

Nine Boxes

for Molly

Spring stood there all body	In the small beauty of the forest	you put this pen in my hand and you
whose hosts are a disturbance of words within words	Glimpsed through the branches	a few red and ochre leaves
When I was eleven I found a private river moving	through a grass, larkly	heard the tress, their diffidence greater than my noise.

Lorine Niedecker "Untitled [Spring]" George Oppen: "Psalm" Evie Shockley: "— shall become as —" Robert Duncan "Often I Am Permitted to Return to a Meadow" David Biespiel: "Seki" Hélène Dorion: from "Hearts, Books of Love" Linda Gregg: "Untitled ['When I was eleven']" Caroline Ebeid: "letter to the Corinthians" Jennifer Chang "The World"

Wall Drawing 172

Lines through the center of the wall toward midpoints of sides and corners

Common towhees in the olive tree out back, song that wakes me

Sonic Gopher Spike song as it empties a dumpster

Robo Taxi song as it glides through empty streets at dawn

Clank and bang, garbage truck song repelling rodents from the yard

Wall Drawing 289

Fourth wall: 24 lines from the center, 12 lines from the midpoint of each of the sides, 12 lines from each corner.

When he says he wants to paint the old car green
I wonder what he means:
beach glass or underside of leaf,
lizard toe, M&M, shamrock in shadow,
peridot in an antique ring.
Which shade, which blade of grass:
this one in sun, this one in sprinkler's stream.
Which wavelength, which beam of light:
spectral and constant, or volatile, changing,
my perception so different from his.
The sheared jewel-face of a wave
(we call it the green room deep inside)
or walls in the dining room of our first home,
where the baby's first food was avocado
and we lay all day on a frayed mint carpet,
smell of tomato plants through window screens.
All August we wore that green scent:
petrichor and lightning, attar of herb,
hint of fertilizer, whiff of aftershave in the bathroom.
It's all subjective, a measurable property
altered by interpretation:
Army fatigues, so many empty beer bottles,
kiwi flesh, pea, weed and bramble,
faded Ithaca T-shirt he left crumpled on my floor.

Smell of tomato plants through window screens
and walls in the dining room of our first home:
petrichor and lightning, attar of herb.
We called it the green room deep inside.
Which wavelength, which beam of light,
which shade, which blade of grass:
spectral and constant or volatile, changing.
I wonder if he means
beach glass or underside of leaf
when he says he wants to paint the old car green.
Altered by interpretation,
all August we wore that green scent.

It's not subjective but a measurable property:
this one in sun, this one in sprinkler's stream.
My perception so different from his,
faded Ithaca T-shirt left crumpled on my floor,
hint of fertilizer, whiff of aftershave in the bathroom.
Peridot in an antique ring
altered by interpretation:
the sheared jewel-face of a wave,
or lizard toe, M&M, shamrock in shadow,
smell of tomato plants through window screens.
The baby's first food was avocado
like the walls in the dining room of our first home.

Altered by interpretation,
spectral and constant, or volatile and changing
when he says he wants to. Paint the old car green:
kiwi flesh, pea, weed and bramble,
peridot in an antique ring.
Hint of fertilizer, whiff of aftershave in the bathroom,
smell of tomato plants through window screens
where the baby's first food was avocado.
Which wavelength, which beam of light?
Beach glass or underside of leaf,
faded Ithaca T-shirt he left crumpled on my floor,
Army fatigues. So many empty beer bottles.

All August we wear that green scent
when he says he wants to paint the old car green,
spectral and constant or volatile, changing.
Petrichor and lightning, attar of herb:
this one in sun, this one in sprinkler's stream.
Beach glass or underside of leaf,
Army fatigues, so many empty beer bottles,
lizard toe, M&M, shamrock in shadow.
We lay all day on a frayed mint carpet
and it's all subjective. A measurable property?
Faded Ithaca T-shirt he left crumpled on my floor.

The sheared jewel-face of a wave
like peridot in an antique ring.
August we wore that green scent
and lay all day on a frayed mint carpet
in the dining room of our first home
(we call it the green room deep inside)
where the baby's first food was avocado.
My perception is so different from his,
spectral and constant or volatile, changing.
Army fatigues, so many empty beer bottles,
kiwi flesh, pea, weed and bramble:
which shade, which blade of grass?

Which wavelength, which beam of light?
I wonder what he means,
but it's all subjective, not a measurable property:
hint of fertilizer, whiff of aftershave in the bathroom,
petrichor and lightning, attar of herb.
We lay all day on a frayed mint carpet,
faded Ithaca T-shirt left crumpled on the floor
beside Army fatigues, so many empty beer bottles.
Walls in the dining room of our first home:
beach glass or underside of leaf,
lizard toe, M&M, shamrock in shadow
or one in sun or one in sprinkler's stream.

My perception so different from his,
I wonder what he means
when he calls it the green room deep inside.
All August we wore that green scent.
It's subjective, a barely measurable property
like the sheared jewel-face of a wave.
Where the baby's first food was avocado,
we lay all day on a frayed mint carpet:
which shade, which blade of grass?
Smell of tomato plants through window screens,
this one in sun, this one in sprinkler's stream.
Petrichor and lightning, attar of herb.

Hint of fertilizer, whiff of aftershave in the bathroom
 altered by interpretation
 when he says he wants to paint the old car green.
 Kiwi flesh, pea, weed and bramble:
 which shade, which blade of grass?
 We will call it the green room. Deep inside:
 lizard toe, M&M, shamrock in shadow.
 Which wavelength, which beam of light?
 I wonder what he means
 by a peridot in an antique ring,
 sheared jewel-face of a wave.
 My perception so different from his.

Wall Drawing 273

First wall: Red lines from the midpoints of four sides.

Dilation and vessel, an increase or rising—can you
feel me breathing here though this is just
a page? What is a mark without the hand,
the pumping heart behind it? Primary source:
primordial, primal filter, not an invention
of light but bathed in it, sanguine link
between the narrow portals. Why did we ever
read new critics, believe in the separation
between blood and art? Like babies, these words are
not autonomous objects: read close but not too.

On the tour, we pressed bugs between our fingers
and stained them shades of crimson. I'd already read
the book that told the story of the cochineal
and pretended at surprise to spare the guide's
feelings. I felt the bloody crush and crack and thought
of a story I read in school where they hung a blood-stained
sheet outside the wedding chamber to prove
the bride a virgin. I remember nothing
but the sheet and knowing blood between my legs (can we
please not talk of that?) never felt like celebration.

Ask me about my spectral coordinates: I don't know
where to tell you to look, and I find you not
by touch or smell or this strange calculation but
by calendar and contrast, chroma and tint. What's
the madder? I want to make jokes but am too serious:
want to want to, I guess, like passing by the place in Vegas
where table dancing wasn't even the most outréd thing
on offer but "steak bathing in tomato ovaries,"
written without irony or the slightest thought
of Agamemnon

It comes down to symbol: the monster's
autobiographical wings or the adultress's shield,
Lady Lazurus's flaming hair in the air or a field
of opiated poppies, unlike the California ones
in our backyard that can't muster
themselves any bolder than golden. As a fiery child,
her costume horns matched her hoodie that matched
her skinned knees: no green growth, no ubiquity, not
everywhere like the sky
but in everything.

Second wall: Blue lines from four corners.

Imagine you didn't have the word: what would
you have said of my eyes then, these little pools?
Or the place my veins rise against my wrist like
lace, a pale and brittle ice. We all know Homer
called the sea wine-dark, and most days out there
he's right: no need for other uniforms. It's when
the clouds slake the ocean's thirst and its aura's tamed
that we can move beyond the scarcity of language
and name its shade or tone. Semi-precious stone,
metal, plant: be sure it rhymes with hue.

I don't want to be ironic or coy: want to strike
the borderless elemental, but it's crowded and
I can't hear myself think: not at this hour in this dress
on these nights with this philosophical inquiry. What new thing
can I say in so few lines? In the next room, an Instagrammer
before the Flavin striking poses, all these codes for cool.
Newspaper asks "Why Are We So Obsessed?" with a reading list
of all who trod the path before and better and they claim
the satin bowerbird too, which you can Google
and while you're at it: "Why is the sky?" Phrase unfinished.

I mention the ocean too often, she says: *you make it
your whole personality*. Nothing I was born to and for years
a love begrudging: its power and its sting unknown
in the lap of lake (which when I close my eyes is colorless clear
to the bottom and in the distance a perfect row of boats,
oars raised against the wind, a syncopation). In the wrack line
this morning, plump wet bodies of velella velella,
by-the-wind sailors, their angled fins illuminated
in rising sun so at first they seem to sparkle, carry
light like gems. Inhale. They also carry their rotting stench.

An exercise in attention: the rug's royal warp and weft,
navy stripes on the bath towel second from left, each
product's font, typeface, and weight, even the wavy line
along the rim of a porcelain cup. The wind blew
in so long and hard last night I woke
to find the yard confettied, glittered with my bright
and ruined salvias, my once-tender
roses: the scattered buds psychological, an opponent
process. I planted sweet peas in all their shades
late again this year, so there's something still to wait for:

Third wall: Yellow lines from the center.

When you know what you're looking at, the seeing
gets simpler. This isn't an argument for or against
abstraction, but even if it were, I would say the titles
make my point: Van Gogh's house, the order
of Rothko's colors, Vuillard's curtain, Albers' study
on departure: with each I know where to start.
Should I have begun with this canary
to learn if the approach holds? There's nothing arbitrary
about the yolk of it, the golden ratio, which
is the artist's math: irrational and constructible, it
decomposes. Of all the body's liquid systems, bile
is the one we need to read if not to write, to digest
if not compose. In my first house I painted every room
a different color but now I keep them plain. Hers matched
her name, though I swear I didn't plan it: a vintage color
that felt gender neutral since we didn't know. Where the lines
cross, I look for meaning, something greater
than the sum: green flash at sunset, spring's first fast lilac,
orange peel removed in just one piece. Not a paradox:
all together they are either a dark void or a white light.