Writing Right Here and Now

Following Paul Matthew’s lead below, begin your poem with some phrase akin to “This is being written in a room...” Go on to describe your surroundings. Start where you are and follow the poem wherever it takes you.

Touchpaper

This is being written in a room which lets light and birdsong in,

but if my pen keeps moving I will need to mention the exit sign over the door

because when making poetry fire does occasionally break out, singeing the wings of creatures who never harmed anyone, clouding with metaphors the simple afternoon light.

Already the page I’m writing on bears marks of the conflagration.

Paul Matthews
in This Naked Light

Same Old

This is being written in the same old kitchen from the usual blue-cushioned chair pulled up to the round, white, full moon table.

Cluttered, oh cluttered both table and mind— Oh Lord, no wonder the poems ring familiar—
always this same view.

Snow today and out there
behind the gray garage
the dead tree with woodpecker holes
is shedding its suit of bark
to stand naked facing impermanence.

jch 2/8/2022

Here’s another way to approach writing the here and now poem. It’s an exercise from the admirable poet Myra Shapiro. Thank you, Myra!

**Myra Shapiro’s poetry exercise for any time, wherever you are.**

Fill in the lists below from your immediate surroundings

- **colors** (use phrases like “the color of rain” or “peach-glow”)
  1
  2
  3
  4

- **sounds**
  1
  2
  3
  4

- **animals**
  1
  2
  3
  4

- **flavors/tastes** (again, specific is best)
  1
  2
  3
  4

- **ordinary but specific objects** (terracotta flowerpot)
  1
  2
  3
  4

Something in your life you have lost
The poem you now write will include at least one item from each list. Include several from each list if you can. The lost object is for psychic weight.

Galway Kinnell said a poem must have:
   1 creatures of the world
   2 interesting language
   3 psychic weight