

## Enter the Painted Landscape

In your poem, climb into a painting (real or imagined) and walk around with all your senses alert. Allow the two dimensional to become three dimensional. Or you might start with a real landscape and imagine it a painting. Or maybe use one of the following as an epigraph.

*Let the viewer stroll around within the picture, to force him to forget himself and so to become a part of the picture. (V. Kandinsky)*

*When you start a painting, it is somewhat outside you. At the conclusion you seem to move inside the painting. (Botero)*

### The Brooklyn Museum of Art

I will now step over the soft velvet rope  
and walk directly into this massive Hudson River  
painting and pick my way along the Palisades  
with this stick I snapped off a dead tree.

I will skirt the smoky, nestled towns  
and seek the path that leads always outward  
until I become lost, without a hope  
of ever finding the way back to the museum.

I will stand on the bluffs in nineteenth-century clothes,  
a dwarf among rock, hills and flowing water,  
and I will fish from the banks in a straw hat  
which will feel like a brush stroke on my head.

And I will hide in the green covers of forests

so no appreciator of Frederick Edwin Church,  
leaning over the soft velvet rope,  
will spot my tiny figure moving in the stillness  
and cry out, pointing for the others to see.

and be thought mad and led away to a cell  
where there is no vaulting landscape to explore,  
none of this bird song that halts me in my tracks,  
and no wide curving of this river that draws  
my steps toward the misty vanishing point.

Billy Collins  
in *The Apple That Astonished Paris*

### **Off A Side Road Near Staunton**

Some nothing afternoon, no one anywhere,  
an early autumn stillness in the air,  
the kind of empty day you fill by taking in  
the full size of the valley and its layers leading  
slowly to the Blue Ridge, the quality of country,  
if you stand here long enough, you could stay  
for, step into, the way a landscape, even on a wall,  
pulls you in, one field at a time, pasture and fall  
meadow, high above the harvest, perfect  
to the tree line, then spirit clouds and intermittent  
sunlit smoky rain riding the tops of the mountains,  
though you could walk until it's dark and not reach those rains —  
you could walk the rest of the day into the picture  
and not know why, at any given moment, you're there.

Stanley Plumly

## Franz Marc's Blue Horses

I step into the painting of the four blue horses.  
I am not even surprised that I can do this.

One of the horses walks toward me.  
His blue nose noses me lightly. I put my arm  
over his blue mane, not holding on, just  
    commingling.

He allows me my pleasure.

Franz Marc died a young man, shrapnel in his brain.  
I would rather die than try to explain to the blue horses  
    what war is.

They would either faint in horror, or simply  
    find it impossible to believe.

I do not know how to thank you, Franz Marc.  
Maybe our world will grow kinder eventually.  
Maybe the desire to make something beautiful  
    is the piece of God that is inside each of us.

Now all four horses have come closer,  
    are bending their faces toward me  
        as if they have secrets to tell.

I don't expect them to speak, and they don't.  
If being so beautiful isn't enough, what  
    could they possibly say?

Mary Oliver  
in *Blue Horses*