

PICTURES & POETRY: WEDNESDAY 22ND APRIL 2020

This is the session I would have run at Hereford Mind, Heffernan House, Hereford. In these workshops, we use artworks as the inspiration for writing ekphrastic poetry (poetry inspired by art).

EXERCISE ONE: A warm-up writing exercise called In Our Mind's Eye.

It takes the concept of Slow Looking as its inspiration. Here is an article about Slow Looking from *The Guardian*:

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/shortcuts/2018/jul/24/why-taking-it-slow-in-an-art-gallery-could-change-your-life>

Choose a picture that you have displayed on a wall at home. Slow Look at it like this: Study the picture for 5 minutes. Really look at it. Absorb yourself in the picture. Then write a piece about it for 5 minutes without looking at it. What do you remember about it? What impressions do you take from it? Is there something there you haven't noticed before? What is its essence? Finish your piece by telling us why you have the picture displayed on your wall.

EXERCISE TWO: The theme for this writing exercise is THE ART OF EDWARD HOPPER

Before you begin, take a look at this picture of Claude Monet's *Water Lilies*.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Claude_Monet_-_Nymph%C3%A9as_\(1905\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Claude_Monet_-_Nymph%C3%A9as_(1905).jpg)

This link take you to an article called *Backing into Ekphrasis: Reading and Writing Poetry about Visual Art* by Honor Moorman. The article contains two poems inspired by Monet's painting. One poem speaks to the artist in a spectator's voice and the other adopts the voice of the water lilies themselves.

<http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/ekphrasis.pdf>

Now look at these paintings by Edward Hopper (1882-1967, American painter and printmaker):

Room In New York

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Room_in_New_York#/media/File:Room-in-new-york-edward-hopper-1932.jpg

Cape Cod Morning <https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/cape-cod-morning-10760>

Cape Cod Evening <https://www.edwardhopper.net/cape-cod-evening.jsp>

Room In Brooklyn (scroll down for picture)

<http://www.thelonelypalette.com/episodes/2016/12/28/episode-13-edward-hoppers-room-in-brooklyn-1932>

Night Windows <https://www.edwardhopper.net/night-windows.jsp>

Hotel By A Railroad <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hotel-by-a-Railroad-Edward-Hopper-1952.jpg>

Choose one of these images to work with and make notes about it. Why did you choose this picture? How does it make you feel? What does it make you think about? Memories?

Make notes describing the picture - colour, light/shade, objects, figures, positions, shapes, etc.

Finally, write a poem in response to your picture. Look back at your notes for inspiration. Here are some suggested approaches:

Write a poem in the style of one of the example 'Monet' poems (addressing the artist directly as a spectator or in the voice of someone or something depicted in the picture).

Imagine a story behind what you see presented in the picture. What else is going on in the scene?

Write about the experience of looking at the picture. Relate the picture to something else it makes you think of, for example, a memory or your current situation.

And of course you are free to write any poem in any style you wish on any topic.

With thanks to *Backing into Ekphrasis: Reading and Writing Poetry about Visual Art* by Honor Moorman

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