

Snodgrass, Matisse: "The Red Studio"

english.emory.edu/classes/paintings&poems/snodgrass.html

Matisse: "The Red Studio"

W. D. Snodgrass

There is no one here.
But the objects: they are real. It is not
As if he had stepped out or moved away;
There is no other room and no
Returning. Your foot or finger would pass
Through, as into unreflecting water
Red with clay, or into fire.
Still, the objects: they are real. It is
As if he had stood
Still in the bare center of this floor,
His mind turned in in concentrated fury,
Till he sank
Like a great beast sinking into sands
Slowly, and did not look up.
His own room drank him.
What else could generate this
Terra cotta raging through the floor and walls,
Through chests, chairs, the table and the clock,
Till all environments of living are
Transformed to energy--
Crude, definitive and gay.
And so gave birth to objects that are real.
How slowly they took shape, his children, here, Grew solid and remain:
The crayons; these statues; the clear brandy bowl;
The ashtray where a girl sleeps, curling among flowers;
This flask of tall glass, green, where a vine begins
Whose vines circle the other girl brown as a cypress knee.
Then, pictures, emerging on the walls:
Bathers; a landscape; a still life with a vase;
To the left, a golden blonde, lain in magentas with flowers scattering like stars;
Opposite, top right, these terra cotta women, living, in their world of living's colors;
Between, but yearning toward them, the sailor on his red cafe chair, dark blue, self-
absorbed.
These stay, exact,

Within the belly of these walls that burn,
That must hum like the domed electric web
Within which, at the carnival, small cars bump and turn,
Toward which, for strength, they reach their iron hands:
Like the heavens' walls of flame that the old magi could see;
Or those ethereal clouds of energy
From which all constellations form,
Within whose love they turn.
They stand here real and ultimate.
But there is no one here.

Henri Matisse, The Red Studio (1911)

Oil on canvas, approximately 71 inches x 86 inches. The Museum of Modern Art, New York City.

