Grinding Cobalt and Vermilion

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GRINDING COBALT AND VERMILION

The artist does not confront the world, but infinity. It is just that our ideas of infinity are changing.

— Rufino Tamayo

Mongo Santamaria isn’t Mozart, but you paint to him, a Basque beret and moccasins tapping, conga beating exact as a heart through your life, as Rothko did to his time’s masters. It matters that we saw them, that room in San Francisco of his already darkening plains of color. That you pressed my arm, led me to the pulse the paintings moved from as blood and breath move, surrounding a body.

Who spoke to us after him, perhaps an unknown woman in a cottonwood canyon, drawing with cattlemarkers. Hidden in the chalk cliffs above the turquoise and abstract lake in our dream of Montana, she is just on the edge of our minds.

If only for planting the gardens at Giverny he painted, perhaps it is Monet molding the clay banks of the pond, improving his vision, the manipulated explosion of poppies.

Grinding cobalt and vermilion, you of another century, in a land with violent history, stain otter on shields of rawhide, search for the key to DeStahl. One grandmother’s blood a mystery, your skin darkens each year as chokecherries, nearing equinox, smoke in the sun.
Cottonwood I will compare the honeyed scent of any western river to where it does not graze wild and beyond reach. Scent of sage, crushed between your two fingers, sacred as these heritages, rise as rosemary, at my touch, rises from your hair.