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Ode to Brunelleschi: The Lament of an Artist

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I looked at my watch. The hours had quickly passed in the park. "Goodness, it looks like it's time for me to go." I looked at him and smiled. "Thanks for opening my eyes to Salinger. I probably would have never liked him if I hadn't seen how he was similar to Potok. I think I'll go reread some of his stuff."

The old man smiled and said, "You do that, and maybe you'll see even more similarities. Now you'll understand why they are better when read together. You learn great lessons about life when you read those authors side-by-side. You correlate the two and make them a standard for your own life. You know what I mean, young lady?"

"Yeah, I do. Thanks. I hope I'll see you again soon."

"Yes, maybe so. See you soon."

Unfortunately we never did meet again, but it turned out to be a worthwhile conversation in the park.

John Rich *Ode to Brunelleschi: The Lament of an Artist*

O dear dead Brunelleschi,
fingers tremble beneath the weight
of your historical significance
as rulers are withdrawn from buildings on paper
built brick by brick by brick
toward a single point
on an illusory horizon
where I pin you in effigy.

Those schoolboys don't know
that your talk is treason, Brunelleschi, heresy!
You've overrun art with reason
and made it God's great gift to great men.
I hear you mumbling beneath that shroud how
men are the measure of all things;
well you are no man who can measure me.

O Slavedriver! Manipulator of space!
You've stolen the vision of a child
and replaced it with one-eyed mania.
Under your order, objects
do not preserve their own sanctity
or their own relationship with the whole.
Rather they are twisted and contrived and
wronged into exactitude.
This is not nature.

This is your realism. This is tromp l'oeil.
Here nature is a grid placed on two dimensions
where naturally occurring phenomena are
arranged like tin soldiers by the ego of an architect.
How you must sleep soundly when the classroom echoes,
"Fillipo Brunelleschi was the inventor of perspective."
How this must satisfy your drying dust.

You fragment our experience of the world, Fillipo,
but I will not bend to you.
You remove us from our environment, Fillipo,
but I will not believe you.
You, pseudo-seer, quantify and calibrate not
the dynamics of the natural world,
but only what pen can do to paper.

Nature, my friend, is built upon a relationship
of parts within a whole
and not of the compression of space
without sense of the whole.
So it does me no harm to think of you
in your hole
with your feet pinned together
as your pine box recedes
in space.