

APPRENTICE ARTIST

Ages ago, images ago,
she was accustomed to acclaim as a painter
of iris, content with replication:

Brushstroking floral vitals at their peak,
shape and sheen of the premises,
exactitude of shade

and light's promises. The whole canvas
conspiracy of dimension in space.
Comfortable with awards and perfected views.

Suddenly disturbed by sightings
of unguessed galaxies in petals,
in bearded falls, lavender standards

and the exposure of mauve junctures, she sees
nodes of knotty runes ripen beyond
the reach of sable hair and palette knife.

Planets and fetal faces inhabit white;
moons, lungs, mountains, bones
blend in plasma of pink, dust of maroon.

The pale scent of yellow fades
from her sleeve. Armies and godsmiths,
prophets and poets abide in the wet furls

of dying as tropic pigment fails. And falls.
Now the patient stem, the stalk of knowing,
twisted like rusty wire, supports a forming:

Marrow swells in covert excrescence.
There is no such thing as still life.
Her not-yet-captured subject seethes

on an inner palimpsest, ruckles and pocks,
surpassing all invented armature.
Clawing its way to the surface of her clay.

--Glenna Holloway
--MONTSERRAT REVIEW, 1999