

Master of Fine Arts

Ah, cheetah-- haughtily feline
and female with a vengeance,
I've released you in full color
from my camera, from my sketchbook,
even uncollared you from mythic times
and dark Egyptian tombs.

Draining my sienna palette,
you refuse to keep your paper context.
Unhampered by layers of super-polymer,
you complete your spotted streak
across the papyrus on my easel.
Your dissident design brushes past
my stroke, tracking shadows in my studio,
haunting the old passageways, hunting
the presiding Tomcat, the drab native mouser
who may not submit to your dynasty.
Shoulders knotted like Osiris's fist,
your precedent pushes into dimensions
not resolved in pigments
or even the bas-relief of kings.

I warn benighted Tom
of your Isis eyes coming,
your speed matched with light,
and hope he hunches himself
in a small niche you can't enter
with your leggy serpent length,
your heathen haunches and expletive head.

Confrontation comes spitting sudden:
Arranging himself on a vacant pedestal,
Tom bristles his long lineage,
his black leopardship. Smoothing
the smug cap of Ptah,
he arcs down sovereignty from ankh eyes.
Below, you tail-tip grudging recognition
of your high-flown ebony kin.

It is the artist confronted:
You've both made your points.
I close the paints
and reach for the sculpting clay.