Song for Pollock

Woods Nash

When Pollock spoke of energy made visible, did he mean the fiery banners of his canvases—those vagrant drizzles, vibrant splashes he left just so, circular dynamics five centuries old? The visual vortex they present won’t soon unclench its grip. He made that kind of current, like a live wire traveling back and back to Renaissance battles of horse-borne chaos, but also forward, futureward, to you, my fellow museumgoer, standing alone this crisp November morning in Houston, perfectly still in your autumn cardigan, a single wrist enclosed in a gentle bracelet of fingers, an air of composed self-containment.

But what brings you now to this bench with sore feet, knees? And have your squinting eyes, like mine, lost their fine edge? If pain is a bridge, we’re getting somewhere. Once, in New York, preparing an exhibit, Pollock took a strand of copper wire. This he twisted and wove into loops—gymnastic, circuitous. Then, dripping paint and plaster, he fashioned a figure inside the contorted metal—a solitary shape like a person reclining. This sculpture, as you’re reading on its placard, was part of a model for his own museum—a complex of mirrors that let paintings lose their borders. We see the sole survivor from that ditched project: this small body present and continuous with the vital stroke of power that surrounds it, sings through it, endless.

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