

Mark Murphy

MODEL WITH UNFINISHED SELF-PORTRAIT

I

I am the dreamer in the background, always dreaming;
just now I dreamt six tulips for me and a dozen for him,
I dream all the time like this, stopping and starting —
and when it suits me, I can even change the course of things.

Take my unfinished masterpiece; is it masterful because
it is unfinished or unfinished because it is masterful?
Although such conundrums belong to the audience,
I've become adept at answering my own rhetoric.

An outline is only an outline, so long as you perceive it
as an outline. Let me sketch it out a little more clearly.
Seeing comes first, believing comes later. The trick
is to see what you believe and not believe what you see.

I do not paint as I see but how I believe it to be.
Believing takes precedence over seeing and dreaming still
takes precedence over living, the rest is as it should be.
Join the march, bang the drum. You are here of your own free will.

II

I am the dreamer in the foreground, always dreaming;
just now I dreamt the world had shrunk to this little corner
between us, our little piece of history - magnified, a lasting
testament to the secret life of paintings, two dreamers

together with their little song: *This is order, this is chaos,*
we are young, we are ageless. I look enigmatic.
'Just do your own thing', he says, 'don't be too abstruse.'
I know my role. History beckons. We think alike.

I am on board ship for no other reason than the price.
Half finished, half famous. I foresee only minor difficulties.
The picture remains a major work in my mother's eyes,
what more approval does a son need? To acquiesce

to a mother's judgment is critical. The problem
with history is rendering. I remain tight lipped.
After all, an artist's model should be open to interpretation.
The problem with art is that it is never finished.



Sam Byfield

YOU REACH FOUR THOUSAND METERS:

You reach four thousand meters:
The air is thin, foliage changes
with each twist you take.
Bamboo shifts to tundra, then
a rare and sudden flush of flowers.

Sheer barren rocks, limestone white,
a remnant of the wet season.
Goats spread across the trail
and their eyes follow you. An old male
brushes your leg, horns massive,

and is off again over boulders, down
into the ravine. A farmer appears
and as if by osmosis the goats gather again
by his side. You can't breathe and the view
is to die for. Clouds slide around you,