

THE POET DREAMING IN THE ARTIST'S HOUSE

by Katherine L. Basham

Contemporary Poems about the Visual Arts. Edited by Emilie Buchwald and Ruth Roston. Milkweek Editions, 1984, 142 pages.

This anthology contains poems (by seventy-three poets) arranged in four groups: portraits of the artist, scenes, still lives, and a last one which the editors call "the thing itself," a group of poems concerned with "the nature of art" and its relationship to our lives and to nature. The book ends with Phyllis Janik's Selected Annotated Bibliography of works about or of poetry related to the visual arts.

The editors have dedicated the book to poets and artists. I suppose the most fun will be had by readers who know the art these poets are considering. If there is collaboration it is unwilling inasmuch as we must say, "here are Picasso according to Cabral, Rothko and Frankenthaler according to Cherner, Graziano's Van Gogh, Quaglianno's Hopper, Sadoff's Hopper, Dacey's Weston, Tick's Kandinsky, Roston's Magritte, Browne's Moore, Nemerov's Klee," to name some. As Nemerov said in his poem, "The Painter Dreaming in the Artist's House," "It is because/Language first rises from the speechless world/That the painterly intelligence/Can say correctly that he makes his world,/Not imitates the one before his eyes." The least successful of the poems in this collection are sorts of reports, written out of no apparent personal necessity. The editors have claimed to be presenting the works of "participant" observer poets. In some of the poems, one will find the lowest level of participation. Even so, happily, this anthology is full of well-made poems of various kinds, some of them memorable and moving. Some of them are, of course, effective as expressions of personality. Some foster a receptivity to seeing visual works in a new way.

It must be said that in reading poems about various artists or visual works one knows and has feeling for, one is involved in a different relationship to the poems and to the works than in instances where as a reader s/he doesn't know the artist even

generally or the particular work which is the occasion for the poem. Because of this, my view of the need for and the contribution toward meaning of Randall Scholes' illustrations of this book changed as I read it. Often, Scholes' illustrations called my attention to the book's intention, away from the poems. This is a nicely made book, a pleasure generally to read. However, I preferred reading the poems without illustration.

One effect of a book devoted to a particular theme or to conventions of art is to make its readers thereafter noticers and mental gatherers of poems in the subject which the anthologists have not included. This makes all readers critics of the book. Another effect of such an anthology as The Poet Dreaming in the Artist's House is to make many Klees and Matisses and Kandinsky's possible as we hear and see them. So poets will write poems to join the conversation. For me, however, the happiest effect of reading this anthology was its "quickenings" of my appreciation of visual art.

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WORD PROCESSING AND WRITING BEHAVIOR

by Michael W. Meeker

We are experiencing what the popular press terms a "word processing boom": one hundred manufacturers enjoyed word processor sales of 2.1 billion dollars in 1982, and sales are expected to jump 30% annually in the next five years--to 7.3 billion in 1985 (Glynn). The fact is that computers are used more for word processing than for any other purpose in American businesses. And 76% of all home computers are now used for word processing (Sandberg-Dement). Journalists moved wholesale to word processing in the early seventies, professional writers have turned to computers, and university and college students are discovering that the word processor "is the single greatest boon to writing, rewriting, and editing since the blue pencil" (Turner 1).

Word processing, an accidental by-product of computer