

# THE WHOLE HISTORY OF ART

William Doreski

You're painting a painting too big  
for your studio. You pin it  
to one wall of the reading room  
and spread a tarp to protect  
the lustrous nylon carpet. Meanwhile  
in a trustees' meeting I complain  
that the library does too little  
to promote the arts. The other  
trustees groan like washing machines.  
They hate my sermons on art,  
its subversions and plenitudes,  
its anger, lust, and repentance.  
One bearded old fellow opines  
that allowing your massive canvas  
to dominate the reading room  
makes art enough for everyone.  
But I want every child in town  
to abandon the love of money  
and cheer van Gogh as he slices off  
and trades his ear for sex. That's how  
real art thinks. Meanwhile your painting  
like the one at the Spouter Inn  
maddens the reading room regulars,  
the duffers reading *Financial Times*,  
the ladies with gardening journals.  
As your giant forms take shape  
their minds lope ahead, unbidden,  
discovering landscapes gross enough  
to accommodate such beings.

These are places no one human  
should inhabit. As you paint  
you smile that tiny hatchet smile  
and daubs of azure and crimson  
writhe on your smock. The trustees  
exit the Trustees' Room. We gaze  
at the genius of your painting  
and the bearded old fellow drops  
to his knees. You turn and face us  
with the whole history of art  
glittering in your flat brown eyes  
and I'm almost proud to cower  
among the rabble you despise.

