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SUMMARY KEYWORDS

painting, poem, canvas, artist, slowdown, burnt umber, asunder, absorbing, german poet, revision process, cartoons, dutch painter, transfixed, doom, carmelite, commission, life, infrared technology, brushwood, ochre



00:05

I'm us Poet Laureate Tracy k Smith.



00:09

And this is the slowdown.



00:22

Last month I read an article in The New York Times. It describes how scientists have used infrared technology to decipher the buried layers of paintings by 16th century Dutch painter, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, peering beneath the surface, they found dead bodies, political references and emblems like crosses that were later painted over. This sleuthing offers a glimpse of the artists revision process, a sense of how his mind might have worked during the long drafting period. I don't know about you, but as a writer, I'm sometimes encouraged by evidence of the labor and the outright toil that goes into another person's art. it hardens me to know that yes, creating something takes time, time during which mistakes will be made, decisions will be brooded over and sudden changes of perspective will be born. Today's poem by German poet novelist and critic Hans Magnus Enzensberger brings a similar creative process to life. It follows a 15th century Italian painter through the painstaking stages of accepting a commission, conceiving an idea and bringing it into being on the canvas. The poem is a portrait of the artist's character as much as a vivid description of the artwork itself. Listening to the poem, I feel a little like a child being told a story. I see images in my mind's eye and feel a sense of joy as the artist realizes his

vision. I even feel a little sad when the poem ends. apocalypse Umbrian master about 1490 by Hans Magnus Enzensberger. He is not as young as he used to be. With a grown he chooses a sizable Canvas, he broods on it. He wastes his time handling about his commission with a mean Carmelite monk from the Abruzzi prior or cannon or whatnot. It is winter now. His finger joints start cracking like the brushwood in the fireplace. With a groan he will ground the canvas, let it dry, ground at once more, will scroll his fingers impatiently. Those like on small cartoons and set them off with white LED. He temper rises and idles away a few weeks, rubbing down his colors. But at long last Ash Wednesday has gone by and candelmas early one morning, he dips his brush in Burnt Umber and starts painting this will be a gloomy picture.



03:18

How do you go about painting Doom? The conflagrations the vanishing islands, the lightning, the walls and towers and pinnacles crumbling ever so slowly, nice points of technique, problems of composition. destroying the world is a difficult exercise. hardest to paint are the sounds. For example, the temple veil being rent asunder, the beasts roaring, and the thunderclaps. Everything you see is to be rent asunder and torn to pieces except the canvas. And there can be no doubt about the appointed time. By All Souls Day, the frantic see in the background must be coded over and over again with 1000 layers of transparency with foamy green lights, pierced by mastheads. By ships reeling, plunging down by wrecks, while outside in mid July, not a dog will stir on the dust covered square. The women have left the servants, the disciples, in the four Lorne town, only the master remains. He looks tired. Who would have thought that he of all people would look dead, tired, ochre. Everything seems ochre now shadowless standing still transfixed in a kind of evil eternity except the picture. It grows and darkens slowly. absorbing shadows, steel blue, livid, though violet, k put more to them, absorbing demons and horsemen and massacres until Doom is happily consummated. And the artist for a brief moment is like a child on mindfully Mary, as if his life has been spared. And in his relief on this very night, he asks his friends to a feast and treats them to truffles to grouse, an old wine with the seasons first rainstorm pounding away at the shutters.



05:48

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