

The House of Cézanne

by John Olson

Is there anything more emphatic than an ovary? There is a house that thinks so. Cézanne lives there. He paints things. Apples, chairs, baskets, skulls. Men playing cards. Women frolicking outdoors. Women sitting meditatively in chairs. Women in hats. Women in scarves. Women looking sad. Women looking determined. Women. The walls of his house are fat but the windows are swollen. The world presses itself against the glass creating colors and birds. The laundry is a feast of folds and wrinkles. The shirts are deviations of sleeves and collars. Everything speaks a language of mute tumefaction. Even the chimney has something to say. Nothing in the house is unscratched, unscathed, unexplored or sloppily ellipsoidal. Unless it truly means to be ellipsoidal. And then it isn't sloppy so much as wobbly, or cheerfully decrepit. Nothing is so reduced to utility that it doesn't flow into this world on a continual basis, meeting perception with its own agenda, which is secret, and soaked in metaphors, like a high school gymnasium, or incoherent telepathist. Because really, when you think about it, what doesn't communicate with the mind directly? Well, people don't, that's for sure. People resort to language, which is narcotic, and agglutinates in inkblots. But none of this matters, because this is the house of Cézanne, where all is mutation, and perfectly imperfect, or imperfectly perfect, the way some bowls can be when they're filled with soup, or fruit, or light opera. The plaster presses itself against the wall like an innocent bystander. The page of a book on divination agrees to become a nipple and propagate raw silk. The smell of raw participles knocks on the door of moths. The sky disturbs the roof with its lusty details. The radical éclat of a mountain on paper embarrasses a counterfeit destiny. The energy of an experience battles the ennui of a grease stain. A thesis weeps for the death of a narrative continuity. For such is the soul of the house of Cézanne that the name of a thing will carry it into life and cause it to have being and colloquy.

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