

LOUISE SMITH



NUMBERS

with poems by

TAMAS PANITZ

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Note on the text:

To quote Marsilio Ficino: "...[t]here is immeasurable space in the spirit, but in the body one could say infinite constriction... numbers, which are akin to the nature of spirit, increase without limit, but do not so diminish; whereas there is a limit to the expansion of the physical, to its contraction there is no limit."

This is what I find in these paintings by Louise: numbers that delimit in order to explicate an expansive contrary motion. A ladder with all the eagerness and confidence of climbers. Numbers shaped like the self-image of hearts, spirals, orbs, rooms — why do some resemble each other, why do some not? "Numbers" shaped by us who pass through them.

— Tamas Panitz



Numbers 1

Dawn in a barrel,
reservoir, bottom of her
pitcher busy collecting rain.

Disheveled stars sparks houses
stride forward, in imitation of
daylight, mount their attack on day:

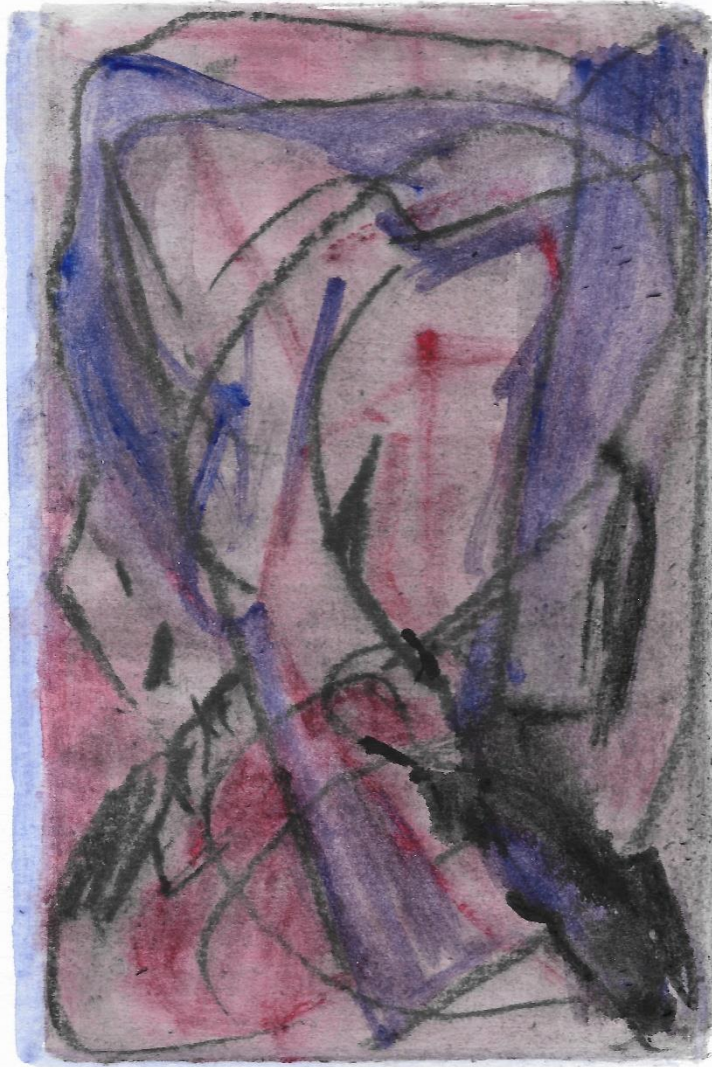
a golden apple.

A golden apple but reddish purple
Black Oxford from Paris, Maine
not for a beauty contest

but found here, our own.

(Not daylight;
but a shapeless mass, sapling
gathers numbers to itself, force, to form a man.)

This light risen from our side of things, headed down.



Numbers II

First it's by eye that I take in
my other

that takes its fill of us, fills the room,
in cwtch, embrace.

From eye to body
negative spectrum,
up & down
all the trouble of twins.

I am my own twin.
He collects from above and bestows
below. He offers all of me, through which we watch
lovers trees roads this architecture rain down.



Numbers III

I remember my mother saw this,
flaming letters peep through the sky

but the kind of fire you'd draw
in Hebrew. Curvy, dark, a wheel

intimate as speed.
Memory is matriarchal. Look anywhere:

time is convened.
I can see three tall women as I eat.



Numbers IV

**Rosette of garnet on Gore Mountain.
A flower opens through rock, intricate
as saxifrage, heresy.**

**Need consciousness not direction
to see how the red curtains were
sliced by the red key, to see that
through the secret door of this stone
is a small black square in the distance.**

Let this white square speak it to me.

**There are others here, too
with keys in the shape of moles
or sunsets, boars scraping up
the mountainside.**

**I send my red key ahead,
unsure what it will do.**



Numbers V

A jaguar of garnet
purrs gently in my head.

I close my eyes
close myself in the stone.

Imprisonment is sex,
being the same animal but different skin.

On the surface is a map
but to whom?

I turn my words over and over
until I can feel just the tip
of their saying.



Numbers VI

I know there's a door here
though we've never talked about it
you never tell me why
let it speak for itself
a door behind a waterfall
behind number, order
I see this through the dim rain of obsession
that's how I know there's a door
you don't confuse with maybe
you can't disorient a door
this you know, you too are a door
staring at me
and I don't dare go in,
but I already am
too early to forget
too late to know
you painted it true,
I'm in there already
arched brows long of face
looking back at the eyes
that made me, each of us
shouldering from our coats
until we're nothing, nothing
but unseen, busy hinges
as angels walk in and out.



Numbers VII

Signs beg to speak, to tell together

land in the margins and travel
inland to the spine,

center of things, the hinges,

draped in more fruit than we can eat.

They propagate themselves
as I walk along the street.
Everything looks like genitals.
Ficino was right.

Passion has a plan.



Numbers VIII

Wheels don't care for sequence
they leap upstream like rhymes
one hand to the other, mirrored,
martyred, going south
where eternity is
I've mentioned this before
trees, doors, chifforobe
wheels in their variety
cross me as I stand here
I am a doorman
for doors themselves
you've painted a portrait of me
just as your room leaped away
scuffed my heart with its
sneakers and cleared out for Sargasso
but these are wheels not eels
sidewise and circumspect
gods seeking new jobs.



Numbers IX

Your Pelican's showing,
fortunate mortal
I mean the one that came
to roost in the twist your lines love
the wrist of wharf
from which it turns
and returns,
turns to gas, chaos
and then condensare,
slips back rarified
here, tense with distances
it's absorbed
I bow to the machine
that knits us to the
horizon, makes room
for us to stand in here.
I think like Ficino that
the soul comes after the body.
It has to open up the world
and come in. Nerval's
lobster Thibault. I would have
named him La Lune,
the cosmic mirror
fashioned by hand.
But this is a bird like any bird
blown here by the storm
that ruined these pilings
on which it sits and remembers
your own intimate
answer to the distances.



Numbers X

A red wing lifts as an oil lifts
itself from cloying rubble.
A waltz from night? This is a waltz
against virginity and sleep

I look east and deduce
the warm breath of my lord.

You too rise from sleep with the heat
that lifts red from the beloved
they call Allah you call
Kris. We're all muslims.

All East and other
Geese and high-tide.
His fragments, fragrance,
you can see the thoughts
of others crossing through him.



Numbers XI

Dusk. Not dusk but
purple, Nantucket
or Hudson- where those whalers
dragged their houses- turn off
the lights, but this stays.

A stain from the sea
changes us as it passes by
violent with sunset,
violet. Nothing
outlasts this careful
decay, and in the silence
when no one's left, that is us,
we who will never stop seeing this.