

## Three scenes in a gallery

### 1. retrospective

I saw Russell Drysdale that day,  
hung up in retrospective.  
His paintings were inserted in  
a building where no one lived.  
The red was classic red.  
The porches were empty.  
I heard a cough and a wind  
whistled down the street,  
submerging stray dogs and  
blowing the tobacco from an old man's hand.  
"Such a bloke," my friend whispered,  
"what about the people living in the suburbs?"  
Was it a myth?  
And whose country, whose painter?  
I turned to answer but they were all standing there,  
looking for someone, startled at the deep brown eyes,  
which were only eyes, and ordinary,  
after all.

### 2. mourning at an art gallery

We sat there,  
rather than moving anymore,  
in front of a painting we mistrusted.  
Shut hands and blinked at the floor,  
because we thought the whole thing had  
stretched too far and died.

"Who *did* this?" my friend asked,  
and we already knew the name.  
Suddenly it was late, and the Sunday crowds  
shuffled through.

They left us there.  
And sat obstinate in front of it,  
for ten minutes,  
only unclenching our gallery legs  
because we had not cared enough.

### 3. I can't see anything

There's a guided tour on either side of us,  
and so we're trapped.  
My friend pulls me over to one,  
in among the handbags and headsets  
she makes me listen.  
"Who can tell me what emotion the painter  
wants us to feel?"  
That's the way they do it now,  
pep you up and make you feel *included*.  
  
"Anger." A murmur.

David Leys