

## Robert Creeley

### A FOREWORD

*Figments of a Landscape, 1998*

*List Art Center, Brown University*

The outside stays there despite our insistent attempts to overcome its distracting actuality. All human fact is at best a compromise with those limits which, as the poet Charles Olson said, "any of are inside of..." We read our worlds as a recognition of ourselves because we live in them, unrelieved. A friend speaks of Huxley's character in *Chrome Yellow* preferring the subway just that it, like religions, provides a securing and entirely human tunnel through otherwise conflicting possibilities. It's all man-made, so to speak, all thought of.

Art, however, must live in a more fraught situation, responding to what it cannot altogether know by virtue of what it nonetheless can see and so feel. It makes do with whatever confronts it, translating, as Denny Moers has said, the imaging, the imagination, of landscapes of time and place in the diversity of their survival. Thus, a fragment of a quattrocento Italian fresco will echo in his recognition of its human proposal, of that which it in turn so felt and wished to make explicit.

Feelings are the values here. They prove the stabilizing connection for all these determined landscapes and figures and details of architecture. Someone had so seen each thing, worked to accomplish its reality. If one thinks that Moers' work in turn now transforms such primary "subjects," certainly it does. Translation is transformation. But the stem, the issue, the constant, is remarkably vivid and immediate. One feels no redundancy or distracting contest with a previous instance or time.

Pound said, echoing Confucius, "Make it new." Each day, make it new. That character of the new must come from the fact of its powers of initiation, of seeing it, saying it, in some way for the first time. But realize that such a *first time* is always one's own. Here there is a literal recording of that experience, the determination of a wash which lifts and gives tone to the initiating image itself, seeing it thus anew. Recognitions, responses, are physical events of transformation. By adding themselves, they change that which first pro-voked them.

Surely one wants to see as much as possible, and to think about it. One hopes that the familiar will prove finally an investment, not an accumulating despair. Time is both enemy and friend. So seeing becomes believing, and

belief sight. It is the exceptional power of this art that these two human possibilities here join to become one.