

A Portrait

The portrait is not a still life (Oscar Kokoschka)

Before the mirror she waited
for the artist, put more blush
on her cheek, decided to change
her flowered cotton for black

silk georgette crepe; she loved
the flow and drape of it; where
would he place her -- on the porch,
next to the pink geraniums or

before the climbing scented jasmine
like Degas' *Mademoiselle Malo*
with chrysanthemums behind her.
Perhaps she would sit at her desk,

bent over a book like Fragonard's
A Girl Reading, in profile. With
a hand mirror she tested her profile.
Or maybe with a shawl rippling over

her shoulders as in Goya's
Senora Sabasa Garcia. Precisely
at noon, the artist arrived carrying
no paint pots, brushes or easel.

He explained that for the first sitting
they would talk; and they talked
of her flowers and herbs and the cardinal
perched in the oak tree and summer

turning into autumn. He sat at the kitchen table.
She stood at the stove to brew a pot of tea,
and heard his pencil move across a sketch pad.

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