

THE RED GATE

He shows me his work, prints he had made
From carved blocks of wood.
Red sharply contrasts with black
And image of a doorway in a temple
He once visited in Japan.
A paper lantern hangs in the center,
Its top half cropped for further abstraction.

Subtly, I suggest it would have a perfect place
On that empty wall above my nightstand,
He says nothing in reply.

Flipping through the remaining ones, he mumbles,
“It was an edition of five, but there is one missing;
I must have given one away.”
(Though he claims he can’t remember to whom)

This lack of memory disturbs me,
Ten years of painting and I’d be damned if I didn’t
Know who possessed such an object of mine.
And I am left only to imagine who this mystery
Person could be. Her position, always two notches above mine—
An assumed she-vixen who was able to pass through
Those weighted doors I long to open.

Later, in the threshold of paved driveway,
I stand unmoving and hesitant
Outside your car door as I wait for you
To walk over to my side,
Place your hand on the small of my back,
And try to steal a kiss before I climb inside.