PAINTING THE WORLD WITH LIGHT

— In honor of Xu Bing’s landscapes

(1)

Let there be light,
the monk says,

and there is light
and shadow.

(2)

Let us speak not
of the mountain,

he says, but of
those things behind

the mountain. Not
of the mask, but

of what’s beyond
the hidden face.

(3)

These stalks.
These berries,

grasses, leaves,
and husks.

This moss.
The branches.

Stones. What
things are is

not what we
seem to see.
(4)

Approach,
says the monk.

Let the mountain
shelter you.

(5)

Without the stars,
he says,

what is darkness?
What is sky

where the mountain
never fails us?

(6)

Somewhere
there are cracks

in this world,
the mountain says.

The other side
of it is dream.

(7)

O, the mountain
is not

what

(no stanza break)
the mountain
is,

says the monk.

Between
this world
and dream,
imagination.

(8)
So shine, sun,
on what we are
and what we
think we are.

(9)
We move towards
what moves
away,
the monk says.
Only
the mountain
stays.

We make
a home
where we find
our light
and shadow,

the ghosts
of our belonging,

the cold
of our comfort.

(10)
Where light
goes
you go too,

into
the eye
of kindness.

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