

Call It A Draw: On Art and Love

NEIL CARPATHIOS

— for my wife

We argue over the Rothko
in the museum. I say it
looks like the inside of
God's head when He has
an idea. You say a third grader
could have painted it.
I point out the depth
of color, yellow more than
yellow, blue deeper than
blue. Like levels of feeling,
I say. The way my love
for Chester, our dog, is red
but my love for you is something
further than red, not carmine,
not maroon or wine but
unnamable. It is all about
magnitude, I insist. The way
words can try to do more
than communicate:
"I love you" on a greeting card
versus the poem I'll write

about this moment, us standing
in front of a painting debating
what is good, I whisper.

You still don't buy it,
you want to head over to Wyeth's
Helga where every strand of
her hair, every fiber of her green
sweater is real, distinct, the way
true love is, the way he must
have felt for her, the way I
feel for you, you say.
It is all about clarity
and precision, you insist.
The way hands that really care
aren't rushed and can hold,
for example, a brush so still
to trap the image without the slightest
distortion, the slightest blur.