

# Imaginary Paintings

Grace Bauer

*after Liesel Mueller*

*How I Would Paint the Past*

A room filled with faces —  
some of which I know  
I should recognize.

But don't.

—

*How I Would Paint the Future*

A room yet to be entered  
in which my own face,  
barely recognizable,  
hangs on a wall  
still being built.

—

*How I Would Paint Hope*

Morning light warming  
an already warm bed.

Or a hand reaching  
outside the painting.

—

*How I Would Paint Despair*

Just the frame.  
No picture inside it.

No wall  
to hang it upon.

*How I Would Paint Depression*

As many shades of gray  
as I can find on the palette  
thickly impastoed dabs of white  
near the bottom  
of the canvas, dripping  
onto a floor I wouldn't have  
the energy to clean up.

—

*How I Would Paint Anxiety*

Of course, I would need plenty of black and very, very large  
brushes, and, of course, those brushes would not be there when I  
needed them and I wouldn't remember where the hell they were,  
but, oh damn, I'd have my hands on a palette knife and a canvas  
stretched so tight it might split right down the middle . . .

—

*How I Would Paint Silence*

White on white  
Black on black

Which is also  
how I would paint noise.

—

*How I Would Paint Happiness*

I might be too busy to paint.