

The Specimen Jar on Frida Halo's Desk

She turns slowly from the canvas,
sees the sun paint smeared finger
marks on the glass, the aborted
child floating in formaldehyde.

Wrenched from life it sleeps in close-up,
small hairs on the wax-like skin,
eyes bulgingly closed, the left hand
holding the big toe of its left foot.

She watches it now and then,
light reflecting her stare from the glass,
two faces competing for focus
then back to the canvas with gentle

brush stabs around the eyes
too black to seem true.
The figure sits upright, straight-backed,
imperious and dark, boned angles

stretching the skin to a crisp tautness,
a slight moustache above the lip.
She stares at her face emerging
from the canvas, almost finished

now, locks on to the eyes and shifts
position tilting her head from side to side.
More canvas than paint, yet hue
and sallowness of flesh known

to suffering and a long line of lovers
begin to play the part she knows,
rippling into truth on the surface.
She sits, a mirror image of the portrait

and traces a leaf shadow on the jar,
sees how the child's thumb threatens
to find the mouth as it bobs
gently in its fluid.

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