

## National Portrait Gallery

Our way there took us through the crowd,  
In talk of your unpeopled art,  
Or anyway its facelessness,  
Dilemma plain to make anyone real.  
“My pictures – no one in them” –  
So you alone inhabit the sketch,  
Solely dwelling there in what you etch.

A friend’s technique applied:  
When her cameraman sees a shy one,  
Together they decoy the prey:  
Carefully she poses, carefully he points,  
And just as the shot gets set,  
The unwary victim lined up behind her,  
Quick away she steps,  
Populating his scene by her departure.

As we spoke, there approached us a fine lady,  
Everything you could ask for in a human being:  
All she wanted showing in her face,  
Fiercely herself, her own picture –  
But not yours, though I,  
As dancemistress of props,  
Fluttered before her adroitly as I know how.

How I took you to task!  
“Who do you think they are?”  
I shoved you:  
I hoped it seemed like mock disgust.  
Humanity seemed lost  
If you would not find it.

And right then we mounted the steps  
Under the arches,  
And casually as an afterthought  
You set it up.  
Sure I had no place in your picture –  
Mere stand-in at your empty target –  
I madly mugged, you took your aim,  
You nailed me like a pinned-down moth.

- Marga Rose Hancock