

The Naked Man Paints his Closet

He picks the coolest day in a hot August.
But hot enough in there, anyway, what with
The closed space, the light bulb, and smell
Of paint. And self: as he works, what funk
He started with doubles, trebles, squares
Itself. By now he's squatting to fill in
The bottom third, paint on thighs and arms.

A Whitman, how he savors smells he plans
To rid him of. He shoves brush onto plaster
For the last time; emerges from his smell
Museum into plain air. Unfair, it makes
Its accusations. So he surrenders: gives
Up earned odor in the shower of the norm.
His closet, drying, sighs as after love.

John Ditsky