

“Painters on the Brooklyn Bridge”

- Eugene de Salignac, 1914



## Music Notes on Life-sized Harp in Metal and Ink

There are people up there, marooned on the grid  
of our vertical city.  
Painting the fingertips of the skyline.  
They look like coordinate points on a municipal timeline.  
Here, is the notch where they built the Brooklyn bridge.  
It took this many hands to stretch across the urban sea,  
this many knots to tow the cable out, lassoing the  
pintods on Bedford avenue  
to the brownstones in the Bloomingdale district.  
This here, is the marker for the great panic of '83,  
starting on the Manhattan end,  
rumors rippling all the way to Brooklyn along the metal grating.  
And here, this here, is where the sandhogs dug  
the foundation below the bridge.  
Underwater, in pressurized chambers, laying trench lines  
in the river like day-crossers trapped in caisson boxes.  
And finally, this is the painter's notch,  
*De Salignac's* notch.  
From the top of the suspenders, the  
swallow of water must have appeared blurry  
and almost matted to the floor of the earth.  
At eye level with corporate buildings,  
if you dropped a pipe,  
a paintbrush,  
it would take full seconds before they would puncture the river.  
Inside the overfilled sky,  
the shape of an opened mouth,  
a netting of steel wires has swallowed a handful  
of bridge welders and dynamite haulers,  
holding up the intermediate space between the boroughs,  
crooning their necks over the cables to find  
tiny squares in which to look out over the river into the patchwork of  
Brooklyn and the necessary noise of Manhattan.  
Careful to steady themselves over their bridge where  
New Yorkers will peddle themselves to work each morning and  
back across to home. Because bridges are meant to be sailed on,  
to catch the dust of the river, the clatter of loose tools from the top of the main towers,  
which sometimes find the silhouette of mechanical shadows when the moon  
is half opened.