

## A WALKING MAN

Ilya Kaminsky

"Giacometti is not working for his contemporaries, nor for the future generations: he is creating statues to delight the dead." –Jean Genet

Perhaps you too, upon seeing Giacometti's "Walking Man,"  
will run from the National Gallery of Art hollering  
into the Potomac, will strip  
off your shirt—  
as you splash, the gulls will  
toss your pants back and forth  
making a game  
of what cannot  
be eaten.

Perhaps you too have an enormous, impolite need to drink with the long-legged statue, but no  
beverages are allowed in the gallery & even Giacometti's  
"Walking Man" is afraid of the guard & wishes  
him bird droppings in his hair.

Between the flashes of tourist cameras, I  
see it: Giacometti's "Walking Man" is  
a political  
declaration—

A public lecture  
on how people's  
souls are unbandaged and how  
we will die of them.

The air is raw with joy.  
Sit, heart, rest  
from the soul's south-west  
Why so much life?  
I don't know what to do with less!

I have given up all I have  
to the giver of bread and breath.

Outside, Washington DC  
is a theater where police vans play the role of police vans  
and senators pretend to be senators  
a taxi makes a city more a city  
and boys still don't read except for what is written on women's t-shirts.

At 10 am, the gallery opens and you zigzag between  
our nation's most important people parading between important  
paintings. Someone's  
camera flashes—  
a politician  
hurries by as if he were  
Giacometti's "Walking Man"  
but he looks more like a well punched  
bus ticket.

Why so much life?  
I don't know what to do with less  
I have given up all I have.

When I die,  
find me at the National Gallery of Art  
I'll be flat on the floor  
in front of Giacometti's "Walking Man"  
a little flask of lemon vodka in my pocket  
I want the last joy of putting my cheek  
to the stone floor  
of whispering  
*you in whom I do not believe, hello.*