

THINKING OF PANCOAST'S SMALL CHAPEL WHILE VISITING MISSION SAN JOSE

In the museum, Clara Pancoast, painter of Texas
landscapes, still-life, Bluebonnet-lacquered
hillsides, the San Antonio River's grace

and sweep, her palette's ripples and striations laborless
and with endless arrival, left behind a question.

And who among you could look within and not

desire mercy? As I write this,
sunburnt tourists wand frustrated phones
at a QR code's promise of virtual pilgrimage

as the Virgin's Castilian roses nod, their bright
silks abloom in arched daylight.

Cross the threshold of your heart, they sing,

gray as stone as it is and cold.

Cross your heart, the roses sing.

What's asked of us is nothing. A few words

of prayer settling like dust where I stand,
the centuries sacred beneath my feet.

What's asked of us is nothing. A single

brushstroke and another and another until
the light of mid-April slants into the room.
What grace there is is all here, in this world.

Clara Caffrey Pancoast
"Portal to Small Chapel at Mission San Jose," Oil on Board
The Witte Museum, San Antonio