Converting Maynard Dixon Paintings into Poetry

By Lance Larsen
If I were a ghost, I’d swim desert air whispering blue mountain, hills like houses, bushes the color of Christmas.
If I were a ghost, I’d play hide and seek with jack rabbits.
If I were a ghost, I’d cozy up to the darkest clouds and fall like rain.
If I were a ghost, I’d circle the white cross three times and count that as prayer.
If I were a ghost, I’d slither red sand like a snake, ride thermals with the vultures.
If I were a ghost, I’d nap inside the ear of a lost horse the color of caramel.
If I were a ghost, I’d sing sad songs with the voice of a mermaid.
If I were a ghost, I’d scare cowboys out of their boots and kiss scared children on their necks.
“Nine Questions while Looking at a Desert Landscape”

By Lance Larsen

How can the horses be happy eating this scrubby grass?
Are the skies always this red?
How can I possibly start a fire without matches?
How to describe these greens? Like spinach, like curtains in a ratty room, like sadness?
If I fall asleep, what will curl up beside me---a gila monster, faraway stars?
Dear Maynard Dixon, did you paint this after a fight with your wife?
How many million ants live underground?
Why do those boulders look like a birthday party of broken bikes?
What does that cloud look like---a weasel, a dirty shoe, maybe a mother crying for her lost baby?