

Catherine Strisik

Shade

The famous Khmer artist has placed his palm
on a murderer's upper back near the neck, has pushed him

toward the painting on the prison museum's wall.
Outside the perimeter the mother is mute on her knees.

Her hands cradle a beautiful fatigue
as if she had just remembered why:

a bayonet blade held upright
to catch an infant as it spins through the air.

The shade shades the body this evening
in Phnom Penh.

He cleans his brushes alone each day
in the medicinal turpentine, wipes

his palette clean, and becomes silent.
The painting is his settlement with humiliation.

You can hear the crickets' trill in the banyans.
You can hear the whole evening is crying louder.