

Nikki Paley Cox

I Want Lou Reed

I want Lou Reed to speak to me a bluesy serenade of minor-key electric licks, a slow psychic guitar along the rubble where the world traded breath for twisted stars. They form his faulty map above New York—sky, his blue mask wrapped in clear plastic, like his body, like bodies we watched slip away. *Love has gone away, Come on baby, slip away.* I want Lou Reed to paint me red filtered light, hollow my eyes. Hallow my eyes in black liquid shadow, Lou Reed, please, hollow my eyes. Punk scholar, explain the ashen face, steel inside veins, running trains back and forth, up and down underground New York. I want Lou Reed to move with me, West-Side Highway to the Bowery, explain this orchestration, its improvisation, hear *pure instinct* from his gritty mouth, watch him kick another hard minute away. *Then something flickered for a minute, and then it vanished and was gone.* Play something that dismembers melody, leaves it writhing on the street, strung out on *Heroin*, that ground-breaking noise-rock ecstasy, a mutilated city memory. Hang your silver clock medallion from my neck, Lou Reed, the city's soot and spirit is descending like a spell *And the colored girls go, doot-di-doot-di-doot.* Bag up Manhattan in a garbage bag and give it to me, I'll lug it over my shoulder, continue down to ground-zero music, weary from the weight. Take me where you used to play, along the river, still a rising sewer, fewer people on the streets, fewer people in the seats on the 6 headed back uptown. I want you, Lou Reed, to hold the grit and steel in naked hands, offer it to me in the screeching underland where music's still a culture and simple words can rupture the cement we run across for cover.



Go Under
Shawn Wölter
oil on canvas