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### At War

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*Dickinson College*

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## At War

Siobhan Phillips

Events seemed of such moment, screens  
bright with charts, staccato stars,  
and ad-hoc icons, we were almost  
awkward, walking just the same  
restless streets as always, bound  
for the retrospective. There, the guards  
in vacant rooms of art were forced  
to look us over and over. One,  
a tall recruit in training, trailed  
an elder pair through permanent-collection  
rounds, his oxfords squeaking, busts  
to still-lives, portraits, landscapes; last  
the long halls of history painting:  
greatest of all, an era held  
and now a dead (if death exists  
in genre) genre. Awe, I thought,  
a curious thing...My drifting, bored  
glance moved off from canvas, down  
to fingers jingling keys and coins  
in creased pockets, nods: These two  
can get the new guy hired nights  
at a hospital ward; they moonlight there.  
He'd rather have time off. They laugh:  
young, single. Time will come  
when cash...We left soon after. Full  
of sights and strolling home, we talked  
of art's decline and the fresh campaign.