

The Poseurs

We trawl the drafty, cobblestone quarters of Florence
search the candlelit corners of underground bars
for the Vespa riders and ristretto drinkers who
play chess on marble boards with nicotine stained fingers
stay up all night debating socialism –
our counterparts in the real Italy.

But they're all back in Frith Street, W1,
posturing in front of Bar Italia.

Here we are the poseurs.

It's supposed to be the off season, but American tourists are everywhere,
buying up leather goods before the Euro's launch sinks the dollar.
Charmed by our cross-Atlantic accents,
they bombard us with recommendations we're too cool to entertain.

Besides, Renaissance charm makes us amorous.
We get kicked out of the Galleria Dell'Accademia for snogging in front of the David –
who knew Italians could be such prudes?
We're asked to leave the Uffizi when our fight about whose fault it is we're skint
disrupts the sightseers and their red umbrella brandishing guides
from their quick hit views of the Botticellis.

Your solution is to decamp to the Blarney Stone pub
and swindle backpackers out of their lire
pretending to be a modern day Michelangelo
sculpting from bricks of hash instead of slabs of stone.

I was glad your dope-dealing dexterity saved us from sleeping in the street,
but we spent the rest of that trip skulking around
afraid those junior year abroaders might recognize you.
Though really, what would they have done –
tell the cops some limey offered to buy them drugs, then legged it with their cash?

Not bloody likely.