**[Frank O’Hara](https://poets.org/poet/frank-ohara) 1926 – 1966**

*Why I Am Not a Painter*

I am not a painter, I am a poet.  
Why? I think I would rather be  
a painter, but I am not. Well,

for instance, Mike Goldberg  
is starting a painting. I drop in.  
“Sit down and have a drink” he  
says. I drink; we drink. I look  
up. “You have SARDINES in it.”  
“Yes, it needed something there.”  
“Oh.” I go and the days go by  
and I drop in again. The painting  
is going on, and I go, and the days  
go by. I drop in. The painting is  
finished. “Where’s SARDINES?”  
All that’s left is just  
letters, “It was too much,” Mike says.

But me? One day I am thinking of  
a color: orange. I write a line  
about orange. Pretty soon it is a  
whole page of words, not lines.  
Then another page. There should be  
so much more, not of orange, of  
words, of how terrible orange is  
and life. Days go by. It is even in  
prose, I am a real poet. My poem  
is finished and I haven’t mentioned  
orange yet. It’s twelve poems, I call  
it ORANGES. And one day in a gallery  
I see Mike’s painting, called SARDINES.