

## NICK BROWN

*Westley Water Tower*, 2012  
Oil on Panel, 34 x 42 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

## DAVID L. ULIN

### Day Game Talking Sports and Poetry

It's a bad idea that turns into a good one, this notion of playing hooky on a Wednesday, two days after Labor Day, middle of a short week in which fall has wasted no time asserting itself and summer (which really was, this year, a summer in the best sense: space, quiet, time enough, although there is no such thing as time enough) has evaporated as if never there. When I agreed to go, I wasn't thinking about the work week; and yet here I am, leaving my house at eleven, driving to Eagle Rock to meet Richard, then heading down to Dodger Stadium where we enter the park to the strains of the national anthem and are in our seats before the first pitch at twelve ten. The stadium is empty, of course—*it's two days after Labor Day!*—maybe ten thousand people scattered like punctuation marks across the yellow ocean of unoccupied seats. *I wonder if the players like games like this or not?* Richard asks, and I think about cross-country travel, the nature of the getaway day. Once, I would have known the answer, but I don't follow the game so closely any longer, and I have no idea of the teams' schedules. Are they heading off to the East Coast, to start a series tomorrow night in New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh? It doesn't make a difference anyway. It's a hundred degrees on the field, and the sun is round as a robin's egg in high and open sky—which is as blue as a piece of Delft china, and with those subtle striations of white. When I played (beer ball, Saturday pick-up games, letting the kids run wild in the outfield while we talked trash to one another), that sky used to confound me, the ball as hard to pick up as a satellite. With two out in the bottom of the ninth, we see the principle in action: the tying run scores when an outfielder loses a routine fly in the sun. By then, we've been sitting for three hours, talking sports and poetry, taking note of the people around us: father and his young daughter, elderly couple in full Dodger regalia, gaggle of young guys in their twenties, the outliers, the detritus, the people without day jobs, or those (like me) privileged enough to blow those day jobs off.

This is why I love weekday baseball and always have: the illusion that it offers of having stepped, for a moment, outside time. This is why I agreed to come to this game, with a guy I like but don't know well, to take a pause from the relentlessness of *everything*, to carve out a brief window of space for myself. Or no, not myself; this is not about me: the day before, I hadn't wanted to go, feeling pressed