The Tokyo Marathon

Enormous painting. Flow of marathon runners facing us, passing us, from off-page middle right to bottom left. Many, many colors, colorful characters. Beautiful colors, in unexpected places. A parade of individuals. Tags over their stomachs identifying them as runners no different really from automobile license plates, rectangular and blue, a series of six or so English letters and Western numerals attached to their running shirts, soccer jerseys, Pikachu costumes, (each individual runner in the foreground is depicted in great detail), black shirt of a man wearing a yellow afro-wig that juts out from each side of his baseball cap like huge yellow earmuffs, who has strewn a teddy bear (*a teddy bear!*) into his shirt just below the license plate; next is a man in a hot pink wig in the straight-hair-and-bangs style, something an exotic dancer would wear, (or a ten-year-old girl on Halloween), complete with matching short pink skirt that puffs out erratically like a cheap, costume ballet dress, (who you know is a man because the mustache and goatee look real). A woman wearing a poncho over a tracksuit, normal enough, but with purple underwear over her track pants, like her superhero alter-ego, or a popular Manga character you don't recognize, and a blue baseball hat, and big red ski gloves. And a cardboard box, big as a refrigerator, two feet sticking out the bottom of it, holding it up, trudging it along…

The eye moves across the canvas, towards the middle right. The individuals get smaller and smaller, and depicted in less and less detail, gradually blurring into one mass of runners in the distance, heading towards us. Shoes, hats, accessories of every color, every shade. Blurring. In the distance yes, but close enough already, at this moment, so as to close that distance within seconds. Because these are marathon runners, we're

watching, remember that; every second brings a brand new painting.

Buzz Lightyear. Spiderman in a poncho. A penguin waddling past. A man in a baseball uniform wearing foam fingers (and a poncho). A stuffed turtle on the head of an old woman in a wheelchair, Princess Peach pushing her, gaining on the penguin.

In the background, behind the runners closest to us, across the street, gray buildings of different shades (one almost green, one almost brown, one a shade in between) rise up and off the page. Near the middle of the canvas, the row of buildings end, and we see the gray sky. From the sky, we see an overpass below, under which the mass of runners enters the page. Beyond the overpass is the next block of buildings, the first of which is a light gray building whose side we see spotted with little black squares that are most certainly windows, but could also be televisions, or microwaves.

Everything is painted realistically; the Tokyo marathon is really like this.

Except for one little surrealistic detail. Between the ponchos and the gray sky, and the absence of shadow amongst the runners, we can deduce what kind of day it is. Dull and drizzly. But in the top right, above the last building, where the sun might be on a brighter day, the artist has painted sunglasses. No sun wearing them, nothing like that. Just sunglasses floating in the gray, Japanese sky. Silver-rimmed, star-shaped, and tinted pink. Very strange and powerful, by itself, but in such an enormous painting of such diversity, such colorful characters, it almost gets lost.