

Anna Nickerson

[A still life, with ceramic vase]

*A still life, with ceramic vase
And small black-stoppered oil caster.*

The year is nineteen fifty-five;
The man, Bologna's drawing-master.

He lives a quiet, four-cornered life,
Polite, determined, and remote –

His angel sisters keep watch over
The stillness of their mother's house.

The townsmen wonder why he draws
When all he draws are pots and pans,

Pitchers, kettles, glassware, cruets,
Vases, ash trays, cups, and bowls.

What does he see in jugs and jars?
What meaning in these kitchen goods?

He never tells. But in each piece
The inner thought is evident:

These objects are his household gods,
Found tokens of her whiter soul,

Icons for his orphaned heart,
Angelic messengers in clay –

Angelic messengers who say
That though he finds himself alone,

Life's pawn at lifetime's darker edge,
The one who gave him tone and form

Is still the guardian of his life
Is still the keeper of his soul.

And so, unknown to anyone,
This still life has two untold names:

It is: *The Virgin and her Child;*
The Mother and her only Son.



G. Morandi, Still Life (1955)