Hungry Lake

In those days I buried dead animals, wrapping them in sumac leaves and tying their wilted bodies with thick blades of crabgrass.

Mid-winter, when the ground was frozen I would roll birch bark around the body, loop in a cherry stem for a button and push my hand with the dead into the snow.

Animals die here every year. The locals say the lake is hungry, that in order to survive a blizzard a man will cut open his entire herd one by one and move barefoot in snow stepping naked from cow to cow until the good weather returns. Imagine when snow melts, the village of carcasses unearthed.

Clean bones from those winter burials rise and find their way here. I paint these bones over and over. There are acres of memorial mounds posing in the fields.

Sometimes a bit of blue from the lake laps in, then ice thickens or birds ascend then disappear into clouds or night comes and a full moon rises.
In the dark I hear a loon calling from across the lake. She is hungry for her mate. I grip my brush hard ready to dip into the depth of color to touch this blank canvas of snow. I answer the loon in the voice of a star dying. When the snow falls I paint them, all these naked bones.

Shoshana Kertesz, “Lake II,” photograph