

# TWELVE MONTH CRUSH



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2017–2018

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Director's Foreword *Karen Hesse Flatow*

I founded CRUSH in late 2016 as a project space and forum for emerging artists and curators. An extension of my studio practice, CRUSH embraced a collaborative model in the effort to explore ideas around building community and breaking normative gallery-based art world conventions. The idea was simple—to share my studio space with other artists and curators and see what would come of it.

The following year, Nicole Kaack and I came up with the idea to initiate a series of conversations to be held in conjunction with and in response to the projects created for CRUSH. We wanted artists to speak in a public forum with makers who had impacted their practices and, through this public dialogue, to take control—often for the first time—of the language that surrounded the work they were making. We hoped that this platform would enable emerging or under-recognized artists to develop their voices, while also building an archive that would preserve their interests and practices of making for the future.

The publication of this volume comes at a critical moment of transformation; in September 2019, we launched HESSE FLATOW, a gallery which expands upon the efforts that we have made at CRUSH. As the next experiment in the natural evolution that grew from my own artistic practice into CRUSH, HESSE FLATOW will support those artists that have participated in our formative years and shaped the program so vitally. CRUSH will continue as a project space, offering a platform for research with artists and curators alike.

In light of the changes and lessons that lie ahead, I am proud to present this publication which paints a portrait of the early dialogues that will continue to be part of the mission that animates both HESSE FLATOW + CRUSH.

Editor's Note *Nicole Kaack*

*Many gendered micro-lineage,  
the matriarchs of my Kentucky heart?*

*To narrate one huge part of one's small life in one small state in one dead  
country so besotted by oblivion, through mothers.*

*But is 'mother of' precise?*

*Should I say 'singers of' instead?*

Dana Ward, "A Kentucky of Mothers"



The programming at CRUSH begins in the flush of an initial fascination that prompts a prolonged relationship with an artist's work through writing and exhibition. Similarly, the series of artist talks and conversations that are at the root of this publication hoped to respond to this effect in each artist's practice, reflecting on an individual's intellectual growth through relationships.

In "A Kentucky of Mothers," Dana Ward remembers the "mothers of [his] heart," the individuals who in their teachings shaped and informed Ward's sense both of his art and himself. If mentorship is a labor of love, so too is the drive to learn from and with, an enthusiasm suffused with and motivated by desire—intellectual anthropophagy both covetous and demure. It is from this root that Karen Hesse Flatow has shaped CRUSH's mission; and it is through this pursuit of the productive possibilities latent in dialogue, influence, and obsession that she and I conceived of the conversations collected in *Twelve Month Crush*.

Begun in 2017 and expanded over the course of the following year, the series was initiated in response to what Karen and I understood to be a lack of critical discourse surrounding the activity not only of emerging and later-career artists but also of incipient platforms. Attempting to capture a snapshot of a particular stage in these artists' practices and of this curatorial project at its beginning, the dialogues invited artists to consider their work in relation to someone who had impacted their artistic development. The community that joined us through these programs varied from friends, advisors, and collaborators to acquaintances and distant peers. Some artists preferred a more private dialogue, while others approached this through a public program with audiences of further friends and advisors acting as spectators and sounding board.

This publication attempts to draw through-lines across eight of the shows exhibited at CRUSH between Fall 2017 and Summer of 2018, charting lineages of influence both in the participants invited to take part in these dialogues and in the visual submissions that we prompted from the exhibited artists. The interviews are ordered chronologically, however, the plates are sequenced to reflect similarities of interest between projects exhibited across the entire season—the consistencies emergent in Karen's curatorial interest. In the current volume, we have collaborated again with the artists to arrive at this edited collection of texts and images, something which we hope will be a resource and a page in each of the artist's archives.



BILL KOMOSKI / LAUREN SILVA



October 5, 2017 – November 4, 2017

October 21, 2017

Nicole Kaack     What gestures or technical apparatuses are influencing your work? There seems to be a digital influence, for example, in the idea of the gradient. In your work, Bill, I see something more in the vein of printing, press, CMYK influence. I am curious what that means to the two of you and how that relates to the idea of painterliness in gesture.

Dona Nelson     [to Lauren] I would like to know, are these done on photoshop or . . . ? How are they painted? Where do you get the image?

Lauren Silva     These works were not done on photoshop. They are all hand-painted on silk. In my experience working on silk and one of the things that drew me to it was that you can't go back and change it. With photoshop, as with acrylic, on canvas, with oil, there is so much reworking and layering. But with the silk, what you see is what you get—if you get a stain on it, you ruin it. And so the imagery really just grew out of gestures I was making and then responding to. Because I couldn't go back . . .

Dona Nelson     Do you have any source or are you just working out of your head?

Lauren Silva     These were all worked out of my head, but are also all natural forms. I love going to Central Park and I went to a lot of gardens over the summer; this became a meditation on these organic forms.

Nicole Kaack     Your earlier work also had a lot of moments that potentially reflected landscape? But they also felt somewhat surreal—they play on this uncertainly representational thing.

Lauren Silva     It is definitely touching on that same impulse. More of a surreal landscape.

Dona Nelson     And what kind of paint is this?

Lauren Silva     This is gouache and watercolor. Because they are already soaked into the [fabric], they won't wash off. There are imperfections in it, built into the natural material, the natural process. Those types of imperfections become part of the image. In working on them, I did re-wet and found that the paint did not lift off.

Nicole Kaack     You use that feeling of a stain at certain moments. Did you intentionally wash out areas?

Lauren Silva     I did. It's silk charmeuse which is an intimate, very soft-textured thing. I was drawn to this fabric because growing up I always fell asleep with my mom's silk charmeuse nightgown. It was such an intimate material and I loved the feel of it. But against your body, it gets stains on it. It was this personal dimension that I wanted to use as a starting off point to begin making marks and begin building a world.

Nicole Kaack     They are stretched before you start?

Lauren Silva     No, the cropping happens after the fact. Some of these were much larger and that area got cropped.

Bill Komoski     I guess all three of us work with an improvisational approach? Do either of you work with preliminary sketches or have an idea before you start? I'm thinking not in Dona's case. Do you? [to Lauren] You just go, right?

Dona Nelson     [to Lauren] But you must have a palette, before you start. Do you have the colors mixed?

Lauren Silva     I have a lot of colors on a paper palette. Working in other ways I would definitely mix all the colors and have large quantities of them. With oil or with airbrushing or with acrylic that was sort of standard process. Because so much of it is water-based, I don't have to spend so much time—I can improvise more quickly working with materials like gouache and watercolor, which don't take up much room. I can have a lot on the same table.

Dona Nelson     But what about the big one [on the wall]?

Lauren Silva     This one I did after I had already gotten into the flow of working on the small works. That is the last one I did.

Bill Komoski     Have you done other wall installations? Directly on the wall drawings or paintings?

Lauren Silva In undergrad and in grad school, I did more. As a student, I was just burning through stuff, and I often just went directly on the wall or would make giant wall-size works. This is the first public one.

Nicole Kaack It is only paint? There are no paper inclusions like you have used in other works?

Lauren Silva This is just paint, and I did tape off areas. The silk ones do have this really thin paper that is actually meant for t-shirt production. I was drawn to it because I could cut it out and have a straight edge similar to the way that taping allowed me to. It is a heat-activated, archival, ironed [adhesive]. So, I guess, going back to our original question: from the experience of working in these different realms, I built this system. It became its own thing—this combination of a straight edge with a more blurred image.

Nicole Kaack Exactly, there is something digital in the way the paper operates. Or even in your work as well, Bill. I wonder if that mural that you have done where the cloth drapes over is a similar kind of straight edge, another type of digital overlay or cut? Then again, it is also much more about the materiality.

Bill Komoski When I started working on these drop-cloths, I noticed that they have a similar quality to silk in that there is no turning back. They are stained and there is no painting over or playing around with them too much. So they have to just happen. With the one on the wall with the hole, I had no idea what that hole was going to bring. At some point, I just decided that I didn't like it without the hole and something had to happen. I got the razor blade, I cut the thing, and I loved the way that suddenly the back was revealed, that the stain had come through. There was already a structure that had a framing element to it, and suddenly that frame opened up to a window. When this wall-drawing happened, the window allowed for the wall-drawing to re-emerge in the painting.

Dona Nelson Is this silk-screen?

Bill Komoski No, it is just painted directly on the drop-cloth. I buy these at the hardware store. They're cut that way and edged and all. It's block printing more or less, for the dot-screen. Old-fashioned block printing that goes back centuries.

Nicole Kaack I think that is why I was curious to ask specifically about your influence by technology. Not all technology is contemporary.

Bill Komoski Well, I like the idea because there is this aspect of process involved with randomness and degraded systems, layers upon layers. A mess of patterns. A pattern, like a grid which is also about uniformity and ordered space, seemed like a good element to bring into that mix. To start with that and watch it unravel. These drop-cloth pieces are the least layered in a way. The smaller paintings tend to have more materiality to them, more layers on top of layers, evolving generally over a longer time, allowed to have things painted out and painted over. They are really different. The drop-cloths are closer to watercolors, where there is no erasure.

Dona Nelson They are a nice size.

Bill Komoski But the large one on the wall is also commercially-made. Those are the dimensions that they come in.

Dona Nelson What kind of paint is on the wall?

Bill Komoski Acrylic. Everything here is acrylic, except for the elements that aren't paint. In the paintings there are a lot of found elements like fabric, synthetic rhinestones that I get at a party store in the flower district. But the paint is all brushed on. I'm pretty old-fashioned when it comes to actually applying the paint. All of the dots in the screen in the painting to the right are hand-painted. I don't use any mechanical devices for that. It's a little bit labor-intensive on the big ones, on the small ones not so much. There is something sort of meditative about that. And that is before things get fun, do you know what I mean? There is a certain pleasure in putting down something like that, but it is always a mode of investment that you then put at risk when you start to lay stuff on top of it. Maybe something drips. I like that danger element that comes in after you've already put this investment in.

Dona Nelson [The painting] has this kind of hovering image.

Bill Komoski Well there are elements of transparency and almost immateriality happening around the physicality. Play between delicacy and something very obviously material, just stuff, and then trying to liberate it from its sort of—

Dona Nelson     Obviousness.

Bill Komoski     Yes, obvious materiality and allow it to float in some ambiguous space or create associative resonance around it. Around the stuff, beyond the stuff.

Dona Nelson     I am really interested in how there is no figure-ground in the work. In any of it. That is the idea; it implies a figure-ground but the figure is dissolving—there is no edge.

Nicole Kaack     Or your attention comes back to the surface again.

Bill Komoski     Right, and you are constantly reminded that the surface is a real object, a thing. Even if the space opens up in terms of layering, there is always this emphatic quality of the surface re-asserting itself.

Nicole Kaack     I feel like that is true of all of your works really. This emphatic orientation towards the materiality.

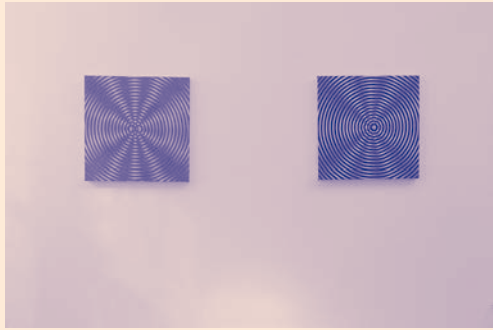
Bill Komoski     The fact of the thing.

Nicole Kaack     And that there are suggestions that are deeper or more representational about the works, but it always rises up again to the experience—getting into that surface as a depth.

Bill Komoski     I think that all of our work also has representational elements—even just in my work, the representation of printing or the representation of three-color separation and digital processes. Or now with this form that somehow emerged, that somehow seems head-like, this centralized element. It potentially refers outside of itself, but again we are back into the meat of the material. I think we all play with that back-and-forth.







TARO SUZUKI / CHARLOTTE HALLBERG:  
SECOND SIGHT



November 9, 2017 – December 22, 2017

November 17, 2017

Charlotte Hallberg     Briefly, to give some context to the work, I'm just going to list a few things that I'm interested in. I'm interested in making paintings that require a long attention span, but that utilize a visual language that is more associated with the fast attention span of our devices or media. However, I'm not interested in the painting speaking solely to that relationship that we have to the screen. I think that language is just a cultural given at this point in our visual world, and that's just one tool that I'm using. The main aspects of painting that I'm interested in are color, light, and observation. I consider the color in these paintings to be observational, to be referring to different kinds of light or times of day or places. I guess I'm also interested formally in relationships of looking and the tactile qualities of paint. I'm very committed to making these as oil paintings and interested in that history of the depiction of light in oil painting. That painting itself or that looking at a still image can still be relevant today is something I'm interested in. To that end, I am often using compositional tools or ways of arranging the image or the space that refer to looking and touching. The limits of those things have changed today, in the way we see the observable world and the way that we are physically interacting with it. This is something that painting can talk about. Maybe that's all I'll say for now. I can elaborate much more.

Nicole Kaack     Something that we spoke about in preparing for this conversation is that digital element and perhaps questioning the usefulness of bringing that read to a painting. You can't completely escape that conversation because these paintings emerged in a moment when the digital is relevant. But at the same time, these feel more about an eye seeing through those media, and about coming back to an experience of an embodied person. Perhaps that mediation is where the abstraction and observation come in.

Charlotte Hallberg     I am more interested in the human element and the human experience of those things. Digital language is just what we're dealing with; these paintings were made in this time, and they're of the time. But I think that this experience of somebody actually making them also refers back to that human touch. Not just that an image is being made, but that the paintings have a tactile quality is an important distinction for me.

Peter Halley     I can present the opposite view. Seeing them in reproduction, I was sort of distracted by the idea that they're illusionistic or would be illusionistic.

Coming to see them here, I realized that they're not illusionistic at all. Every illusion is cancelled out by the contradictory clue. I began to see them as, all of a sudden, the equivalent of analytic cubism. A composition in a different kind of language. Although, I was just thinking tonight, you could even bring in somebody like Léger or Delaunay, and later stages of cubism. To me it makes sense to bring this up at the beginning, but what really impresses me in terms of the slow read, is to think of them as really complex mathematical equations that a person like me could never solve. I've always been fascinated by works of art like that, often found in traditional figurative painting—a Titian or a Rubens—or even in architecture, with Frank Lloyd Wright. I saw the design of a building in Frankfurt by Hans Holbein, a couple of years ago, in a museum. The interlocking space was so beyond my mathematical understanding. That's what I see in these.

Nicole Kaack In thinking about the slow read were you also referring to the surface quality? You mentioned the contradictory clues—I liked that phrase—of reading them.

Peter Halley Charlotte has spent time in museums in Northern Europe. They're also on panel. So, for me, the Northern European exquisiteness of the surface also comes into play.

Charlotte Hallberg I take the history of oil painting very seriously and enjoy using that history's traditional techniques. Those techniques are why oil paintings are so luminous historically. If I'm talking about my project as painting a quality of light or a depiction of color, those technical aspects of painting are really important to maintain. I'm making a lot of my own paint and working on a very traditional absorbent ground. When I was in Europe for a little while, I was loosely looking at the history of the depiction of light in European oil painting. It's something that I think has taken my work a little bit of time to catch up to. Parallel to that, I was also looking at the development of artists' materials and colors, when different pigments became commercially available. I continue to try to access everything that is materially available within the medium. Sometimes it means having to make something that's not commercially available in its form.

Peter Halley The concentric circle motif is really clear. Where did the other lines that pass through come from?

Charlotte Hallberg I mentioned this interest in sight and touch. Circles are very symbolic of many things. The concentric element here, especially the sort of change in the scale of that element, is something I've always thought of as a dilation, like an eye. And then—this is maybe revealing a little bit too much—this wavy element, the squiggly line, comes from a depiction of a hand. There are ten fingers—imagine the plane divided evenly by ten digits. This wavy element acts as another symbol of movement or temperature or light or some sort of effect. I'm interested in making a still image by trying to distill this moving imagery into something succinct.

Peter Halley I'm surprised that the fingers was a secret, because the hand and the eye are Masonic, alchemical, powerful symbols.

Charlotte Hallberg I'm usually afraid to tell people that.

Peter Halley In contemporary terms, it's touch and vision. And that's kind of like painting.

Charlotte Hallberg They're paintings about painting, surprise.

Nicole Kaack It's funny to me that you say "still image," because they feel so dynamic. Dilation is the perfect word. I was thinking of them as eyes because of that central shape and the way that the light, the gradations move you in and out. You're moving, but the painting feels like it's moving as well. It's a very interesting form. In doing a little bit of research into your work, I noticed that in the past you had done graphite drawings of these circles that feel like designs, a pre-element. Do you still do those?

Charlotte Hallberg Yes. I will usually work out some kind of composition through graphite drawings. Usually, they're in pairs, so I can compare different ideas that I've had on one page. The works start entirely in black and white, in value. Once I've laid that out, the drawings are essentially a map of the overall feel of the painting. If you took an image of one of these and converted it to black and white, it would stray a little bit, but the idea is that it sticks to that value structure. Next to that, I will establish some kind of palette, which is becoming more and more specific as I've returned more and more to this kind of observational color in the work. Then, once I have those two things, I scale up the drawing to the painting, and I'm really just making color

decisions when I'm at the painting. It's not like I'm planning out where each color goes digitally on the screen. In fact, I haven't done any digital preparation for my work in probably three years now, which was a very freeing decision. The paintings are very slow. There is a lot of waiting for things to dry. In some ways, when I'm at the painting and making these decisions, it's almost like making a few one-shot paintings, waiting and thinking about it for a long time, then making another move. There's not a lot of room for fussing, and there's also not a lot of room for changing things because of the surface. Peter mentioned complicated math before; I often use the analogy of a game that my family grew up playing called Rummikub. It's like Rummy 500, except for with these little tiles. You can play one of your cards on the board if you can fit it within the structure of the existing things, and sometimes you have to move the entire board around in order to fit one piece in. I often feel like that's how I'm thinking about making color decisions. It's the same logic.

Nicole Kaack     Do you feel like you're often moving the whole board around?

Charlotte Hallberg     No, I feel like I'm thinking really far ahead, and then I have to come back. Then usually I forget what I was thinking anyway. So it's always a surprise. I never really understand what the painting is going to be sometimes until the very end. Sometimes I have to live with stuff that I don't love, which is also a challenge.

Peter Halley     I always ask myself if artists of your generation think in these terms. Almost by nature, if I see this body of work, I think of its position within the range of recent art, and art of the last 100 years. I forget who said, "I make paintings because I don't like any of the paintings being made." There's something lacking that I want to bring into it. Do you have any thoughts on where you locate these paintings within the realm of everything else happening?

Charlotte Hallberg     Well, there are a lot of things happening out there. I don't know that I locate them entirely within abstraction happening today. The painters who are working right now that I'm looking at the most are actually figure painters or observational painters. I just saw that Louis Fratino show that came down at Thierry Goldberg, which was really beautiful and just full of amazing color decisions. I really like the broad scope of painting. Who else? The Robin Williams show that just came down at PPOW—very strict figure painting, but there's a wide variety of formal elements that I really respond to. There's also painting that's happening right now that deals with the

digital mediation of images and how that relates to painting. If you saw an image of this work, you would probably associate it with a few of those painters. I don't know how I feel about that. I'm not interested in paintings that are talking about a quick read. This isn't a slight to any of these artists, but I think that there are paintings that use this language to make really fast images and to continue to amplify that. I'm more interested in the opposite. I've been making work in this gradient motif for the last seven years or so now and I've thought a lot about its relationship to the screen. Personally, I am tired of that as the main content in my work, because that is too fast. My work is tending more towards the human touch, towards the observational place. We are also at a certain point where we just live with that all the time and it's not such a revelation. I don't know. I think I am slightly in a weird place in terms of other works right now. There is a lot of painting happening right now, which is very exciting. The Josephine Halvorson that's up at Sikkema Jenkins right now is totally incredible and those are plein air paintings. But I think that there is a strangeness and a slowness to that work that I really respond to also.

Nicole Kaack     When I was encountering your work online, there was an early video piece, a very simple thing that you did that—I believe—was taken from an airplane. It was two simultaneous screens that were catching the horizon, moving in relation to one another. That was really helpful to me in thinking about your work in this observational mode. Bringing it back to something that you are experiencing in a real, physical way.

Charlotte Hallberg     I haven't thought about that video in a long time. I think I always thought about it as a painting, actually, a moving painting. It's basically two frames side-by-side, tilting the camera back and forth through an airplane window during sunset. Sometimes the horizons line up and sometimes they don't, so they're in and out of synch. The quality is terrible. I've also been making these other videos recently, which are basically tracing the perimeter of the viewfinder of a camera through a landscape. So the camera is still, it's just sort of a figure walking, down one side, across the top, and over the sort of linear landscape frame. Those I think of, also, very much as paintings. You're looking at this image for this specific amount of time. The time that it takes to look at the image and understand it is the time that it takes for this person to walk. That is sort of a secret practice.



Taro Suzuki *in conversation with Mary Heilmann, Jill Levine, Bill Komoski, Mary Clarke, Elizabeth Cannon, Jenny Hankwitz, Steve Keister, Gregory Botts, and Karen Hesse Flatow*

December 21, 2017

Karen Hesse Flatow Will you talk about Zen and rage?

Taro Suzuki When I was on this panel about No Wave, I basically said that getting into my performance was about raging against the end of Modernism, the death of Modernism. That still holds true. I think these paintings are about that.

Elizabeth Cannon Were you doing the light works at the same time you were in the band?

Taro Suzuki I was. The light works were thinking about, "How do I get beyond zero?" Modernism ended with Minimalism at zero. The painting becomes an object then. Right? It goes beyond zero, it starts to expand from that single point.

Mary Heilmann It's not a picture.

Taro Suzuki Right! It's not a picture. It's an object, and beyond that, it's physics. It's light.

Nicole Kaack Or something that you're responding to. The location of the image is almost in the viewer, because your eye is responding to it in a very particular way.

Taro Suzuki Exactly.

Mary Heilmann You know, you guys, you should be sitting here. They're just wiggling around.

Karen Hesse Flatow As you move around the room, they move with you.

Jill Levine It's vibration. Like quantum physics, before that was popular.

Elizabeth Cannon When I first saw this group of paintings that you did for this show particularly, what struck me was the fact that you had two centers. You made a very conscious decision to have two centers to the paintings. And through that decision, you've created a third entity, which doesn't exist anywhere except in the eye's perception. The warping of the picture plane. It looks like a radiation. It's the warp that you get when you look at them from a distance. Not close up. You see a radiation out.

Mary Heilmann     If you sit and stare at it.

Karen Hesse Flatow     An undulation. It's almost a wave.

Elizabeth Cannon     But it's not from two centers. You managed to get it to radiate in one piece not two. You created a third thing from two.

Steve Keister     The third thing being the moiré pattern. My contention is that the optical effect is squared. It's exponential. Because you have both the color vibration at the edge, the optical color vibration, combined with the moiré pattern, which is its own vibration.

Taro Suzuki     Yeah, I was going for maximum impact. I hadn't used fluorescent colors in a long, long time. Gregory's actually responsible for that. A couple of summers ago, Greg was just musing, "You know, you don't use fluorescent colors anymore." I said, "No, I don't." And he was, "Maybe you should go back to that." Just like that. I thought about it. Then I started playing with it.

Gregory Botts     Well, I thought that was your trademark back in the early days. I didn't know Taro that well, back then. But in my mind you were that fluorescent guy.

Steve Keister     I think it especially works well because it doesn't depend on the fluorescents. Fluorescents, non-fluorescents, it's all working together. I have another idea, where it's a combination of Duchamp and Warhol. You have the Duchampian hypnotic.

Taro Suzuki     Like the roto pieces?

Steve Keister     And with Warhol, you've got the mis-registration. It's kind of like a printing technique.

Taro Suzuki     Yeah! I was working with that in the back of my head for a long time. For years and years. Bill came over to my studio, I don't know, in 1990-something. I had just started using printer's palette. [to Bill] And you were like, "Yeah, that's the way to go." And he said, "What are you using for the blue?" And I said, "I don't know, cyan?" And he goes, "Cerulean!" [laughter] Right, do you remember that?

Bill Komoski     No! In fact, that was probably about the time I was starting to play with that.

Karen Hesse Flatow     From one studio to the next.

Nicole Kaack     [to Bill] The printing technique specifically?

Bill Komoski     No, but that three-color separation. I think I was definitely trying to figure out what would be the best blue. Because cerulean is actually a little bit . . .

Taro Suzuki     It's a little green.

Bill Komoski     Yeah.

Elizabeth Cannon     Then there's that pearlescent color you use on the base. I just started thinking about that pearlescent because I find these paintings have this push and pull. That pearl color is like inside of a shell, it's like a mystery. Where are the depths? You are also putting the gels inside the painting rather than on the top, so there's depth inside of the paintings. It used to be that his surfaces had almost 100 layers . . . he'd come home at night and he'd say, "Well, I've just put on the 59th layer of gel." It'd be day after day after day after day. The practice of putting on the gel was so laborious.

Taro Suzuki     These paintings have half as much gel—only 30 coats. Over the pearl gets gel so that everything is really flat. Say this one, gets the red layer. And then there's some texture there, because the red has some actual physical depth. So that has to be made flat again by putting coats and coats of gel over it. It also has a lensing effect, magnifying the pearlescent and settling the color, like the red. It evens it out. Because it's being magnified a little bit. That pearlescent comes from . . . the East Village, around the corner from me, back when I was in school, there was a sign painting supply store. M. Horowitz. It was like this magic shop out of The Twilight Zone. That store was there since 1890 or something, and he was selling supplies that were antique. He sold a lot of glittery kind of materials. I discovered glass beads there, reflective beads.

Jill Levine     Diamond dust and glass beads and aluminum powder. All that really toxic, crappy stuff.

Steve Keister     Barbara Gladstone was really on the case with this new wave looking art. Especially with the fluorescents, angular fluorescent. So she had a group show in '79. The original *Canal Street* show. Taro and I were in it.

Taro Suzuki     Nancy [Arlen] was in. Tom Rankin was in it.

Steve Keister     Judy Pfaff was in it.

Taro Suzuki     Frank [F.L. Schroder] was in it.

Steve Keister     I think that's probably it. If I think of the photograph that Richard Prince took of us, sitting in front of Dave's Corner for the announcement for that show, I think we've named all the people. That was '79. Five years ago, Mitchell Alpus restaged the Canal Street show in his gallery in Chelsea on 25th Street. He republished the Richard Prince announcement of the original. He put Dike Blair in the re-staging.

Elizabeth Cannon     Was it the same work?

Taro Suzuki     It actually wasn't. [In the original,] I had some much more saleable pieces. They were metal wall pieces that cast shadows, and adjacent to the shadow was paint on the wall. What I did for Mitchell were mirrored light pieces, where a single pin spot gets bounced from element to element around the room, from different mirrors.

Steve Keister     I remember you showed those in Cincinnati at a group show called *Dynamix* that was an expanded roster of "energist" artists.

Gregory Botts     So then there's the Daniel Newburg Gallery. Where did you show at between the two things?

Taro Suzuki     Stefanotti. On 57th Street. He had a hallway, and it was pretty narrow and long. I did a lot of installations in that hallway. I could just bounce light back and forth down this corridor. I changed all the fluorescents to black light tubes. It was fun.

Steve Keister     Do you remember Ronny Cohen?

Taro Suzuki I do remember Ronny Cohen. I didn't want to participate in her final Energist thing.

Steve Keister The article? That's one of my really distinct memories—she was going around to our friends' studios, and everybody was really excited to talk to her. Then the issue came out, and all of a sudden it's called "Energism?"

Taro Suzuki I know, right! So embarrassing. It's on the cover.

Steve Keister Jonathan Borofsky was on the cover.

Taro Suzuki Right, yes. But he was part of the article. She got the cover story.

Steve Keister And Jeff Koons was considered an Energist at that time.

Nicole Kaack With what work?

Taro Suzuki The vacuum cleaners. It was Plexiglass. That's an industrial material.

Karen Hesse Flatow So Taro, what's next?

Taro Suzuki After Energism?

[laughter]

Jenny Hankwitz I've been wondering about that phrase you used earlier, "the rage against Modernism." Keeps bouncing in my head. Is that something that's been in your head all these years?

Taro Suzuki I think so. Bill—at my birthday—described Postmodernism as this lack of an overarching narrative that united Western art. Is that fair?

Bill Komoski Yeah. Or rejection of any kind of grand narrative.

Taro Suzuki Greg also invoked a weird thing about religion and put it with Modernism. I think what I equate with Modernism is the idea of social progress.

Steve Keister     That's been part of it, historically.

Elizabeth Cannon     Belief in the future. Moon landing.

Taro Suzuki     Exactly! When I got out of school and saw that it was all gone, I was pretty pissed off. [laughter]

Jill Levine     You were here to start it up again. Redefined.

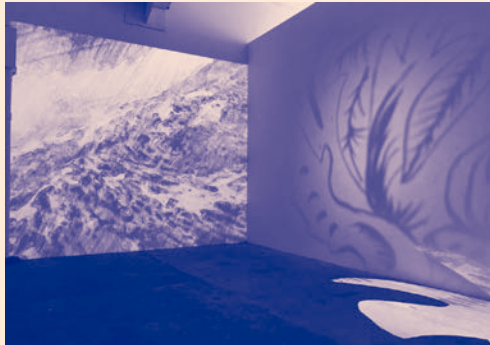
Elizabeth Cannon     Circles. Sisyphus.







# HUNGER: JOHANNES DEYOUNG AND NATALIE WESTBROOK



January 4, 2018 – February 3, 2018

Johannes DeYoung *in conversation with Sam Messer*

January 11, 2018

Nicole Kaack     So shall we jump in? You both just showed work at the B3 Biennial with Natalie [Westbrook] as well. That was themed on the topic of desire, which is also very relevant to this show at CRUSH. Would talk about that experience and how that ties in to the current work?

Johannes DeYoung     I think for [Natalie's and my] work in the show, but also for our work as individual artists, it's been a long-standing theme. It's actually one of the central ideas that tied the structure of this show together. We started the project about three years ago with an exquisite-cadaver-style collaboration where we would pass drawings back and forth. The content hinged on conversations around the theme of desire, and we looked toward the text that informs this show as a structural and content leitmotif to pull the themes of our individual practices together.

Nicole Kaack     For those who might not be aware *Hunger*, a novel by Knut Hamsun, is the root of this current work by Natalie and Johannes. I wonder if you could also speak to the novel? I know that the book ends with the main character signing up to crew aboard a ship at sea. Is the narrative structure of the work directly parallel to that of the novel?

Johannes DeYoung     Well, the protagonists in a lot of Knut Hamsun's literature go through a process of giving away everything, pursuing something very enigmatic, and then charting out anew. That's the structure that we're looking toward. There's also a transcendental relationship with nature and some kind of underlying zeitgeist that's urging return to something pre-linguistic or pre-symbolic to find something primal. That's what we've identified among various themes that drove the book.

Nicole Kaack     I wonder if you could also speak about the way that the text elements imbue the work with a sense of urgency? On occasion, the text will disrupt the visual narrative; for example, there is a moment where the video reads, very literally, "grounding me to the pavement," something that is indicative of a city as opposed to the natural environment that the images describe. Are those narratives in tandem more than they are simultaneous?

Johannes DeYoung     There's a nature / culture tension in the work, and that is something that Natalie and I can find between our individual practices when we come together in collaboration. Her work is not narrative. She's really invested in

expressionism and iconography that comes from the natural world, finding patterns and hidden structures in flora. My work is very different. I'm drawn toward questions of the human condition and other subjects that reveal themselves in time-based media through narrative, often non-linear narrative. Finding a way to combine our two practices together comes about through this tension of nature and culture, nature versus the constructed symbol.

Nicole Kaack Do you feel like that's part of your work as well, Sam? Especially the recent show at Wadsworth Atheneum?

Sam Messer I'll just say to start that the idea of putting things into a movie is something that Johannes really motivated—I never would be doing that, but he got me curious. I've always been enamored, curious, and perplexed by the idea of moving, the idea of the kinetic. But I could never figure out how to do something with it—I stumbled into it more recently. I love to draw and I am just impatient, in a sense, with a certain object-ness or way to tell a story. The work at the Wadsworth Atheneum is also about my attraction to writers. I find that it is actually more interesting for me to deal with text when the image is moving, rather than having a singular relationship between image and text. There is more of an interesting balance.

Nicole Kaack That's an interesting point. In your work, Johannes, you and Natalie decided to have the equivalent of textual pages in the video as opposed to having a spoken narrative. What motivated that decision?

Johannes DeYoung One of the things in Sam's work that I find really powerful and resonant is the kinetic, emblematic quality of the images. Within a single image, there's a whole story or poetic that unfolds. I feel like I'm always after that but never fully arriving at the perfect solution. A lot of my work ends up in sequence, in this juxtaposed, time-based medium because that, for me, makes sense as a working method. One of the things that Natalie and I set out to do was create a process that would work for both of us. It wasn't actually like the depiction of a story, rather like looking for hidden structures that guide a narrative or creating structures that allow us to work with language and narrative in an open way that offers new associations. Often, in my own work, I use a cut method, but we especially use it when we are working together in cases of text. We'll literally take a quote, dissect, and scramble it. We did that in this piece in a very manual way. In my own practice, I've used algorithms to do that, an algorithm that takes

sentences and rearranges or extracts segments. That's not anything new, it's a Dada game. But we use that as a guiding structure for how we assemble the overarching piece.

Nicole Kaack     When you are choosing the words, the way that they format on the page demonstrates that as well, right? It becomes a kind of concrete poem.

Johannes DeYoung     We wanted them to read more like headlines, with that same urgency. We took out as many articles as we could to try to get to the point.

Nicole Kaack     It's something that you also play with in timing how long those texts are shown, sometimes covering them up before it feels possible to have read them.

Johannes DeYoung     Well, there's a rule there. They're on screen for five seconds, and sometimes they're interrupted.

Sam Messer     Can I ask you a question? How did you make the boat? The boats at the end seem to be photo-generated, as well as the first sailing boat, maybe. I'm just curious because I am really interested in the way it looks. We see so much information now. I am trying to find that shift between the drawing, which I think is Natalie's, to other kind of information and to understand how you break it down or decide how much to leave. I'm trying to learn something technical.

Johannes DeYoung     The whole piece is basically a collage of different approaches and styles. Some are straight drawings, like Natalie's which you see when you come in. But then a lot of it comes out of the work that I was making for the B3 Biennial, which was a computer model built in Maya of a turbulent ocean with a dinghy floating on it. For that work, I partnered with a guy who developed shaders for Pixar to get my texture swatches onto the model in a way that would work with the lighting system in Maya. It was occlusion-based texturing. As the lights moved, the drawings would pile up on top of each other and get denser and denser and denser. But the whole process felt so laborious and so far away from drawing by the end. Drawing a texture swatch would take 10 minutes, and then it would be two weeks before I could get that drawing to map in a way that I felt even slightly conveyed a sense of the hand. Before that, it would just feel like the geometry of the model was overriding the drawing. In the end, I spent so long rendering that thing and working on this piece that I thought, "When I'm done with that, I don't want to do it again for as long as I possibly can." And so I

tried rotoscoping. I had all these frames from the previous piece; when I took the boat out, I had the waves. Then I just made drawings.

Sam Messer     What's rotoscoping?

Johannes DeYoung     It's literally drawing or tracing over, frame by frame. I got enough of the frames, and I made what's called a playblast. It's the quickest type of render that you can produce with 3D graphic software. I got a playblast out of the software and then I used that as the DNA for making these line drawings.

Sam Messer     That's how you do the waves?

Johannes DeYoung     Yeah.

Sam Messer     I was really enamored with the idea of drawing water. One of the most interesting things that I've come across recently was that idea in the context of 1400s mapmaking. Originally, Western Europe thought the world was made up of Europe, Asia, and maybe Africa, surrounded by a river. When it was accepted that there was actually more space and so much water, the challenge became how to draw water. It's really interesting to look at old maps to see the kind of calligraphy that people came up with. When you look at Hokusai or many of the early Chinese artists, they found beautiful ways to actually depict something moving. It is something I've always been interested in; how do you draw something still that is moving, that also shows that it's solid but not?

Johannes DeYoung     Well, there's another moment in the video that was a really different approach—drawings of water as flat, graphic, undulating forms. I'm actually way more interested in that. I understand where the Maya imagery comes from and I feel like it's tied to a literal representation. But the flat, graphic drawings, sometimes start to feel like smoke or something else. I'm really interested in that. Rendering water is a real challenge.

...

Nicole Kaack     The movement of the lines in this video is really interesting, both in terms of the render and all the different styles you use. I remember a very particular

segment where it's zooming through clips of a face, but the face is drawn in many different styles. There's one that seems to follow Van Gogh where the curls are more present. And then another that is a more representational rendition.

Johannes DeYoung     Those are drawings that I have made over years. I found a pile of drawings that seemed to relate to what we were doing, and incorporated them into it. That's the thing about this way of working—we can really bring any type of source material into sequence, as long as it fits within a structural and narrative framework. It all made sense together although it didn't begin as one thing.

Nicole Kaack     That becomes another way that the work thinks about a time or a narrative. It is now, in some way, an auto-biographical document as well.

...

Nicole Kaack     I wonder if you could speak to your collaborative practice?

Johannes DeYoung     Natalie's really the only artist that I've directly collaborated with. Our greatest collaboration is that we made a daughter together. But we've done two projects together, this being the second one. I am collaborating with a musician for the first time right now and I'm excited about that.

Nicole Kaack     On an animated piece as well?

Johannes DeYoung     Yeah. His name is Jack Veas, and I'm doing work in response to one of his 10-piece percussion scores. We have a different way of working. It's basically a call-and-response, where he sends me a sample of a file, then I make a little bit [of animation] to send back to him, and we keep sharing like that. We've been working like that since August [2017].

Nicole Kaack     How would you say that's different from the exquisite-corpse mode that you were discussing?

Johannes DeYoung     Well, Natalie and I have studios right next to each other, so we're often able to work right on top of each other's work. Most of the drawings for this video are no larger than five by seven [inches] in scale. They're very small. We'll

have a stack of cards and, to be very literal, it might be that I draw through a stack of cards like a line and get a motion path, or the spine of a character or a leaf that's moving. Then Natalie will draw on top of that. She'll flesh out an idea, then give me the stack back. And then I'll draw on top of that. That's the style that we used. It's not too different from the last time we collaborated, where we were doing that with collage. We photographed a model, then we painted and drew on top of the photographs, and then in the end we cut the photographs apart and they became individual frames of an animation. It feels more immediate the way Natalie and I have worked together. This other collaboration feels like a completely different type of process.

January 27, 2018

Natalie Westbrook     There are many differences in the ways that Johannes and I are working and thinking individually. One big step that we took together towards unifying our vision was to make a decision—one of the first that we made in working together—to work strictly in black and white. That was a big challenge to me because I rely so heavily on vibrant color. But it was also a relief. In terms of animacy, my color is alive and moving and vibrating in and of itself. To have that taken away, to have my work stripped of color, made me think of my paintings and my forms differently spatially. Karen proposed that we could transform the space with a digital media installation. That really stuck with me as a goal. The immediate answer that came to my mind was, “I’ll paint a mural.” But that’s much too easy and obvious a choice for me as a painter. In terms of us collaborating, that would have been an easy out. I didn’t want to pursue a Basquiat / Warhol type of collaboration where I do my thing and he does his. We wanted to really come together and force each other to get uncomfortable. The black and white was uncomfortable for me in that way. But it was a relief because it was this clear-cut solution, this clear-cut goal.

Nicole Kaack     What brought you to that particular limitation? Were you defining the project by seeking to have some sort of constraint that you could respond to already? What made that your choice?

Natalie Westbrook     Johannes kept talking about how overwhelming it is to experience my work. I thought, “That’s great! That’s how we’re going to transform the space. We’ll do a lot of it.” But that was just too easy. Johannes kept talking about something more minimal and clean. That’s a very foreign concept to me. Black and white made sense to him, because he was really coming at it through the novel, *Hunger* by Knut Hamsun, thinking allegorically and thematically about lack of color. I was a willing collaborator. I was happy to have you here, Roz, for many reasons, but in particular I was hoping you could talk a little bit about your limited palette? I’m exploring tactility with vibrant color, but you’re getting at a sense of tactility while also using a very minimal, neutral palette.

Rosalind Tallmadge     I think we are both trying to evoke the natural world. I have an interest in geology. The surface might function as an artifact of time or of natural forces, for example. I’ve become much more pared down to the point where I almost feel that the idea of color is not relevant in the work. It’s more about the material process. I don’t even really use paint anymore, just gel medium. I don’t know what that’s about. Maybe it’s because I live in New York and everything’s gray. [laughter] People



have said that before. I don't really know. The idea of the painting being experiential, about light, perception, or even opticality versus the idea of image—that's how I approach it.

Nicole Kaack I think that's what I had in mind when I framed your work in relation to animation or observation. They're very metallic surfaces, right? A viewer and the painting can respond to each other.

Rosalind Tallmadge The light and the environment make a huge difference. Everything has to be constrained to an image at some point, but it doesn't really contain the painting in any way, you know? They're really different depending on the time of day, the light, the space. To me, that's successful. The idea of painting becomes more successful to me because you have to be with the object.

Nicole Kaack That's always the struggle—fore-fronting the physical presence.

Rosalind Tallmadge I guess that is where animacy would enter into my practice. I've never thought about that before, though.

Nicole Kaack [to Natalie] In your work, also, physical presence is so important. The immediacy of the light and the colors.

Natalie Westbrook And scale is important for me. I think a lot about my experiences in nature. I used to work a lot out in the field. Now I work more from memory. But I'm thinking about that experience of going on a hike and having this startling encounter with this very teeny-tiny plant that's a specific color and form, that feels like it's identical to some vital organ deep inside the human body. Or walking along and discovering some leaf larger than a person. That sense of scale that can be so stunning and surprising in nature—I have yet to figure out how to evoke that in my own work. I'm very taken by colors and forms in nature, and I've worked for a long time with that, but scale I feel like I don't quite have a grapple on. I know that it's important. So scale and tactile quality are key to the physical encounter and experience of the work.

Karen Hesse Flatow It's interesting that you speak of scale given how you are entertaining that entire space [of the gallery]. That can explode from there, in terms of the size of your project.

**Natalie Westbrook** Having the opportunity to fill a space was very comfortable for me. I've always enjoyed working on a large scale because I have a background in scenic painting and theater work. That has always had an influence on what I do in my own studio—that sense of theatricality, of projecting to an audience from a stage. For years living in New York, I collaborated with The Paper Bag Players, the oldest children's theater company in the U.S. They have a studio down on the Lower East Side. There is this great sense of humor in their work. My work is not overtly humorous, but there's a playfulness in theatricality that I'm engaging with, a subtle kind of absurdity.

**Svetlana Rabey** How did you find that the black and white affected your painting? The experience of it?

**Natalie Westbrook** It made me pay a lot more attention to form. I have found myself drawing more in the last year. I have a drawing in the show which I didn't think was going to be included at the outset. I don't make lots of drawings. I do work on paper—which I think of more as painting and collage—but the work in the show is a drawing. The linear contours of forms became a lot more significant for me.

**Nicole Kaack** That's another thing I wanted to ask you about; there's such a broad array of stroke types and representational styles in the video. I would like to hear your experience of that. Was it interesting to mine that diversity?

**Natalie Westbrook** That was a very experimental aspect of our collaboration. Johannes refers to it as an exquisite cadaver process. In lieu of sitting down and putting our heads together for long blocks of time, one of us would do independent work, pass it on to the other, and then they would respond to it, and say, "Take a look at this." We responded back and forth in that way. We kind of threw it all into the pot. The black and white, we discovered, was a way to unify things. I think if all the different animation styles and techniques and approaches were in color, it would not have cohered.

**Nicole Kaack** I love that there are so many different types of media and formal styles. There's the transparency; the cutout projection on the floor that moves up into that transparency; and the two opposing surfaces of video animation. Did these different forms come about by happenstance, working in that collaborative way?

Natalie Westbrook     It was a lot of trial and error, and because our studio is far from the gallery—we're based up in Connecticut—we couldn't just jet over to experience the space whenever. We kept looking at the gallery map. Of course, we'd both been in here, we'd taken pictures, but we kept looking at the measurements and saying, "What if we projected on that wall? No, it needs to be on this wall." It was a little challenging to imagine the physical experience of the space. We went through many different iterations of what that projection and transparency could be. We had colored light with a lot of motion to it, a strobe with blinking and changing colors. We tried different kinds of movement with transparency and mobiles. But ultimately, what we arrived at was very simple and almost crude.

Nicole Kaack     It's lovely though because, by invoking shadows, it does speak to that history of what animation has been and what it is now. It compresses those two very different things in this one really interesting gesture.

Natalie Westbrook     Thank you. It was rewarding to come up with a solution that felt so simple after all the struggle that led up to it, to have that sit in the same space as this dual animation video that was much more labor.

Hannah Schutzengel     To me, it has that same element of surprise that you were talking about of walking in the woods and finding something. As you first walk in, it seems like it's a part of the same video. Then you realize what it is, just this little drawing on a transparency. It's got that weird scale shift as you see how the light projects it.

Natalie Westbrook     Thank you.



*Yet high over the city our line of yellow windows must have contributed their share of human secrecy to the casual watcher in the darkening streets, and I was him too, looking up and wondering. I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life.*



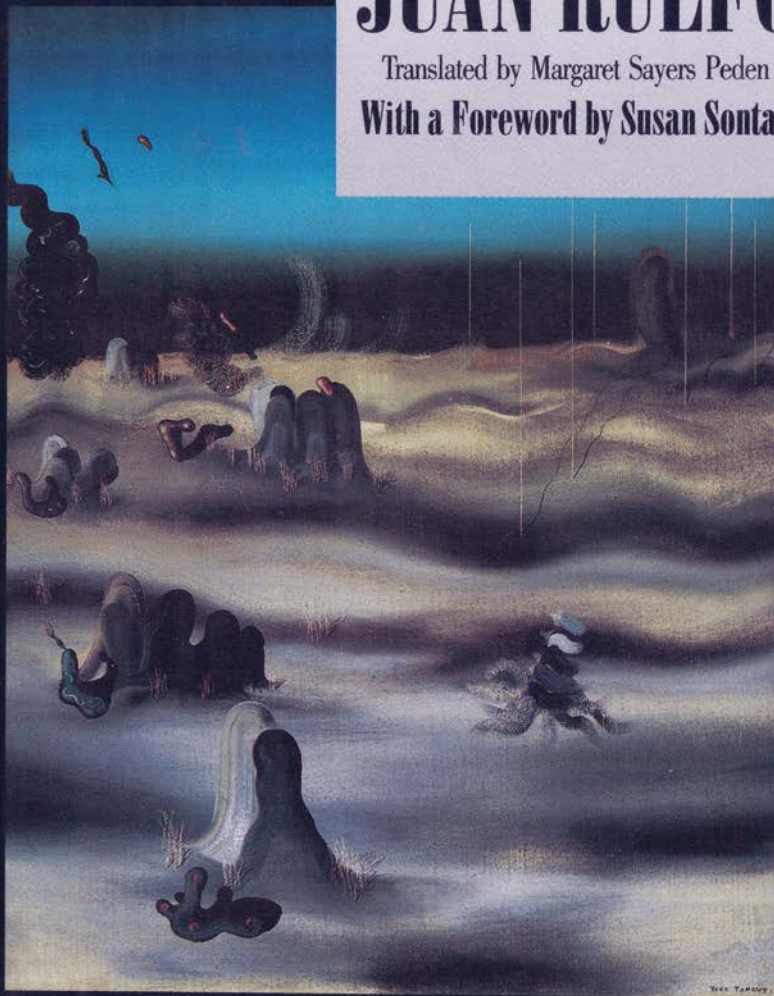


Pedro

Páramo

JUAN RULFO

Translated by Margaret Sayers Peden  
With a Foreword by Susan Sontag





I have a memory of having seen something like foamy clouds swirling above my head, and then being washed by the foam and sinking into the thick clouds. That was the last thing I saw.

Are you trying to make me believe you drowned, Juan Preciado? I found you in the town plaza, far from Donis's house, and he was there, too, telling me you were playing dead. Between us we dragged you into the shadow of the arches, already stiff as a board and all drawn up like a person who'd died of fright. If there hadn't been any air to breathe that night you're talking about, we wouldn't have had the strength to carry you, even less bury you. And, as you see, bury you we did."

"You're right, Doroteo. You say your name's Doroteo?"

"It doesn't matter. It's really Dorotea. But it doesn't matter."

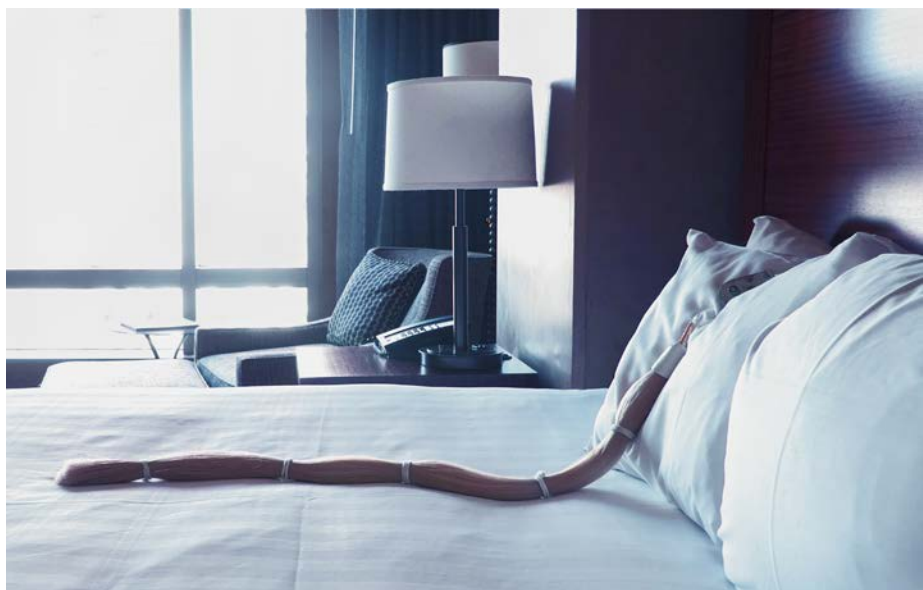
"It's true, Dorotea. The murmuring killed me."

*There you'll find the place I love most in the world. The place where I grew thin from dreaming. My village, rising from the plain. Shaded with trees and leaves like a piggy bank filled with memories. You'll see why a person would want to live there forever. Dawn, morning, mid-day, night: always the same, except for the changes in the air. The air changes the color of things there. And life whirs by as quiet as a murmur . . . the pure murmuring of life . . .*

"Yes, Dorotea. The murmuring killed me. I was trying to hold back my fear. But it kept building until I couldn't contain it any longer. And when I was face to face with the murmuring, the dam burst.

"I went to the plaza. You're right about that. I was drawn there by the sound of people; I thought there really were people. I wasn't in my right mind by then. I remember I got there by feeling my way along the walls as if I were walking with my hands. And the walls seemed to distill the voices, they seemed to be filtering







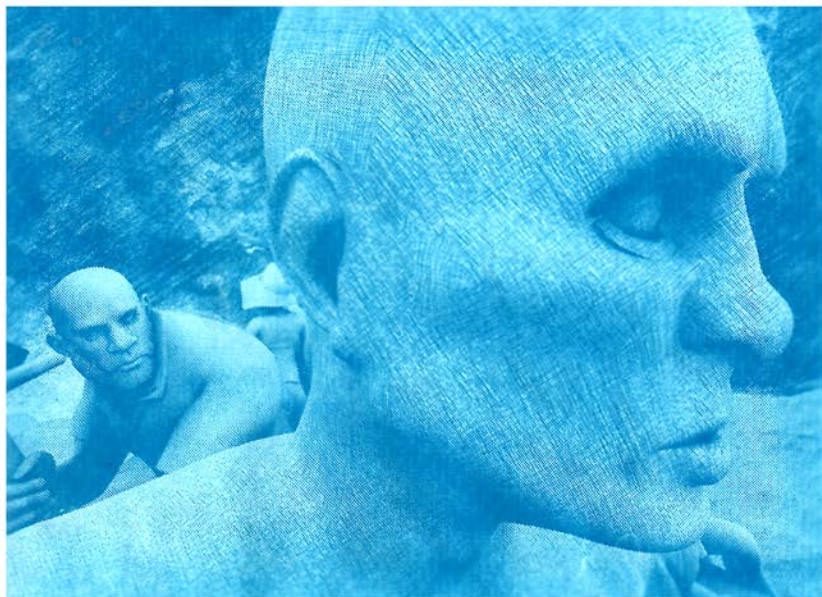
#### DEEP HUNGER

Carrying away the  
traces  
of his singular city, from which no man departs  
—starved in

Christiana: Christiania: Christiania: Christiania: Christiania: Christiania: Christiania:  
Christiana: Christiania: Christiania: Christiania:  
Christiana: Christiania: Christiania:  
Christiana,  
this singular city, from which  
no  
man departs.

Fragments adhering  
for any length of time,  
even as  
for any length of  
memory.  
The rhythmical sound

for any length of consciousness  
pointed  
towards  
Fragments adherently  
askew.



Where were

Fragments adhering  
after God's finger  
felt its weight and held my shoulders, and let me withdraw?

Light slight slight slight  
any length of my nerves gently—yea,  
verily, in my head  
and

in my brain in my brain  
in His finger, His graciousness pointed towards,  
His graciousness the Lord stuck  
His graciousness the Lord  
stuck

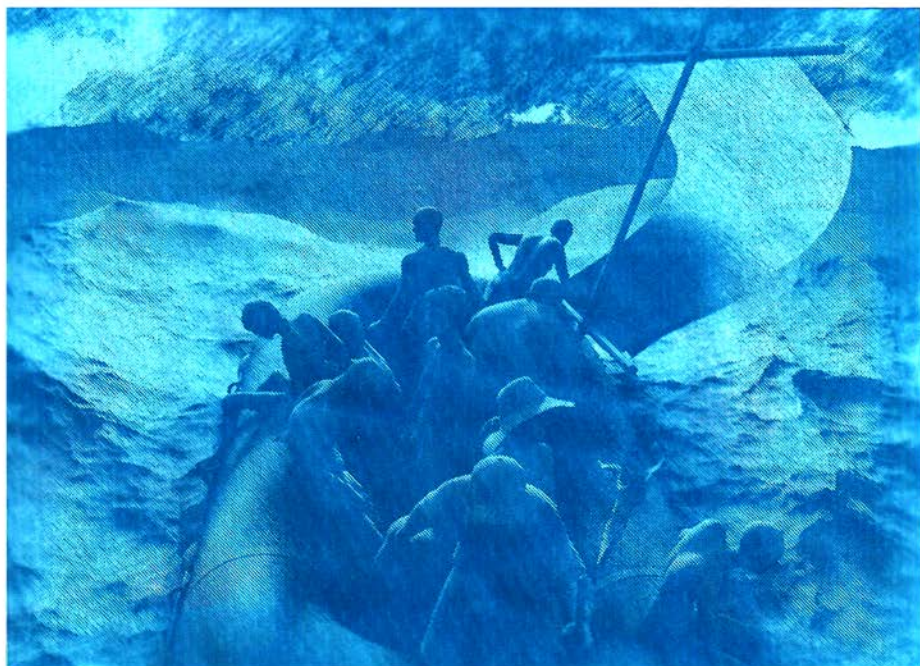
any length of my brains ran quite  
softly  
out of my brains ran quite gently—yea, verily, in peace

the track of time, it was a gaping  
track of my  
nerves

for what my eyes  
stared far off, I no more,  
left with my nerves gently—yea, verily, in  
my brain in my brain in my brain in my brain  
in threads. And the  
housetop hath befall me; but let  
me withdraw

slowly,  
my thoughts collected.  
I paid attention to them, and  
wrote quietly and well;  
wrote a  
couple of pages as an introduction. It would  
serve as a beginning to anything. A description of travel,  
a political leader, just as I  
thought fit—it was a perfectly splendid  
commencement  
for something or  
anything,

without adding one word more.



The  
wind soughed many  
times at a stretch. With  
every fibre of my  
being,  
I seemed to myself to  
be hollowed out from top  
and  
toe.

In my pain I cried: Lord,  
my toe.

In my skull  
without adding  
one word more.

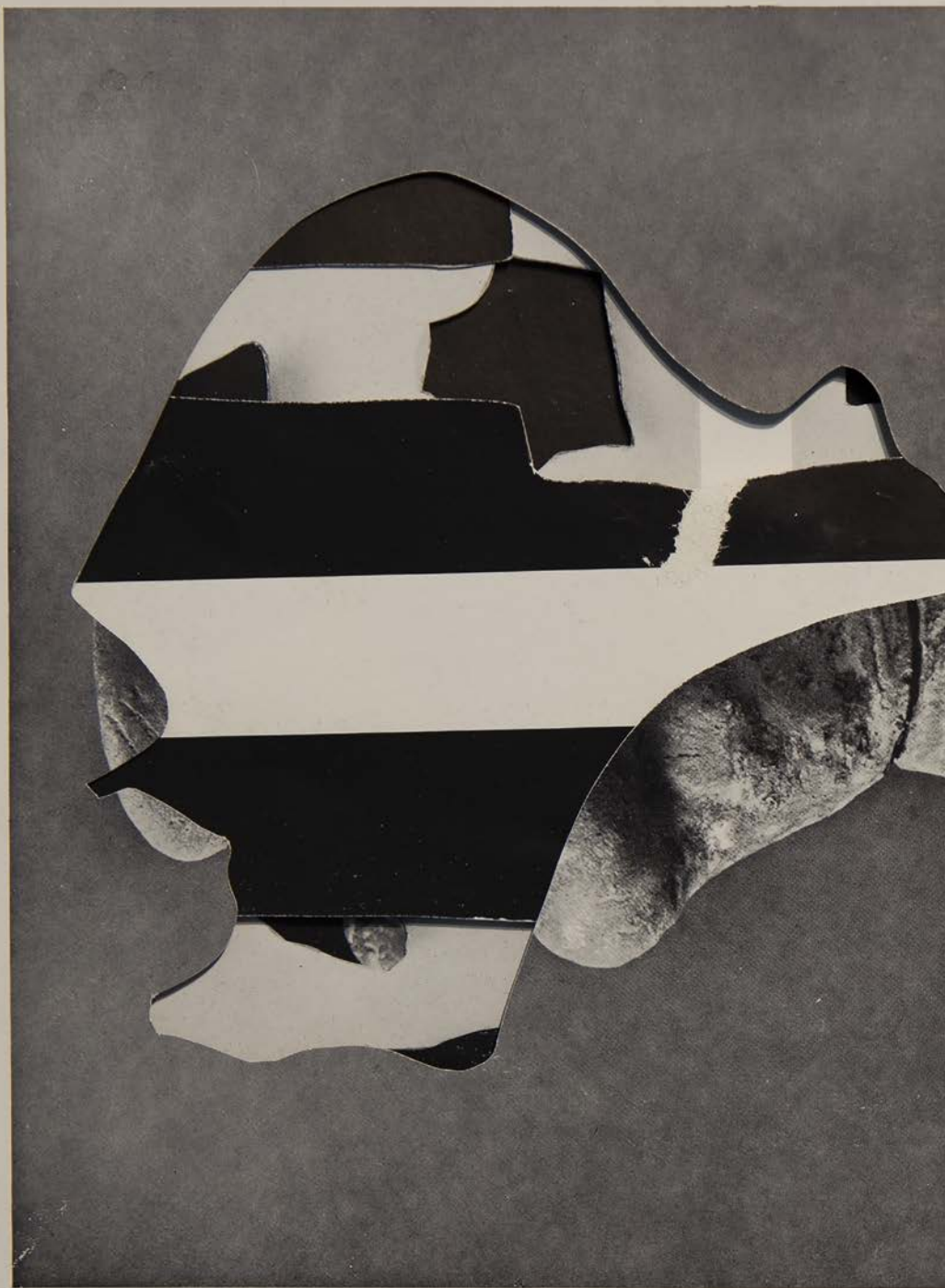
The wind  
soughed many times — a storm was brewing

cause, either, for lack  
of food  
for lack of  
food for  
lack of food for letting  
herself be accompanied  
into a long walking?  
And why was I afraid  
this dainty, silken-clad bird?  
Did it not cost me anew, and crush me  
anew,  
smiling in space; in space; in space; in space; in space; in  
space; in space; in space; in space; in space; in  
space; in  
space; in space; in  
space; in space; in  
space; in space; in  
space; in space; in space;  
in space; in space;  
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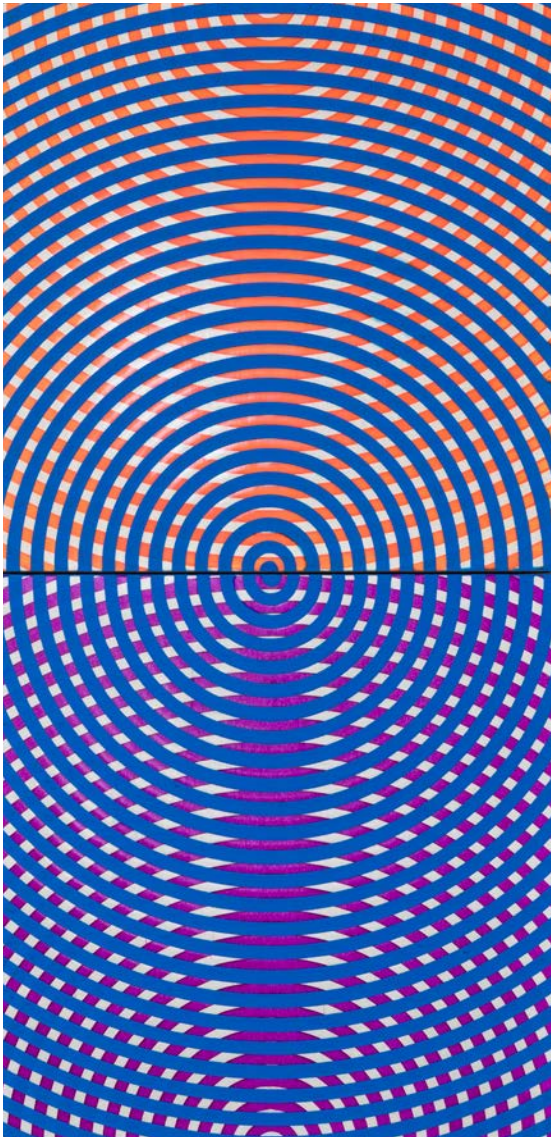
And why was  
she thinking over savagery—the gentlest puff of wind  
that blew against us?  
The total darkness  
running riot in my brain, just  
for letting myself  
be accompanied in the  
kingdom of savagery? Was not madness  
running riot in  
my brain, just for letting herself  
be accompanied in the pleasure of death?

Its weight left me  
that my brains ran quite gently  
out of time.  
It was just as if  
my eyes stared far off,  
quite gently open.

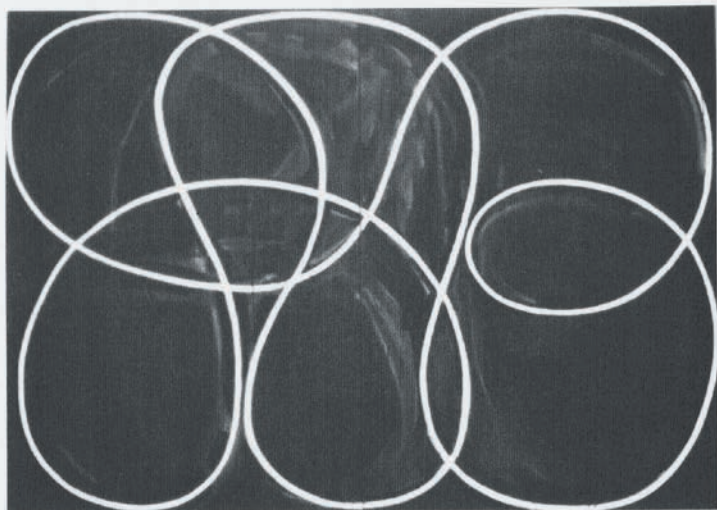








# *Taro Suzuki*



**WHITE COLUMNS**

**OCTOBER 19 – NOVEMBER 11, 1990**

## TARO SUZUKI: FINDING THE LOOPHOLE IN SISYPHUS'S CONTRACT

by Tricia Collins and Richard Milazzo

Implicit in the contention that History repeats itself is a metaphysical model of the universe that constitutes itself as the ebb and flow of a futile system of alternately progressive and regressive terms. But at the outer extreme of this circuitry, this existential syndrome of ascent and descent and then ascent again that is the cycle of human expediency and transcendence, 'nostalgia' and the 'utopic' impulse and their synthesis, at the other end of this continuum of discrepancies that is beyond the proverbial full circle of a life lived 'contractually', subsists an environment of disparate effects, the non-causal parameters of an absurd ethic, the terminal conditions of a non-synthetic whole.

Reflexive to such a metaphysics is the higher futility of bracketing this experience — in art or in a specific project or in a specific project that is art, that is specifically Taro Suzuki's art — which is akin to 'looping-the-loop'. That is, on a more pragmatic level, it is futile to point out that Suzuki had already at the outset of the 1980's begun to question the severity or dogmatic closures of Minimalism, without however throwing the proverbial baby out with the bath water, and that in his use of day-glo and lava lamps he preceded Peter Halley and Haim Steinbach, respectively. Or that in Suzuki's strident use of color and light in relation to certain pictorial, geometrical and spatial issues, as well as in his use of certain scientific and science fiction motifs or psychedelic or illusion-based strategies in relation to the 'tradition' and historicity of the earthwork vector in the art world, he had brought to bear upon abstraction (abstract painting, in particular), figurative and installation work certain new fictive and Pop modalities. Just as it is not painting but the rules of painting that die periodically, repetition in History also leads a double life (call it meta-repetition) in that it becomes a marker for what is *outside* itself, which does not always simply duplicate itself. Sisyphus's fate was not simply that of the first copy machine but that of an individual who could no longer live *inside* the boundaries or restraints or 'loops' of History. Suffice it to say that such past and earlier works by Suzuki as *Disco Mummy* ('82), *Mondo System* ('85), *Liquid Fixtures* ('85-'86), his light installation at John Weber Gallery in 1986, *Martian Mirrors* ('86), *Yellow Pyramid* and *Pink Cube* (both '87), reflect not only his prior contribution to the history of a particular discourse during the past decade but the recalcitrant nature of that contribution.

The works in this show, which the artist refers to as *The Loop Paintings*, constitute his most recent work. Like his previous work, they are systematic, or rather, systemic: there are 6 paintings in the series or cycle and they limit their use of color to the primaries and secondaries. In addition, there are two diptychs, one black on white, the other white on black. Within each painting 4 or 5 continuous loops are drawn in charcoal; the loops are circum-

scribed by the natural arc or extension of the arm or body. They are minimal gestures which are additionally distanced by the colors. As in Brice Marden's recent work, in which he uses various twigs and small branches to enact the gesture, both distancing from his 'hand' and yet instrumentalizing the varied (accidental) articulations that may be transmitted (through the artist) to us by Nature, the gesture within the system of Suzuki's paintings begins in an arbitrary ('natural' or accidental) way, but then, by the time the artist has completed the 2nd or 3rd loop, necessity in the form of various decisions involving formal composition, aesthetic preference and other cognitive and spatial considerations work their way or insinuate themselves into the field of the painting. Later, minor adjustments are made in the loops, and these (adjustments) are allowed to persist as traces of the decisional in relation to the arbitrary scope of the loops and the painting as a whole.

In these paintings by Suzuki, the decisional and arbitrary, the cerebral and the bodily or sense-perception, are made to work in concert with each other. But regardless of the constraints that are consciously imposed upon the painting, or the 'rules' that are generated and objectified as enactments of consciousness's role in the larger process of things in general, the amorphous or unruly character or 'nature' of the loops determines the overall look and character of the painting.

Suzuki has written of these paintings in the following way:

"For me the process has come full circle. Perhaps in retrospect these closed figures are diagrams of the convoluted path I took from painting in 1975 through my work with light, objects and conceptualism — back to painting in 1990.

"At a time when the media rules every aspect of our culture — where conceptualism is the most prevalent style, I see painting as an avant-garde act. I think perhaps this group of paintings is about arriving at painting." (From a letter by the artist to the authors, August 6, 1990.)

But a loop is not a circle; nor is the convoluted nature of the journey, the process, symptomatic of a mechanical (unthinking) experience of the absurd; neither describe exactly Sisyphus's futile trek of rolling a boulder up and down a hill, even if the paintings *intentionally* do not distance themselves from a sense of this futility and the mortality of the process, all process, including the "path" or process that deposits us in the end at the point where we began. Closures, these "closed figures" to which Suzuki refers, the loops, are part of this process. And origins, like our closures, are also subsumed by our "arrivals" — regardless of the place they lead us.

Tallahassee, Florida  
August 1990





In 1875, Trouvelot was invited to Harvard to use their 26-inch refractor telescope for a year. This drawing of Mars is one of of fifteen observational drawings made during that time, and later published in *The Trouvelot Astronomical Drawings* in 1882.

Of all the drawings in this book, the image of Mars is among my least favorites. The drawings of the Eclipse, Jupiter, and Saturn and her rings are by far more spectacular and breathtakingly accurate given the technology. What has always interested me about the drawing of Mars is the amount of information that appears to be invented, though I hesitate to use that word. Trouvelot is using the most advanced technology of the time to make observational drawings of objects that humans are only just able to fully visualize. In many ways he is presenting a complete image of these objects to people for the first time. “Complete” meaning physical depiction in color and observational detail (i.e. not a written description of an object, but not yet a detailed photograph.) This solution to information that is observed, but not fully understood, is bizarre. Mars becomes its own lens for a roiling landscape. Swelling clouds become crashing waves, weather patterns become an aurora, lens refraction perhaps becomes a moon. There are now photographs of Mars that begin to make sense of these confident generalizations, but at the time I can only imagine that the image would have been truly baffling. Our closest planetary neighbor—a place that humans had written about visiting as far back as the 17th century, touching the soil and inhabiting—continued to be a mirage.

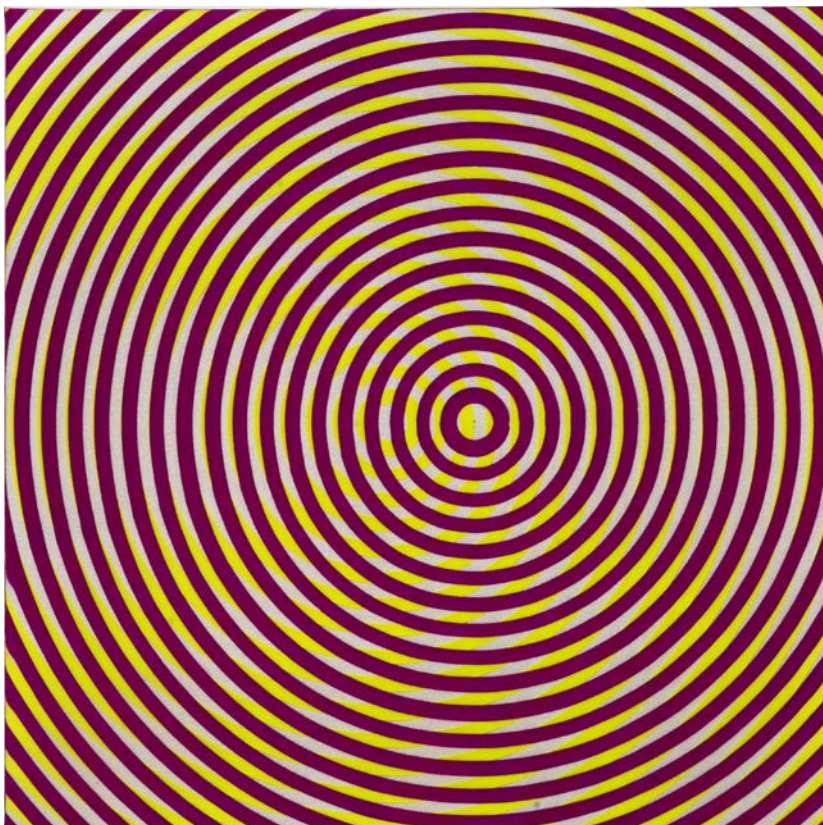




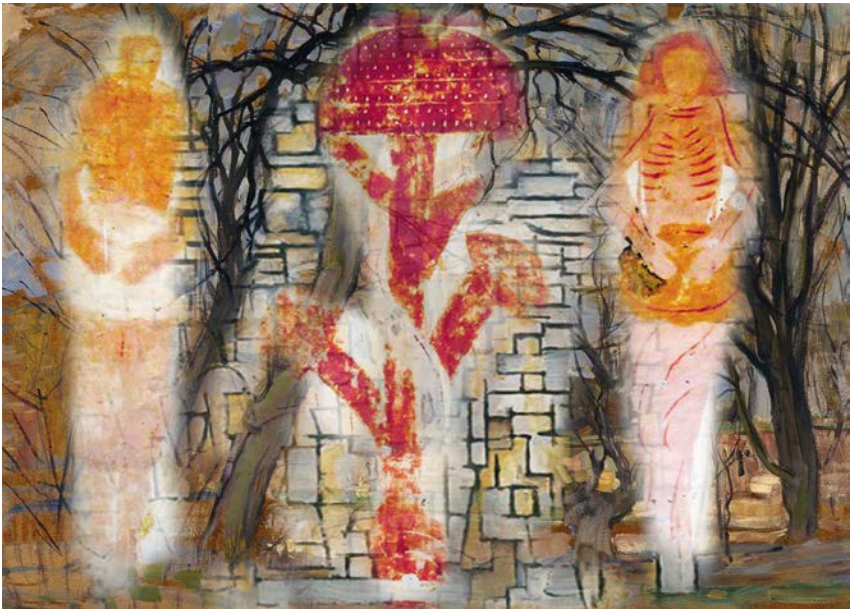
THE PLANET MARS.

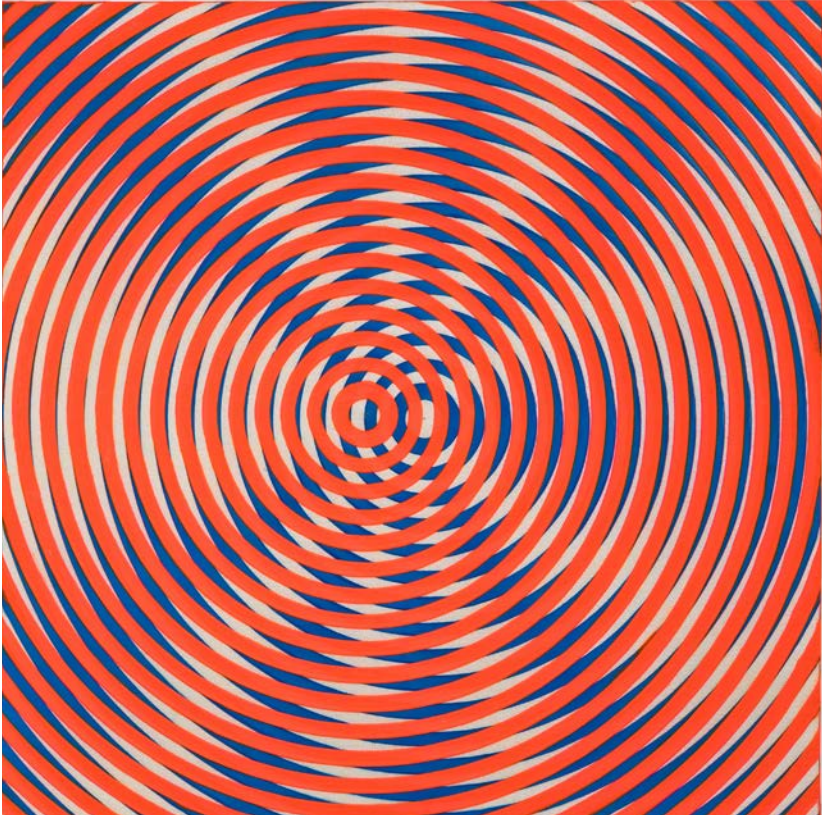
Illustration September 1, 1877, on the basis of the observations of Schiaparelli.

*E. E. Bennett*









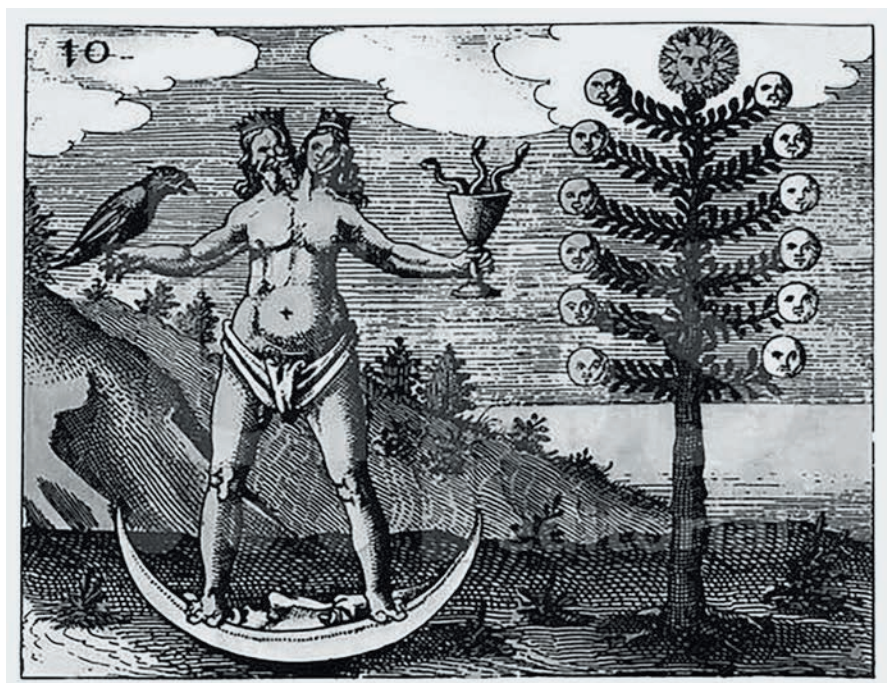












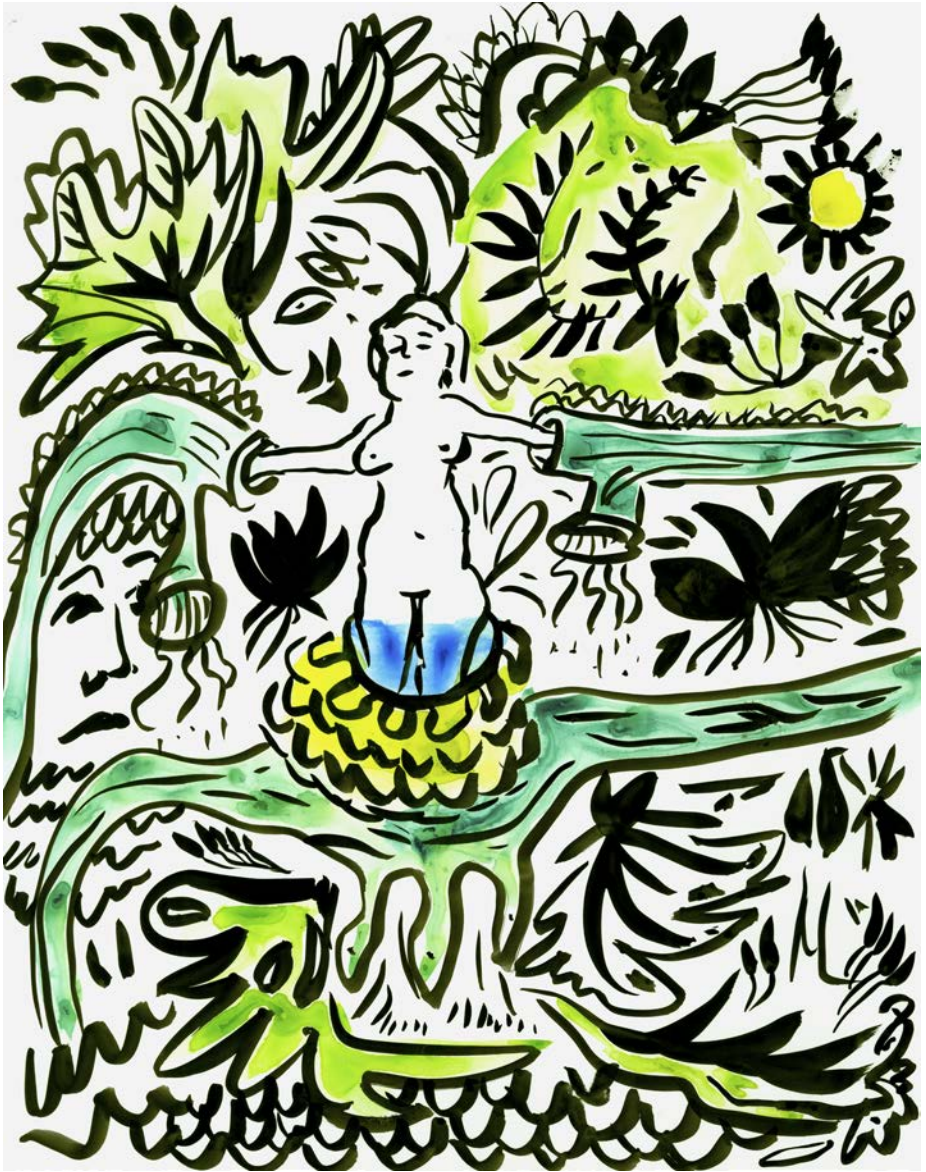


The *Voynich Manuscript*, a mysterious book hand-written and illustrated in Central Europe in the 16th or late 15th century, is currently housed in Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. The book's dense pages, filled with undeciphered language and perplexing drawings, have piqued my interest not as a mystery to be solved, but as an abstract visual and imaginative world unto itself. The manuscript includes botanical renderings of unidentified species, astronomical drawing and Zodiac symbols, nude females interacting with connecting tubes and immersed or bathing in pools of unknown green liquid, and pharmaceutical drawings of medicinal herbs, possibly recipes. While scholars the world over and U.S. Army cryptographers have made countless unsuccessful attempts to decipher the meaning of the 600 year old book, the most recent notable effort was made by a computer scientist in 2016 who claimed he had cracked the code using artificial intelligence. Alas, just months after the breaking news, the academic community challenged his methodology, expressing doubts. Today, the fabled text remains an utter mystery. While cracking the code has been a preoccupation of the highest minds, some theorists have suggested that the text may not be decipherable at all, but instead created as a universal language invented anew, or that, perhaps, the manuscript is a hoax.

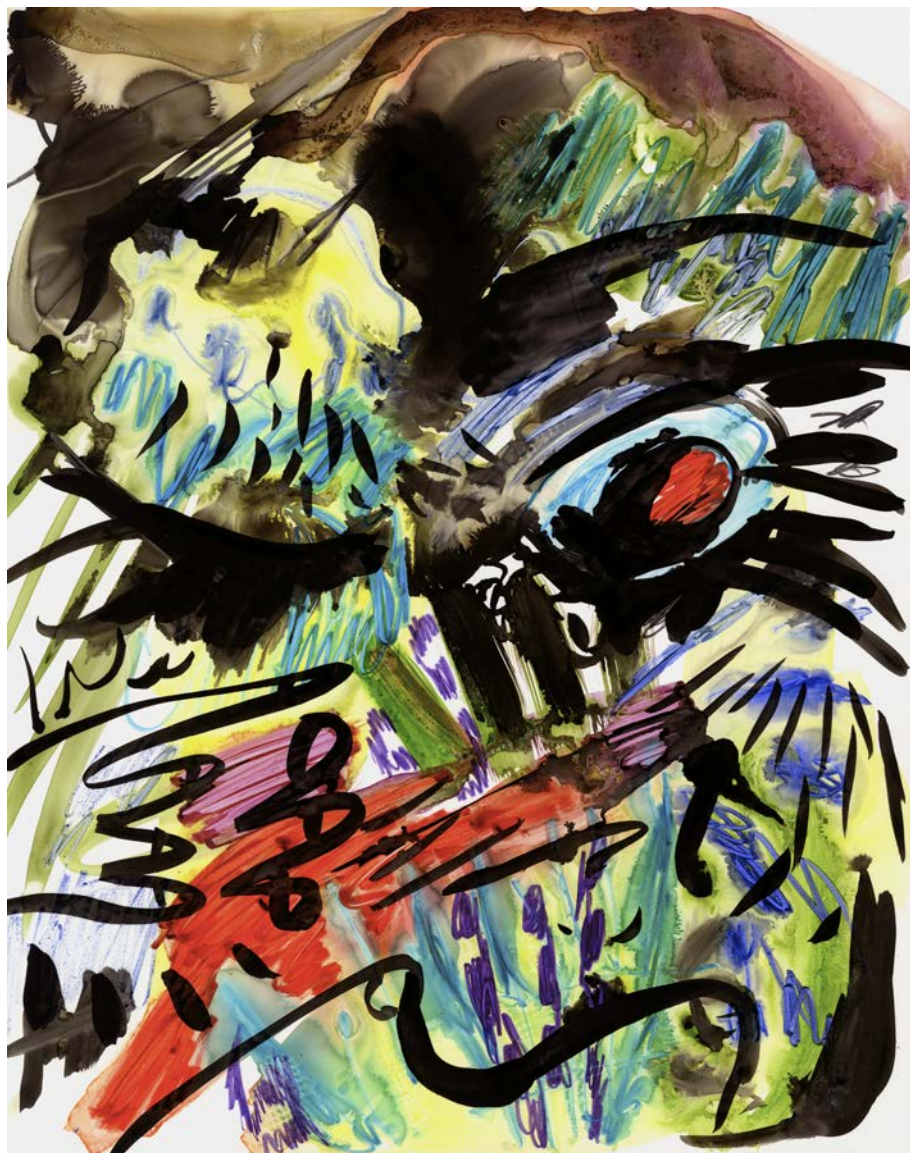
As unreadable language, the text, alongside the inexplicable pictorial illustrations, must be viewed as image, making for an altogether visual experience that is, at once, formally engaging and conceptually challenging. The undeciphered book exists as a visual and physical object more than a manuscript, an imaginative and ambiguous canvas for countless projections of possible meaning from around the globe.

For this manuscript, I created four new drawings, at a scale just inches larger than the original *Voynich Manuscript* pages, and I fancied myself an illustrator.





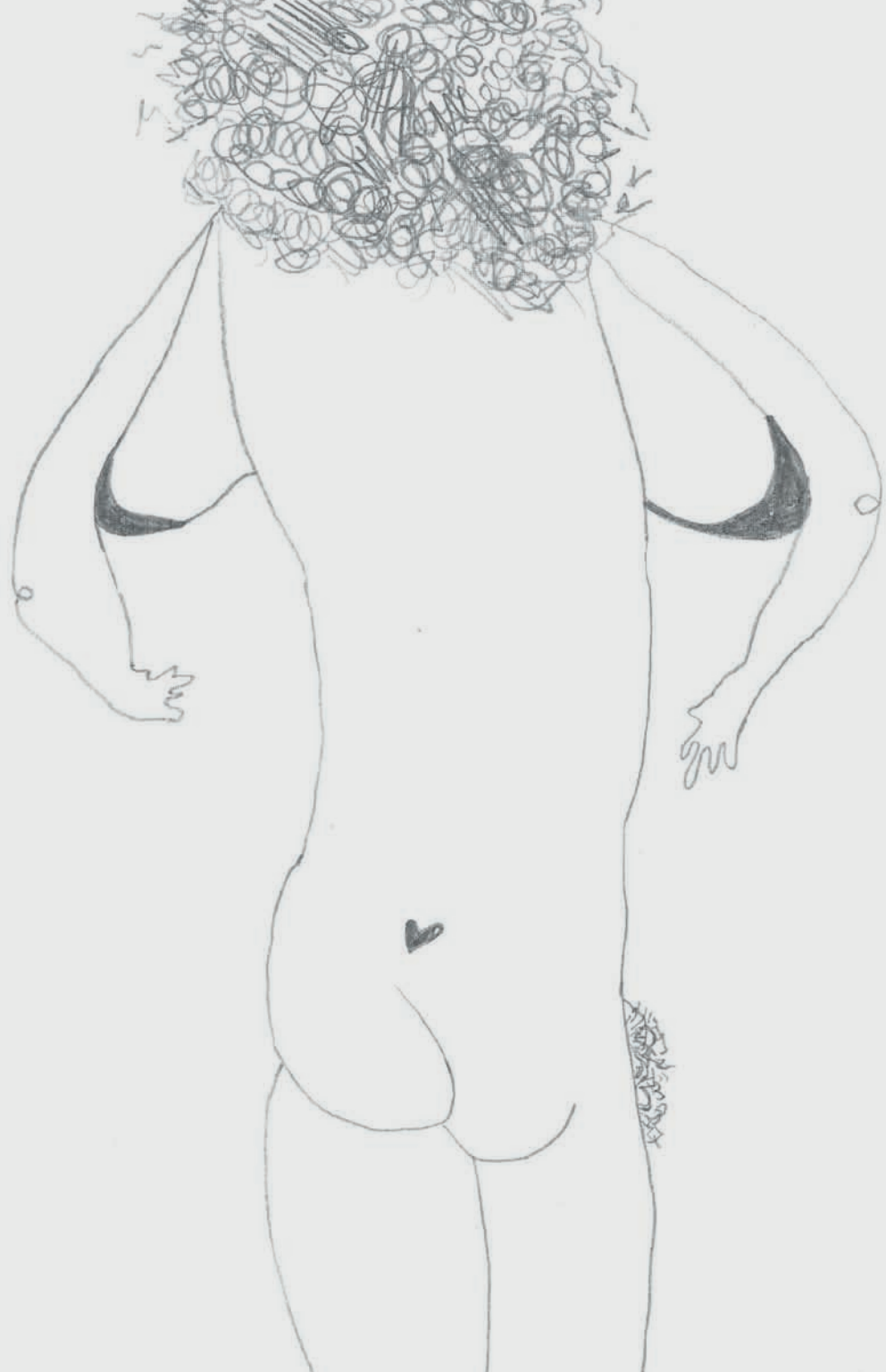


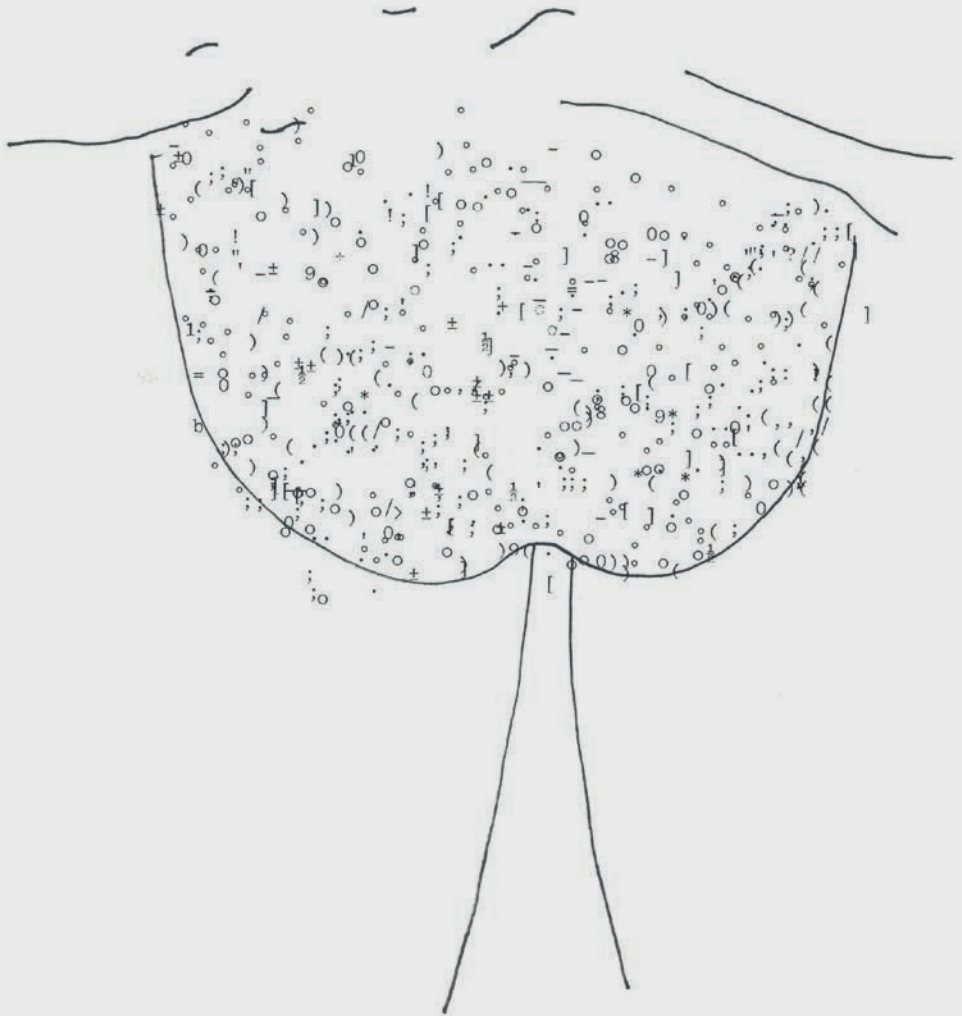












I slept with an alcoholic and all I got was an incurable disease.

I have been dodging calls from my psychiatrists for weeks now.

I got into a fight with my gallerist today. It wasn't really a fight as much as a very heating arguement. I want to stand up for what I think is best for my work without seeming like an asshole, but that seems nearly impossible to do. I tried to go into it with the affirmation 'do what a man would do.' except i'm no man, except in size. in confidence i am a mouse of a woman. i hate myself. after our conversation i just wanted to apologize and apologize, but men don't apologize. how do i stand up for what I believe in? because when you believe in something concerning your art it really doesn't have any merit or validity, it's just some arbitrary concept or belief we pull out of our ass. except we need to have the confidence to defend our so-called beliefs as if they were the cure for cancer. after my gallerist left I started to cry. i called my mom, she helped a little. she told me that her and my father loved me so much, that I was there favorite artist in the whole wide world. that people make mistakes, that this is a learning experience, that I shouldn't worry because i'll be famous one day. she has such blind faith in me. i called her from the rehabilitation center that my father is currently living in because he lost his ability to walk. my gallerists was telling me about herself and said that her mother died when she was very young. this is the most heartbreaking thing to hear. no one should go without a parent. i've been forced to come to terms with my parents ageing process. my mother is spending at least 12 hours a day with my father in the rehab center where they live in southern california and all i can do is be a little fucking tiny piece of shit and cry on the phone to her. she has enough fucking worry about stop crying to her. i yelled at her last night because all she can do is talk about how horrible my father is

doing and how she can't handle it. so i fucking yelled at her and told her to see a therapist. she can't make a fucking appointment with a therapist? i can't help you mom, please call someone that can.

i ordered \$40 of thai food after my meeting to be delivered to my house asap. all i wanted to do was get fucked up and since i'm no drug addict i'll just use food. waiting for the food to come i kept talking to myself repeating "you are a piece of shit. you are a piece of shit. you are a piece of shit. you are a piece of shit." i told myself to stop because it seemed like an unhealthy mantra to be repeating to myself.

i stopped. i ate. a lot. i drank some bourbon. i took my medication and then some more. 2 klonopin will help. i turned the lights off. i watched fucking something on tv. tv is not enjoyable when you want to fucking kill yourself, but if you don't watch tv you will actually fucking kill yourself. catch 22.

i masturbated twice in a row to some porn on my ipad. new videos but same pornstar. i usually can't watch something if i'm not familiar with it, but this time i thought i'd leave my comfort zone just a little. i came, i saw<sup>ed</sup> my vulva in 2. except it was already split down the center to start with.

## Growing up female in a Kafkaesque world.

Being a woman is like being a cockroach, except women can't survive a nuclear fallout. We get stepped on by boys + left for dead. We survive, are wounded, and need intensive therapy to heal the damage. That's the hard part - the therapy - the remembering, the talking, the rehashing, the time - the **FUCKING** time it takes just to survive.

And we are never the same as before.

We have changed.

Hopefully,

for the better. It

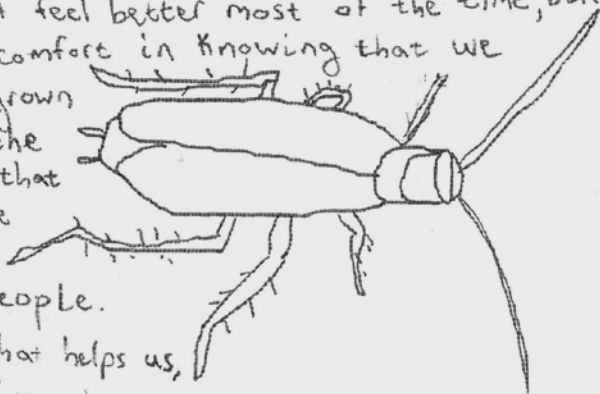
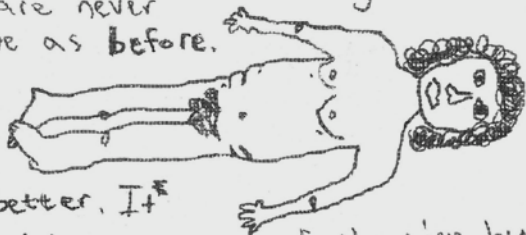
doesn't feel better most of the time, but we find comfort in knowing that we

have grown from the past, that we are better,

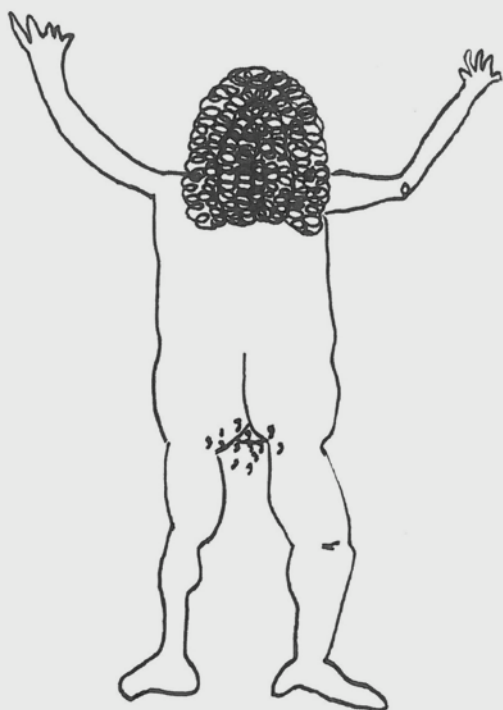
kind people.

And, that helps us,

sometimes, but in other times it doesn't bring comfort. Now, like a cockroach, we have a hardened shell.







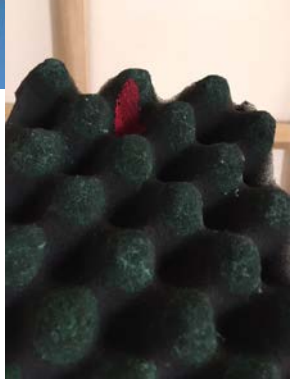












# I Awoke and Found Me Here on the Cold Hill's Side



He was standing absolutely still by a service port, staring out at the belly of the Orion docking above us. He had on a gray uniform and his rusty hair was cut short.

I took him for a station engineer. That was bad for me. Newsmen strictly don't belong in the bowels of Big Junction.

But in my first twenty hours I hadn't found any place to get a shot of an alien ship. I turned my holocam to show its big World Media insigne and started my bit about What It Meant to the People Back Home who were paying for it all.

"—it may be routine work to you, sir, but we owe it to them to share—"

His face came around slow and tight, and his gaze passed over me from a peculiar distance.

"The wonders, the drama," he repeated dispassionately. His eyes focused on me. "You consummated fool."

"Could you tell me what races are coming in, sir? If I could even get a view—"

He waved me to the port. Greedily I angled my lenses up at the long blue hull blocking out the starfield. Beyond her I could see the bulge of a black and gold ship.

"That's a Foramen," he said. "There's a freighter from Belye on the other side, you'd call it Arcturus. Not much traffic right now."

"You're the first person who's said two sentences to me since I've been here, sir. What are those colorful little craft?"

"Procyra," he shrugged. "They're always around. Like us."

I squashed my face on the vitrite, peering. The walls clanked. Somewhere overhead aliens were off-loading into their private sector of Big Junction. The man glanced at his wrist.

"Are you waiting to go out, sir?"

His grunt could have meant anything.



"Where are you from on Earth?" he asked me  
in his hard tone.

I started to tell him and suddenly saw that he  
had forgotten my existence. His eyes were on  
nowhere, and his head was slowly bowing forward  
onto the port frame.

"Go home," he said thickly. I caught a strong  
smell of tallow.

"Hey, sir!" I grabbed his arm; he was in rigid tremor.  
"Steady, man."

"I'm waiting...waiting for my wife. My loving wife."  
He gave a short ugly laugh. "Where are you from?"

I told him again.

"Go home," he mumbled.  
"Go home and make babies. While you still can."

One of the early GR casualties, I thought.

"Is that all you know?" His voice rose stridently.  
"Fools. Dressing in their styles. Gnivo suits, Aoleelee  
music. Oh, I see your newscasts," he sneered. "Nixi  
parties. A year's salary for a floater. Gamma radiation?  
Go home, read history. Ballpoint pens and bicycles--"

He started a slow slide downward in the half gee.  
My only informant. We struggled confusedly; he  
wouldn't take one of my sobertabs but I finally  
got him along the service corridor to a bench  
in an empty loading bay. He fumbled out a little  
vacuum cartridge. As I was helping him unscrew  
it, a figure in starched whites put his head in  
the bay.

"I can be of assistance, yes?" His eyes popped,  
his face was covered with brindled fur.  
An alien, a Procyon! I started to thank him but the  
red-haired man cut me off.

"Get lost. Out."

The creature withdrew, its big eyes moist. The  
man stuck his pinky in the cartridge and then put  
it up his nose, gasping deep in his diaphragm. He  
looked toward his wrist.

"What time is it?"



I told him.

"News," he said. "A message for the eager, hopeful human race. A word about those lovely, lovable aliens we all love so much." He looked at me. "Shocked, aren't you, newsboy?"

I had him figured now. A xenophobe. Aliens plot to take over Earth.

"Ah, Christ, they couldn't care less." He took another deep gasp, shuddered and straightened. "The hell with generalities. What time d'you say it was? All right, I'll tell you how I learned it. The hard way. While we wait for my loving wife. You can bring that little recorder out of your sleeve, too. Play it over to yourself some time...when it's too late." He chuckled. His tone had become chatty—an educated voice. "You ever hear of supernatural stimuli?"

"No," I said. "Wait a minute. White sugar?"

"Near enough. Y'know Little Junction Bar in D.C.? No, you're an Aussie, you said. Well, I'm from Burned Barn, Nebraska."

He took a breath, consulting some vast disarray of the soul.

"I accidentally drifted into Little Junction Bar when I was eighteen. No. Correct that. You don't go into Little Junction by accident, any more than you first shoot skag by accident.

"You go into Little Junction because you've been craving it, dreaming about it, feeding on every hint and clue about it, back there in Burned Barn, since before you had hair in your pants. Whether you know it or not. Once you're out of Burned Barn, you can no more help going into Little Junction than a sea-worm can help rising to the moon.

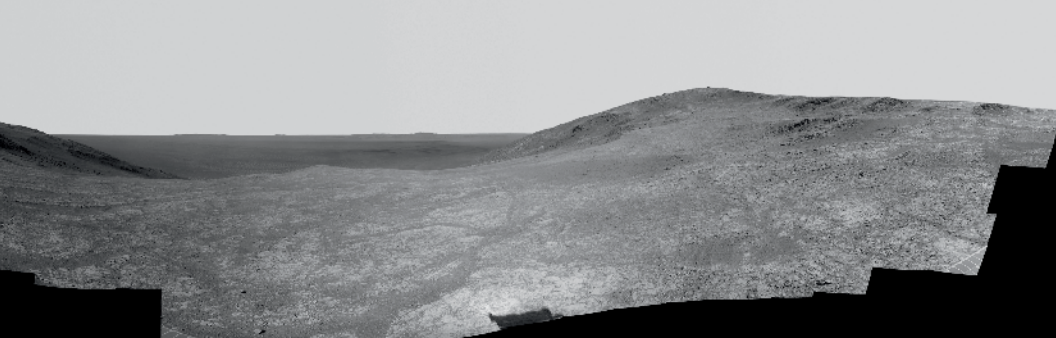
"I had a brand-new liquor I.D. in my pocket. It was early; there was an empty spot beside some humans at the bar. Little Junction isn't an embassy bar, y'know. I found out later where the high-caste aliens go—when they go out. The New Rive, the Curtain by the Georgetown Marina.

"And they go by themselves. Oh, once in a while they do the cultural exchange bit with a few frosty couples of other aliens and some stuffed humans. Galactic Amity with a ten-foot pole.

"Little Junction was the place where the lower orders went, the clerks and drivers out for kicks. Including, my friend, the perverts. The ones who can take humans. Into their beds, that is."

He chuckled and sniffed his finger again, not looking at me.

"Ah, yes, Little Junction is Galactic Amity night, every night. I ordered...what? A margarita. I didn't have the nerve to ask the snotty spade bartender for one of the alien liquors behind the bar. It was dim. I was trying to stare everywhere at once without showing it. I remember those white boneheads—Lyrans, that is. And a mess of green veiling I decided was a multiple being from some place. I caught a couple of human glances in the bar mirror. Hostile flicks. I didn't get the message, then.



"Suddenly an alien pushed right in beside me. Before I could get over my paralysis, I heard this blurry voice:

"You air a futeball enthuslash?"

"An allen had spoken to me. An allen, a being from the stars. Had spoken. To me.

"Oh, god, I had no time for football, but I would have claimed a passion for paper-folding, for dumb crambo—anything to keep him talking. I asked him about his home-planet sports, I insisted on buying his drinks. I listened raptly while he spluttered out a play-by-play account of a game I wouldn't have turned a dial for. The 'Grain Bay Pashkers.' Yeah. And I was dimly aware of trouble among the humans on my other side.

"Suddenly this woman—I'd call her a girl now—this girl said something in a high nasty voice and swung her stool into the arm I was holding my drink with. We both turned around together.

"Christ, I can see her now. The first thing that hit me was discrepancy. She was a nothing—but terrific. Transfigured. Oozing it, radiating it.

"The next thing was I had a horrifying hard-on just looking at her.

"I scrooched over so my tunic hid it, and my spilled drink trickled down, making everything worse. She pawed vaguely at the spill, muttering.

"I just stared at her trying to figure out what had hit me. An ordinary figure, a soft evidness in the face. Eyes heavy, satiated-looking. She was totally sexualized. I remember her throat pulsed. She had one hand up touching her scarf, which had slipped off her shoulder. I saw angry bruises there. That really tore it, I understood at once those bruises had some sexual meaning.

"She was looking past my head with her face like a radar dish. Then she made an 'ahhhhh' sound that had nothing to do with me and grabbed my forearm as if it were a railing. One of the men behind her laughed. The woman said, 'Excuse me,' in a ridiculous voice and slipped out behind me. I wheeled around after her, nearly upsetting my football friend, and saw that some Sirlians had come in.

"That was my first look at Sirlians in the flesh, if that's the word. God knows I'd memorized every news shot, but I wasn't prepared. That tallness, that cruel thinness. That appalling alien arrogance. Ivory-blue, these were. Two males in immaculate metallic gear. Then I saw there was a female with them. An ivory-indigo exquisite with a permanent faint smile on those bone-hard lips.

"The girl who'd left me was ushering them to a table. She reminded me of a goddamn dog that wants you to follow it. Just as the crowd hid them, I saw a man join them, too. A big man, expensively dressed, with something wrecked about his face.

"Then the music started and I had to apologize to my furry friend. And the Sellice dancer came out and my personal introduction to hell began."

The red-haired man fell silent for a minute enduring self-pity. Something wrecked about the face, I thought; it fit.

He pulled his face together.

"First I'll give you the only coherent observation of my entire evening. You can see it here at Big Junction, always the same. Outside of the Procyra, it's humans with aliens, right? Very seldom aliens with other aliens. Never aliens with humans. It's the humans who want in."

I nodded, but he wasn't talking to me. His voice had a druggy fluency.

"Ah, yes, my Sellice. My first Sellice.

"They aren't really well-built, y'know, under those cloaks. No waist to speak of and short-legged. But they flow when they walk.

"This one flowed out into the spotlight, cloaked to the ground in violet silk. You could only see a fall of black hair and tassels over a narrow face like a vole. She was a mole-gray. They come in all colors. Their fur is like a flexible velvet all over; only the color changes startlingly around their eyes and lips and other places. Erogenous zones? Ah, man, with them it's not zones.

"She began to do what we'd call a dance, but it's no dance, it's their natural movement. Like smiling, say, with us. The music built up, and her arms undulated toward me, letting the cloak fall apart little by little. She was naked under it. The spotlight started to pick up her body markings moving in the slit of the cloak. Her arms floated apart and I saw more and more.

"She was fantastically marked and the markings were writhing. Not like body paint—alive. Smiling, that's a good word for it. As if her whole body was smiling sexually, beckoning, winking, urging, pouting, speaking to me. You've seen a classic Egyptian belly dance? Forget it—a sorry, stiff thing compared to what any Sellice can do. This one was ripe, near term.

"Her arms went up and those blazing lemon-colored curves pulsed, waved, everted, contracted, throbbed, evolved unbelievably welcoming, inciting permutations. Come do it to me, do it, do it here and here and here and now. You couldn't see the rest of her, only a wicked flash of mouth. Every human male in the room was aching to ram himself into that incredible body. I mean it was pain. Even the other aliens were quiet, except one of the Sirians who was chewing out a waiter.

"I was a basket case before she was halfway through... I won't bore you with what happened next; before it was over there were several fights and I got cut. My money ran out on the third night. She was gone next day.

"I didn't have time to find out about the Sellice cycle then, mercifully. That came after I went back to campus and discovered you had to have a degree in solid-state electronics to apply for off-planet work. I was a pre-med but I got that degree. It only took me as far as First Junction then.

"Oh, god, First Junction. I thought I was in heaven—the alien ships coming in and our freighters going out. I saw them all, all but the real exotics, the tankies. You only see a few of those a cycle, even here. And the Yyelre. You've never seen that.

"Go home, boy. Go home to your version of Burned Barn..."

"The first Yyeir I saw, I dropped everything and started walking after it like a starving hound, just breathing. You've seen the pix of course, like lost dreams. Man is in love and loves what vanishes...it's the scent, you can't guess that. I followed until I ran into a slammed port. I spent half a cycles's credits sending the creature the wine they call stars' tears...Later I found out it was a male. That made no difference at all.

"You can't have sex with them, y'know. No way. They breed by light or something, no one knows exactly. There's a story about a man who got hold of a Yyeir woman and tried. They had him skinned. Stories--"

He was starting to wander.

"What about that girl in the bar, did you see her again?"

He came back from somewhere.

"Oh, yes. I saw her. She'd been making it with the two Sirians, y'know. The males do it in pairs. Said to be the total sexual thing for a woman, if she can stand the damage from those beaks. I wouldn't know. She talked to me a couple of times after they finished with her. No use for men whatever. She drove off the P Street bridge...The man, poor bastard, he was trying to keep that Sirian bitch happy single-handed. Money helps, for a while. I don't know where he ended."

He glanced at his wrist watch again. I saw the pale bare place where a watch had been and told him the time.

"Is that the message you want to give Earth? Never love an alien?"

"Never love an alien--" He shrugged. "Yeah. No. Ah, Jesus, don't you see? Everything going out, nothing coming back. Like the poor damned Polynesians. We're gutting Earth, to begin with. Swapping raw resources for junk. Alien status symbols. Tape decks, Coca-Cola, Mickey Mouse watches."

"Well, there is concern over the balance of trade. Is that your message?"

"The balance of trade." He rolled it sardonically. "Did the Polynesians have a word for it, I wonder? You don't see, do you? All right, why are you here? I mean you, personally. How many guys did you climb over--"

He went rigid, hearing footsteps outside. The Procyra's hopeful face appeared around the corner. The red-haired man snarled at him and he backed out. I started to protest.

"Ah, the silly reamer loves it. It's the only pleasure we have left...Can't you see, man? That's us. That's the way we look to them, to the real ones."

"But--"

"And now we're getting the cheap C-drive, we'll be all over just like the Procyra. For the pleasure of serving as freight monkeys and junction crews. Oh, they appreciate our ingenious little service stations, the beautiful star folk. They don't need them, y'know. Just an amusing convenience. D'you know what I do here with my two degrees? What I did at First Junction. Tube cleaning. A swab. Sometimes I get to replace a fitting."

I muttered something; the self-pity was getting heavy.

"Bitter? Man, it's a good job. Sometimes I get to talk to one of them." His face twisted. "My wife works as a—oh, hell, you wouldn't know. I'd trade—correction, I have traded—everything Earth offered me for just that chance. To see them. To speak to them. Once in a while to touch one. Once in a great while to find one low enough, perverted enough to want to touch me..."

His voice trailed off and suddenly came back strong.

"And so will you!" He glared at me. "Go home! Go home and tell them to quit it. Close the ports. Burn every god-lost alien thing before it's too late! That's what the Polynesians didn't do."

"But surely—"

"But surely be damned! Balance of trade—balance of life, man. I don't know if our birth rate is going, that's not the point. Our soul is leaking out. We're bleeding to death!"

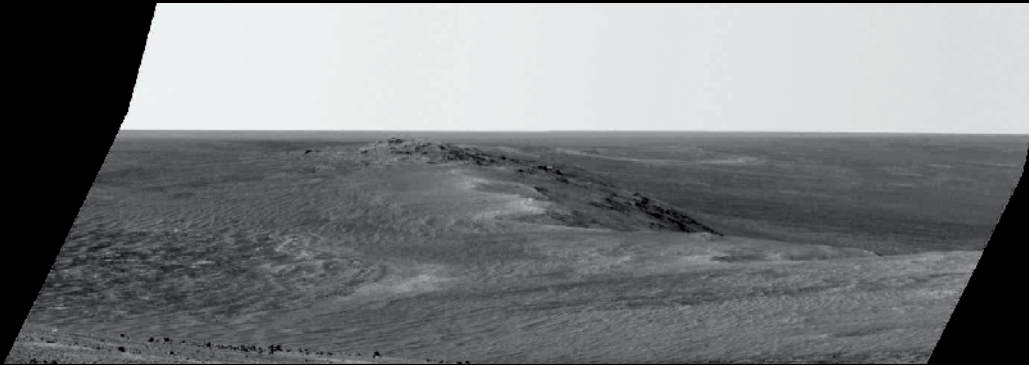
He took a breath and lowered his tone.

"What I'm trying to tell you, this is a trap. We've hit the supernormal stimulus. Man is exogamous—all our history is one long drive to find and impregnate the stranger. Or get impregnated by him; it works for women, too. Anything different-colored, different nose, ass, anything, man has to fuck it or die trying. That's a drive, y'know, it's built in. Because it works fine as long as the stranger is human. For millions of years that kept the genes circulating. But now we've met aliens we can't screw, and we're about to die trying...Do you think I can touch my wife?"

"But —"

"Look. Y'know, if you give a bird a fake egg like its own but bigger and brighter-marked, it'll roll its own egg out of the nest and sit on the fake? That's what we're doing."

"We've been talking about sex so far." I was trying to conceal my impatience. "Which is great, but the kind of story I'd hoped—"



"Sex? No, it's deeper." He rubbed his head, trying to clear the drug. "Sex is only part of it—there's more. I've seen Earth missionaries, teachers, sexless people. Teachers—they end cycling waste or pushing floaters, but they're hooked. They stay. I saw one fine-looking old woman, she was servant to a Cu'ushbar kid. A defective—his own people would have let him die. That wretch was swabbing up its vomit as if it was holy water. Man, it's deep...some cargo-cult of the soul. We're built to dream outwards. They laugh at us. They don't have it."

There were sounds of movement in the next corridor. The dinner crowd was starting. I had to get rid of him and get there; maybe I could find the Procyra.

A side door opened and a figure started towards us. At first I thought it was an alien and then I saw it was a woman wearing an awkward body-shell. She seemed to be limping slightly. Behind her I could glimpse the dinner-bound throng passing the open door.

The man got up as she turned into the bay. They didn't greet each other.

"The station employs only happily wedded couples," he told me with that ugly laugh. "We give each other... comfort."

He took one of her hands. She flinched as he drew it over his arm and let him turn her passively, not looking at me. "Forgive me if I don't introduce you. My wife appears fatigued."

I saw that one of her shoulders was grotesquely scarred.

"Tell them," he said, turning to go. "Go home and tell them." Then his head snapped back toward me and he added quietly, "And stay away from the Syrtis desk or I'll kill you."

They went away up the corridor.

I changed tapes hurriedly with one eye on the figures passing that open door. Suddenly among the humans I caught a glimpse of two sleek scarlet shapes. My first real aliens! I snapped the recorder shut and ran to squeeze in behind them.

Text by James Tiptree, Jr.  
© 1972

Images courtesy of  
Opportunity rover, NASA

45	Aglaé Bassens	F. Scott Fitzgerald, <i>The Great Gatsby</i> , ed. Michael Nowlin (Ontario, Canada: Broadview Editions, 2007), 73.
46–47		Aglaé Bassens. <i>Evening Longing</i> . 2018. Digital image.
48–49	Virginia Lee Montgomery	Juan Rulfo, <i>Pedro Páramo</i> , trans. Margaret Sayers Peden (New York: Grove Press, 1994), 58.
50		Virginia Lee Montgomery. <i>SUITCASE OF BUSINESS WITCH - Houston</i> . 2018. Digital photograph.
51		Virginia Lee Montgomery. <i>PONYTAIL SLEEPING ON BUSINESS HOTEL BED - Seattle</i> . 2018. Digital photograph.
52–55	Johannes de Young	Johannes de Young. <i>Deep Hunger</i> . 2018.
56–57	Gabriela Vainsencher	Gabriela Vainsencher. <i>Scratch</i> . 2018–2019. Pigment print. Size variable.
58	Taro Suzuki	Taro Suzuki. <i>Tantric Dawn</i> . 2017. Acrylic on canvas on panel. Two panels each 24 × 24 inches.
59–61		Tricia Collins and Richard Milazzo, “Taro Suzuki: Finding the Loophole in Sisyphus’s Contract,” (New York: White Columns, 1990).
62–63	Gabriela Vainsencher	Gabriela Vainsencher. <i>Diver</i> . 2018–2019. Pigment print. Size variable.
64	Charlotte Hallberg	Text by Charlotte Hallberg. 2018.
65		Etienne Trouvelot. <i>The planet Mars. Observed September 3, 1877, at 11h. 55m. P.M.</i> Plate VIII from “The Trouvelot Astronomical Drawings.” 1881–1882. Chalk pastel.
66	Taro Suzuki	Taro Suzuki. <i>Helio Trope</i> . 2017. Acrylic on canvas on panel. Two panels each 30 × 30 inches.
67	Jennifer Coates	Jennifer Coates. <i>Cereal Shaman</i> . 2018. Digital collage.
		Jennifer Coates. <i>Burial</i> . 2018. Digital collage.
68		Jennifer Coates. <i>Alien Visitation</i> . 2018. Digital collage.
		Jennifer Coates. <i>Adam, Eve and the Mushroom Matrix</i> . 2018. Digital collage.
69	Taro Suzuki	Taro Suzuki. <i>X Mass</i> . 2017. Acrylic on canvas on panel. Two panels each 30 × 30 inches.
70–71	Gabriela Vainsencher	Gabriela Vainsencher. <i>Locks</i> . 2018–2019. Pigment print. Size variable.
72	Lauren Silva	Instagram, silva_lauren. October 10, 2017.
73		Instagram, silva_lauren. October 5, 2017.
74	Caroline Wells Chandler	Caroline Wells Chandler and Jennifer Coates. <i>Licker</i> . 2018. Mixed media on bristol. 9 × 12 inches.
75		Johann Daniel Mylius. <i>Philosophia Reformata</i> . 1622.
76	Natalie Westbrook	Text by Natalie Westbrook. 2018.
77–82		Natalie Westbrook. <i>Illustrations of The Voynich Manuscript</i> . 2018.
83–90	Lauren Faigeles	Lauren Faigeles. Excerpts from <i>funny girl!</i> 2018. Page number dependent on mood.
91–95	Bill Komoski	Bill Komoski. Digital photographs of the artist’s studio. 2018.
96–103	Brittany Nelson	James Tiptree, Jr. [Alice B. Sheldon], “As I Awoke And Found Me Here On The Cold Hill’s Side,” in <i>Ten Thousand Light Years From Home</i> (New York: Ace Books, 1973).







# LAUREN FAIGELES IN FUNNY GIRL!



February 8, 2018 – March 10, 2018

March 10, 2018

Lauren Faigeles I feel like most of the women that I paint are me, in a way. I think this is the first time I have painted men with any kind of personality. Usually they were just dicks with the most basic male bodies. But I think that guy [pointing] has a character. [Pointing to a different painting.] That's obviously Hitler. I usually like doing the curlicue hair for every woman, but I felt more characters in these pieces. That's why I think I was just sticking with portraits. My work is usually not so portrait-heavy. But here it feels like they are a group of friends hanging out. Maybe Charles Manson is a part of it.

Nicole Kaack To a large extent, your work—and even the language from the press release—attempts to undermine or at least question traditional canonical male figures. Maybe it is a more complicated relationship as with Carolee Schneemann's "Cezanne. She was a great painter."

Lauren Faigeles I grew up on Long Island and my father has had a huge influence on me. He took me to museums all the time. The people whose work I fell in love with were mostly male artists. I remember, when I was 14, seeing a Jackson Pollock and starting to cry. That would probably be embarrassing today, but I really loved a lot of these male artists. To some extent, the people you're most inspired by are the ones you are trying to upend or kick in the butt. How do you love something and try to tear it down at the same time? I really love a lot of [Julian] Schnabel's work, but some people tell me I shouldn't like it.

James Siena What do you love about it, though? I'm curious. I like this line of thought. "They're macho assholes but I don't care." The work is the work, and you're somehow able to separate that or, almost, co-opt it.

Lauren Faigeles It's a really confusing thing to do. I saw one of [Schnabel's] shows in Berlin at the Contemporary Fine Arts. They were just gorgeous, these huge things. I was alone in this ginormous space with his work, and it just seemed like this once-in-a-lifetime experience. The colors were really gorgeous. He's super problematic, but I talk and think about his work a lot.

James Siena I remember you wrote in your book, "I wonder if Julian Schnabel sleeps in a three-piece suit." I thought, "He paints in his pajamas." [laughter] I have a much more problematic relationship to Schnabel because, I think, as a male, I'm offended by his dick-swinging swaggerishness. He'll go out, buy a really expensive

rug, and then just crap all over it with some modicum of bad, elegant painting. That you can co-opt it is a really admirable thing because, when you make an abject, crazy, fucked-up painting, it doesn't seem like it's trying to be heroic. And that's the problem I have with Schnabel. Schnabel is a kind of blowhard, heroic artist. This friend, who's an artist, related Schnabel's plate painting to *Kristallnacht*.

Lauren Faigeles     He's brought that up. I got the sense that he was doing the plates, it came up, and he just went with it. I feel that with my work I do things, people pull references, and I'm, like, "Okay." I'll go along with that.

Nicole Kaack     It wasn't about that, but now it is.

Lauren Faigeles     That's a part of it, yeah.

Nicole Kaack     That's true, though, James, about this work. It's responding to a certain brand of 'great' history painting, without trying to turn it into this religious experience. It's about the irreverence and playfulness.

James Siena     When I look at that Hitler painting, I remember what Mel Brooks said when he got his Tony award for *The Producers*. He got up to the podium to accept the award—usually people thank others—and he said, "First of all, I want to thank Hitler for being such a funny guy." He got into a lot of trouble for saying that.

Lauren Faigeles     I love that speech. Mel Brooks is really funny. I've been thinking about "Springtime for Hitler" the last few days. I do feel like spirituality plays a role in my work—I actually grew up in a more religious household and have been praying every day now, since my father passed away. In the Jewish religion, we say a Mourner's Kaddish, so I've been doing that every day. It's been bringing me back to a more spiritual, religious self that I was when I was younger. Because my work is funny or sexual, people never see the spirituality in it. But I invest my work with many of my beliefs and a lot of trust goes into my process of making, especially with these pieces. In that painting [pointing], I just really liked that green color. So I just put a bunch of it down, and trusted myself to figure out what it was. I found this man underneath. It actually says, "I love you." No one ever picks it up because it's so easy. There is a love in my work, and I think the reason why I like to deal with tougher subject matter is because we don't always think that these oppositional ideas are conjoined, that with love there's hate. Everything contradicts itself.

Nicole Kaack     There is a spirituality in it but not in the sense of the cult of the artist, which is potentially more about that tradition of painting, of masculinity. You're responding to that, depicting the female body as you do, bringing a representation and realism that is also abstract.

Lauren Faigeles     Yeah. There's a "heroine" one with these large legs and a little anus. It's almost a Yves Klein body print of big legs.

James Siena     The materiality of that painting is very human. Very animal, mucus-y.

Lauren Faigeles     James actually gave me good advice on that one. It was just the yellow and the figure, the legs. He said, "Why are you using the white of the canvas? Why don't you paint in white?" I was like, "Great idea, James." I did.

James Siena     I don't remember that.

Nicole Kaack     Part of the show was this series of drawings that you were doing in the gallery, being surrounded by your work, but also engaging with visitors. Is that something that you've done in the past as a practice? Or was this a newer thing?

Lauren Faigeles     Unfortunately, I wasn't able to be here much of the month, because I was sitting shiva in California with my family. But I do like the idea of being in a room with someone while they read my books and look at things. I like for people to be able to see my work in comfortable, safe environments like my studio. The one weekend I was here, we were making coffee for people. I like people to get comfortable, to be able to draw and touch, to talk and sit with things. And come back. I definitely want to keep working on my books, and maybe zines. It's something I haven't figured out. But hopefully it's something I can work on in the future.

Nicole Kaack     Does anyone have questions for Lauren or James?

[Audience member]     I think some people might look at your work and say there's a lot of intuition in it, but I really like the word 'trust.' Maybe you could talk a little bit more about that.

Lauren Faigeles     That’s an interesting point. I want to think about it. Usually, I would be making a lot of jokes in this situation. But at the moment, all I can think about is my father. He was a really lovely man, and very supportive. He’d always say, “Follow your passions.” He loved my decision to be an artist. In terms of trust—In my work, all this subject matter is rolling around my subconscious, all these things that I want to deal with. I could literally just think, “Okay, I’m going to make a piece about hearts.” Or, “I’m just going to put down a shade of green, and that’s going to be it.” I just believe that all of these ideas will naturally come up. Sometimes artists are too in their head, where they feel that they have to figure everything out beforehand. I like being more intuitive, where I can figure it out as it goes. These paintings are all made in the same time frame, but I usually have pieces that I work on for years. That piece [pointing] only took a day. I always think I will finish every painting that I start in a way that I would be able to put in a show. I don’t know the timeframe in most cases, but if I put something down, I know I’ll figure it out eventually.

James Siena     I would offer another word besides “intuition” and “trust.” I would also think of the word “instinct.” You have good instincts. You fill your head with things you’re curious about, so you don’t have to think consciously and plan. You react to a green shape. You make a move, and then the world finds its way into your work.





# AGLAÉ BASSENS: YOU CAN SEE BETTER FROM HERE



March 16, 2018 – April 14, 2018

April 7, 2018

Eric Oglander     You utilize painting to recontextualize these photographs. Why do you feel compelled to use paint to do so?

Agláé Bassens     I remember you warning me that you'd ask me that. Why do I paint them? I guess because I feel that—even though the paintings are really quite fast—when you look at a painting it slows you down. Maybe because you're aware that someone took time to make it. There's an element of choice. You stop and look at a painting of a fence way longer than you stop and look at an actual fence. I find that it is a tool to make you pay attention to the mundane things that you would otherwise miss. I also just love painting, so I wouldn't want to do anything else.

Eric Oglander     Was there a time when you weren't painting a thematic thing like windows or fences? Do you remember when you started on themes?

Agláé Bassens     A lot of the things I paint now, I started painting in the first week of art school, but all jammed together so that they seemed incoherent at the time. One week a window, the next week a palm tree, and so on. Over time, I've realized that they're all threads of an ongoing curiosity about what it means to look at things, what it means to participate or to be on the outside. All these different selves have different motifs that become a range of imagery. At the time, I found it confusing to be drawn in all these directions. I guess it's been boiling up for a long time, but only quite recently have I been able to group things and understand that they are different strands of the same ideas.

Eric Oglander     I think it takes just getting in the studio and working to really figure out what your work is. There are a lot of artists who, when they first start, think that they're no good because they don't immediately start making a coherent body of work. So often I hear people say that they're not creative, they don't have a creative bone in their body, but it really takes just playing. And spending a lot of time doing it, until you do find that consistent thread, or that thing that you can adhere to and feel comfortable with.

Agláé Bassens     It's funny that people feel so anxious about it because it's actually quite difficult to not put meaning into everything. If your whole practice was about removing the creative input, you would find that it's hard to do. The more internal a thing is, the more meaning. You're right, though, that when you start out, there's a lot of pressure to make work that fits a niche and carries a recognizable theme. It feels dangerous to do something that seems really random. You don't give yourself a

chance to see how that might actually be related, just in a different way that needs to be developed.

Eric Oglander I feel like people often get scared of branching out because they settle on something that was successful. God forbid they change and see how a new thing is received. Sometimes the reception is not as good as it had been. It's definitely a consistent struggle as an artist.

Aglaé Bassens I thought of a question for you.

Eric Oglander Go ahead.

Aglaé Bassens You ready?

Eric Oglander I'm ready.

Aglaé Bassens I'm thinking about the mirrors [in your Craigslist Mirrors project] as this collection of images found online and also about your desire to be less directly physically involved, to relinquish the aura of authorship and the drama of, "I created this." It seems that you want to draw attention to things you've noticed and are happy to give that the stage. But I also know that you make things carved from wood and, as we were talking about earlier, the objects that you carve have functions, which perhaps allow you to feel like you have justified their existence because they have a purpose. Where do you see yourself in the work? How do you think about your fingerprint? Do you feel like you have to make the object because there's something missing from placing the photograph that leaves you frustrated?

Eric Oglander No, I don't feel frustrated by the photo project. I appreciate it because they are other people's photographs and I'm literally just taking them and dropping them onto Instagram or Tumblr. But I also love working with my hands. The simple act of carving wood or working with something tactile is a necessity to me. I do find that I like making objects that, if not actually functional, might at least appear functional to further remove them from the art world. I also like making objects that hang on the wall rather than live in space because then they become a little less sculptural. They are like tools on the wall in a garage. Sometimes, I'll just put a hole directly in the object so I can hang it on a nail. My work is motivated by the same sensibility that leads me to collect

folk art. These people weren't trying to make objects that would sell for tons for money in gallery spaces. They're just loose, fun, haphazard, lighthearted objects.

**Agláé Bassens** This tension between what you want to make and what you enjoy doing, between craft and how you justify that with meaning . . . Is art maybe just finding something that you like doing and then figuring out, "How do I make this seem reasonable to make."

**Nicole Kaack** In terms of . . . the preciousness of the thing, perhaps? Or investing an object with aura.

**Agláé Bassens** I feel that integrity is really present in your work. You decided that it has to be honest or come from a place that is genuine, and the only way that you do that is by doing it because you enjoy it. So it sits in a strange place between craft, enjoyment, and purpose.

**Eric Oglander** With social media and the success of so many young artists—people making just ungodly amounts of money off their work—there is pressure to make the next cool, hip, important thing. I feel like it's all lost in that moment. It doesn't feel like art to me.

**Nicole Kaack** The performativity?

**Eric Oglander** The lack of integrity. What is the intention behind the work? Why are you making it? I see a lot of work that is explicitly trying to be the next impressive, hot thing rather than what the artist truly loves. I like seeing really nerdy work, where people are just excited and giddy about what they're making. I feel like that's often not the case, that the work hides behind this overwrought, flowery, academic description of what it means. I'd rather walk into a space, see the work, and be able to interact with it, feel something from it before figuring out what it's necessarily about.

...

[Audience member] Do people ever complain to you about using their images?

**Eric Oglander** One woman from Washington got in touch with me. The mirror was on her patio and was reflecting this beautiful sound. It looked like a painting, just gorgeous. I posted it and it ended up being in a Huffington Post article that they did

about Craigslist Mirrors. Her nephew saw the photo and alerted her that it looked like her sound. She got in touch with me and, at first, I was really nervous that I was going to be sued or something. Not that I'm making any money from them. But she was only excited, sent me other listings of hers where she had posted mirrors. The home where the mirror was photographed was for sale. She wanted me to post on my website and advertise her home in Craigslist Mirrors. It was really funny. But I think that's the only person that's been in touch with me. Other people have been upset that I'm essentially stealing other people's photos, but that's what my project is all about. I don't argue with that.

Nicole Kaack Do you ever encounter that as well, Aglaé? You sometimes source from Google Images.

Aglaé Bassens No one's picked up on it yet. I'm not hiding. Most of the work here is stuff that I photographed, though definitely in the past I've used found images. In this painting, for example, the pink sofa. But it doesn't really look like the picture. I'll get an image of a sofa, I'll crop it, and I'll modify the palette. It's changed a fair bit. It does do something different to use someone else's image because it becomes more generic somehow. The way that I add my personality comes from other experiences and does not directly reflect the real place. How you choose to create atmosphere is different.

Nicole Kaack You can't work on your feeling.

Aglaé Bassens So you transfer details from other things you remember. I'm trying to remember something I've seen that I don't have a picture of. I'm trying to relocate that vibe. Sometimes things are made up. That rainy window is just made up. Going back and forth you lose track of where the image is. Especially if you keep going back to the same themes and it feels like you are also holding in your mind all the paintings you've made before. Or pictures on your computer, which then died before you had a chance to back everything up, but somehow you remember this picture you took.

Nicole Kaack The failure of memory.

Aglaé Bassens It's like recognition of a memory. An interest in how much or how little you need to just trigger something you've seen before, rather than making something exactly like this picture.



# OPEN MIND: SELVA APARICIO AND VIRGINIA LEE MONTGOMERY



April 19, 2018 – May 19, 2018

Virginia Lee Montgomery

May 11, 2018

Nicole Kaack [to Virginia] I thought it would be nice to launch in with the text, “OPEN MIND,” that you wrote for this exhibition. I was so fascinated by the image that you recount again and again of [Selva Aparicio’s] hands making this incision into a cadaver’s skull. Perhaps we could focus on how that image informs the title of the show and continues an investigation into the transformations between material and memory?

Virginia Lee Montgomery Absolutely. Selva and I had a really intense bond in graduate school. As the text lays out, we had side-by-side studios in this removed corner of the Yale sculpture building. Our practices shared many interests, even though what we make is very different. A lot of what we do is about being out in the world, constantly absorbing experiences with our bodies and our minds, and later trying to translate that through whatever it is that we make. And always being hyperaware of the paradox of contextualizing that within the ivory tower situation of Yale.

There was this one strange, surreal morning when I was coming back from taking business classes at the Yale Management School, which was this really intense experience that I sought out for the sake of research. It’s actually, extremely hard to even get inside that ecosystem. It’s a separate entity that exists outside of the academic pedagogy. Selva had similarly started up a relationship with the medical school at Yale and was taking anatomy classes through the surgery group, spending her time in the morgue with dead bodies.

One morning, when we were about to go to our departmental meeting, Selva just grabbed me. She just kept saying to me, “My hands, my hands.” And I slowly put together what happened. I was the first person she encountered after she left that particular medical community, so she was recounting the memory but also building it out spatially with her fingers and these rapid eye movement blinks. She was telling me this because she was trying to ground it in me. In 20 minutes we were about to go sit down around a departmental meeting board room, talk about—I don’t know, who put black paint in the sink and eat donuts. But I had this 20-minute window with her, where she was trying to tell me about the experience of cutting open this body.

It’s one of these moments where we realize, “Oh my god, yeah, this is really what we’re doing.” How weird is it that we now have to sit in a department meeting and talk about bureaucracy? The strangest thing that I later realized, when talking with her a year later, is that she had no memory at all of telling me any of this. It had been internalized, but it was also interesting actually understanding how trauma and shock operate within the body. You can be moving forward in time, saying things, speaking things, but have no conscious memory of what was going on.



I was recently on the phone with Selva, and we were talking about what it is to be making work. We were recounting, trying to trace back to the last time that we were together, and I mentioned that moment of when she cut open the head. She was like, “How do you even know that I did that?” And I said, “You told me.” So I started telling her what she did. She was totally freaked out that I remembered it and in such detail. I was like, “Yeah, I’m storing information in my body constantly, Selva.”

Nicole Kaack I like the idea that the body can be separate from the mind and still have that sense of storage. These ears [gesturing to Selva Aparicio’s work] offer some sense of the things that they’ve heard, and can still function albeit following a different logic.

Virginia Lee Montgomery There is that classical, philosophical argument about the difference between mind and body, which I love on a romantic level. But I also grew up with a very close family member that had Lou Gehrig’s Disease, which breaks down the body while the mind stays perfect and brilliant. That’s a really fascinating thing to watch, that literal separation between mind and body. It’s a horrific disease where the synapses, the nerve endings, just start to erode, but your mind stays crystal clear. So you become really aware that the body is just a functional vessel for a soul. You still are interacting with someone’s consciousness, even though they may not have the ability to relay information out. Selva and I both have this obsession with the question of what is a spirit and how do you interact with it. Selva’s always talking about the “husk,” the material. She’s very aware of bodies, but curious about when it quits being a body and starts being material.

Nicole Kaack Or when does a body cease to be human, perhaps.

Virginia Lee Montgomery When does the body cease to be a human and when does it cease to be a recognizable form. Selva was explaining to me that when you’re actually working [on a cadaver], there is a breakdown process that continues to occur, regardless of the capabilities of deep freeze. It’s never truly a suspended form. At a certain point, it does get cut, cut, cut. Or it just starts to break down. And then, you don’t recognize it.

Nicole Kaack Thinking about husks and synecdoche, in terms of representations of yourself within your films, might we talk about your literal body surrogate, the pony-tail. How does that function?

Virginia Lee Montgomery For the past six years, I've been traveling with this four-foot-long ponytail in my suitcase to different jobs around the country. I'm a graphic facilitator, so I do professional mind map scribing. At conferences or private meetings for any type of client—from pharmaceutical to fashion, whenever there's a group speaking together in a room—I'm there in an organizational capacity, trying to map out the conversation. Almost every week, I get on an airplane and fly to a different location. I'm in New York for five days and then I'm going to Seattle—that's where Ponytail and I are going. When you become hyperconscious of being embodied as moving in space or identify as dislocated, you develop a desire for forms of psychic consistency.

The blonde ponytail prop comes from the fact that the consistency between these different events and locations is that I'm always returning at the end of the night and sleeping in a bed. What is the material that I'm interacting with at that moment? Clothes, bed. But my direct point of contact is usually my hair. If I have to leave that for the business environment, how can I still preserve that consistency as a material structure? Perhaps the blonde hair lies on the bed eternally, until I return to it again. Regardless of where my physical body is, at least that is a consistent thing in time and space. It's always there, sleeping on the pillow. Over time, I started documenting it. A lot of this video is the ponytail in hotel rooms.

In terms of making this work, I thought, "I don't know if I can make a three-hour film of just ponytails on pillows." I could, but . . . I don't know if I want to. The ponytail body-prop surrogate maneuver came as a means of facilitating a tangible form of psychic dislocation. It also allows me to make something that I could then bring with me in a suitcase, as a system that functions within the confines of my usual business job.

Nicole Kaack You purposely sought out business classes at Yale and are now in this job which places you in contact again with that kind of corporate environment. Something that you speak to in "OPEN MIND" is the act of internalizing yourself enough to mask your encounter with situations that are other or unfamiliar.

Virginia Lee Montgomery I'm here with you. I don't know what everybody's relationship with their body is, but I am super aware of myself as a spirit inside a thing. I see this, my body, as an apparatus for my spirit to move. And I work from there. I'm really interested in absorption. Psychic absorption. It's hard to map out things that are invisible that you're absorbing all the time. That's why memory is really fascinating to me.

I also wonder what it means to, as an artist, try to build an installation that then refers to metacognition.

Nicole Kaack     Or logic.

Virginia Lee Montgomery     It's a logic. I'm interested in circles or when things start to spin. I think about it in terms of spatial dimensions. What's the difference between a circle and a sphere? Because they're fundamentally the same thing, they both have this [makes a circling gesture with finger] going on. But when one circle starts to bisect another circle, that starts to bisect another circle, that starts to bisect another circle, you get a sphere. And then, in the progression of that build, you start to spin. When something starts to spin, and spin, and spin, and spin, that opens the possibility of a glitch. Or for something from the real to come forward.



# ELECTRIC MAYHEM: CAROLINE WELLS CHANDLER AND JENNIFER COATES



May 24, 2018 – June 23, 2018

Caroline Wells Chandler and Jennifer Coates *in conversation with David Humphrey and Angela Dufresne*

June 8, 2018

David Humphrey     Here's a straight question. I'm just going to pitch the ball. What is Modern art to you guys?

Angela Dufresne     I agree. I think that question is screaming in this room.

David Humphrey     You've got this Matisse *Luxe, Calme et Volupté* thing going.

Jennifer Coates     I have a crush on Modernism, on early Modernist painting, because I teach it. The first year I taught it, I wasn't feeling it. Matisse, Picasso, whatever. The dudes. But I crushed harder and harder the more I taught it. I just want to reproduce the utopian freedom of that moment with this kind of idealism.

David Humphrey     Didn't you have books of Modern art out while drawing? It's almost a third collaborator. Sort of Grandpa Modern Art.

Caroline Wells Chandler     I feel like art history always is, though. At least for me. I know it is for you [to Jennifer].

Jennifer Coates     We have fun giving each other assignments. I want you to find something from a Bosch painting or from Ensor, and just play around very irresponsibly.

Caroline Wells Chandler     Have fun with it.

Angela Dufresne     Irresponsibility—the uncivilized or uncolonized imagination—is a big aspect of many movements in Modernism, right? I'm more in Northern Europe, right now, in my own understanding. From the perspective of a performative kind of space, though, how do you hide? Besides execution, how does this play out in your daily life and help you survive the madness?

Jennifer Coates     It just sucks up the seriousness a little bit. Put an erection on it and put a sock on the erection.

Caroline Wells Chandler     Or it could just be a floating sock. Either way.

David Humphrey     Pin the erection on the donkey drawing.

Caroline Wells Chandler I haven't answered your question. I don't know exactly. But I do think about the fact that the centerpiece of the zine is *The Joi of Lyfe*. Find the staples.

Jennifer Coates The centerfold. No one can have that, by the way, because it's mine and it's not for sale.

Caroline Wells Chandler In the original painting, there are two figures that look like that. The nymph with the broken back and a clock covering the crotch. I always think about taking things that feel like a hetero gaze and then queering them up for fun. I'm into a lot of it, but I like to do something that feels affirmationally queer as well.

David Humphrey There's something so funny about that moment where the most conventional idiom—nudes in the landscape, still life, pastoral scenery—is the location of avant-garde experimentation and innovation. You're echoing that because now Modern art is in museums. Queering that work is doing again what they have done to Claude Lorraine, or something.

Angela Dufresne Breton used the word "queer" in the Surrealist manifesto. My friend Tomaso De Luca said that Picasso is the queerest artist he knows. And there is nobody more on top of G-A-Y than Tomaso in many ways. He's a scholar of Patrick Angus's work. He's a total esoteric gay knowledge whore. I was painting his portrait not too long ago and, in this beautiful Milanese accent, he says, "Picasso is the gayest artist on the planet. Still!"

Nicole Kaack What makes you say that?

Angela Dufresne Many of the ways we think about transgression—or disidentification as Esteban Muñoz would say—is to shift the register of our perception of things. To reconfigure how we conceive of ideas and forms, all of these genres, all of these tropes. He did that to all of them, fucked with them. He broke down these normative ways of seeing bodies and cultures as separate, and fucked up the ontology of things, moving away from the logic of Enlightenment thinking.

David Humphrey That's what we try to do as artists more or less. It's a rolling act of rebellion, which involves questioning all assumptions and shuffling them out to see what can emerge that is different.

Nicole Kaack I was reading something about the figure of the trickster, this person stealing from god to give to the mortals. There are ways of subverting the systems and uprooting. The artist's role is to fuck things up. However, I'm wary of using the word "queer" in the context of Picasso, largely for fear of overusing it in a way that devalues its meaning.

Jennifer Coates Well, the etymology of the word "queer" goes back to the proto-Indo European word "terkw" which means twisted. "Queer" and "distortion" both go back to the same thing.

Angela Dufresne It's interesting that you say that. I'm thinking about Mannerism right now. Really, maybe, the Modernists started with the Mannerists. That distortion that identifies something interior which has no physiological articulation gets Mannerist.

Jennifer Coates Right. Distortion—to twist, to torment, to torture. These are all the same thing. Poetry overlaps the things.

David Humphrey Torque.

Angela Dufresne I'm not even into S&M, but that sounds great. It sounds very useful.

Nicole Kaack I was reading something that you wrote, David, and in it you say something to the effect that painting is about memory, which I thought of as interesting in the context of these drawings which are about developing a language together. But also about this surreal forgetting too.

David Humphrey I think I was making a point about observational painting. That you can't really observe and draw at the same time because you actually look away from the thing while you make the mark, so you rely upon memory. That little space, opens up to what? Mind, association, convention, the whole world of interiority and the brain. Everything that we do, hopefully, as artists is tangled in a layered consciousness. Even the dumbest conventional activity is somehow tangled in subjectivity. I think what's so mad about these is that you softened the boundaries between each other. These drawings potentially turn this thing of subjectivity collective.

Caroline Wells Chandler One thing that happens when you're drawing with somebody is that they'll do something that forces you to solve this pictorial space—as long



as you insert references that you think the other will know. Like Jen bringing this awesome Stonehenge. Then in *Muppets in Space*, Gonzo's trying to get in contact with the others so "R U there?" is spelled out across the screen. Someone seeing it might think that's an error in spelling. But I knew that you would know that it's a screen capture from the Muppets. And I was working on it and sent it to you, and I thought, "Okay, that was funny."

David Humphrey     But it looks like the "T" is escaping from the word "there," to kind of isolate the word "here." Stepping onto the henge.

Jennifer Coates     It's used like a standing stone there, too.

David Humphrey     So maybe it's "rut." "Rut here."



# SCIENCE FICTIONS: BRITTANY NELSON AND GABRIELA VAINSENER



June 28, 2018 – August 6, 2018

Brittany Nelson and Gabriel Vainsencher

June 28, 2018

[Audience member] I am interested in hearing about your decision-making with motion in the physical prints—this feels like a thumb in this piece. Out of these relics, are these archival or documentarian objects? Art objects or photographs? Can you talk about your hand in the production of the work?

Brittany Nelson That decision-making is important, especially with the Mars rover [piece]. I feel like all of the works for this particular exhibition are about trying to look for something in something else. You can do that literally with a flashlight, but at the same time, the light obscures the image. I usually work more or less scientifically, making a lot of prints and editing down. I tested out every flashlight you could imagine. Every variable is tested. Of course, it is sometimes almost arbitrary which images are chosen. A lot of it ends up being decided by how much of the text is visible or sharp.

But I think it's important that the viewer knows that somebody is making these things. Or how, depending on the way something is photographed, you can feel someone standing behind the lens or not. These particular images have a certain quickness.

Nicole Kaack Like a drawing or a gesture.

Gabriela Vainsencher In these ceramic pieces, there are definitely traces of my hand, sometimes literal palm marks. Porcelain has a really high resolution as clay—it takes up any texture. So, when I knew that my body print was going to be left on it because I had to support something until it hardened a little, I actually tried to use my arms. Handprints and fingerprints are so recognizable. I tried to hold it so as not to leave a legible mark.

That said, I think these pieces are, in themselves, so bodily and expressive. They have their own motion, but also carry the imprint of the pose that I used to support them. In a certain sense, they are the negative of the motion that I used to support them. My hand is very present. And, obviously, they all started as drawings on a flat piece of clay that were then cut and manipulated.

Nicole Kaack In the way that light functions in the book pages and the slow slumping of these ceramic figures, you are both introducing limitation or resistance as a means of production. There is this feeling of letting things happen, if in a controlled, experimental way. Within parameters. Creating premises for something to exist.

I also would love to hear about what upcoming projects you're both thinking about. I remember you saying something about time capsules, Brittany.

Brittany Nelson We were talking about time machines. I'll be spending the summer in Athens, and being there has been a really strange experience surrounded by all of these ancient ruins and the Parthenon hovering over the city like the moon.

I feel like the closest we've come to time machines are early photo experiments. I've been reading a lot of writings by Henry Fox Talbot, who was one of the early innovators of photography and photo processes. A long time ago, I read an article in which I remember Talbot discussing a photograph he took of his studio window. The image wasn't looking out the glass lattice but was of the window itself. Just light coming through the window ended up being the perfect subject on which to test these photo experiments. Talbot talks about how, photographing this window, for the first time there were two images of the same thing at different times lying on a table together. It's a simple idea, but the first time it happened it would be shocking and amazing.

Nicole Kaack It's interesting that the effect of it is contingent on that being the first instance of the event—the context is so important. We could do that now, but we are so used to stopping time. Nonetheless, there can still exist the feeling of being transported.

Brittany Nelson One other thought on the idea of time that I have had while in Athens has to do with the display mechanism at the Acropolis Museum. Many of the objects on display are these chunks of old marble. They display these by placing them on top of newer blocks of marble. I think that's a time machine.

Nicole Kaack Almost exactly two windows next to each other.

Gabriela Vainsencher The marble itself is probably about the same age, right? In terms of stone age.

Brittany Nelson You just complicated it! [laughter] Yeah, for sure. There's just such a stark difference in terms of color, polish, cut.

Nicole Kaack [to Gabriela] Are you going to keep transforming between media?

Gabriela Vainsencher    Yeah. These sculptures are actually extremely new, so I may continue for now. I'm going on this residency in Woodstock in August [2018] called Byrdcliffe where they have ceramics facilities, and I'm going to make some more. See where this goes.

Karen Hesse Flatow    Do you have a limited amount of the paper remains [for the photographs] from your Hunter days?

Gabriela Vainsencher    There is a limited amount, but it's a pretty big pile. The pile is about this thick [gesturing], and only about half of them are cut. The other ones are whole, so they're just out of the book. Mathematically speaking, there are many combinations that I could still make.

Nicole Kaack    Are you reinventing the book with these?

Gabriela Vainsencher    I do want to make a book out of them. I started keeping the page numbers from the book [in the frame]. I thought it would be interesting to make a new book that retains all of the original numbers even though they no longer indicate a chronological order of any sort.

Karen Hesse Flatow    I had one question for Brittany. You talked about queer abstraction. Do you consider these works abstract within that paradigm?

Brittany Nelson    I do consider them that, though admittedly within a really strict definition of abstraction. In photo language, or if you Google "abstract photography," you will end up with a lot of close-up photos of leaves. It's a completely different definition from other media. For a while, I had been working really strictly within a non-representational language, mostly playing with these chemical experiments. Part of this project was about expanding my own definition of that. I am interested in things that get right up to the line between representational and abstract, things that exist in the liminal space between the two. This series has been new for me in that I used an actual image. I feel like images have some kind of weight to me again, and they didn't for a long time.

[Audience member]    In relation to both of your practices, I'd like to hear more about reproduction, both in multiplicity and in transformation between clay, ceramics,

and photography. Gabriela, you're talking about potentially making a book out of these, which involves taking images of pages from a book, putting them into a physical form, and potentially bringing them back to the photograph. It becomes sort of an infinite process, right? You're taking an image and it's collapsing on itself and regenerating. In that process, is it just the act of searching that feels most important? Or is there something specific that you think about?

Brittany Nelson For me, going back and forth with an image unhinges it from the time it's stuck in. That becomes a means of getting away from the nostalgia of these 19th century photo processes. I'm not interested in moving backward into that history, which is completely male-dominated. Going back and forth, using all the tools in the kit, I feel like the image becomes uncanny or unfamiliar. It is able to feel futuristic rather than nostalgic. On the other hand, with the rover, it is a futuristic, present-day photograph that I wanted to push into the past. In both cases, I am unhinging these things to make them more malleable in time.

Gabriela Vainsencher I really love that so much of science fiction is simultaneously futuristic and old—the history is futuristic, is a bizarre time space. It's more expressive of how people see themselves in that moment, and how they project into a fictionalized future. That's such an encapsulation of how science fiction works as well, as a historical artifact later.

# HESSE FLATOW / CRUSH

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