

Most of B.D. Graft's works emanate a peculiar simplicity with a deep familiarity.

*Which kind of simplicity?*

That kind that colloquially we say: "that's iconic" or "isn't that universal?". A kind that suggests a shared meaning, a world that is recognizable. That kind with a remarkable ontological simplicity or methodological reductionism. The kind that avoids complexity. The kind that "when two or more explanations are offered for a phenomenon, the simplest full explanation is preferable".

*Aren't you talking about both simplicity and familiarity?*

Yes. About both because in a way its simplicity is familiar.

*What do you mean?*

Well, let me tell you. Recently, I aimlessly bordered canyon walls in a park. I was in a pretty bad state of mind (before going to this place) and I remembered B.D. Graft mentioning to me that the woods brought him back, to a better place.

*Why is that?*

It seems the digital was ubiquitous in our lives.

*What was done to eliminate the unpleasant feeling the digital was bringing you and him?*

We went to the woods. It's funny how some of us gravitate towards a woodland when we feel oppressed by the ubiquity of the digital.

*Where was your mind when you were there?*

The woods made me think about both mine and Graft's walks and mine and his fatigues alongside Peter Handke's "we-tiredness" (brought to me by Byung-Chul Han).

*What Handke says?*

**Peter Handke**

“I have an image for the ‘all in one’: those seventeenth-century, for the most part Dutch floral, still lifes, in which a beetle, a snail, a bee, or a butterfly sits true to life, in the flowers, and although none of these may suspect the presence of the others, they are all there together at the moment, my moment.”

*What did this metaphor make you think about?*

It made me think how we are connected through these trivial walks in the woods. By our tiredness. By the fact we have been moving around in cities for a while.

*Is it something shared by B.D. Graft?*

Yes.

**B.D.Graft**

(effusively) “It is this very hectic, very lovely, very fast lifestyle that I’ve been in for a long time. And, now in my thirties I’m more drawn to nature and silence”

He looked straight at me with all his bi-dimensional presence.

*What do you mean by bi-dimensional presence?*

We talked over the computer. And, I stayed still, listening, in silence, studying his image in my rectangular computer frame.

*Why is that?*

I began to understand that our talk was far different from the one we would have in the woods.

*And, what did he say while you were in silence?*

**B.D.Graft**

(Hand over fist) “I’m expressing my desire toward silence. Less social media. Less noise. More of these still-lives that I paint. Things that calm me down when I paint”.

*And, what did you think?*

That’s tough when someone is trying to get out of, in how Han put it

**Byung-Chul Han**

(Prognostically) “the digital swarm” (where “no soul—no spirit—dwells within it”)

and during the corona pandemic is left only with it (“the digital swarm”) to get in contact with people.

*Would that be all?*

No. I remembered Arp, when he was trying to find (in his words, in Dadaland)

**Jean Arp**

(Prophetically) “an elementary art to cure man of the frenzy of the times”.

This inclination made him stay away

**Jean Arp**

(histrionically) “from the more rowdy events”

when he was in the process of making “Squares according to the Laws of Chance”.

*Why did Arp come into your mind?*

Because of the way he described the previous work.

*How was it?*

An art developed through silence or the search for it.

*But, is it the same context as B.D. Graft?*

No. The context for Arp’s “elementary art” is the World War.

*Could you be more specific?*

**Jean Arp**

(Effusively) “Despite the remote booming of artillery we sang, painted, pasted, and wrote poetry with all our might and main. We were seeking an elementary art to cure man of the frenzy of the times and a new order to restore the balance between heaven and hell.”

*Is there another reason why Arp would be remembered?*

Arp was one of the artists Graft used in his own collages.

*Which others were used?*

Many others were being picked up from books focused on 20th century modern art like de Kooning.

*Does abstract expressionism represent him?*

Abstract expressionism is not really what represents him but in terms of colour, composition, that’s a big influence of his.

*Which other artists were used?*

Helen Frankenthaler. Ellsworth Kelly (just this bright simple minimalistic use of color, use of space). Matisse. Richard Diebenkorn. Kurt Schwitters. And, by a lot of these primary colors, very geometric, very simple looking, not being simple, but being simple, in a way.

*Why are you mentioning collage?*

Because he started with collages.

*What did Graft tell you about it?*

**B.D.Graft**

(Calmly) "I started making collages when I was at university"

*What did he do in university?*

**B.D.Graft**

"I was studying film and English literature"

*Why is that?*

**B.D.Graft**

"Because I wanted to get into writing".

*Did he want to be a writer?*

Not exactly if you meant by writing what Handke does. But, yes, exactly, if by that you mean what Henri Michaux did in the level of writing.

*So, why was he studying in this particular university?*

**B.D.Graft**

"That was the way I thought I wanted to be creative in my mind".

*But then how did art come about to happen?*

**B.D.Graft**

"As a hobby, to kind of get away from all the books and all the films and all the computer screens, I found myself making collages in the evenings. So, I would turn off the computer and grab some books and I would just start cutting and pasting and doing these collages. A kind of therapy for me. To calm down my mind a bit. And, later, I've switched to acrylic and oil pastels transitioning to a more painterly drawing style".

*What else he told you?*

Later, Graft told me about his spontaneity and impatience. That someone could say that it's one of his negative sides. But, he is not that impatient (not that I can see through the conversations I had with him - quite a calm and peaceful person I would say). All Graft's works I would say come from spontaneity.

*How does he define, in his own words, this particularity?*

**B.D.Graft**

(Smiling) "So, what I do is quite fast and quite impulsive"

*Why did he smile?*

Because I knew that he was referring to a result. I know he spends a great deal of time concentrating, distilling a wide range of emotions and feelings and thoughts through a handmade process to gather, as he told me, “an amount of rawness, freshness” in the work.

*Does he only paint or draw?*

No. Last time I saw Graft in person he showed me a sculpture of the upper part of a body. Upper part of the thighs, including arms, to the head.

*Anything particular about the sculpture?*

Its head was a plant-pot. It (the sculpture) was grabbing it. Its head. Its plant-pot-head.

*Did this characteristic make you think about something in particular?*

It triggered me to think of the relation between the pot (with the plant) and the body.

*What in particular?*

Something that is not far fetched. About a 1999 survey, elaborated by Gosselain, that shows how in sub-Saharan Africa this relation is common.

*Which relation?*

Well, he stress that

**Olivier P. Gosselain**

“Either in an implicit or explicit way pots are frequently associated with human beings”.

*What else does the study show?*

It shows in a way the intense bond that we establish with objects.

*What else did you talk about?*

*Simplicity.*

*What about it?*

The simplicity of translating reality into an appealing, familiar, alluding to everyday aesthetics and naive physics.

*Is it how you define it?*

Yes if I add that his project is also one of collage and repetition.

*What did he say about it?*

**B.D.Graft**

“Just saying things simply. I don’t like when things get too complicated. Out of touch. It’s plainly to get a message across”.

*In other words?*

The process here is one of juxtaposition and of contiguity between things. However by its repetition of motifs Graft offers us more and more an immersion in his world. We surround ourselves by the wholeness of its naive physics and its stern simplicity.

*So, are you saying that this is an example of Occam's razor cut?*

Yes, indeed.