

*You said there was no past, present, or future.
Only in our verbs. That's the only place we find it.*

- Don DeLillo, *White Noise*

*Never see a brother like me go solo
Laser, anesthesia, maze ya
Ways to blaze your brain and train ya.*

- Public Enemy, *Welcome to the Terrordome*

WHICH CRISIS SHOULD YOU TRUST?

Distances unfurled across multiple meridians and time zones, expertly choreographed in a daisy-chain of precarious rafts and makeshift dinghies foundering in the South China Seas, bobbing if not bailing, drowning *and* waving. Trains became toys, terminally unhinged from their tracks, slouching perilously toward the bone-yard as Meyerson stood astride the rubble, taunting Mr. Mayhem, uncorking devouring genies, *rubbing battered Attic lamps*. Again and again, he saw them instinctively thrill to his paintings' two-fold jolt in the neck: a recognition of the calamity itself – the death-grip gestalt, cunning and sentient, frozen in extremis – immediately coupled with an overwhelming sensation of powerlessness shot through with guiltless, emancipatory relief.

Absence made the heart grow fonder: no argument there – truth and law, ruling side by side, upon a throne of adamant. But what seemed to elude these bingers as they fed with equal gusto on both his first drip and the torrential downpour that was sure to come with it, was the sheer fact of a great distance having just recently granted your compassion a temporary reprieve. Oceans away in both conscience and coordinates, every last one of them was flush with a sort of giddy, *get out of jail free*, newly-furloughed delight – the kind of ethical absolution which conveniently attends the confusion of proximity and proximate cause.

Unphased grazers & weekend abstainers, thus emboldened by this emotional rescue, could hardly resist the urge to bend the nearest available ear with a practiced, conspiratorial wink, as if to say: “Sure, we were all connected. But we weren’t really *inter*-connected, you know what I mean?”

Though the mere retinal after-image of a Meyerson painting alone, divorced from the immediate specificity of its physical, tactile armature – from the kinesthetic drama of the painterly event – had long been known to leave one gasping helplessly in its swirling, granular fog, at the end of the day, who *couldn’t* embrace the generous impulse behind these welcome sensations of being let off the hook indefinitely; the cancellation of *that* psychic debt ?

PROSPECTORS & POTENTATES

Had they gotten a little too tender toward their own feelings, lately? These electric horsemen riding rapt through the valleys of their own obscure remote feeds, scouting for verifiable fact buried in marbled fat, sketchy with the historical longview, fated to turn up gristle. The hard-core bingers among them continued to slake their empathy fatigue with whatever scraps of his painting they could get their fidgety hands on, re-upping dwindling supply chains when collective, proverbial itch became shaky, intolerable scratch with whatever dressed up data-set turned out in sumptuous drag they just happened to dredge up from the deep dead web that day.

The best song wasn’t always the single, so one never knew whether the rippling mirage staring back at you from the screen – one or two or twenty times removed from the embodied singularity of his original painterly intent – was the aftershock of some earlier operating system’s slow, rumbling depreciation – of no longer being supported – or if Meyerson was just planning while you were playing, saving while you were spending. There were solo webcam séances with two-million hits beaming shame-waves to the masses; omens of ill winds and bad moons rising roiling beneath the molten surface of any number of his meticulous compositions in oil & acrylic just waiting to leap out at you like an angry jack-in-the-box, and yet the total absence of any lingering, signature gesture implying volume, or even facture suggesting depth, evidently didn’t seem to

dampen the mob's enthusiasm for the pulse-quickenng pleasures of the hunt, factor even a little into their calculus of constant craving, curb their insatiable hunger one bit. *Stress & duress*: it was like fuel to them.

ARISTOTELIAN RETALIATIONS OF PURE FORM

Circa 2005, the normative lyrical ode passing for "content" in a quasi-abstract painting pinballed back and forth between placid lakes of feeling whose undisturbed, frictionless surfaces resisted *any* existential reverberation likely to exorcize one's hauntological ghosts (or cancel one's feelings of negative intimacy with his or her own body), on one hand; and, in heavy rotation on the opposing end of the spectrum, a Euclidean mania for every upcycled geometric form sliced & diced, teased & squeezed, cropped & inverted, and otherwise dutifully subjected to the crystal method's entire kaleidoscopic arsenal of Cubist fragmentation and multi-planar shuffling (thus giving the modernist master narrative that necessary shout-out). A tesseractual wrinkle in the space-time fabric of the canvas, as it were, whose resulting corralled "intensities" – superimposed upon other, not so dissimilar "intensities" – created the kind of generic, all-purpose, ambient interface harkening back knowingly to the first Industrial Revolution's *Poetics of Accelerated Steam-Driven Dispersion*, while simultaneously offering itself up in the here and now as an infinitely fungible Info-Age instrument of interior décor, par excellence. Pretty vacant, indeed.

Once upon a time, Ellsworth Kelly, the de facto global solutions leader and last word in all matters chroma & contrast related, declaimed with characteristic koan-like simplicity: "Color plus form is the content." And the success stories of this period, then as now, liked to think they drank from the same exalted cup. You know the drill: Roger Rectangle and Suzie Circle meet cute deep in the hollows of the Fractal Forest, trade compass for protractor in the ensuing blistering courtship, and – voila! – the Mathiverse's brittle, hard-edged scaffolding duly melts away in voluptuous, rose-colored surrender; dissolving much like a fist upon opening one's palm, to reveal . . . more math. Very complicated video games spring to mind. South Park's unrelievedly 2D aesthetic made a cameo. Both the plastic fantastic and a beige spectacular blandness, obtained – in a slack, not

so suspenseful counterpoint. And as assorted trompe l'oeil terrorists with a jones for 8-bit sci-fi tropes punctually arrived to split the bill on the abortion, the flash and fire of Meyerson's early shockwave xanadus in irradiated, hothouse hues made their climactic splashdown like the Sun to the proverbial Ra – the seismic tremble coursing through their surfaces mirroring an itchy trigger finger seemingly anxious to exercise the Truman Option; to blanket every gallery in a white-hot nuclear winter, blast radius be damned. Sleeper cells of centrifugal meaning steadily spun outward into the haute pockets of the newly-minted arriviste, setting cascading chains of custody in motion; gaining traction.

Smoke did not signal fire for Meyerson; it did not precede it. Rather, gusting solar winds lodged within the crease of the wreck signaled a self-immolating turn of mind within himself and the culture at large, a cruel lust for the epiphanic disturbance for its own obstreperous sake to ward off creeping ennui; *to keep shit real*. Jokers. Jackals. Mischief-makers with a grudge. Anarchic desublimation as longing and lifestyle choice shading darkly over time into an ominous, catastrophic veil on the brink. An urgent plea to be lifted, *coming from the veil itself*, in order to bring in the light. A sun-starved house, in other words, that needed to be brought down, leveled, razed.

NEW JACK CITY

At the joyless, antiseptic core of the prestige-granting milieus with which Meyerson was forced to traffic, the not-so-subtle coercion presented itself in the form of two options: He could wait patiently until his work became conscious of its own capture in the submissive circuits of casino capitalism; or, alternatively, he could actively cultivate cargo-cult circuses of such contrarian chutzpah that Hiroshima cashed its reparation check on the next half-life chapter. Those were the choices; I kid you not: frame your work rhetorically (the fruits of your labor) in such a way that it became “internet aware” or “internet awake” or otherwise underscored and valorized its greased passage from node to node (in the vaguely deathless vernacular, one assumes, of the undead ghoul rising if not fully tumescent); or, conversely, package your interiority (your private self) for

future public performances in a full-throated, brand-building external vision statement chock-a-block with identity politics' faded markers and cues – but now writ large, so as to accommodate the twits & grams. Whichever came first – it was all so bandwagonesque! Phoenix or Lazarus, take your pick, but make no mistake: you served the server, or *you got served*. It was death on the installment plan – by a thousand insults to the brain, and then some. The difference, such as there was, scarcely launched ships.

Over the course of a decade, then, in which Meyerson had seen the hip dollar chase various computational readymades robed in stealth velour (always skipping ahead to venerate the machine of their own delivery, morbidly fixated on the texture of transmission's exact, numerical thread count) – a decade, mind you, where if you were trying to core the Big Apple's bubble of participatory self-interest, he would have to come mightily correct and lose even the pretense of any illusions forged in a *Blazian Song of Fire & Ice* that foretold, say, a welcoming alternate universe whereby Humvees and High School football bought you a ticket to the big dance – a decade, more to the point, in which he became increasingly exposed to the tyrannical regime of *right mind, right thought, right action* imposed by the day's predominant aspirational protocols of taste, of collective consensus-building, allowing him to see for the first time how these merciless gatekeepers were about as likely to validate as subject matter a Pop-uncanny rogues gallery that might include a Lamborghini as they were to sign off on *The Lion King*.

Time passed. The zeitgeist continued to frustrate analogic conceit, settling on a Sphinx-like nowness. Narcissus vs. Prometheus superseded Alien vs. Predator as the prevailing antagonistic mythos, though protean recombinatory genius seemed to be getting the upper hand over those still prostrating themselves adoringly at the lip of the pool. Everything sped up (including speed itself) as the island began to lose the habit of truth, boomeranging incidentally now in the general, wobbly direction of some kind of truth-substitute – *a Splenda version of the truth*. Confronting Meyerson was a new species of hybrid fiction born of journalistic fact offering up grand, triumphal statements concerning the anomic state of affairs worldwide, many degrees and orders of magnitude beyond what one might consider *current events*, albeit slightly reductive in their

totalizing impulses. Nevertheless, they resonated with his aerial, bird's-eye, "macro" sensibility and seemed to dovetail neatly with one-half of the doubled, crippling sensation that would later become the cynosure of his work.

If only, he thought to himself. At the same time, he sensed in their suggestive absences a hollow core of unearned gravitas, the notion that time was not your friend woven into their glacial winding-downiness that put him in mind of all the other entropy emojis making the rounds these days, pedal-to-the-metal on their thermodynamic thrusters, doing donuts in the parking lot. Which, in his less generous moods, he had to admit, appeared to resemble intricate sand castles blowin' in the Baroque wind designed by Antoni Gaudi – but from the *Emporio A/G* line, not the really good stuff. An evacuated endgame or endgame as vacuum, he concluded, unlikely to thwart the prevailing at-a-glance aesthetic in contemporary painting given the potential viewer's instantaneous absorption of the "facts" or the "information" or the "algorithmic 411". *If only*, he thought.

"CHAIN, CHAIN, CHAIN . . ."

Here was the world of industry and its abandoned industrial structures tarted up for the grave whose systems of scaled-out extraction and expansion alienated from big nature spoke to the banality of complexity and surely not the other way around; here was the processional formation of capital and the alleged ubiquity of its transnational flows couched in the visual rhetoric of the passive, disinterested documentarian – the fly on the crumbling cement wall – whose tone of concocted exuberance lent your thesis that exotic, mysterious valence which was pure catnip to the rating agencies. And here was Meyerson himself staring directly at Gursky or Burtynsky or whatever anonymous stringer from the Associated Press strapped with a telephoto lens who happened to turn out highly saturated bespoke infinitudes backlit by a mood of casual vastness and artless malaise. If the future is but the obsolete in reverse, as Nabokov had averred, then the rust truly *did not sleep* on these busted jalopies pulled out of retirement and given a new set of rims; these antique Wurlitzer's plucked from their pensions and Palm Beach homes and

conscripted back into a slowly rotating, softly hissing, slightly warbling state of emergency preparedness to better serve as infantry in the *Ongoing Global Crisis In Disproportionate Capital Accumulation*, aka the truth between the haves and the have-nots. *If only* their compositional structure could be cloned & collapsed and perhaps thoroughly effaced, altogether?

If only their endlessly uniform, flat-as-a-Kansas-wheat-field vibe of detached & studied aloofness could be dialed up into something at least provocative enough to stir a sense of righteous indignation with a snowball's chance of implicating us all in what had become, he had to be honest, a shameful moral slide. *If only* their subject matter offered that *man-in-the-mirror moment of ruthless personal accounting* likely to undermine our tendency to osmotically emote force-fields of well-being in the grim face of black sites and torture hotels.

If only their subject matter, well . . . *mattered*.

And besides, hadn't Baldessari nailed it back in '67 with:

A TWO-DIMENSIONAL
SURFACE WITHOUT ANY
ARTICULATION IS A
DEAD EXPERIENCE

He just wanted to ask them: *Have you paid attention to the weather, recently? Been to outer space? Tasted the cold sucking vacuum of it? Spun headlong into its black brute coups?*

BIG BLUE MARBLE

Under the dirt-pearled dome of any of his studios over the past twenty years – from Jakarta to Brooklyn to Hong Kong to Paris to Seoul, and back again along the compass-spinning routes of his restless, migratory loop (the reason why “home” never synchs with the map; why home will always be a supernatural state of mind, a quantum blink in swinging actuality – *there/not there*)

– Meyerson gingerly suspended whole Biblical swan songs in near-absolute equipoise like he was trying on different cosmic grins to see which one fit; engaging their irregular perimeters and swaddling the entirety of this concussed, atmospheric bruise into the cradle of his outstretched arms in order to pit “perpetual unfinished” against “perfect resolution” in an unholy deathmatch for the *Provisional Détente World Title*, unifying the belts and not even sweating the undercard.

You could throw a coat of suicide silver right on the side of the crate for good measure, slice the motherless burden of weight and mass on your shoulders into fine ribbons of sloughed confetti sourced from soft sieved feathers, and send it drifting for days like so many intimate, bottled messages destined for the dead-letter office, but Meyerson – the orphaned architect of an origin story that had been told so many times it had become a story – considered himself the necessary first casualty in an unforgiving *Optical Inquisition* of his own thoroughly draconian devise, and so recommitted himself daily to recording every fugitive synapse of muscle memory personally expended on behalf of his paintings to deep storage, ensuring their right livelihoods, their gleaming weaponized tips. Some were heartless and some wore their hearts on their sleeve, but Meyerson would straight vomit the heart. Birth certificate or no birth certificate, he was simply too strong for too long – pound for pound and stroke for stroke punching way above his weight class.

He would cinch the puckered, dimpled center of whatever amorphous wraith wrapped in a loose burkha of hallucinatory shimmer loomed large before him in the studio that day – expectant, waiting, idling, revving. Trussed and bound and stretched across the rack & wheel of his fevered imagination (*limbs pinned back in customized stress positions*), he always made sure to leave room the size of a button for the obliging press of your finger. All the better to twist the resulting bow with a satisfying flourish, as one might fashion a particularly elaborate balloon animal into the vaguely tentacular shape of a multi-limbed Goddess of Destruction.

- David C. Hunt

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