

Fragment on Pictures

1. This work calls (or am I dreaming) for the viewer to approach with two considerations in mind. The first is strictly technical; the second, subjective (naturally!), and brings us to the question of what these paintings think. To view an object technically, in the sense of the Greek *techne*, requires that we understand subject and frame as mutually constituted, the concept of art framed by its formal necessities. Modern science – born out of the scallop shell of Copernican physics, Dutch optics, Baconian observation & Persian mathematics – produces a pure subject, shorn of its frame. This philosophy of science promotes *techne* to the ‘bringing-forth’ of a world: technology doesn’t merely frame but produces a world where we fly to the moon in order to discover our own alienation. Contrary to this history of truth production, modern art – Magritte’s jokes, Fontana’s wounded canvases, Ashbery’s artificial worlds – exposes a subject always already framed.

2. In Schreber’s psychotic revelations occurs a phrase, “the forecourts of heaven” (*Vorhöfe des Himmels*). *Himmels* nurtures an ambiguity which is lost in English: Heaven, or the heavens. The subject only desires to know what he is excluded from (in Spinoza’s diagram, “God, or nature”). The forecourts lie outside the realms of bliss, but exist in the cosmic hierarchy at the highest proximity to Him. The subject is glorified by this proximity; a single cloud gilded by an invisible sun. Psychoanalysis calls the frameless subject a psychotic operation: (Freud’s name is *Verwerfung*, translated by Lacan as *forclusion*) foreclosure. I reject as impossible the idea that is for me most unbearable and it comes to define my truth. With respect to painting, then, the subject is (constituted by) what lies outside the frame.

3. The work of Christopher Page adduces diligent research into luxury, its materials and structures, its tendency to disgust & potential for joy. This series – whose views might have been abstracted from a Grand Tour album – exposes the exemplary status of art for a bourgeois economy which approximates paradise in the domain of commodity production. Heaven is nowhere if not this world, where, according to Wordsworth’s positively maternal formula, “We find our happiness, or not at all.” We live where intimacy with the desired subject, “God, or Nature” is absolutely foreclosed. Luxury is an emergency of this forecourt; the palette served up is delicately self-differentiated - the product, you can be sure, of an expensive education in colour – and art’s subjects (History, or organic bodies) have immaculately been excluded from view. These ‘Pictures’ – their technical ingenuity, thinking as subjects – present an image of luxury that is at once an intensely ambivalent satire on “socially necessary” labour & the demonstration of an exemplary attention to the treatment of objects, for your delectation.

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