

Spring 2014

Learning to see

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Learning to See

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

School of Art, Design, and Art History

May 2014

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the many friends and guides who helped me in my three years at James Madison.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Stephen Webber for your unwavering faith and love, to Ken Szmagaj for your constant understanding and support, and to Jennifer Creef and Patricia Drummond for being real friends.

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Abstract

Learning to See is a written document accompanying the culmination of my three years painting at a graduate level. Through an exploration of line, color, shape, light and bears I traverse the wandering heart of painting. This document is an exploration of the place in which people become bears and bears become mountains.

The temple bell stops
but the sound keeps coming
out of the flowers.

—Basho¹

Learning to See

by Jade Webber

I want to be true to the fact that things have forms, and that they move, and that I search for them. There's a physical truth, where the thing has a form and there's an ultimate truth, where maybe nothing has a body or form. Yet I impose the form of a bear upon the many layers of color and line in my paintings. The bear is a metaphor for *being*. As a painter I tend to begin a painting by thinking about colors and light, tending toward pure abstraction, to me it represents the formless (that from which we came). "But," I say to myself when looking at my abstract works in progress, "Where is my friend the bear? And how can I coax him to the surface?" I attribute the act of perception to the object because through the act of painting the metaphor of walking shapes arises and I have come to think of the bear as growing out of the living work.

¹ Matsuo Basho, *The Sea and the Honeycomb: A Book of Tiny Poems*, Trans. by Robert Bly. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 31.

I need to explain

To start from the beginning.

Learning to see.

Seeing begins with a square or

a triangle

or I look for both

and so I draw

I set up blocks and

draw them

the background and foreground

and the shadows too: I see them as the same, another

square or triangle and the sky too

mountains and rivers

without end

humans too, begin as triangles

and the chairs

and the

spaces in between --

this is the turning point

this is most important

the space in between

there is no empty space,

we are all a part of one grand, interconnected, triangle, square, circle continuum.

Call it God. Call it seeing with naked awareness,

it is the beginner's mind.

Finding triangles and squares in the spaces between objects was a great realization for me. Though I am not using pure geometry in my current work, the line of thought has been very influential in the way I perceive reality. I turn the paintings upside down and sideways so that I can perceive the shapes on the surface in new ways. I try to keep the painting open as long as I can—until I feel the painting begins to insist on being seen in a certain way which feels both fresh and orderly. This way of working has grown out of the regimen of drawing from life—in which I have learned to recognize the amazing way that shapes unite everything.

Let us say that a bear is running very quickly. First I perceive the blur: the bear blends with the space so that visually the space no longer exists separate from the bear. In Buddhist terminology I perceive an optical example of no-bear in non-space.

Then my eyes focus; I recognize three dimensions (everything appears as separate objects: I see a bear and I see the landscape in which she is running). Then, after long hours in the drawing studio I notice that between the running bear's legs the negative shapes move and change. Each clear shape—so solid one moment becomes new in the next. Now I can see an object and I can also see space. The space is moving as the object moves: A group of shapes in a shaped space. A profound unity emerges: It is a bear moving through space and at the same time the space is moving—they move together,

they move each other. The space is as alive as the bear even when the bear is only sitting—paws akimbo—as they do in my paintings.

There are universes inside the paws of my most recent bear paintings (See Figure 1).

Looking at the painting I perceive that a paw has been drawn but at the same time the space inside the paw brings landscape to mind: the paw *is* the landscape. I find this understanding reflected in ancient Eastern wisdom tradition teachings. I said earlier:

mountains and rivers without end alluding to Zen master Dogen's great *Mountains and Rivers Sutra* in which he says,

Because green mountains walk, they are permanent. Although they walk more swiftly than the wind, someone in the mountains does not realize or understand it. "In the mountains" means the blossoming of the entire world. People outside the mountains do not realize or understand the mountains' walking. Those without eyes to see mountains cannot realize, understand, see, or hear this as it is. If you doubt mountains walking, you do not know your own walking; it is not that you do not walk, but that you do not know or understand your own walking. Since you do not know your walking, you should fully know the green mountains' walking. Green mountains are neither sentient nor insentient. You are neither sentient nor insentient. At this moment, you cannot doubt the green mountains' walking.²

When he says "In the mountains" he is using mountains as a metaphor for both the self and the entire universe. To be the self is to be the entire universe, the self moves and the universe moves.

² Eihei Dogen Zenji, "Mountains and Waters Discourse," *Mountains and Rivers Sutra*, Accessed January 18, 2014, www.nozt.org/teachings/edsansui.shtml.

In my most recent series (See Figures 1, 2 and 3) I am trying to take up as much of the canvas as possible with large gestural shapes so that the canvas (the universe which contains many smaller universes) becomes one entire bear which is at once flat and at the same time shows depth in the abstract passages inside of the forms. I work first to create an amorphous, group of writhing colors and searching mark-making. Then I find simplified versions of paws and ears and noses, outlining them with stark black lines. An outline is often used by beginning drawing students in an attempt to make something feel more “real” or “solid” but more often than not it serves to flatten the object; it makes the viewer aware of the line, aware of the page on which the line sits, aware of the flatness of the page—the beginning student is not usually striving for this—but I love the eye-play this creates. There are no lines in nature (by which I mean: that which meets our open eyes): there are the illusions of lines where two objects meet or where a thin shadow runs slanting along a thigh. But what appears to be a line is always actually a shape or it is the edge of a meeting of two other shapes. Painting thick black outlines tends not to solidify the bear rather it causes them to appear opaque, transparent and less unchanging. Inside of the boundary of an outline abstraction is free to swirl. My application of paint points to the surface (it reminds the viewer that they are looking at paint on canvas) but the combination of colors and scratch marks lead the viewer into worlds within the paws, bellies and noses of the bears. Which, in turn, leads into the self because the bears are like people somehow (a person wearing a bear suit).

In my drawing “Kitten is the Mountains” (See Figure 4) a kitten in the middle ground with triangular ears floats amongst a sea of colors and triangular mountain forms. Her

body has a form (she is recognizably a kitten) yet her edges blur with the mountainous background; the shapes of her ears echo the mountain shapes behind her and she becomes indistinct around her borders. Where does she end and where do the mountains begin? I drew her as she lay on a couch; the mountainous shapes are actually pillows. When I am drawing I am constantly exploring my own changing perception. As was Giacometti, his evident search in his work reminds me that shapes are always changing when trying to record them. The pillows are constantly walking in and out of perspective; they grow larger and smaller. In this way all things are mountainous; ever changing as the mountains. My perception changes them and they change my perception: it is as concrete as particles that change to waves when the viewer looks at them.

When I heard that particles become waves and waves become particles, I imagined the particle as a circle and the wave as a line. So when you look at the circle it becomes a line and when you look at the line it becomes a circle—we are made of constantly shifting energies. It's brilliantly useful for me to know this is so: because when I am trying to draw someone they are always jumping in and out of perspective, they are as big as my thumb (when I close one eye and hold it out) but I am drawing them larger than life. They are made of triangles when I am looking for shapes in them, but those triangles disappear if they shift or the light changes. Out of the corner of my eye I see a bear, but really it was a trashcan. When I am drawing a bear he hops all over the place, I can't place him in among his surroundings, if I close one eye, half of him is see-through or I see him suddenly double and at some point I just have to put some marks down, make some decisions. But I want to be true to the fact that perception is ever changing. Perception is

our only way of being in the world, so I create worlds inside the paws. I also draw lots of lines that cut across the figure and blur its edges to be true to our tendency to merge into formlessness. What I want to make clear is that I am not doing it just to be expressive; it is more true to my shifting perception. You could say it is a visual interpretation the moving particles and the waves of which the bears, the paint, the universe and we are made. Jean Debuffet put it beautifully:

I have a very strong feeling that the sum of the parts does not equal the whole.

My inclination leads me, when I want to see something really well, to regard it with its surroundings, whole. If I want to know this pencil on the table, I don't look straight on the pencil. I look on the middle of the room, trying to include in my glance as many objects as possible.

If there is a tree in the country, I don't bring it into my laboratory to look at it under my microscope because I think the wind which blows through its leaves is absolutely necessary for the knowledge of the tree and cannot be separated from it. Also the birds which are in the branches and even the song of these birds. My turn of mind is to join always more things surrounding the tree, and further, always more of the things which surround the things which surround the tree.³

I have come to find that we intermingle with the space around us; our thoughts and feelings flow through us to the people with whom we come into contact just as the pillows become mountains; they are pillows, yet they are also mountains. Her ears are mountains. When she moves her feet she changes the shapes of the mountains between her feet. Knowing this to be true I realize that each action creates waves like ripples

³ Jean Debuffet, "Anticultural Positions," Presentation at the Arts Club, Chicago, Illinois, 1951.

outward. The cat walks across the lawn and her walking changes the lawn: her walking changes the buildings. Unseen movers shape our actions. A painting with the intention to connect to another human being will continue to resonate and send out waves, I have felt them.

Years ago, in the MOMA, I was stopped short by a painting called, *The One Who Understands*, by Paul Klee; it is a minimal line painting of a face. I felt Paul Klee himself looking out of that painting, giving his understanding to any person who was listening. Imagined things have a place in reality: they are felt, they are imagined, and though they are not always photographically representable, they are physically present. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, the theorists Deleuze and Guattari say,

Of course, there is no reason to think that all matter is confined to the physicochemical strata: there exists a submolecular, unformed Matter. ... There are also nonhuman Becomings of human beings that overspill the anthropomorphic strata in all directions.⁴

There are some paintings which spill over the lines of their subjects; by which I mean they are both figurative and abstract at the same time (they are showing the hopping back and forth between particle and wave; between background and foreground). Like those of Deibenkorn, DeKooning, Cy Twombly, Joan Brown, Cecily Brown, Joan Snyder, Rothko, Picasso, Matisse, the list goes on. These enact the “Becomings of human beings;” that place between solid forms and subatomic particles. A painting is a solid an object (the paint sits still on the canvas); but somehow it needs to show constant

⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 2-3.

movement because everything is always changing so a painting must nod it's head to this tendency of the universe. I do this in my most recent series by leaving ambiguity, the figures are not complete, something is missing and they overflow their own boundaries.

But that is all concerning the act of painting: inside my paintings bears live. The Theorist Walter Benjamin says that art was “first and foremost, an instrument of magic. Only later did it come to be recognized as a work of art”⁵ – I feel art making is an everyday sort of magic: invisible things become visible and speak. Instead of an individual expression it is a part of the larger dialog that we speak silently with those who knew and will know that language.

The first people to scratch on cave walls were bears, thousands of years later people painted over those scratch marks fashioning them into animal forms. For thousands of years people continued adding to those paintings. The writer Mark Nepo said this discovery lead him to believe that

“ . . . Though each of us thinks we are creating by ourselves, for ourselves, in a complete effort within our own lifetime, there is an unfinished painting that joins us over time and we are—aware of it or not—adding to each other's expression, scratching the same wall of experience; creating an ever evolving mandala of what it means to be alive.”⁶

⁵ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Art in Theory, 1900-2000, An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 520-527.

⁶ Mark Nepo, “The Unfinished Painting,” *PARABOLA, Many Paths One Truth*, vol. 36:4 (2012): 9-12.

I paint bears as a part of a collection of myths that I am inventing, or at least recording. Sometimes a finished painting or drawing appears in my mind complete, as though it has already been made in some non-physical world and it seems to me that if I can just remember it well enough I might be able to do justice to that image. Last time that happened I was lying on my yoga mat in relaxation after a class; the head of a bear appeared in my mind leaning his head on his paw and I had to keep him there in my mind's eye until I could get up to draw him on a sticky note so as not to lose him. On the rare occasions that happens I run to the page and draw as fast as I can before I forget it, they are never quite as good as the thing I saw in my mind. Other images emerge by piecing photographs together or making sketches or writing a story and looking for interesting images. But the pieces I like best are the inspired ones, they feel like magic. Perhaps those first bear painters move our hands with their invisible paws.

In my first painting of a bear, called *Self Portrait of a Bear* (See Figure 5) I was depicting the human I recognized when looking in the eyes of a bear. The bear painted it, as a self portrait: the self who is serious and loving, wise and forgiving. He has taken on a life of his own and he talks to me, like all my favorite paintings do (mine and others'). I try to record the things the paintings seem to be saying either in color or words. I personify everything: the paintings reflect some growing notion or idea inside of myself the fruition of which is the piece.

“Now now,” they all invariably seem to say, “Remember how nice it is to be alive, just at this very moment.”

The painting *Gardener Bear* (See Figure 6) is a portrait of my husband. It has some recognizable bear features (namely the eyes and the nose) but the rest of the bear fades into brushwork; he becomes the flowers. In *Two Bears Look Away* (See Figure 7) two bears look away, the muddy colors reflect the muddiness of human relationships. I painted it in the dark, mostly with my eyes closed: this painting in particular was driven by my emotions which were reflected in the process. Because it was dark in the room I felt that the colors are given by happy chance and I let them be as they had come in the darkness. Though colors are not simple to work with; I spend a lot of the time in my studio pondering a complex color wheel—feeling the way one color reacts to the colors around it (or the way my heart reacts to them.) Color theory is fascinating, some colors have an energy that moves toward the viewer (warm colors) and some colors have a receding tendency. Mixing compliments creates endless varieties of warmth and cool; depth and flatness. I find this fascinating and profound. Colors in the world affect us in similar ways: red geraniums against the blue sky might feel like peace and might evoke a vastness—can the same color combination in the paw of a bear evoke the closeness of the flowers and the vastness of the sky within the paw of a bear?

Each bear, usually sitting upright with his soft paws drooping at his fat belly is a reminder to myself to try to be calm, to put love into the work of living. I see bears as forest people; unburdened by frenzy of the human mind; a furry person who has forgotten their troubles. They aren't the same bears who chased me in the forest as a child, they are their invisible cohorts. There is a sacred magic when bringing something to life on the

page. “Art class was like a religious ceremony to me,” Miro said, “The instruments of work were sacred objects to me.”⁷

I set to dividing the space of the painting, this globular color dragon marches in to eat another one. The colors encounter one another and merge—“*One side of the painting has become too heavy, that red shape has got to be balanced with thick orange. No, blue. No, green. No.*”

I scrape off layers of grey ooze: the outcome of the battle. Scooping mounds of wax and paint away to clean the oily mess. Making it less drippy. “*The whole thing can't be you drips!*” Adding cold wax to dry up and clean out this pile of rubbish. Healing the wounds the dragons inflict upon the surface of the canvas.

Painting is like humming up a melody from sounds that had no form. What exists just beyond objects are shapes and subshapes floating and merging (like if we squint our eyes and everything blurs.) Our colors mix with our surroundings, just as we each hum. Just beyond our own self-borders we hum together. Here is how we hum: when an attractive person walks in the room some part of my body hums. When someone is angry at me I can feel it when they walk in the room. When you feel someone's eyes on you from behind then there is a hum happening. When we sit near each other and feel love for one another we are humming in our hearts. When I am drawing a bear he hops all over; my perception has him hopping: we hum. When the bear is made of just such colors in just so light: there is a hum.

⁷ Joan Miro, “Art Quotes,” *The Painter's Keys*. Accessed January 18, 2014, http://quote.robertgenn.com/auth_search.php?authid=123.

Today I looked back at a painting from a few years ago, my favorite though it has none of the technical skill I have gained in the years since and is not technically as successful as many others. It is a relatively small painting of a bear and today I noticed the reason it works: it is because the line of his mouth is slightly curved down on the left and slightly curved up on the right. So his expression is both solemn and kind. He is always saying something different to me: that is why he is my favorite. The hidden little smile is elusive; I don't see it every day.

Perhaps what I thought was a painting about two sad bears is actually a fighting couple. They started fighting while I was drawing and I couldn't ignore it. This exact scenario happened in *Lover's Quarrel* it began as a study of three bears mourning the loss of a child and ended as a fight between two bears. The story emerges through layers of mark making and at the same time the layers conceal the story (as time conceals the past) some remnants are left for the viewer to see like bits of an old ear left near where the new ear is, the old face skewed behind the new -- but most of the work is hidden beneath. These fragments of previous inquiry, initial intentions reflect what really happens in life; like the plans of mice and men things go astray. Characters in paintings do what they would do in life, if I listen to them rather than fight them the drawing comes out in the end. Perhaps the figures become completely indistinguishable from the background.

I don't know *why*, but why is not the point, simply that it *is* that way in the drawing because it *is* that way in life. We *do* that way. We *are* that way. In *being*, we are also not *being*.

Zen master Dogen said:

Although there is birth and death in each moment of this life of birth and death, the body after the final body is never known. Even though you do not know it, if you arouse the thought of enlightenment you will move forward on the way of enlightenment. The moment is already here. Do not doubt it in the least. Even if you should doubt it, this is nothing but everyday mind.⁸

Everyday-mind is the result of our daily experiences, it is our habitual way of seeing the world. And it is not always in strict agreement with the way someone else sees things: I aim to reflect the shifting nature of perception in my work.

Once I thought I saw a stuffed cow in a field, driving by it I saw the whole thing: someone had made a head out of a tin can and legs from brooms and the body out of hay and a tail from another broom and feet made of tin cans and a nose from a watering can. But when I looked again it was a real cow. Then I had driven past it. I believe it was actually a real cow. But that fragment of a vision was true for a moment because I saw it.

Which is everyday mind?

⁸ Eihei Dogen Zenji, *Moon in a Dewdrop, The Essential Dogen: writings of the Great Zen Master*, ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi. (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2013), 52-53.

As a child I remember I thought once that I had come up with very good metaphor for the world. It was that the world was an orange and the peel was the atmosphere. But then, I forgot, almost immediately, what the rest of the metaphor was. There was something else to it, and that something else was what made it a good metaphor, I believe it had to do with the way people behave. But the fact that I cannot remember what that other thing was is the only reason I remember the whole thing in the first place. It is that missing piece which plagued me for a few days and which still comes up when I am doing work to realize metaphors for life and I remember that lost orange metaphor. It is a fragment from childhood which in itself is missing a fragment. I only remember it because it is missing something.

We are like this somehow, or I am. For example I am questing after some missing piece in a painting and day after day it eludes me until at some point some partial section of that fragment appears and the painting feels as though it has come out and said hello. So I no longer paint on it for fear of forgetting that gesture that the painting made. Always something is not quite said or realized.

I knew a professor in New Mexico who collected recordings of conversations. He said he was interested in the pauses in between words in which words were no longer apt enough, that he was interested in. Like when a woman said, "I miss him. He is" and then she paused and looked at her hands. That pregnant pause is what he was collecting: audio recordings of the missing pieces which make up the real experience of what it is to be

alive. The audio recordings weren't the final product, he was a writer, he probably wrote about it. Something is missing there and that is what makes it real.

If a human believes themselves only flesh and bone and physical parts there would be no thoughts. Thoughts have no physical reality. You can stuff a dead body full of electrolytes and a new heart and blood and all the component parts, you can push breath in and out of its lungs but you cannot make the breath a vital one. It is not food that keeps us alive: it is the missing part which does not *exist* that causes us to *exist*. This is why I draw bears in blurred abstract marks and lines, sometimes they have form and sometimes they do not. Because that is the way they exist. There are some who (for an instant) appear whole, like the stuffed cow I saw, she exists for a moment in time whole and then she ended up never having existed at all.

In Shunryu Suzuki's Zen masterpiece, *Zen Mind, Beginners Mind*, he describes in other terms a similar way of experiencing existence.

If you want to understand Buddhism it is necessary for you to forget all about your preconceived ideas. To begin with, you must give up the idea of substantiality or existence. For most people everything exists; they think whatever they see and whatever they hear exists. Of course the bird we see and hear exists. It exists, but what I mean by that may not be exactly what you mean. The Buddhist understanding of life includes both existence and non-existence. The bird both exists and does not exist at the same time. We say that a view of life based on existence alone is heretical. If you take things too seriously, as if they existed substantially or permanently, you are called a heretic. Most people may be heretics . . .

Many people these days have begun to feel, at least intellectually, the emptiness of the modern world, or the self-contradiction of their culture.⁹

Recognizing the ‘emptiness of the modern world’ was, for Suzuki, a good beginning to understanding the emptiness within all things. Though ‘emptiness’ does not mean ‘nothingness’ it alludes to the transitory nature of thoughts, bodies, objects and all things. Our culture sees things that are decaying as beautiful: Greek sculptures cracked and limbs missing are an example of this preference. The more it decays the more beautiful we seem to think it is. It is just on the verge of extinction that we recognize the inherent worth of certain species for example.

In the times we live in, it is a strange phenomenon that people look for darkness and destruction as a sign of depth and beauty. The contemporary novel, dives inevitably into the darkest parts of relationships until they fall apart; going just beyond a veneer of happiness to reveal emptiness—this is understood as depth, as the unmasking of a deep discontent which flows through all people. It is not untrue, but I believe something is missing in this outlook—the next step—after decay comes new life. Every person and every bear is alive and in that living has already been dead; it is in the surface that I find the depth. Bears are the metaphorical people of the forest (in touch with their beginnings and their endings—their roots and their leaves). For example, my painting, *Lightning behind the Roses*, (See Figure 1) depicts one highly simplified bear. But the painting shows the aftermath of a year of working and reworking the canvas, it leaves the viewer

⁹ Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, (New York: Weatherhill, 1970), 100.

wondering if it isn't also a landscape and what happened to the obliterated mountains? It is perhaps a very positive view of the apocalypse: after the storm arose a bear.

This poem accompanies my work and reveals something of the sentiment.

Three bears met in the woods at night.

*The wood is good
the wood is good*

The first bear said,

The wood is good

Said he.

The second bear, with flowers in her hair
turned to the third,

What say you?

Said she.

*Bones and flesh
Bones and flesh.
Flesh and bones.*

Said he.

How many bones?

The other two asked
with surprise in their eyes,

How many bones say thee?

*As many as sea and sky
and sky*

as many as sky and sea.

The sky and the sea make raindrops; the bear, who appears soft, shows himself to be wise inside; pondering the many bones as raindrops. He is flesh and then he is bone, and then he is flesh again.

Sometimes the fact that everything is always in flux is very sad (we grow old and die, people change and grow apart, the cycle of death and birth doesn't stop). All contemporary artists deal with the sadness of the world in different ways: I deal with sadness by searching for beauty. For example: I thought I would be sad at the dump. But the mountain of trash at the dump is amazing because it is flocked by birds, thousands of white sea gulls and little black birds with yellow beaks, eat the food we throw away.

Imagine a hill of debris on which a compacting machine with wheels as big as houses rolls monstrosly along, crushing everything under it. Just inches in front of the terrible wheels flocks of birds fly up like waves crashing on rocks—and before them am I, pushing more trash onto the land from the back of my little truck. I make sure to open the lids of my leftover food boxes, so the flocks can get to the food faster—so that less of it might get buried: relatively speaking it may be a pointless act.

But opening the food boxes is like painting: this is post post modernism. Modernism created the machines to crush things, post modernism created the trash to be crushed and post post modernism opens the lids to feed the birds.

And the birds? I don't know, that is the missing piece, that's the part we can't classify: they are the real stuff. The birds are like the softness of the paws of the cat. I can say that they both do and do not exist and this is true, but what I am really interested in is: why are they so delightfully soft?

The world is beautiful even in its contradictions. When drawing the figure (as when drawing the bear) I have to remember that the body is already dying. The writer Andre Gide said, "Know that joy is rarer, more difficult and more beautiful than sadness. Once you make this all-important discovery, you must embrace joy as a moral obligation." Beauty exists beyond us: it cannot disappear. It is like fire: one fire may be put out but the element exists in perpetuity.

When walking from light into shadow all our colors change. When painting I am interested in where people become mountains and bears become people. I am asking the observer to enter the artwork from the point of view of the inner child by using vivid colors and sweet forms which draw us in by the heart rather than the mind. The child who sees the birds and not simply the horror of the trash and the machines: the birds point to a larger being. There are also worms who eat the trash, and leave their castings and micro-organisms make the nutrients in the castings bioavailable for the tree roots in the distant future, intelligently searching in the subterranean darkness.

The walls are only white when nothing is whiter than them. For the sake of conversation, they are not in this moment white walls; they are grey (though the paint was labeled

white when it was applied). With the window light comes an invasion; a vibrant shaft of light, and the walls become suddenly gray. And the chair on which I am sitting—what color is it? It is not as light as the wall and not as dark as the corners. I find its hue solely in comparison to the rest. Nothing would have color if there were no light. A pitch dark room filled with people has no pink or blue or red in it. Color does not exist with out light. It comes into existence with the light.

Once, I was standing in a white road outside of a stone house. In the distance a white dog lay sleeping in the road and both the dog and the road were crossed by long and rich cypress shadows. They were in fact casting their shadows both across the grass and across the driveway (a white crushed stone driveway) and the tips of the shadows (acute, wobbly, horizontal triangles) fell in the grass on the opposite side of the road. How blessed is it to see a cypress shadow just in the very mid of the afternoon when it falls so generously thick and plump on not only a green surface but two greenish surfaces and a white surface. Changing its hue not once but three times in its length. First the shadow is purple in the dirt and grass and then the shadow hits the road. Here the road changes from white to azure. There is no replacement for the pleasure of witnessing the play of light and dark. And if we stand in the shadow of the cypress, are we not connected intimately by light and shadow to the grass, do we not now share a blue hue change? And if we lie in the white dust of the crushed-marble street are we not also azure?

Not to forget the white dog, lying in the street, in the shadow, just after midday. He too is ocean blue. His tail, just the tip of his tail sticks out into the grass: a triangle (the same

sort of shape as the end of the cypress shadow beside him). How can the world have such unity? I must continually practice so that I do not lose what I have found: my ability to see.

The shapes on the canvas are living. They ask the painting to become something new. My perception, always changing, drives them into being: the object breathes.

Here he comes, out of the mist: a bear.

Lumbering, floating landing—his nose is strange,

his eyes are peaceful,

his paws contain universes.

Figures



Figure 1. *Lightning Behind the Roses*, Oil on Canvas, 2014



Figure 2. *Tricia, Out of the Sea of Brahman, Oil on Canvas, 2014*



Figure 3. *Hiding Beneath a Stone*, Oil on Canvas, 2014



Figure 4. *Kitten is the Mountains*, Pastel on Paper, 2013



Figure 5. *Self Portrait of a Bear*, Oil on Canvas, 2011



Figure 6. *Gardener Bear*, Oil on Canvas, 2013



Figure 7. *Two Bears look Away*, Oil on Canvas, 2013

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