

# XII

july 14. anxiety about making paintings. i could avoid much of the anxiety by simply having others make the paintings. and i will likely do some of that. i'm not A Painter. but dammit i have to have something to DO. i can't write all day and anyway it's several years between books. making films leads into the problems of the film world, which interest me not at all. i'm enough of a visual-art-type artist to believe that one's location as a maker ought to involve *some* physical endeavor of some kind--everything can't be made by pointing and clicking--and painting is a most efficient form of physical labor--it can say a lot if you get it right, and it can travel in the world in rewarding ways. so, it's hugely efficient, energy-wise--big return for a very controlled investment. i have to be careful to separate the things that attach to the life of a painting (gallery, art dealer, sales, etc) from the actual process of making them. i've already had all the stuff that attaches to an art career, and NOW i'm making paintings? it would seem like i've gotten something backwards: painting is what you do to have a career, isn't it?, not something you do after you've already had one and walked away from it! so the question becomes instead do i enjoy the process enough to actually make them? it seems that i do. if true, then the rest is just powerful noise. i like that a painting performs in the world in a specific way, and to arrive at that specific way there's no choice but to make the painting. i'm sure that lots of painters would describe the process as a mix of fun and high anxiety. add me to that list. i think my main trepidation has to do with knowing that doing it well involves taking it at least somewhat seriously as a task, and that in doing that i will be caused to change. and do i want to change in *that* direction, given the freedom that i have to order my life as i wish? that's really the question that has me waking in the middle of the night: do i want to change in this way? because if you're doing it right, painting unleashes elemental forces in you, whether defined as cultural, psychic, or animal doesn't matter--and riding that force has been known to kill. i can already feel it kicking into gear from just a few stabs at doing it. does that mean it's in the nature of painting or does it mean i'm doing it right? *and do i really want to feel this force?*

DAVID ROBBINS

I have been seeing two pianists - Pete and Joe. They knew nothing about each other for a long time, although both sensed that something was weird. Then I lost my voice from the exhaustion of rehearsing twice a day and I had to come clean. I told Joe first, as one would a lover. I went back to Sunset Park. In the glow from Pete's macbook screen we quietly returned to work on Bach and Scarlatti. I decided to put Joe on the backburner. Who was I kidding? We will perform our five minute opera "Enkidu, If I Were You" here at Aloys Greenspon at the end of the month.

It is spring, my baby. The streets of New York are so busted we can barely walk on them. The city is bankrupt. I see you stumbling towards another from my window. I'm late. I'm in a yellow cab and my iPhone just cut you off. Actually, I hung up on you. I hung up on you (@me.com). We try to share. As galleries in the same city we share artists. We share jealously. Jack, these songs are about that. Because attention is currently one family can bankrupt another when mama spends too much time at the neighbor's. The west side confuses her in a fresh way. At GBE she spilled soup alllover her new T-shirt thinking about her friends who live close to the Fukushima nuclear plant. Chantown I miss you. These are songs of love and loss.

On May 9<sup>th</sup> Pete Drungle and I are performing live music at the gallery. We are trying to take our collaboration to the next level.

This time, for example, we decided to pair Syd Barrett's surrealist song "If I'm In You" with The Goldberg Variations by J.S. Bach.

The computer helped us butcher the Variations and Frankenstein them back together. Through cut and pasted midi files Pete made our demoted sheet music. Then our bodies had to learn it. We called Helga Davis. Froenza Schouler's dress is also a Frankenstein. The lace it is made from was drawn on a computer. A robot sewed/drew it onto tulle; the tulle was then dipped in acid which burned away the unwanted parts and created lace.

Matt Mazzucca brought rubber, Vaseline and a staple-gun and made us a set.

It's the season and the auction houses are haunted by artworks in limbo. Rumor says some sales are rigged to increase action. One painting in this exhibition is a self-portrait and an advertisement for the show. The time of an artist's emergence and their work showing up at auction is shockingly brief. With this painting I decided to cut to the chase.

A new body of paintings hang on the gallery walls. They double as barfles for the sound of the music. The Hills are alive, The City is on.

I have a boner.

Odlon Redon.

The dove in the bathroom window at Keena Spaulings broods her egg. We use the toilet carefully when we see her angry eye through the glass, so she won't fly away.

You had better get \$10 000 so you can freeze your own eggs, Miss.

Djuna Barnes would have barfed. She favored bestiality over child bearing. Thelma Wood knocked her teeth out. Sometimes violence clears the air. I'm coming for you, bitch.

That creep! Yuck. How could you?

But wait, you are gorgeous, out of control, disappearing down into the subway, which is also possessed. Hetero-normativity, My ass.

Darling, save yours.

E. S.

May 2011

EMILY SUNDBLAD

PRESS RELEASE

# XIV

*Saturday was always the day. I was eight or ten. We'd gather into the car to visit the relatives. There had to have been an illegal amount of people in my father's car. The relatives lived in various places, my father's father stayed in Mount Olivet, Saint John's was where my mother's family remained, and Pine Lawn was the last stop. Sitting in the shade of the pine trees for lunch at Pine Lawn on Long Island was considered special, a treat. We would bury quarters in the dirt.*

I have been wrong about many things; this one came as no surprise but became an encompassing series of questions. I always thought that my family had a peculiar relationship with death and the dead, but from what friends have told me, it seems fairly standard. On holidays and sometimes just on a bright cool day, we would visit the cemeteries of our relatives, especially my grandparents, my mother's parents. We would compete with the other relatives to leave a better arrangement of flowers on their graves. My mother, Helene, and my mother's brother, Paul, would begin to complain about the arrangement. Not from their perspective but acting out the perspectives of my grandparents, a type of theater. My grandmother always wanted to make sure she got a better arrangement than my grandfather. I always found this curious and absorbing. Only through my mother's and uncle's performance of them do I have these memories. The performed memories have been better than a photograph. My imagination can now conjure arresting images of my grandparents based on these plays. We may have buried them but we revisit them by integrating them back into our lives: by performing them, we become them. Talking through, embodying them, or appropriating their voice brings to life something needed to be heard now, a present sense and perhaps a tradition. Traveling with these voices gives us a method of mourning, and perhaps transforms them into a symbol. This is a symbol used for interior development of ourselves. But the questions that remain are 'Why do we keep them around?, Why do we bring them back? Is it because we think we're missing something today?'

*John Ward, also know as Jack, aka Jack the Fox was a WWI hero medic, a gambler, drinker, womanizer and a thief. My grandmother, Margret Ward put up with his shenanigans for years before his death. She owned a bar, and he worked there until she had to fire him for stealing money from the till. As kids, of course, we had no idea about any of this. We only knew him as Grandpa who would drive us out to New Jersey for pony rides and then stop at various bar and grills. We would eat and he would drink and smoke cigars. He looks like a short Mickey Spillane with his fedora, cigar and later his cane. When he finally died we were sad....but not Grandma. I think I was the only one with any idea about his proclivities because one day I ran into Grandma talking to another woman so I thought I'd hit her up for a dollar. She introduced me to the woman who she said was my Grandpa's 39 year old girlfriend. Jack the Fox was in his sixties at the time. So when I attended the wake there was no crying. Actually, Grandma had everyone in stitches telling stories about Jack. She said, "So one time when Jack was in the hospital he says to me 'Oh, Margie when I die don't bury me all the way out on Long Island in the military cemetery because you'll never come visit me.' So I says 'Jack don't worry if I buried you in the backyard I wouldn't visit you!' " Then she told stories about how when he would come home drunk and demand his dinner. "So he would sit down in the kitchen and I would give him his spaghetti dinner. When he finished he'd stand up pull a couple of bucks out of his pocket and put it on the table. He was so drunk he thought he was in a restaurant so he left me a tip!".*

Thanksgiving dinner has always been a time to talk about burial plots. How and where we want to be buried, next to who, what type of stone. This often brought to mind specifically crows. Crows ritualize the death of a member in their murder. When one dies in a specific place, crows gather silently for a few moments and then take off without a sound. Remembering the place, those of that murder will most likely never return there, avoiding it. They have buried their dead. Crows are a species of birds that teach and pass along information from generation to generation. Remembering and revisiting old territory, migrating, burial plots and maker of tools, crows adapt to and reflect the human world. They can recognize humans individually, imitate our voices (with training) and have symbolized death, luck, wisdom and trickery in myths throughout cultures. Crows are our reflections. We often say that 'they seem to know, they're watching'. Crows are animals we fear and envy. Through their patience and waiting they evoke a collective understanding in us that we fear each other and possibly our own death. Crows are sources of meditation. As we build scarecrows for these birds, the straw-filled clothes strike us in their resemblance. In our chase for immortality, when reminded of our own death we turn to violence. Lately, I've wondered, what happens if we remove death?

*Here are some classics from Edith Schkrutz, my mother-*

- 1. "Don't come crying to my box" - this was used when you weren't acting towards her in a loving respectful way as she felt you needed to be.*
- 2. Another - "I want to give while my eyes are still open" - this was used when she gave a gift, usually monetary to be enjoyed by the recipient so that she could also derive pleasure from it. I, personally, like that idea.*
- 3. And then my own - " It's wonderful to celebrate one's life before they put the lid on you" - meaning, it's great to be acknowledged & honored while you're still alive rather than eulogize you after you're gone - because then, how would you know?!*

SEAN WARD

DEAD WEIGHT

VOICES OF HELENE, KENNETH AND SEAN WARD

# IIIX