

art as war, with a smile

by Rosanna Albertini

Myths are the souls of our actions and our loves. We cannot act without moving toward a phantom. We can love only what we create.
— Paul Valéry

His world of fears. The same garden of horrors we absorb like sponges from stories reported on paper or screens. Bam! A 3 year old girl shot in the head. Dead. Three people wounded on the porch of their house, revenge. The man of the house had saved a woman in the street from a violent attack one hour before. It was yesterday it happened for a thousand years. Truth and lie embrace like lovers, the mind does it there is no escape. Adult painted by Stuckey bumps a boy on the head, adolescent or short blond female pulls off the head of another female. Daughter and mother? Same boat sailing East, a boy makes a fire and a horse stumbles over cords of violence.

One might call them connections, these grids of irregular threads that the artist traces in all his collective scenes giving them different colors. Maybe everything started from love, but Adam and Eve jump off the boat. Jay Stuckey's visual language multiplies actions in the void, each of them gluing a mute meaning to bursts of rage and to less frequent embraces. Little dreams normally hidden in names are spread over the canvas by his action-drawing, cutting, combining, painting over images of daily routine: food at Trader Joe's, a telephone number, notes and schedules on a piece of paper. The canvas accepts notes and receipts along with glue, oil colors, and oil stick marks. And there is only one TIME defined by processing such visions, the stop of time which is the painting.

Painting is not an expression of a view, as people believe, it's a way of reversing what we see into a series, with all the suffering throughout time. ... It is the spirit questioning matter. Psycho-sites: thick deposits of spirit. ... The painting shows things that are impossible to see, unfolds our own music which is invisible in a spoken space.

— Jean Dubuffet.

Jay Stuckey says he can see himself in that mental space, and he trains his ear to listen to what the space tells him.

What to do with words then? I can't name Stuckey's characters. He calls them people. Yes, they are humans. I am the horse on the boat stumbling over art history.

Philip Guston and Jonathan Borofsky are declared sources of inspiration for this artist, as well as Paolo Uccello, Giorgio Morandi, Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin and the Persian miniaturists. All of them silence virtuosos. If techniques are obviously different, the search for eternity in their paintings, with a perfection overcoming nature's, or timely qualities, is a thread that shortens their distance in history. To honor them, Stuckey must crash and bump the illusory cages of purity, in practice and ideas. With Goethe he could assert that

the worst picture can speak to our perception and imagination, for it sets them in motion, makes them free, and leaves them to themselves.

His world of painting. I follow the threads painted by Stuckey to unravel himself out of his ego. Anonymous action in non-places, incessantly in movement, violence stripped from spectacle, only apparently scribbled. A big laugh explodes at the end of his task. Intelligence becomes a biological engine (HQ). If a pale, small ego tries to reappear, he generates one more little ego who pees on him. The real challenge is to make physical, to make us feel the system of tensions that erases, among humans, the difference between ground, sky, water. For the place is mental. A field of bad energy, the triumph of rage and punk rock music the artist likes and plays.

People are no more than naked eggs with legs, arms and teeth. Monsters of energy, cut off limbs and heads fly around. Connecting rage, in FOG OF WAR, is made with green lines, a chaotic grid with no audible screaming. The painting is extremely accurate, maybe composed like a piece of music: some dark areas, dark or light gray, shape visual pauses; large white brush strokes leave something like snow which will never melt, bloody red spots bloom from pain, hope isn't dead in the battlefield. The top left corner recalls the faraway landscapes of renaissance paintings. Ding ding ding, if one looks long enough, three tender images lurk in such an absorbing mess, tiny photographic images of a house, of a couple in love, of a map pointed at Oakland, California. It's fiction! The artist was born and grew up in Washington D.C., from a Georgia family. Same nostalgia as in Robert Rauschenberg's combines. No perspective, but the space isn't flat. It couldn't be.

War as art. It happens when the artists can barely stand to distinguish himself from the crowd. He becomes a grammatical mistake like the one thrown by Arthur Rimbaud on the face of the *Parnassiens*, artists who felt closer to gods than to humans:

I is everyone else.

Therefore Stuckey distances his action drawing and painting from modern and ancient formalisms. Art history, a long stream of imaging the human condition under intolerable circumstances and yet, finding the poetic gesture that alters the look of real

objects and give them feelings that people don't dare to express. Matisse flattens a table covered with fruit at the eve of WWI: apple and pears slide down.

Jay Stuckey's naked eggs with arms legs and teeth have been stripped from everything but flesh and feelings. Grotesque and humorous, they spread primary emotions. What emerges from the picture is not who they are, except generically M or F. They are what they do, or what happens to them. A NIGHT IN THE WOODS: someone is stuck with one foot in soft, smelling shit and the other in a bear trap. Sex, music, fears and smiles generate a dance of white linear waves across the space. Some gigantic leaves participate in the dance, and the space is soft under a rain of tiny blues, grass or stars who knows, maybe a sky and a marsh and earth, oh damn, it's life, how humans feel it. The painting is a window cut out from an endless theater of experience. No living creature is bigger than another, as in Persian miniatures.

Our globe painted by Stuckey is a block of disasters almost packed for recycling. Vaguely visible images of flooded or burned out places, humans are still attached to them. The price? People in a vertical crowd fight to death against each other, walking on one another (fuck you Fuck You FUCK YOU) to grab something red held by a creature locked in sadness and isolation on the top of the pile of disasters: my body tells me it's a heart. No war can be won without it. At least, when war is art, words are pointless. As we look at the naked tragedy of our days, I hope you cry. Then I hope you laugh, facing ridiculous little people, stronger than expected.

They is us.

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