

CARNIVALE

Stephen Kuusisto

Beyond countenance is a simplicity born of color. It is politically incorrect nowadays to talk of madmen, but at sunset the mad are either speechless or very talkative. What else? All the buildings in town appear on fire.

I told you this long before.

The soul becomes dyed with the color of its thoughts. Marcus Aurelius stood in a marsh and tracked ribbons of light on the water's surface. I suppose he did this because Aristotle did also. The motives of colorists are pure suppositions.

With color one obtains an energy that seems to stem from witchcraft. Henri Matisse performed a seance under his hat.

Reason is negative and dialectical, because it resolves the determinations of the understanding into nothing (Hegel). Color is more of nothing. Color rides zero in and out of the windows.

I saw this when I was young. I thought the window was a place. Blind kid with his nose against frosted glass. The self-construing eye and its tints. Adults murmuring in the next room. Swan Lake playing on the gramophone.

There is nothing, nothing in heaven, or in nature or in mind or anywhere else which does not equally contain both immediacy and mediation (Hegel again). You see, even Hegel was a colorist.

Einstein: *Fantasie ist wichtiger als Wissen*. (Imagination is more important than knowledge.) Color is the siphon. I know a man who plays a red piano. Art is what you can get away with (Warhol). The best time to play a red piano is dusk. Color... thinks by itself, independently of the object it clothes (Baudelaire).

So you stand up. Drunk because your eyes are bad. Monet threw away his eyeglasses. What is that? It is a purple hibiscus. Someone

not you planted it. Color is an act of reason (Bonnard). The most rational mind in the world put this flower here. She was rational as a fox.

Raw Umber, Cadmium Red Light, Burnt Umber. Climbing stairs. Perfect tiny attic windows.

We were always intoxicated with color, with words that speak of color, and with the sun that makes colors live (André Derain).

A thimbleful of red is redder than a bucketful (Matisse).

Colors are both of us: the fool and the pragmatist. When I haven't any blue I use red (Picasso).

Once when I was a small boy and sailing to Europe with my parents the steward set fire to a dish of crepes. I was overjoyed and simultaneously heart broken. All that blue I couldn't touch... and the delight of strangers...

The problem for colorists: they can't tell a proper story. Color flies like leaves in wind.

Hans Hofmann: "Color is a plastic means of creating intervals... color harmonics produced by special relationships, or tensions. We differentiate now between formal tensions and color tensions, just as we differentiate in music between counterpoint and harmony."

My autistic friend T understands the human voice as colors and smells. This I understand. The sound of a particular man's voice produces a fog of ocher and the smell of excrement.

"Everything is ceremony in the wild garden of childhood" (Neruda).

I crawled under dark pines as a child, searching for the northern orchid known as the lady's slipper. One could find it because it was the color of royalty.

Formal tensions and color tensions, the iridescent orchid of the sub-

conscious. I never got over it.

I recognize I've already told you this.

The years of my childhood trembled, the hours were green. I lay in the garden in the wet light of summer and listened to the songs of rhubarb and thistles.

Immediacy and mediation: I believed colors would come to know me.

I have no reason to change my view.

At sundown I feel talkative. Dawn was a time of silence. The colors are not the same.

Inside the sunset there is a sunset, its ceremony formal in two traditions: one of hypothesis and the other of history.

