

ABSTRACT STRATEGIES: A TENDENCY

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3/2011, NYC

... in letting the abstractions of light and texture, image and voice swirl around you and carry you into a filmic experience, you become aware of what you are experiencing. The active audience members don't lose a sense of themselves while engaging in the physical sensations of abstract cinema, but feel more the possibility of being.¹

In the beginning I could not see. Slowly as I opened my eyes, soft and blurred shapes and colors moved. I was between them, up and down and down and up. This was my playpen. These were the slats I looked out of. These were my frames. These were the spaces I would fill and dissolve again in a lifetime of play and work, work and play, love and sadness, hope and despair: this perceptual feeling life I breathe.

Playing with structure and the contextualization of images you will find there is no distance between you and me, between projector and projection, maker and viewer. The viewer is the maker leading to a nowhere mirror while 'somewhere' expands to the distant collision of images and words we cannot see. Caught between frames we find a space to walk, a hesitation between breaths, a ragged line, an endless adventure. The available space is the empty frame, the half frame, the stuttering frame, shuttering frame. Hold in your mind what you have seen before. Forget your drive to conclusion. Remember the in-betweens, the faded, the throw-aways and cross your genres while dialoguing with surrounding areas.

You say: "I see the frames, I see the half lines, I see the shuttered stares, the bifocaled split; I see what you see you tell me, but I cannot feel." To feel, return to your mind's eye, return to the site within, the body site. Feel the rhythm of your breath, your tight and unstretched limbs, find your chest walls and open, connect. Deep breath, connect. If you can touch and I mean touch deeply inside, you can see. The world made whole through feeling but wonderfully still full of holes and gaps and blurs.

There is a time when abstraction falls away to realism and, thankfully, so. These are the times of trauma, of calamity, of survival

struggle. Thank goodness for our multivalent selves that can move back and forth between abstraction and realist tendencies. Recently I was caretaker for my spouse who was undergoing serious spinal surgery. I tried to avoid my tendency to abstract so I could listen attentively and particularly to the doctor's description of the operation, to the regularity and dosages of medicines, to the expectations and possible contraindications of the outcome. I worked against my proclivity to abstraction and practiced a quiet observant gaze, a gaze directed to the three dimensional trained vision, the learned seeing.

June 14, 2015

My chest has a bit of an iron band
Holding my breathing
The dishwasher makes such a sound
Swishing around in rhythm with an AC underscore.

It's not my ribcage that will be cut open, nor your's, but it is you
Who gave me this skeletal keypad with vertebrae letters to keep score
Of the forced deep breaths, the too-tight-in-the-waistband jeans (Yes, WORD,
I meant w a s t e b a n d), you little shrimp of a keyboard.

I like jotting down sensations, air currents on 'economy',
and, after I unbutton the
W A I S T and unzip for comfort, I'll remember how we
played around in bed with
The purr of the vibrator channeling third party
company.

June 16, 2015

Blue bunny in your blue made-in-China hospital wrap,
blue hair marks for electrodes,
Blue as your eyes, my silver lining blue, āhinahina
silversword, Hawaii honeymoon.

You are going in with the green coats, the shiny, muscled
surgeon, the tiger cub with twinkles.
Not Twinkies! You have a team there and so good you
won't be back 'till back is good.

I ate my tacos alone and noticed the Ginkgo tree, oldest
living plant (that's an omen)
is tinging gold on leaf tip edge. Just like us my darling.
Tinged and golden 'round the perimeters.
Tinged and golden around the edges.

Your back as strong as any spine-tree Ginkgo, even Oak.
Carving and sculpting only letting
flow more smoothly. That nerve run wild! Let 'em run
and run and run.

Let our cheeks pull in and pinch, let the jokester tweak
the fanny, but, never, never let
nerve end pinch!

Beware says the blue marked skull.

Care yells the nape dark mark.

Stay clear to the ankle bones.

Open and free let them run.

Singing 'The Sound of Music'.

Gingko-Alpine trees. Golden. Sing.

June 18, 2015

Grey snores, grey blinds, events leg pressure pump
sounds grey.
We sleep side by side: you on the hospital bed bracelets
sighing your age,
Me, even older, legs spread, butt deep sunk in my dyke
dressed day-wear.

Yes, its not even night, just grey, just snores, just pee and
pee and air pressure.
Legs, arms, with the neck sore from the position they put
you in for carving.

Not Thanksgiving but thanks for the day and the
surgeon's sewing kit,
Thanks for the long, uneven but not bad running stitch,
for the
Air that squeezes your calves, for the air that catches
your throat, for the deep deep breath.

The corners are exceptionally grey. I can't see where one
wall hits the other.

It's 4 p.m. in Mt. Sinai Hope Center, GP 8, and you've
had quite a day.

There is a tendency to fulfill our wishes, but we cannot, to project
our beings one into the other (not onto the other), to empathize,
to feel. There is a tendency but no completion, no fulfillment, no
resolution. Hesitating we find our unexpected beings. We read
between the lines, we repeat, we underline, we need to know but we
resist. We repeat and find an interlude. An inter-ludic play between.
We are an inter-ludic play.

*One of the things that 'queer' can refer to: the open mesh of possibilities, gaps,
overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of
meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of
anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically.²*

*They were regular in being gay, they learned little things that are things in
being gay, they learned many little things that are things in being
gay, they were gay every day, they were regular, they were gay, they
were gay the same length of time every day, they were gay, they were
quite regularly gay.³*

Sedgwick holds hands with Stein and we discover a poetics of

the liquid state.⁴ A place is conceived as mutable, contestable, leaky. Places and people become unstuck, flow into one another, creating alternate possibilities for temporary encounters and new understandings of community.

That behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern that we- I mean all human beings-are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are

parts of the work of art. Hamlet or a Beethoven Quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no

*Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no god. We are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself.*⁵

These words by Virginia Woolf complement the images of the final section of my post-post-modern autobiographical film, *Tender Fictions* (1995) where folks are walking in makeshift raincoats and boots through the water covered Venetian streets during the “ ”. Woolf moves to extreme realism and, in my mind, abstraction when she ‘becomes the thing itself’ while at the same time embracing the most abstract of concepts, the ability to be singular and everywhere at the same time. This ‘becoming’ is my touchstone in my Stein/Woolf world of realism and abstraction.



NOTES

- 1 Hammer, Barbara. “The Politics of Abstraction”, *Queer Looks: Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Film and Video*. ed. Martha Gever, Pratibha Parmar, and John Greyson (New York: Routledge, 1993), 70–5.
- 2 Sedgwick, Eve Kosovsky. *Tendencies* (Duke University Press, 1993), p. 8
- 3 Wikipedia. Ludic derives from Latin *ludus*, “play,” and is an adjective meaning “playful.” The term is used in philosophy to describe play as an act of self-definition; in literary studies, the term may apply to works written in the spirit of festival.
- 4 Stein, Gertrude. *Miss Furr and Miss Skeene. Geography and Plays* (published 1922)
- 5 Woolf, Virginia. A Sketch of the Past in “Moments of Being”, a Harvest HBJ Book; Harcourt Brace, 1976; pages 72–76