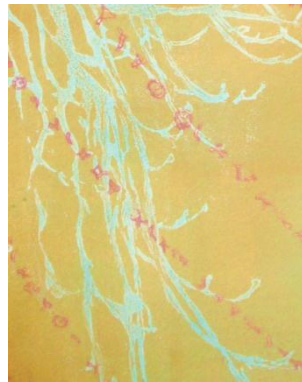


*Extracts from « The Waterfall : Reflexions on Visual Art at the Time of Environmental Crisis », 2012*



Perhaps this is only a question of taste, but as an artist, I find the shapes and colors in birds, fish, amphibians, mammals, plants, much more interesting and infinite in relation to our bodies.

...

In the representation of wildlife, sometimes called naturalistic art, there is a danger of harming conservation efforts instead of promoting them. The artist must be well formed in visual art.

When I make a bad painting of a lion, I'm only doing harm. If I deform its limbs, misuse my colors, I do nothing to help, except to repel others, including myself. This is the case for doctors, chiropractors, psychoanalysts: it is so important to know our profession well before truly contributing!

Many animal artists talk about the look in the animal's eyes as its most important aspect. However, it is not enough to represent the animal with all the slightest details and take time to catch the minute reflections in the eye, with ten

or twelve paintbrushes with different color tones in one hand. The look in an animal's eyes is an evasive poetic moment in wildlife. For this, techniques with sophisticated knowledge of color hue usage have no place. Such mastery has a deeper source. Only by cultivating our own poetic wildness, our unconscious, the zone of thought without reason, will we find ourselves capable of capturing it.

Sometimes a child is unsurprisingly more apt than a professional animal artist to succeed in this.

...

In the desert of Kalahari in Botswana, we pass through the Tsodilo hills. There are rock paintings in red hematite of animals that resist the sunlight for hundreds of years. Especially you can see that a giant artist has swept his enormous paintbrush over the boulders with pastel colors; mauve, light blue, turquoise, orange, and light yellow ochre. This in itself becomes an idea of a painting.

With such primordial testimony, how can anyone say today that painting is dead? A technique such as painting can simply not be extinguished, at least as long as mammals from whose fur and bristles they come from exist. Nothing replaces the human gesture of a paintbrush. These traces of a divine brush certify the omnipotence of painting, because it is inscribed in the universal natural world, over these rocks, in the waterfalls.

...

After such trips to Africa, an artist sees work at home in the studio differently in a revolutionary way. Faced with this continent of magic and sacredness, cruelty and vivid poetry, creations at home made in the calm of a placid day bear no weight. But the desire to embody the phenomena in Africa is awakened in a soul. And mere ideas are not sufficient.

The artist feels the need to share this experience and point out to others that we're heading the wrong direction. Like our guide in Mana Pools, who allows us to walk around among the wild animals, the lions, elephants and water buffalo, the artist becomes the spokesman of nature, with a mission to guide others toward

a similar liberating revelation, toward the entrance of our own untamed internal world.

...

Two types of knowledge exist, one that is linked to science and history, facts, and a second, the one that is captured by the unconscious. For example, when I was a child, I wasn't good at apprehending historical facts at school, and like many pupils, I had a habit of hovering in my studies only half-consciously. I was not able to concentrate on reading. I read full books without knowing anything about them. I just brushed over the words from the beginning to the end, to show my parents that I could read a big book. This state of semi-consciousness does not bring any visible result, often bad grades in history and reading comprehension, as well as total ignorance of the contents in the book, but it can add to another type of knowledge, nourish another part of the brain, that is, the one that receives and store impressions. A rich collection of indefinable impressions built up over the years, at home and during trips, at school, in books, black on white, where the intrinsic quality of the words' shapes and sizes is perceived as part of a vast composition, is an underestimated and invaluable resource for an artist.

...

For a work of art is only pleasant to look at if its author enjoys making it at every moment, from the beginning to the end. Such work can generate true communication. A delight to draw leads to a delight to contemplate.

...

I'm thinking of the painters of Barbizon. Thanks to these painters, especially Theodore Rousseau, the idea of a natural reserve in the Fontainebleau forest was born at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The paintings are long term emblems, but the painters also were militants during their time, motivated to action by their sheer love for the forest!

...

When you love someone deeply, life seems too fleeting to love this person fully. The sensation of never being totally satisfied with another person can also be felt with wildlife. This becomes even more poignant when we become committed to its cause.

A human has a tendency to forget the poetry of wildness, because of responsibilities, duties, ambitions. A voyage, like love, can remind us of the existence of the untamed. The desire to protect it rises up naturally. And we succeed in finding our way.

...

We speak of the ephemeral in art, and its intrinsic value: a performance or an organic work of art that decomposes, a melting ice sculpture, a chalk painting on the sidewalk washed out by the rain, calligraphy in the sand erased by the waves, a musical moment... However, these creations are not ephemeral; they are integral parts of a vast continuity. They are essential links in the chain of time.

...

At home I sand down the edges of my copper plates, in order to print them so that the ink doesn't get caught in them. To slide my cloth along the metal and take off the excess amount of ink, without cutting my fingers. This is how my fingers take on the color of the orange metal, and I dream of the wild landscape where it comes from.

...

Again in my workshop, from the corner of my eye, I spot a strange source of light. It turns out to be a copper plate leaning on a wooden shelf, reflecting the evening light and illuminates parts of my studio in orange lights, color of dusk. When I write about Chile, nostalgia for this dry and hot weather overcomes

me. The memory of minerals perfuming the air, the fruits, the different corn dishes, accompanied with tomatoes, onions and cylanthro, in brown Pomaire terracotta bowls.

We are lucky to live and relive the qualities of faraway places, thanks to the airplane, to appropriate their scents and climates in our memory, to see their mountains from above. I realize how much we are attached to these instances of happiness, as integral parts of our true intimate life. Our accomplishments seem less important, because these are only passing victories.

The penguin couple reminds me of our inherent attachment for our environment. And this particular love, as shown in the women who persistently pursue their search for their loved ones' bones in the earth, links us to the entrails of human love.

...

An artist can achieve this pure detached spirit as well. When we make something beautiful that stands out, we don't appropriate it; instead, we detach ourselves from it as if it were part of nature itself, just another discovery. Beyond individual artistic achievement, we are all one artist. The very best we achieve is actually others' creation as well. This vision would eliminate sensations of competition, which are dangerous for both our moral and physical environment.

We are under extreme pressure today to adopt these selfless values: there is urgency.

...

For example, this is just one of the many inscriptions on the Martin Luther King memorial: « *Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere, we are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny, whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly (...)* We are determined to work

*and fight until justice runs ‘down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream.’”*

Listen to certain American voices, kind, sincere and warm, from the land of Emerson and Thoreau, and understand that the fault is elsewhere, not in a nationality or another.

United States, Iceland or France: it's not enough to look at governments. They simply do not represent the people who allow themselves the time to think things over.

By listening to the contrary voices the swinging slows down and the boundaries are eased. This is how differences become riches, possibilities and sources of good fortune. The dualities are joined in a welcoming body and spirit.

...

The lyre bird is a living example of emancipation from moralism. This whacky feathered creature can teach us so much. He finds a spot in the middle of the forest and builds himself a little pedestal out of earth to perform a concert. His concert is closer to a comic stand-up show. He can imitate the most varied sounds, those of other birds, but also machines and human voices. According to what I learn on internet, when I want to integrate the bird into a painting and need to know its physiognomy, he can imitate a machine-saw, a hammer, and even the conversation of the wood cutters themselves. In imitating these types of sounds, you get the feeling he is accepting deforestation as part of his environment. His forest is no longer the virgin one in the South of Australia, as his ancestors knew it, there are new sounds now! Wisely, he knows how to live with these realities by integrating them into his art, and with humor. This crazy creature seems to know that we can't find purity in life, it's only in art! For him, performance art... And on top of this, he is filmed and made into a u-tube. Vanity is not only human...

This creature shows us that a space with wildlife, both separated and continuous, is sometimes possible. He admits the existence of us humans, and the least we can do, is to venerate him. I think that the forest companies should first learn the curiosities of the forest before given the license to take from it. Perhaps industrial saws would show more clemency.

...

Almost every day I take a walk across my village and then into the fields or the forest, often at the same hour of the day, around 5 in the evening. I call this my “Emmanuel Kant” walk, because the 18<sup>th</sup> century philosopher was said to take a walk every day exactly at the same hour. People were able even to set their watches to the punctual time he passed by their house.

I cross the wheat fields and observe the progress of the wildflowers along these parcels, their evolution from a bud to a flower and then a fruit, and the change of colors in their leaves. I count on this time to relax and review the good sides of a sometimes tumultuous life, both mine and the planet’s. During moments where all can seem lost or falling apart, this walk brings me back to serenity.

One day, the sky is a violet dark blue, I see a bird landing on a dry stem in the light of the sun. I am moved by the power of this scene. In the apparition of such infinite and simple beauty, I realize the well of hope one can reconquer here. Both for humanity and the vast nature that surrounds us.

It will overcome all degradation.

Thanks to airplanes and easy access to wonderful images of all over the planet, we can be constantly surrounded by beautiful scenes; Chile, the Andes; Iceland, the glaciers; Borneo, the remaining jungle... To travel there is so easy compared to 50 years ago.

But a moment of beauty in a daily life seems particularly precious. When it appears in our familiar place without searching for it, it comes with a special strength and gives us confidence, because we realize then that this source of energy accompanies us at all times.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm recalls this, “my cup runneth over”, which means “I’m satiated”. Beauty and passion fulfills us and takes over us like a revelation of truth, and we need nothing more.

One point of view in contemporary art is to believe that beauty is a luxury. We wonder, how can we allow ourselves to create “beauty” during the moments of crisis, faced with the ever multiplying catastrophes?

But once we've questioned these ideas and re-examined them, we can move on! We can continue our path, and allow the beauty of nature guide us. Originality will only occur when we make steps forward.

I especially like to look at leaves against the sky while I walk in the Fontainebleau forest. This is how their shapes best reveal themselves. And the windows in my house allow me many occasions to observe them. When I pass in front of the kitchen window, there is a maple tree, and I see the blurry shapes of leaves appear in the wind, and the moving shadows they create against the wall, as if they were a picture. In order to capture this moment in visual form, we would need extensive artistic training and experience. A simplistic representation of the leaves would not communicate their essence. Neither a photo nor a concept would be enough. It is a lifetime project.

Contemporary art explores the fusion between art and nature, seen for example in land art, and installations where these notions are put into play. But true fusion remains impossible in that we would never attain the heights of what nature offers us.

The total union of these two poles is only an idea. It remains virtual but can serve as a lantern for the perseverant artist.

As a beginning and for visual art today, I think there can be a meeting of energies. We can both provide ourselves with the rigors of visual history and gather the languages of an innovative and powerful contemporary art.

...

The pictorial language is a form of preliminary expression, the underlying current. Then writing, a mode of rebellion, allows a flow of visceral resistance.

A waterfall of words gushes forth. They are fervent, combative, as if to attempt to purify a world of lies, interpretations upon interpretations. A radical recourse to the power of nature.

Thanks to artistic transcription and to writing, a renewed strength will accompany the mission of defending the wild, both on earth and in ourselves.