

Bruno Perramant

The sense of measure

“Good God! she said, I never saw you looking so happy. Did you paint a picture or did you end up discovering that in fact the human race doesn't even need to make art...”
William Faulkner, *If I Forget Thee Jerusalem*.

Who is able to see painting? What disposition makes painting visible without ever quite being acceptable? It is impossible to be silent and anonymous when entering the public and worldly domain of representation. Van Gogh's paintings found their way to visibility at the same time as his writings, and it would be true to say that he knew how to write as well as read. Backtracking by way of an image or text makes it easier to grasp painting. A painting is an immediate object, and if the media hasn't gotten to it yet, then it is destined to mediate. This was recently confirmed with *Les Demoiselles*, as many found it upsetting to be face to face with this piece. As in a love relationship, intimacy only happens through violence or through daily wear and tear, but never by trying to figure out what is a priori and expected.

Over-interpretation, even I have delved into it myself, can't dissipate the strangeness and setup of an autonomous body that is ultimately uninterpretable. I see a phrase from a text written about me “Bruno Perramant pointing a gun at the viewer“ and I have to accept it. But how did this idea come about? Are the guns and shots merely being directed outwards? That seems rather feeble, since artwork is self-focused and its participation in the outer world is always random. I think of painting like a black hole that swallows everything around it, invisible and visible matter, sound waves and light waves. What we see is the moment right before, and not after, the extinction. How then can an artist possibly threaten someone or something with death? I needed a killer, someone who stands for us all, i.e. the political Mafia since the Mafia is always political. Take a guilt-free look at “the miracle killer“. That is where Pasolini found his Paulian fable. The redeeming miracle is beyond engendered and invulnerable speech, and transforms a persecutor into a saint... to death...

“LOVE IS A MENTAL ILLNESS NEVER LOVE ANYTHING IN YOUR LIFE JUST STICK IT WITH AN APPLE PIE YOU'LL NEVER BE DISAPPOINTED BY AN APPLE PIE.“

Crazy words? Food for thought. So it isn't the artist who is shooting, I've already touched on this. I wanted to paint a P38 like an asparagus. But when you keep trying to eroticize everything while referring back to History, you end up making something nutty. “I speak like a madman“, says Hölderlin; “I go signifying“, replies Dante. The ideal would be to talk as you walk, matching your thoughts to the rhythm of your steps, or just listening to where you are headed, or to what is coming your way.

Now it is winter, it has rained a lot. The ditches are overflowing, which is why the sky is reflected in the stagnant water. It is in fact a vertical connection, but also an excavation of light, as if light were rising from the earth, a double circle of sky between tufts of grass and under trees. A double perforation of reality, open space, the perfect measure of nature. If I were to tell you that just then I started hearing voices, then I belong in an asylum. That is not what I mean. The words were already there, words of memory, flowing, not to my ears but into my mouth. Words, too many of them, but hushed, barely audible, diluted, eaten away by gastric juices. This is what

I heard: "Who are better fighters than fascists? Did he think that attacks weren't serious? But all those deaths?" But don't jump to conclusions. This was in the winter of 2001. Work it out. Then came the willows and fig trees of spring, and then came September.

And what if this was all just an excuse to paint a landscape. A landscape abandoned by language, where words molder away, dissolve, and make room for the thing in itself, on its own, unique, idiotic, in a state of real presence. Recall *Matrice*: "I want to put the image of my heart onto the canvas", were Titian's words to Philippe II... a painter's words.

This series of pathways is called *Revolution n°1*. The order of cycles, of Cézanne's revolutionary painting, which doesn't delude itself on the spiritual summits of the highest mountain, but which paints this mountain, is this mountain, like the revolving stars (*Revolution n°2*), like constant revolutionary discourse that is engulfed by terror.

Revolution is the destruction of a kingdom.

Revolution is the revolution of the sun, the steady measure at the basis of all later measures; human metrics, time and justice relativize one another.

Here is a state of revolution: *Dolby Stereo*.

From a phrase in Godard's film *jlg-jlg*; "staring into the negative, the kingdom of France" taken somewhere from Hegel, the word "kingdom" has disappeared, isn't in the image. If it can't be seen, then it should be heard. The kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of David, in surround sound.

Dolby Stereo, Standard Blood... these are now autonomous works, they were hoped for as language, as a promise. The measure of the world, of life, of death, not just under the original light of the sun, but in relation to all light, natural and artificial. I had described these paintings as beginnings. Their morning aspect is even more striking to me now. And yet beyond the painting, and as an artist's privilege, we are not contemporary with the beginning of anything, it's too late for that. What the world offers for thought is already far away, separated from its original state. So what comes back? What constantly returns, ignoring all chronology? What appears? Since something keeps appearing. What kind of thought disregards linear and horizontal time, seized in the moment where light has never stopped shining? Why is this wrinkle of future onto the past, which makes up the starlit present, an endless source of joy?

The solar star (*Sun*) keeps up its measure, gives the measure, adjusts light and shadows. Language is born out of the sun's accurate measure. Things come into focus, are named, represented. Before the word, it is the thing that speaks, necessary-non-being or random-being. Bearing in mind Jean-Luc Godard's words: "Juste une image, une image juste", but in his last film, so very black (in terms of color) *Éloge de l'amour*, the word-image has been replaced by the word-thing; "juste une chose, une chose juste". This does not involve the image, but the ternary relationship between thing, light, and language. A minimal condition for singing the praises of love, night and day, from every angle, every aspect, from near total darkness to the utmost saturation of color.

... "Without which he could have discovered that love, no more than sunlight, can't limit itself to one spot, one moment or one body, but shines throughout earth, time, and vibrant swarming humanity" ... *If I Forget Thee Jerusalem*, William Faulkner, I

stress... The light of day, like love, vanishes into the immeasurable, and yet it is this light that encounters the world's opacity, giving it the right measure. Luminous infinity determines what is objective and finite. The right measure, justice, the standard meter, this is what rekindled my interest in these paintings. If *Standard Blood* was created according to Duchampian standardization, I was intrigued by another standard meter. The Ministry of Justice in Paris, Place Vendôme, bears the inscription LE MÈTRE; fruit of the French Revolution, The Enlightenment, a cosmic measure brought down to the symbolic idea of human justice. And yet, out of the two metallic signposts (invisible lines) marking out this inscribed meter, one is missing. This implies that justice is based on an idea of measure outside of man, symbolized by the standard meter, the universal metric unit. One should know that true justice is the measure of the whole. Thus, one should at least take good care of the meter, unless this differs from the way Marcel Duchamp reveals infinity, I have my doubts. The very idea of justice vanishes when we let go of measure and, as follows, of language. Monuments are doomed to ruin, but what here falls apart is the measure's value. The ruin of values gives rise to other revolutions. The same applies to the alienation of the measure – alienation to time, space, work, science and reason. The other side of the measure, going back to this project's initial theme, is the immeasurable, which gives rise to anguish and concealment in the common revolutionary terminology, unless it turns into the metaphysical nonsense that accompanies terror, harking back to a Supreme Being. By concealing and negating the immeasurable and in the name of justice and a so-called right measure, Reason, tied to revolutionary whims, leads to the destruction of values beyond anything that has taken place in History.

The dawn of revolution is accompanied by speech, since all begins with access to language. Revolutionary twilight only happens when there is no poetic fulfillment, when language as a whole fails through distorted hearing. The rhythm of words sets the rhythm of the guillotine.

Once the brain is removed, a physical and mental decapitation, the body has to be put back together. Restoration à la Frankenstein which might be granted by a double heart, double flow, double blue. This physical measure is about trusting and salvaging perceptions and sensations, checking that all isn't dead and buried. I thus come back to joy, the source of composition. The joy I had connected to phenomena of appearance. Appearance is by definition visual, yet what I wish to discuss is "sound appearance", which is just a different kind of wave that makes it easier to understand this undulatory phenomenon. Sound may suffice as an event. It might just be some unknown person's voice like the New York subway conductor on the Manhattan to Brooklyn line. This man was talking into his microphone, commenting on payment, the order of stops, fines for breaking rules, tidbits about each area. This was perhaps due to overzealousness, but none of it was important. It's just that I was gripped by the tone of his amplified voice, which literally stopped me from getting off the subway. I wasn't trying to understand what this neutral voice was saying, but let myself be taken several times to the end of the line, Coney Island, in the middle of the night. I had nothing to do there other than discover the shining star that later showed up in the polyptych *The Unhappy End of Saint Paul's [America]*. This is all to give an idea of how far a banal event can go when it becomes what is definable as the appearance of reality, i.e. a wave coinciding with a receiver which is your mind joined to your body. A sound, an image, an object, a person, a landscape... anything can happen, it's all a matter of disposition and trust, of total and unconditional approval.

The other side of the coin is the strange joy that streams through your body and justifies a seemingly idiotic attitude, like staying alone on the subway to listen to an anonymous voice telling you nothing other than the list of subway stops, endless names against the backdrop of night. This sort of parable is to say that an appearance is not conceptualized, it "is" a figure for the visible, for discourse; image and sound in open circuit, at best a "Dolby surround" effect; putting the brain back in. Its power is by resonating with your Being, a harmonic A, a vibration that literally tunes you to its own beat, a sound glimmer or a visual echo, it's all one.

Bruno Perramant, *SUN II*, FRAC Auvergne, FRAC Alsace, February 2003, Clermont-Ferrand.