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No One's Lady Of Tears

In the studio, one might say a large part of what takes place is looking, and things that are looked at change. One may notice an ancient mystery emerging in this quantum physics: that an object's behavior may be affected by what it has undergone in its lifetime is a correlation which would appear only natural to the medieval thinker. It is perhaps because the lachrymose Virgin has been looked at ceaselessly that her tears transformed into the ultimate spectacle of female emotionality legitimized through suffering. Wallace halts this reproduction, this being itself again and again in being re—cognized. By doing so, she perhaps makes space for a different type of (ex)change.†

Wallace shatters the image of a weeping Virgin across aerated concrete blocks, a material meant to come together for shelter but here allowed as fragmented, self-standing parts. The blocks are divided into sections: one, including fragments of an eye, the mantle, a lone tear and the outline of her nose and lip, takes center space and attention; the remaining section is displaced around the darkened areas of the room, its pieces' carveouts alternatively facing the viewer and the walls. Like life and death may be seen as part of the same cycle, the two sections are both parts of the same image. Treating light as a veil, the artist at once conceals and shows, drawing from within a tradition that flirts equally with the mists of theatre, the occult, and a psychoanalytic view of the world as a body landscaped by shadows.

In the adjacent room, the light is drawn again around three more assemblages, hanging from the mostly dark walls. The collages are made up of carefully patchworked photos originally taken by Wallace's current partner in the mid 2000s, previous to the start of their relationship. Here reversely, while images are indeed formed, it is their stories to shatter: the narratives of that one morning or afternoon, of a gesture, of a wave's crash onto the shore. Led by a beautifully counterintuitive title, some of us may be reminded of Shirley Jackson's story *Nightmare*. A woman walks through the city to find herself insistently surrounded by an ad campaign run by some unknown company. The ads appear on street poles, paper handouts, gradually resounding everywhere around her and describing her with increasing accuracy. Both the woman in the story and we as readers slowly realize she's being used in this marketing scheme without her knowledge or permission. She never agreed to be part of it. The layered, spinning photos of this specific collage bring to mind the terrible feeling of being not only lost but in danger, caught in the sharp tragedy of moving only to find yourself back where you started, over and over again, time ticking you further and further out of life.

† The opening paragraph is indebted to Allison Burger's text on Valerie Keane at Gaylord, 2025

Such disorientation might be akin to the feeling that surprises us looking at a loved one to suddenly realize we have no idea who really is in front of us. The fast-tracked artificial intimacy of modern life is procedure, pure procedure, a military operation. Everyone's just answering orders. Suddenly every word is a shield raised on a battlefield, dazzling like a paradox, like sunshine dancing off the waves of a storm and we realize we are not equipped, that this parade will have the best of us, that this is how we were born and this is how we will die: conscripted. Society operates like a script suggesting things should be relatable when, actually, we have no real grasp of what another person may be referencing behind those worn signifiers of pleasure or pain, doing good, it's going, meh, great. What we do grasp though is what we had already decided, in a glimpse — that same glimpse that keeps changing the world while sadly maintaining us in our sameness.

And yet what is this action of first conceiving of a breakage, grouping into sections, and then engraving each fragment? This action of breaking, blending, and keeping a narrative open? Like a bracket of timespace in which one is allowed by anomaly to hold things in place that would otherwise collapse, holding them close and open, here is potential. The line of her face, both broken and continuing, surprisingly, the line of her face, its resilience, its more-than its tears, is a promise and is resistance. The whirl of a precarious assemblage might read as confusion while harboring an escape, an alternative route, something else that lets us want to belong, to go along with it. Before Wallace's images could possibly reassemble themselves, through their fractured radiance one is given the chance to reflect on how a woman's body and perspective has been objectified and instrumentalized throughout history, whether through sainthood or madness, consistently relegated, held at the border of subjectivity. And perhaps learn how the immaculate conception—virgin birth, tears without cause, intuition without reason—might simply be the greatest, most gracefully whispered 'Fuck You' of all time.

— Clemente Ciarrocca