

Camille Clair : *Ribeye*

June 25th-August 28th, 2022

That summer a growl from the bushes interrupted my gaze and aborted my confession. That summer I abandoned the car at Angeles Crest and ran all the way down the mountain.

That summer the dog died. It was my first time cradling a dead thing, experiencing the stiffness, and not finding it grotesque at all. In the backyard we dug a trench in the shade of the persimmon tree, close to where she lay. She had often been under the persimmon tree: eating the rotten fruit and later vomiting it up. The yard was fertilized this way.

It took an entire day to dig a hole big enough to fit a 12kg dog. And in the sullen May heat, it was exhausting, but digging a grave is the kind of task that can't be staggered, broken into shifts, or interrupted. That evening we ate Fesenjan that you had begun to prepare during the last hours of her life. "She died with this smell in her nose," you said.

"With this smell in her nose, she died," I replied.

The next day we drove to the desert to visit Michael Heizer's land work "Double Negative". In the skyscraper size cavern, I found a dried out, coiled snake skeleton. I wanted to take it home but you told me not to touch it (tiny insects lingered in the vertebrae) so I just took a picture and later made a drawing that looked like a ribbon, and not like a snake. Now I am often drawing ribbons in the margins of things. I mean, I am often drawing ribbons but really they are snakes.

That night we stayed in Las Vegas, which was empty aside from bored locals who were taking advantage of the reduced room fees and vacant pool decks. The slot machines and roulette tables were tied off with caution tape as if people had died all over them. It may as well have been the case, for the feeling of being involved in a crime stayed with me long after I left the casino.

That summer we tried to donate blood as a family, but were all turned away due to various deficiencies and ailments. Leaving the blood drive, we felt like delinquents. Everyone was giving blood that summer. It was the thing to do.

That summer I watched Nasturtium overgrow the grave, and added the flowers to my salads. That summer I was hallucinating slightly. And even now, if ever I suspect I am seeing something beyond what's actually there, I experience a bitter taste.

The taste seems to permit further incoherence.

That summer I was often tying ribbons around the things I wanted to forget. But by now I accept that the ribbons are no longer snakes.