

**KIRCHGASSE   Stefan Burger**  
**Softbox**  
**15.4. – 27.05.2023**

(Ask as many questions as a thing will allow.) At first, I, for one, couldn't do it. Why? Because to cling to a reality principle is to fold up the softbox and submit to a gentle *nullification*. But is it so easy to give way to that liting feeling? Cater to the revision that everything undergoes if life is regarded a great *mise en scène*, a fabulously chubby absurdist ruse. Then what would we be, except the awkward melange. And organisation nothing but the way things haphazardly come to compose themselves – as rooms within rooms, temporary assemblages, a love of free gamble without the stakes. Is it so easy? To cede to the drama tied up with deferral of meaning and intervene in its *metabolism*, to chew a situation in hopes it will rend delight or surprise, as he might –

The drift of idiosyncrasies that a kerbside offers is the strange paradise of the inestimable. The walker that walks it learns nothing but has everything to gain, for it is stirred by happenstance, it is moved by *cognitive incongruence*. Is it arrangement or arraignment? That this throbbing enjambment of stuff finds itself caught up in or arrested by, be it a gossamer of sticky tape that ensnares the lenses of unseeing eyes. What of the vicissitudes when reams of offcut carpet are finally bought up, after having spent so long prospecting for second lives, the standing order 'a vertical form of reception' like an especially jilted lover? Her vexation concealed by a cute state of chronic bemusement, perfection in the mastery of playing the *choral hypocrite*! You know,

Call it obtuse tendency or poetic insurgency, objectal thingliness is protected by the desuetude of black and white, and then exploited by the 'authenticity' of grain. Grain – crackling and dimpling, ticklish little irritation – is thrown over the obsolescent in the manner of dust, a fuzzed layer that in memory retains something about it that seems true. (Seems true? Said like it is antithetical, nostalgic for universal reading.) We learn to look not for mooring by facticity although facts we are offered: here you have a portrait of the *shadow snooper* donning seat cushions for a bonnet; here, a stable of unlikely roles resigned from their dinky coat hangers; here, a *silvery image with holes*. It is what it is – that paternal refrain slinking as a critter might along a 'gradation of perception', coming to bear on this sprawl of worldly gubbins.

And there again, that special stock of levity that juts out with the beauty of an untrained dancer who asks: do we prefer levity an agent of creation, or a pawn in the agenda of a thought beyond sense? Or am I the sorry state of a guide without direction, misplaced among the many little swirls twirling in the baker's marbled batter. They are thankful, perhaps, the 'characters' suited up for immortalisation against despondency, do I mean. Because is this not, despite everything, a matter of liberation that trials sentimentality anew? Where freedom judders forth by way of humour, one that does not surrender what originality there is still available in romance. Butw it is what it is – all in all – a stage conspicuously set by a minor figure. Ask away all questions and this ersatz life replies flexing like a wrinkle: *immer*.

Elaine M.L. Tam