

The Gaylord Apartments
3355 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90010

PAUL LEVACK
JUNE 3-JULY 2, 2023

Photographs taken around Mannheim, Germany in Paul's apartment, at his studio, and on walks with his dog. Photographs taken in Paris at the Musée D'Orsay during a work trip. All made using a purposefully broken lens. A modified copy of a collectible lens favored by early Pictorialists because it has a lot of character to it. The images come out distorted, blurred, and intensely colorful. The prints are varnished then cut with scissors and mounted onto similarly hand cut hardwood boards painted with egg tempera around the edges, emphasizing the photographs' tactility. Paul's thoughtful choices in material from start to finish fall in line with a history of late 19th century Pictorialist photographers seeking experimental and accessible means to an end while also trying to elevate the understanding of their medium. There's an urgent and human quality to this mode of production loyal to the intimate psychological effects of the images.

Presented here is a kind of "odd hallucination" on top of his usual conceptual photographic concerns forming a series of emotive, disturbed, and elegant images. Taken from a noticeably straight forward perspective, an immediate sense of agency can be felt as a result of his choice of subject matter and material handling. A quality that heightens his desire to stir emotional effects like that of the Pictorialists. The kind of anarchic elegance that's characteristic of his work is at its most charming if also most vulnerable. The effect of the modified lens adds the flavor of an ecstatic mental breakdown to images that otherwise might appear innocuous. A blurred and glistening picture of an enticing figure in a painting heightens something sinister but also lovely and humorous about the experience of looking. A self portrait in the reflection of a window, pictures of his pet and an apartment are common images warped and made special again via calculated decisions that border on becoming unglued. The works are shown in tandem with a selection of musical excerpts by Richard Wagner (one from Christian Thielemann, the other the Nationaltheater Mannheim). Through Wagner, whom Paul describes as "one of the first phenomena that gay men were ever able to be collectively autistic about", Paul generously invites the viewer to appreciate the spectacular ability of an artwork to both concretize and complicate our perception of reality.

-Ramsey Alderson

I received your missive dated Thursday last and perused its "contents" with some interest, admittedly derisory. Jeering, if I'm being honest. I was left wondering what exactly it is about me you are even criticizing, as the note contained no detail of any kind.

What is the right level of detail for a communiqué of this nature? I wonder. Would it have been better for you to list out my various flaws, to inventory and rank my mortal sins and minor transgressions? I'm reminded of a sort of meta-account in the Great Mirror, a point where Ihara directly addresses us to recommend a book now lost to history, a tale called The Abyss of Tamagawa's Heart. Written by a monk enchanted with a boy prostitute, the book reportedly described the courtesan's sexual travails as framed by the four seasons. Ihara found the account especially amusing when it recorded minutia like the number of moxa burns or flea bites on the boy's body.

Would this have been appropriate? To catalog my scars, and every scar I've left on you, with near-erotic interest? Would I understand better now why you are so upset? Or perhaps other human trivium might explain: the pettier aspects of your current domestic situation, the things you eat, the pets you care for, the other banal ways you might currently dispose of your (seemingly abundant) free time?

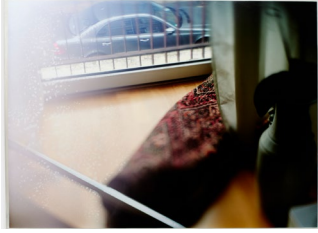
Perhaps your way was superior. A formless glob of language borrowed from the imprecise cloud of pop psychology, self-serving therapeutic babble, occasionally congealed into words that don't exist or are used incorrectly. A compassionless form letter mad-libbed into something resembling human communication. I am reminded of imperious Claudius: "I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet. These words are not mine." Perhaps it's best you deny me any use of your lens, that our last communication ever would be a total rejection of any sympathies between our disparate points of view. Perhaps you were just pulling your punches, softening the edges, telling yourself it was for my comfort.

Perhaps, though, some contrast to the sludge would have communicated the nature of your pain a little clearer - if there was some real relation to the way one actually sees, the way one actually feels, unmolested by the dubious intellect. If there was something like a center, a focus in sharp relief that blurred to this drivel at the edges... if only one of the flea bites had been allowed to draw blood. Or perhaps the issue here isn't one of delivery. Of course, I would never suggest there's simply no flesh there to draw from: I'll give you the same benefit of the doubt I always have, one last time.

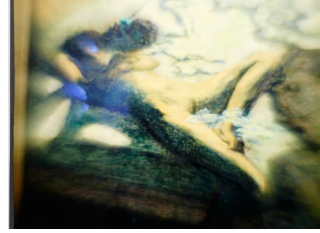
I envy you, honestly. To be this self-centered, this unconcerned with actually being understood - it must be tremendously liberating.

Regretfully,
Poy Born. May 29 2023.

CHECKLIST



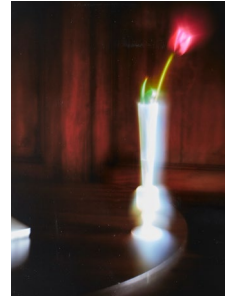
Untitled, 2023
16.75 x 22.75 inches
Archival pigment print on Baryta paper, picture varnish, wood, egg tempera, gesso.



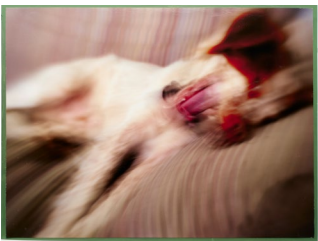
Reclining Nude, 2023
10.25 x 13.5 inches
Archival pigment print on Baryta paper, picture varnish, wood, egg tempera, gesso.



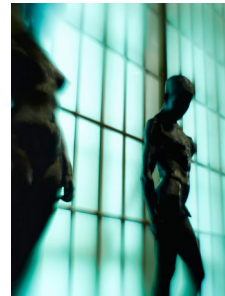
Enzo, 2023
8.25 x 10.8 inches
Archival pigment print on Baryta paper, picture varnish, wood, egg tempera, gesso.



Still Life with Tulip, Computer, and Salt Cellar, 2023
17 x 12.5 inches
Archival pigment print on Baryta paper, picture varnish, wood, egg tempera, gesso.



Enzo, 2023
17.6 x 23.6 inches
Archival pigment print on Baryta paper, picture varnish, wood, egg tempera, gesso.



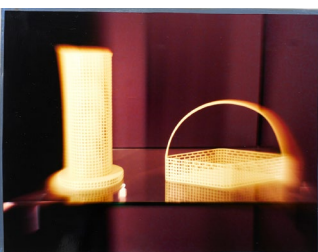
Untitled, 2023
17.1 x 12.8 inches
Archival pigment print on Baryta paper, picture varnish, wood, egg tempera, gesso.



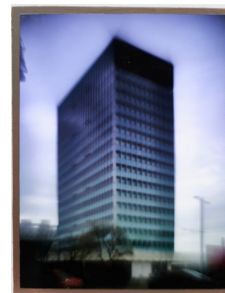
Chestnut Trees on the River Neckar, 2023
11.5 x 9 inches
Archival pigment print on Baryta paper, picture varnish, wood, egg tempera, gesso.



Landscape, 2023
13.25 x 16.75 inches
Archival pigment print on Baryta paper, picture varnish, wood, egg tempera, gesso.



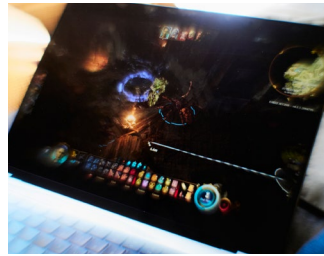
Still Life with Basket and Vase, 2023
10.5 x 13.5 inches
Archival pigment print on Baryta paper, picture varnish, wood, egg tempera, gesso.



MVV Hochhaus, 2023
11.75 x 8.75 inches
Archival pigment print on Baryta paper, picture varnish, wood, egg tempera, gesso.



The Rape and Desolation of New Orleans, 2023
13 x 16.75 inches
Archival pigment print on Baryta paper, picture varnish, wood, egg tempera, gesso.



Boulder's Gate III (Early Access), 2023
18 x 23.6 inches
Archival pigment print on Baryta paper, picture varnish, wood, egg tempera, gesso.



Hinterhoff, 2023
16.75 x 22 inches
Archival pigment print on Baryta paper, picture varnish, wood, egg tempera, gesso.



Schloßgarten Würzburg, 2023
16.75 x 22.6 inches
Archival pigment print on Baryta paper, picture varnish, wood, egg tempera, gesso.



Untitled, 2023
15.75 inches round
Archival pigment print on Baryta paper, picture varnish, wood, egg tempera, gesso.



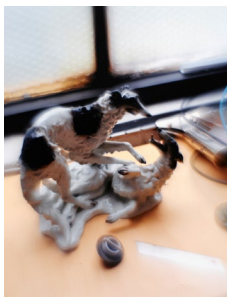
Still Life with Cauliflower, 2023
17.6 x 23 inches
Archival pigment print on Baryta paper, picture varnish, wood, egg tempera, gesso.



Untitled, 2023
11.5 x 8.75 inches
Archival pigment print on Baryta paper, picture varnish, wood, egg tempera, gesso.



Still Life Looking Out Onto The Herschelbad, Mannheim, 2023
15.1 x 17.6 inches
Archival pigment print on Baryta paper, picture varnish, wood, egg tempera, gesso.



Still Life with Two Fighting Borzoi, 2023
11.6 x 8.6 inches
Archival pigment print on Baryta paper, picture varnish, wood, egg tempera, gesso.



Siegfried Idyl, 2023
5.375 x 40.5 x 61.75 inches
Archival pigments print on prism texture paper, wood, cans, porcelain figurines: Capodimonte "The Joke" by Pucci (1980s), Knabenfigure by Imogen Plossrock for Bing und Gröhndal (1950s).

"Playlist", 4hr 12min

Anja Kampe, Stephen Gould, Rene PapeStaatskapelle Dresden & Christian Thielemann
Dan Ettinger & The Orchestra of Nationaltheater Mannheim
Birgit Nilsson & Wolfgang Windgassen, Sir Georg Solti, Vienna Philharmonic