

baader-meinhof

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Chicago

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Exhibition Text

I was supposed to be writing about Chicago, but I'm just going to talk about the weather. That works right? I mean, this is a show about "Chicago," and whenever I hear anyone talk about it, it inevitably devolves into meteorological niceties. This show is about a specific time and place, which is like a climate of sorts. Is this a localized temperature? Where is the high-pressure zone; where is the low-pressure zone? Where is it hot; where is it not?

There is something unthought about all these people being in the same room. We go to the same bars, parties, openings, but haven't been grouped together like this. What does it mean? I guess the main thread is that we represent a certain kind of "Chicago Artist" city - those hard-scrabbled people who have or still are operating their own exhibition spaces. Prairie, Donuts, The Suburban, Obst, Apparatus, Good Weather and Scherben - all galleries that have or continue to exist by virtue of certain participants working outside their own practices. In this sense we're both the atmosphere and the meteorologist, acting and being predicted.

A week ago, the National Weather Service was spreading tornado rumors - those are pretty common in Omaha, right? They tried to make it believable by blaring the sirens for about an hour, signaling to everyone: Get into your basements (which were all flooded). I stayed in my attic. I think everyone stayed... wherever it was they were. It really wasn't very bad; clouds were billowing diacritical marks in a blue run-on sentence. Some were black, others shades of grey... these ones would roll through for one to three minutes and spit out quarter-sized rain drops that would lick and run down the windows, tinted amber from the sun still burning through the patches azure. It looked, for a moment at least, as if there were mountains, and Chicago was just a hamlet in the valley.

But the mountains passed through, like people do around these parts. Night fell, and I know what remained were wide boulevards, rain-soaked parks, and a river that will be dyed green next March.

Below sunshowers and dream-cicle thunderheads, I was a nobody amongst others reaching for their phone to snap a picture of the sky. There is no better place on earth to be a nobody than Chicago. I blame the lake. Something about the way it rocks and crests, imbuing the city with a kind of natal anonymity, a de-subjectifying glaze, leaving behind only the truly special. You can forget and be forgotten until you're ready to be remembered. Chicago is a place where you make what you will leave behind, because, ultimately this is a place that is meant to be left: either by choice or finitude. Emily Dickenson would have fucked with it heavy.

- Gareth Kaye