

VEDA

IRREALIS

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NOVEMBER 16, 2023 – FEBRUARY 10, 2024

I recently read a story about a man who has severe short term memory loss due to an aggressive virus that ate away parts of his brain. Mere seconds will go by before he doesn't recognize where he is or how he got there. He will declare that this second is when he is truly conscious for the first time, even if he has made this claim a million times before. One day this man's wife found him holding piece of chocolate in the palm of his hand. He was covering it and uncovering it with his other hand, over and over again, as if he were a magician performing a disappearing trick. Each time he believed a new piece of chocolate was appearing. His wife gently told him that it was the same chocolate but he could not be convinced. The chocolate and the universe were trying to tell him something. "No... Look! It's changed. It wasn't like that before... What on earth is going on?"¹

When I read this man's story, I thought of Nancy and how her work presents recognizable, everyday objects anew, speaking new languages again and again. They serve as a catalyst for letting go, for allowing the memory of a thing to never imprint itself fully on your brain, to show how its label can be peeled away and how what Nancy has termed the "shimmer" appears before you; an ungraspable something that you're eternally urged to grasp at. When you look at her objects which also always belong to the world, their shimmer seems eager to tell you something. You're obliged to let them look back at you so that the conversation goes both ways.

Nancy recently moved and is learning a new language. After letting go of practical household items in one place, she is currently in the endless loop of buying all of these objects again, a French press, a Brita filter, hot plate, etc. On the surface, these small items can symbolize a minute sense of being planted in one place, and yet the only settled feeling is that of being eternally adrift between places. Even the acquisition of a very heavy antique bed and wardrobe, that she said the sheer size and weight of should make a move feel permanent, could not entirely plant a person in one place. The heavy furniture pieces are unassembled and still in pieces in her studio, eyeing their potential to appear in her show, along with the millions of French presses that can be sold and bought again in every new place. I could go in a million different directions writing about Nancy's work but I will start here.

You are very thirsty and driving on a highway towards the desert. It has been hours since you left home and you are starting to feel dizzy and tired. The grey, concrete retaining wall next to your car has an abstract shape imprinted on it that you cannot identify. The shape repeats, over and over again, whizzing past your periphery. You slow down to see what the shape is but the car behind you is getting dangerously close. You try looking at it while going fast but you feel sick. You take the next exit, pull over on a dirt road, turn the car off and close your eyes for a few seconds. The abstract shape appears as an afterimage behind your closed eyelids. The shape is still unclear and squinting to see it better when your eyes are already closed doesn't do much.

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The sun is beating down hard and your car is becoming an oven. You open your eyes, try starting the car and it makes an awful sound. In the few seconds you had turned it off, your car's catalytic converter has been robbed of its shiny innards. You unfold a holographic metallic sunshade and place it in your windshield and exit the car. You begin to walk and look for water. Turning back to glance at your car, you see hundreds of other abandoned cars lined up with the same metallic sunshade in their windshields. The sun momentarily blinds you in its sharp white void. Shading your eyes, you look ahead. A shimmering mirage of water appears on the horizon. You walk towards it and find a pool of gold coins.

There are people swimming in the gold coins. You recognize them as your relatives and ancestors and offspring. They see you. Some of them grab the gold coins and hide them in their pockets. Some of them grab the gold coins and offer them to you. You jump into the pool, swim with your kin and it becomes all too familiar. The pool seems to be infinite but it is actually an infinity pool. You swim to the edge and look down, where the cliff and the illusion are revealed. You have a strong desire to jump and you do.

You have fallen into another infinity pool full of gold coins. This time there are no people, only animals from both land and sea. Many of the animals are swallowing the gold coins. Many of them are choking. An octopus grabs as many coins as it has tentacles. You notice something on one of the coins. You take a closer look and see the imprint of a decoy duck and things start to become all too familiar again. The octopus gets bored with the coins and drags you down, past a sunken ship, to the bottom of the infinity pool where you reach another one.

Here there are swirling curlicues of DNA. Each curlicue is uncurling itself and wrapping around the gold coins. Like a virus or a tumor, the consumed coin disappears and a million new coins take its place. You recognize something has gone awry. The curlicues give rise to a whirlpool and you are sucked down to the bottom into yet another infinity pool.

This time it is not full of real gold coins but of cartoon gold coins. There are too many gold coins to be rendered completely but you recognize the dirty yellow sludge to be a generalized representation of the whole. Scrooge McDuck, replete with cane and top hat, swims past you in glee. You swim in the sludge next to him and try to hold one of the rendered gold coins in your hand but it sifts between your fingers and dissolves into the sludge you are submerged in. Scrooge's eyes and all of the gold coins look back at you looking at them and suddenly they look different. Transforming from the second dimension into the third, they say something in a language you have never heard before but somehow understand. Scrooge says, "I'm thirsty" while all of the gold coins say in unison, "I would love you if I could."

A lottery ticket appears between your gaze and the gaze of the coins. You realize it is your own hand holding it. There is a table next to you with several Galette des Rois crowns stacked on top. Your great great great granddaughter is crouched under the table wearing one of the crowns and salivating, waiting to eat her slice of cake and hoping to find her prize and be crowned again. The results of the lottery are drawn live before your eyes.

You don't match any of the winning numbers from the sequence drawn but you write them down anyway on a cream-colored piece of paper with a green pen, below all of the other winning lottery numbers you wrote down before. You have been hoping to find a pattern. You place the paper onto a large stack of other papers that accompanies more stacks of all the drawn numbers that came before and after. Your great great great granddaughter stomps her feet. Upset at your misfortune of not winning, of never finding a pattern and angry with the infinite stacks of useless numbers on worthless cream and green papers that she will have to inherit, she unwraps the fake-gold-foiled paper crown on her head and throws it to the

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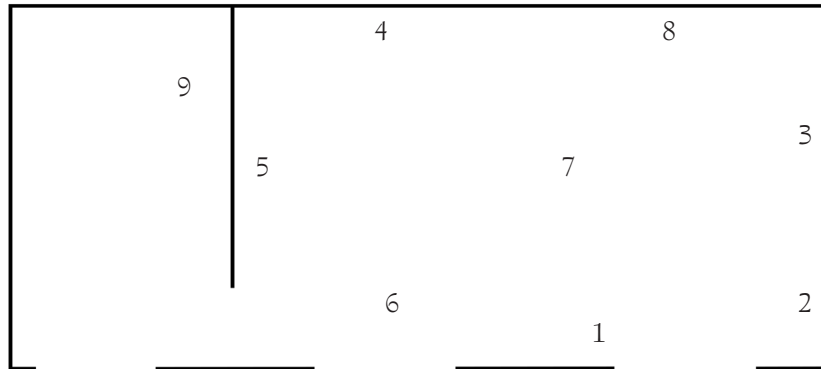
ground along with the rest stacked on the table. Their circumferences unfurl and connect to each other. No longer matching the circumference of a child's head but the whole world now, they wrap in a maze around your body. To get outside of the crown's maze, you ride along its craggy pattern up and down, up and down until you feel a hand on the crown of your head push you down into a hole, burying you with all your papers and numbers.

You're in a dim room when you open your eyes but there are slivers of sunlight coming from tunnel openings next to you. You notice a faint shimmer appears every time you move, refracting in a million different directions inside this space. You see that the shimmer is coming from you. You are a gold coin inside of your car's empty catalytic converter, a husk inside of a husk. You roll out of one of the converter's tunnels and into a white cube where someone reaches down, picks you up and puts you in their pocket. Once home, this person takes you out of their pocket and inspects you in the palm of their hand. They see you are actually only a cheap milk chocolate wrapped in fake gold foil. They throw you out of a window and you fall onto hot concrete. There, the round, golden sun looks down on you and you look back at it as you melt inside your foil and are squashed flat by the next oncoming car.

-Alexandra Noel

1 Wearing, Deborah. *Forever Today: A Memoir of Love and Amnesia*, copy edited by Deborah Adams, Doubleday, 2005, p. 126

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1-7 *Untitled*
2023
gold paper crowns, airport quality glass beads,
floral toilet paper, holographic fly tinsel, gold
and interference gold pigments, school glue,
heavy matt medium, PVA, balsa wood, brass
paper clips, fiberglass mesh, bamboo sticks
and glass straws
variable dimensions

8 *Untitled*
2023
cardboard box, LED candles
76 x 95 x 20 cm

9 *Untitled*
2023
video
1:02