

The year is 2022. The staff of the MGM Grand disperse across the marble casino foyer. David Copperfield, who has performed 3 times a day for 42 weeks of every year since 1996, needs an audience. One by one, the staff corral gullible Midwesterners and jaded regulars into the vacuous, mostly empty auditorium. The doors shut. The audience waits in darkness. Their mouths search for their daiquiri straws. Suddenly, the stage illuminates. Standing in front of them is a man they assume to be David Copperfield. But this first trick seems more like a gag. He looks nothing like the icon they saw floating above the desert on the way from the airport. He looks more like a dusty, disheveled impersonator. A beaten-up replica, mechanically going through the motions. If there were any butterflies in this auditorium, they have now turned into moths, quietly eating away at the insides of the audience's stomachs.

One may feel this same disenchantment when walking through the aisles of a Las Vegas liquidation center. A painting rests on the floor like a performer waiting to go on. A maze of secondhand couches arranged more like barricades than places to sit. The spoils of fallen empires laid out like a yard sale after a flood. If the Vegas strip is a stage, this liquidation center is its dressing room.

However disappointing, there is something thrilling and life affirming when you peek behind the curtain of a reality and see it for its true complexities. Consider the Hoover Dam. It is not the empty space in front that takes your breath away, but the space inside one's head, where one can see it all. The iconic monolith and the destruction that would occur if the 250 square miles of water were released.

In considering the title of this show, "Fidelity," I can't help but think about this one quote I once read from a memoir about a son and his father that goes something like this: "I stopped seeing my father in relation to myself, but instead, as in relation to the world. And with that, I was able to love him." To see the world with fidelity, is to see the world with love. To see David Copperfield without illusions is to see somebody worth loving.

—Nicolas Bermeo