

ARTIST STATEMENT #179:

Tao Te Ching in the Rain

For three or four years now, I have carried a small, pocket-sized edition of the *Tao Te Ching* around with me everywhere I go, though it is not uncommon for months at a time to pass by without my so much as thinking about it. Nevertheless it is usually with me. This past week I was caught in a monstrous downpour and the little book was soaked from cover to cover, and as a result puffed up like a loaded sponge, its pages pasted to one another like geological strata.

The cover I had to declare lost, and so, discarding it, I constructed a new one for the still-bound pages out of cardstock paper, acrylic paint and wood glue.

The pages themselves, however, having dried out after two or three days recuperating above a very active radiator, have made a complete recovery of their individual autonomies, one may argue, in complete opposition to the teachings contained upon them. Such is the *Tao*, elusive in words, yet transmitted in words.

This new *Tao Te Ching*, with its simplistic, almost naive declaration of the contents hidden underneath the white and black cover, is now primed to be destroyed by a deluge once again. This is what I would argue was the primary purpose of its original publication by those perennial harpies at HarperPerennial—successive deluge. The old cover was marketed to Westerners with new tastes for old wisdom, this new cover to Westerners with that old flare for the overtly declaratory.



*The name that can be named
is not the eternal Name.*

This new *Tao Te Ching* will weather well in the deep recesses of my over-shoulder-slung army surplus bag. I have contrived a vulnerability of whiteness for its bland New World translation. Disintegration is inevitable; disintegration is perennial. I will carry this book with me even after every atom has been replaced.

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