

ARTIST STATEMENT #540:

*Am I Still the One I Never Was?*

*"...oh, marvellous independence of the human gaze, tied to the human face by a cord so loose, so long, so elastic that it can stray alone as far as it may choose..."*

-Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*

Following an eight month period of inactivity due to sickness, dystopian actualization and other factors, I return to art making with a question on my lips, a question which is identical to the act of art making itself, now and at all times: "*Am I an artist?*"

I had remarked, at some point early in this project (Artist Statements), something along the lines of, "making art is the act of filling the hole created by the decision to be an artist." This begs the question: at which point along this circular continuum can the artistic identity be pinpointed? Does one make art because one is an artist, or is one an artist because one makes art? Or are perhaps neither of these the case? The (perhaps) mischievous irony of the original (grad school) assertion does little to assuage the vertigo of the questions of identity and meaning and purpose and vocation and so on.

I have taken pictures in the cities I have lived in. San Francisco, New York, Portland, each with their own unique character, yet each somehow yielding the same elusive answers to questions impossible to articulate. The best you can do is encircle the feeling, the absent presence, and attempt to approximate the underlying realities sensed with the whole of the senses, which is greater than the sum of the parts. The world is there, but is it still the same world it's always been?

These photographs, which I am painting more or less faithfully, yet also with a certain fidelity, as always, to the paint itself, are things that I have seen, yet which now flop about like fish on land, thrashing further and further from the shoreline, point of contact with the Real, mediated by the jealous and lascivious touch of emergent technologies (in this case a digital camera), which more and more wants in on all action in the sensual sphere of the human. Nevertheless, each picture is a crystal of my living gaze, a shard of memory, revisited now, years later, and crystallized again with the intentionality of my (artist's?) hand and eye.

To complicate the issue I have also included, of the twelve, three images which are not my own, but which are rather culled from the (pseudo-)infinite ocean of the internet, the collective unconscious of our symbiosis with the machine.

I am uncertain as yet if it is possible to reclaim that which was never mine, or which never was at all, or if it is possible to claim it for the first time, or to renounce it for the first time, but I also know that there is probably more at play here than a simple trick question, though there may be very little substance to this claim of even the possibility of the *claim*, or for that matter the *claimant*. There is no bridge. I am. That will have to do.

These small paintings can be seen as a companion series to the *Repetitions*.

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