

Coda:

Some Useful Tips On Reading a Painting by Paul Bureau

*"I present. I do not depict, I **paint**".*

-- Pierre Soulages

Experiencing a painting by Paul Bureau requires patience and contemplation. In the accompanying monograph on the artist, I spoke of two out-sized oils: the red and the black, titled respectively *One on One (R | Y | W)* and *One on One (B | W)* (both 2010).

Let us consider *One on One (B | W)*. The painting possesses a deep quiet, almost sempiternal. However hypnotic its effects, don't assume a passive or static stance before it. These paintings press upon your body image as though it was less mirror than symbiotic partner. A solitary station-point in space yields only one appearance of a painting that is profoundly janus-faced. Move in front of it and assume a measured pace. Incidents in the field will stake their claim as you make your circuit and you will be drawn across the replete surface as though by main force.

Nine feet high, *One on One (B | W)* is a painterly menhir that awaits your optic archaeologies. Give yourself over to the sheer wealth of pure chroma and be prepared for surprises which a virtually monothermal surface might seemingly rule out. Its extrusive grid offers your optic a glancing and then penetrating appraisal, as though a pebble had been sent skimming across the surface of a pool of still water. The resulting reverberations will capture and provoke you. Bask in them and you will find the black field explodes with a lunar luminosity.

At a certain point, prepare for the epiphanies to be had in tasty excrescences of pigment that lead you deep into the lustrous black surface – and beyond, into its processual history, and

close to the painter's own heart and intention. Oases of pure chroma on otherwise-monochrome paintings, these lovely taches will return you to childhood and finger-painting, when instinctual pleasure was so endemic to the experience of pure chroma, making the experience of this painting a singularly rich feast for the senses.

Materiality itself means exaltation. Bureau's paintings have little in common with Abstract Expressionist painting. One thing they do share is an explicit materiality, and the hegemony achieved by the act of painting. The materiality is sensuous and tactual, and so slowly decanting the painted object is its own incentive. The sheer factuality of the painting will shake you out of any possible complacency. The painted taches constitute a sort of indexicality that leads one back through the stages of the painting's life to the moment of its genesis.

Bureau's painting is an open space of interrogation and signification because he returns to the very basics of painting -- colour, materiality, texture -- just as important abstract painters as varied as Mondrian, Ryman and Tomma Abts have done in order to secure the truth of painting.

And while the painting in question seems resolutely and unavoidably black, we are reminded as we look at it of the words of Soulages:

"I love the authority of black. It's a colour that doesn't compromise. A violent colour but one that nonetheless stimulates internalisation. At once a colour and a non-colour. When light is reflected in it, it transforms it, transmutes it. It opens up a mental field all of its own."

"Like a mental field all its own." The words eloquently invoke our experience of a Bureau painting, where the play of light on the black activated by myriad textures of light that invite us to make it a part of our own mental spaces.

Bureau's paintings are not auto-referential entities. They are provocations. They incite questioning and contemplation. The thick epidermis of oil paint is a sensuous presence in one's own

lived space that might well change the condition of being here; of being, that is, in a world. Such is there meditative potential. Sumptuous and austere at one and the same time, *One on One (B | W)* is a snare for your nomadic, voluptuous eye.

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