



In Light of The Absurd

On the cover
Himmat Shah
Untitled | 17 x 8 x 3 inches | Bronze | 2016

TIME

“It happens that the stage sets collapse. Rising, streetcar, four hours in the office or the factory, meal, streetcar, four hours of work, meal, sleep, and Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday and Saturday according to the same rhythm this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the “why” arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement.

A step lower and strangeness creeps in: perceiving that the world is “dense,” sensing to what a degree a stone is foreign and irreducible to us, with what intensity nature or a landscape can negate us. At the heart of all beauty lies something inhuman, and these hills, the softness of the sky, the outline of these trees at this very minute lose the illusory meaning with which we had clothed them, henceforth more remote than a lost paradise. The primitive hostility of the world rises up to face us across millennia. For a second we cease to understand it because for centuries we have understood in it solely the images and designs that we had attributed to it beforehand, because henceforth we lack the power to make use of that artifice. The world evades us because it becomes itself again.”

Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*

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This exhibition engages in pristine visual dialogue with the visionary literature of Albert Camus, as it brings to view art that has instinctively depicted the human condition. The exhibition draws great relevance from Camus's humanitarian quest as he looked for genuine realities behind the order of things, positing a world integrated with nature, seeking balance within the web of complicities extant to a civilized world. The exhibition endeavors to cross examine our contemporaneity in light of the viewpoints that Albert Camus left us with, in a lifetime of beauty and servitude

An Introduction

The Predicament of 'Being'

These first images definitively bring to mind the predicament of 'being'. What Camus submits to us in *The Outsider*; perhaps one of the most cogent introspections into the heart of the human-condition, exposing our existence 'cut off from a sense of God, in benign indifference of the Universe'- a stark realization of the absurdity that is life.

Sartre and Heidegger have examined this predicament; 'as a "transphenomenality of Being"- a nothingness- 'where things overflow all the relationships and designations which we attach to them and 'being' in general and existence in particular is *de trop* (superfluous)': 'being existent one cannot escape this original contingency; this "obscene superfluity"- a 'Being For-itself', with no outside purpose to give it meaning or direction'; a thrown projection of 'Being'-a 'thrownness' in time, what Heidegger refers to as Dasein (*Da* :there, as in *Being-there-in-the-world*).

Rameshwar Broota and Rajendar Tiku's works have always contemplated the 'Being' in a sense of the contrapositive- as a sublime weakening from universal to particular, a perspective of the omniscient narrator: of light or time, like God searching human; what Sartre calls pre-reflective consciousness and Heidegger refers to as a presupposing of 'Being'; an examination of existence from outside its symptoms of being manifest.

"All great deeds and all great thoughts have a ridiculous beginning. Great works are often born on a street corner or in a restaurant's revolving door. So it is with absurdity. The absurd world more than others derives its nobility from that abject birth. In certain situations, replying "nothing" when asked what one is thinking about may be pretense in a man. Those who are loved are well aware of this. But if that reply is sincere, if it symbolizes that odd state of soul in which the void becomes eloquent, in which the chain of daily gestures is broken, in which the heart vainly seeks the link that will connect it again, then it is as it were the first sign of absurdity."

Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*



Rameshwar Broota
Untitled | 24 x 36 inches | Corning Guerilla Glass | 2018

The Being-in-Itself

“Being-in-itself is never either possible or impossible, It is. This is what consciousness expresses in anthropomorphic terms by saying that being is superfluous (de-trop)-that is, that consciousness absolutely cannot derive being from anything, either from another being, or from a possibility, or from a necessary law. Un-created, without reason for being, without any connection with another being, being-in-itself is de trop for eternity”

Jean Paul Sartre ‘Being and Nothingness’

Being there in the world (Time)

“As a Being in-the-world with Others, a Being which understands, Dasein is ‘in thrall’ to Dasein-with and to itself; and in this thralldom it “belongs” to these”..

Heidegger ‘Being and Time’



Rameshwar Broota

Untitled | 24 x 36 inches | Corning Guerilla Glass | 2018



Rajendar Tiku
Dummy and The Paper Bird | 16 x 12.5 inches
Ink and vegetable stain on paper | 1980

The Fall of Dasein

“It is on the basis of this potentiality for hearing, which is existentially primary; that anything like hearkening [Horchen] becomes possible. Hearkening is phenomenally still more primordial than what is defined ‘in the first instance’ as ‘hearing’ in psychology—the sensing of tones and the perception of sounds. Hearkening too has the kind of Being of the hearing which understands. What we ‘first’ hear is never noises or complexes of sounds, but the creaking waggon, the motor-cycle. We hear the column on the march, the north wind, the woodpecker tapping, the fire crackling.

It requires a very artificial and complicated frame of mind to ‘hear’ a ‘pure noise’. The fact that motor-cycles and waggons are what we proximally hear is the phenomenal evidence that in every case Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, already dwells alongside what is ready-to-hand within-the-world ; it certainly does not dwell proximally alongside ‘sensations’ ; nor would it first have to give shape to the swirl of sensations to provide the springboard from which the subject leaps off and finally arrives at a ‘world’. Dasein, as essentially understanding, is proximally alongside what is understood.”

-Heidegger, ‘Being and Time’



Rajendar Tikku
Study for the Grey Areas of a Public Hydrant | 16 X 12.5 inches
Acrylic and vegetable stain on paper | 2009

“We were a heap of living creatures, irritated, embarrassed at ourselves, we hadn’t the slightest reason to be there, none of us; each one, confused, vaguely alarmed, felt de trop in relation to the others. De trop: it was the only relationship I could establish between these trees, these gates, these stones. In vain I tried to count the chestnut trees, to locate them by their relationship to the Velleda, to compare their height with the height of the plane trees: each of them escaped the relationship in which I tried to enclose it, isolated itself and over-flowed. . . . And I – soft, weak, obscene, digesting, juggling with dismal thoughts – I, too, was de trop. . . . Even my death would have been de trop. De trop, my corpse, my blood on these stones, between these plants, at the back of the smiling garden. And the decomposed flesh would have been de trop in the earth which would receive my bones, at last; cleaned, stripped, peeled, proper and clean as teeth, it would have been de trop: I was de trop for eternity.”

- Antoine Roquentin, in Jean Paul Sartre’s, ‘Nausea’

Albert Camus's literature has inspired many a generation. In times of immense suffering and unprecedented loss, he unflinchingly stood for a perspective that was irrevocably human, redeeming the individual's standpoint, even as the world was swept up in totalitarian ideologies of the time. His works continue to re-instill a deep sense of value and faith to life, as they mirror the innermost disquiet of an individual faced with the machinations of an existence drawn verily into the pursuit of advantage. Camus's works have gracefully borne the horror and anguish of a generation torn apart by war- doggedly keeping intact our instinct for life, what is given us first and foremost as humans. In the wake of such adversity that saw the human spirit greatly intimidated, Camus unremittingly searched for grounds that could bring us closer as human beings. Camus's faith in life held him closest to the human individual. He was amongst the rarest few who believed in humane outcomes to situations of immense socio-political upheaval. Camus was never the one to sit back and let our fate be examined in intellectual idiosyncrasies- vehemently opposing 'ideal solutions' that theorized political violence, advocating a future realized at an immense cost in human lives. He held an inherent sympathy of the human condition, in as much an intimate sense of beauty. His was a philosophy avidly lived through, having seen life at close quarters since childhood is what lent him the appreciation of its simplest virtues. He voices the passions of an impoverishment suffused in the sensual sublimity of a life by the sea. Camus never fails to reminisce with the memories of his Algiers, of it's culture of naïveté and soulful abandonment- a nostalgia that was to be his eternal idiom of solidarity, a solar maxim that revealed to him an innate strength that suffused the misery that was to be it's part. On such occasion Camus impassionededly reflects; "To correct for a certain natural indifference, I was placed half- way between misery and sunlight." "Misery prevented me from believing that all is well under the sun and in history, while the sunlight taught me that history is not everything. To change life, yes, but not this world which was my divinity."

"I have never written anything that was not, either directly or indirectly; linked to the country in which I was born."

- Albert Camus

By way of this exhibition one endeavors to draw strength from Camus's verses as they re-affirm in light, an art that in its part invokes an existential catharsis, meditating our condition in sublime wakefulness as we face dire situations of an absurd that drastically depletes our biosphere, creates mad prejudices for material solvency, causes stark imbalance in the socio economic paradigm, normalizes culture to a consumerist code and reduces life to a matrix of utilitarianism- begetting a moral nihilism that idolizes violence and misrepresents nostalgia as it renders us utterly incognizant of our impact on ourselves.

In Light of The Absurd

At the very beginning there lies the idea of space, kinesthesia and bewilderment, first impressions of nature, the material inertness of time- in a world we were given and in what we have made of it for ourselves.

With our inclination for reflection, as the first human beings- perhaps dawned the precept of making sense, our survival pitted against a densely contingent macrocosm; whence we as the first hominids perhaps grew to sense a cosmological order at the heart of things, one that would see us to light. As a writer of recent times suggests; the situation- the 'first cause', that caused the being of the Cosmos, might not be contingent at all- but much rather an absoluteness, a condition of absolute necessity. The cosmos itself being caused as a situation of minimal contingency, transposed thereafter into a dense causal nexus of situations and modalities native of that world- a possibility we would much rather accept and believe ever more certainly, taking the viewpoints of a cosmonaut looking down from space. Rather than posit 'brute situations' whose occurrences are always absolutely irrational.

Our cosmological perspicacity as the earliest inheritors of the earth, lent us the means to articulate our connection with this absoluteness. We symbolized our earliest impressions of nature, harmonizing the absolute in representations of the 'Natura Naturans'. This primordial vision and the world of symbols did beget a consecration of nature and harmonized the initial precepts of a human equation placed in moderation.

Today however we seem to have come a long way from this 'state of nature', of which much can be left to imagination, the world of symbols remaining preeminent, however, extant to a different heterogeneity- one incontinent, aggregated in burgeoning material appetite at the fast pace of our looming mortality. We seem transmigrated- in our state of evolution and our alienation, from ourselves and from nature. Science transforming our lives, yet fostering the extensive needs from our 'inner migrations', as we face a great psychological divide- one that was subsumed in nature and a natural social construct. On the hindsight of a hyper consumerist revolution is stark economic disparity, disillusionment, and a moral nihilism that idolizes violence and misrepresents nostalgia. As also an ever widening emotional disconnect with the world of nature- hitherto reduced and objectified as a mere resource pool.

In the face of such glaring inequities and the sheer non genuineness at

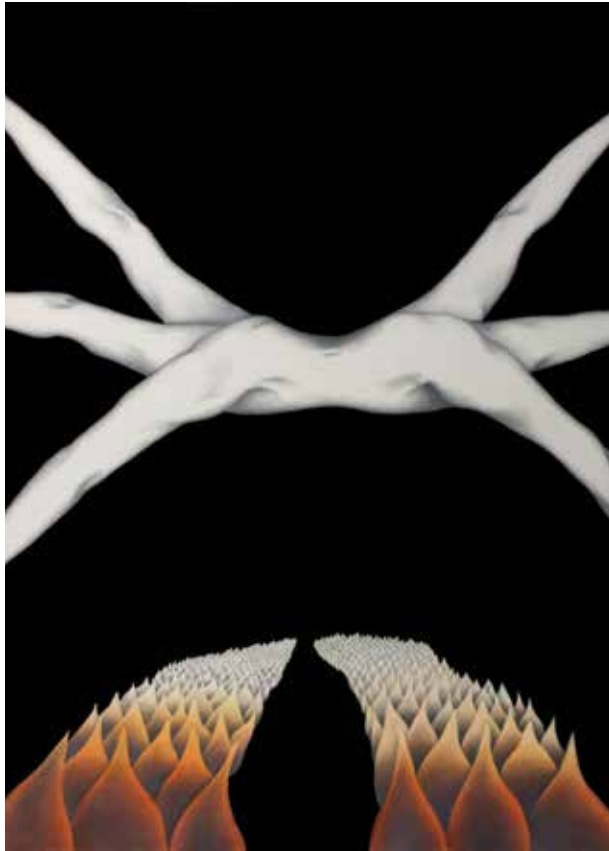
the heart of our existential makeup- our world perhaps stands depleted of it's 'instinct of life', casually refashioned as the residual masterpiece of an 'absurd rationality'*. Our sanguineness normalized in the efficacies of logic, our 'un-smartness'- catechized in dialectics of reason. As we as an epoch remain solely inattentive, in our habituation, custom and diversions<<Sartre

"Modern intelligence is in utter confusion. Knowledge has become so diffuse that the world and the mind have lost all point of reference . . . But the most amazing things are the admonitions to turn backwards. Return to the Middle Ages, to primitive mentality; to the soil, to religion, to the arsenal of worn-out solutions. To grand a shadow of efficacy to those panaceas, we should have to act as if our acquired knowledge had ceased to exist, as if we had learned nothing, and pretend in short to erase what is ineradicable".

Albert Camus (Notebooks 1942-1951, pp. 15-16)

This exhibition brings to view art that has remained largely undetermined by the symptoms of the times, yet is magnificently illuminative of the pith of the human condition. The exhibition takes recourse in the vision of Albert Camus, in his unwavering humanism. In one part invoking his life-long ruminations of a genuine world, the bitter-sweet world of his youth- suffused in the idyllic beauty and simplicity of his mediterranean homeland (.. the Ithaca of Odysseus), and in the other- reconciling with the images of 'the other' world, one 'built of stones and mists'- the world that we know as familiar-'in our cities of iron and fire'- as we shun the 'gentle secrets hidden elsewhere, somewhere in that first world'.

The exhibition looks to re-discover the balance entwining these worlds, from the perspective of an outsider, one who is unaware of the games to be played. To view the world at modest distance, 'performing an act of lucidity as one would an act of faith' - forgoing the banalities, contritions and callousness for the 'sanguineness of raw experience'- looking through a glass wall at civilization; one that rather mutes- the bizarre epithet of 'humans secreting the inhuman'



Vasundhara Tewari Broota

Approach | 35 x 45 inches | Printing Ink and Pencil on Paper | 1984

..“Consequently I strive to forget, I walk in our cities of iron and fire, I smile bravely at the night, I hail the storms, I shall be faithful. I have forgotten, in truth: active and deaf, henceforth. But perhaps someday, when we are ready to die of exhaustion and ignorance, I shall be able to disown our garish tombs and go and stretch out in the valley, under the same light, and learn for the last time what I know.”

Return to Tipasa, Albert Camus

*When one finds it necessary to turn reason into a tyrant, as Socrates did, the danger cannot be slight that something else will play the tyrant. Rationality was then hit upon as the savior; neither Socrates nor his “patients” had any choice about being rational; it was de rigueur, it was their last resort. The fanaticism with which all Greek reflection throws itself upon rationality betrays a desperate situation; there was danger; there was but one choice: either to perish or -- to be absurdly rational. The moralism of the Greek philosophers from Plato on is pathologically conditioned; so is their esteem of dialectics. Reason = virtue = happiness, that means merely that one must imitate Socrates and counter the dark appetites with a permanent daylight -- the daylight of reason. One must be clever, clear, bright at any price: any concession to the instincts, to the unconscious, leads downward.-

-Nietzsche 'Twilight of The Idols'

At The Beginning

An Awakening In Deep Time..

(The instinct of Life or The Knowing of what we know)

*“In regarding the universe as alive and ourselves as continuously sustained within that aliveness, we see that we are intimately related to everything that exists”**

The conception of our universe seems changed. Contemporary science has drawn a possible paradigm shift- one that re valorizes spiritual philosophy and re-instates the idea of the cosmos as a living fabric; one with an immanent consciousness- indicating a cosmological order to creation***.

This consciousness seems to be immanent at every level, in atoms as reflective consciousness, in energy, matter and even empty space (as zero-point energy)- a seemingly re-generative life force that creates and evolves with each instant.

*‘Even though we live in a world of apparent separation, the new physics describes the more fundamental reality as that of seamless interconnection’.**

This seamless interconnectedness of the cosmic universe supervenes the idea of matter having been created from space, and the very space from a super space- a Mother universe. A writer of recent times elucidates the idea beautifully; *“We are living within a “daughter universe”, that, for twelve billion years, has been living and growing within the spaciousness of a Mother universe”. The mother universe has existed forever, holding countless daughter universes in it’s grand embrace while they grow and mature through an eternity of time.”**

“Instead of a Black Hole representing a one way journey to nowhere, many researchers now believe that it is a journey to somewhere- to a new expanding universe in it’s own set of dimensions” <<John Gribbins, In The Beginning: The birth of The Living Universe.. *Gribbin’s dramatic conclusion is that our own universe may have been born in this way out of a black hole in another universe” He explains it in this way:**

“If one universe exists, it seems that there may be many – very many, perhaps even an infinite number of universes.

Our universe has to be seen as just one component of a vast array of universes, a self-reproducing system connected only by the tunnels through space time (perhaps better regarded as cosmic umbilical chords) that join a baby universe to it’s ‘parent’.”

***researchers have calculated that if the universe had expanded ever so slightly faster or slower than it did, even by as little as the trillionth of a percent, the matter in our cosmos would have either quickly collapsed back into a black hole or spread out so rapidly that it would have evaporated

*Duane Elgin, we live in a living universe

“There was something formless and perfect
before the universe was born.
It is Serene. Empty. Solitary. Unchanging. Infinite.
Eternally present. It is the mother of the universe.
For lack of a better name.
I call It Tao.”
Lao-Tzu



Rajendar Tiku, The Blue Umbelical

“A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely; but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security”

-Albert Einstein



Himmat Shah
Kali | 21 x 11 x 11 inches | Bronze | 2006

“All Hindu religious thought denies that the world of nature stands on it’s own feet. It is grounded in God; if he were removed it would collapse into nothingness.”

Huston Smith, *The Religions of Man*

The Mother Universe; Kali in Hindu mythology, ‘Ma’ in Japanese and ‘Tao’ in Chinese mythology and what Pavel Florensky writes about as a primal Being-as Sofia, one who is ‘the darkness of emptiness in the sensory world’ and ‘the darkness of metaphysical non-being in the spiritual world’

In Japanese culture there is an ancient concept of time and space as a single entity, the idea of ‘Ma’ which in Hindi means mother. This is also the Japanese edict of solitude, or silence, a nothingness that embalms the being. This space, or depth between moments is coveted in the Japanese way of life and is what in their beliefs, that holds together each aspect of existence. In Japan it is manifest in living- from the pauses in a conversation, to the spaces in music or theatre, to the gaps in the aesthetic paradigms of art and architecture.

“Contemporary science points to such a presence, an “unbounded life-energy, as the Mother universe, present in all material forms as well as in seemingly empty space”. “A vastness whose power and reach is not limited to containing only our universe; there likely are a vast number of other universes growing in other dimensions of her unimaginable spaciousness.” “The Mother universe allows all things to be exactly what they are without interference. We have immense freedom to create either suffering or joy.”*

*Duane Elgin, *We Live in a Living Universe*

Camus uses the symbol of Nemesis to represent the Greeks’ refusal to carry “anything to extremes, neither the sacred nor reason, because she negated nothing, neither the sacred nor reason.” This fidelity to limits, Camus argues, has been lost in the modern world, and can only be recovered by a return to nature and lived experience.

Sean Illing, *From Nihilism to Transcendence*

The Natura Naturans and The Natura Naturata

“By Natura naturans “Nature naturing”, or more loosely, “nature doing what nature does”- we must understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, or such attributes of substance as express an eternal and infinite essence, that is ... God, insofar as he is considered as a free cause.

But by Natura naturata “Nature natured”, or “Nature already created”- I understand whatever follows from the necessity of God’s nature, or from God’s attributes, that is, all the modes of God’s attributes insofar as they are considered as things which are in God, and can neither be nor be conceived without God.”

Baruch Spinoza



Norio Takaoka
Small Fruit | H 4 x W 5.9 x D 4.9 inches | African Granite | 2014

“In terms of ethics, if we try to use our intuitive capacities to achieve a strategic advantage in situations, we are immediately separating ourselves from the dance of participation with life and, instead fostering existential isolation. I learned that if we do not want to upset the equilibrium of the universe and disrupt the fabric of our lives, we are wise to act in ways, and with intentions, that seek the well-being of the whole”

Psi and the Ecology of Consciousness (Duane Elgin, April 2011)

The Twenty First Century And Our Very Own Absurd

It is not wholly ironic that the crumbling of the foundationalist systems and metanarratives of the twentieth century, ones that Camus forewarned us about, left us a void of inter subjectivity, where the only surviving ideology was the one that connects us directly with our most fundamental illusion, ‘greed’, bringing us a consumer’s dream where one could go look in the supermarket for guaranteed personalities. A situation continually aggrandized in the twenty first century – from where as an eminent writer of recent times suggests; *“The acceleration of modernity, of technology, events and media, of all exchanges – economic, political, sexual – has propelled us to postmodern fallacy of ‘escape velocity’, on which the postmodern mind and critical view cannot, by definition, ever truly break free, from the all-encompassing “self-referential” sphere of discourse”- a situation which according to him wipes out or completely dilutes the idea of a history; and where reality is now a self absorbed pure simulacrum;*

“The fourth stage is pure simulacrum, in which the simulacrum has no relationship to any reality whatsoever. Here, signs merely reflect other signs and any claim to reality on the part of images or signs is only of the order of other such claims. This is a regime of total equivalency; where cultural products need no longer even pretend to be real in a naïve sense, because the experiences of consumers’ lives are so predominantly artificial that even claims to reality are expected to be phrased in artificial, “hyperreal” terms. Any naïve pretension to reality as such is perceived as bereft of critical self-awareness, and thus as over sentimental.”

Jean Baudrillard ‘Simulacres et Simulacrum’

Alan Kirby posits this new post postmodernist era as one of ‘Hyper ephemerality’- ‘a storm of human activity producing almost nothing of any lasting or even reproducible cultural value – a culture with no memory. ‘A culture that defines the real implicitly as myself, now, ‘interacting’ with its texts’. Thus, pseudo-modernism suggests that whatever it does or makes is what is reality, and a pseudo-modern text may flourish the apparently real, dished out in an uncomplicated form ready to be consumed-the code of a consumer and conformist, moving about in the world as it is given and sold-a world of globalised market economics raised to the level of the sole and over-powering regulator of all social activity- monopolistic, all-engulfing, all-

explaining, all-structuring.’ One aggrandized within states of personal anxiety. Kirby posits a ‘technologised cluelessness in a world narrowed down, not-broadened, intellectually, in the flood of information and high tech production of content that is often shallow and largely consumer centric- governed by intellectual states, which he says, “are ignorance, fanaticism and anxiety, one that extends far beyond geopolitics, into every aspect of contemporary life; from a general fear of social breakdown and identity loss, to a deep unease about diet and health; from anguish about the destructiveness of climate change, to the effects of a new personal ineptitude and helplessness, which yield to TV programmes about how to clean your house, bring up your children or remain solvent. This technologised cluelessness, he says is utterly contemporary: the pseudo-modernist communicates constantly with the other side of the planet, yet needs to be told to eat vegetables to be healthy, a fact self-evident in the Bronze Age.’

Alan Kirby, The Death of Postmodernism And Beyond

In light of this exhibition one hopes to present a reality of a very different nature, one not necessitated by hyper conjugation or consumed as object- as we distance ourselves from the matrix and look across to another time, trying to visualize a very different world- a lucid vision garnered in life’s genuine experiences, a code of humanity that Albert Camus lived by. By way of this exhibition we engage in pristine visual dialogue with Camus’s prose, looking at his literature for the art that it truly is, and drawing immense recourse in his compassion.

A writer of recent times lends perspective; *“Art becomes central to Camus’ absurdism for two reasons. First, it is only through art that an absurd world can be made meaningful. Second, art adds aesthetic value to life without dogmatically reducing reality or pretending to ultimate knowledge of things. Camus’s embrace of art also reflects a key point in his transition from sensualism to absurdity: In many ways, sensualism is the posture of the artist; that is, the artist does not define the world so much as experience and transfigure it. If anything, the artist uses myth and symbolisms to communicate experiential truths. As Camus engages the absurdist stance, then, art becomes an invaluable source of meaning. Indeed absurdism is rescued by his sensualism.”*

Sean Illing, Between Nihilism and Transcendence

“a rational person is one who strives to maximize profits. It is one of the contributions which anthropology can make to economics, to point out that profit is not the only possible relation between things, and that there are actually existing cases where people maximize relations other than profit.

-Calhoun – Thesis, Ancestors(1973, p. 164)”

“As we shall see, when individual rationality does become the dominant pattern in social life, continuity fades and society weakens.”

- Calhoun – Thesis, Ancestors

“An analysis of rebellion, leads at least to the suspicion that, contrary to the postulates of contemporary thought, a human nature does exist, as the Greeks believed”

Albert Camus(The Rebel, p. 16)

CHAPTER 1
Silence and Virtue

*“This heart within me I can feel, and I judge that it exists.
There ends all my knowledge, and the rest is construction”*

Albert Camus, The Stranger



Rajendar Tiku
Snow Tree and Seven Sparrows

“..In the direction of the ruins, as far as the eye could see, there was nothing but pock-marked stones and wormwood, trees and perfect columns in the transparency of the crystalline air. It seems as if the morning were stabilized, the sun stopped for an incalculable moment. In this light and in this silence, years of wrath and night melted away slowly. I listened to an almost forgotten sound within myself as if my heart, long stopped, were calmly beginning to beat again. And awake now, I recognized one by one the imperceptible sounds of which the silence was made up: the figured bass of the birds, the sea’s faint, brief sighs at the foot of the rocks, the vibration of the trees, the blind singing of the columns, the rustling of the wormwood plants, the furtive lizards. I heard that; I also listened to the happy torrents rising within me. It seemed to me that I had at last come to harbor, for a moment at least, and that henceforth that moment would be endless. But soon after the sun rose visibly a degree in the sky. A magpie precluded briefly and at once, from all directions, birds’ songs burst out with energy, jubilation, joyful discordance, and infinite rapture. The day started up again. It was to carry me to evening”

Albert Camus, Return to Tipasa

“Those brief moments when day topples into night must be peopled with secret signs and summonses, for my Algiers to be so closely linked to them. When I spend some time far from that town, I imagine it’s twilights as promises of happiness. On the hills above the city there are paths among the mastics and olive-trees. And towards them my heart turns at such moments. I see flights of black birds rise against the green horizon. In the sky suddenly divested of its sun something relaxes.... What exceptional quality do the fugitive Algerian evenings possess to be able to release so many things in me? I haven’t time to tire of that sweetness they leave on my lips before it has disappeared into night. Is this the secret of its persistence? This country’s affection is overwhelming and furtive. But during the moment it is present one’s heart at least surrenders completely to it.”

Albert Camus, Summer in Algiers



Himmat Shah | Etching 24/25 | 2002



Amitava Das
Untitled | 41 x 29 inches | Collage and Graphite Pencil on Paper | 2014

Paris and Algiers

“The loves we share with a city are often secret loves. Old walled towns like Paris, Prague, and even Florence are closed in on themselves and hence limit the world that belongs to them. But Algiers (together with certain other privileged places such as cities on the sea) opens to the sky like a mouth or a wound. In Algiers one loves the commonplace: the sea at the end of every street, a certain volume of sunlight, the beauty of the race. And, as always in that unashamed offering there is a secret fragrance. In Paris it is possible to be homesick for space and a beating of wings. Here, at least, man is gratified in every wish and, sure of his desires, can at least measure his possessions. Probably one has to live in Algiers for some time to realize how paralyzing an excess of nature’s bounty can be. This country has no lessons to teach. It is satisfied to give, but in abundance. It is completely accessible to the eyes, and you know it the moment you enjoy it. Its pleasures are without remedy and its joys without hope. Above all, it requires Clairvoyant souls- that, is, without solace. It insists upon one’s performing an act of lucidity as one performs an act of faith. Strange country that gives the man it nourishes both his splendor and his misery!”

Summer in Algiers

Camus writes of absurdism as experiencing exile, a deep disenchantment brought on in confrontation with the nothingness at the heart of the world. In his verses he sought reconciliation with life even as a young man exiled from Algiers, working for a newspaper in Paris living in a dingy hotel, even as he wrote the final draft of 'The Outsider' in the wake of the impending Nazi invasion, as also in times when he was affected and then caught up by tuberculosis, a disease that would drag through all his life. Camus' verses have explored the existential divide between expectation and circumstance, coming to the conclusion that an irrational world is inherently so and happiness comes with the lucid acceptance of its many vicissitudes and contradictions. His works are as much a catharsis of the existential dilemmas of the civilized world, as a reflective nostalgia that brings together the two cities that bore the greatest testament of his life's journey.

"My reasoning wants to be faithful to the evidence that aroused it. That evidence is the absurd. It is that divorce between the mind that desires and the world that disappoints, my nostalgia for unity; this fragmented universe and the contradiction that binds them together"

Albert Camus

“La pensée de midi,” This “thought of noon” as Albert Camus himself liked to say, is his vision of a ‘tragic solar maxim’ that, whatever the state of mind of the writer, even if he lives in difficult times, is always saved by the images he keeps within himself.

- Jacques Chabot

Camus held a mythical allegiance to the Greek philosophies that mirrored the splendor and ironies of his own homeland of Algiers, he solely embraced this mythical standard in life- a harbinger of the sun, and the solidarity of life and nature- a ‘permanence of light’ to the tune of which he lived all his life, giving it the meaning and vigour of experience, calling it the ‘Greece of the Flesh’. Camus drew from his own Mediterranean origins, this ‘solar thought’- what to him fuelled measure, the ‘just measure’ of humanity as he addressed it, and ‘what all rebellion must be staked in.’ Camus has addressed this as the ‘Mediterranean attitude’- a life by the sea, where nakedness is a physical freedom, a liberating way of life*, what Paul De Man writes about as the “nakedness- an athletic freedom of the body, an Arcadian myth that was the source of Camus’ fundamental vision, one that his use of irony and ironic narrative devices never put in doubt; in the privacy of his Notebooks, it asserts itself even more powerfully as an act of indestructible faith.”

-Paul De Man, The Mask of Albert Camus

**.. “And living thus among bodies and through one’s body one becomes aware that it has it’s connotations, it’s life and, to risk nonsense, a psychology of it’s own.”*

Albert Camus, Summer in Algiers.

In the Myth of Sisyphus Camus invokes a classic Greek legend of a Human that stood up to the Gods and their hegemony. Sisyphus became the Arcadian Hero that epitomized metaphysical revolt against the absurd world of the Gods, his greatest victory was his sheer affirmation of fate, even if it was to push a boulder up a mountain, only to have it fall down again, and to have to repeat the act endlessly. Sisyphus epitomizes the core implications of being cast into the world as human, *“into the wild and limited universe of man that teaches that all is not, has not been, exhausted. It drives out of this world a God who had come into it with dissatisfaction and a preference for futile suffering. It makes of fate a human matter, which must be settled among men”*

Myth of Sisyphus



Amitava Das
Untitled | 18 x 24 inches | Graphite Pencil on Paper | 2018



Amitava Das
Untitled | 18 x 24 inches
Collage and Graphite Pencil on Paper | 2018



Amitava Das
Untitled | 18 x 24 inches
Graphite Pencil on Paper | 2018

The Myth of Sisyphus

“I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.”

Albert Camus Myth of Sisyphus



Anish Tiku
Vigil in Oblivion | 20 x 30 inches
Dry Pastel and Acrylic colour on Paper | 2015

The Desert in Oran

Obliged to live facing a wonderful landscape, the people of Oran have overcome this fearful ordeal by covering their city with very ugly constrictions. One expects to find a city open to the sea, washed and refreshed by the evening breeze. And apart from the Spanish quarter, one finds a walled town that turns its back to the sea, that has been built by turning back on itself like a snail. Oran is a great circular yellow wall covered over with a leaden sky. In the beginning you wander in the labyrinth, seeking the sea like the sign of Ariadne. But you turn around and round in pale and oppressive streets and, eventually, the Minotaur devours the people of Oran: the Minotaur is boredom. For some time the citizens of Oran have given up wandering. They have accepted being eaten..."

Albert Camus, 'The Minotaur or The Stop in Oran'



Anish Tiku
Tied up | 16 x 13 x 7.5 inches | Black Marble | 2008

“The capital of boredom, besieged by innocence and beauty, it is surrounded by an army in which every stone is a soldier. In the city, and at certain hours, however what a temptation to identify oneself with those stones, to melt into that burning and impassive universe that defies history and it’s ferments! That is doubtless futile. But there is in every man a profound instinct which is neither that of destruction nor of creation. It is merely a matter of resembling nothing. In the shadow of the warm walls of Oran, on it’s dusty asphalt, that invitation is sometimes heard. It seems that, for a time, the minds that yield to it are never disappointed. This is the darkness of Eurydice and the sleep of Isis...

Just think of Sakyamuni in the desert. He remained there for years on end, squatting motionless with his eyes on heaven. The very Gods envied him that wisdom and that stonelike destiny, In his outstretched hands the swallows had made their nest. But one day they flew away, answering the call of distant lands. And he who had stifled in himself desire and will, fame and suffering, began to cry. It happens thus that flowers grow on rocks. Yes, let us accept stone when it is necessary. That secret and that rapture we ask of faces can also be given us by stone. To be sure, this cannot last. But what can last, after all? The secret of faces fades away and there we are, cast back to the chain of desires. And if stone can do no more for us than the human heart, at least it can do just as much.”

Albert Camus, The Minotaur or The Stop in Oran



“No love without a little innocence. Where was the innocence? Empires were tumbling down; nations and men were tearing at one another’s throats; our hands were soiled. Originally innocent without knowing it, we were now guilty without meaning to be: the mystery was increasing with our knowledge. This is why, O mockery we were concerned with morality. Weak and disabled, I was dreaming of virtue! In the days of innocence, I didn’t even know that morality existed. I knew it now, and I was not capable of living up to it’s standard. On the promontory that I used to love, among the wet columns of the ruined temple, I

Anish Tiku

Target Man’s Ephemeral Abode | 10 x 14 inches
Water Colour on Paper | 2017



Anish Tiku

Target Man and Fluid Flow | 10 x 14 inches | Water Colour on Paper | 2017



Anish Tiku
Target Man and The Edible Respite
10 x 14 inches
Water Colour on Paper | 2017

seemed to be walking behind someone whose steps I could still hear on the stone slabs and mosaics but whom I should never again overtake. I went back to Paris and remained several years before returning home. Yet I obscurely missed something during all those years. When one has once had the good luck to love intensely, life is spent in trying to recapture that ardour and that illumination.

Forsaking beauty and the sensual happiness attached to it, exclusively serving misfortune, calls for a nobility I lack. But, after all, nothing is true that forces one to exclude. Isolated beauty ends up simpering; solitary justice ends up oppressing. Whoever aims to serve one exclusive of the other serves no one, not even himself, and eventually serves injustice twice. A day comes when, thanks to rigidity, nothing causes wonder any more, everything is known, and life is spent in beginning over again. These are the days of exile, of desiccated life, of dead souls. To come alive again one needs a special grace, self-forgetfulness, or a homeland.”

Albert Camus, Return to Tipasa



Nidhi Khurana
Unknown Prophecy-Stone Age I & II | 23.8 x 11.8 inches | Stone Carving | 2018

“We lead a difficult life. We don’t always succeed in adjusting our actions to our vision of things...We have to labor and to struggle to reconquer solitude. But then, one day, the earth shows its primitive and naive smile. Then it is as if struggles and life itself were suddenly erased. Millions of eyes have contemplated this landscape before, but for me it is like the smile of the world. In the deepest sense of the term, it takes me outside myself... The world is beautiful, and nothing else matters. The great truth the world patiently teaches us is that heart and mind are are nothing. And that the stone warmed by the sun, or the cypress magnified by the blue of heaven are the limits of the only world in which being right has meaning: nature without man...It is in that sense that I understand the word “nakedness” [dénouement]. “To be naked” always contains a suggestion of physical freedom and I would eagerly convert myself to this harmony between hand and flower; to this sensuous alliance between the earth and man freed of humanity if it were not already my religion.”

Albert Camus, Notebooks



Nidhi Khurana
Dreamtime-Comboyne II | 37.8 x 24.8 inches
Natural Dyes and Woodcut Print on Silk | 2018

The Invincible Summer

“At noon on the half sandy slopes covered with the heliotropes like a foam left by the furious waves of the last few days as they withdrew, I watched the sea barely swelling at that hour with an exhausted motion, and I satisfied the two thirsts one cannot long neglect without drying up – I mean loving and admiring. For there is merely bad luck in not being loved; there is misfortune in not loving. All of us, today, are dying of this misfortune. For violence and hatred dry up the heart itself; the long fight for justice exhausts the love that nevertheless gave birth to it. In the clamour in which we live, love is impossible and justice does not suffice. This is why Europe hates daylight and is only able to set injustice up against injustice. But in order to keep justice from shriveling up like a beautiful orange fruit containing nothing but a bitter, dry pulp, I discovered once more at Tipasa that one must keep intact in oneself a freshness, a cool well- spring of joy, love the day that escapes injustice, and return to combat having won that light. Here I recaptured the old beauty, a young sky, and I measured my luck, realizing at last that in the worst years of our madness the memory of that sky had never left me. This was what in the end had kept me from despairing. I had always known that the ruins of Tipasa were younger than our new constructions or our bomb-damage. ‘There the world began over again every day in an ever new light. O light! This is the cry of all the characters of ancient drama brought face to face with their fate. This last resort was ours, too, and I knew it now. **In the middle of winter, I at last discovered that there was in me an invincible summer.**”

Albert Camus, Return to Tipasa

“I have again left Tipasa; I have returned to Europe and it’s struggles. But the memory of that day still uplifts me and helps me to welcome equally what delights and what crushes. In the difficult hour we are living, what else can we desire than to exclude nothing and to learn how to braid with white thread and black thread a single cord stretched to the breaking-point?”

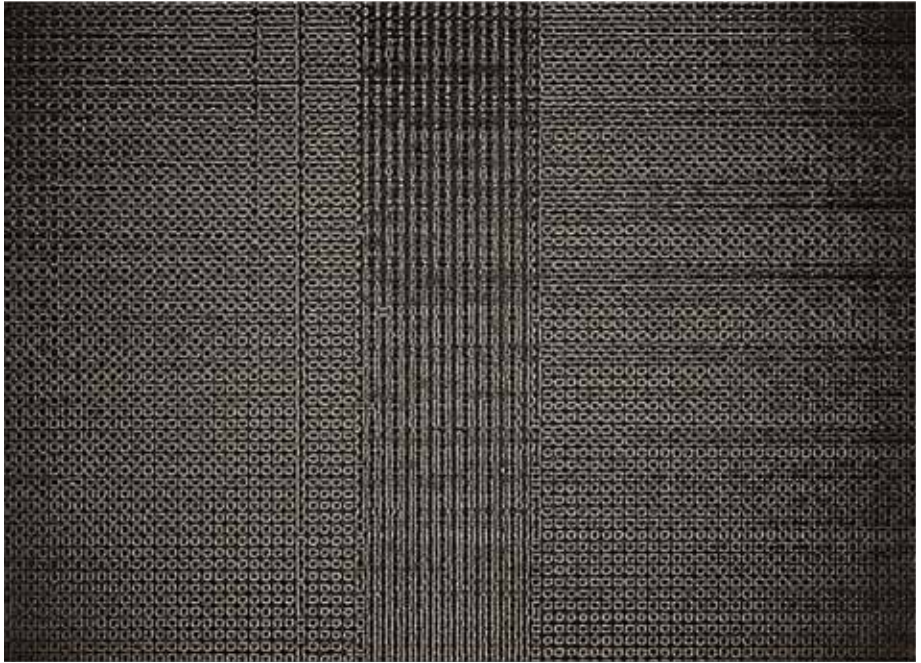
In everything I have done or said up to now, I seem to recognize these two forces, even when they work at cross purposes. I have not been able to disown the light into which I was born and yet I have not wanted to reject the servitudes of this time.

There is thus a will to live without rejecting anything of life, which is the virtue I honour most in this world. From time to time at least, it is true that I should like to have practiced it. Inasmuch as few epochs require as much as ours that one should be equal to the best as to the worst, I should like, indeed, to shirk nothing and to keep faithfully a double memory. Yes, there is beauty and there are the humiliated. Whatever may be the difficulties of the undertaking, I should like never to be unfaithful to one or to the others.

But this still resembles a moral code and we live for something that goes farther than morality. If we could only name it, what silence! On the hill of the Saint-Salsa, to the east of Tipasa, the evening is inhabited. It is still light, to tell the truth, but in this light an almost invisible fading announces the day’s end.... The sky darkens. Then begins the mystery, the Gods of night, the beyond-pleasure. But how to translate this?

The little coin I am carrying away from here has a visible surface, a woman’s beautiful face which repeats to me all I have learned in this day, and a worn surface which I feel under my fingers during the return. What can that lipless mouth be saying, except what I am told by another mysterious voice, within me, which everyday informs me of my ignorance and my happiness”

Albert Camus, Return to Tipasa



R Erdjnz
The Fabric | 8.5 x 11 inches | Print on Archival paper | 2018

*“He simply exists, like the wind or a stone in the sun . . .
If you interpret the book in this light, you will find in it a
paean to sincerity and an at once ironic and tragic eulogy
to worldly pleasure.”*

**Letter from Camus to Rolf Hadrich
on September 8, 1954**

CHAPTER 2
Meursault
or
The Phenomenological Phantom

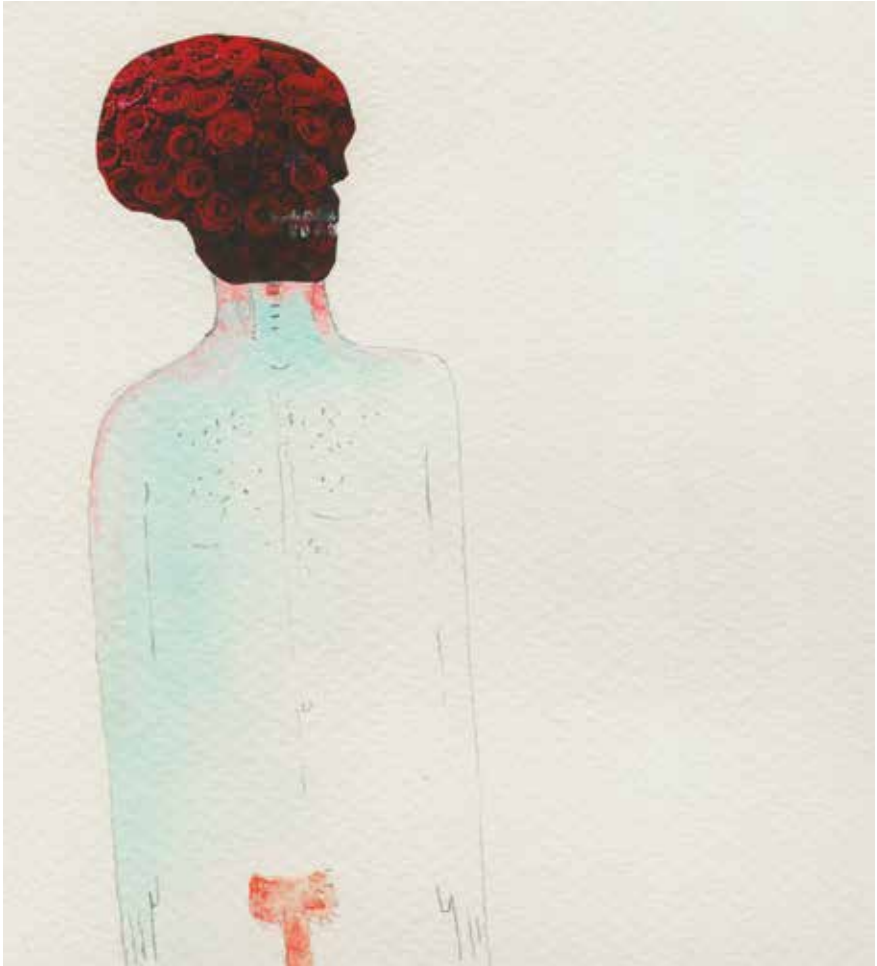
To Meursault, the world seemed justified in living abreast of it- coursing in its ebb and flow, an outsider to its illusions. Out there swimming- as he often would in the sea of his coastal town. In a time when perhaps one could keep ambition and technology at bay, and still live in secret in a world within a world.

“Many in fact, feign love of life to evade love itself. They try their skill at enjoyment and at ‘indulging in experiences’. But this is illusory. It requires a rare vocation to be a sensualist.”

Albert Camus, Summer in Algiers

One would imagine Meursault’s world as a sensory world, the lucid phantom dimension of sensory perception, the world of Rousseau’s L’Homme Sauvage (natural man) tumbling into society. An innocence in-itself, not contrived by emotions or encoded in morality. Here one might think of Meursault as an affable phantom, more human than we would imagine, living in phenomenological oblivion- one that negates our artifice and petulance.

“To be aware of all the complexities of life is already to foreclose its simple, unreflective joys.” Richard Solomon’s critique of Meursault<<Sean Illing, Between Nihilism and Transcendence



Neeraj Bakshy
Smelling the Roses | 9 x 11 inches | Collage on Paper | 2018



Neeraj Bakshy
L'Homme Civilise' 'Civilized Man'
10 x 14 inches | Collage on Paper | 2018

Deus Ex Machina*

In the twenty first century, how does one reconcile with the sheer callousness and indifference that sums up our cold utilitarian way of life? As our extreme incursions upon nature have trampled upon our own genuinely human instincts for compassion, as we go on destroying much of the natural habitats that have preserved the balance of our planet. We are perhaps the interfering Gods dropped from machines to enforce our own will on a planet that seems to be turning on itself.

“Camus’s starting-point was the assumption that humanity’s own rational, scientific enterprise had revealed that the heart of existence was a closed material universe that itself was utterly indifferent to the deepest human longings. In such a universe, “suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger.”

Michael W. Nicholson

*Deus ex machina is a Latin calque from Greek, meaning ‘God from the machine’.

The term was coined from the conventions of Greek tragedy, where a machine is used to bring actors playing gods onto the stage- a plot device whereby a seemingly unsolvable problem in a story is suddenly and abruptly resolved by an unexpected and seemingly unlikely occurrence, typically so much as to seem contrived.



Neeraj Bakshy
Keeping Vigil | 12 x 9 inches | Collage on Paper | 2018

Bakshy's 'Keeping Vigil' is at once an innocent, scintillating and damning portrayal, an earnest call to reckon with the absurdity of our world, as it is exposed in innocent eyes. Innocence gazes in nervous curiosity and its reflection seems caught up or dangerously close, with our humanity, whose gleaming contents now seem revealed as awry and menacing, the scourings of a structure that teeters on an invisible brink; something what we are now experiencing, in impact of our displacement from our 'state of nature' - what is brought to new extremes with each passing day.

Reflecting upon the character of Meursault one notices very prominently, a literary device that puts a divide between human and the world a glass wall that shields innocent perspective from the complex implications of humanity. This characteristic of Camus is most cogently explicated in Sartre's profound analysis-

"..However, we are not concerned with honesty, but with art. Camus has a method ready to hand. He is going to insert a glass partition between the reader and his characters. Is there really anything sillier than a man behind a glass window? Glass seems to let everything through. It stops only one thing: the meaning of his gestures. The glass remains to be chosen. It will be the Stranger's mind, which is really transparent, since we see everything it sees. However, it is so constructed as to be transparent to things and opaque to meanings."

-Excerpt from; 'John Paul Sartre's Explication of The Stranger'

“The Eternal Return is easier to understand if it is imagined as a repetition of great moments – as if everything tended to reproduce or echo the climactic moments of humanity.”

Albert Camus, Notebooks 1942

The Nostalgia of Living:

Towards the end of the book, Camus’s Meursault (The Stranger) reflects upon his life time of existential oblivion, he re-affirms his life, as he spent it in his particular way. The best sense he could make of it’s benign wonderment-moments however small were to be harvested in detail and followed like bread crumbs on a happy path, what an assiduous deluge of humanity always threatened to engulf in it’s spate. Life to Meursault was the casual approach of a sea at bay- a mass of benign indifference whose sheer presence was it’s only true meaning. Meursault appreciated the sense of freedom that such a perspective offered, re-affirming this life dreamed in vivid moments, a space freed of judgement- one of myriad potentialities. Beauty, irony, goodness and dissonance re-ordered in grace, in an absurd sensual likeness.

Swetlana Boym, a writer of recent times lends great insight in her book ‘The Future of Nostalgia’. She talks about two aspects of Nostalgia- the restorative, which is affixed to an agenda- aiming to restore the metaphors of the past in the present in a doggedness for material defendability, whereas the reflective is the gathering and preserving- in their randomness, lucid fragments of memories, making the present meaningful and enriched in substantive beauty.

‘Nostalgia is not merely an expression of local longing, but the result of a new understanding of time and space that made the division into “local” and “universal” possible.’

‘Restorative nostalgia is at the core of recent national and religious revivals. It knows two main plots – the return to origins and the conspiracy. Reflective nostalgia does not follow a single plot but explores ways of inhabiting many places at once and imagining different time zones. It loves details, not symbols. At best, it can present an ethical and creative challenge, not merely a pretext for midnight melancholies. If restorative nostalgia ends up reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and specialize time, reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and demoralizes space. Restorative nostalgia takes itself dead seriously. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, can be ironic and humorous. It reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another, just as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgment, or critical reflection.’

Swetlana Boym ‘The Future of Nostalgia’



Anish Tiku

Core and Couture | 48 x 23.6 inches | MDF Board | 2018

“When he does talk of it, it is in the following terms: “I awakened with stars about my face. Country noises reached my ears. My temples were soothed by odors of night, earth, and salt. The wonderful peace of that sleepy summer invaded me like a tide” (The Stranger). The man who wrote these lines is as far removed as possible from the anguish of a Kafka. He is very much at peace within disorder. Nature’s obstinate blindness probably irritates him, but it comforts him as well. Its irrationality is only a negative thing. The absurd man is a humanist; he knows only the good things of this world.”

Explication of The Stranger by Jean Paul Sartre

“Amor fati: let that be my love henceforth! I do not want to wage war against what is ugly; I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. Looking away shall be my only negation. And all in all and on the whole: some day I wish to be only a Yes-sayer.”

Nietzsche

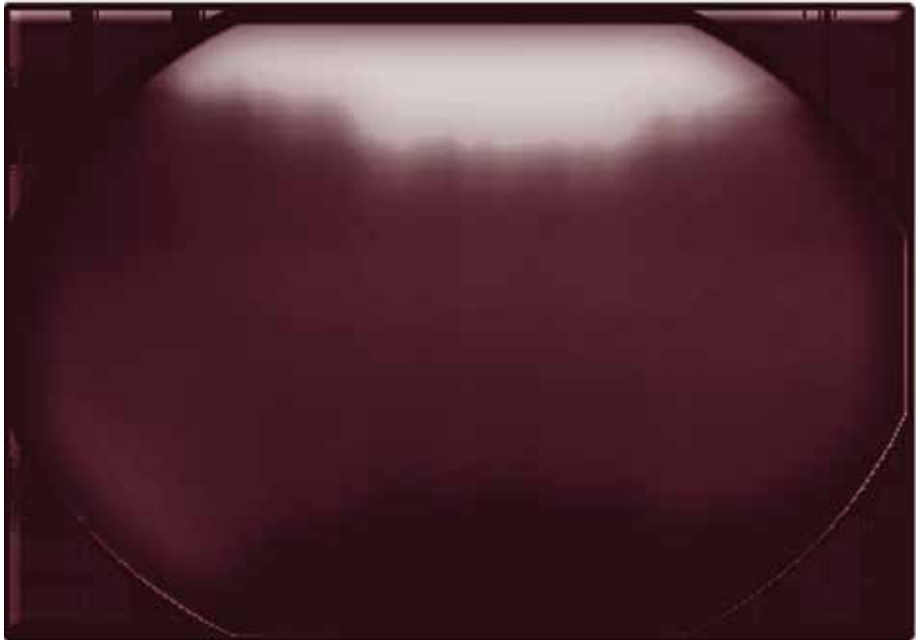
An awareness of death in Nietzsche's philosophy is reconciled with the idea of eternal recurrence, and internalized in life through courage, “Courage . . . is the best slayer – courage which attacks: which slays even death itself, for it says, Was that life? Well then!

Once More!”

<<Thus Spoke Zarathustra.

For Nietzsche the notion of Death awakens a bond with necessity, a lucidity that accepts life as it is given, and re-affirms the will to creative will, to live in the creative impressions that life regards each moment, suffused in sensual abandon- one that preserves its fragments of light ..

Meursault's awakening to Death takes recourse in the realization of a collective fate, and re affirms life as a common fate, at the end where each one is ultimately at level – this awakens in Meursault the affirmation of his own fate – what Nietzsche ascribes the notion of Amor Fati.



R Erdjnz

Dark Chocolate | 8.5 x 11 inches | Print on Archival paper | 2018

“From the dark horizon of my future a sort of slow, persistent breeze had been blowing toward me, all my life long, from the years that were to come. And on it’s way that breeze had leveled out all the ideas that people tried to foist on me in the equally unreal years I then was living through. What difference could they make to me, the death of others, or others’ love, or his God; or the way a man decides to live, the fate he thinks he chooses, since one and the same fate was bound to “choose” not only me but thousands of millions of privileged people who, like him, called themselves my brothers. Surely, surely he must see that? Every man alive was privileged; All alike would be condemned to die one day; his turn, too, would come like the others’. And what difference could it make if, after being charged with murder, he were executed because he didn’t weep at his mother’s funeral, since it all came to the same thing in the end? The same thing for Salamano’s wife and for Salamano’s dog. That little robot woman who was as “guilty” as the girl from Paris who had married Masson, or as Marie, who wanted me to marry her. What did it matter if Raymond was as much my pal as Celeste, who was a far worthier man? What did it matter if at this very moment Marie was kissing a new boy friend? As a condemned man himself, couldn’t he grasp what I meant by that dark wind blowing from my future?” . . .

Albert Camus, ‘The Stranger’

Conclusion

Camus, much like Nietzsche, strongly affirmed the present, a present that is interconnected with the past, not by way of idealizing situations of progress or in divinity, but a genuine nostalgia for meaning in our experience of the world. Camus's views re-affirm a present sustained as an ever continuing paradigm, since our evolution as a species of hominids to a civilization of science, as we as humans seem inherently connected with the physical world that sustains each element of our becoming. In his vision he held a world valued in beauty and preserved in limits, held together in the tradition of humanity.

It is ironical that our world does present in a way, a copy of Camus's vision, but merely on the surface. One does wonder if our e-sential experience of life has not superseded our instinctive interconnectedness as human beings and the deep bond with nature nurtured since the dawn of time. One wonders whether the diversions of our world have in fact consumed us, totalizing impacts that veer us into extremes, where we are willing to replace nature with the fetish of technology, the future as spiritualism and sheer vanity as individualism and if we are indeed in an age of high tech barbarianism? Of aggressive machines solely occupied in pursuit of advantage.

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