

LOOKING AT ELLEN MOON'S *In The Field: 365 Days* FIELD PAINTINGS

There is a lot of staring that goes into looking at a landscape, by staring I mean what seems to be an uninterrupted, continuous attention that your focused/unfocused eyes, your body, are able to devote to a scene in front of you, stay involved without necessary understanding. It is this opening of time (opening of the field) between one blink and another, which appears undisturbed, even if you realize, in retrospect, that you have blinked many times during that one minute or one hour of gaping.

Such a state is a very curious type of looking, and of seeing; the landscape before you seems still, even if there is a stream winding its way right through the middle of your view, and bees are fast buzzing around or long icicles are dripping with measured melting at the end of a cold spell.

It is the time between an instance, when something had arrested your attention, and a round fulfillment of when you are ready to shift your gaze and let it all go. These moments come back to you even if the scene before you is long gone: through stories told, transformed into a vision, dream visitations, or in postcards received from far away lands.

What we call a capturing of landscape, through various devices of perception, your eyes, bodily memory, a pencil at hand, a camera lens or paint of all kinds, must relate to articulating that temporality of space, that duration and the vision running parallel to it.

Ellen Moon's 365 field paintings, done in one field, and assembled into one harmonious flow, from January 1st till December 31 of some year and spread across over three years, not only complicate your relationship to perceiving landscape but perform something quite new, they reassemble a novel vision which engages multiple layers of permanence.

In The Field: 365 Days plays with continuity of seeing on many levels.

At the outset the project is a document: it simply records patient returns to the same spot for one hour every day of the year, and with watercolor engages the tool of choice of a slow, enchanted archivist. Further, it reassembles a year-worth of proof from over three years of looking (the artist kept track of the gaps to be refilled until each day in a year had its correspondence in a painting). It gives evidence to the habit, bordering on devotion, of being at a site and looking without the need for a spectacle, without an event.

365 Days engages your inner calendar and concept of time by rendering visible the flow of transitions between seasons and their signature characteristics, it either confirms what you know: that the winter is at the beginning and end of your twelve month cycle or surprises you that summer seems truly long, stretching the lush foliage in big swatches over months, and alerts you to see, maybe for the first time consciously, that there really are days when there is snow covering still green leaves. Looking at Ellen's field, we believe they do. Thus the project, seen in its entirety, tunes you out of your own knowledge to something real, it delivers you to rhythm and the message of the landscape.

In musical terms, that follow the idea of tuning, *365 Days* re-enacts polyphony: it weaves explicitness of a melody (the gradual changing of the scene, light, color) and simultaneously opens multiple sources/sites: as if all days of a year, across three years, exposed themselves to us for the duration of that one stare (in Ellen's case the one hour required to complete one painting session). This polyphony must be close to what nature sees of itself, what perhaps in real time reflects in a drop of dew or as it's transported via a multi-lens eye of a May fly.

Ellen Moon has accomplished a connection, and delivered you a passage, you, the impatient one, so you are given an insight into how the world might work without you/us, behind the curtain of glaring light. ... That perception, I think, is granted to a very few, the patient and wise among us, and out of those few, yet there is a smaller

group who are able to give the knowledge back to you, to deliver and to transcribe. Ellen Moon, has trained her eye and hand to be able to be as true to the scene as possible, she admits to setting out to depict the real light and real sky, either clear or laden with fog, let the lush grasses or naked branches cooperate to define what that one hour on a particular day of a year had looked like.

This project made of 365 vignettes in a single field, when presented complete, is also a testimony to the fact that the field gave something genuine back, something that takes you beyond a multiple-view assemblage, beyond a grouping of ordered assignments, delivered a single distinct vision that returns to your eyes with a powerful wave of seeing that is yet to come.

In a recent exhibition in NYC, titled “Stay In Love” a curator Chris Sharp had assembled a group of artists whose practice relies on multiple returns. In the show you could find a painting of Peter Dreher, who has been painting a glass of water every day, Roman Opalka whose painting meticulously numbered each instance, Miroslav Tichy’s photograph that returns to a look at women with incessant surprise, Hanne Darboven and On Kawara reimagining the calendar ...however, none of the works on display were able to touch something what Ellen Moon’s *365 Days* transported: a single vision rendered through a polyphonic sight, and a moment in time when you can feel that you transcend all, rooted in one spot, equipped with knowledge of multiple returns.

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