

Ghosts of the Future

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A photo of my parents. Both my mother, who was 26 when the photo was taken, and my father, who was 28, are younger than I am now. Their gaze is turned to me in the present, as I begin to grow old. My eyes are fixed on my parents, who are old enough to be my own children. Time is reversed. I, a six-year-old boy in the same photo, look back at myself in the present. I return his stare, gazing into my own eyes as a six-year-old boy. How do I look to him? The shadow of my mother as she stands on the earthen floor, the rounded stone by the side of the oak tree at the entrance, the chirping of a cricket under the stone, the distant landscape visible between the many gaps in the boarding fence... Things I saw as a six-year-old boy are transmitted to me in the present.

Underdrawing:

I trace photos of my family and other people, in a fashion similar to a machine. In the same way that a blind person extends their hands to a person's face in order to trace their features, I follow undulations hidden within each photo. What is important here is the ability to copy rather than an ability to draw. Internal thought processes and psychological aspects associated with such draughtsmanship are irrelevant. I trace while confirming the shape of mouths, noses, and cheekbones particular to family members, as well as differences in facial expressions and clothing, and footwear that appear at odds with the feet of the wearers.

Applying the paint:

I apply paint to the surface. Completely irrespective of the drawing beneath, I apply the paint at random. In so doing, the figures drawn on the canvas recede further and further behind. Like specters, they are drawn deeper and deeper inward, coming to settle in a time that has already passed. While periodically rotating the canvas 90 degrees, I continue to apply the paint.

On the loss of form:

As paint is applied, the image underneath is erased. Here, in direct contrast to the way an image appears when photographic film is developed, the image

fades away. The meaning that envelops each figure also disappears. The paint marks can be likened to the product of the figures' emotions, released from their bodies as fruit is from a tree. The marks give materiality to the transparent image. This does not contribute to the generation of form, leading instead to its erasure and dissolution.

For this reason, each touch of the brush is, so to speak, a desire: an action that renders meaningless that which possessed meaning. I recover physical substance to replace any sense of bewilderment or self-loss that such action evokes. "Physical substance" constitutes what is here at this moment—this point in time in which I exist, the surface of the painting, and the traces of paint I place upon it. In this way, I temporarily return images dense with meaning to a state of physical existence. The act of painting is the tracing of life in the present and its seductive proximity to material form—things bereft of life.

Ghosts:

It is when this is achieved that ghosts appear.

They appear unequivocally. These ghosts function first and foremost as a medium—a conduit connecting this world with the one beyond while belonging to neither. A medium is also the origin of "media." That is, matter that exists without any possibility of possessing real substance.

Mimicry:

Ghosts mimic the time of the present. The distortions they cause can be understood as the fluctuations in consciousness that occur due to the distance between time in the present and that of the past, but also the error resulting from the perception of depth in the picture. The past can only be seen from the present. While indistinct, from time to time ghosts unmistakably appear in the present. If one looks from a point of view in the past, the present is seen as a point in the future. By moving oneself to a point in the past through extended concentration, what becomes visible is the future, namely, the present.

Movement:

In the same way that an illusory depth extends from the pictorial surface to the world beyond, the present exists on the side of the painted surface, where our lives are also unfolding. Those observing the painting, including the painter him/herself, must live and move. The viewer is brought to move back and forth in relation to the painting only to the same extent that distortion occurs within the pictorial space. That is to say, the viewer is brought to realize their existence in the present depending on the degree to which they alter their distance in relation to the picture.

When I observe the picture during its production, this back-and-forth motion in relation to the painted surface relates less to vision and more to the body: literally, a physical movement. The depth within the painting and the depth in time from past to present are synchronized, like two mirrors held against one another, with the real process of producing the painting and the viewer's back-and-forth movement at the time of observing it.

And finally, dialogue:

Through the momentary eye of the camera lens, I turn my gaze to people of the past who are no longer in the present. Whether deceased or still alive, they are not here. And yet, it is possible to exchange words and smiles with these deceased figures.

In precisely the same manner, there are without doubt people watching us from a moment in the future. As we stare at the camera now to become part of a photo capturing a moment of the present, and after we too have faded away with the long passage of time, the same photo will come to be seen by someone in the future, awakening us once again.

There is a bar that I often go to together with my students. A room with several low tables occupies the second floor, and whenever we go there, many students turn up uninvited under the pretext that it is a drinking party open to all. One day in autumn, there was a drinking party for the class following a critique, and I stopped by after it had turned dark. The party had already begun, and as I arrived the students greeted me with smiles and loud voices. After talking for an hour or so about things discussed in the critique and painting in general, I went downstairs to the bathroom.

I casually looked at a mirror that was missing an edge, hanging at the side of the entrance. Where there should have been the reflection of my own face, there was nothing... All that could be seen was the figure of people drinking behind.

"That's strange," I thought, and looking upon a calendar next to the mirror on which the name of some builder's office was written, I noticed that while the date was correct, the year was 2030 instead of 2016.

"I see, I'm not in this world any longer." Strangely satisfied, I slowly made my way up to the second floor again. Everyone was intoxicated as they had been a moment before, while the conversation seemed to have taken a lively turn. But something was different. It seemed as if much time had passed, and I had come to another world...

As I looked closely at the faces of those present, each appeared subtly different to how they had looked before I'd gone to the bathroom, some of them looking as young as babies. And somehow, the people there seemed not to notice my presence. No matter whose eyes I turned to, nobody returned my gaze. Just as I began to think I was no longer there, my eyes met with those of one of the infants. When I smiled pleasantly, the baby returned the gesture with a huge grin. (Memory of a dream)

Ghosts of the Future are beings yet to be born, departed spirits that can be summoned by those in the future. They are nothing more than we ourselves, living in the present.