

With Higher Standards



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@
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Ciudad de México



WITH HIGHER STANDARDS

Act I, Scene 1

'The Marauder', Hotel Bar and Grille, 0300 Hours

BEN:

[Sets down drink. To PRISCILLA:]

Let's talk about this.

I'm not sure what you expected, precisely, but this is a business. Negotiations commence until an exchange is proffered. Transactions are made, and everybody goes back to their corner. Someone wins, someone loses.

Last night, you expounded relentlessly about ethics, for example.

What ethics? The only rubric is the price and the receipt of payment. People live, people die, but savings accounts are immortal.

Go sleep it off. You'll feel better in the morning, certainly by boarding time. A round of mezcales and two Xanax can't hurt.

Act I, Scene 2

'The Marauder', Room 205, 0700+1 Hours

PRISCILLA:

[Alone, writing, while speaking aloud.]

Note One – avoid composing a list of things I saw.

Note Two – consider removing my first-person perspective, and talk through a surrogate.

Note Three – flow my words together more naturally, as if speaking.

Note Four – Don't. Show. Off!

PRESENTER ON TV IN BACKGROUND:

--graced director was brought up on charges today in federal court, with the trial set to begin next month in what is sure to be a major media ev--

PRISCILLA:

[Speaking aloud, staring upward.]



Ugh.

[Turning to page, pen in hand, not writing.]

Occult, yet atheistic, taking time to process. Pointed arches, as if proposals for commemorative inserts into the vaults of a disused gothic chapel.

Blank faces, empty eyes, and scepters. A dark modern liturgy, zombie clerics, enacting a robotic re-animation of long-deceased epochs.

Act II, Scene 1
'The Marauder', Hotel Pool, 0930+1 Hours

PRISCILLA:
[To BEN:]

You are not the most skilled actor. I don't believe it clear if it is important to you, or not.

I shouldn't say this to you, probably.

We are no longer close, and my impression of you is a total fiction, fixed in the unreachable past.

You don't know if you want to stay on the margin, or in the spotlight. The position that it's all about you, while somehow remaining systemic is a terrible deflection.

Be more authentic. Own it.

Don't sublimate your needs upon me, and make me another proxy for your bullshit.

BEN:

I'm sick of this mindset. I helped you when you were dying. We are partners in crime. I only want to be real with you, about the ways in which the world works.

PRISCILLA:

You have no perspective to tell me how anything works.
[Aside:]

As if anyone did.





Act II, Scene 2
Parking Level Four, Zone B, 1230+1 Hours

[BEN, walking swiftly downstage right.]

BEN:

[Silent. Red.]

[Exit BEN.]

Act II, Scene 3
'The Marauder', Room 205, 1245+1 Hours

PRISCILLA:

[On phone to unnamed colleague.]

It's almost subterranean. The rendering process took ages, and our conversation meanwhile about the relative subtleties of their talents led into a harsh criticism of contemporary Mexican cuisine. Or more accurately, the lack thereof.

Mexican food was fixed in the late 60s. Mole, for example, just means sauce. It has nothing to do with the content.

You can make variations: a little more of this, a little less of that, but the ingredients stay the same.

Anything else is just pretentious.

UNNAMED COLLEAGUE:

[Unintelligible.]

PRISCILLA:

That's how I feel. But it's completely wrong.

[Lights dim. End.]



-JL Murtaugh





Portal/Mantle/Brace

They say the waters run in reverse and that it's empowering to see. The long wall with the black door in it. Many rings of vapor/smoke overlapping the set, casually obscuring its center like a cluster of awestruck cherries. Its pinhole-eye makes it stronger; faster than most. New grasses grow on the other side. In a beautiful new shade. The favorite black door on the left. There's an actor over there too, improvising most likely; dying on the stage. The keys were left in the bowl near the front door. A silver key has a lion's head carved at one end — with a crown, with a jade medallion. There's a second lion key somewhere.

In the center
you are
the moment
you wake

Something changed: A pyramid of horses in a field. Surrounding the field, a circular river flows counter-clockwise with no source; carrying a soft-boiled yellow. Elevator music cloaks the landscape. The horses are sculpted from stone, pasted to each other and to the ground. The sky cycles from light to dark and back to light, swiftly. A tiny man with a bowl cut, denim shorts, and a hairy chest is playing the trumpet — frustrated by his inability to keep in time with the piano, he's grimacing. He walks up to the horses, flailing both arms and hands with increasing speed. As his arm speed increases, a thunderstorm cracks. Horses get flipped. Every horse's ass end, and shortly later, their wide right side. Letters etched across the entire mound....The Outer Mantle.

In a hail storm
A meteorite descales
covers half
the eastern states

an orange peeled
you're captured
by its orangeness
and fair work

-Kevin Krueger





A Worm with a French Name

There's a passage I think a lot about from Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*. It doesn't really concern the main characters and the passage is really sort of an aside, illustrating a certain kind of Americans that were living in Europe at the time:

Occasionally he dined with a friend or two at the Cafe Anglais, where his talent for ordering a dinner was a source of felicity to his companions and an object of admiration even to the headwaiter of the establishment. These were his only known pastimes, but they had beguiled his hours for upwards of half a century, and they doubtless justified his frequent declaration that there was no place like Paris. In no other place, on these terms, could Mr. Luce flatter himself that he was enjoying life.

This passage bears no weight on the plot, yet the idea that ordering dinner might be a talent was one that resonated. I imagine a kind of attention to detail and gracefulness to his dining companions that is far and away beyond the more common "ick what looks good to you?" (though it is doubtful that in Henry James' time anyone would use "ick") Maybe what I like about the passage is that there is Mr. Luce's talent is a talent of care. Absurd as this talent may be on its face, I like to think that showing a great deal of care for his companions and for himself is not to be discounted, though I doubt that Henry James' intention was to highlight care, instead poking fun at a fussy expatriate with no other talent than to graciously order a meal.

Almost every night, I watch one or two episodes of *Frasier* before falling asleep. Like Mr. Luce, I think Niles and Frasier's brand of fussiness is some combination of care and attention to detail as well as a bit of arrogance and pretension. But what makes the show successful is that it plays to both aspects—it makes fun of them, while also illustrating that they move through life with a lot of care and tenderness. Each is mirrored by an ex wife whose character is even more specific to the point of cold detachment that ventures into cruelty. Yet these women are not without a certain charm, even the one of them which is only a character in reference, never seen or heard; one day I think I'll have a pair of pets and name them Maris and Lilith.

-Jackie Im



All fine and dandy, but here the day of, well... I found the fictions spun by our dancing partners — artists and their works — in this show particularly enticing. I was relaxing in the room as the show came together; a narrow, strangely appointed suite in theory one level more luxurious than an event in this hotel last year but nice enough with a wide variety of comfortable seating options for small and large group conversations and dim golden lighting. Usually my preference and indeed likely the preference of the works and their makers, if asked, would be something more akin to sunlight, pure and white, and normally we'd oblige but, well, there's only so much one can change in this type of venture, and our intention was never neutral ground. I'm busy using a series of devices that took up most of an adjoining room to digitize and translate the projects, scan drawings, catalogue the objects, prepare to document performances; I'm swept away a bit, voraciously devouring these uncanny tales. But I can't say I know what to make of any of it. I don't claim to be an expert in, well, much of anything; a colleague of mine anxiously awaited the capture of each new piece in a room several floors below, connected by a fiberoptic we'd strung out the window. He was painstakingly diagramming the contents of each piece, placing each in an art theoretical parallel of the Aarne-Thompson-Uther classifications. This man (I'll omit his name) may consider me an enemy as he was subject to my pace and my whims, especially as to what was and wasn't art in the room, he thinking my choices amateurish and anyway not constricted by the precise system he'd prefer. But our assignments were meted out in accordance with our ability, and he was a dyed-in-the-wool scholar who could hardly operate a computer — there were rumors of visitors to his room subject to bitter cold or cruel heat as he refused to work the thermostat.

Oh, for my work to be done, for people to fill these rooms, for some drink to be poured for me. But there's so much to record, and I'm afraid to check my phone as there are likely a string of requests for me to reshoot, retranscribe what I've done thus far. Down below in the lobby there's a crowd, or I'd like to imagine one anyway, waiting for the go ahead to come upstairs; the hotel staff is likely growing suspicious, the beer is getting warm, the works of art are changing faster than I can affix them in ink to the page.

I thought for a second about a text in the form of a correspondence between Et al and Syndicate, where each missive was another cut forming the thing from whole cloth and maybe it can continue in that format (edited of course for spelling, grammar both for your reading pleasure and out of my own vanity) but it'd not be entirely true: the basic structure was laid out a little over two months ago in a quick meeting on a bench outside an art fair at which I for my part wasn't doing very well at. Of course it would be argued half-convincingly by all in attendance that these events are a success independent of financial gain or loss, that connections and impressions were the value being traded, but it hurt to not find the reinforcement of our project as represented by people willing to take the objects we brought home with them in exchange for much-needed money. That conversation, on that bench, between us was where this slipped from "we should think about doing this" to something nearly inevitable. We each had gelato; a small cart surprised us and you had chocolate and hazelnut and I strawberry; you had a coffee and I a beer.

And between distractions and dead ends we talked out some of the rough details of *this*. I'm writing this in the middle space before the real work of realizing the specific project begins; maybe it will change dramatically in the interim (*it did, but then maybe again it didn't*). It must be said that each of us have done our share of single-day exhibitions and projects and have attended a few and heard about even more; we're not out to break ground.

I think the idea is, and we didn't put it in these terms during our conversation (your gelato melting fast; you got up to get a napkin but it looked like a disaster) that we start with the beginning and the ending and fill in the middle, compressing the exhibition's installation, its documentation, its viewing into a single day.

The beginning: a one-day show in a hotel room, six to eight artists (*we settled on five*), in a variety of formats, taking specific advantage of the physical make up of the site. If there is art in the room already, it get included in the exhibition to the best of our ability (*our thinking here was those shabbily framed things would be firmly screwed to the walls and wouldn't be invisible... it turned out they were removable; we've taken them down*). What are the venues for work in such a place? The bed, the various end-tables and desks and other flat surfaces super specific to this hotel, the extra textured walls, the television...

The ending: the opening, this catalogue, pre-set with the majority of the needed images and information but completed on-site and ready for you.

The middle:
Much to be done.

-Aaron Harbour



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AMANDA, LAURA, VIRGINIA



Maruša Sagadin, *Oh Bigness! Oh Schutz vor ihr* (variation), 2019

**OH SCHUTZ VOR IHR
OH SCHUTZ VOR IHR
OH SCHUTZ VOR IHR**







Debra Delmar, *We Are Fresas*, 2019



Jaymerson Payton, *Believing in What You Can't See*, 2018
Oil Paint, Oil Stick, Resin, Spray Paint, 96 x 76 inches



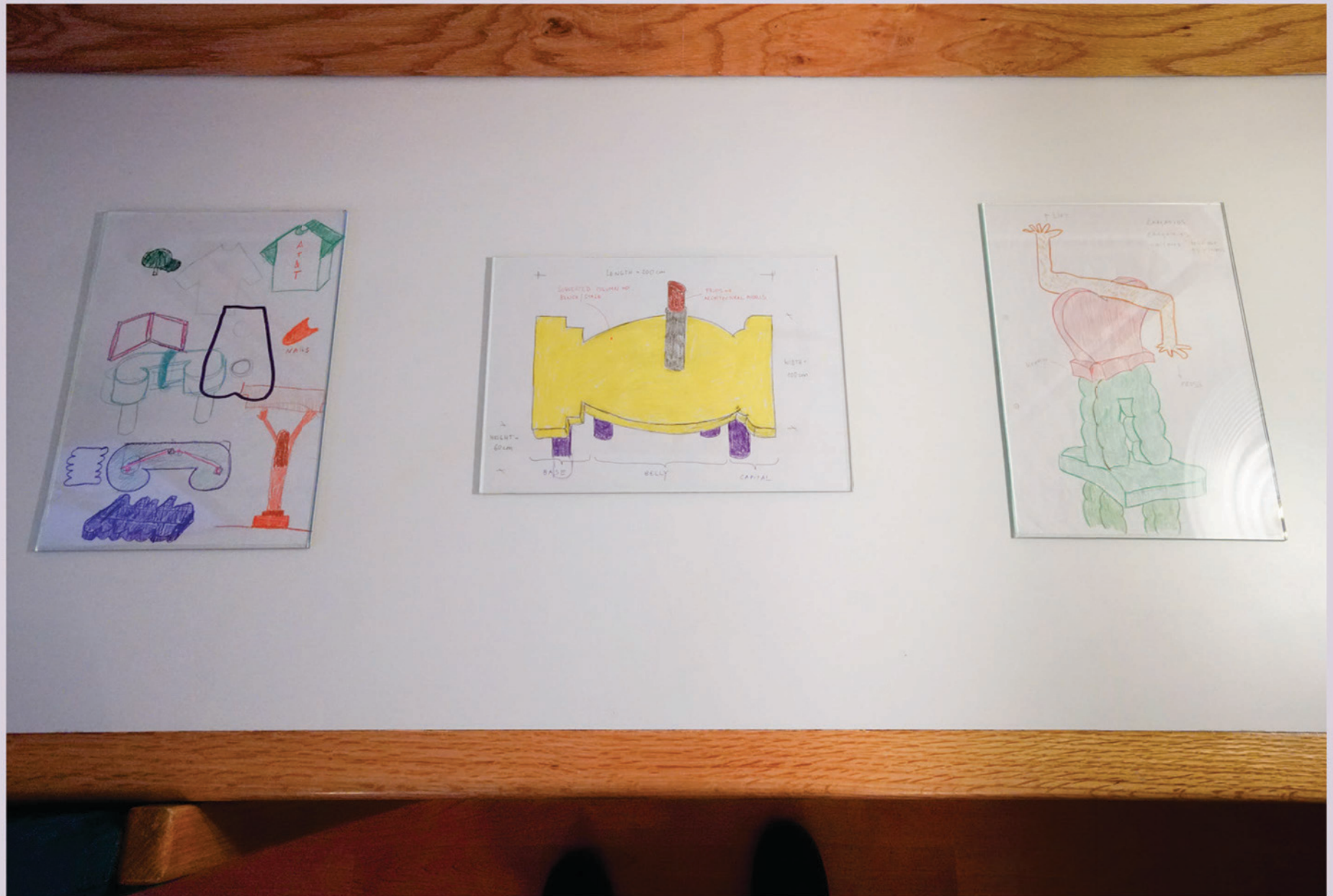
Debra Delmar, *We are Fresas*, 2019



Lina Lapelytė, *Play for the Parallels*, 2018



Anthony Discenza, *Score for a Hotel Room (Bad Night)*, 2019



Maruša Sagadin, Study for *Carytids*, 2018