

The Painter of the Pig

One wonders anymore what one does with the space that used to be called “History.” Charles Mayton has painted a pig.

One antecedent, *The Painter of the Hole* by George Grosz, stages an obsessive return to the site of its protagonists’ trauma. The antecedent is not topical. Trauma in the trenches of the First World War was experienced as unbearable guilt: the law was articulate and one was guilty before it. In contrast, trauma in our droning, IED proxy wars, returns as anxiety: it could be characterized by the virtuality of the expectation of the Other.

What does one expect from Painting? . . . Painting, the fictional field whose local terms (only ever those of its author, to be sure) seems to be all but erased, all but immediately, by the *discours-quelconque* that attend each of its contemporary moments.

. . . The answers to this question are almost unbearable.

The Pig, then, is a rather upbeat rendering of this object that anxiety “is not without”, as Lacan formulated it. One could make a case that the current turn towards the image in painting is linked to expectations that are virtual (in ways that are manifold) and whose position could be indexed by a single signifier: *render*. An image can be *rendered*, fat can be *rendered*, in the Quattrocento there was the *rend* of paint and then *rending* of flesh has been around forever. We’re dealing with the staging of separable objects, here. Which is a relief since the problem of anxiety is partially a problem of proximity: Putting it on stage is one way of not being too close (for comfort). This fact speaks to the almost too-perfect pairing of *mise-en-scene* and “traditional” oil painting in Mayton’s work. It exposes that performativity (in painting) is much older than the recent relational discourses would have it: Which rendering in which epoch would not have been a gesture that cut across the social field?

Painting, traditionally, had an intimate relationship to the desire to remove ones’ eyes. For some, we could go as far as to say that it presents a solution. What it presents for the others ... this depends on what they want (to see).

-Tim Pierson