Witnessing drawing’s carcass

This item was submitted to Loughborough University's Institutional Repository by the/an author.

Citation: SAWDON, P., 2015. Witnessing drawing’s carcass. Gone Lawn, 17.

Additional Information:

- This paper was originally published in the journal Gone Lawn, which can be found at: http://journal.gonelawn.net/glj_about.php

Metadata Record: https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/16740

Version: Accepted for publication

Publisher: Gone Lawn (© Phil Sawdon)

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Witnessing Drawing’s Carcass

Wednesday, February 29th. ... I deferred all the vellum scraping and shaving to go to the Winnats, where I begrudgingly whittled a strange stick during the melancholic conditions of the unfolding afternoon. By late evening I was home again. A dawdling and seemingly itinerant footnote was anticipating my arrival. As I drew nearer it mumbled aloud, “The drawing is dead. Come at once.” Complacently I traced through several lines, and was there or thereabouts by at least the quarter toll. I had hitherto contacted Monsieur Lièvre (a monkey) who avoided me on the frame, and remained there teetering silently throughout the night.

Thursday, March 1st. ... At dawn Monsieur Lièvre and I departed. I recognised radical doubt in the ambiguity of the footnote so Monsieur Lièvre offered to go unaccompanied to query some initial (re)marks. I waited. He returned and told me that the drawing was irrefutably dead. Accordingly we both went to the site; a wretched, wretched place. We encountered the atelier mistress, Madame Pipe. She told us that the drawing died at 9.30 yesterday morning. The last struggle began at 6 o’clock. Madame Pipe found my particulars on another fragment of paper in a drawer. I went upstairs to see the carcass; then Monsieur Lièvre accompanied me to the terminal surgeon who had been called in, the name Anonymous. Anonymous gave us a certificate. It read “Immediate cause of death: A lack of repose.”

Let me describe this place. It was originally a bare white surface so small that it left no space to move. Amongst other items it now contained the dusty traces of a broken chair, the roots of an ash tree; several pencil shavings and a bisque doll likeness of T.S. Eliot. In an awkward corner were a few empty bottles of iron gall ink and a photograph taken some years ago along with several cards of theoretical text. On the reverse hung various hats, and some shoes alongside a pair of parasols and under another hanging from the scratch was a small basket of fresh flowers. There was one sheet.

I drew out the drawers. In one I found a dot in motion and a blind mouse yet there was no other food anywhere. The other drawers contained a cluttered assortment of scripts: there I found all my papers, away back to the academic time. In a closet were several heaps of dirty rags; at the bottom there had been charcoal, but now there was none left. Lying about here and there for no apparent reason were embossed coffin shaped medicinal bottles, and various medicaments.

The drawing lay on the floor covered by another. I looked long, long at the surface, but could not recognize it. I think it is more than three years since I have worked on it, and it has changed horribly. Its teeth surprisingly have all remained, white and perfect as I remembered them. I took away several effects in a small package including a box to burn nicely, two small poems, a pamphlet, a panther’s skin, a copy of The Waste Land and a preserved monkey much to the consternation of Monsieur Lièvre.

Friday, March 2nd. ... In the morning I arranged my books roughly on the shelves; during the laying out they have been carelessly stacked on the floor. In the afternoon I went to The Fictional Museum of Drawing and saw the carcass on the wall. The face appeared more familiar. I gave the keeper some more artefacts for the exhibition; the opening will be on Monday at 2 o’clock in the morning. Monsieur Lièvre accompanied me to the basement café where the woman behind the counter offered us a few fibres cut from the drawings head, we accepted – I scarcely know why, more’s the pity!

René Hector, Diaries, 2014