

THE DIARY OF MARK FLOOD, PART THREE: ATTACK OF THE DRONES

by Mark Flood



Mark Flood. (Courtesy of the artist)

Friday, April 22, 2016

1.

My unemployed buddy Ling was tired of the corporate grind. I suggested he join the Flood entourage, and work at our glamorous CAMH gig. He could search his soul while he pinned Lindsay Lohan clippings to the wall.

He said he had a drone camera. I said Great, but I didn't expect much.

My mental picture of drone activity involves the drone sitting on the ground while the operator attacks the controls in frustration. A secondary image is the drone smashing into someone's face or, worse yet, into a painting.

But Ling turned out to be quite skilled. He shot flyover movies of the install, and they racked up views on Instagram.

CAMH's director, Bill Arning, told me that other museum directors had seen the drone footage of my show. They had expressed Drone Envy. They said things like, We don't have a drone-cam yet but we're getting one! My exhibits are just as drone-friendly as yours! 2.

My zigzag wall of giant paintings got finished today. It looks great, and it's not going to fall and kill someone.

There was a party atmosphere in the CAMH all afternoon. Bill Arning and some staff came over. The Flood entourage loitered tirelessly. Visitors going to the basement got distracted, and hung out.

The CAMH guys used a cherry-picker to bridge the east and west wings of the wall with a long horizontal painting, perched overhead.

Visitors will pass under it to go backstage.

3.

This overhead painting is a silkscreen portrait of Jim Pirtle from the '90s. It's psychedelic, with multiple Jims dissolving into a flesh-colored mist with about 25 eyes.

Jim is an art genius, but he's the kind the art world can't readily use, because he doesn't play the game, and he doesn't care about the money.

Once, back in the '90s, Jim and I spent an afternoon inhaling a 40 lb. tank of nitrous oxide. We would blow up garbage bags and hit from them.

Whippet-huffing amateurs may not realize it, but nitrous is a hallucinogen. After an hour, my visual field was nothing but thin horizontal stripes, pink, white, and brown.

The Jim-creature hovered in front of the universe of stripes. We had a long conversation where we just said one word, back and forth, with various intonations.

I believe the word was...What?

4.

The zigzag wall of giant paintings looks just like I'd imagined. It has the feel of a hallucination. It was inside my head, and now, it's outside.

It's scary. What if some of the other things in my head were to materialize?

I've known a lot of people who got confused about what was inside their head, and what was outside. They thought the neighbors were conspiring, and the bushes were whispering, and the way the guys drove the forklift at work meant You Are Gay.

Saturday, April 23, 2016

1.

Here's a dispassionate survey of the lace paintings in the show.

Heaven's Gate

Lace paintings are my attempts to capture beauty, and use it to attract an audience that has little use for critical theories and anti-retinal readymades.

I'm sure that by now Dave Hickey is tired of hearing how I got the idea from him.

Art-morons frequently assume I developed lace paintings to make my art more commercial. They think the road to Art Success was always out there, clearly marked and waiting. The issue was whether an artist, in this case Mark Flood, was willing to make that shameful, sinful journey.

I guess they think I waited until I was 50 because I was so fucking pure.

Actually, painting beautiful lace paintings felt like career suicide to me. Conceptual readymades were the official highway to success. Art was to be propaganda in the service of Marxist revolution. You'd get your fair share of glory in the workers' gulag, I mean, paradise.

Hideous was good, hideous signified Integrity. Beauty was career suicide.

Ah, suicide! In my younger days, I was into death.

First Song

I don't know if other artists do this, but when I see paintings I like, I find out what size they are. Then I have stretcher bars made of that size for me.

I had four made the size of Sigmar Polke's Paganini. This is one of them. It's seven feet tall by sixteen and a half feet long.

Large paintings create certain challenges. I had to find lace with large figures, figures that were big enough to activate this giant composition.

The figure on the left looks across the blue field, to the couple on the other side, and points his flute at them. They look back, listening. One's eye is directed back and forth across the rippling iridescent ocean.

How did I make that big blue expanse of brushwork so supernaturally regular? My secret is that I use super-brushes of my own design. They're three to six feet long, and have dozens of brushes joined together, on a metal armature that's bent like stair-steps. So every stroke I make is like 12 strokes, evenly spaced...if I do it right.

I sat my fat ass on a rolling metal cart, and my sad assistants earned their dough by rolling me slowly back and forth before the painting. I made little up and down movements with the super-brush, until the painting looked good.

When I first tried the cart technique, I thought all I would get out of it was a funny picture for Instagram. But it works.

Drama in the Forest

Some conference of curators was held in Houston, and they came to my show. I followed their posts on Instagram because they had #markflood.

One of them called my lace paintings endless commercial potboilers. That's a typical response from art professionals. Beauty is bad, propaganda is good.

I'm surprised someone can stand in front of paintings like this, and not see anything more than a commercial potboiler. But I guess if you go to the right university, and study sticking your head up your ass long enough, anything's possible.

The Fapper

I believe the power of the lace paintings has something to do with the contrast between the formal order of the floral patterns, and the chaotic lines generating by tearing the lace. I love to bring that contrast into the context of the human figure.

I like my figures to be sexual, because I think art is about sexual display, like a peacock spreading its tail, or a lizard extending his throat pouch. The Fapper depicts a person in black stockings masturbating to a picture of Justin Bieber.

The figurative lace paintings don't sell, but I love them, so I make them anyway.

Monday, April 25, 2016

1.

The assistants assembled the wall of Mark Flood memorabilia. They found digging through dusty, unorganized boxes of my past a lot more entertaining than I did. It made me want to call my therapist, or my sponsor.

They pinned up lots of color copies of old collages. These are vintage color copies, back when color copies were a luxury, made behind the counter at Kinko's.

They preferred collages that feature genitals. I told them my show is disturbing enough without having lots of pussy and dick on the walls.

2.

There's a room about the '80s band I was in, Culturcide. My assistant Dylan was installing it and he didn't think the Culturcide memorabilia I picked out was "colorful" enough.

I had brought letters to distributors, promoters, and radio stations. Orders for LP sleeve printing and test pressings and shipping. Lots of bills and invoices.

I think '80s music biz paperwork is interesting, because that's the stuff you never see.

Tuesday, April 26, 2016

1.

We brought in a lot more furniture. Black leather sofas and easy chairs from my studios. Benches and chairs from CAMH storage. I like people to have a place to sit down and look, and talk, and think.

We started lighting the show. I like subdued, moody lighting. I don't care if it takes a moment for customers' eyes to adjust.

I wanted the zigzag wall to cast a big shadow over the backstage.

2.

You can divide the world into onstage and backstage.

I like lurking in the shadows, pulling strings. I like power, not attention.

I don't mind stepping into the spotlight when necessary. But I don't live for it, like some do. The roar of the crowd doesn't intoxicate me. It sounds too much like an angry mob looking for their next victim.

3.

Some artists want to be understood. I used to explain my art, but I wondered if that wasn't self-sabotage. People want to figure it out for themselves.

No one really understands anybody's art, and they never will. People are still arguing about Matisse.

To be able to make the art, that's enough. To place it somewhere in this

wicked world, that's the dream.

4.

I don't care if you understand my art, because my art understands you. It enters in your eyes and reaches your guts, and infects your nervous system.

Before you know it, you're wandering around the CAMH putting LIKE signs on everything.

5. My show terminates to the west, the quarter of the magician and the sunset. There's a room lit only by a black light, where all the shadows can gather. There's a suite of ANOTHER PAINTING paintings there, on black walls, soaking in the black light. They are flagrantly beautiful and meaningless, just like people, just like life.

Why think about art when you can sit on a black leather sofa in a dark room and watch music videos on TV?

6.

Remember all those LIKE signs that might express your alleged self? In my video, there's an erotic performer having sex with those.

I was curious how Facebook's economy of LIKEs would function in porn. I wondered if LIKEing wasn't just sublimated fucking.

Porn is where sublimation dies.

Wednesday, April 27, 2016

1.

JB and Marita came by CAMH to see the show. They're hosting my fancy dinner tonight. They claimed they'd spent all morning in the kitchen boiling hot dogs.

2.

My two European dealers arrived today. I anticipate tension over who gets to sell which paintings in the show.

I think I'll bring some pistols to the dinner, in case they want to fight a duel in JB and Marita's backyard.

3.

The dinner was the thing that made me most nervous about the whole

exhibit. Formal occasions where I get dressed up and people are nice to me have never been my forte.

I'm thought about taking a Xanax before the dinner, to erase my anxiety. But Xanax is a two-edged sword.

Without my anxiety to guide me, I can become uninhibited, and start babbling...

4.

Did I ever tell y'all about that time I got obsessed with that bisexual prostitute/construction worker who had a brain tumor pressing on his aggression center?

He didn't care about art. He was obsessed with this TV show called Remington Steele. He thought Pierce Brosnan, who played the title role, was the coolest motherfucker.

It was a triangle...Me, him, and Remington Steele. He pulled a gun on me because I suggested we change the channel.

5.

My buddy Shoe had this stripper girlfriend, and they fought like maniacs, but then they always made up. She poured Benzene on his clothes, and smashed his art, and he cried. Everything in their pad got broken into bits, so there wasn't anything bigger than a baseball.

They had a pet rat that was the symbol of their love, and it got injured too. Then it couldn't pee unless they massaged it. So that was their love story, massaging the pet rat so it could pee.

6.

One time my roommates and I were gonna throw this pig's head on the ice skating rink at the Galleria, as a conceptual / political art-piece.

I painted a dollar sign right between the pig's eyes. Who says I have no talent?

When we got there, the machine was out shaving the ice. So then we drove to Alameda Mall, and threw the thing in a fountain.

But nobody noticed the pig head bobbing there! So Mike fished it out and started just chasing people at the mall with it.

He got arrested.

7.

The dinner in my honor was a lot of fun. I didn't share any stories.

People came up to me and told me about the Mark Floods they owned. That's my idea of fascinating conversation.

8.

When I drove the dealers back to their hotels, I was musing aloud.

I told them that the next time the three of us were in a car together, I would probably be in the trunk. They'd be driving to some deserted place, where they could kill me and dump my body.

They would probably make it look like a Grindr assignation gone wrong.

The dealers didn't say anything. They just looked out the windows, into the darkness.

I'm the kind of artist whose death is a great career move. I don't play the game, and I say the wrong things. I'm in the way.

I have a delusion that everyone enjoys laughing at the art-hell we inhabit. In my work, I try to capture how ridiculous it is. Not because I think I rise above it, but because I'm stuck in it worse than anyone. I'm wallowing in it. I want company, so we can laugh at it together.

But you know what? The art world is full of people who have no sense of humor at all. They don't see how art that's purposeless, irrational, or even just complicated can be good. They're looking for something so straightforward even a consultant can understand it.

I'm complicated. That's why I'll be in the trunk.

Mark Flood