

A sOLEmN mAss FOR thE pOOR hUBBLEs

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(A kind of opera-guide to the Zenita-Universe, a state in which rampant growth, geometry, nature and cultures, monochromy and eloquence all passionately embrace. Or: An Introduction to the Philosophy of the Roomy Boudoir.)

The failure of the Mars expedition lies solely in the stubborn desire of its astronauts to return to Earth. Sentimental blokes they are—mere heroes of the already known world. No wonder they fail to make headway; mentally and technologically equipped for the journey, they seem to have gone and wet themselves when confronted with the notion that their true destination was indeed the destination itself. Unbearable was the thought that they would never have the chance to report back to their fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, and—first and foremost—to the president himself on how life on Mars really is, on what the Minotaur actually looks like, and where and how God resides. Their only cowardly aim is to return— both mentally and bodily unscathed, carrying bags that are loaded with nifty souvenirs. Moreover: while enjoying a hero's pension, the ceaseless sputtering of anecdotes, all the way up to the very last interview as the last living witness, as one of the greats among the locals, reading at the poolside from "How I Found My Way Back to the Entrance of the Labyrinth: An Autobiography"— until, despite all precautionary measures, death calls after all, miserly and strange.

All the same, Heaven and Earth remain inseparably bound, each partner nurturing the other in turn. As a matter of fact, anyone is free to take part in the consummation of their love at any time (the only restriction being that you are not allowed to watch). The voyeur and the secret are unappeasably estranged. Only those willing to strip down and join in are allowed to enter the roomy boudoir. Peeping Toms are condemned to endure the life of a cosmonaut, forever doomed to float through daily encounters with the same old lost-in-space lingerers.

For that matter, Plato had realized long before its invention that the telescope would amount to nothing but a chicanery. It was clear to him that, instead of simply observing the stars, we ought better to employ the intellect in comprehending the laws that govern their movements. Even the largest Hubble is still incapable of peering even a hem's width beneath the supreme skirt, of lifting the curtain to air the boudoir, or depicting the origins of life in even halfway decent exposure.

Divinity took pains to organize itself into triads in order to escape being bound to any monogamous coupling. "My Discoverer and I," "The Great Patriarch and His Chief Shepherd," and "The Truth and its Exclusive Annunciator"—the sort of fatuousity that has been screaming with flagrancy toward the heavens for ages. Approaching the divine, that is, requires, above all, remaining down-to-earth and learning to think in terms of threes. The drama triangle is in every respect superior to the duel. The individual semblances of three entwined faces are no longer locatable; only the whole system initiated by their union accommodates description. Their interaction yields more than would the aggregate of their eyes, ears and noses. Aside from that, division by threes is always more difficult.

There is time enough, then, to build a model. (For the sake of expedience, we will forego justifying the latter through any practical substantiation of its everyday fictions). The very moment the mesocosmonaut passes through the gateway leading into Amel Bourouina's gallery, a system of pathways unfurls itself before the visitor, which in turn—once embarked upon—leads (without exhibiting the least suggestion of an incline) to a lofty vantage point. When viewed from atop the (provisionary) peak, the vista's center presents discerning meso-cosmonauts with a view of themselves in miniature; the gallery and its artefacts are revealed below in model scale, thus compelling the visitors to involve themselves through self-localization. As soon as the meso-cosmonaut has accorded credibility to the model, a long narrow passageway is manifested, which must be traversed before the newly entered galaxy widens once more. According to the model, that is the place where a second system points the way. No exit points are visible—nor is any grail. Nonetheless, the well-trusted real surrounding space bears a number of clues:

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“Ich verzeihe mir [I Forgive Myself],” “Control your Thoughts,” and “Schön Malen kann nicht jeder [Not Everyone can Paint Pretty Pictures]”—sentences built of sand: letters that, formed simply for the moment, have herded themselves into text paintings and amuse themselves by issuing jocular instructions, allowing little bits of wisdom or even platitudes to form, but only long enough for either love's or the sea's waves to reach them (only to prompt their immediate rebirth in a sandbox, now constituting a new set of relationships). If the letters begin to get bored (and only then), they proceed by pulling out their paint-boxes. They line themselves up alphabetically, with “A” at the front and “Z” at the back, and tonally, from white to yellow, then on to red, green and blue, and all the way down to black. This procedure is commenced in the hope that someone will whirl them around and mix them up. Whenever the letters want to stop making sense, no longer feel like signifying third-party thoughts or having themselves pressed into hexameters, they usually take a rest as wild heaping clusters or go for a dip in the soup, refusing to simply lie down in their letter case, sorted by color like felt-tipped markers. The grains of sand feel the very same way: as soon as the fun of purling and sliding has faded (when they have grown tired of illustrating the streaming of time), they cling to one another to form a firm and mighty fortress—or, they leave the sandbox again and spill mirthfully onto the canvas to form the words “Cold Coffee Steam Makes Beautiful.”

Zenita knows the letters and the colors and the little grains of sand. She knows about their relatives, about the cord that binds them all at the belly button, about their fondness for integration, and about their potential to articulate everything (“Happiness Makes Up in Height for What It Lacks in Length”). She knows that the pictures engender pictures, that the words entail new words as well as deeds and vagaries. In her catalogue-book *Opus IV. Selected Works*, Komad presented various series in chronological order. Now, with *Missa Solemnis*, she has widened the expanse of her mirthfully comparative ZenitaUniverse Sciences to include a solemn new study, thereby disclosing yet another ground plan. Now exposing a part of the very foundations upon which the Zenita-Universe (private grounds upon which all are welcome) has been built, she has succeeded in establishing that, building in all number of directions at the same time and using any number of possible materials, the builder is just as free to apply cement to paper as she is to sketch upon the canvas.

Komad's Mass is a journey. Whoever dares to embark upon it ought best to pack the “Bild gegen den bösen Blick [Painting to Ward Off the Evil Eye],” or simply make sure to get undressed well from the start—the reason being that the following has occurred in the past: The monochromy has tended to produce strange offspring: children that could not be stopped from taking root, taking hold of the space they occupy, and relentlessly taking on forms of their own. Eventually, they became so fed up with the achromatic monotony that they abandoned

themselves to indulge in mass orgies. During the foreplay to the present Mass, monochromy demanded that it finally be given a part of its own; it began to perform dances of elation and throw rakishly wild parties. Finally altogether unleashed, its children began to devour each other, goading one another into mass acts of procreation, never tiring of reaping more pleasure, with which they proceeded to contaminate the surrounding space and us alike—the meso-cosmonauts, to whom no further option was left but that of participation.

Unmitigated. That is to say: whoever tries to escape will see nothing at all; whoever attempts to withhold will lose everything. There are no viewers; involvement is compulsory: risk. For perhaps the roots that have twisted their way towards us from the other side, from beyond the plane of the canvas—from another unknown heaven—are indeed highly dexterous in their search for nourishment, for symbionts—for us. Is it the legacy of art history that is well-rooted in these thoroughly contemporary canvases, or does the canvas—the Heaven that we already know—in fact present no limits after all? The path to clarity concerning what may lie behind leads directly into the middle of the *mêlée*. That may actually be the place where certain magical beings reside—those who turn their backs on expectations and preconceived notions, those prima ballerinas who are capable of chiselling out the Laocoön and His Sons in no time flat, thereby delivering heroism from the grasp of melancholia and into the realm of sensation-rich harmony between word, image and tone: there, where nothing is anxiously balanced, mutually excluded or reciprocally damned. Certainly, the peace that reigns in Zenita City is anything other than priggish or oppressive. (There reside, among other things, full-bosomed paintings that are givers of life).

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The visitors find themselves at a four-way crossing. The geoglyph of sand reveals the floor plan of a cathedral. The way the travellers now stand there, at the crossing of transept and nave, it appears as though they must have entered through the northern portal, as though the whirling of the birth canal, the bulging life-filled nucleotide strands of the narrow double helix has simply spewed them out directly into a state of grace, spitting them into their well-trusted and comfortable cathedrae. From the foundation's remains, memory allows towering walls to ascend, lets dauntless lancet arches emerge to encompass them, and empowers the sand to adopt new and ever changing fixed forms, perhaps to build a house—his or her house, the house of God. Memory causes the mounded sediment to lay bare the entire temporal span of architectural thought, resuscitating innumerable saints, thousands upon thousands of building engineers and all of the painters and sculptors—in the mother church, in the temple, in the tradeunion hall or the Palace of the Republic.

They will surely find their way. They will recognize the meaning of the paths before them, of the changes in direction that are to be undertaken in the search for particular niches. They know the practices involved and the rituals that are employed here; they may even knock down the foundations, leave the painter behind them, give the priest one last smile, grab hold of the gleaming umbilical cord as it streams through the lantern toward the floor of the crossing, and pull it down with enough resolve to bring Heaven tumbling back down to Earth, seizing it for themselves, and evaporating in the most tremendous and final of orgasms. Unwitting bystanders noticed nothing but the merry distant ringing of the bells at what seemed an entirely inappropriate hour.