

and so on

(notes on art)—in no particular order

Ray Malone

"One chooses the labour again and again—
someone picks up stones from the path, to smooth it,
and one of us goes off into the brush or the forest, to find
other stones,
bringing them back and placing them carefully,
or scattering them, according to his or her lights,
in the same path . . ."

it must be possible to fashion art from stumblings, hesitations, uncertainties—to
compose according to the distribution of silences—isn't that the breath of music—
then why not the breath of writing also, or of painting, or drawing—why not?

a line, then a space, another line, and then another space, and of course a further
line to declare the space—and so on—so, a rhythm begins, a simple placing and
the paper trembles—there's nothing more to be done

no sooner is one line drawn, than there must be another—as though no line
should be left alone—and yet a line is never more than a beginning, no matter how
long, no matter how many more come to be drawn

there is a way of understanding that has nothing to do with words

every artist, writer, painter, composer, has to ask, who will attend to what I do —
and every artist has, at last, to ignore the answer

if art is reduced to a social function, it is nothing, or no better than nothing

the painting is nothing I see, or recording of something seen—but the possibility of
seeing

if only a line might have the resonance of a single note—the line yearns for time,
lost in space

a line draws space to itself, calls to the edge of things—once drawn, the edge
itself 'trembles'

Ray Malone

there was a time, and for some there still is, when a drawing would prompt the question, a drawing of what?

I'm interested in creating an object you can relate to without illusion

I have a certain activity in mind—which is staring at a 'blank' space, and things 'happening' at the edge (& towards the edge), an edge that contains & engages the viewer, and what is immediately beyond it—no particular reading is dictated, but a viewer cannot fail to find themselves (at some point) in this position, that is to find him/herself questioning, which is where art (& its appreciation) begins

neutral colour—in a sense, of course, there is no such thing as a 'neutral' colour, only a colour we've no name for

. . . *here is your path*, you're walking it, eyes wandering here and there, ahead, or from side to side, occasionally towards the sky, sometimes down to the ground, paying attention to the things you should, the signs, the directions, and to the things that happen to be there, the buildings, the trees, to the "usual" (the things you've seen once, or many times, before) and the unusual (the things that have 'always' been there, though this is the first time you've noticed them), to the pleasing and the unpleasant, to the objects, perhaps, of your daily indifference, you just see them, hardly noticing that you do so, scanning, browsing, more or less purposefully, hardly aware of your purpose when it's most apparent, alert and yet in a half sleep, aware of much, oblivious of more, your eyes brushing against the world as, at times, your body does—

but then, someone, who knows who it is, or what they are, or whether it matters, places something in that very same path, that way so familiar and so full of unfamiliarities, that field walk of an infinity of observations dulled, for a moment, or worse, for a lifetime, to a beaten path, a mindless tracing of habit—someone places something in that way, in your way, something you've not seen before, or not here at least, something that briefly at the least, alerts you to where you are, perhaps to the way you are as well as the way you go— someone places something, the obstacle, in so far as it is in the way—

and that 'something', let's call it 'art', and let's say, for the moment, for our purpose, that that's what art does, what artists do, it places, they place, something in the way of your daily life, indifferent or otherwise, in your way, and let's add, let's propose, to put it more strongly, that in so far as you noticed it, in so far as it was an obstacle in your path, it was meant for you, whether the artist knew it was your path, or thought it was someone's else's entirely, whether he thought of it as anything more than, well, a path, let's say, for the pleasure of feeling chosen (because it is

a pleasure), that at precisely the point that you stop in your path at the obstacle that that 'someone' placed there, that obstacle was meant for you, and for the very reason that you stopped, to notice—

whether you immediately walk on, or whether you linger, whether you soon forget it, or remember it long after you've beaten other paths, to other places, it did what it was meant to do: it stood, that is, in your way, it stood against the familiar, against the habit and the indifference, against the very frame and nature of your daily life; it did, in other words, what art, since we decided to let it be called art, to call this obstacle art, what art is meant to do, what no other thing does the way art does it, to be an obstacle to habit and indifference, to the stale and the mundane, to deadnesses of all sorts, in fact to custom itself . . .

a painting never fully appears, any more than a person does—it is, of course, an everyday assumption, that both do

Art must wait, must be patient—perhaps no-one will ever see it (there is so much to distract us from the attention that art demands from us)—that is a matter of faith (an artist wakes every morning more or less in that faith, in the uncertainty that is the source of all faith—whether he sleeps soundly or not, the morning is there with the same question to which the artist will hope to find the answer, or the courage at least to try)

"the stillness of the event" (Nietzsche)—nothing, certainly no artistic product, is better placed to represent this stillness than a painting, being the sum of serial events in its production, the accumulated traces of its creation—but painting is prone to excess: the nuance, the indefinable point of location, the still moment is not so easy to attain, either in the production of a painting or in its reception —to attain it, and not reduce it to the 'balance of a placid equilibrium'

It seems to me that in some, but in one sense all cases, representational painting seeks to abolish the distance that Walter Benjamin suggests can, ought, (may only?) be 'brought alive'. It too brashly claims its immediacy, its present-ness (as against its presence), and allows me no alternative but to bathe in its own life and not to bring our two (of course quite separate, quite other) lives together—that is, that it shuns the neutral, the possibility of non-confrontation

A painting is a cumbersome, uncomfortable thing (the way a tree is). It answers at times to a certain refinement (the way a tree cannot), to a certain sense of being human (as a tree may do, but only by analogy). It is there to be noticed or ignored, in the fragility of its being, no matter its being is a crude meeting of materials. At its best, it is there to return something that only the viewer can bring to it, his/her gaze. All paintings aspire to this, but how often or rarely any one of them succeeds, is

impossible to know.

However, paintings have something that is often lacking in those who look at them, or glance at them in passing, or simply ignore them, that is patience, the patience of all objects, for the moment of silence, of stillness in which the two meet and the gaze may be returned.

Painting to be, as it were, its own evidence, not evidence of the world—to create a relationship, not to be a sign of one.

I'm not interested in 'information'. To talk of art as information is to reduce it, to banalize and diminish it. Art tells us nothing. If it does, it is because we 'use' it; but, in using it, we betray it, as surely as we betray a person if we 'use' them.

Silence—To produce work that 'speaks for itself', work that is worth returning to. Or of which it can be said, there is nothing more to be said. [Two separate thoughts, surely?] To silence people, is that it? Remember the friend who said, there's nothing to say about it, once it's done. And if there were, it would be something else. Of course it would. But, I must say. Why should a stone silence me? Why shouldn't I have something to say about such a stubborn-ness as that? All the more so, then, about a painting, surely something done precisely to set/lay questions before me, to stir speech in me. There's so much to see, so much passes in front of us, all to no purpose. All to be left, speechless, all to be noticed, or not, in the silences that we mostly are.

Object relations—Painting is physical. The activity, I mean, but also the 'product'. Reproduction obscures the truth of this, as it obscures the reality of everything it appropriates. In photography this is a source of poignancy, but in the reproduction of a painting it is an anaesthetic. The reproduction of a painting is a loss of another sort, assuaging a pain one hasn't actually felt—yet, perhaps? Or, perhaps, never to be felt?

Painting is its own notation.

a tree, a painting—A tree grows, a painting ages.

Attention is the distant object: desire, and destination. And a variation on this: attention is the distant object brought close, desire *becomes* destination. Tension *between* things—closeness, distance.

all over—The problem of writing about art—even about the looking at it—is that lan-

guage enforces looking as a sequence of acts, a journey, or to put it another way, it imposes a logic, a narrative structure, on something that has a logic of its own, a pictorial, 'overall' one.

Ding an sich—The world has always seemed to me to be full of discrete objects, so that, while I recognise the house, the column, the doorstep, these things do not wholly deconstruct themselves into concepts, but at all times must impinge upon me as solid affairs of form, colour, pattern, texture.

From as early as I can remember, art—in the form of those paintings introduced to me as the 'art treasures of the nation'—was, and continues to be about object-ness rather than depiction, about things rather than images.

I cannot experience art *merely* as image. I cannot, even though I recognise the cultural imperative that says I *should* do so, I *should* ignore its thing-ness, its quiddity. I have never been able to lose sight of the thing that a painting is, nor lose myself in the "how-lifelike-it-is" of the thing the painting depicts. I have always wanted to assert the object-ness of a painting, to assert it as a mere thing, even to its detriment, as one more thing among the many others.

Silence—Everything tends towards silence. Art begins and ends there. Silence is the beginning of thought, and the end of thought. But between the first and the last is *articulation*. In that sense art is not silent, art is thought articulated in another way.

If art can be pinned to biography, to the personal experience/s of its author, it can to some extent then be disempowered; it can, as it were, be "known"—classified, categorized, put away, controlled—its dangers, its open-ness, its other-ness warded off. It appears to make it knowable, and therefore in a way trivial, everyday, banal.

Two poles—One, a small area can be utterly absorbing; the other, the world is so various, how could one stop and look at any one thing? That's what the artist is about, bringing the two poles together, trying to find the equator. He functions along their axis, trying, *either* to concentrate on the isolated object at one extreme, or to include as much of the world as possible at the other. He must choose: that is, either to be *ex-clusive*, or *in-clusive*.

It's not a question of 'representing' or 'visualising', but of attention to the presence in the painting/drawing. To find, for instance, a way of drawing a line, that keeps one's eye, at all points or instances, *on the line*.

the space of painting is both real *and* imaginary