

BANISH THE THOUGHT / MARRY THE NIGHT

by Matt Morris

She has remained in the studio too long, and now she is bound to be late. She knows the sun is set, had watched the daylight soften, but had not thought of it as time passing. Startled when her evening plans occur to her, she rushes and in so doing overturns a glass of wine onto a coat. The coat is black with white lining. She looks back at the sound of the glass falling, watches the purple spill sink into the weave of the lining. “Shit!” she says aloud, then thinks, “What will I wear now?” She looks around the studio; one painting on the wall catches her attention. She sees one possible painting, and if she had woven the ribbons of color-stained canvas in a different order, she would see another one. The pressure of a determined outcome contends with the possibility of surprising oneself. Still, those closely cropped edits in *Painters Painting*, 1973, *did* happen, and Helen Frankenthaler later served on Ronald Reagan’s National Council on the Arts (and in 1989, she told Deborah Solomon in an interview for the *New York Times*, “Some of my friends criticized me for going to the White House, but it was a great party.”¹). The glass wasn’t broken. She moves it and scrubs the coat. The white lining and the red wine turn pink. She decides to face the night without outerwear. She looks at the painting and turns off the light, watching what remains visible in the darkened room. She doesn’t leave the room, instead, she gropes toward the glass and bottle of remaining wine, pours, and tries to see another painting where this one hangs.

The artist has remained away from the studio too long, and now the paintings are bound to their imaginary corollaries in her thoughts. The artist knows the sun is set, had watched the daylight soften, but had not thought of it as time passing. Startled by how light seems to concentrate inside her fantastical paintings like bright ideas, even as evening dawns, the artist overturns a glass of Dubonnet on the rocks. The ice has long melted; the glass is sweaty. The aperitif falls onto a coat. The coat is milky, pale pink with hot pink lining. The artist looks back at the sound of the glass falling, watches the reddish spill sink into the weave of the lining. “Shit!” she says aloud. The artist looks away, into her mind: one notion for a painting catches her attention. The artist sees one possible painting, and if she were to weave the ribbons of color-stained canvas in a different order, she would see another one. The pressure of a determined outcome contends with the possibility of surprising oneself. Still, those closely cropped edits in *Painters Painting*, 1973, *did* happen, and in that same year, Agnes Martin—who does not appear in the film—saw her writings published for the first time: “The artist works by awareness of his own state of mind...To hold onto the ‘silver cord’, that is the artistic discipline. The artist’s own mind will be all the help he needs.”² The glass wasn’t broken. The artist moves it and scrubs the coat. Light glints off the wetness and softness of the shades of pink. The artist decides to face the night without outerwear. The artist looks at the coat as if it is a painting and turns off the light, watching what remains visible in the darkened room. The artist doesn’t leave the room, instead, she gropes toward the glass and bottle of Dubonnet, pours, and tries to see a painting where the coat lay.

She has remained in the studio too long, and now she is bound to be late. She knows the sun is set, had watched the daylight soften, but had not thought of it as time passing. Startled when her evening plans occur to her, she rushes and in so doing overturns a glass of wine onto a coat. The coat is white inside and out. She looks back at the sound of the glass falling, watches the purple spill sink into the weave of the fabric. “Shit!” she says aloud, then thinks, “What will I wear now?” She looks around the studio; one painting on the wall catches her attention. The painting she sees now had been concealed in a previous version when she had woven the ribbons of color-stained canvas in a different order. The pressure of a determined outcome contends with the possibility of surprising oneself. Still, those sounds of rats scraping inside the walls are getting closer. Rats pile over one another, sharp footed, greasy, to make every attempt at completing a gown for her to wear to the ball. But every effort is frustrated by how their feet shred the gathered fabrics. The scurrying rodents shatter the quiet of the room, and yet the glass wasn’t broken. She moves it and scrubs the coat. The red wine turns pink on the white cloth. She decides to face the night without outerwear. She looks at the painting and turns off the light, watching what remains visible in the darkened room. She doesn’t leave the room, instead, she gropes toward the glass and bottle of remaining wine, pours, and remembers the other painting woven into this one.

un-weave, re-weave

A black, glass thought contends with a nation passing. She darkened into night, surprising her friends with a pressure to party. She says, “I will bottle this evening in purple and red glass.” She pours shit, watches it falling. Some of it is on one painting. She scrubs the weave. It has set into the canvas. She edits plans for the painting, gropes at the possibility of another outcome. “What now?” The painting overturns her, then she thinks she is going to leave the room. She cropped what remained of the spill. She doesn’t see the color-stained glass and the painting as a passing of oneself—an interview between the new and the outré. She’s startled when the glass looks back with all the visible pink light possible. The Franken-painting was lying. Looks soften too late. She tries passing, but she is not Helen. Instead, she occurs in the studio, where she looks of wear. If one had wine, the studio would be great. Painters lining the room, watching one another. “Council me, closely.” Later, Deborah served wine and decides doing so is work. Those lining the house had different times in 1987 and 1993. Around the time the wine wears off, a thaw did happen. Daylight rushes in. Sun turns sharp, and she is bound to sink into one remaining counteraction. But for a loud sound, all moves toward determined order. Still, the woven arts coat her in white ribbons. She watched them hang Solomon. She is told she catches the attention of Ronald Reagan, and knows now the coat of white on the wall, and a coat of white on the face that criticized her. She wasn’t broken; she remains to see and long. “My turn.”

She has remained in the studio too long, and now she is bound to be late. She knows the sun is set, had watched the daylight soften, but had not thought of it as time passing. Startled when her evening plans occur to her, she rushes and in so doing nearly overturns a glass of wine but steadies herself. Only the painting before her is upset into a gentle motion of pattern compounding pattern. She wove ribbons of color-stained canvas into a grid, and then she divided each square produced by the overlapping strips into two arrows pointing in opposite directions. Directionality capsizes into non-hierarchical networks in the manner Félix Guattari describes thus: “Everything works. Everything is acceptable. I speak of ‘discourses of reference productive of subjectivity’. What matters to me is clarifying criteria for getting beyond the oppositions between different kinds of discourse.”³ The surface of the picture is like lace made from computer cursors; intense, saturated color and tints and shades bitmapped into elegant equanimity. The pressure of a determined outcome contends with the possibility of surprising oneself. And yet, those closely cropped edits in *Painters Painting*, 1973, *did* happen, and Helen Frankenthaler later served on Ronald Reagan’s National Council on the Arts (and in 1989, she told Deborah Solomon in an interview for the *New York Times*, “My life is square and bourgeois. I like calm and continuity. I think as a person I’m very controlling, and I’m afraid of big risks. I’m not a skier or a mountain climber or a motorcyclist. And I’m not a safari girl—I never want to go on a safari. My safaris are all on the studio floor. That’s where I take my danger.”⁴) She looks at the painting and turns off the light, watching what chromatic vibrations remain, festive in the darkened room. She doesn’t leave the room, instead, she gropes toward the glass and bottle of remaining wine, pours, and tries to see everything working, everything acceptable, a great party.

1 Solomon, Deborah. “Artful Survivor.” *New York Times*. 14 May 1989. Accessed online 25 October 2017: <<http://www.nytimes.com/1989/05/14/magazine/artful-survivor.html>>
2 Martin, Agnes. “What Is Real?” *Writings*. Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 1998. Print, p. 93.
3 Ettinger, Bracha Lichtenberg. “From Transference to the Aesthetic Paradigm: A conversation with Félix Guattari.” *A Shock to Thought: Expression after Deleuze and Guattari*. Edited by Brian Massumi. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print, pp. 240-241.
4 Solomon, Deborah. “Artful Survivor.”

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