

## Steel Magnolias

Fragility in art is a value-signifier. Like a currency digitally encrypted to be non-reproducible, fragility captures the exclusivity of a moment in time. It speaks to the interplay between, on the one hand, the moment of the artist's creation, bounded by their lifetime and labour—better if briefer, more prolific—as well as their Zeitgeist and material underpinnings, and on the other, increasingly valuable metrics of exclusive viewer (user?) experience. Being in the presence of an exclusive object is emphasized by unique, crafted fragility. The object is more of the moment, a Ghost in the Shell, exceptional, impossible... or just possible. Just hanging together. And therefore the whisper of mortality.

Think of these antiquated works where the wrong attic drip or Ray of Light or minor tremor could destroy them forever. Conservators effectively turn each object that passes through their hands into a reverse Picture of Dorian Gray; they are renewed while the sins of time and resource extraction are visited on human bodies instead. The objects themselves stave off this realisation, protective in their sublimity, surface, fragile as it may be. It's not like language, which by now is very difficult to eradicate in all its proliferations, and which, unlike objects, has no surface. In objects there is an admittance of failure in the very fact of their being. They are protective in this admission, elusive even in total physicality. Catch Me If You Can—if you can get it (which you never faultlessly can), language has no surface. It's this that makes it vulnerable to overinterpretation, forever in a way an object can never be, and faulted in a reluctance to preempt its own concreteness. Where the visual artist will show Steel Magnolias that speak and situate while also saying, in a roundabout way, 'I am actually also nothing', a writer, scribbler, artist w/ words (there are none for us, an admission of failure) will have no place to hide. No failure to point to but the patently eternal. They Shoot Horses, Don't They?

The turn to ironic detritus in art is perhaps then a fragile reckoning with the full consequences of total exposure. Circulation, Broken Embraces, (de)valuation and appraisal are now possible on such a turbo level, through technology. There is Less Than Zero to say, and yet everything is constantly being said. Detritus is then perhaps a gesture to becoming Death Proof in the face of the elements, especially air and water. In smaller localities of production there is perhaps both fear and longing that the object will be sucked up into larger transnational currents. The robustness of concepts, especially in language, can now be found not in the resilience of materials but in the sheer scale of their machinistic formation. This then begs a question for public interpretation in all flippancy and exactitude: what is left when the soft parts deliquesce? Also—if an art object is submerged, especially if there are organic components in its composition, which parts are the first to be effectively consumed by bacteria and microscavengers, pulped up and gargled in a microcosmic Bonfire of the Vanities? Investigating the distributed sound that this makes in circulation is complex, grappling with what is left, what is forever, what is Never Say Never Again.

The embarrassment of working all this out in public.