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Catastrophic Snow Globes as Oneiric and Mnemonic Gadgets

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Abstract

While at first glance, snow globes might seem trite or trivial objects, on closer reflection, they are revealed to be symbolic realms that provide clues to the desires, dreams, nightmares, and memories of the cultures that produce them. When we consider snow globes as products and reflections of the social world and the individual's place within it, it is not surprising that some artists and designers use these objects to depict some of the darker sides of contemporary life. Considered in this essay are snow globes of catastrophe, representing loss and malevolence, which trouble the notion of snow globes as comforting keepsakes. Here, I argue for a reading of snow globes as oneiric and mnemonic gadgets that magnify our human dramas and disasters, induce memory, melancholy, and nostalgia, and allow us to see our fears and our nightmares more clearly, exposing the relationships between matter and memory, objects and persons.

Keywords

snow globes, memory, Roland Barthes, Walter Benjamin, Walter Martin and Paloma Muñoz

> Everything is strange. Things are huge and very small . . .
> We are giants, lying here, who can make forests quiver.
>
> —Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (2000).

When the gigantic is ignored, fails to mesmerize, or threatens to overwhelm us completely, we turn to miniature. This turn provides on the one hand, for a jolt in perception that allows us to feel large and in control, in order to become temporary tyrants, to be gentle, or to mock. On the other hand, on encountering a miniature (Figure 1), it is impossible not to mentally shrink your own body and to place this abbreviated version of yourself in its landscape. There is something appealing in this shift in experience—vertigo of time and space—but also something frightening.

When we encounter worlds in miniature, we become simultaneously aware of our strength and our vulnerability, and the ease with which we can pass between the two states. Recently, there has been a new wave of artists and designers who have begun to experiment with the creation of miniature disasters to heighten these sensibilities. They do so by creating a certain type of tiny catastrophe, those captured inside of snow globes. These projects attempt to play on but also to remove the kitsch from their choice of material; these are works of sincerity. If winks are made in their designs, they are conspiratorial winks, not idle gestures.

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Figure 1. Facing Silence. 2004.
Source: Image courtesy of Walter Martin and Paloma Muñoz.

From art gallery pieces to souvenirs, snow globes provide a window into fantastical and frigid landscapes. Deceivingly complicated structures with a solid presence, a liquid center, and an airy quality of imagination, they offer scenes with changing snow patterns, alternating between blustery and tranquil. When still, they may seem fixed, as a photograph, but snow globes are designed to be put in motion, bothered, shaken, and turned topsy-turvy. Often found collecting dust on writing desks, bookcases, and occasionally in cabinets of curiosity; snow globes have come from someplace else. They have traveled as souvenirs in luggage or have arrived through the post as a gift, bubble-wrapped and resting, snuggling packing peanuts.

Typically, snow globes contain what the American rock quartet R.E.M. would call "shiny happy" people and animals enjoying pleasant, whimsical scenes.[1] A census of the snow globe world reveals all manner of smiling faces—snowmen, Santa Claus, Muppets, Disney figures, polar bears, penguins, Peanuts characters, Barbie, Yoda, and even the fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld.[2] A tour of the interiors of the snowy spheres overwhelmingly reveals the most popular buildings and monuments of the world: Snow brushes the tip of the Eiffel Tower; a blizzard circles Lady Liberty's pointy hat, as snow dusts her robust shoulders; and can it really be—yes—snow falls on the wounded nose of the Great Sphinx. These are only a few examples of common snow globe scenes, but in the following pages, we will encounter even more surreal spaces and also nightmarish landscapes.

It is difficult to tell, at first glance, if it is snow or debris and ash that fall on the Twin Towers inside the plastic dome, a winter scene or a crime scene—a January snowstorm or the aftermath of a terrorist attack. For a moment, peering into a souvenir orb from New Orleans, it is not certain whether the water filling the snow globe is rancid, left over hurricane spillage from Katrina, or, simply harmless liquid adding buoyancy to a tourist's bibelot. And in the

inevitable moment of preshake unease of the Detroit snow globe, there is a question of whether the action will induce more urban blight or return the city to its heyday as an auto utopia.[3]

There is an unmistakable allure to gazing on these tiny disasters and shaking their foundations, but what can be said about this fascination? Maybe this is a new form of ruin gazing. Catastrophe on a manageable scale. Perhaps disaster porn to go. Or, possibly something else entirely. In an interview in *The Paris Review*, Milan Kundera (1984) suggests, "the combination of a frivolous form and a serious subject immediately unmasks the truth about our dramas . . . and their awful insignificance." Here, I want to argue that the small-scale genre, the miniature form of tiny disasters, does the opposite of what Kundera suggests—it magnifies our human dramas and catastrophes, induces memory, melancholy, and nostalgia, and allows us to see our fears and our nightmares more clearly, exposing the relationships between matter and memory, objects and persons.

Little History of the Snow Globe

Contemporary snow globes—those staples of the tourist gift shop—have traveled under many names: water balls, snow domes, snow shakers, and blizzard weights, just to list a few. The exact origin of the snow globe is still unknown, but the beginning of their popularity can be traced to early 19th-century France. Their emergence as a souvenir object can be pinpointed a bit more specifically to the city Walter Benjamin declared the capital of the 19th century and David Harvey called the capital of modernity: Paris. Snow globes were a sought after souvenir object of the 1889 *Exposition* Universelle held in the French capital, which marked the 100-year anniversary of the storming of Bastille. Encased in the glass dome of this popular takeaway filled with faux snow and clear liquid was the newly constructed Eiffel Tower cast in miniature (Figure 2) with a petite tricolor flag flying at its summit. This commemorative snow globe was a much jauntier version of the ubiquitous miniature towers ensconced in plastic casing now sold at the wrought iron feet of Eiffel's most famous creation.

With the design of the tower, the exposition, and its souvenir snow globe, a new mythology of place was launched. As Roland Barthes (1983) writes,

> First of all as a universal symbol of Paris, [the Eiffel Tower] is everywhere on the globe where Paris is stated as an image; from the Midwest to Australia, there is no journey to France which isn't made somehow, in the Tower's name, no schoolbook, poster, or film about France which fails to propose it as a major sign of a people and of a place: it belongs to the universal language of travel. (p. 237)

And just as the Tower is part of the Esperanto of tourism, snow globes, and souvenirs in general, are punctuation marks: ellipses, question marks, exclamation marks, even interrobangs. They elicit pause, beg questions, shout memories, and draw a combination of emotions.

Souvenirs are part of how we talk about travel; they encourage stories and memories. As Orvar Löfgren (2010), Swedish cultural researcher of consumerism and tourism, writes,

> Souvenirs may look trivial but the kinds of narratives and memories they trigger off are astounding . . . To me the most striking characteristic of a souvenir is its openness, its readiness to carry the mind in all directions. There might be millions of tiny brass Eiffel Towers distributed over the globe, but no two of them carry the same meanings. (p. 101)

Souvenirs open a space for the potential narration of a point of connection—"yes, I also went to Paris once," but they also invite the telling of particular experiences in an oft visited place—"I went to Paris with my girlfriend and had a magical time in the Spring of 2013"; or, "I was in Paris

Figure 2. 1889 Eiffel Tower Snow Weight.
Source: Image courtesy of The Bergstrom Mahler Museum of Glass, Neenah, Wisconsin.

for its liberation in 1944"; or, "I visited Paris for the *Exposition* Universelle in 1889 and stood in awe of the many new inventions"—to give only a few examples of any number of the myriad human experiences one can have in time and place.

It is not surprising that during this time of experimentation with scale, the achievement of new architectural feats, and the creation of new dreamworlds inspired by constructions of iron and glass that the snow globe would also become a space of interest. The Eiffel Tower snow globe was more than a replica; it was also an original, a gesture toward its giant counterpart rather than a copy. In 1889, the Eiffel Tower snow globe could be mistaken for a humble miniature circulating among the tourists streaming from The Gallery of Machines, where the latest technological wonders were on view, but the snow globe also created a dazzling space, only it played with the sense of human scale in a different way. The Gallery of Machines could only make those who stood inside it feel small; it consumed visitors, swallowed them whole with its enormous glass eyes and its iron maw. By contrast the snow globe troubles the phenomenological experience of space on two distinct levels in a manner that might please Lewis Carroll (1871), by alternately gigantizing and shrinking those who encounter it through the looking glass. With the snow globe we can hold the Eiffel Tower in our hand, like the photographic trick that tourists play with perspective, but we also climb inside to experience a different space, an opium den without opium.

For Walter Benjamin (1999), the international expositions, where snow globes made their first appearances, were intoxicating spaces that preceded the entertainment industry: "They opened up a phantasmagoria into which people entered in order to be distracted . . . [Visitors] yielded to its

manipulations while savoring their alienation from themselves and from others" (p. 7). Emerging, as they did, from the cultural womb at the same time and place, it is not surprising that the states of distraction and alienation that Benjamin observed are replicated in miniature in the space of the snow globe.

Unlike a world globe, a three-dimensional scale model of the earth, which is a topographical object on which we skirt our fingers along the surface or perhaps give it a good spin, a snow globe is meant to be entered. A world globe is an object of attention—here is where I've been, here is where I'm from—look, we can measure the distance with this scale. With a snow globe, we can also handle it, shake it, and observe its contours, but we move past the surface and travel into the space and into another state as well. This is why the snow globe, more than the world globe, is disorienting and distracting.

The snow globe works as a key to open the interior of the person locked in its gaze, but it also functions as an object in the interior of one's home that says something of its owner. Its emergence as a popular souvenir item in France, Victorian England, and elsewhere in Europe coincided with the time period when the private sphere of home life and the public sphere of working life became more separated for large sectors of the population, the expanding bourgeoisie, and "from this sprang the phantasmagoria of the interior" where the homeowner "assembled the distant in space and in time" (Benjamin, 1999, p. 8). Purchased in public and taken into the private space of one's home, a snow globe could serve as a prompt for memory, as a vehicle for conversation, or as a decoration to be admired by visitors to the household.

By the early decades of the 20th century, the popularity of snow globes had expanded beyond Europe to the United States and farther afield. In North America, the flurry rich domes were no longer souvenirs only from World's Fairs and vacations but also freebies from corporations used as advertising—a kind of souvenir of the everyday—objects not necessarily destined to be family heirlooms. These snow globes featured such dignitaries as Planter's Mr. Peanut and Tony the Tiger, the famous Frosted Flakes devouring feline. The corporate snow shakers worked in much the same way as their touristic forbearers—as reminders of past experience and as emblems of desire.

Since their first emergence as a cultural product, snow globes have been tightly linked to the ebbs and flows of commodity culture at large. It is not surprising, then, that snow globes have connections to worlds of fantasy, commodity fetishism, and fashion design. For example, Karl Lagerfeld, Chanel, and Hermes have created souvenir snow globes, Louis Vuitton gave snow shakers as gifts to V.I.P. customers, and Jean Paul Gaultier has created a snow globe filled with perfume. Even Grace Coddington, *Vogue*'s creative director, keeps a snow globe in her office; it was a gift of the Japanese fashion label Comme des Garçons. Nested in Coddington's globe are two bears, identical except that one is black and one is white; they live inside a storm of swirling tinsel (Murphy, 2012).

Big Screen, Little Screen, Paper Screen

Beginning in the mid-20th century, the popularity of the snow globe could be seen not only in tourist spots or on home bookshelves, or even as advertising props, but also in films, perhaps most famously in *Citizen Kane* (1941). In this slice of the silver screen, seen through the second screen of the snow globe, Orson Welles nostalgically transports the viewer to the prelapsarian days before all was lost for Kane. In the film, the snow globe functions not as the mystic's crystal ball, but as a personal history channel broadcasting what once was. Through the glassed wintery landscape, we see a realm of the imagination where visions of ordinary life grow increasingly resonant and melancholic. In a classic cinematic moment in the film, Kane drops the snow globe and with a labored effort whispers: "rosebud," the name of the sled he owned as a child. Although the direct reference is to the sled, "rosebud" is a symbol of a greater loss than just Kane's youth; it is a total loss, loss of character, loss of self, and loss of hope. This scene from Welles's film is a visual representation of Flaubert's (1980) assessment on the difficulties of living in the present:

"The thought of the future torments us, and the past is holding us back. That is why the present is slipping from our grasp" (p. 134). With Kane's release of the snow globe and its falling crash on the floor, we, the viewers, know that the present is destroyed and that the future is doomed. This scene illustrates how snow globes can be used to signal utopian moments, while at the same time, they may reveal the dystopian possibilities that lie coiled within those moments.

This dual feature of the snow globe—its ability to simultaneously present a comforting calm and a fragile vulnerability—can be seen in the souvenir globes from the film *Fargo* (1996) given to industry insiders and sold packaged alongside a special edition DVD. The film critic Ty Burr (1999) was one of those lucky enough to receive the mementos from the Coen (1996) brothers' film. He wrote about his prized items:

> Sitting on a shelf in my office are two snow globe paperweights, each depicting a scene from the 1996 Coen Brothers film *Fargo*. In one of them, a teeny Marge Gunderson is squatting by an overturned vehicle and a bloody dead body; in the other, she is pointing a gun at the equally teeny figure of villain Gaear Grimsrud as he stuffs what's left of Steve Buscemi's character into the wood-chipper. The snowflakes in the latter globe are both white and red. It's really cool.

According to Burr, the promotional snow globes are not only simple souvenirs of the film, pieces of cinematic novelty, they are powerful reminders of the film's underlying meaning that add to the experience. He continues:

> The fact is my *Fargo* snow globes actually enhance my appreciation of the Coens' deadpan playfulness. At the same time, their plexiglas crassness doesn't detract one iota from my experience of the film. On the contrary: whenever I glance at the wood-chipper diorama, my mind drifts to the wonderful scene that follows, the one where the Coens at last commit to moralism (maybe) as Marge quietly says to Gaear: "There is more to life than a little money. Don't you know that?"

For Burr, the violent scenes locked inside the snow globes illuminate the real message of the film; they show the treacherous and murderous depths humans can sink too when driven only by money lust. The snow globes do something else here too, while the scenes remain constant (besides intermittent falling snow and circling blood or clear skies), the critic's memory travels to the scene just beyond the frozen one inside the object and then it spills out to the film as a whole.

A snow globe is an oneiric and mnemonic gadget, which is why it so often finds itself as a companion piece to the dream sequences found in television and movies. One of the most infamous examples of this narrative technique can be found in the popular American television show *St. Elsewhere* (Brand, Falsey, Masius, & Tinker, 1982-1988). The medical drama ended its 6-year run with one of the main characters' autistic son, Tommy Westphall played by the actor Chad Allen, shaking a snow globe with a diminutive model of the hospital St. Eligius, where most of the shows' action takes place, inside, suggesting all of the drama played out on the small screen had been a dream—a product of Tommy's imagination. While a controversial and maddening ending for some loyal viewers, the final episode of *St. Elsewhere* illustrates the rich and often blurred boundaries in how we experience the world. As David Harvey (2003) writes, "we do not merely live in a material world . . . our imaginations, our dreams, our conceptions, and our representations mediate that materiality in powerful ways . . . spectacle, representations, and phantasmagoria" (p. 19).

The atmosphere of the lily-white swirling precipitation of the snow globe conjures a perfect world and its inverse, innocence, and its loss. In the opening pages of Alice Sebold's (2002) novel *The Lovely Bones*, the main character, the victim of a savage murder remembers hauntingly:

> Inside the snow globe on my father's desk, there was a penguin wearing a red-and-white-stripe scarf. When I was little my father would pull me into his lap and reach for the snow globe. He would turn it over, letting all the snow collect on the top, then quickly invert it. The two of us watched the snowfall gently around the penguin. The penguin was alone in there, I thought, and I worried for him.

> When I told my father this, he said, "Don't worry, Susie. He has a nice life. He's trapped in a perfect world." (p. 4)

An ominous mood is constructed from this brief scene, telling the reader that many sinister sentences will snowball throughout the novel and that the idea of a perfect world is itself a kind of trap. We see through *Citizen Kane, St. Elsewhere*, and *The Lovely Bones* how easily snow globes can work as a conduit for memory, offering at turns senses of nostalgia, alienation, and the potential for loss.

Travelers

Snow globes can cause our minds to drift as a parallel to the drifting snow inside their glass or plastic hides. They can relax us, as we watch their miniature flakes flit downward. They can spark memories of scenes witnessed in the past, visited spaces, or mediated cinematic moments. And, they can also inspire our imaginations, transporting us to alternative temporalities and geographies. Snow globes propel us into worlds we might not have thought of had we not been shown an alternative prospect.

There is already a tinge of unreality about a snowy landscape—our vision is obscured, our movement is hindered, distances blurred. A snow globe's interior is merely a reduction of this sensation: condensed and concentrated. While at first glance, snow globes might seem trite or trivial objects, on closer reflection they are revealed to be symbolic realms that provide clues to the desires, dreams, nightmares, and memories of the cultures that produce them. When we consider snow globes as products and reflections of the social world and the individual's place within it, it is not surprising that some artists and designers use the objects to depict some of the darker sides of contemporary life: alienation, fear, suicide, homicide, political corruption, environmental catastrophes, and apocalyptic scenarios. These snow globes of catastrophe, representing loss and malevolence, trouble the notion of snow globes as comforting keepsakes.

As previously mentioned, snow globes can offer a window onto a scene that is cinematic, a scene that expands beyond their small surface area. If the snow globes created by the artists Walter Martin and Paloma Muñoz are to be described by cinematic genre, they might be placed in the bin labeled "snuff films."[4] Inside the undersized Siberianesque worlds of Martin and Muñoz lurk the dangers of landscape, the threat of wild beasts, and an impressive array of the wickedness that humans can inflict on each other. The surreal snowy landscapes these artists have created are nightmarish and lonely. Despite their small stature, a surprisingly frightening enormity exists under the glass of these objects.

Martin and Muñoz call their series "Travelers," which is evocative of the size of the pieces, but must also refer to the characters that populate these liminal landscapes. The traveler is a highway man, a nowhere person, a fellow or lady on the move, someone who is dislodged from their everyday life, spun out of their social web, who is alone even in the company of others. A traveler is therefore open to new adventures but also vulnerable to mishaps, banditry, predators, and simply losing their way.

Inside the eerie creations of Martin and Muñoz, we find something that seems out of Cormac McCarthy's (2006) apocalyptic novel *The Road*, an eternal winter of not quite discontent, but of uncertainty—the uncertainty of what might happen and the uncertainty of what will happen now that something awful *is* happening—which is much more haunting. For example, in *Traveler 257 At Night*, a menacing figure in dungarees stands with one leg in the air hovering over another figure pressed into the snow, a large rock smashing a head below, the figure is not yet perished. We know this because the arms flail. The menacing figure is not a good Samaritan, does not aim to help, we know this by the raised leg.

Inside another insonorous sphere is an arachnophobia-inducing landscape where a spider with a human head sits poised before a gentleman bound in the spider-person's gossamer threads (Figure 3). The figure here is doubly trapped—inside the dome and inside the spider's web—it is containment inside containment. The immobilized bowler-hatted fellow could be a stand-in for

Figure 3. Traveler 264. 2010.
Source: Image courtesy of Walter Martin and Paloma Muñoz.

everyman, like the ubiquitous men who appear in the Belgian surrealist painter Magritte's works or the multiplying Pierce Brosnans in the remake of *The Thomas Crown Affair* (McTiernan, 1999).

A third example shows a human figure cantilevering on stilts; hungry howling wolves wait just below (Figure 4). This scenario makes one reluctant to give the globe a shake, lest you send the man to the wolves. Typically, snow globes beckon the user to shake them, to shimmy the landscape, to produce a romantic, cozy snowy atmosphere; the *Travelers* produce instead tension and caution. With their expansive series, the artists turn the experience of interaction with snow globes on its head, they bother our sense of calm in the face of such things; but the pieces they create are also beautiful objects of art that work as magnets for our gaze and dares for our hands.

Bachelard Was Right, or, Small Things Are Good to Think With

A snow globe gives off an air of entrapment, of a watery, wintery prison cell of which one can never escape. Yet it also offers the opposite, a possibility of liberation. As an object, it seems quite easy to smash, especially the old fashioned ones, made as they are of glass. How easy (and satisfying) to hurl across the room, to crash against the far wall, to release the faux winter inside across the carpeting, linoleum, wooden baseboards, to liberate the people, architecture, animals lodged inside. A snow globe can seem a frustrating object because it does not appear to offer opportunities to create change, only the temporary disruption of a snowstorm or total disruption by smashing. This may be true in the material sense, but as Bachelard (1994) reminds us, small things are "good to think with." Snow globes, often thought of as trifles, toys, or silly collector's items, prove a useful contemplative tool.

Benjamin (2007) declared that the "[t]oy is hand tool—not artwork" (p. 73). And Susan Stewart (1984) writes, "to toy with something is to manipulate it to try it out within sets of contexts, none of which is determinative" (p. 56). Following Benjamin and Stewart, we can see the

Figure 4. Traveler 289. 2010.
Source: Image courtesy of Walter Martin and Paloma Muñoz.

snow globe as a tool that allows those caught in its gaze to enter an altered state, where dreams of the future and memories of the past sit alongside present awareness. This state is what Benjamin (1999) would call the "utilization of the dream-elements in waking," which for him was "the textbook example of dialectical thought." This dialectical thinking allows for movement toward the awareness of history, for Benjamin a dreaming toward awakening (p. 88).

We can follow Benjamin, who loved sifting through the ruins of capitalism's past in the Paris arcades, where he whiled away hours in junk shops and curiosity stalls, occasionally buying snow globes, a toy which can shake back memory—of Paris, of the 19th century—of anything really.[5] Benjamin was drawn to souvenirs in general, he saw past their treacly exteriors and recognized their potential for discovering clues to the dream space of modern bourgeois capitalism. In 1926, he wrote of his blissful discoveries of snow domes to Jula Radt, a friend, sometime lover, and sculptor who was well connected in German bohemian circles. His treasured purchases were wrestled from the side streets of Paris after he wandered about in a satisfied state after finishing his writing for the day.

In 2013, while staying in the neighborhood of Montmartre in the 18th arrondissement of Paris, I attempted to replicate Benjamin's practices: writing, walking, purchasing snow globes. On the afternoon, I set to experiment, most of those I found were predictably of the Eiffel Tower, the rest were vintage Tweety Bird (*Titi* in French) grinning in various global settings—Tahiti, Morocco, Timbuktu—the fantasy vacation lands the French bourgeoisie dreamed of in the 1960s. Thinking with snow globes will not allow us to solve the riddle of space and time, but it might point to modern mythologies and shake out some memories of a lost past that can be incorporated into a new future.

In the flotsam and jetsam of previous eras, Benjamin recognized a fossilized past full of nested experiential knowledge just waiting to reemerge from history. As I was writing this text, I dug out one of my own cultural fossils, a snow globe from the 1982 World's Fair held in Knoxville, Tennessee. It features Knoxville's own architectural answer to the Eiffel Tower, the Sunsphere, a tall structure with a golden ball at the top, resembling a monstrous basketball, hovering above a crisscrossed green metal base, not unlike that of a basketball net woven for giants. The little souvenir snow globe pries open the memory vault of my past, while shrinking the landscape palm-sized. It does not bring forth so much of the day of the fair itself since I was only 4 years old at the time, but what is recalled is the memory of the object sitting on the bookshelf in my spacious closet, a small town 20th-century child's version of the 19th-century bourgeois drawing room. It also makes me think of the Sunsphere and its surrounding environs, close to the University of Tennessee and the site of many melancholy teenage evenings spent outside of The Hot Summer Night's concert series held in the shadows of the monument, where unable to afford a ticket and unwilling to engage in certain illicit acts that I saw others perform to gain entry, I sulked outside the gates. And last, lager than my individual experiences, the globe works as a symbol for the city of Knoxville itself, an easily transportable emblem of the actual or imagined city—not unlike the way Barthes writes of the Eiffel Tower.

While it may seem like escapism to delve into the miniscule landscapes of snow domes, in fact it does the opposite. Thinking critically about the hermetically sealed worlds of snow globes opens up riddles of modern life. It brings attention to our size, to ourselves, and to the worlds we inhabit and create. The art of catastrophe expressed in disaster snow globes points out our faults and our fears, but allows us to give them a shake. As we shake them, they shake us.

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Notes

1. "Shiny Happy People" was a real earworm of a song released in 1991 by the Athens, Georgia, based rock group R.E.M., which featured the guest vocals of Kate Pierson from the 1960s inspired group The B-52s alongside the main voice of the band, Michael Stipe.
2. The Karl Lagerfeld globe features a side profile of the famous pony-tailed designer in a glass dome filled with miniscule golden flecks. The phrase, *Mon plus grand luxe est de n'avoir* à *me justifier auprès de personne* (Translation: "My biggest luxury is not to have to justify myself to anyone"), adorns the base. The designer globes were available exclusively at Sephora beauty stores in 2012.
3. In *Tourists of History*, Marita Sturken (2007) shows a similar phenomenon at work, when she examines the trend of remembering national tragedies through tourism, consumerism, and kitsch objects. The book begins with a description of two snow globes that occupy a portion of her desk. One is of the Oklahoma City National Memorial with a peaceful downtown in the background observable through a winter storm or clear skies depending on the shaken or unshaken status of the globe. The second is of the World Trade Center, obviously depicting the day of the attack—fire trucks and rescue vehicles fill out the scene, deceivingly, they appear busy if caught in a blizzard or painfully immobile if the storm has passed. Another example of snow globes commemorating world events can be found in Esther Leslie's (2009) essay "Snow Shaker." In her surreal example, the end of the Cold War is symbolized through a souvenir globe containing a miniature Trabant, the prototypical East German automobile, which splits the wall into two.
4. The first of the *Travelers* was made in the winter of 2001 and first shown at the Chicago Art Fair in 2002 (see http://www.martin-munoz.com/recent/indexTRAVELERS.html).

5. Benjamin (1994) writes of buying snow globes in Paris in a 1926 letter to Jula Radt (see *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin 1910-1940*, p. 297). The German cultural critic's affection for the souvenir orbs was well known; see, for example, "A Portrait of Walter Benjamin," where Adorno (1983) writes of his friend: "small glass balls containing a landscape upon which snow fell when shook were among his favorite objects," (p. 233). See also, Esther Leslie (2009) "Snowglobalism."

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