

inbetweenness

101 Spring Street
Judd Foundation
October 22 – December 18, 2021

The knot-end of a thread being sewn, passed under and over, catches on the fabric. This is a moment of balanced tension. The thread and the fabric it passes through appear flat together. They are mirrored waves with no in-between.

This perfect point escapes from us too quickly. Our world is filled with stitches that are too slack, with threads gathering and knotting underneath, or too taut, gathering the surface of the fabric into ruffles and ridges. Our real lines of thread are compelled toward this abstraction of flatness that will always slip away. But a flat line would do no good. We already have the flat in the weave of crossed lines that is the fabric itself. A truly sewn flat would be a loom's additional edge. It could not suture or bind, but only extend the fabric one thread's width sideways.

A thread and fabric, a line and a field. These are not failures to become flat. It turns out that is coy talk to deflect from their work together as a tension. These are empirical geometries. The shape of their arrangement is only one of their sides. They also carry with them a confounding of expectations and tendencies. The happy trajectory diverted by a distracted hand does not vanish for failing to appear. It remains in the kink now set into the gathered fabric. The hesitation to stitch shows in the hole tearing wide open at the wrong moment.

The art of this particular geometry is called drapery. It is the gathering beneath of the slack string and the gather of tension on the surface of the fabric. This is not an art form that is so interested in the drape's initial binding. Where the stitch or bunch holds firm, it does so in order to echo itself into the fabric. Even an eye for seams will note the firmness and professionalism of a stitch and then follow down the rest of the fabric. A dress flows. A banner illustrates the wind. A curtain lifts off the flat glass and rests back against it with the elegance of a dancer's trailing leg.

The gathering at the top of a curtain is an initial impulse given breadth and extension by the loose hang of the curtain below. The excess of surface that such gathering makes possible opens the wave of the curtain and offers it as a sensitive device. In its billows, it gives movement a chance to appear; wind through windows, the passage through doors, the small displacements of a person walking nearby.

Empirical geometry also includes the world beside the shapes. Our breath can shake across the surface, but a hard glance leaves the curtain unmoved. Even beauty doesn't register in its wave, but the tint of thin fabric can turn the whole world a hazy blue. These impositions are honest, but they are also expansive and generous. The curve and flow of the waving fabric bring the still smooth glass to our attention when it could otherwise have been absent, and the sight of beauty at a remove is a reminder that curtains wait to be opened.

The wait of this thread and fabric is not limited to windows. Lovers are draped too, in sheer fabrics begging to be unwrapped. His skin scattering the dim light, too playful or bashful or clumsy, he jokes too much, before he embraces the texture and begins to enact this nightgown. Tension arises in between threads in between us, a whine begging for the lazy fabric to loosen and drop. More coy talk.

This is no schematic dimensional progression, one thread, two fabric, three the billow. Threads are pliable. It should not be surprising that their geometry is too. Here, it is the gathering of space that raises the flat of the glass and touches us to our lovers and our memories of our lovers. But has the fabric gathered or has the loose and free fled? We need another look. This one vertiginous, a bird's eye view inverted, shifting down and bent and over. Ruffles confront a hinge and darkness gathers in the bend like a leaking bruise.

It must be said that the sky often causes resentment. It has a form that is constantly unique but also total and undivided. The sky gathers everything together within itself, but we have no analog that can open our empathy or our mutual recognition. Its radical novelty retreats into sameness, another and

another new cloud. Most of us choose not to look so long. Our eyes rebel at attending to the details of a cloud or the density of an afternoon's light for more than a moment or two. There is no end to what we could discover there, and only for a slight wind can impose upon us a new infinite to be overwhelmed by. Photographs threaten to go further. They turn on the sky's singularities, uniqueness and totality, and double them in representation. Once captured and split, this infinite envelope is tied down to definite boundaries. There is very little a sky can do to escape this kind of domestication.

Until the birds came and pinned the clouds to the wall. This was not revenge. It was an anchor. Unlike the sky, a bird moves in one direction and holds a stable external edge against the world. In any photograph, we are given the contrary instructions to relate disparate elements closer than anything else on earth. This bird and this sky exclude all existence in their minor dyad but starkly break from each other. This is not a question of ground. What could be less grounded than the sky and a bird? The photographic bond of contraries lets any image seep between itself, spreading conjunctions. In this instance, skies grant space to birds and birds grant detail and direction to skies. If we have trouble imagining the progression of a cloud, a bird gives us a line to follow. As the photographs try to impose their control on the most open expanse, it is the bird's organic movement that begins the pull against, like a dog raging at the end of its line, flexing the surface of the sky until the image bends at a right angle.

This empirical geometry is the bristling of the sky. Capture, once pinned, becomes the power of fixity. With the fall of the first control, the other goes, and boundaries become edges to overflow. Two photographs blend two skies in different lights. The break between them vanishes in the line where wall meets wall, but the darkness is no gravity pulling the light in. It is refraction weighted by the pull of the bird's pinned fixations. This is light as unique and total, like the sky that gathers it. Tension tears at the picture, the gradient intensifies, and the ends of the curve shoot off the edge of the image. The bird's organic flight now pulls the image apart, pouring the space of the sky into the room.

Two pins or two punctures from a needle. Taut chain or the pulled tight thread. Light in, light out, color and value, drape and image. It is not a question of reconciling these geometries, but of encountering the space that they generate and attending to where they mix and pervert and fold and redouble, and then standing within the gathering and flow of the curtain and the coalescing bend of an image wrenching itself together.