

## *The Problem of Freedom*

Now, dear reader, pull that thread through a buttonhole. Have you heard the joke?

*It's weighted by cultural fabric.*

There's a curious little image on the tins of Droste, a Dutch brand of cocoa powder. It depicts an early 20th-century nurse carrying a tray with a tiny tin of Droste featuring the same nurse and tray and yet another *now*-microscopic tin of Droste. This container is soundproof. Well, at least, when it's measured by waves of pseudo-frequencies. But I think it just carries energy, a crystal. Not *just*, I mean, we don't need to quantify history in decibels when the past buries its head in the sand.

Have you ever seen a copy of a copy of a copy? One that stretches a rubber band until it's pale? Time itself is tethered to that infinitesimal *streeettccchhh*. Time is miniaturized. It occupies space between disquietude and slow-speed reversal. That nurse . . . She multiples even though she is always partially obscured. That's the "Droste effect." It's a propagational anomaly. You move closer. It recedes. You move back, and there you are, the two of you in a pedestrian's lockstep.

In *The Problem of Freedom*, the artist, Alejandro Figueredo Diaz-Perera, isn't gently guiding us by the hand. He aims us toward uncertainty and instability.

Silence is a revolution: a place that mutes the gridded lines where electricity once occurred.

When we are held in these knotted muscles, one making meaning from seeing, the other for the desire of resolvability: a natural response is to throw up our hands in the air and say *Enough!*

"So, what's your throughline?" I ask Alejandro. He's pushing us toward the experience of unknowingness. To discomfort.

Instead of this or that theoretical path, or using particular statements beginning with the age-old, “Well, this work is about,” Alejandro isn’t interested in a conceptual framework to tie these works together. But rather, to cite his exact words, uniting each group through an “exploration of materials.”

I recently encountered a graph by a group of individuals attempting to quantify artistic influences throughout history. They used science to “solve” the equation of overlapping styles. I can appreciate the quasiness of these experiments.

And finally, dear reader, I break the fourth wall with a stage whisper:

*Quasiness isn't a word, but it takes the aesthetic shape of queasiness.*

Hold on to that word. It’s the byproduct of change, or at least of uncertain energies.

–Regina Mamou, 19 June 2021

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