



# Window Space



Connor Rothe

Angel

September 14<sup>th</sup> – November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Lovers—correct me if I’m wrong—insist on bringing the two perspectives [*emic* and *etic*] together, a sort of double exposure. To draw into the very inside of my heart the limit that was supposed to mark it on the outside, your strangeness. –

Anne Carson, *Plainwater*<sup>1</sup>

Drawing out of an interiority is a question of sharing with the corrupted other, whose point of origin, like you, is a matter of exposure. This is to say the idea of the self cannot be self-contained as an interiority; rather, to be, one must experience through the edge of the body in relation to an other as an other, which is a matter of exteriority, of parting oneself, of ex (out of)-posure (to place). Such a common exposure creates a spacing between us—oriented towards the outside—that is, the limit of our particular strangeness mirrored back to us, reminding us of the alterity of being, for the body— from which we sense—is exposed to its extremities.<sup>2</sup> For the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, being/subject is a relational force predicated upon “the force from the outside, or more precisely, the force of sharing and opening between an *inside* and

---

<sup>1</sup> Emic in anthropological research refers to insiders’ perspective, while etic refers to outsiders’ perspective. Anne Carson, *Plainwater: Essays and Poetry* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 223.

<sup>2</sup> “A body’s always ob-jected from the outside, to ‘me’ or to someone else. Bodies are first and always other—just as others are first and always bodies... *An other is a body* because only *a body is an other*... Why is this body thus, and not otherwise? *Because it is other*—and alterity consists in being-*thus*, in being the thus and thus and thus of *this* body, exposed all the way into its extremities.” Jean-Luc Nancy, “Corpus,” in *Corpus*, trans. Richard A. Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 31.

*outside* which refer to one another.”<sup>3</sup> This is the pleasure of relation, which lies in the distance of this double exposure that takes place between you and I: the coming together [*con-venance*] to this ground of withdrawal, that is, exposure onto the outside, forming the ground of sensing a good fit [*convenance*] between strangers/lovers.

The outside, to put simply, is the world, whereby the symbolic boundary of self/other and association/disassociation is undone to assert being as relational, which is a recurring theme in Connor Rothe’s work. Often working in acrylic with the instrument of airbrush, traces of appearance takes shape through repeated alterations of proximity, which may be read as an act of undoing things in their given state. Or perhaps, his semi-figural blurry paintings, manipulated through close-ups and distortions, function as a visceral reaction to the atmosphere of a site. The radiance of light, as a result, emerges to the fore in the quietude of pictorial accuracy, recalling German-American photographer Uta Barth’s fleeting photographs of placeless places, whereby a scene is fixed to be felt. Between each sanded layer of colours lies a conjuring of a sensorial presence, conveyed through distance. Warmth, after all, is felt through the space between the source and its recipient, which we learned from Rothe’s *I Felt Your Shape* (2024): a spiritual pondering of origin.

\*

What if to paint from a distance is to paint in the parting of the self?

Drawing upon the pleasure of coming together and finding harmony [*convenance*] between lovers and strangers alike, the question of connection through the spacing between us—that is, the relational tension between inside/outside, public/private—is magnified to the scale of Connor Rothe’s *Angel* in the symbolic mapping of sharing stretched between us.

---

<sup>3</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, “Pleasure of Relation,” in *The Pleasure in Drawing*, trans. Philip Armstrong (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 67.

Interwoven lacing of electrical wires sprawl from the edges of the canvas, gathering densely, edging closer and closer to drape a grid of electrical supply, whose organisational flow lies in the transitory movement of energy being spent outside of the visible network of cable lines. Such an expenditure must not be thought of in terms of lack. Rather, it is a transference of the surface, where the flow of energy establishes an infinite common that is radically othering. If we take each physical wire as a double exposure of an actual-virtual—a movement caught between wires and bodies—we might then consider the possibility of forging a relational force by way of distance.

Distance gives us the capacity to be virtually connected by way of sharing, of spending, of parting ourselves. And such a distance between us is the basis of our digital being: the possibility of being and coming together as an anonymous other in a realm that oscillates between closure and disclosure. Like our vascular system, whose containment rises to the surface with great pressure, and spills into the question of the liquescent body's limit, or the lack thereof.

Perhaps, we can consider the telephone pole as an infrastructure of spillage, whose exteriority powers an interiority that is nonetheless connected to an outside orientation via the fact of the internet: singular plural sharing. Digital existence is not entirely corporeal, but it cannot be disassociated from the physicality of wires and bodies, for the pleasure of being online is contingent upon the sharing of alterity in form (bodies) and structure (wires), composed of their difference.

Between my Wi-Fi enabled device and yours is a rapport of displacement—a window—where we co-exist in close proximity to one another, but we do not touch. Conditioned by its positioning inside of the gallery's window space, *Angel* parallels the schema of exposure/withdrawal, where the limit of the interior is pushed towards the common. We merely par-take our pleasure, frustration, anxiety, boredom, strangeness, and a range of multitudes with-out, recalling what Carson alludes to when describing the double exposure of depth (self) and surface (self-as-other) in the peculiar congruence [*convenance*] of lovers.

The wire system makes possible the construction of an interior (private) and an exterior (public) that collapses onto one another, as input and output confuses *Ange's* pictorial space, blurring the defined edges of a beginning and an end. The lack of spatial illusionism allows the gravitational pull of distance, rendered in uniformity and flatness. Rothe's gesture of airbrushing seems to rapidly circulate as infinite replications onto itself. The body here, like that of a harp, is distanced and tensioned to reach pleasure. As such, the systematic movement of lines is given a sense of tender urgency, at once, abstract and physical.

\*

It is in fact upon the world of things needing to be uncovered that the world of merely visible things keeps exerting its pressure.

—Simonides, *Fragments*<sup>4</sup>

Pixelated encounter, as it usually goes,  
when an image appears before/after me.

Adjusted likeness configured between the lacing of shadows, soften edges of  
reality shared amongst virtual covenants of devotees.

After sun, as it usually goes,

dimly lit interiors, draped in worn fabrics, whose texture flattened.

Affection can be damning

when it appears as inaccurate replications of ever growing desires:

to be an other amongst others, contained in a box of numerical looping.

To affect and to be affected:

I inch myself closer to the phantom moving images,

a source of light—when all other radiance quieted—where touch is a repeated motion  
of

---

<sup>4</sup> Simonides of Keos fr. 598 PMG translated by Anne Carson in *Economy of the Unlost: Simonides of Keos with Paul Celan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 60.

retraction, bounced back into the cluttered space of speech void of sound.  
Yet, sonorous resonance takes place between the disclosure of what may not be named.  
Alluring in its relational isolation: a possibility of infinite suspension, whose  
tangibility depended upon the logic of the lure:  
knowing how to read an opacity.<sup>5</sup>

\*

The body of a messenger, opened, shared, loved, estranged:  
What if the flesh of an angel is nothing other than entangled wires?

—Leon Hsu

---

<sup>5</sup> Here, my thinking is influenced by John Paul Ricco, *The Logic of the Lure* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).