

Art of Olive Green

Towards Art, an Ethics & a Laugh

Archives

All posts for the month June, 2013

Full of Piss & Vinegar: pet pee got you peeved?

Posted by *getraer* on *June 27, 2013*

Posted in: Self-Sufficiencies, Upcycling. Tagged: animals, mildew, urine, white vinegar. Leave a comment

I must post this, even though many readers may find it beyond disgusting. It's just too useful. It also takes profits from a specialized industry (enzyme-cleaner formulators) and returns autonomy to individuals, microorganisms and fungi—lifeforms that existed long before, and hopefully will exist long after, industry.

This may be a **solution to animal-friend urine-odor contamination: mildew & vinegar**. The mildew eats the ammonia compounds and pheromones, then can be completely purged with regular washing plus a cup of white vinegar (as my blog post about mildew and military surplus explains).

I adopted a little shelter kitten, Pozzo (Beckett, not Italian) who is the dearest animal I've lived with out of a life of several dogs and cats. We are a little too close because she spent every waking hour with me or my girlfriend for her first 10 months. She was never alone. So when I am too busy to pay attention to Pozzo, or she's annoyed that other animals or people are around, she pees on anything of mine I left on the floor. I can't even stay mad at her and it's made me a cleaner person.

I found a solution for where it affects the floor, but the clothes stumped me for months so I shredded them for "pee flags".

Strategically used to mark territories, pee flags are useful to keep squirrels out of the garden and mice out of my studio, but some valuable things were affected as well: a Chrome bag, a vintage ugly Swedish Army sweater, and a net bag I use daily for produce were all marked.

The net bag was the least prized, so I clipped it to the inside of the utility sink where my washing machine drains. It's made of nylon or some ungodly polyester. Forgotten for several weeks and occasionally rinsed with greywater, it became very mildewed. I threw it in to wash with some warehoused surplus and a cup of vinegar added to usual wash soaps.

It emerged smelling fresh and new! I'll try it with another rag, leave it for the cat, and update the blog if she renews her claim to it.

Finite Human Resources

Posted by *getraer* on *June 21, 2013*

Posted in: Uncategorized. Leave a comment



[The Year of Living Precariously](https://theyearoflivingprecariously.wordpress.com/2013/06/21/finite-human-) (<https://theyearoflivingprecariously.wordpress.com/2013/06/21/finite-human->

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“Smile. Look like you’re excited to be working.”

These are our stern instructions for the evening; no caveats, no exceptions. One should look perfect, but not ostentatiously so: hair scraped back and face pinched into a blandly ornamental femininity, malleable as a doll, and loaded up with crockery like a buckaroo; there should be no stray hairs, no stray tears. One should be gregarious, but not imposing: one should know when to shut up.

Some people, of course, *are* excited to be working. It’s an exciting opportunity to catch a glimpse of someone wealthy – the special treat of wiping up yuppies’ discarded slops as a mediocre boy band perform, or the rare chance to carry canapés around inside a Chelsea townhouse with impractically pale carpeting. These are quite the only perks of the job, but my God, what perks! The task of skulking in the dungeons of the...

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Opposites Attacked

Posted by [getraer](#) on [June 13, 2013](#)

Posted in: Culture crit, Self-Sufficiencies, The Sides of Thoughts. Tagged: ambivalence, crisis of modernity, engagement, occupy wall street, responsibility. 1 Comment

The USA—not America, that’s the name of a continent—has no walls like the Berlin Wall, or the Great Wall of China. Our wall is conceptual. To pretend “America” is a country and not a continent is to seize this hemisphere in language as well as practice. Why not just use the acronym USA? We love acronyms so much that we forget what they stand for, especially when they make for exciting sci-fi (think “laser”). It’s hard to explain that nomenclature issue to people who haven’t traveled. The distance and expense of travel, and fear of those who don’t speak English (which I suspect we’ve inherited from the British), has kept us at home. Our entertainment convinces us and most of the world that we are the best of all possible countries, and certainly the most fun and promising. And maybe we are or could be, given our many unique properties, and be Reagan’s “shining city on a hill.” But if so, we are squandering that birthright.

I grew up in suburban Arizona, but traveled a lot throughout my life by U.S. standards. I never saw poverty until I was 13, in Hong Kong, where my parents and I took a tourist boat that somehow went through a floating trailer park of houseboats. They were crap, just watertight enough to float. Televisions, dead animals and food scraps floated in the dun gray opaque water. For the first time in my travels I felt guilty taking pictures. Scrawny children waved nets on poles three times their height at the boat, begging for money.

When work enabled me to travel again, I enjoyed the business-class flights and five-star hotels that were the only perk of my magazine job. I didn’t have enough money to eat in the hotel restaurants, so I went to kebab carts in Berlin and street vendors in Singapore. But soon I started to see things like I had seen in Hong Kong, and found myself only taking pictures of them—because not since Hoovervilles in America have we had that. But we have it now. If I drove across again, as I have six times, I would see enough of it to break my heart. Images of Detroit alone are excruciating.

I started to feel nauseous at my privilege. Privilege *should* be a hairshirt. I only cared about that, not the press junkets I went on. People said to me, “Oh, you have the best job,” and I felt ill. In the USA we don’t have grinding poverty directly beside revolting opulence. It’s the juxtaposition that is the most perverse visual of our legacy to the world. Edward Bernays, who invented marketing and PR in part by channeling his uncle Freud, knew that “the optics” are what really matters. Watching other countries flail through their development without the benefit of such counseling is painful market realpolitik, but it’s just our own transformation laid bare.

Ask the U.S. girl who never left Pennsylvania, a press person (not to say journalist) who joined me on the trip to Mumbai. After our first day out, she sat and stared blankly in the lobby. I asked her what was wrong. She said she had never seen poverty like that. Her horror had been so evident that people stared at her in Mumbai streets, making her more uncomfortable. It had indeed been hideous and raw. But I was obsessed with it, not numb against it.

What had she seen? Beggars whose arms had been chopped off to garner the pity and pocketchange of tourists. People living in huts made of scrap lumber and cloth, powering the televisions glowing behind rags with stolen electricity. A runway at the airport so full of entrenched humanity that planes couldn’t use it. Gurus standing amid pigeons covered with birdshit, almost theatrically beatific. Filth and sewage and generations of grime being washed away and around with monsoon rains. Hotels that smelled of bugspray so that you realized everywhere was life, especially desperate human life, and everything must be done to keep it away from those who found life and its struggles distasteful. I realized U.S.ers can’t face this, we are swaddled in things that obscure the brute reality of industrialization, and have forgotten the humangrinder that was ours.

Maybe my class consciousness was awakening. I was an underclassman, paid just enough to live with a roommate in a gutted industrial area that ultimately gentrified me out as I have been half a dozen times in my 15 years in NYC. Staying in the best hotels and

flying in parts of planes I didn't know existed, I was supposed to be thrilled. But I worked very hard on the sarariman magazine whenever I wasn't traveling, went home to my cubicle loft in a former knitting factory, and was finally too drained to appreciate it. My clearest memories of Rio de Janeiro were the feijoada, because our guide told us its roots in slavery, and the favelas burning unchecked while the sun set over them. It seems fire crews are too skittish to go into some of them. I fell asleep on a jeep ride up to see Cristo Redentor and other press folks took pics of me, laughing. I only woke up to shoot favelas and graffiti. My friend Danielle, a filmmaker who sometimes did freelance travel journalism, understood my preoccupation though I'm not sure she shared it.

In Paris, our PR guide told me gypsies would steal my wallet, so I had to keep it in my front pocket. We were all from NYC. (But NYC has been purged, is no longer like that of *Taxi Driver* or *Downtown 81!*) I hated her because she had never even tried to transcend her privilege, as I do daily. Maybe our guide had suffered, but not like the displaced peasants and *lumpen* of the earth, and not with the poetry of suffering born from centuries of exile, enslavement, oppression. It takes generations to make beautiful things like the blues, jazz or hip-hop out of unending torment. By comparison her suffering was banal and even contrived. The things she said on this trip led me and another person "of color" on the trip to request her discipline from her agency. She was pulled from travel, which is ironic because that's the only thing that could have dropped the scales from her eyes.

But she would never have seen. Most of us never see, and that's what makes our atrocities on the world stage possible. We are a compassionate people, generous, and probably more tolerant of differences than any other nation on earth. Yet at the same time our derelict leaders exploit those differences, and it's becoming too obvious to ignore at home and abroad. We've become unparalleled at mining these inequalities for profit. And worse, we are leading the rest of the world by example to do the same.

From my travels, I could list a pornography of displacement and destitution like the best desolation around our country now. But what's the point, one can't *see* it, smell it, flee from it into an airconditioned car. Anyway you can look out your window if you want to experience it, or drive if you can afford gas. And think of when you lost a job, when your office closed, when there was nothing but "To Rent" signs in your business district or suburbs because sales were long out of the question, when you drove through an area you hadn't seen for six months and found all the businesses closed, quietly decaying, and maybe some new construction frozen, the rebar already rusting. Think of how far we came from that, and why we are returning. Why should it be different anywhere else?

What made me think of all this? A dear friend of mine who has traveled extensively, seen unbelievable things and can tell the stories convincingly in any frame of mind, spoke tonight of something he saw in the Philippines. Churches replete with gold and gems, old things of centuries in splendid upkeep, within incense-smoke distance of the most astonishing poverty, poverty so ingrained it was hard to tell whether it had preceded the churches. When he spoke he was suddenly very angry, and I was impressed at this anger. I recognized it. People who have traveled enough to know and consider these conditions, and who don't work for NGOs or humanitarian imperialist enterprises that hope to "remedy" them like Taft, US Governor General of the Philippines, did "our little brown brothers" there, are very rare. I might contend that most US travelers are part of the problem, because anyone here who can afford to travel so is not doing so to spread democracy or fight for equality. Hell, we can't even do that here! And it's easier to fix your own backyard than to pretend you can make a difference in someone else's.

I'm not saying people shouldn't do such things. But those who do must acknowledge that the model has failed, and not before encircling the entire earth and entangling all its vitals, like a tapeworm so big it couldn't be extracted without tearing out key organs. Their little battles will never, by nature, be big enough to stop the leviathan. They can only conduct a pathetic crippled triage in an emergency room carpeted with the dead and dying.

Resistance gets less organized over time, even accounting for technology. A significant economist said that every failed revolution perfects the state mechanism that prevents further revolution. Look at past uprisings. Could you do that? Even if you succeed, as in Egypt, what will take its place? Don't ask them, answer Zarathustra: "Ask not free from what, but rather, free for what?" Even the rebellion in Turkey is scrambling to do that now, but Occupy, which I left in despair, couldn't do it before the clubs and zipcuffs left it bagged and tagged, with even books destroyed wantonly like at Freiburg University while one of Germany's greatest philosophers presided. Fortunately we don't need that kind of drama anymore, we have more engrossing distractions.

Because it's going to be harder for us than it was for them; institutional memory neither forgives nor forgets. A smug asshole who had protested during the 60s told me today that Occupy were "loafers moaning about a handout, looking for something free." Ironic considering that looking at the present political landscape, the 60s "revolution" with all its precious music, childlike fashion and convulsions of naivete that continue to torment us today as marketing tools exploited by the very people who believed them once, *failed*. He claimed it had succeeded, but I think the hydra grew some new heads, this time that breathe drones and sing siren songs to the tortured chained to the floor. Sixties "change" didn't last beyond a generation, it's being rolled back now, maybe because its former agents are comfortable and complacent as they settle into a well-deserved retirement that will bankrupt what's left of this overleveraged country.

I worked in a retirement home for two years, with a gay man who had been in the closet his whole life telling me of his torment while hitting on me and giving me gifts. With a man who used to be a train conductor, obsessed with punctuality and always arriving for dinner like a train running on time. Sometimes he left traintracks of his own feces as he left the dining room. With women who'd outlived their husbands who were strong and independent (where was that solemn menhir "feminism"?), and a woman who lived through Nazi Germany crying after her son who'd forgotten her in that retirement "community." To me, these people were greater than any boomer who became an ad exec to pimp for the USA in the cynicism left from his "revolution." What will he be like at the age

of today's "greatest generation"? More of a righteously entitled pain in the ass, I'd bet.

Boomer ad exec thought he could play the system, "change it from the inside," but that's clearly impossible now, ask President Hope & Change. Reformism, from what I can tell, does not have a good track record. Just a little bit better than violent putsch and expropriation. In either case the problem is always what follows.

The system has become self-perpetuating, has gone viral. No other model of economic development exists.

Actually, there are other models, but I don't know if we have the stomach for them...having distended it so terribly with gluttony, the only thing is the kill/cure of austerity.