

Richard Prince

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LOOW

SOMETHING LIKE THAT. Are there any others? Combinations? That should be it. That's what I get from Wool's work. When it's all said and done. It all adds up.

How do you make art? Easy...you don't...

I met Christopher in 1986. I had gone to one of his shows at the Cable Gallery. Cable was on Houston and Broadway. I'm happy to say I now own one of those paintings I first saw at the gallery. It's hanging in my library upstate in Neon, New York. The painting is feminine, delicate. The pattern is whispered on. It's married to the surface like a vein in marble. It appears to have always been there. The stretcher is covered in one sheet of aluminum. The metal male chromosome that's underneath all that delicacy keeps some kind of secret, heavy desire.

Cable was run by Nicole Klagsbrun and Clarissa Dalrymple. They showed Robert Gober and Ashley Bickerton. I was working out of a back room at 303 Gallery when it was on Park Ave. South. I was writing jokes on little pieces of paper. Christopher came by and bought a *Cowboy* photograph. I'll tell you...I was broke. It was the first *Cowboy* I'd ever sold. He saved the day. Who was this guy?

"What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event."

In other words:

The canvas is a space in which to turn something that's blank into something that's active. This was partly what the abstract painters were up to. (Partly.)

They were also trying to get rid of Picasso and were pissed off at him for doing everything they wished or wanted to do.

Fuzzy Wuzzy was a bear. Fuzzy Wuzzy had no hair. Fuzzy Wuzzy wasn't there. Was he?

The AbExs were trying to find "spiritual clarity." This clarity was found just before Pollock's Oldsmobile 88 went airborne (thanks Glenn) out in East Hampton killing him and Ruth Kligman's girlfriend. On the road? End of the road? End of story. He had painted himself into a corner. A corner that he willingly put himself into. Did he get out of the corner? Does it matter? I think he liked it there. It took a long time to get there...so why not stay? There's a state of grace associated with being in that corner. It's totally clean in the corner. It's the corner of corners. Immaculate.

Most artists never get to the corner. They never get to the room where the corner is in. They never get to the door where the room lets you into the corner. Most never get to the house where the door is. Hardly any at all even find out where the neighborhood is that leads to the house that has the door that opens to the room where the corner is in. Most artists have no sense of direction. The zones that make it difficult to find the direction are full of twilight and quicksand. Still they try. They rummage and scratch and start and stop. Some just reshuffle. Some shovel the same old shit. There are those too who pose but never pose a threat. A lot just give up and quit. (If I were a carpenter.) The ones that have no choice carry on and keep doing it because they love art and aren't suited for anything else. They may suffer but that's okay...they'll go to their graves sacrificing every bone in their bodies for their work. Nobody said it was going to be easy.

Papa's Got A Brand New Bag.

There are very few new bags out there. When it comes to putting something out there that's any kind of contribution or continuation, the newness is a revelation. Do you know how many artists contribute? Add on? Become part of "art history"?... Maybe five...five or six every decade make this kind of revelry. (Remember...the fountain of youth turned out to be located in a swamp.)

Christopher is one of the five or six every decade that got to the corner and painted himself in and stayed and thrived and managed to survive and tell the tale. The "corner" is called the Promised Land.

It's a long haul.

The end of abstract art? I DON'T THINK SO. I don't think abstract art has even started.

Using the tools of the graffiti artist...tagging and sampling inside and in the building, instead of outside and on the building.

There's a picture by Nan Goldin of Christopher taken at Tier 3 in 1979. He's sitting next to a girl named Liz. Liz was his girlfriend. There's some kind of spray-painted face behind them on the wall. It's sprayed in black paint. Christopher looks like a very young Morrissey. Meat is murder. Thank god he didn't look like Ian Curtis.

The spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.

Living in a cave? You still need the right ingredients. Silkscreen. Cut and paste. Masks. Stencils. Spray paint. X-Acto knife. State-of-the-art computer graphics. The madness and muscle of machines.

Eliminating the token drip and then picking it up off the ground, retrieving it, and gathering it into your arms and taking a picture of it, focusing and reproducing it, blowing it up, and, for good measure, rubbing it in.

So who is Christopher in music? Thelonious Monk? The Mothers of Invention? Bill Evans? Sonic Youth? Keith Jarrett? ODB (OI' Dirty Bastard)? D'Angelo.

Clip art. Decorative rollers. Verbal clichés Urban and No Wave. Rock Paper Scissor. "Queen for a day. Who will it be? I don't know but it won't be me."

The sidewalk. The fire escape. The puddle in the street. The dog without an owner. The vacant lot. The can inside a paper bag. The chain-link fence. The weeds that part cement. The Xerox flyer advertising the umpteenth band that will play for six people for one night at a friend's loft in even lower Manhattan.

Graffiti versus an alien alphabet.

Ahab the Arab. (BATTLE OF THE BANDS)

Bricks, mortar, and shingles. Maybe not so many shingles.

"It's sign painting with feedback."—Glenn O'Brien

Common knowledge made uncommon.

I really did a stupid thing. A really really really stupid thing. Standing ovation!

If it looks good. It is good.

Why hire somebody when you can...do-it-yourself.

I didn't go to school for this. I am the art world.

Grecian formula? If only I were Greek.

I want to be buried in a bag, just like my neighbor's cat.

Question: How does he stay up? Answer: By his bootstraps.

Dear Landlord...
Junkies and homesteaders. Whitewashed windows. No vacancy. Abandoned. Wrong number. No forwarding address. Disconnected. "The number you have reached..."

"If I hold my hands out...as far as I can...that's all the space I need."—Willem de Kooning

Going all the way.
Straight line. Curve. Covered up. Drawn again. Ghosted out. Coming thru. Skidded and pulled. Leaked and blotted. Squeezed. Riffed. Step back, then sit and look...and look again before another round, another covering, then cover what's covered once more with nine yards of another nine yards.

After the fire. After the flood. After the fan hit the shit.

Stamped and rubber stamped. Peeled. And peeled back once more for another peek. "Rather Ripped," wouldn't you say? Pedal to the metal. That's when smoke comes off the tires after the tires spin trying to gain traction waiting to take hold and leave behind black traces of rhyme and when they do start to trace and grab the asphalt and fly down the straightaway for a quarter mile and cross the finish line... It's then that the checkered flag is waved at the winner. And who waves the flag? Jungle Pam waves the flag.

The Image of a word.

We had “movie nights” at my loft on Reade St. This was around 1988–90. The deal was anyone who came to “movie night” could bring a tape of their favorite film and play it. We tried putting a limit on the amount of time you could play your favorite part of a movie or video or home movie or documentary film or film about anything...but there was no real limit in the end. People just showed up and played what they wanted. Larry Clark. Glenn O’Brien. Jim Lewis. Richard Flood. Matthew Barney. Mary Farley. And Christopher Wool. They all came. Christopher always came with Super 8 stuff. Stuff he shot in and around his studio. Mostly stuff he shot at night. Streetlamps. Dogs barking. Sirens wailing. People walking by with exaggerated gestures, talking up a storm, and then next someone alone, real quiet, coming right after the crazies and not saying anything and walking in a straight line going from A to B. There was nothing extraordinary about the film. Christopher didn’t want excitement and he didn’t want to be exciting. That’s where he was at. One of his films was called *Hole in the Wall*. He was hammering nails and taking them out so that the hole that was left behind was all you looked at.

The cat had my tongue.
This was when he was painting words and sentences. One day he showed up and asked me for some jokes. He wanted to paint two jokes. I gave him two of my favorites. After he painted them he gave me one of the paintings. “I never had a penny to my name so I changed my name.” A couple of years later I was broke. Bankrupt. I sold the joke. I sold the painting. I beat myself up for selling the painting. I was selling everything I owned. I moved out of the city to a tiny town up behind the Catskills. I owned a weekend house up there and rented it out. I lived in my car. I didn’t have a pot to piss in. Chamber Music was all I could read and hear. I want that painting back. The person who has it shouldn’t have it. I should have it. It’s mine. Give it back. NO QUESTIONS ASKED

I’ve never seen Christopher with a camera. But he takes bunches of photos. He puts them together like a bunch of newspapers. He ties up what he sees. After he reads these photos he makes a book out of them. He’s made twenty of these newspaper books. Maybe I should call them albums. Keepsakes. He keeps them and puts them alongside his paintings. They’re evidence of where he’s been. What he’s done. What he looks at. They’re backup. Like if he needs to talk about the abstractions in his paintings he can point to what’s in the photo and say...“See, I told you so. I don’t make this stuff up.”

His photographs are not that different from his paintings. I’m talking aesthetically. SIDE BY SIDE. They have the same look. Your eye can fix on both mediums and make you feel like you’re standing in open indoor space next to uncovered radiators and bright white walls that have been gessoed so many times that they have the surface of a cake that’s been covered in thick frosting.

Paint it black.
Paint it mostly “almost” black.
Once in a while ultramarine blue. Or deep purple. Just like the band.
What is he listening to? When he paints. What kind of music does he paint with? If I knew I would tell you but this isn’t an interview. My guess? I can tell you it isn’t Patsy Cline.

The front of a convenience store. (That’s a word he should paint...CONVENIENCE.) The store is covered head to toe. Top to bottom. Side to side. With stickers and advertisements and shout-outs about prices. Two for one. Get one free. 99 cents. Promotional cards for energy drinks. Yakety-yak come-ons for cigarettes and beer. The promos are layered. Like lost-dog flyers stapled on telephone poles. The new ones layered over the old ones. The hodgepodge of images is confusing and creates a blur, but then the blur comes into focus and starts to stand out. BoDayGa. BoDayGa. It’s not a pretty sight. But being pretty has nothing to do with it. Standing out is all that counts.
You go inside and buy a lottery ticket. Christopher buys one every day. He keeps the stubs and over the years has made a huge collage with his losing tickets. I ask him why he plays. He looks me in the eye and says, “EYES ON THE PRIZE.”

“I eat politics. I sleep politics. But I never drink politics.” That’s one way to describe Christopher’s relationship with art. Trust me, the relationship is in there somewhere.

Hypnotist. Anarchist. Insomniac. Mercenary. Authority. Prankster. Comedian. Psychotic. Paranoid. Adversary. Informant. Absurdist.
WOULD IF I COULD.
These are words that I would and I could describe Christopher with. I would if I could but he’s already done it himself.

I would like to see the handwritten note that Christopher would give the bank teller after telling her, “This is a holdup.”

Are the word paintings really declarations? Or is he punishing someone. I don’t know. I had one hanging in my house for a couple of years and I thought I was being rewarded.

YOU
MAKE
ME
Untitled, 1997. Enamel on aluminum, 108 × 72 inches.
This painting is a sweet painting. The painting is like Trent Reznor’s six piano notes that he scored for the opening of his soundtrack to the movie *The Social Network*. Either that or it has something to do with Joan Didion’s *White Album*.

What the Fuck?
Lucky Son of a bitch.

I’ve heard that the word paintings resemble tabloid headlines, inscriptions, announcements, information, hieroglyphics, opinions, even something “oracular”... whatever that means. For me the words are nothing more than subject matter. He ran into them. This “matter.” Once you commit to the matter you don’t have to think about it. You just deal with it. Subject first, medium second. (Forgetting about your subject is half the battle.) That’s what happened one day when he was “out and about.” Most likely out taking a walk. Probably to that bodega to buy another lottery ticket. Smack dab... he ran right into it. And it hit him hard and he ran home like the three little pigs. Like all great artists he got lucky. It’s like the end of all those cartoons... THAT’S ALL FOLKS.

It’s like what his friend Jim Lewis said. “When you multiply misunderstanding... meaning emerges.”

Holy Shit.
I wonder what would happen if Christopher had kids. Forget it. He doesn’t need them. He’s already painting tic-tac-toe.

There are what...seventy-five word paintings? That’s a good number of paintings. A body of work. There are approximately two hundred and fifty words on those paintings. But that doesn’t make a novel. It’s not supposed to. He’s not trying to Moby Dick his way into your life.

As simple as I can say it.
Christopher isn’t a writer.
Christopher isn’t a poet.
Christopher is a visual artist.

Christopher makes things to be looked at. You stare at what he makes. What he makes pours over your eyeballs. It seeps into your brain. And it sits there and occupies what you think about. What do you think about when you’re occupied by Christopher Wool?

Slogans.
Is Christopher political? I’ll ask him. How can you separate what he paints from current events? You can’t. Is a Supreme Court decision more important than a Wool painting? I doubt it. Wool is better and more needed. HANDS DOWN. Just ask yourself...who was the president of France when Gauguin was painting his beautiful paintings in Tahiti?

It gets us nowhere. But that’s okay because there’s nowhere to get.

Anger.
“If you don’t like it you can get the fuck out of my house.” But who is angry? The artist? The viewer? I don’t think the artist is angry. Maybe you’re the one who’s angry. Maybe you’re the one who needs to get out of the house.

More Houses.

What did Jesus say up there on the cross? “Hey, I can see my house from here.”

What does it mean to come home to a house that’s full of love and tenderness and affection? It means you’re in the wrong fucking house.

THE SHOW IS OVER. Long live the show.

RIOT
The word is spray-painted on a door after it was painted
RI
OT
with a stencil on sheet metal.
There’s a picture of the stenciled painting hanging in a living room with sliding glass doors. It looks like a modern house or apartment somewhere in Cologne. I think the place belongs to Christopher’s Cologne dealer. And in the picture there’s a mother or babysitter leaning down about to take the hand of a two-year-old in a diaper and T-shirt. The two-year-old is standing in front of the RIOT painting. This photo appears on page 103 of Wool’s monograph put out by Taschen. The photo is uncredited. If you take a magnifying glass and

put it over the photo you can see that the two-year-old's T-shirt says SHIT HAPPENS.

1993. Christopher starts to paint what he calls his “out” paintings. He takes images of flowers. Another image he doesn't have to think about... an image that's always been painted... an image that has been painted by everyone and their grandmother. And by “painting it out” he tries to ignore its popularity. When he does this “out” painting, the petal or petals end up looking like “explosions.” He bombards the shit out of the flower. But that's too simple... that way of looking at it. That's what everybody says. That's what your grandmother would say.

Big black blobs and goo and messes.

Talkin' Loud Sayin' Nothin'. 1994. Wow... it feels good.

It's a groovy painting. Have a nice day. Keep on truckin'. Juicy, clear, and simple. Filling the fire and wearing a wire. I'm walking on sunshine.

Flood
F ood

And then there's *I Smell a Rat*, 1989–94. Killing his ego. “I've got no secrets.” What's he hiding in there? This is a spy painting. It's straight-up reconnaissance. Is it “rat” under all that goo and gunk... or is it “rat-a-tat-tat” under that bucket of slop.

I'll pick some more out.

Groove 1, 1994

Pattern recognition. Looks like Woodstock. The crowd. A gathering of tribes. At least that's what comes to mind. Associations. What the painting imagines. Not so much what I imagine...but what the painting imagines. What it imagines is something that's full. FILL ER UP. There's repetition in and on the painting but where it starts and ends isn't really what you think about. What you think about is the graphic, the color, the evenness of the pattern, how the pattern is applied and the pattern itself. Why this pattern? Where did it come from? (It came from outer space!!!!) It doesn't look made up. It certainly isn't random. It comes from somewhere, but where? It's right there. Right in front of us. Before instead of after. Its existence is rumored to be. I know... I'm beating around the bush. It gets so hard to tell. I shouldn't even be thinking about it, but I think I'm right.

It's not about making the past go away. PONY UP.

Take a ride on the turtle and forget about first place.

I CAN'T STAND MYSELF WHEN YOU TOUCH ME. 1994

Take an old painting out of the racks. One that you did a couple of years ago and “touch it.” Don't make it new. Make it again.

Process.

You shouldn't try to help yourself. I'm not sure what that means exactly but I think it has something to do with beating a dead horse.

I like that Christopher uses traditional “techniques” to “interpret” his subject matter. (How's that for plain speaking?) Nothing fancy or “way out.” Nothing clever. Nothing mysterious.

I like to look at art that when I look at it, I can picture myself doing it. Spending an afternoon doing it. That's part of what I like to experience when I look at art. And it's part of what I have when I look at Christopher's paintings. I see myself doing them. I understand how they're done and I want to spend the afternoon painting what he paints. There's pleasure in that. The pleasure of wanting to make yourself part of the process. There's so much room to make a mess, a fuckup... you jump right in and spoil yourself.

BUG A BOO.

Around 1992, Christopher came to me and asked about silkscreen. We talked about how dead the medium was. How it had been beaten to death, and that maybe, yeah... he could breathe some new life into it.

I told him there was one lab left in NYC that made silkscreens. Also silkscreen inks, the industrial kind that were no longer available because of toxicity. If you wanted to find some industrial-strength ink you'd have to find a hoarder.

A duck to water.

Via Duct?

The Marx Brothers.

What did Karl Marx's mother say to Karl? “Why can't you make some money instead of writing about it?”

Long story short: Reincarnation.

What Christopher has done with silkscreen has made the medium whole again. He has taught an old dog new tricks. Most silkscreens deal with representational images. Christopher transfers drips, splatters, puddles, and “by the by” patterns to the silk. He's even spray-painted swirls and made the swirls into screens. The images that he's transferred are nothing close to real. The only thing that comes close is Warhol's *Shadows*.

But Warhol's shadow is still a shadow and it's one screen and it's the same screen used to make the same painting fifty-five times. Most silkscreens are small. (Silkscreens are expensive. The bigger the screen the more the expense.) Christopher gets around scale by gridding his abstract shapes into four different sections and making a screen for each section. Like dividing up a pie and making a screen for each wedge. When each wedge is screened it's like reassembling pieces of a puzzle to make the abstract shape whole again. The four different sections when pieced back together can make a big pie. He doesn't register the screen. His screening is never correct. He could care less about sameness. He takes the mechanical-reproduction process out of the medium and gets rid of the repetition. The time-after-time quote of the silkscreen isn't there anymore. When he passes his ink thru the screen he has no idea what the result will be. Having no idea is exciting. Lifting up the screen is always a surprise. His method is straight out of Compton... (in his case, straight out of Alphabet City). He grabs a screen throws it down and bleeds the ink thru the mesh... printing a monster mash of hot apple pie. He “plays” the screen like an uneducated fool. The squeegee is his angel. Toots and whistles. Scumbles and bum. Hey man, can I get that pie to go?

“I've made paintings that were ‘pictures’ created merely by the act and process.” That's what he says.

HAVE GUN WILL TRAVEL

Does painting have a unique “aura”?

Whoever said painting was dead...

1. Is over six foot seven.
2. Grades dissertations for a living.
3. Doesn't know who Romaine Brooks or Walt Kuhn is.

Painting is dead. That's a theoretical position. It's an argument. It's like saying camouflage and Cubism are the same thing.

Subtext. Underneath it all. Sure, some of Christopher's work is about mass media: movies, television, and music. How can it not be? But they're only touchstones. The lexicons and images of mass media are hard to ignore. And besides, why should he ignore down time? If he wants to sample a bit of New Cinema from 1977 go ahead. What Christopher's work is about... is what all good artists' work is about... the self and what's immediately around the self. TRIED AND TRUE. It's all a self-portrait. Always was, always will be. (Remember, I said “good” artists.) When Christopher takes his arms and

spreads them out... that's all the self he needs. Like he said, THE SHOW IS OVER. End of story.

How to paint, instead of what to paint.

Can you carefully achieve randomness?

Glitches and imperfections which are perfect.

NOT FADE AWAY. (Rave On)

Putting Words into Christopher's Mouth.

“In 1977 I took a walk below Canal Street west of Broadway west of Hudson. All the lofts were shells. There were no roofs. Water was pouring in. NO MANS LAND. Nobody was living there. There was one restaurant. Ponte's. It belonged to the Mob. Everything around was boarded up and vacant. Everything was covered in plywood. The facades reminded me of a back lot I once saw in Hollywood. Fake and empty. Pretty soon the neighborhood would be settled and sold. But right now it's wasted. All that remains is a big beautiful scar.”

The painting remains the same.

You put your left foot in. You take your left foot out. You do the hokeypokey. And that's what it's all about.

Rubber-stamp paintings. Like a canceled check.

Decoration or wallpaper? I wonder what Daniel Buren would have to say about that? Or Brice Marden? Or Blinky Palermo?

Are you saying what I think you're saying? Or are you just whistling “Dixie”?

Pitch black.

When paints drips out of my leaky faucet should I save the sink?

Slang.

X's and O's... busted.

“Mama Too Tight”... (I lie like a rug.)

Double Booty Party, 1999, is obscene. (I have it on good authority there's a hairy unwashed asshole in there somewhere.)

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HellWoolHellWoolHellWool

There are very few people in Christopher Wool’s artworks. In fact I can’t think of one. Says his high-school teacher . . . a Mr. Timothy Barber . . . “You know . . . I just don’t recall Christopher being a people person.”

“As I walk along, I wonder what went wrong.” Lyrics and music by Dion and the Belmonts.

HAND JIVE

Green Is My Favorite Color. (ENVY)

I hung out with Christopher when he was at the American Academy in Rome in 1990? I was staying in an apartment just below the Academy that was kind of like Yaddo. A place where you got a studio . . . (You lived upstairs.) It was a private retreat that was funded by Gladstone Gallery. You were alone. It was freezing and there was hardly any hot water. This was November into December. The only place warm was sitting directly in the sun at an outdoor café at three in the afternoon. The only thing that saved me was a movie-rental place on the other side of the river. Christopher had it made. The Academy was like a youth hostel. A freak-filled dormitory where the only thing that was square were the three meals a day served in the cafeteria.

My studio had been a garage. Jerry-rigged. It had zero heat, no windows, and terrible fluorescent light. There was leftover oil on the uneven cement floor. (One thing I can’t stand is a floor that slants.) The “studio” hadn’t been cleaned in years . . . There were cobwebs in every corner, an endless supply of sawdust that kept oozing out the walls like a family of beavers were inside gnawing away at the studs. There were enough bricks and odd pieces of lumber lying about to fill up a mine shaft. HAPHAZARD.

Christopher’s studio was gorgeous. This was the kind of studio Twombly painted in. Before Christopher. The studio had no other purpose. It had been built for painting. North light came thru the skylight. The ceiling was a million miles high. The fir floor was lightly sanded with a dull stain . . . It was perfectly pitched. Even the chair that was provided, to sit and stare at any ongoing or finished work, was considered. The chair was gorgeous.

I wanted what Christopher had. I wanted to be in the Academy.

I wanted to be around people instead of spending an unending weekend alone. A Roman holiday? Are you serious? Everything closed, locked down . . . Rome is a ghost town during holidays. And . . . I wanted to be warm.

I had to cook for myself. Sandwiches. Potato chips. Red wine. I wanted conversation. (Remember, no cell phones no Internet.) Crappy. That was my place. That was my experience. Gorgeous. That was Christopher’s place. That was Christopher’s experience.

He even had a girlfriend. At least I thought he did.

We spent a weekend together. The three of us. Went out to some ancient town to look at ruins. She was studying landscape architecture. I didn’t know you could study landscape architecture. I was smitten. I fell for her. But I couldn’t figure out if they were a couple or just friends. That’s the thing about Christopher. He doesn’t give out much information.

I backed off, deciding finally, yeah, they’re more than friends. Fuck.

Right choice.

MAKING OUT.

The ménage felt like the movie *Two-Lane Blacktop* and I was Dennis Wilson the mechanic.

Soon after that weekend I headed off to the Nile. To get lost in the Valley of the Kings. Christopher had asked me while I was gone if he could use my studio to make some works on paper. I said, “Are you kidding? You want to work in this shithole?”

So that’s what he did. He worked in my shithole. When I got back, there were twenty pieces of paper lying around on my rat “infested” muddied floor with the words “ARE YOU KIDDING?”

I’m not sure why I’m telling you this.

I said this once before. In a book that I wrote so long ago I can hardly remember writing it. What I said was:

I wouldn’t mind changing places with somebody else. Just for a day. To see what it would be like. To see if it’s all that it’s cracked up to be. Something like that. Like I said, a long time ago. To put an update on it . . .

THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER. And in my case it still is. I still want be Christopher. To have what he has. I still want to change places with the guy and paint his paintings and photograph his photographs. Invasion. Replicate. Trade. This wanting and wishing is a way to say . . .

WOOLRULES

And . . .

Christopher matters to me. His art makes me feel good.

He’s the kind of artist that when I picture him alone in his studio with his foot up on the windowsill looking out onto

the street I think to myself . . . whatever he’s doing in that picture . . . that’s the picture I want to be in.

Lean mean fighting machine.

Coat and tie required. Preferably a heavy check winter tweed.

Open Range

I talked to Christopher last night. We had dinner together and caught up. He’s been moving back and forth between Marfa, Texas and the city for a couple of years now. He was on his way back down and I asked him why . . . why Marfa? He told me it was the opposite . . . (of New York) open and uncluttered . . . you pay attention to things like the weather. I heard myself talking when I used to be asked about moving upstate. “It’s exotic, not something I’m familiar with,” he said. “I wanted to put myself in an environment that I had no experience with.” “Starting over?” I asked. “No, it’s more like a script . . . It’s what the doctor ordered.”

Blood on the tracks.

I wondered about his recent paintings that I saw at the Musée d’Art Moderne in Paris. I went twice to that show. I hadn’t really seen landscape in them, or even the possibility until our conversation. The reading was a stretch of course . . . there was no “landscape” in the paintings at all. It’s me interpreting, interfering, falling into the stupid wooze of speculation. Sure I could turn the shapes into something they’re not. (Like maybe?) Is it that far out? Far out . . . At least I can try out the maybe. Tumbleweeds. Dust storms. Cumulus clouds. Horizons. The kinds of endless roads that Robert Frank used to photograph. Beep Beep. Roadrunner roadrunner McMurtry’s *Horseman, Pass By* turned into the movie *Hud*. But all that is putting a shine on it. Making things up. Wronging the work. It’s me being a cowboy.

Vanishing Point (The Movie)

Maybe that’s what I saw in Paris.

Christopher driving a 1970 Challenger around Marfa. Hopped up on speed listening to some all-night radio station out of Waco. Why not? Indulge me or spare me. Ramrodding around the desert trying to outrun John Law. Big spray-painted loops are in there somewhere. Projectiles too. Huge paintballs bashed up against concrete that look “unforeseen” but are planned right down to the last smudge and dot. *Minor Mishap*, 2001 . . . *He Said She Said*, 2001. *Woman on a Bicycle*, 2003. *Run Down Run*, 2003. Like he said, “You can’t imagine them before they’re begun.” It’s like what friends

say and you hope that what they say isn’t a lie. The “system” is the truth and the truth is Christopher has found a way to paint.

You have to know that some of the paintings can be done in a day. A day is all it takes. Christopher can start in the morning and be finished by day’s end. Sometimes it’s that quick. There’s no deadline. It’s not rocket science. And it’s great when you can make a whole painting without breaking a sweat. Maybe I should cue up the end of the movie when Barry Newman dead-ends and crashes the white glass-packed Challenger into two bulldozers . . . KABOOM! The show is over (again). I could bring the cue to movie night.

Can of Worms

Take a can of beer and shake it. Shake it good. Pop the top and let it out. All over . . . the place.

93 Drawings of Beer on the Wall . . . 1984. An early title of a Wool book. Makes perfect sense. You take one down, you pass it around and there’s 92 bottles of beer on the wall. That could be pretty good. One hundred paintings of beer on the wall all painted with the word NEXT . . . NEXT NEXT and NEXT. On and on until the next one. And the next one after that. And after the last NEXT is painted you crash and end it.

Question:

If a big blob of nothing is reproduced and made into a silkscreen and that big blob of nothing is screened and printed onto canvas . . . what does that big blob of nothing turn into and mean?

Answer:

1. A big blob of something.
2. A big “bad” blob.
3. “Mr. Blob.”
4. None of the above.

HE’S MR. KNOWITALL (Should be pronounced to its music.)

Christopher’s work is based on thinking like a painter. Like every painter before him . . . Christopher is thinking like every painter before him.

NOTHING BUT NET

SEE SPOT RUN (title of a children’s book that Christopher read as a child)

Wooly Bully. Improvisation plus composition equals

“improvisation.”
How does a painting get made today?
Same as yesterday only today.

It’s not about marching. It’s more about tripping and being
out of step.

SCALAWAG

Can you have a love affair with a painting? Or do you just
have sex with it and leave it at that.

You take the whole sky and then you limit it.

Direct action gets the goods!

On page 230 of Christopher’s Taschen book there’s a
photograph of a stairwell. This photo has been described
as a “second translation of an original text.” The description
was written by Richard Hell. Hell was a punk-rock pioneer.
An early member of the band Television, he later formed
Richard Hell and the Voidoids. He wrote the song “Blank
Generation.” Hell is also a poet and novelist. We lived in
the same building on East 12th St. and Avenue A. This was
back in 1979. The building was full of beats, hippies, and
punks. Allen Ginsberg had three connecting apartments
on the fifth floor. René Ricard lived there too. (I remember
his apartment once caught on fire.) Luc Sante lived right
next to me. (I always thought he was the Henry Miller of
our generation.)
Hell and Wool recently collaborated on... Keep on Smiling
and the Whole World Smiles with You... That’s not the title
of their collaboration... I just said that because I’m listening
to a Louis Prima CD.

Sorry...
Interruption. Brain freeze. Where was I? Train of thought.
When the whip comes down. Cock-a-doodle-do. Tell me,
do I look funny to you?
This is what happens when I think about Christopher.
Kaleidoscope.

Ten feet from his painting is one thing. Then up close,
say a foot or two in front... it’s another thing.

Anyway...back to the “stairwell”...
The stairwell on page 230 looks like the stairwell in that
building. It’s got all the “hallmarks” of the beats, hippies,

and punks. That’s all I wanted to say. HALLMARKS.
I’ll die for you. I will. I will. I will.

Numbers don’t lie.
But they do if you’re an artist.

Just think of it. When the moon is out, it’s out there in several
shapes. The sun, on the other hand, is always a circle.

EVERLAST
Remember, that’s the word that’s on the front of the trunks
of a heavyweight contender.

Christopher Wool. Everlasting.

