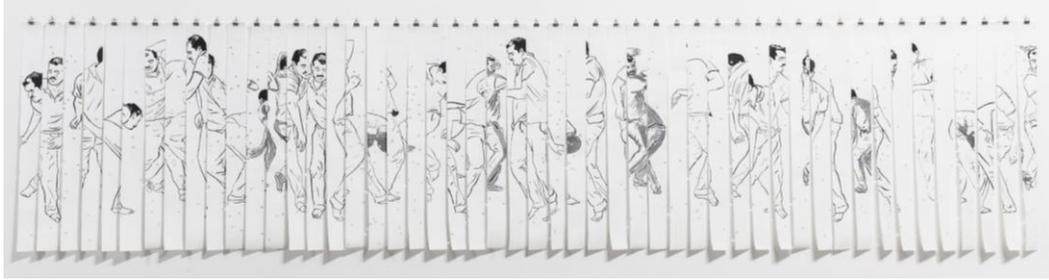


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Paul Tjepkema on Oliver Husain

The Man Upstairs is Moving



The man upstairs is moving. And is full of holes. And he has this dance that he does, but he is all cut up to pieces. And there are other things that seem all made out of paper, but it's like one of these things that you make where you cut up the paper after you have folded it over itself a lot. And outside these trucks go back and forth crashing about. I hear a person talking. I hear high-heeled shoes clicking on sidewalk. The paper is soft and comfortable but it isn't really paper. It is a drawing of a thing that might be made out of paper.

The man is downstairs now. And maybe it's a photograph from a while ago. A still before the dance. He has these big eyes and is kind of sleepy looking. Gesturing to someone off panel. Shoeless. Not wearing a watch. It's not until he goes upstairs that he will really move – cut to strips, punched full of holes. Movements vague like a hazy memory. Little bits, like drawings of things made out of paper. Emerald green.

And they don't seem to inhabit a space. They float. Pulled right from a desk. Pulled out of a game. The initial response is "doodle" but every piece is related.

There are these little bits of sushi or these old licorice candies. But the person who makes the sushi is missing an arm and an eye and puts them down next to these party streamers and it isn't for eating anymore.

It isn't for eating anymore.

There is an organization. The experiment of sequence. There is sequence of color in life (yellow banana turns brown) but these laws don't affect the objects here in this green dimension. There is no speech. But there is language. Missing sound, these

things that still somehow seem loud become characters, and we can notice the graphic effects that seem to follow the pacing and beats of a story. Establishing a rhythm. There is a familiarity to objects both abstract and real. Commonsensical knowledge of things like gravity. Panel rhythm and room layout. Page to page rhythm and actual physical movement from human interaction. In all instances there is a suggested movement and the rise and fall of story arc. The play of shapes weaves and creates this potential of formal drama existing within the work.

The truck drives by. It's a truck because it sounds like a truck and it's heavy like a truck so it's a truck. The overhead lights hum. The vents press and seize.

And the little bits roll and tumble and some shiny black marbles fall out and stop in suspended animation. Void of temperature.

A man's voice from outside yells and a different man's voice responds, yelling too. The confrontation muffled through the door escalates until the heater clicks on and hums over them drowning out their argument.

There is this turquoise here that I am trying to get pulled into. Or green. It seems round and soft and fun and full of air. And they float and hang in this white space and I have stepped into the white space around them but the calmness of the shapes and the wanting to go there is almost impossible. The simplicity and the comfort of the drawings are so relaxed and enjoyable that everything coarse and opposite about my reality reminds me to think that nothing can be so comfortable. The world that is quiet and blank with soft green moldable objects with sweet pancakes on a black sheet of licorice cannot be a real place because I am a human and human life is hard and complicated.

But there is this one guy who seems to be there. Like, he has found some way to enter this place. We see maybe even further in the past.

The paper shapes gain density. Momentum.

Hard plastic scrapes across rock and disperses clicking granules over cement as they scatter in every direction. Animal walks past. Heat clicks off.

The man inhabits a structure. Someplace recognizable. Angles suggesting walls. Lines suggesting ceiling. The only setting the barefoot figure has occupied appears to be a building. He seems to stretch and grow. A synchronized, specified system of movements perhaps in preparation.



The door opens. I converse with a man. We share the space. We discuss the dimension. It seems impenetrable. The windows become photographs. I have slipped backwards and am on the outside.

I study the photograph of the man in the room.

Muffled sound of tires squealing. Footsteps on wood above my head. Creaking.

He unlocks the world. He knows a secret. The movements are a key. Or a signal. Or something. He moves his body, grows bigger, and fades away.

No Shoes. No watch. Soft pants. Open shirt. Like, if a mood or an attitude is what has allowed his entry.

I'm sneaking in. The rolled bits. The falling marbles. Black and shiny, rolling down. The soft shapes. And then suddenly an alien shape with jagged hatched lines. Alien because it resembles the world outside of the image. Alien to the objects in the image. A remnant not all the way transformed. And we get to see this process.

The pants seem to be running while the figure disintegrates quickly, running between the black marbles. Kicking at them like soccer balls. The structures of this world hold no weight. The laws of this realm bend the foreign construct into something neutral and form-fitting. The figure has drifted. A flash of brilliant light. The emerald seemingly relaxed and soothing, coming into contact with an outside organism reacts by absorbing it.

The object is co-opted. And psychological attributes still exist but it is here now. Incorporated. The suggestion of some abstract punch-line almost.

And when you pull it apart, one of the sushi bits, it separates at the seams. And hidden inside are faces in various states of relaxation. Some catatonic. Saying you can occupy this space, but you will be swallowed by it. Absorbed into its comfort. The realm is an organism and in order to survive in its state, there can be no influence.

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The man upstairs that is dancing is cut into strips and has holes punched out of him. Like a memory or a movement. A fond recollection of how it felt to occupy space unlike your own. A series of movements that make you feel like you are somewhere else.

And the paper sculptures are no longer from this dimension. The paper sculptures are things hands can't help but build. Our world's representations of the anomalies perceived when having visited this place. Ambassadors of abstraction.

Now the streamers are here too, and in between the curtains. He is seeing in all places the objects of this abstraction, just outside of his periphery, bleeding into his world, a place void of description. He busies his hands, makes things he would make.

Paper mock-ups of visions once perceived. The synthetic versions are not as visceral, but being able to tell the difference is a gift in itself. And you think fondly of the place. Its enjoyable imagery but I can't help but feel sorry for the heads coiled and stuck. Like they sat too close to the TV and then it pulled them in.

Movement creating memory. Allowing entrance to a place built of uninhibited abstraction. A daydream that is calm and soft and smooth and comfortable and that pours out of a pen when you are not thinking about holding it. But, it holds no identity. No concept of the self. You can come in and you can stay but you can no longer be you.