

## FrameWork 12/23/2

### Masi Oliveria on *To pluck eternity along the lines of circadian rhythm*

Here I am, deep in the cyber jungles of Google, stalking artists for Patrick Cruz's group exhibit in Canada. I dive in and search the first name on the list, clicking through images like a woman possessed, reading texts with the enthusiasm of a caffeine-fueled detective hot on the trail of a crime scene, or I should say, art scene.

I feel a surge of thrill at the idea of getting to know these strangers (except for one artist I know in real life). Getting to know them through their art, excavating their past shows, interviews, videos, seeing what they look like, how they speak, getting clues about their personalities, choices, likes, and social media lives.

Patrick mentioned that the artists in the group show are into "materiality" so I guess it's not a good thing to deduce their art just from looking at images online, because I can't feel their tactility, texture and the actual thing, which is the essential part of their art.

Right now the time is 8:42 p.m. November 4, Saturday in the Philippines. I check the time in Toronto, Canada, it is 8:42 a.m., Saturday. In Vancouver, it is even earlier... 5:42 a.m.. So the people there right now are just beginning their November 4th while mine is ending in a few hours.

To pluck eternity along the line of my circadian rhythm, I must leap to another dimension/state of mind and travel through centuries.

Here goes...



**“An Essay That Decays Faster Than Your Attention Span (or A Brief Meditation on Nature)”**

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Atoms, the unassuming building blocks of life, don't discriminate. They're literally everywhere from compost piles to works of art. If everything, and I mean everything, is atoms playing an eternal game of Tetris, are guns and grass practically cousins? Like cosmic Lego – they click, they clack, and voila, you've got everything from trees to a trillion dollars.

Nature, with a capital "N," is all about lakes, birds, mountains, flowers, and the fresh air we claim to breathe in between Instagram posts. It's all very picturesque until you take into account flies, mosquitoes, parasites, earthquakes and tsunamis. And if we're all basically atoms aren't we also part of nature? Including our shoes, our phones, our money, and the unholy creation that is the SUV?

Hold that kombucha! What's artificial then? According to ChatGPT, "Artificial refers to anything human-made or crafted through deliberate intervention rather than occurring naturally. It encompasses everything from synthetic materials and technology to creations born from human ingenuity and manipulation."

So it's anything made by humans, like books, culture, civilization, fried chicken, craft beer, but most especially stuff made by scientists like robots, plastics, chemicals. But isn't science the study of nature? Then is it both the detective and the culprit in this case?

Art, on the other hand, is always trying to copy the real deal (Nature) but ends up with a bad photocopy. Artists aiming to mimic Nature's beauty often end up with results as futile as teaching a goldfish to play chess.

And what about art supplies? Paint is basically a chemical cocktail. But even chemicals are nature's handiwork – they just got a makeover in the lab. If you're all about using natural materials, scavenged like a rat in a dumpster, you're on a mission for eco-virtue. You're recycling, reducing, and reusing like a true eco-warrior. But, of course, you secretly judge the fast-food-chomping, gas-guzzling, online-shopping masses as morally bankrupt, uneducated, and crass.

The whole "natural vs. artificial" spectrum is a space-time seesaw. On one end, you've got environmental art, where Mother Nature gets to do her thing with minimal meddling. On the other, there's factory art that involves more human hands than a Vegas magic show. And we haven't even discussed A.I.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, the OG hipster transcendentalist, is all about Nature with a capital "N." He's sipping on that "self-reliance" smoothie, waxing poetic about the sacred connection between humans and Mother Nature. According to him, getting in touch with Nature is like the ultimate self-care routine – it's where you find your inner glow, but without the cucumber face masks. He's basically saying, "Nature's got the answers, man, just commune with some trees and you'll be woke AF."

But then, hold up, Joris-Karl Huysmans crashes the party with his "Against Nature" vibe. This guy's like the ultimate rebel, a key influencer of the decadent movement. He's all about thumbing his nose at tradition and flipping the bird to convention. Think of him as the proto- "YOLO" philosopher – he's here for a good time, not a long time.

Emerson and Huysmans debating about nature would've made for primo podcast material. Nature enthusiasts, you've got your stoic tree-hugger on one side, and on the other, you've got the artificial-loving aesthete who's on a quest for the excessive, the bizarre, and the downright weird. It's a cultural showdown between sensitive spiritual thoughts and seriously deep delights.

Emerson, eyes staring dreamily at a flower as if it held the secrets of the universe, be like, "Find your true self, and cultivate your soul. Nature is the handiwork of the divine." But Huysmans, who's more interested in the uncivilized antics of squirrels overhead, eye-rolls, "Divine, smivine! Nature is a carnival of chaos, a feast of folly. Just look at those squirrels—pure anarchists!"

Emerson, the self-reliant maestro, waves his arms as if conducting the air itself. Huysmans, the irreverent stand-up philosopher, mimics the antics of the woodland creatures, adding a touch of slapstick to the discourse. Under the filtered light of the fading centuries, Emerson and Huysmans continue their eternal banter.

In this grand scheme of things, Earth's birth and death are just a blink, and we're all tiny universes trying to make sense of it. Life is infinite and the creator has the ultimate VIP pass. Or are we just a collection of rearranged particles, shaking our fists at the cosmos and saying, "Look, Ma, I made a poop sculpture!"?

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I reflect that all the artists on the list have a poetic resonance, and maybe I need to get into that frequency and out of my mundane concerns—childcare, cooking, cleaning, grocery, laundry and so on. It's also interesting how most of them find the beauty/or the value in the mundane. So that everyday life, just by looking, may be transformed into something extraordinary.

At the moment, the current world population is 8,072,532, 232. And the second I type this, it has already increased by more than a hundred. Births today, it says on the [worldometers.info](https://worldometers.info), are 175,220 and keeps increasing. Deaths today are 79,333 and counting. Right now it is November 13, 2023, 11:22 a.m., Philippine time.

How wonderful to imagine that it could be as simple as switching onto that frequency. Just a click or a snap or a switch and you are tuned into that eternal bandwidth. Just like that, and you'll find yourself in the very same frequency that the artists and poets since the beginning of time have been pointing to again and again: The world in a grain of sand, infinity in the palm of a hand, eternity in an hour.

image: Jayson Oliveria, *Fetch*, 2023