

MARFA JOURNAL

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As of late, Manhattan has become a bottomless source of unreasonably tender ideas for me. Another mountain for a young woman to climb. American artist **KEN OKIISHI** is partly to blame. Love is when you romanticise a condition out of proportion. One Thursday afternoon, I went on a date to The Whitney Museum and saw Ken's (*Goodbye*) to *Manhattan*.

It was my **ROMANTIC** welcome to the city. Despite having visited NYC several times before, I had never really fallen in love with the city, but it changed that afternoon.

What's your museum of choice?

Multiple museums overlay, as memory percolates through the experience of whatever is in front of me. I experience every museum as what Carlo Scarpa did to the Castelvecchio in Verona - without nostalgia, and as unresolvable fragments of actual happenings. I recall the Met on a winter day; walking past the Temple of Dendur, emerging in weird American period rooms, glancing the glorious melange of the courtyard - a sudden flash from the Met Gala last year, where Justin Bieber's in-person cyborgian plasticity was as astonishing as Rihanna's electrifying performance of *Bitch Better Have My Money* whilst the bathroom repurposed as a smoking room - and ascending the stairs into this late nineties, early image-based internet database style display of awkward American domestic objects, past the Japanese scrolls, through the Chinese garden court. This physical memory is mixed with other flashbacks, as the schizophrenia of memory is allowed to burst the surface and the fission of images, sounds, bodies, objects and walking aligns along a heterogenous garland of simultaneous presences. I remember exiting that evening, past darkened halls of blurry artefacts, blanking out for awhile and then suddenly arriving at Nicolas Poussin's *Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun*.

Do you ever sulk?

Sometimes my face does make a weird expression.

What's the essence of art?

That it is not everything else.

Is talent a matter of luck?

In art school, I remember all of these vaguely talented people saying things like hard work is more important than talent, and it always felt like a lame excuse for either being successful and feeling guilty about it or not being successful and feeling guilty about it. Talent is as much related to doing something as it is to doing nothing. The ideal scenario is that truly great things happen when talented people get lucky.

Can business and art ever get along?

Strangely, they get along best as discrete entities that pretend the other doesn't exist.

Do you respond well to feedback?

I only let a few people affect me with their feedback. I think it's important to know when not to pay attention.

What is your bad habit of choice?

Thinking about suicide.

How important is courage?

It's the essence of glamour. I've often thought that the most important political work I can do as an artist is to create a glamour around living that is also dedicated to reorganising the power relations that literally drive me crazy.

Would you agree to have a three-course dinner with a complete stranger?

The person I would want to have dinner with would probably say no to this idea.

When was the last time you spent quality time with a relative?

Genetic - a few months ago. Chosen - a few hours ago.

Can you love a person and an idea equally?

I often think of people as ideas which can be a bit disappointing in the end, so yes. I really shouldn't.

What is the key question of our times?

Stolen from Beckett - *I can't go on, I'll go on*.

Do you smoke?

Is this a health insurance questionnaire?

Do you like the smell of roses?

The painters of my new apartment put vanilla extract in the paint to cover up what they thought were bad paint smells, and now I can't get rid of this cheap vanilla smell. Rose would probably be a better smell. I prefer no smell altogether - like good sashimi.

Who is the last person you would expect to bump into in a local bookstore?

My partner. I remember seeing him at St. Mark's Bookshop when it was still on the ground floor of the Cooper Union dorm, before we knew each other. That was in the nineties. I still love seeing him somewhere suddenly, like we don't know each other. It's constantly reawakening that moment in the nineties, the sense of another person standing there - someone you would like to get to know.



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