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Hello Sally and Helene,

I imagine you're both wondering who one another is and why you're CC'd on the same letter. Helene – since 1996 Sally has been the president and chief executive officer of Buffalo Wild Wings, a sports bar/stadium themed chicken chain restaurant with over 1000 locations in ten different countries. Sally – Helene was the adopted daughter of a wealthy German hop and grain merchant, born in 1816, who lived her adult life as a mother and homemaker. Though she died in 1866 her ghost allegedly haunts her home, the Villa Salve Hospes, which is now a *Kunstverein* (kind of like a sports stadium but for art). I also want to thank both of you before I get carried away: Sally for responding to my last letter, and Helene for what could be called implied hospitality during my stay. I'm aware this must all seem like nonsense, but I promise we'll be on the same page by the end.

I find myself in Germany again. I travel here more often than any other country to make and show my work. I think we "get" each other, and I can't complain. It seems like art institutions always have some old *D-marks* hidden underneath their *sofakissen*. Ask, and the Germans will most likely find the means through which you can receive.

I used to have this problem with Germany though. Not the Germans' profoundly economical demeanor that most visitors find alienating, nor the cuisine, which I can thoroughly appreciate in moderation. The problem I had was with the buildings. It wasn't a matter of aesthetics; I love me a Zimmermann and adore the Frederician. The problem was an atmospheric fear that I often felt while jogging into previously unknown territory. Provoked by the *geist* of certain buildings and monuments rather than their forms, I was overcome by an incomprehensible terror while running by the Berlin Victory Column on my first trip to Germany in 2013. *Goldelse* (Golden Lizzy) is a 67-meter cylindrical stone column atop a round base thrusting above the middle of a traffic circle that, like the earlier Alexander Column in Saint Petersburg (and so on), is topped with an angel. In this case it's a gilded statue of the Ancient Roman Goddess Victoria to commemorate the Prussian victory of 1864 in the Danish-Prussian War. Helene, I'm sure you're familiar, and Sally, Wikipedia has more information on all of the above if you're interested; I had no clue what it was when I first encountered it. In the ten minutes prior I had also unknowingly trotted past the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Memorial to Homosexuals Persecuted Under Nazism, and the Memorial to the Victims of National Socialist 'Euthanasia' Killings, all abstract forms that I had barely cognized as someone's conceptual art. These rectangles, scaled for human bodies, may have induced a mostly subconscious anxiety, but my threshold wasn't pierced until I lifted my head to realize the full scale of the Victory Column.

Something about the horizontal expanse around the column, compressing into escalating concentric circles, seemed to violate my intuitions of inside and outside, left and right, center and periphery, like the column was just the tip of a sublime iceberg, or a handle for Earth: The Baby Rattle, waiting to be grappled by a demonic infant. Or maybe it just seemed to deliver its symbolic referent, German Militarism, with force.

I'm not exaggerating when I say I nearly shit myself while turning to sprint in the opposite direction, head down, trying not to look at the upscaled Wagner memorial in the barrel vault. A few days later, the Reichstag similarly sent me running, and then the Park at Gleisdreieck a few days after that. I've had a comparable reaction when jogging elsewhere – alongside the Mediterranean three times, in Vernazza, Marseille, and Bol; in each instance a crippling fear that the seemingly static sea would fold up and over the land, the horizon denoting the upper edge of a flat, flexible earth. The stuff of neobaroque nightmares from movies like *Inception*, *2012*, and *Interstellar*. Or was it the wave of Poseidon?

Sally, I assume you're familiar with Adolf Hitler, but Helene I'm not sure what sort of informational access you have in the ghost world. Well, Wikipedia reminded me that Hitler wasn't really German; he was actually born in Austria and snaked his way into the Bavarian Army, the German Workers Party, and eventually that job as Führer. The rest is history, as they say. But at the beginning of 1932 Hitler still wasn't a German citizen, and this guy named Dietrich Klagges was in the process of appointing him *Regierungsrat* (some bullshit administrator position) that would officially naturalize him. And while that was happening, Hitler occasionally stayed in the same neighborhood as an art institution called the Kunstverein Braunschweig, which was later occupied by Nazis during their moment in the early 1940s. And that very Kunstverein – the same one Helene has haunted for over a century – is where my next art show is.

So you'd think I'd be kind of freaked out by the neighborhood, right? There's even a 22-meter black and gold war memorial obelisk right down the street. To be honest – not really. Since 2013 I've seen a lot of gilded obelisks. A lot of apologetic monuments and stained, chunky stone buildings. I've traveled to the City of the Brothers Grimm, followed the "quintessentially German" Romantic Road, and wound down the double helix spiral of the Mercedes Benz Museum, which is more like a 20th century German history museum through the lens of its most colossal brand. Twice I've visited the Haus Der Kunst - what was originally the Nazis' showcase for what they believed was Germany's finest art. I even lived in a rococo *schloss* in the middle of a forest in Baden-Württemberg for 6 months. I guess the technical term for my desensitization is "exposure therapy" – the only way out seemed to be through the entrance to the Victory Column and up its 285 steps.

While this fear of architectural *geist* has faded, it seems no amount of exposure will ever prepare me for the experience of being alone in a dark interior. Within each building are rooms, within each room are closets, and within each closet are cabinets. Surfaces pierced by holes that allude to shadowy volumes and walls perforated by windows which, at night, can't be seen through. I'm always somewhere, and I can only ever physically be wherever that is, so I can never fully know what's behind a door, a wall, or my back. In the dark, every building becomes a baroque entanglement of containers containing the stuff of nightmares. I can recall bouts of supernatural terror as far back as age 4: ghosts, witches, wizards, candymen, clowns, goblins, trolls, Skeksis, little monsters, serial killers of the dream world... all kinds of things, really. Fast forward three decades, and while the more imaginative forms have vanished into thin air, an invisible force still seems to be present around every corner and behind every surface whenever I find myself alone in a space at night. If the conditions are right, this mental habit is as consistent as the sun setting, and it intensifies after exposure to the medium of psychological horror. An effective scary movie will force me to avoid going to the kitchen or bathroom at night unless absolutely necessary for days, even weeks, as my mind uncontrollably projects fictional filmic characters into my nocturnal reality. Ask me if I want to watch *Poltergeist* and my response will be a terse "no." I would prefer to not be exposed to the trailer for *V/H/S* again. It's even hard for me to read the plot synopsis of *The Ring* on Wikipedia.

So Sally, this former villa, the Kunstverein, which is haunted by Helene, puts me in a bit of a pickle. Firstly, it's a heavily authored neoclassical monstrosity, one of those spaces that artists describe as "tricky." While the institution has some cred, it would be so much easier to

do a show beneath your backlit black and gold winged buffalo because I've been thinking about it for two years and it seems designed for such a thing. I'll get around to that later in this letter. For now, the most pressing issue is that it's just me and Helene here at the Kunstverein every night for a whole month, and I can't imagine an adequate description of how awful that feels. But I'll try.

Do you know this German guy named Immanuel Kant? The Philosopher? He used this term *hirngespenster*, which translates to "brain ghosts" in English, to expose spiritual visions as a sensory delusion. To build his argument he compared the *hirngespenster* of an inflamed, enthusiastic imagination to an optical "*spectrum*" (spectre) created by means of a concave mirror. I'll spare you the details, but just know that this skeptical account of ghostly apparitions anticipates his doctrine of transcendental illusion, for in his critical writings, he repeatedly draws on the optical media of his day in order to describe the fallacies of speculative reason. Kant characterizes speculative metaphysics as a "magic lantern of brain phantoms." In doing so, he transforms the optical instrument into a sort of figure for the limits of philosophical knowledge. Kant's critical theory of knowledge presumes that our senses are "*affiziert*" (affected) by a principally unknowable thing in itself.

Helene, despite all my efforts to keep my mind off of you, I'm acutely aware of our copresence as the sun sets each night. I push open doors, some that seem paper thin, some industrially heavy and self-closing, and I imagine you behind each one. I find myself hoping it will snow so that the dry leaves will stop snickering across the cobblestone outside. As I scan the room from my featherbed before turning out the light, I feel like you're poised in the padlocked closet where the curator said artist editions are stored. I fear that if something behind that door falls, like an Isa Genzken edition, the trauma will rouse my *hirngespenster* for years to come. So how to deal with this gap between what I know – that I probably won't encounter you, Helene – and what I feel – that you're here? Perhaps I could prove your nonexistence. But I simply can't do that. The only way out seems to be "through" – to make peace with you. Or my idea of you.

Legend has it that your trips to Sanssouci in Potsdam and Charlottenburg in Berlin left you with a preference for the baroque and the rococo over neoclassical nods like the villa we're in right now. We grow up imagining a certain kind of world for ourselves and then realize there are rules to the game. Even for artists like you and I, Helene. Historical weight has a way of consigning us to what's sometimes called fate, and I wonder if family lineage, tradition, and the time one is born into carries into the afterlife. Out here in meatspace, it seems that the classical keeps coming back with a highly rationalized vengeance, whether it be the Italian Renaissance, the Age of Enlightenment, or Nazi Germany, and you seemed aware of this eternal return. In the drawings and engravings of subsequent civilizations, classical forms were subtly smoothed and regularized, "correcting" and "restoring" the monuments of Greece, and not always consciously. The Pantheon was built around 125 AD, which inspired Brunelleschi's 42 meter dome of the Saint Maria del Fiore completed in 1436. Then the printing press was invented and over the next few centuries domes appeared in Arricia, England, the University of Virginia campus, Malta, New York, and more. Villa Capra was finished in 1592, which inspired the Villa Salve Hospes you're floating in right now. I'm looking at images of all these buildings on what's called a web browser. Following these lines forward through history, the buildings start to look more and more like theme environments.

I'm realizing each "neo"-classicism selects some models among the range of possible classics that are available to it, and ignores others. For your father, a merchant, the Caduceus was chosen, and two of these staffs of Hermes adorn the exterior in relief. As god of the high-road and the marketplace, Hermes was perhaps above all else the patron of commerce and the fat purse: as a corollary, he was the special protector of the traveling salesman. But he was also the god of roads, thieves, trickery, athletes, sports (Sally!), and travelers as well as the emissary and messenger of the gods. He mastered rhetorical persuasion and special pleading, and would outwit the other gods for his own satisfaction or

for the sake of humankind. He knew the boundaries of society well and would transgress their borders in order to confuse their definitions. His symbols include the herma, the rooster, the tortoise, satchel or pouch, winged sandals, and winged cap.

Medieval allegory constructed a systemic ballast for meaning, yet at the same time opened the gates for the proliferation of possible meanings for any given emblem, to the point at which it risked that bad infinity which for millennia defined and perhaps still defines the abyss for Western thought. As long as allegory could be restricted, as in Dante, to an airtight hierarchy, maddening riddles could be repressed. But by the seventeenth century, that hierarchy had ceased to be manageable, and the harmony and proportion governing the strata of meaning began to fall apart. Proliferating resemblances, metamorphoses, symbolizations, emblemizations, connotations, and reverberations; the baroque rushed towards the brink of a void where any sign could signify anything.

I get the sense that you know this, Helene. And I imagine weekends when your *Mann* was out of town in which your own personal heaven touched down to earth, and these hierarchies collapsed. Suspending paintings from the ceiling fixtures to watch them spin and disturb the symmetry of villa. Ornamentation poking out from blank space, refusing to respect the limits of the classical frame that contained the illusion. Composing forts in the bedrooms with your most arousing fabrics. Sculptures become architecture and vice versa. Bringing an ostrich in from the garden and hotboxing the *frauleinzimmer*. Reaching for exotic image banks stuffed with Pierrots, rhinos, and apogees that extended beyond the catalog that European art had relied upon for the best part of 3 millenia. Indulging your "*Lesesucht*" (reading addiction) when you had the study to yourself with Gothic novels and ostensibly authentic ghost narratives from the booming print market. An enveloping suspension of disbelief.

Before leaving Los Angeles for Braunschweig I visited Universal Studios Hollywood to ride Harry Potter's "The Forbidden Journey." I would use the industry term "ghost train," which would apply for Universal's recently closed "Jurassic Park: The Ride", but it's actually an advanced "dark ride" with vehicles mounted on robotic arms. Both proscenium and track are absent. Suddenly I was thrust into the rising action as a central character and immersion seemed likely as long as I accepted my new role as narrative participant. This kind of environmental design doesn't reproduce the story of the literary works inasmuch as it evokes their atmosphere; the original narrative provides a set of rules that will guide the design and lend structure and meaning to the visitor's experience. Indeed, it seemed that every texture, every sound, every turn in the road reinforced the Harry Potter Universe. But the Forbidden Journey expands on this principle by using projection screen technology alongside the physical props, augmenting the physical sensation of movement through themed space with the representation of magic on screens. A holographic Hagrid asked me if I had seen a dragon. A video image of my face was projected onto a cloud of fog, blasting me with cold air, as a Dementor tried to suck my soul out of my body. The cliffs outside the Chamber of Secrets, perspectively corrected across a video dome that wrapped around my ventral portion, nearly caved in on me. As with many theme park rides, the story is a bit muddled. Amid all of the chaos, it's hard to follow the narrative. But for a few glorious moments, the Floo Network, flying benches, and Whomping Willows seemed not just possible, but actual.

The presence of the supernatural at this point in time (my time) is a puzzle, as it appears to have been for the first baroque. Judging from his ceiling at San Ignazio in Rome, Pozzo entertained the faith of his Jesuit Order in the miraculous deification of Saint Ignatius, founder of the Order who would lead the Counter-Reformation. Pietro da Cortona, the artist of the equally mesmerizing quadratura ceiling for the Palazzo Barberini, must have been aware that the papal family of the Barberini was entangled in hypocrisy. On both ceilings, the distorted projection of anamorphosis presents the appearance of a viewpoint that doesn't exist, a column of atmosphere extending to infinity, a trompe l'oeil dome on a flat surface. The epiphany of divine truth was produced through cutting edge techniques of painterly deception, as with realist techniques in filmmaking. Faith and the lack thereof (or bad faith)

are indistinguishable when both are grounded in illusion. The flaunting of abundance, the layering of allegory upon allegory, the withdrawal of the actual, the realization of an independent universe of meaning with its own laws of gravity and perspective: these conditions return in the epoch of “The Forbidden Journey”, with its mixture of real sets, animatronics, and domed projection screens. In the baroque, the supernatural wasn’t a matter of life after death, but of an immanent realm just beyond the earthly facade of the mundane. It was habitable; and it graced the quotidian at every turn. Perhaps at its most palpable, the mundane expresses the immanent (if perpetually deferred) sublime through a technology which is itself an object of awe. This technically mediated beyond both exists and does not exist, whether it be an allegory of redemption via immense tromp l’oeil ceilings or basking in the glow of immersive screen spectacles, an allegory of the “lifestyle.”

And so, Sally, we find ourselves again in a “lively sports-bar chain dishing up wings & other American pub grub amid lots of large-screen TVs.” I counted 30 on my last visit, not including the 6 outside on the patio. Empowering us to manifest “legendary experiences between friends,” the interior design incorporates locker room style waiting benches, furniture made from recycled basketball courts, and faux-concrete booth dividers numbered like bleachers. The idea being that you’re at the stadium – whether you’re watching the game from the bleachers or waiting to be put in play is up to you. However, in your response to my last letter, you wrote that my videos “aren’t the right fit” for a sports bar, and this, sadly, was not a surprise.

Do you all ever throw the term “brand gremlin” around at meetings? I was reading a white paper recently that defined brand gremlins as “people, processes and other entities that are out of alignment with the organisation’s overall brand strategy.” The term gremlin emerged out of Royal Air Force slang to describe a mischievous creature that causes malfunctions in aircraft, automobiles, and other machinery. While the brand sabotage is symbolic rather than technological, both create friction in what is meant to be smooth colonial expansion.

You’re probably familiar with the movie *Gremlins*. The setting is “Kingston Falls,” one of those white bread American towns with a refined Main Street charm nostalgically clung to by its fictional townsfolk. It is within this setting that the gremlins are able function as gremlins - cute little mogwai sourced from a mystical Chinese sorcerer that transform into darker skinned evil monsters who eat fried chicken and breakdance to hip-hop. A year later Kingston Falls would start to serve as the set for three versions of “Hill Valley” in the Back to the Future trilogy - 1955, 1985, and 2015. The plutonium necessary for this time travel was originally stolen from “terrorists”, or as Doc yells before they murder him: “the Libyans!” Leaping into Doc’s augmented DeLorean, this otherwise average American teenage boy named Marty McFly outruns the terrorists’ antique Volkswagen Transporter and finds himself in the right place at the wrong time: 1955.

I get the sense, Sally, that you think my videos would behave like brand gremlins if installed them at B-Dubs – antagonists from some perceived “outside” hellbent on eroding your bottom line. Would there be a way to script this scenario so that the resolution (pressing the source button on the remote to return to the normalcy of the Fox Sports Racing broadcast) offers the same kind of aesthetic pleasure that the arc of gremlins invading *Kingston Falls* offers over 106 minutes? Or would there be a way to think of the videos on the patio in relation to the Fox Sports Racing broadcast inside? A formal bridge composed of those palpable logics I wrote about. Further along, would this bridge then be a bridge for an artistic community? Because to be honest, whenever my friends and I hold our water aerobics and B-Dubs night, we prefer to bring our glistening wings back to my friend’s grandmother’s pool instead of dining in. We feel a bit out of joint with the environment, and not in a generative way. The good news is that we’ve consumed your “Hackables” - the chipotle BBQ dry seasoned wings smothered in creamy queso, the teriyaki sauce tenders topped with Cajun spices – and we can taste subtle hints towards what we like to call “heterogeneity.” Xfinity is

expansive – there are over one hundred 24 hour sports networks alone. But what I’m offering is the infinite.

A fifteen minute drive from the Pasadena B-Dubs and holding a Yelp rating that’s one whole star higher is Uncle Yu’s Indian Theme Restaurant. It has everything it needs to be one of many “authentic” Taiwanese restaurants in the San Gabriel Valley - namely Taiwanese ownership, staff, and food. You see an illustrated portrait of a suspended Uncle Yu on the sign, and then usually Uncle Yu himself sitting in those same suspenders near the register when you walk in. But then you start to notice the “Indian Theme” – dreamcatchers, woodcarved tribal chiefs, and servers (who are all Taiwanese) wearing beaded headbands and synthetic feathers. In another imaginative leap, the wooden seating seems to have been lifted from German beer hall design and, in lieu of indigenous programming, the televisions play Fox Sports Racing. Compare this to Jurassic Restaurant, or “Jurassic Restaurant Full Line Tin” as the sign read, which also held a 3.5 star Yelp rating until it closed in 2017 after a tree fell through the roof. Faux cave walls made out of shaped foam and a lifesize model of a Tyrannosaurus Rex skeleton quickly coded the space as an unlicensed Jurassic Park themed restaurant, but then the details started to chip away at the program. On display were plastic Burger King kids meal Rugrats toys, paper Chinese lanterns, and miniature foam pumpkins. The Taiwanese food was served by Taiwanese waitresses who wore full Native American costumes, and accessorized with Uggs, chokers that spelled out their names, and utility belts emblazoned with adhesive pink triangles. The televisions played Fox Sports Racing.

Or perhaps you’ve heard of Alpine Village, the Bavarian themed shopping plaza in Los Angeles built by a German immigrant that includes everything from a restaurant/dance hall (where the televisions play Fox Sports Racing) to a dentist office to a driving school. One of the most interesting effects afforded by the environment is that I (*technisch Deutsche*) become a minority amongst a largely Japanese and Latino clientele. Southern California is thinly veiled here behind *Jugendstil* decor, thorny old fonts, and an oversized bronze Beethoven bust. While it doesn’t manage to saturate me with the precious romanticism I devour on Bavaria’s own “Romantic Road” theme route, I’m jammed with *wunder* as I frolic through these gaps. Wonders like: when is Germany authentically German, and when is Germany just playing a German themed version of itself? When I’m in Germany, am I accessing the essence of Germany or inventing my own Germany in my head? Can this essence still be found at the Hooters in Frankfurt, specifically in its nonthemed, *Gewerberegister*-compliant kitchen?

It’s difficult to measure, and therefore vouch for in this time, but I have a feeling that an embrace of the multitude of things in the world, at different scales, used for different purposes, by different individuals, cultures, and species, creates the opportunity for the ambiguities and complexities of everyday life that make for the biodiversity that keeps us thinking, curious, and sensitive to the world. While I’d agree that Uncle Yu needs to check himself, I keep going back to think about this “Indian Theme.” Allegedly, it acknowledges the burial ground beneath the shopping plaza, which also contains a Vietnamese restaurant, a Filipino owned Dentist practice, and some other businesses whose signage I can’t read. But ultimately I think these strange hybrid environments implicitly acknowledge the idea that humans can get nearer and nearer, so to speak, to reality; but can never get near enough, as reality is an infinite succession of steps, levels of perception, false bottoms, and hence unquenchable, unattainable. And this embodied artifice is often what I want out of art. I feel as though I’ve gotten somewhere with an artwork when it makes me feel like I’ve landed in a new country, jet lagged, and odd looking light switches and plug sockets seem to emanate clownlike parodies of themselves with unseemly intimacy, mocking my incompetence. An uncanny state where things are strangely familiar and familiarly strange. A state where I realize that the smooth functioning of things is merely an aesthetic effect to which I have grown accustomed to. The opposite of exposure therapy, perhaps - denaturalization.

How does this compare to a streamlined theme restaurant chain like Buffalo Wild Wings? The sports bar/stadium themed chicken chain restaurant subject is offered an environment of complete narrative control under one totalizing theme chosen by its designers. The ideal, according to the criteria of contemporary “lifestyle design” discourse, is that this subject becomes the product by dressing for the theme, engaging with B-Dubs’ social media accounts, and adopting the franchise as their neighborhood haunt. Abnormal presences or perspectives, while not impossible, are severely curtailed, if not through direct proscription, then simply by being intrinsically dismissed as unthematic anomalies - “brand gremlins.”

Looking at images of exhibitions past at the Kunstverein, the neoclassical villa weighs heavily on contemporary art, often crushing it. It wasn’t made to nurture ethereal delicacies; rather, it was erected to be filled with noble humans and grand designs. Kind of like in *Gremlins*, the “superior values” of our “great societies” prevail over the unmonumental, the abject, and the alien. The soberly framed ornamentation does violence to plastic video monitors below. The rolling wood plank floors upstairs quarrel with stretched canvas. Artists tend to give in and center the work according to the neoclassical order. A famous German artist took the doors off their hinges and laid them in the middle of each room. This is an artist who, in other exhibitions, has had the install team reconstruct walls from a prior exhibition but not finish them, so that you can see their internal structure. It’s too complicated to fully explain here, but showing the studs and drywall is actually a common motif for artists who make Marxist (not the comedians) themed artwork. It demonstrates that they’re aware of the way things work. Like when this less famous German artist duo had the Kunstverein’s install team move every tool from their tool room upstairs to the rotunda.

Me, I’m just trying to please you, Helene, by finding elegantly disturbing solutions for these riddles. And to sway you through a spell of art and rhetoric that nothing is better equipped to deal with the gaps that you see between sport and art, Sally, than art and rhetoric. *Gapsloitation* in the form of a pitch. I don’t sell consumable goods, after all – I peddle perception. But this letter isn’t just for your two pairs of eyes only, and I feel the requisite shame of exhibition-ism. I imagine certain individuals will make their way to Braunschweig hoping for a Marxist themed show. I also wonder how many Germans rolled their eyes when Hitler came up at the beginning of this letter. I’d like to think these battles come down to tact, and not law. If I don’t pull it off, perhaps we can agree that I earned it due to all the European artists who come to LA and make wide-eyed videos about cars. But at least by default, I’m staying in my lane - after all, this is my heritage, my stock, my 23andMe. Regardless, is Germany German-themed? Perhaps in my own displaced mind, through which everything has to be decoded. This allows me to invent my own Germany. Taking fate and making it McFate. Like a buffalo, having grown its gilded wings, gone wild.

Do you ever wonder, Helene and Sally, if your mind was unfit for your era? I find myself muttering “if we only had the *technologie*” a lot during this install. For now, rectangular images reign and purpose-built structures can at best be as animated as a cuckoo-clock. I keep thinking about what my art would be like if my consciousness could be uploaded to the cloud, eliminating concerns such as budgets, hardware, gravity, and pre-existing architecture. No need to default to video rooms shrouded in black fabric, or a sports bar/stadium themed chicken chain restaurant wrapped in synthetic veneers, or a villa cast from a smoothed and simplified classical imaginary. Around me, a wholly mutable spatial image of the Villa Salve Hospes would float. I blink, and scrumptious ornamentation emerges, unbridled, from the walls. A rendered rococo villa that never existed, offering an infinity of points of view. Spatial imagery without the mediation of a screen interface. Full immersion in my mind’s eye, for infinity. Besides, I don’t really own anything, or feel like I belong anywhere. I’m all exchange and circulation, peddling perception. Might as well don a Caduceus made of pure light. Like the afterlife, this fantasy seems to traffic the same anxieties people have about death, for if ghosts exist, oblivion might not be the end.

Other times I feel grateful that I'm able to walk into the same rooms that you visited at Schloss Sanssouci, Helene, where the gilded woodwork and paintings and mirrors and textiles make me feel as though I've walked into a humble heaven (before it gets sucked into a dimensionless vacuum). Sally, I'm sure you're aware that, already, every Formula One engine has a 3D modeled doppelganger of itself, outside the car, to predict when the engine will melt. And the time will soon come when a Formula One driver won't be able to compete with a self-driven car. Already there is technology that exists in our consumer automobiles, like anti-lock breaks, that are restricted in Formula One because audiences are invested in the mechanical talent of the drivers and their potential for error over the course of the 21 week season. If it was only about the predictive modeling of the engine and the outcome, those 21 weeks would be determined in nanoseconds.

For now it seems the best I can do is to allow us and our ideas to live in the minds of later generations. I am thinking of aurochs and angels, the secret of durable pigments, prophetic sonnets, the refuge of art. And this is the only immortality we may share.

Yours in good faith,
Norm
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