

The Space of Beauty

A Journey to the Center of Saturn

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Yesterday afternoon I traveled to the ends of our Galaxy – not *all* the way to the end, but close. I went only for a short time, but it was a moment that opened the screens of a particular contemporary art scene to me, particular in partisanship and partialness, and allowed me to better grasp the spaces of frustration I so often experience when dealing with this scene.

I traveled without a space shuttle. I needed no mechanical machinery for my trip, no capsule or distillation for this journey, though it was offered to me at some point by others as I expressed this voyage. How then was I able to embark on such a task you may ask; or maybe you may not be asking? I will tell you nonetheless; regardless of whatever side of this coin you lean on.

I traversed the polluted openness of our second sky by using an entity un-deprived to any: a small space richly sourced yet no smaller the vastness of the cosmic wonders I paused every so often to reflect upon while voyaging. It is a space hidden deep within our cranium, forever the enigma for systematic chronicling by brain specialists, where its expansive breath of function will forever remain misunderstood. It is non other then our own personal canvases of Wonder and Imagination.

Though the trip was a moment in time it took ages to understand. I can not tell you how long it lasted, only that an impression has been stamped physically on the ways I look at the narrow landscape of institutionally promoted present-day ‘high’ art, and it is this stamp that I would like to frame for you. I will do this by distilling this diary of concerns through the visual play I explored on my trip and by the wonder that is the sixth planet of our solar system; Saturn.

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The second largest ball in the galaxy puffed out in front of me. I wondered for a second if I was in some kind of hyperbolic transience as I reached its orbit. Speed is no issue when traveling inside your own *Will*, and the zoom affect from such velocity created reflecting metaphors of transmogrified ‘things’, aliens maybe!!! This was a given I suppose! I circumvented the outer parameters of the planet once I fully reached it, and its encapsulated wonder needed an old English Explorer’s (or Imperialist’s) heart. I moored over Saturn’s rims and found them absolutely beautiful. The mind can not, at this moment of earth living, fathom its beauty. The size, eloquence, the precision, the accuracy with which every circle aids and guides the other is a test for abstemious eyes. One has to gorge, possibly encompass a spoiled child’s life, to really appreciate its cornucopia, and yet still you might have a hard time accepting it; that these rings are only extremities, that they are only what circle the supposed holder of its holistic beauty; the sphere itself. My eyes were unrestrained, confident and assured that I would in time approach and be privileged with entrance into the sphere of such ocular pleasures, so I studied the outer rims of opulence unrestrained, beguiled by ignorance and a sense of commune. I was, *in thought*, coming to join the sixth planet; one said to be the most beautiful planet in our galaxy; the planet of Art.

The first physical feeling to jolt me out of my warm travel was the cool breezes made so by the ring’s floating ice particles; billions of them, of different shapes and sizes, of make-up and intrigue, genres and genders, austereness and ease, and a bunch of other stuff, even what I would call ‘lost clusters’, which floated un-rhythmically (more on these clusters later). In short, maybe I should say that Everything was there, floating and circling, beautifying and working, each, it seemed, in their own concentration and force, but yet, adhering to some invisible order, some allure from within the Sphere – all of them traveling and tilting at the same angle as the Sphere’s waist, its equator; all in unison.

There are seven rims in this sixth planet from our sun, what the sixth day of our calendar, Saturday, is named after; a day known also as the day of Beauty. Seven is also the number of days it took ‘The Creator’ to build ‘our kind’, so it is fitting that the day of most work, the day of beauty, is preceded only by the day

of rest, Sunday. I should also point out that our earth bodies, our continents, have divided themselves into seven parts; reminiscent to me of the seven rims I was about to explore.

Playing with its coincidences and numerical hypothesis I couldn't allow myself to get lost in thought just outside the sixth orbit from which all art is to be understood! I had to move in closer, and closer even. The outer rim, which from a distance appeared drawn or spray painted (the actuality of the images seen on earth), to my surprise were made of dust clouds, with more brilliant colors than any imagination could fathom. I saw whole landscapes of infinitesimal particles, so fine that they blurred the panorama outstretched in front of me; I soon realized I was inside of it. Along and within such fogs, as if pulling back perceptions were large clusters of ice, so large that they disturbed and disrupted the dust oceans, which hazed my vision. The seventh rim, the one I was now in – the outer most rim – was thousands of miles long and harbored some of the most exulting geographies, of areas that looked filled with jovial and quotidian activities. These large ice clusters turned and rotated within described gyrations, almost with utilitarian purpose. Everything was tangible regardless of how small it may have appeared; all things touched at some point and functioned for one another.

I moved further inwards passing the initial explosion of creativity, whether mundane or 'communal' – or even unrefined – into an open space of emptiness, which supposedly separates every ring from one another; an area of nothingness one would think! But what one realizes in Space is that emptiness is always an illusion, there is no such thing as Nothing. What one thinks to be 'Nothingness' is really only invisibility; a vast ocular opening where our gaze finds no physical hindrance. I was now between the seventh and sixth ring where for some reason activities were kept to a minimum, the mixing of ring dwellers between Seven and Six seemed to be discouraged, or 'highly attended' to. This could have been mandates hidden to me, or even accessions, agreements, veiled negotiations as to how movements were to occur – possibly the law of the planet opening itself up to me! But from time to time I did see compilations of diminutive dust balls, or smaller son-daughters clusters of ice rocks (from Rim Seven) break through the rim's parameters onto the wide openness of the invisibility I now explored. They did so brutally and clumsily; all of them eyeing Rim Six. Naturally, I followed.

Rim Six was smaller than Rim Seven but was more refined; concentrated maybe! The rim was a bit smaller and its citizens looked to be forcing the luminosity I earlier saw unrestricted from Rim Seven. I found this luminosity to be everywhere in the planet, but each place had its own frequency and promoted it differently. It's what created such incredible colors, those I was so in awe of when I first reached its orbits. It felt to me that the crossings made by Rim Seven dwellers – those that looked secretive or 'granted' – were influenced by the gigantic sphere whose gravitational pull we all followed, the lure of Beauty (I say 'we' for I was also being pulled). I wondered why one would want to escape their rims, rims Seven or Six, and further even to rims Five and Four, if not for some supposed clarity.

Yet each rim, as I passed them and explored them from a hovering distance, held clusters of activities and relationships that practiced something unique and beautiful in their own right, so I asked why chase beauty when beauty is meant to be with Self? In asking this I also turned the question upon myself; for their propulsion must not be so different from what propelled me. It was the lure of this gigantic matter which sat progressively larger the closer I got to it that compelled movement; almost magnetically, subconsciously! Was the ever increasing large bubble the place of Reason and Right, of Reality and Proof, the Place of Authority, from where all significance of Beauty was to be understood? Was this why they traveled and left their ownerships behind? Why they felt the 'need' to?

The other remaining large rims (I say 'large rims' for there are smaller more individual rims which often separate large ones from each other, but these are not considered in the overall calculations of seven) were much the same as the previous ones, but each smaller in size. The infrastructures in these lesser more personalized rims seemed to escape partnered nuances found in previous rims. Communities were slighter, smaller in appearance and smaller in shared activity. 'Idea' presided over any other form of thought, and explanations of ideas were the chosen forms of dialogue; all else was stripped bare in to even tinier particles which floated freely out onto the vastness of the open Space.

In Rim Two particles chased each other, clustered ice crystals created small spheres of protection around their communications; what was shared and open in the former rims were now guarded and defended with

special codes – codes deciphered only by citizens of these small rim communities. I thought that communication between Rim Seven and Rim One would almost be impossible were it to be attempted, and when I studied it closer I was right. This I could see from a distance, for just as Rim Seven occupants moved forward to inhabit and be closer to the sphere, so too did some Ring One dwellers recoil back to ‘felt’ ethos of Rim Seven. I now understand that some particular ice clusters I had seen (mentioned earlier) – those whose circulations looked lost and confused in Rim Seven, were actually returned Rim One citizens. They were former residents in search of something lost, aliens in a space where once they were members. They were returnees to a stage that intellect should have told them was forever closed to them; a stage of innocence. Still, not all returned, for then there wouldn’t be a Rim One.

Ring One held refined ice cubicles, a minority of sought-after crystals that shone brightest many would argue (these ‘many’ may be citizens of previous rims!!). Yet these minorities were there creating, forcing, and straining luminosities (gasping shines) so as to gain entrance to the bubble sphere of validation. These were interesting and highly specialized rocks whose beauties were arousing; stimulation that shown from within. They may have been, or have held, whole universes in themselves. Particularities were diluted so much so that definitions for definitions were discussed in detail; arrangements scrutinized, methods and histories were bravely discredited and rearranged. Deconstructionists adorned this ring, frustration and envy encircled its circle, and information was closely shared with ‘the center’; done so in search of more ‘validation.’

Lost in this maze of tangible evidence I finally turned to witness my proximity to the pull; I was here, and it was here – I had reached the sphere. But as I approached it the unimaginable occurred. What I had thought to be the most physical presence out of everything physical here, presented itself to me as nothing but an air-like substance; the bubble was almost nothing but gas (I should have known by the few times I called it ‘bubble’). When something is so refined it inevitably becomes translucent, and by that nature, untouchable. All throughout my explorations of Saturn’s outer rims I had seen elements become more and more refined and now, finally, they had become gas.

I had reached, and without noticing it, had broken through the bubble of present day art and found myself floating with no physical restrains; tangibility had been lost. Unlike the physical activities seen as I passed the rims I could see nothing ‘physical’ here. The ball of mass was active but with nothing more than interpretations of what lay around its equator; the rims themselves. But even so, majority of conversations witnessed in rims Two and One seldom made the crossings in to ‘the space of validation’. The gas cumulous, almost perfect in sphere but not quite, for its rotation is so fast that it bulges at its equator and flattens at its poles, was a very particular beast, interested only in entertaining its history, dictating and structuring a formulation that represented only a precise constituency, those it felt could not only understand its gas like matter but support it.

The interesting element here was that some of its gas was made up of particles, which could only be found on its rims, but selectivity prevented a true representation of the rims’ outputs. If only this gas bubble considered and accepted its full make up it would for sure be less airy. The bubble was made up of selective magnetic pulls, invisible currents, whose forces reached beyond the seven rims and whose selections were so defined that they protected the bubble’s values instinctively (or mechanically!). If one was to solidify all of the gas matter in the bubble into one physical form I doubt it would even make up one of its rims; yet, visually, it was clearly larger than all the rings put together – its perception was what held the ‘lure.’

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I thought I would in time come out of the other side scathed slightly by what I breathed in yet perplexed over this planet of Beauty; this after only experiencing a gas filled edifice. But (surprisingly) shortly after my deflation I bumped into physical matter; hitting it while my back faced Saturn’s sky and while I pondered over its moons. I had reached a nucleus I thought did not exist. I was surprised (as mentioned) that something real really *did* live inside this bubble of gas, and it was nothing short of a culture, made up of tangible earths which encompassed thoughts and actions, ellipsoidal in make up and strangely familiar.

Maybe I had been a bit hard on it earlier! Was this the Art World; a world in-and-of its own, self standing and self erect? Had I found it, living hidden away behind an illusion, an artifice of sorts, protecting itself? Or was it Beauty and all its mysteries that lay in the center and the Art World the gas bubble that roamed around it? Was Saturn a planet of many worlds, or a world of many planets; the rims and their identities feeding into each other, supporting, yet contrasting the other? How can so many worlds live so close to one another yet circle each another separated by perceptions of Nothingness, which often seem to function as gates (the spaces between the rings)?

In its center one world controlling the planet's rotational force, enabling laws of circulation, defining and structuring patterns and ways of thoughts and actions; of history! I noticed that the power which was held inside came from the ability of this nucleus to hide its make up from the rings which circled it, yet all I could think about were the ambitious thoughts of those rim hoppers, those I had witnessed calculating each step so as to warm their uniqueness by this spherical gas fire (ultimately to enter it) – traveling rim to rim, learning and discussing, patterning and making, juxtaposing and deconstructing, educating and dismissing, attempting and rebuking, assessing and prophesizing, eliminating and debauching, losing and achieving, dying and resting, longing and respecting – many of them, the bright and strong ones, making it only to Rim One and denied the Visa to explore.

There they waited and reconfigured ideas and thoughts, punctuations and reflections, The Philosophies, only partly knowing that it was their uniqueness that fed the nucleus's beauty and lure; what they projected on to It made It. They had all traveled, some to the point of exhaustion, so they could impact Its idea of beauty and the uncanny, but yet their travelers remained in spherical rotation close but not in the center, and always looking from the outside commenting on the pulls perception and exclusiveness. If they had only seen what I saw, that beauty could not live held so secretively and chained to 'A Center', that it was only the perception, nothing but a perception, then they would reconfigure their projected quandaries. They would not be fixed by what controlled their gaze but control where their gaze would be fixed.

Looking at the center of Saturn I was confronted with a culture and its preoccupation with its history. This small body of earth inside the planet was weary of its fragility; worried constantly of its faculty. It held on to its perceived historical ability to create much of what now circled it: the gases, the rims, the Nothingness, the satellites and moons (splinter bodies which I have not discussed in this voyage), its orbit, its pull, and all the other billions of finite particles unseen but felt every so often. I had to realize that this planet was not free, as beauty should be. I knew this for no beauty can be free when living dependent on our analytical minds?

I left its space the same way I came in, hovering like a lost astronaut in awe of the experience, but sadly no longer propelled by the center. I felt deflated somehow; maybe because I rarely saw myself where previously, in its rims, I constantly formed myself. I do feel this feeling is a shared one, the feeling of incessantly inflating and deflating in the world of art. Could this breathing be what gives life to its gas bubble? Am I then not disconnected from it but really of its life blood, like all the citizens in the rims' cultures? I never thought that art and beauty were separate but yet they seem to be. I had always carried with me some quotidian imagination when it came to one's experiences of beauty and object. In many ways my concerns were reflected in Rim Seven, never knowing or feeling that I was not a part of a larger constituency of creative output. I knew early on as an artist that I wanted to refine my objectification of beauty and felt deeply that this 'refinement' was why many made the journey from rim to rim, but I know now, more than ever – having taken this voyage into the caldron of present day art – that everything there is to know about such maturity already lays in everything you know. I guess I already know everything I will ever need to learn about Art, but beauty, on-the-other-hand, is something much more complex.



There was one other component to my voyage I have not mentioned, and sadly I will not expound extensively on it here, but I will say that this cog I speak of is a blanket of darkness, which drapes any ideas we have about anything. It is the unexposed back of whatever we are looking at, or thinking of, where the sun's rays don't illuminate. These spaces are whole universes, fissure of thoughts beyond abstractness; they are spaces where the spaces of space exist. Activities which occur here are abounding, so much so that just in thinking of the potential for such spaces can make you realize that Beauty can not be only what you imagine and see, but what you feel as well. Saturn/Beauty has a dark area.

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