

A response to *Source*

Symmetry conjures the physical body, particularly the face. We see faces in nature of course; we see ourselves in all of nature's coming alive to consciousness, and symmetries of flow in the deeper, generative body: we configure, pattern, or make fields, from the world's phenomena, unifying things. At the start of life we like to land into a symmetry of the great new other: the face, the body's, containment and reassurance.

Then our energies grow and diverge: without a channel there is no flow, but without a friction there is no electricity; yes, 'without contraries, no progression'. *Source* is in part an affront to a merely passive perception of ideal symmetry, a kind of discomfort. This earth's body, it shows us, is replete with dangerous power; the flow is live and generates, and the thought of electric power made from water, as a round of creation, is comforting: warmth, light, and vitality.

But here it is also raw material, raw perception: natural force is presented in symmetry, then not, like an alternating current. Look, here comes green, as a little luminous leaf floats into the field of vision from right to left, on one of a thousand streams, and is perfect. There we are. But then we are overwhelmed.

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The fact that the work can be seen by some as ‘angry’ or discomforting is what calls for response, and dialogue, with its images: these spaces, subterranean, both organic and metallic; these men, like eternally labouring hi-viz ghosts; these broken symmetries, layerings, pictures and sounds, now dawdling, then quickly rushing away. Men hover, scraping into strange terrain. I think of surgeons as much as of engineers; I’m certainly considering male control of the constructed or the re-constructed world or body. It’s like we are peeking through little apertures into the enormous surging of the Mystery, and the frames of our perception – the screen, the speakers, the room itself – are resistances, shapes or pressures, that makes it possible to see it and hear its music at all, that makes the energy of our involvement possible.

I watch men, machinery, overlaid, or X-rayed, on gynaecological patterns, skulls and bodily microcosms: Is that a cell or a follicle, made huge? It’s an insect kaleidoscope! And there’s not really scale in this world, except for the one that the human bodies bring.

When I was a child I discovered diagrams of naked men and women in what used to be known as a ‘medical book’ in my parents’ bookcase. The *Source* installation speaks to me of these first and lasting secret – about what’s really going on.

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This is from Ernest Becker:

“As I see it the history of mankind divides into two great periods...In both periods men wanted to control life and death, but in the first period they had to rely on a non-machine technology to do it: ritual is actually a pre-industrial technique of manufacture: it doesn’t exactly create new things, but it transfers the power of life and renovates nature. But how can we have a technique of manufacture without machinery?”

Man controls nature by whatever means he can invent, and primitive man invented the ritual altar and the magic paraphernalia to make it work. And as the modern mechanic carries around his tools, so did the primitive scrupulously transport his charms and rebuild his altars.”

(Escape from Evil)

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Apparently, in the 'water-flow analogy', sometimes used to explain electric circuits by comparing them with water-filled pipes, voltage is likened to difference in water pressure. Current is proportional to the diameter of the pipe or the amount of water flowing at that pressure. A resistor would be a reduced diameter somewhere in the piping and a capacitor/inductor could be likened to a "U" shaped pipe where a higher water level on one side could store energy temporarily.

Blood in the vein is also electricity of course, and the earth is a dark, living thing. Yet here we are, in our masculine high-viz, channelling, digging, dependent.

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