

Dancing in the dark / I think I just needed to wee — Notes on pumps and paintings

By Maggie Brink

All pumps use basic forces of nature to move a liquid.

We were talking about a dream in which two very large, extremely hairy cats were sitting on your throat. “I think I just needed to wee” you said. “Sometimes you get very thirsty sleeping too,” I offered. How does a pump work? I was wondering.

Ever important systems for filtration and redistribution — the sleeping body, the subconscious, the urinary system, paintings — I think. Another inconclusive list.

In reverse osmosis, pressure is applied to push material through a semipermeable membrane and it emerges as something new.

Mark is open about making a painting from something that already exists — a note or tone if this were music, a central idea or sense of something maybe? — as opposed to completely from scratch.

Relax about academic questions that have no place here. Trust the bass tone that moves you, build a routine and work with that, find systems that help to channel the water from the well you're drawing from, catching.... A break, a fish.... I'm full of watery analogies. A painting is a lucky opportunity, always an element of chance in play. But systems and structures are important too.

Pumps have strict tolerances and precise conditions under which they must operate. Every pump has a chart showing the performance curves and how to attain the Best Efficiency Point. The discharge capacity can be calculated for any head.

Reformation and romanticism have a lot to answer for, as does pop music — but there's plenty to mine — the bottomless cup, the all-you-can-eat buffet. The beautiful repetition of days, pieces of private, even secret routines, (actually common and shared!) Even drudgery leads to something. Brushing teeth, the same walk, so many cups of coffee! Everything exists inside the smallest moments and movements that are our actual lives. In order to make the world manageable, “the brain needs to process, digest and divide up the welter of experiences that have been ingested.” Filtration, transmission, redistribution. Work the internal randomisers. Sometimes a good painting is like having a nap: A way to avoid mental collapse.

I often think that if I get tired of dancing in the dark over here, I'd like to live inside one of your paintings. The shadows there suggest a time zone I feel would lend me a deep sense of sanity. Built from an archive of shadows you've collected walking around here — over there it's no particular time and all times at once.

Always thinking of other places. Now I think of Rene Daniels' painting *Mystic Transformation*, what I always thought were bow ties but are in fact rooms, seen in schematic perspective, unfolding. A world of interiors. Deliver me!

But the endless circular shadow of your paintings signal deferral not deliverance.

At the end of the day, when I talk (usually to myself) about a painting, I always seem to be talking about the way the surface belies another 'thing'. The endless deferral — of days, arrivals, the future — belies the surface representation of a place I imagined was a destination but turns out to be the place I'm living now.

I love it when a painting shares with me the kind of in-between and simultaneous possibilities I find in the circularity of this new time zone I'm adopting: I'm in neither place — I'm in both — they are one and the same. For me these shadows mirror the process of replacements from which actually living is composed. Maybe sanity is closer to hand than I'd realised.

It is thanks to the failure of things (including paintings) to "deliver" that there remains a point to anything. We can never properly be secure unless we are dead anyway. And in the meantime, all there is for it is living with the amorphous shape-shifting of things that I might, for lack of a singular name, just call *the ceaselessness of everything!*

No wonder that the process is the part I really believe in. I see now I'd be mad to really believe in or elevate anything above it. The process of making the painting is the thing too, more than the painting itself. Not to say the painting doesn't mean something. In your case the painting's thing-ness, is what lets me remember all this.

Pipes carry the fluid, but pumps supply the energy to move it. Because the piping and pumps work together, they must be thought of and designed as an integrated system. Change one part, and the system can become less efficient.

The future as we anticipate it is the past reconstituted: Re-living and pre-living, reconstituted memories become future projections. I'm beginning to suspect that we might *all* be ceaselessly ripping things up and collaging them back together as we go. I thought it was just me. But now I feel less lonely.

No matter how anyone else is doing it, an important aspect of the process seems to always be in maintaining some tension between intuitive decisions and the systems and controls we impose. Systems, routines, habitual behaviour — so ceaseless and ceaselessly lovely.