Cultural Daily

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On the Still Life

Maurice Amiel · Wednesday, March 27th, 2019

The still life is closer to life than the "nature morte" because it acknowledges the hand that produces it. *What is stilled is not only the life of the subject, but also the life of the person drawing the subject as he/she lives a stilled moment of self-revelation.*

The lone grape cluster… offers the possibility of entering the intimate nature of the grapes: texture , color, flesh and structural life-giving elements of the grape cluster. *Can we say that because the drawing has succeeded in "drawing" these qualities out of a stilled life?*

lone grape cluster – 2 April '99

From the lone fruit to its grouping … that passage involves going from the single to the varied, from the loneliness of the fruit on the dish to its momentarily composed situation in a bowl … *waiting to be deranged and re-arranged for the esthetic, affective or practical motivation of the person drawing.*

msa – 14 Jan. '06 – un vague souvenir

The fruit among other things … evokes the moment when activities may have crossed around the bowl, resulting in the haphazard neighboring of unrelated things … *an apple, a roll of film, a sun glass clip and a letter make for strange bowl-fellows, as life is known to produce at time … the least "still" of the drawings in this post.*

strange bowl fellows MSA 18 Jan. '06

When the table carries the fruit … could it be because an afternoon moment of laziness may have wished to be recorded "as is", across two pages of the sketchbook … as only a moment of stilled life can do? *I remember that moment very clearly some twenty years later, such was the peculiarity of my total involvement in that moment.*


when the table carries the fruits: 3 strawberries, their reflections and shadows – 11 Aug. ‘99

When the fruit has d(r)ied … when it has lost its fullness and approached a skeletal state … it may then become the subject of a true “nature morte” study … *however scrawny, nervous and almost comic it may appear to be!*


dried apple half MSA – 10 Mar. ’13

My favorite media for sketching in general are: the fountain pen for line and wash and the ball point for line and tonal areas as in most of the drawings in this post. *As extensions of eye and hand they can convey the mood of the person drawing and, by the way they are “handled”, reveal as much about the relative outer stillness of the subject as about the inner one of the person drawing.*

Credit all drawings to Maurice Amiel

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