

Hu Fang
**The Door to
Slow Sunset**

01/03

1.

Félix Gonzales-Torres wrote this postcard on August 2nd, 1995. It was one week since he returned to New York, heading next to Miami. “It’s very hot down there,” he wrote of Miami, “but it’s clean, and it has the most beautiful slow sunsets.”

The following year, Félix González-Torres passed away.

I got the chance to read these words recently from a friend who received this postcard, and I then realized that Félix’s “slow sunsets” live on today.

2.

Looking out my window, branches swing into wavy lines with a breeze, its shadows change from one moment to the next under the sun, low frequencies continue to be heard from the sky above this city. The light contours the insignificant bodies of ants crawling on the windowsill and the shadows of trees are captured onto the rockery in the Chinese garden. Rushing pedestrians seal their lips under this light.

3.

A kind of floor decoration, with patterns like ocean waves, is becoming popular these days: perhaps it’s meant to relieve our day-to-day stress. The pedestrians rush over the waves, which add a little bit of fun to their strolls. Sometimes we encounter highly ornamental gardens in the areas connecting metro stations to the street. A middle-aged “salary-man,” who pauses to make a phone call, nestles into this garden without even realizing it. There are more and more of these relaxing and ornamental spaces in the city; just like the *bonsai* on the office desk, they offer us a short break. Of course, fundamentally speaking, one can also say that all they offer to us is simple decoration, or the mere creation of an illusion.

But if this is about a desire to rest, then the impulse to rest should be directly related to the origins of architecture and the city. If we say the need to rest urges man of natural (“primitive”) instincts to “make himself a dwelling that protects but does not bury him” (Marc-Antoine Laugier, “An Essay on Architecture,” Paris, 1775), then today this same need to rest is encouraging us to return to nature, although this nature is no longer a primitive one. This nature has turned into an environment filled with eccentric human beings.

4.

We cross this city for certain encounters. There are certain expectations in our minds, for which we strive to eliminate or reduce interruptions

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from reality; the crowded subway, congested roads, anxiety from the passing of time. How should we understand all that happens in the course of moving across a city, and what do these “interruptions in reality” mean for us? Are they to be internalized as a component that we endure or reflect upon in our encounters? How, then, should we learn to meet in the unforeseen turbulence?

It is precisely those interrupted moments that need to be paid attention to, those sudden disconcerting moments that turn into peaceful calm, suggesting a mutually formative, yet ambiguous world that includes our emotions. This reality perhaps grows with conflicts, yet the world has not been troubled by its overall existence.

5.

This environment casts, shields, tolerates, and stimulates our existence. Joseph Grima once spoke of this contradiction: for example, an aircraft is one of the most efficient means of transportation, at the same time, it is an enclosed space isolated to the outside world, which may also become a space for our meditation. A discontinuous, non-homogenous, irregular contemporary life system, perhaps a catalyst to nurture what Joseph Grima, Shumon Basar, and Hans Ulrich Obrist call “posthastism,” which is comparable to a writing process that’s been constantly delayed in time, in an environment created by the progress of time itself. Its pursuit of a particular function of experience far exceeds its own definition. Like the Chinese film director Lou Ye’s response, “In posthastism, we do not know what to do, so it is OK not to know.”

On June 22, 2012, there was a *Posthastism Encounter* in Beijing, and its energy was then dispersed into the processes of the everyday. The flow of discourses, images, and sounds were of individual encounters of varying spaces and speeds, meantime adjusting to the turbulence of mutual rhythms, which allows time and space to establish a different relationship to us. All kinds of encounters are based on people’s everyday practices in between the social and the individual systems that surround them, they are bound to meet: when Jijing Master (Silent Master) demonstrated a slow walk from his everyday practice during the *Posthastism Gathering* at the Pavilion, this became a silent correspondence to the encounter with Olafur Eliasson and his slow movement experiment in the Master of the Nets Garden in Suzhou in February, 2010. Hence, Shumon discovered the relationship between the spiritual brothers Jijing Master and the reclusive novelist Douglas Coupland, who lives in Vancouver and

contributed a piece called “If posthastism is the answer, what is the question?”

As the architect Hsieh Ying-chun continued to rush about in the countryside for his “People’s Architecture”, Zheng Guogu’s *Age of Empire* land project grew endlessly in its building and demolitions, and Alan Lau was still on the road between five cities within a week to supply economic consulting; Kang He was editing his novel *The Tale of Entering the City* that has been in the works for the last four years, Wu Na sat in front of her Guqin, started to play, while Yan Jun kept looking for a sound similar to a hummingbird’s fluttering wings ... Among the constant frictions and clashes of social and individual bodies, what would these energies create, engender, and change?

With these tangible and intangible encounters, we enter into a context saturated in contradictions and vitalities. Over there, slight changes in thinking would lead to consequential effects in reality, like the butterfly effect. So far, we cannot distinguish its beginning or end; our senses of the progress of time are so limited, and our understanding of haste is as limited as that of posthastism.

7.

Each day, you wake up before the city. You watch the city waking up in the frigid morning air, imagining a loved one sleep, at the other end of the ocean. A car’s headlight flickers towards a destination through the morning mist. The names of your friends that came to mind vaporize like the early morning dew.

It is the best moment to preserve this illusory beauty – before the arrival of contracts, before the body enters into its work mode – everything seems rather serene. And I had once believed that the color palette of the world is embedded in the first stream of sunshine at dawn, just as I used to believe the secret to music was hidden in notes, which would only be revealed as it is being performed.

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