

Now hangs Swedish artist Max Ronnersjö's large-scale, percent (%) painting in my apartment—as if one shops for ½ priced boots or a practical winter coat this spring. During a studio visit, the hybrid maker remarked that he deliberately appropriated the fluorescent red-orange hue used in SALE signs, commonly recognized in suburban store fronts, choosing a no-frills white canvas for his “Art & Fashion” exhibition at *Galleri Bon* (10.2014). Aside: all paintings in the % series were swiftly produced on the day of the opening. Ronnersjö's mediums, materials and methods exemplify an ongoing schism: value should be intuitively gauged by the individual, not externally assigned by an authority. Many of us search for an easy bargain—a situation which proves to be better than expected, an object exceeding its selling price, a maneuver which costs less than predicted to execute, a person serving a function that we could not serve ourselves. We want more than we can juggle, even if consequences are grievous; I am no exception. With eyes set on the amorphous brass ring positioned at the deep end of the shimmering turquoise water, my lungs remain strong and fill to capacity—in preparation for that next lunge. Like the invisible diver in David Hockney's *A Bigger Splash* (1967), I curl my toes around the edge of the board with few scars and fewer regrets.

Throughout the day, I am entranced by Ronnersjö's neon creation which serves as meditative catalyst for me to *go elsewhere*—a hiatus from unavoidable demands. The work itself suggests that I re-evaluate marked vs. unmarked parameters, such as: whether or not my existence is vital to anyone besides myself. I speculate on whether or not I will succeed in making a crucial impression on those I seek to affect and assist. I waver between viewing my life as either an improvised accident or a meticulously crafted (and sometimes staged) play; my life-as-critique usurps any attention directed towards art works which cross my path. My thoughts and moods shift as my eyes scan Ronnersjö's %, reminding me that I am, like other entities, no singularity—I careen like market prices which define (and re-define) international currency. I morph and adapt to expectation, for remaining the same gets me nowhere.

“Ideals” promise no one that they will eventuate. Examples of such disappointment: a failed exam, dystopian romance, a missed connection, a mistake in full bloom. Lessons unfold with frequency; we move on to manifest the remainder. Ronnersjö's % work increases in value as I salvage memories which coincide with my own set of factors—both inherited and acquired. With my hazy attempts to magnify, forget or override who I am (or might become with a less fortuitous turn), I am released from the burden of exactitude which better suits dogmatists and absolutists. In choosing to float with no discernible beginning or end, I drift towards an instinctual clue to my inquiry: what does *any* symbol mean? Almost within reach, the ring gleams as the sun reflects off its smooth contours. I swim towards it in quizzical silence. A conclusion penetrates my solitude, as nagging alternatives remain at the pool's edge—above ground, where a collective reality looms.

Some are blessed to possess the currency of charisma; they will never need money, position or privilege to actualize ambitions. Some will master the art of hustling, and even though they have nothing but hard candy in their pockets, few will detect their hunger. Some will see the fruits of their labor reach potential; they will sprint to the finish line harboring a pain known only by those who share their plight. Some will take whatever suits them, unflinching at the possibility of an unjust motive. Some will master the skill of negotiation; they will exchange ample goods for services in fair play. Some are plagued to infinitely upgrade—yet, ironically, what they require is already in hand.

Let us go unharmed by the paradox of insignificance and delusional grandeur. Most desires scribbled on private top-ten lists (buried in drawers, taped to mirrors) will not come true. We may turn into haunting replicas of those we deplore, embrace one vice or another as temporal escapists, never regain normalcy after trauma, exaggerate our public status of happiness and well-being so as to *go with the flow* or dodge suffocating judgments. We may become less than we once imagined for ourselves: as child warriors roaming fields, as adolescents swiftly winning affections, as rushed professionals jumping lanes on the freeway. We may disappoint with neither graceful explanation nor exit. We may fall short, become less than 100% or only slightly more than 0%, until we no longer have the luxury of viewing the % symbol as it blazes unscathed, free from any imposition of accuracy, representing nothing and no one—*finally* able to do what it wants.