

(...)

Somewhere, out there, the merest glimpse of light, an initial shading, not even a color, gives shape for now to nothing whatsoever – a slight hint of texture from the otherwise unformed. There is nothing to look at, to even pay attention to, but little by little we let ourselves be carried away by this thing that is coming forth, slowly detaching itself from the opaque. A gradual materialization is taking place, appearing by degrees, though exactly what it is remains unclear; then there is a first streak of color, but still nothing from the world as we know it. Next, gently, little by little, the shading spreads, comes forth from the shadows. We sense a beginning. Perhaps “something” will emerge from these shadows. Is it the start of something – of everything – of “Time” and the Creation?

This slow process of coming into visibility (in reality very condensed, an abridged version of dawn) introduces us to the *appearing* of the world, its origin and its very “worldness.” It initiates us to the emergence of things, or better still, what I call *momentum*, *momentum* as opposed to *repletion*. During the momentum stage, things have yet to stabilize into things-in-themselves, have not yet found their final form and function, are in the transitional phase of their own becoming. They are also, therefore, moving forward, propelled by the undefined and undetermined. Then they begin to slow down, to visibly happen together, that is, taking on the color, shape and property of a specific destiny, the qualities that will make them identifiable, that will define their essence. At this point, we must ask ourselves whether something has been lost or run off from the initial tremor, from the original phase of indetermination, which in stabilizing and reaching repletion has settled into a given form, contour and color.

(...) what is at play here is a silent transformation, an occurrence that takes place imperceptibly, in “nightness” as it were. For instead of bowling us over by a *fullness*, by a beauty totally and immediately realized, the scene begins with an utter *hollowing out*, with total bareness; we are not made captive by its intensity; we are made *available* through its silent transformation. (...)

Duchatelet produces “silent transformations;” this to me is the most accurate way to describe her work. To say “produces” is to use the word advisedly as her work does not raise the question either of figuration or representation but rather of *the workings* of transformation. Not only because such silent change is impossible to either capture or represent on canvas, but also because the device or protocol introduced here attempts to integrate – and herein lies its meaning – the human subject into the transformation; we are no longer just a spectator. Indeed, as the transformation occurs before our eyes, we are gradually overtaken, permeated by (into) the world ever-in-the-making, simply by virtue of being part of the *shifting totality* of that which takes place. This brings to mind Wittgenstein’s logical starting point and his first proposition in the *Tractatus: Die Welt ist alles, was der Fall ist*, usually translated as “the world is everything that is the case.” He also says: “The world is the totality of facts, not of things,” not of things which are always more or less resultative, reified

and replete but of everything that takes place, of everything that is *the case*, *Tatsachen*. Because it is everything that happens that, by virtue of its happening, makes up the “world.”

And whether it is a question of the gradual revealing, *gradatim*, of the San Marco fresco; or a question of daybreak – of any daybreak – in an unfamiliar room and the discovering of “everything” that “is the case” of an *interior*, as in a painting by Vermeer; or whether it is, on the contrary, a question of the silent transformation, without place or reference point, of waves and clouds; whether we are outside or inside; whether the horizon is visible or concealed – these are all just *variations*. The quest remains the same: that of capturing, or more exactly constituting, via slight, constantly shifting changes, that which is “the case of the world.” In other words, what is “real” is continually being reshaped by the appearing of slight modifications: They comprise what is “real” – there is nothing else to say, nothing more to add. Duchatelet’s first sculptures – if they can indeed be called sculptures – explored with eloquence this very question: a sheet of stained plywood, one corner peeling away from the underlying board, giving way to a shadow. It is the unobtrusiveness of the gesture, the hardly at all-ness, that constantly shapes “reality;” it is where “reality” appears, or what I call “worldness.”

My earlier mention of initiation, therefore, is to be understood in both senses of the term, distinct and even held as antithetical in everyday usage but brought into full creative tension in the art work of Duchatelet. Phenomenally, on the level of process and from the point of view of science, *initiation* means that which marks a beginning, the starting point of a transformation in the making. Take, for example, the “initiation” of chemistry or genetics: an initial step (owing to the breaking of a bond) sets off a chain reaction and leads to a new state. But *initiation* has another, more common meaning, as used for example by the priest or the mystic and seen in the subjective light of thought: the introduction into some closely guarded or even secret knowledge. Duchatelet brings these two perspectives into an unlikely rapprochement and even neutralizes their contradiction. She isn’t afraid of establishing what serves as a Rule, perhaps even a ritual – the showing of her work requiring an enclosed space, removed and isolated, total darkness, a limited number of participants, and silence; for accessing the world ever-in-the-making demands both concentration and readiness, or, to risk an oxymoron, a state of *focused availability*.

Because it is neither the “passing of time” nor even our awareness of the ephemeral that causes such art to resonate with us; that would be hardly enough. Instead, through its “available focus” on the silent transformation of the world, the work of Caroline Duchatelet invites us to pay attention to our ability to be there – *actually there*, “simply” there – and exist.