

GLADSTONE GALLERY

"Questionare: R.H. Quaytman," *Frieze*, June, July, August 2011

QUESTIONNAIRE



Marcantonio Raimondi
I Modi (The Ways)
The nine remaining
fragments from the second
edition, published 1527
1510-30
Engraving
22x24 cm

R.H. Quaytman

What's your favourite journey?
Leaving.

What do you like the look of?

I like looking itself and I notice that differing fields of focus emotionally affect me. If I feel down, looking up and into the distance can help. However, most of the time I look at things very closely, which can also be comforting. I have difficulty with middle distance. Perhaps my paintings are attempts to bring the near and very far focal fields together, bypassing the middle distance altogether.

What images keep you company in the space where you work?

Often they're uninvited guests. When working on one image its opposite will inevitably come knocking. If it's a figurative image, abstraction and geometry will intrude. If I'm making a geometric abstraction, time, space and narratives will clamour around noisily in my studio.

What was the first piece of art that really mattered to you?

It wasn't so much art but pictures themselves that made an impact on me from the start. I thought they had a hidden meaning that could, if you looked at them very carefully, be revealed. Text seemed an annoying appendage to the true message of the book. Beatrix Potter's watercolours had huge magical meaning and the trolley

car in the snow in an *Ant and Bee* book was also packed with meaning. I have a strong memory of doing a 1,000-piece crossword puzzle one weekend in my father's loft on the Bowery and coming across two pieces that clearly revealed a little boy and girl standing in the woods - but they were not included in the illustration on the box. Looking at pictures became looking at art but this involved a struggle to leave behind magical seeing. The art that turned out to matter were paintings that I couldn't understand - the ones that seemed cut off from a text and was able to accompany me into different territory.

If you could live with only one piece of art what would it be?

Art wouldn't be art if there were only one - then it would be an idol. I work in opposition to the idea of one, even though, at times, it does feel like the long goodbye to the one and to the best is a satisfying chord to play. The problem is how to live with art at all. I am attracted to the idea of putting art away in storage almost more than living with it.

What is your favourite title of an art work?

Andrea Fraser's *Untitled* (2003). *Untitled* is such an awful word to put beside any work of art but in this instance it makes such smart and funny sense and points out the pretentiousness and compromises implicit in that designation.

What do you wish you knew?

Knowing my birthday I wish I also knew my death day. I also wish I could know what happens after that day. I don't mean what happens to me when I die but what happens to everyone left behind who is living.

What could you imagine doing if you didn't do what you do?

What I imagine I would do if I didn't do what I'm doing is my personal nightmare. That's why I do what I do.

What should change?

Coming.

What should stay the same?

Home?

What music are you listening to?

When it comes to music I have no intelligence. My listening habits exhibit confused emotional/sexual proclivities towards, on the one hand, Irish ballads and, on the other, African-American pop music. I like to dance very much and this year I'm into Thomas DeCarlo Callaway a.k.a. Cee Lo Green. I was thrilled to find out we share the same birthday because the only other thing of note to happen on 30 May was that Joan of Arc was burned at the stake. On a more intelligent note, I'm also listening to the music of Terre Thaemlitz, who I lately had the good fortune of hearing about.

What are you reading?

In relation to the paintings I'm making for the Venice Biennale I am reading *I Modi, the Sixteen Pleasures: An Erotic Album of the Italian Renaissance* (1989). It's the account of how a 16th-century Venetian author, Pietro Aretino, collaborated with master engraver Marcantonio Raimondi to produce a highly circulated and repressed pornographic satire. I plan to use images of the remaining scraps that have survived of the original Raimondi engravings. I am also grazing on *Objectivity* (2007) by Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, which is full of wonderful illustrations and fascinating accounts of how scientific objectivity/truth was siphoned through vision since the 18th century. *My Vocabulary Did This to Me: The Collected Poetry of Jack Spicer* (2008) was indispensable last year. I'm loving Terry Eagleton's *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës* (2005). I especially like his introduction to the second edition and how he updates his views on Charlotte and explains how badly he underestimated her.

R.H. Quaytman lives in New York, U.S.A. Quaytman's solo shows, 'Cherchez Holopherne, Chapter 21', was at Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Cologne, Germany, in April. Quaytman's work is included in 'ILLUMInazioni' (ILLUMInations), the 54th Venice Biennale.