

DON GREGORIO ANTÓN

OLLIN MECATL: THE MEASURE OF MOVEMENTS

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A NOTE TO STUDENTS

What is important right now is not who I am or why I've made these retablos. No, not at all. What matters most to me is present in the hands that hold this page, the eyes that see these words, and in the moments lived by you. Nothing else really matters. Why? Because what you have in your hands is only so much paper and ink, but you, the nature you occupy, are far more important. You are a single event that will never happen again in the history of the world. This is far more meaningful.

That is why I have written these words for you, because you should be included in this exhibition as well. Yet, like anything else, words can only go as far as the mind before them, and your mind is capable of going so much further. That is why it is useless to focus your attention on me and the meaning of my imagery, or these simple techniques. Rather, it is more important for you to be aware of the meanings of your seeing and what happens to it when it is placed before things.

Do you understand what I am trying to say? Whether you see it or not and regardless if you care, your image reflects in everything around you. Your thinking, your beliefs, all that you have learned are mirrored in the things you see, and upon the surface of what is in and around you. How you react to this determines how you will see, and how you see will be how you'll live. To be aware of this and to do it well, your own truth is essential, your own understanding is critical. Not in what you see, but in how you see and the meanings it creates.

For me this is what is most important, as much of our original seeing is lost in learning. It is often the first casualty in education. Too often we learn what we cannot do, what we cannot see. We view ourselves through others' eyes, think others' thoughts and explanations, and believe through authority our excuses and limitations. We often fail at learning because we learn failing first. This creates fear, and fearful learning creates fearful lives.

That is why I am reminding you of what you own, of what is necessary to complete the act of seeing. Your mind, your thoughts, and your feelings are essential for this. Without you, without your intelligence, without those emotions that create



meaning, this essential act is useless. It is not naïve to think so. It is crucial to understand that you must add a part of yourself to all that you see for learning to take place. Learning is not in what you see, but in how you see it and what should come from it. Whatever you approach in your life, whatever mysteries there are, all of them will need you as a vital part of their unfolding. We seem to forget this, forget to remember how important it is to own our world, to discover our thoughts, and to believe what is uniquely ours.

So bear with me. Let us go back through these images and see what you could do with them, for art is never finished by the artist, but rather by the one who views it and uses it to see further. Good art should be like great music. The kind

that moves somewhere inside of you, that inspires you to sing to it even though you may not know the right words.

When looking at the images you will instinctively be drawn to those images that already have a part of you within them. Look into these, lend yourself to the process of seeing and you will notice movement, moment, and the illusion of meaning. Anything you will ever see contains these elements. At times it may catch us off guard, prompting us to a quick and easy judgment of what we first encountered. Other times they may captivate or sedate our assumptions as to what it may mean. You yourself may have felt this from others from time to time, and have maybe suffered from it as well. There is nothing worse than bearing the limitations of others, or their lack of vision. Yet, herein lies the importance of venturing beyond the surface of things, beyond that which defines the object and who has made it. Here is where you can choose to go further than others when looking at what others call "art." It is you who are necessary to complete the gesture of what is before you. So I ask you, be active with your thoughts, challenge your world, refine your seeing as this is a gift you can only give yourself.

This is why I photograph, and more importantly, why I teach. I wish to test the depths of meaning, to understand the illusion of surfaces, and to learn where I am being led. Here memory teaches me, gives clues when reality cannot, and allows my imagery to exist as unfinished sentences, reflective instances of prayer, something left for you to complete. They are not intended to be seen, but felt and read as well. My lessons are not meant to be taught through the image, only their evidence made visible for what your eyes may find in discovering them. So please, test the surface of what you see. Ask yourself if your eyes are still pliable, if they can still hold the uniqueness within them.

I believe that there is more to seeing, more to what we are taught they can see. Our eyes should be allowed to breathe, taste, and listen. They should be courageous and permitted to go further into any space that has not known their shape before. Why? Well, this is something you must decide for yourself. But I believe it is imperative for you to name your world, to not separate yourself from its existence. Just know that it takes time to grow into your eyes, to become use to what they have to teach you. Why? Because our world so desperately needs you to decide this. It needs minds capable of dynamic thought and compassion. It needs those who can see below the surface of things and who can reflect on their meanings so that others may learn their own. Like you, meaning has its own unique velocity and movement

in each of us. Look for it, chart its terrain within you and believe, regardless of experience, regardless of intelligence or culture, your right to see.

So, after all this what use is this exhibition? Let's put this into perspective. Don't think that because my imagery exists on a wall in a gallery that it must be important or respected. This is not an example of what you should be doing, nor in how you should be thinking by any means. These are mere notes made by someone who, like you, is also searching for meaning. No one can lead you to this discovery or be an example of what you should be for yourself. For me, this is what is important right now. Student knowledge is the beginning of the world's wisdom. What you learn you will teach, if not in a classroom then to that world that is unfolding around you, to those you love and hate and who will look to you for meaning. What you teach is how we will learn. This you must own for yourself.

I want to thank you for reading all the way through this. I know it took some of your time, but I hope that it has given you a few things to think about. Even if you do not agree with what I have written or think of it as corny. My aim was not to make you believe in me, but encourage you to believe in that part of yourself that allows believing to occur. If I might be of some use to you, now or in the future, please contact me at dga2@humboldt.edu where I teach photography at Humboldt State University. I will not have your answers, but I will have my own and maybe that is something we can talk about. What is most important is not knowing all the answers, but knowing your questions and how to ask them of yourself.

Thank you! I look forward to what you have to teach me.

Don Gregorio Antón

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