



+

ON PAINTING

SYMPOSIA + DOCUMENTS



+

Socrates:

— To which is painting directed in every case, to the imitation of reality as it is or of appearance as it appears? Is it in an imitation of a phantasm or of the truth?

Glaucon:

—Of a phantasm.

Socrates:

—Then the mimetic art is far removed from truth, and this, it seems, is the reason why it can produce everything, because it touches or lays hold of only a small part of the object and that a phantom ...

Σωκράτης:

— Τίνος ἄρα ἡ ζωγραφικὴ; τοῦ μιμουμένου τῶν ὄντων ὡς ὄντων, ἢ τοῦ μιμουμένου τῶν ὄντων ὡς φαινομένων;

Ἀδελφῶν:

— Τῶν φαινομένων.

Σωκράτης:

— Ἔστιν ἄρα ὁ μιμητὴς πολὺ πόρρω ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας, καὶ ἂν βούληταί τι ποιεῖν, ὅτι ἂν ὀλίγον ἅπται ἐξ αὐτῶν, ἐκείνόν ἐστιν εἶδωλον· ὥστε ἔστιν εἶδωλον ἐκ τοῦ εἰδώλου, καὶ λέγοιτο ἂν εἶη τρισσὰ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας...



+

ON PAINTING

SYMPOSIA + DOCUMENTS

INTRODUCTION

"The fundamental architectural problem becomes visible only in the house on fire."

— Giorgio Agamben

As Prometheus gave fire to humans, we now seek to give fire to machines.

Humanity at risk – be it from our creations or from the Earth reclaiming herself – what becomes of painting?

As an end looms, statesmanship disintegrates, moral responsibility is abandoned for gain, and art is made, bought, and sold as though we could print the sun in gold. Is painting at the end of the world ethical? Was it ever?

This sequence of symposia is entitled *The Spinning Owl*, and is a continuation of my research into painting as a vessel, carrying the action of thought across time. Drawing from Plato's suspicion of images and Derrida's idea of the *pharmakon*, this project asks:

Can a painting exist ethically, as a site of ontological presence beyond our mimetic drive? And if so, can it still bear meaning over time? Is painting's ambiguity its strength, weakness, or is it irreducibly both?



Plato exiled painters from his Republic for seducing citizens with copies of copies, three steps from the Real. However, as Iris Murdoch argues in *The Fire and the Sun*, the Platonic concern was not art itself, but its moral effect. She repositions the artist from liar, to one who trains the eye toward reality through form and clarity. The good artist, in this view, practices a love of the Real through disciplined attention, not spectacle. The mid-century American painting I admired as a child exemplifies this: issued from iconoclasm, forbidding depictions of god, but creating divine experience. Art, then, insisted on the absence of narrative. We now understand the narrative was maintained, but displaced from the picture plane. That art must be progressive is a modern myth underwritten by capitalism—not only fiscal, but of the image and idea itself, semeo-capital. Plato surmised that a complete shift in ideology can take place within three generations. Without history or the weave threaded from the past, our amnesia is total. I believe a painting can move beyond mimeses without abandoning our natural codes of perception and still carry stories essential to our sense of civilization. *The Spinning Owl* begins from that possibility.

Is painting a site of ontological resistance? In a world dominated by simulation, where images no longer represent but replace, is painting a humanist act of refusal? The simulacrum is now sovereign; we are immersed in an image economy where perception is flattened by speed and screen. Against this, painting returns to the trace, to the mark made in time. I propose an examination of painting, not as a screen, but as a threshold; not as the constitution of an image, but a constellation of thought-acts.

We live in an economy of images untethered from bodies. Painting, for me, is a refusal of this rift. It is in this line of thinking that I intend to initiate and organize *The Spinning Owl*, a series of symposia gathering artists and thinkers in critical inquiry of painting. Each edition will result in a catalogue and a documentary, with a final publication uniting the catalogues in a single document, and the documentaries in a single film.



+

THE SPINNING OWL

<https://thespinningowl.com>