

WORLD WITHOUT

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#### COVER IMAGE

James Turrell, *Deer Shelter Skyspace*, 2006. An Art Fund  
Commission. Courtesy the artist and Yorkshire Sculpture Park.  
Photograph by Paul Rossiter.

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LISTENING TO JAZZ ALL DAY

Hemphill, Lake, Bluiett & Murray (wsq)  
bathing the soul  
in the juice of four squeezed saxophones

spiky and astringent, Monk  
constructing a new  
and asymmetrical architecture of the ear

Bill Frisell (Mr Pedals) and his Telecaster  
conjuring  
a phantasmagoria of resonances out of air

genres float through the room  
like large benign ghosts

I have no idea what will happen next

Gil Evans:  
'insecurity is the secret of eternal youth'

## WEATHERING

storm pulses in from the Pacific  
jolts of lightning, explosive thunder  
trees thrash high above the roof in darkness

half a mile away  
rain pelts down on Gōtokuji temple and graveyard  
(300 lords, wives, concubines and children of the Clan of Ii)

splashing onto  
and sluicing off  
the Buddha Hall's steep-pitched copper roof

as it has nights like this  
for over three hundred years  
(wet earth, leaning stones and rain-soaked moss)

READING PHILIP WHALEN

who follows  
the thread while  
letting all manner of things intrude to

deflect the flow, to  
get included, to be annotated, to  
scatter yet sharpen the attention

wasp on the window-pane  
ideas that happen to happen through the door  
small outbursts of entertainment vaudeville burlesque  
acted out in the theatre of the skull

‘all over the place ...’  
but always going forward

*a graph of a mind moving...*

and even if the grin is a bit fixed

(‘that nice, that clever Mr Whalen!’)

the voice nevertheless goes on  
in the words of the enthusiastic Mr McClure  
being ‘mock-serious, biting, casual  
good-natured, concise, powerful, and humorous’

(did you remember to bring the gin?)

WATCHING BIRDS EAT

*mejiro*, or white-eyes

would come from their nests to feed  
each other berries  
from the tree outside our window  
each June

but since our neighbour chopped down  
his patch of bamboo to  
enhance the value of his land

not a single one

(bulbuls steal the berries out of each others' beaks)

REMEMBERING LOL COXHILL

a gathering of England's musical avant-garde  
white beards everywhere  
*good lord, wonderful to see you, are you still alive?*

scratchy radio static  
intermittent drum-beats and cymbal-scraping

a power trio disassembles Hendrix

multiphonic altissimo saxophone drone and flutter

a guitar played with a bow  
a violin strummed like a guitar  
a singer with his hat made from a cabbage

professionally amateur  
straight-faced, hilarious, earnest, spiky

gathered together  
in a late-imperial, wood-panelled, high-ceilinged hall  
with long purple drapes drawn across the windows

to commemorate  
a lifetime of commitment to the instant

the passionate, generous  
and slightly mad engagement with sound  
of one of their own

LISTENING TO THE WALLPAPER

red plastic bench seats  
low lighting and fake marble tables  
smooth-jazz Muzak  
    (it's painless and you won't hear a thing)  
paintings of cattle wading into Highland streams  
portions of said cattle at £20 a chunk

and then, suddenly, on the speakers  
Ella Fitzgerald is singing *Night and Day*  
voice dancing on tiptoe  
    through the changes, through the lyrics  
inventing all the notes she needs  
to create the world she hears the music making

1956, thirty-nine years old, at once

a young girl's voice still full of yearning  
and the grown woman's full-fledged song  
replete with knowledge, style, poise and joy

VISITING THE ORIENT

marble pillars, mosaic floor  
looped calligraphy on peacock-blue tiles

*He has created man and taught him speech  
He has set the sun and moon in their courses*

a square pond with a trickling fountain  
plump diwan cushions  
a stuffed peacock  
blue-and-white ceramic jars  
a stained-glass window with  
    a carved and gilded cedar-wood frame  
inlaid Egyptian woodwork  
gilded ceiling, Ottoman chandelier

a *mashrabiyyah* (lattice-work upper-storey window) creating  
a *zenana*, a space for modestly peeking women

Kashan, Damascus, Iznik  
Sind, Kubachi, Cairo, Istanbul

thank you very much, Frederic, Lord Leighton (1830–1896)

as we step out into the twenty-first-century rain  
falling steadily on Holland Park Road, London W14

SITTING, EATING, STANDING STILL AND WALKING IN ATHENS

mother of all temples and shrines  
a *grande dame* who's seen a bit in her time  
Athene, Virgin Mary, mosque, powder store  
Venetian artillery, Lord Elgin, UNESCO  
floodlit now in all her ruination  
a crone with gap-toothed colonnades and fallen pediments

taramosalata, olives, anchovies, butter beans, roast chicken  
robust red wine  
photograph (1948) of Seferis and Katsimbalis on the wall  
black pouches under Seferis's eyes

morning, fourth-floor balcony  
blue railings, blue awnings, a blue-and-white flag  
sun warms my knees  
thick yoghurt with honey and nuts, hard-boiled egg  
bread and jam and excellent coffee

*you want a traditional Greek breakfast?  
this isn't it?  
oh no! two cups of coffee and five cigarettes*

WAITER: *if I had a gun I'd be in prison now  
those politicians in the parliament  
they don't even dare go to the window to look out  
they and all those other big people stole all the money  
and now it's in Latin America somewhere or Switzerland*

RECEPTIONIST: *it's no use  
thinking about what happened, we need to think about what's next  
so calm yourself*

a demonstration assembles  
coaches park in side streets  
marchers bussed in from all over the country  
    FOR BANK\$ BAILING OUT PEOPLE GOT SOLD OUT!!!  
scooters and motorbikes with horns sounding  
    WALK IN SOLIDARITY  
thousands on foot led by drums, banners and loud-hailers  
applauded from the pavements as they pass

shutters, padlocks and FOR RENT signs  
    the arcades are empty  
plastic bags blow across marble floors in the shadows

old men sit on straight-backed chairs at the roadside  
orange trees line the streets  
    dark green foliage full of fruit  
men with their hats on gesticulate in cafés  
a tiny white-haired woman tends the lamps in a chapel

Kalamata olives, hummus, beetroot salad, cod with garlic puré  
robust red wine  
a photo of the owner's uncle, killed in Albania, 1940

written on a wall in Plaka:  
THERE ARE TWO RULES FOR SUCCESS:  
I. NEVER TELL EVERYTHING YOU KNOW.

Archaeological Museum  
'Mask of Agamemnon'

shock of shining gold verisimilitude

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