

Trisha Baga
LOAF
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LOAF - A blurry eye exam, or the sourdough hippocampus

Contemporary technology allows a net mapping of 3-dimensional forms, a wringing out of volume to an expansive, but wholly compressed 2D. Complex curved volumes – a tennis ball, a dog, an alien – might be translatable as planar vector diagrams. Let's say this Berlin apartment is a brain, a mapped and flattened cognitive organ. It is compartmentalised in the same way and there is symmetry: left and right hemispheres correspond to a singular hallway that functions to structure flow. Light responds to bodily proximity, a basic on-off sensibility approximate to the stimulating function of the pituitary gland: hormones, blood, galvanic affectation are ushered into cameo roles as more pedestrian objects. There are black holes and white walls: the brain architecture is swiftly rearticulated as vernacular archetype. The drawing of a floor plan can also be read as the abstraction of an idea. Fantasy and philology allow mutation – sociological procedure, technological metaphor, erotic image, or surreal apparition bond as a muttering mass.

In Trisha Baga's LOAF, inside and out, skin barriers and seams are deliberately confused. In the same way that mould might ravage a slice of bread, screens and ceramics ooze with an implied sense of microbial growth, alive with all the exhaustive permeation of the pathogen.

The apocalyptic eyes and ears fashioned (and necessary to deploy) seem hesitant to make categorical distinction between nuclear implosion and natural phenomenon. Hierarchies dissolve in an ectoplasmic fog where smoke, words, speech and rhythm become ever-shifting signifiers in a more abstract pictorial lexicon. Seeing *through* smoke is still more curious, a pre-retinal experience more like seeing with the brain than the eyes. Perhaps it is a kind of dirty behind-the-scenes akin to hearing the breath of the performer when listening to classical music through headphones.

Bone dappled, lavender-light spackle, holocaust pale, brothel apology, aroma-of-now, cucumber bisque, purple tango – the faded reality of on-camera skin in all its alien variants is a queasy exposé of our screens' crackling velum. This is not a face, but a bladder of lard. Like some prehistoric boiling, our bodies have near abandoned all symbols of critical function, subject instead to the entropic temperature and deviations of the screen. Perhaps the ongoing obsession with getting skin *right* in painting is an appendage problem of contemporary technological habits: the greasiness of fat offset against the mediation of a two-dimensional plane. Oil is a surfactant jelly, a mediator of volume like alcohol is a lubricant of language. We are spot lit in a weird plastic destruction, a hiding in front of hello where the on-screen face is possessed of a light bulb flaring inside the skin. Luminescence, iridescence, is contingency and as hard fought as the battle for mimesis may be, real life's resistance to photography produces a precarious equilibrium between the giving and receiving of form.

In LOAF, The Invisible Man mobilizes a similarly anxious rhetoric: *I'm not sick, I'm not crazy*. His words, spoken by Baga, but projected via invisible and therefore hypothetical vocal cords trigger an immediate zipper-fracture between solid and immaterial. Substance doubts itself: imagine the ongoing ontological crisis of the Invisible Man's brain and its endless struggle to assign empirical weight or volume to its own indecipherable mass. Objects gain faces and bodies are liquidized or husked down to geometric memories of themselves. In one deft swoop, the tangible body we assume to know is catapulted away from legible territorial outline and into a more abstract digital machine fragmented by car journeys and endless shifting landscapes. The metaphor of toxicology might be applied as flesh is poisoned and dissolved by its own shadow.

Nighttime phosphorescence operates like a photographic surface, tracing an instant retinal fizz akin to receiving multiple neural Polaroids. Luciferin (from the Latin *lucifer*, "light-bringer", glow-in-the-dark) is a light-emitting compound comically christened with Satanical undertones. Following this tangential logic, a slice of toast in all its singed transitional glory might be a surrogate motif of photography, a molecular oxidation of the body and the light: "*function toast, medium brown, oxygen level, critical*"... We are sensitive to a phenomenon of light that allows us to colour and distinguish otherwise identical objects and television is a central proponent of this auratic delirium. Fluorescence continually refers us back to the outermost surfaces of things and glaze chemistry in essence conceptualizes an explicit corollary with heat, chemical and metallurgical properties.

And skin of course is one surface and of one plane. It is dimensionally intelligent, wraps around us and stops blood from leaking out – like enamel or glaze on a bathtub, it is an encasement, an enclosing, a layer. Ceramic glaze proposes an even tighter hermetic seal: it has no soft nervous tissue but instead offers vitreous skin as a agitated surface behind whose violently stained and hermetic foil is recourse to dust, to ceramic crumble. This metaphor of obfuscation is perversely linked to our human dependence on light for all biological desires, our need to illuminate to eat and work or else etiolate into a lousy bastard paleness. And so alchemy, in its most primal medieval context positions the artist as progenitor of an elixir that is both generative and corrupting. The artist is drunk doctor and mad baker, a fictional auditor of an economy where value is derived by figurative literalness. The same phenomenological crassness might be imagined in the impromptu meeting of a USB data-stick crushed in unwilling embrace with a mash of chapstick: a backpack accident, an unfocus of the binaries of hard and soft, a mass confusion of the possible use-value of utensil, cosmetic, diagram, data and lubrication. And so for substance, as the video subliminally counsels: "*Life's a beach*", *Put-your-money-where-your-mouth-is*.

In all dimensions, Baga mobilizes a painterly rhetoric. Colour is remedy, colour is poison, colour is queering obfuscation. Colour drips, swells, flagellates, reverbs and collapses. Colour for Baga might be non-philosophical, a decorative conceit, a maniacal musical structuring: we are pervasively reminded that both light and sound occur in waves. Every atom is saturated. The gesture of painting with all its theatrical predicates – the pointed finger, swiping hand, pissy drips and fecal splurges – is apparent throughout. Diagrammatic clarity coagulates under collaged expression, mutant abstract lines author both a return to and mocking of painting. Baga's marks are fuzzy aggregates of a residual specificity – they have speech without language; they are linguistic propositions whose default setting is to the logic of the visual. Communication and information are no longer rational correlates. And emerging on top of constantly moving video imagery, Baga's instances of dust and libidinous squiggles all stimulate the authoring of a style, but one that is not predicated on immediate legibility. Questions and promises are reflected back on themselves. Like the prismatic refraction of pixel array, which occurs when water droplets magnify the primary colours on a computer screen, language undergoes basic centrifugal separation. Placards, paint typography, license plates, police tape and advertisements are a constant graphic confusion of the aural and the oral. Here is yet another rearrangement of body parts. The lenses of our eyeballs have become quite literal projectors for an ongoing show reel of entertainment and cosmetic enhancement; they are little logic boxes at the beginning of a vast electrical and chemical machine. This is the circuitry of our circuitry and retinal functions are flirtatiously engaged in an act of electronic solicitation with the outside world. Voices exist without volume and words emerge detached from an alphabet. The stammer of many languages emerges with grace, but unhinged from content in a way, which provides it with inherent structuring power. Our eyes reveal rather than demonstrate ideas.

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