

Emotion is an unlimited resource

so that when it's instrumentalised, much can be requested and very little given back in its wake.

With some types of commercial photography, say that deployed by the estate agent or the figure of the slightly tired rep travelling abroad again to espouse London's credentials as a destination, and its wares, there's a sort of aching gap between what is being said in the photograph, (or solicited), and what is being given. It's almost too exhausting to talk about how the aim is often to sell the image of an invariably fictive but nonetheless emphatic experience, poised and ready to be had, through objective things or moments rather than those objects themselves: Slightly dilapidated park benches become authentic potential bearers of that ever-promised spontaneous yet deeply meditative moment of frisson. The lamppost down the road is dramatically transmuted into Rodin's *The Thinker*. A couple walking their dog past Tesco Express become high priests of contemporary minimal living, all dappled light and clean reflections, thanks to a mere asymmetrical camera angle here and there and not much else. It's no wonder then that in the face of all this triumphalism and perma-bluster, the banality that these prosaic objects and instances otherwise represent can start to seem endearingly benign.

There is of course an ideology behind all of this and its implication in terms of the bowdlerisation of place has been well recounted. Often described as a process of accumulation by dispossession, or production and capture, its extension towards the annexation of individual experiences themselves was well under-way even before the work of plundering our towns and cities had been quite completed. Not wholly ignorant of the human desire to seek out effective life, Larry Page for one grasped early that in terms of raw material this constituted our century's very own virgin wood. Even if only in a linguistic way then, it's funny that our acquiescence, cheerful or not, in submitting the experiential realities of our daily lives to the thousands of services offering to help us organise and share them invariably creates another type of exile. Over the last few years it's been hard to avoid the various statements declaring the end of our claims to self-determination, its vanishing from the maps of our own experience. While this may at times sound melodramatic, what's particular to this coup over the previous one is that it's once celebrated capacity towards 'customisation' still manages to hold a bit, despite its ever and fast tarnishing reputation as it displaces and overrides everything that is indeed personal.

It's yet to say what this type of machinic gaze might allow for in the end, or if the idea that reality can be reborn as 'behaviour' is yet another instance of a nihilistic yet oddly domesticating market fiction. But in the meantime another chasm is produced. On one side there is a powerful and human need for effective life and on the other is an excruciating and deliberate formal indifference whose handling of individual quotidian life, what probably amounts to dignity in a way, swings wildly and of its own accord, building one part of a larger picture characterising a firm's relationship to its 'users'.

- Gili Tal, 2019