

## HAIL MARY – MY NATURE PAINTINGS

Robert Smith, front-man for 'The Cure' singing *Lovesong* in 1989, written as a wedding present for his bride Mary Poole.

Whenever I'm alone with you  
You make me feel like I am home again  
Whenever I'm alone with you  
You make me feel like I am whole again

Art kind of does that for me. A warm embrace in frightfully cold weather. A comforting shared silence where time stands still.

As Robert pours his heart out in song, I look out the studio window over a cold looking London and see some little kids on those push scooter things, racing each other through the park. It's autumn and the leaves fly about as they speed through the piles.

Now, just because Robert is singing in the background and I am talking about autumn leaves, don't think I am getting all nostalgic and melancholy or anything like that. But as I watch the kids playing I can't help thinking back to being that big. I don't mean age. I mean physically, that height. Having a tiny body. I remember leaping to slap the door architraves as I entered each room of my family home. I was in training for a professional basketball career. Every door was a slam-dunk opportunity. My basketball career was very short lived and I haven't shot any hoops for a couple of years but I now stand six foot three and if I stand arms extended I can reach the roof of my London apartment. Having a body is a pretty weird thing. Looking out from it is odd to say the least.

This ramble isn't leading to any great philosophical conclusion. I'm just writing shit as usual. Just thinking. As I have moments of thinking its nice to write it down sometimes. If it is written and recorded maybe my thoughts will live on a bit longer than me.

The art I am making at the moment is nothing special. I am doing some more paintings. Of nothing in particular. I have reached a new style I guess. Quite sparse mark making. Suggestions of landscape. Dirty as usual. There are kind of naturey, plant like forms, bushes or shrubs. Scratchy, harsh and seemingly dry surroundings. Nothing new in the big picture of art history. I spend most days chasing my own tail around a

canvas, a piece of wood or maybe paper, drawing, painting, trying to reach a point of completeness, where I can allow myself some feeling of achievement and maybe that I haven't wasted yet another day although ultimately knowing full well that I have.

I was just thinking of this studio time in relation to shooting baskets as a kid. I would draw a line in the dirt at some ridiculous point half way down the backyard. From here I would launch the ball over and over again until finally I got it in. Often it would take hours. Endlessly throwing up the Hail Mary. The term Hail Mary is used in sport to describe an almost impossible action that only divine intervention could make succeed. I remember throwing these Hail Mary shots up as measures of the existence of God. I would say prayers or statements to some higher power to see if there was a response, made evident with scoring a basket. I would ask questions almost like a Ouija board. I would barter with God my earthly actions and future good behaviour as a trade off for these ridiculous shots to go in, nothing but net.

In the studio for me there is a kind of giving over to divine intervention. Often I have no idea where the work is going but have a kind of blind faith that it will come together – that some strands of information, actions, objects and production intertwine in some synergetic integration. Always scrambling to make sense of it all.

As Robert sings and I think about art, basketball, my existence looking out from this odd body, nothing seems that important. I do doubt that my paintings and nonsensical ramblings will ever do great things and change the world, but it is nice to think that they could make someone happy somewhere, one day. Have some meaning to someone. Make someone think about something.

Maybe, art holds something powerful and divine. Or I suppose I hope it does. A connection or conduit between the physical and beyond. A portal to some other place, other time. A point of exchange. Memory, existence, the afterlife, everything in between.

I was at a service station the other day and upon paying for my petrol the attendant said to me with an awkward smile 'God is good. But God is also bad. God took my mother today'. Taken by surprise I said in return 'Have a nice day'.

David Turley, 2016