

YESTERDAY

Today is my fortieth birthday. I suppose I have to write something. It's only fitting to write a little blurb about life thus far surely?

I am now forty years old.... Not much has changed. Actually not much has changed from yesterday when I was thirty nine, but a lot has changed in forty years. My body has grown substantially. Stopped growing. Started growing hair in weird places. And now I noticed the other day my skin is kind of becoming loose. I try to avoid getting all sun tanned and leathery but to be honest I don't have any regime of skin care and lotions. I just have a wash, washing my hair not that regularly and trying to avoid dousing myself in too many foreign petrochemicals and inorganic chemically concoctive substances. Spending about thirty years in the Australian sun has surely had its impact.

I still look pretty youthful and over the past five years I have been exercising daily which hopefully isn't too late and has helped me add a few years on to my estimated time of departure. I actually do an exercise program kind of thing where I jump around and roll on the floor for at least thirty minutes a day. It's got to be better than not doing it right?

I don't have a bad diet at all. In fact over the past six months I have really got it together and now I eat so much less and usually quite healthy meals. My two weaknesses are pastries and beer. I can admit to being a slight alcoholic for a period of my life. I have weaned myself off a lot and am now in control, drinking only expensive top shelf beers which have something called flavour as opposed to most high street off license shops which sell the three for a fiver drown your sorrows alone in the park kind of beverages. I used to drink these far too regularly and yes sometimes alone in the park but now I am a changed forty-year old responsible adult. I must say also the pastries are uncontrollable. There is something seductive and irresistible about a sticky bun or buttery dough covered in sugary fruit or spiced topping. I do not and will not dare to imagine a life without them no matter how many calories. I did manage to get one pastry in today. A chocolate croissant for breakfast at the Wolseley. I am sure one a day is not too harmful.

I am also sure being forty is going to come with a lot of excess baggage. It certainly doesn't feel any different to yesterday and thirty-nine but I know how this life stuff just sneaks up on you. The body gets sorer in weird places and small tasks seem to take longer. Mentally I am not sure I am as quick or maybe I just like to think things through a little more before being too rash and acting. I used to just jump into things head first but now I kind of tip-toe around the edges weighing up the pros and cons before deciding it perhaps isn't right for me and I therefore should wait until a better option presents itself. I am not talking about big life decisions here, just choosing dinner at the supermarket.

I have noticed when painting I tend to hesitate more than ever, feeling a huge sense of breathless anxiety before making a mark. This is followed by an even bigger sense of relief that I did it and again anxiety preceding the next mark and so on. A rollercoaster. I am sure as life goes on this painting practice won't prove to be good for my heart. The tension is damn weird. Every mark there is fear, joy, dread and pleasure. It's just paint on canvas. There isn't a right or a wrong mark. Just my decisions. It never gets marked by the teacher. There are no answers at the back of the book. There is an attempt to achieve balance and imbalance, movement and stillness, energy and calm, order, disorder, time, otherworldly states, something else, somewhere else beyond forty, beyond life. I am not so sure that my painting will make any difference to anyone other than me. There is a kind of addictive tension that brings me a little pleasure of sorts and maybe this small happiness will keep me feeling forty a little longer. At least another year.

David Turley, 2017