On Lingering with Beauty

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Fragility

I can think of no other art gallery that is so easy to enter and to find oneself in as Brighton's Fabrica. It can be done almost without meaning to, an art exhibition the last thing on your mind, and it can be done in an instant. Walking through the town, a simple step and turn from the street, finds you inside. Take that step in the summer of 2015 and you are confronted and surrounded by Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva's *Fragility*. Much will depend on the time of day, the weather, the quality and intensity of the sunlight, the number of people already in the gallery. Each variation can transform the work. Visit *Fragility* several times, and it takes on the feel of a performance, so much happening, and yet behind or beneath each event-generating difference, it is as though there were something else, another light traced in the ever changing translucence, something just out of sight but somehow also inside this space, letting everything we can see be seen but also letting us know that this is not quite and never can be everything. Having stepped so easily into the gallery, there is a faltering, an awkwardness to our movements. Where and how to walk? Where should we go? Navigating our way, we are drawn towards the canopy as though to an altar and to what we take to be a centre, or, remaining at the edge of the room, we attempt to find a place from which to get a sense of the whole piece. Each such movement is also an attempt to gain a certain mastery: either to attain the heart of *Fragility* and know ourselves to be properly inside it, or to find a point where we can imagine ourselves sufficiently outside it to begin viewing and judging *Fragility* as an object, an artwork. Neither quite succeeds. Even from the canopy, our gaze is drawn elsewhere, to the high window or to the slow swaying of the sheets caught in the through draught that has suddenly picked up between the doors. And *Fragility* has an uncanny ability to extend to every part of the room. There is no outside; no location allows you that critical purchase. The closest you might get to such a position is when you choose to watch others making their way around the gallery, observing their uncertainties and conversations, noting the directions in which they look and move. But this voyeurism too is short lived. The work first invites everyone to participate in the transformation it has effected and then strangely insists on our doing so. If you stay,

Fragility seems to have created and implicated its own fragile community, enveloping all of us in the gallery *here*, *now*, making our individual ways to and fro, back and across the room.

Our experience of *Fragility* is also tightly bound to our experience of its material, to our knowledge of the caul fat, the membrane and arteries, and to our responses (deliberate or instinctive) to that knowledge. This material as a medium is worked so that it plays between the conceptual and the visceral. Transformed into something beautiful, the beauty is sustained rather than curtailed by an awareness of what we are really looking at. The work and the medium remain beautiful even when an aesthetic idealisation is denied us, or, better, precisely because this idealisation is denied us. The material cannot be concealed or subsumed, but the work and the experience of the work are enhanced by this inability. And yet, however uneasy the experience, the space, and the matter of the thing, what surely keeps us here is the pleasurable sense that this (*this*, *here*, *now*) is *beautiful*. Yes, that is the right thing to say: it is beautiful.

Of course nothing in this description need chime with your experience. Perhaps you were so caught up in the cares and worries of everything else you were doing that day you scarcely took in the material and its movement. You had no trouble in navigating the space because one look told you it was a religious church-like installation, not your sort of thing at all. Or reflecting on the proximity of the gallery to the street, you wondered why you had never actually noticed it before. Each of these reactions and countless others are always possible. For the purposes of these remarks, however, it suffices that even if it were not your experience of *Fragility*, you know what the word "beautiful" means in my attempt to capture an experience, and that familiarity is worth thinking about. Let us take another very different example. Again, the focus is on the word "beautiful".

A beautiful vision

Consider the following passage that closes a review article written by the philosopher Jerry Fodor. The context is a critical discussion of Richard Dawkins and of the tendency or temptation to draw a faulty inference from the biologist's decision to accord explanatory purchase to the gene over, say, the pelican's beak. Is it not, the inference runs, therefore the gene rather than the beak that discloses the processes of evolution under their truest description and from their truest perspective? And is this not, finally, because evolution is *for* the gene rather than the beak? Regardless of whether or not this is a fair or accurate

rendering of Dawkins' interpretation of the reasons for evolutionary biology's concentration on the gene, I want to pay attention to the words that Fodor offers by way of conclusion and to the emphasis and implication they perhaps continue to have beyond that conclusion.

> It's very hard to get this right because our penchant for teleology – for explaining things on the model of agents with beliefs, goals, and desires – is inveterate, and probably itself innate. We are forever wanting to know what things are for, and we don't like having to take nothing for an answer. That gives us a wonderful head start in understanding the practical psychology of ourselves and our conspecifics; but it is one of the (no doubt many) respects in which we aren't kinds of creatures ideally equipped for doing natural science. Still I think that sometimes out of the corner of an eye "at a moment which is not of action or inaction," one can glimpse the true scientific vision; austere, tragic, alienated, and very beautiful. A world that isn't *for* anything; a world that is just there (Jerry Fodor, *In Critical Condition*, 169).

As in the case of *Fragility*, I want to assume that something is successfully communicated here, that we know what Fodor wants to say and that we know as well how and why he is using the words with which he succeeds in saying it. Moreover, he is not merely confessing to a personal preference, to an idiosyncratic capacity to derive pleasure from what would normally be the least auspicious of surroundings. The passage does not speak of Fodor's preferences or Fodor's individual experience. We know what it is or would be to think and to feel *this*. The thought and its rhetoric are not unfamiliar even to those disinclined to accept them. We are creatures who cannot bear too much reality and the world that a thoroughgoing and rigorous naturalism demands we acknowledge necessarily confronts even that acknowledgement with a ruthless indifference. Our penchant for teleology makes it relatively easy for us to study and to understand penchants for teleology but it seems programmed to resist the productive study of purposeless nature. Note the difficulty of finding the appropriate verb in the previous sentence: "*programmed* to resist", "*bound* to resist," whichever word we introduce it seems to come with the echo of a certain *fate* or *design*. The penchant, as Nietzsche argues, infects the language itself. It is not simply that we await a full scale philosophical critique of *purpose*, as Nietzsche in his more optimistic moments seems to have believed, but that it is literally inconceivable to us both what such a

critique must entail and how such a critique could proceed. If there is to be such a critique it will not and cannot be *ours*. What, then, are we to make of Fodor's concluding thought of a skewed and momentary "vision," one that can be neither produced at will nor passively received, a "truth" better said by the poet (the citation of a line from Eliot's *Four Quartets*), a "truth" characterised as "austere" and conveyed, firstly, analogically in terms of a literary genre ("tragic") and secondly, anthropomorphically, but only to the extent that the anthropomorphism is itself a species of undoing and distance ("alienated"), a "truth" and a "vision" we can sometimes find "very beautiful"? Although it might have been possible to have substituted other adjectives and anthropomorphisms, to have cited other poems and poets, and even to have alluded to other genres, is there not a sense in which what is expressed here by the word "beautiful" cannot be expressed in any other way? "Sublime", a plausible alternative, connotes the restless attempt to contain, to think, or to imagine what cannot be contained, thought, or imagined. It thus falls on the side of an activity that draws an ambiguous pleasure from the inevitability of its failure. The disturbing pleasure of the sublime follows from the fact of failure, the failure to interpret, to thematize, or to capture in an image the conceptual content of what confronts us. The pleasure of Fodor's "beautiful" and indeed the pleasure implicit in the meaning of the very notion of the "beautiful," differs crucially from this. Indicating no specified conceptual content, it describes a stillness, an acceptance, but one allowing neither self-congratulation nor self-abasement. It is not the fact or proposition "that the world is not for anything and is just there" that is being judged beautiful, but the world itself. The pleasure derives neither from the content of a thought nor from any deliberate mental or cognitive activity but is rather the expression of a rare attunement to nature in which nature (or that part or effect of nature that catches and keeps my attention) is disclosed *as it is*.

This experience of the world as beautiful might be felt as a consolation or a promise, something nature has in store, as it were, for us. However rare, such moments must in some sense be dependent on us so that without us the world would lack its beauty, its austere or tragic or alienated beauty. Beauty is uncontroversially disclosive. It requires there be someone to whom the disclosure occurs. Fodor's thought cannot be that when we find the world beautiful we discover another of its objective features and that we have in such a moment a genuine increase in knowledge about the world. The perfectly legitimate question "Why do we find the world beautiful?" receives its proper naturalistic response as

a question about us and our development rather than about the world and it is to this question, presumably to be answered in evolutionary and psychological (those penchant-for-teleology) terms, that the question as to why the world is beautiful is to be subordinated. Fodor describes a moment when that why-question is silenced or a moment when it does not arise, when the world is such that our thought remains with it (*here, now*) as it is rather than seeking diagnosis or explanation. The sentence following the attribution of the "very beautiful" is clearly to be read under its preserve: "A world that isn't *for* anything; a world that is just there." This difficult truth, an impossible truth for us, is now rendered beautifully and bearably. One is reminded of Nietzsche's take on the hard sayings of the Aeschylean and Sophoclean choruses affirmed and sung as counterpart and backdrop to the tragic hero's inevitable downfall, sayings rendered momentarily affirmable by the audience in and through the context of the tragic drama. It seems that a thoroughgoing naturalism cannot consistently concede the "for us" implicit in the attribution of the beautiful; the essential irrelevance of the beautiful is another of those "truths" we purpose-seeking animals are innately incapable of appreciating. How can what is in essence not for us be said to be for us beautiful without the beautiful thereby standing as if in mitigation against the "not for us"? A certain idealism or idealist metaphysics seems to hover in the wings. Our positive evaluations of the beautiful and of the work we want the word to do for us can never be fully consistent with an anti-idealism. For many this would be reason enough to break with the notion altogether.

As with the first example, you may not be able to feel the force of what is being said here. You may find you have no way of sharing Fodor's "beautiful vision", rejecting on religious grounds, say, the very idea of a fundamental *not for us*. The appreciative stillness evoked might seem false, leaving you disinclined to accept or trust it. But, for my purposes, it is enough for you to admit that you know what "beautiful" means and you know what it is doing or is supposed to be doing when it is used in this way. Well, let us concede the point, we might know instinctively what the word means but it is very difficult to specify that meaning. Is there really anything we can plausibly and interestingly say about it?

An invitation to linger

There is a fleeting simplicity to beauty as though what we value in it were threatened in its very notion, the notion or concept *of* beauty. Beauty would be simply unsayable, or, at its

heart, there would be a simple unsayability. And already even this seems to say too much, turning what was meant to be the thought of a profound fragility into something fatuous, a cliché, long familiar from a hundred homilies where beauty offered as the end of thought merely congratulates us on finally reaching and embracing thoughtlessness. “Ah,” said a friend when I mentioned my intention of trying to write about the ties between beauty, this unsayability, and finitude , “Ah, indulgence, the past and its pathos.”

Yet the past is not a bad place to begin. Plato knew the difficulty of admitting and thinking the simplicity that was the intrinsic worth of beauty, but, in his dialogue the *Phaedrus*, he found a way of presenting this as an indication of beauty’s uniqueness.

> But beauty, as we were saying, shone bright in the world above, and here too it still gleams clearest even as the sense by which we apprehend it is the clearest. For sight is the keenest of the physical senses, though it does not bring us knowledge. What overpowering love knowledge would inspire if it could bring as clear an image of itself before our sight, and the same may be said of the other forms which are fitted to arouse love. But as things are it is only beauty which has the privilege of being the most clearly discerned and the most lovely (*Phaedrus*, 250d).

Of all the forms, it is beauty that we can apprehend in a way that is wholly appropriate to it. As beauty is in the world of forms so are its instantiations in the physical world. Nothing need be added to the physical seeing of beauty to appreciate the discerning of its form. Rather than with the simplicity of beauty, the problem lies with the absence of such simplicity in our relations to the other forms and with the means at our disposal for the reaching of knowledge. We will never apprehend the true or the good in the way we can beauty. The beautiful simply appears to us. It need not and cannot do anything else. Each experience and expression of the beautiful (each "This is beautiful") entails an access to the universal. This universality is preserved in the account of beauty that stands at the heart of modern aesthetics.

Immanuel Kant had never intended to produce a systematic treatment of aesthetics. His critiques of finite human reason had investigated the conditions for the possibility of both theoretical knowledge and practical reason, and this distinction - theoretical / practical - had seemed exhaustive. Nevertheless he came to see that there remained an issue about a type of judgement and feeling that possessed its own rationality and necessity and which

was not compatible with the determinate judgements we employ when making knowledge claims or giving reasons for our actions. Central to this third and reflective judgement was the manner in which it communicated a feeling, for Kant, a rational feeling concerning the sublime, the sense of purposiveness in nature, or, most importantly, the beautiful.

It can happen that while out walking or caught up in some aspect of my everyday work, I am suddenly struck by the appearance of a thing - pleasurably struck and pleasurably surprised. Attending to that appearance, I judge it beautiful, not the thing in its generality, but this specific singular appearing (*this, here, now*). In his analysis of this judgement, Immanuel Kant offers an ingenious solution to the well known worry about the subjectivity of taste. On the one hand, we acknowledge that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, that to describe a thing as beautiful is not to itemise one more property it possesses. On the other hand, we sense and insist that in making such judgements we are doing more than simply expressing a personal preference. The judgement, Kant suggests is both subjective and universal. But how is such a judgement possible? It requires a causality other than that found in judgements concerning the (subjectively) agreeable or the (objectively) good. When I say of an appearance that it is beautiful, something in the appearance itself must enable me to stay with it. The experience is sustained. "This is beautiful" expresses a simple delight in the appearing itself. For as long as the experience continues, I demand nothing else of what appears. My judgement lets it be as it is. I have no other interest in the appearance than this pleasurable acceptance. The (aesthetic) judgement of the beautiful is thus without interest. It is disinterested. This enables Kant to demonstrate and explain another feature of the beautiful, namely that, when I experience it, I am also already aware that the experience is not only mine. Because the appearance does not answer to an individual or pathological need in me, in delighting me as subject (and for Kant, crucially, as rational subject), the pleasure extends to an entire community of similarly constituted subjects.

Kant does not straightforwardly identify or name the cause of this judgement of the beautiful and the experience it affirms, but he argues that there must be one:

> it does have a causality in it, namely, to keep us in the state of [having] the presentation itself, and [to keep] the cognitive powers engaged [in their occupation] without any further aim. We *linger* (*weilen*) in our

> contemplation of the beautiful, because this contemplation reinforces and reproduces itself (Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, §12).

At the risk of labouring the point and to summarise, we can say that, for Kant, neither the pleasure proper to beautiful nature nor the pleasure proper to beautiful art can be distinguished from the judging of that beauty. In each case, the beautiful is what pleases in "the mere judging of it". In this curious simultaneity, it contrasts with the sort of liking or pleasure whose judgement is informed by sensation (the agreeable) and the sort of liking or pleasure whose judgement is informed by a concept (the good). The simultaneity of feeling and judgement prevents our seeking to explain it either in terms of a sensation whose pleasure is peculiar to my own satisfaction or in terms of in terms of a concept to be correctly or incorrectly predicated of an object. The former would tell us something about the individual judging subject, the latter something about the object; the judgement of taste tells us nothing about subject or object. It expresses delight in the object's appearing, a delight that coheres with a harmonious free play of the (mental) faculties. In the pure judgement and experience of beauty, there is however an acknowledgment that this delight is in some sense sustainable, that it is "caused" to continue for a while. This "while" and "whiling" seem to be marked by the same fleeting and fragile character as the beauty they would sustain and so allow to count as an *experience*.

For Kant, although he had little interest in developing a philosophy of art, to recognise the possibility of there being fine or beautiful art is to recognise its formal superiority over nature. "A natural beauty is a beautiful thing, an artistic beauty is a beautiful representation of a thing." Accordingly in art we can judge and experience as beautiful what we could not so judge and experience in nature. An object deemed frightening, ugly, macabre, too fragile or ephemeral, can be represented in such a way that in the gallery we can and are invited to linger with it. (Interestingly and as an aside, the only exception to this artistic re-appropriation, Kant suggests, is the case of the disgusting. What is disgusting in nature cannot be represented in beautiful art. What is literally the refusal of taste cannot be tastefully retrieved. By the same logic, in order to work, a genuine example of the disgusting would need to be a disgusting example.) The artistic and beautiful representation can be judged as such only if the material (the paint, the marble, etc) is subsumed in the work. For Kant, artistic beauty requires that there is no room in the aesthetic experience of the work for an awareness of the stuff it is made of, nor for the

process and techniques of its being made. It is *as if* the work were natural. The work is a work of genius, rule-governed but in such a way that there is no way of uncovering the rule. Thus Kant shores up and protects the beautiful in nature and art, and thus unwittingly bequeaths us the distinctions, values, and vocabulary of an artistic modernity.

It is in the end a question of distance. Artistic representation establishes an aesthetic distance between a subject and the represented thing, and once established the viewing subject can respond appropriately to the work. There have been many dismissals of the attempt to legislate for this appropriate response. Nelson Goodman surely had Kant in mind when he ridiculed the Tingle-Immersion theory of artistic appreciation. You immerse yourself in the work and then measure the resulting tingle. It is that worry about the fatuous thoughtlessness and contentlessness of this approach to the beautiful. We do not walk around the gallery searching for opportunities to emit gasps of disinterested pleasure. Goodman's parody is more than a little unfair. It overlooks the role played by my being struck or surprised by the beautiful, and Kant never held that there was no conceptual element in the engagement with the work of art. There has to be at least a minimal conceptual investment for me to recognise that we are dealing with works of art at all. The pure disinterestedness of the beautiful in nature is qualified in the case of art. Further, Kant holds that to judge a thing to be a work of beautiful art is to judge that it exhibits what he calls "aesthetic ideas". The work of art is thought provoking but no particular thought or set of thoughts, no language or concept, can ever succeed in capturing its content.

It is nevertheless worth thinking a bit more about Kant's need to dictate the elements of our experience of the beautiful (in nature and art). He can make sure that the aesthetic judgements do not encroach on the domains of the agreeable and the good, but he clearly feels that more is required. The experience of the beautiful must be constrained. It is important for Kant (as for Plato) that we derive the relevant moral lesson from our recognizing of the radical significance for us of the beautiful. But there is the perpetual possibility that, caught up in the beautiful, one can become distracted. Kant as much as, if not more than, his critics is afraid of the consequences of a distracted and pleasurable thoughtlessness. In the gallery, the look that responsibly and rationally enjoys the work of art can slide into a very different sort of look, one in which far from my holding the work at the requisite distance for tasteful appreciation, instead the work seems to hold and transfix me. The smallest of alterations can turn the critical distance of appreciation into fascination.

In being fascinated, one's attention is held and controlled by the very thing one had sought to evaluate and judge. If there is a risk of the work of art impinging in this way, Kant advises leaving the gallery. Here the substantive superiority of nature over art reasserts itself. Kant remarks on the relief felt by finding oneself back with the tranquil and less indulgent pleasures and beauties of nature. But the damage is already done. Each interruptive moment when I am surprised by the beautiful is indistinguishable from my being on the verge of becoming fascinated by what appears.

Kant's intricate and profound descriptions of the beautiful and of the lingering to which it invites us can be equally applied to the phenomenon of fascination. A being capable of delighting in the beautiful is necessarily also one capable of being fascinated. The Kantian solution is inevitably to invoke rationality, assigning the beautiful and its disinterested pleasure to the rational and the distraction of fascination to the non-rational. Yet the imposition of this rational moral diagnosis merely tells against what is most engaging and true in the initial accounts of the beautiful. The uneasiness and ambiguity of the extended and sustained experience of the beautiful, its extraordinary temporality and the easily ridiculed thoughtlessness, all of this is a function of the impossibility of finally imposing or drawing a line between holding at a distance and being held at a distance, between the beautiful and the fascinating. And might this impossibility be an inevitable consequence of our finitude?

Finitude

In the first of the creation stories in the book of Genesis, we are told that, the creation completed, "God saw every thing he had made and, behold, it was very good (Genesis, Ch.1, 31)." This moment at the end of the sixth day is an interesting one. It is a sort of signing off, an "it is finished" that throughout the western tradition has also stood as a model for what it is to create artistically. God rests on the seventh day, his work done. But the interest here is not with God as artist, but with God as God, as infinite, omniscient and omnipotent being. Instead of seeing that his creation was good, that is that it was perfectly in accord with what he had set out to create, could he have seen that it was *beautiful*. Let us continue to hear "beautiful" with its ambiguously revised Kantian connotations: an appearing and an appearance that strikes us, that has the capacity to interrupt the ordinary course of events. Think of a piece of music long familiar to us, so familiar that I rarely feel inclined to play it,

and suddenly I hear it not as though for the first time but with a resonance I have never quite noticed before. Think of the way the fondness one feels for an old friend can suddenly be sharpened by a glance or gesture that can catch us by surprise. These moments of a *this, here, is beautiful* are not merely incidentally interruptive and singular. The pleasure we give voice to in our expressions of their beauty is a consequence of our being able to be interrupted in such a fashion. There is no diagnosable pathological element in me that explains my experience and there is no determinable and identifiable objective property in the music or person whose beauty I feel myself to have experienced. Such moments invite us to linger with the music or person in a sort of expanded present, but they can also linger in the memory: that painting; that scene where she...; the final sequence; that look across the room as he left; your hand reflected in the mirror...; the light accentuating the opacity of the membrane...; a child's voice; an animal rustling. Now could an infinite and infinitely complete being be struck or surprised like this, suddenly, involuntarily remembering or noticing? God sees that what he has made is good at just the right moment for such a seeing, namely when the task is completed. It is not as if, half way through creating the plants and trees, he became transfixed by the veins of a leaf and by the play of black on green. This concluding beholding that all was good serves as a divine underwriting, a guarantee that nothing has been lost or missed in the making. All is as it should be. There is no room for being struck by a thing's appearance outside of the control of the thing's maker. However well I know this person, this music, this walk, there is always the possibility of this interruption, this singular acceding to the transcendental and universal. But only because every aspect of this scenario is finite, partial, and bound to a final parting. Let us leave it as a working hypothesis: Only a being who can die can genuinely judge and feel something to be beautiful. Only a finite being can be fascinated, can have its gaze held by something (even the most familiar of things) as it falls back away from the contexts in which it functions and in which its familiarity is secured.

In their contrasting philosophical systems and so with very different motivations, Plato and Kant admit and celebrate the essential role carried out by the partial, perspectival, and sensual constituents of the experience of the beautiful. Yet each of them tries to derive from this experience an account of the non-animal, ideal, and supernatural elements that finally define us. To the extent that an experience of the beautiful lasts too long, to the extent that it begins to chime with a loss of reason, it becomes morally and pedagogically

problematic. The disinterestedness ceases to be pure. What is left is unproductive distraction. To continue, as we must, to stress the necessary finitude of beauty is necessarily also to take issue with this supplementary moralising narrative. It may be that only we, we humans, experience beauty, but this exceptionalism cannot lead us anywhere but here with these singular experiences and memories, these fragile communities. There is no way, in principle, of protecting and preserving: beauty from fascination; ideality and universality from materiality and singularity; the human from the animal; a life devoted to the rational appreciation of beautiful art from the pleasures of meandering associations and contingencies; an artwork which idealises and subsumes its medium from a work in which the material constantly intervenes and interests the viewer.

For many theorists and critics, all of this is simply so much the worse for beauty and its idealist apologetics. Why not get rid of the whole vocabulary? For them, art's work is conceptual, and appeals to the universal significance of an aestheticized *this ,here, now*, are to be interpreted as ideological attempts to preserve a special separate realm for art and aesthetics and for the privileged audience sufficiently qualified to appreciate them. Everything we have noted as an ambiguity or difficulty for Kant ought to be used to dismantle this aesthetic ideology. But, of course, in dismantling it, we need then pay little serious attention to those features themselves. Fascination, finitude, the thought-provoking effects of these singular appearances, and this passive lingering are as much the property of the ideology as are disinterested beauty and aesthetic ideas. We would suggest otherwise, defending the relevance and plausibility of an account of the beautiful that acknowledges community, universality, the irreducibility of its judgement to either cognition or desire. The complications that follow the reintroduction of fascination, materiality, and finitude, are less a reason to break with that account than they are to acknowledge an implicit awareness of its own frailties and inarticulacy. They qualify but do not undermine the community and universality. The judgement "*This, here, now is beautiful*" still stands and still requires its unique analysis. The invitation is still issued.

Fragility, again

Stepping back into the gallery, let us recall the terms in which we tried to describe our experience of *Fragility*: first, the obvious rightness of saying that it is beautiful; second, the difficulty of getting a grasp of the whole work so one is always attending to some particular

aspect in relation to the whole, and that at a particular time, with the work affected by so many external variables; third, the sense that one is never seeing *Fragility* alone, that what one is experiencing as beautiful would be so experienced by anyone who found themselves in this strange community; fourth, that the nature of the material and the medium, whether we know what is or not and whether we are consciously thinking of what it is or not, constantly insinuates itself into our experience of the work. Each of these terms can be usefully seen as both belonging to and complicating the inheritance of Kant's idealist aesthetics. They come together in this formulation: *the necessary finitude of a beauty that fascinates*.

To close. *Fragility* is lit up in such a way that there is always more to it than the variations in the light and the sun outside, a light belonging to the material and the work and to the space the work and the material have made possible. I have wondered whether this other light and the source of this other light are not precisely what we are looking for and looking to move towards as we move around the gallery. We move and the work moves and this other light moves, and our movement is, as it has always been, the movement of an animal, a fascinated animal capable of expressing and experiencing this fascination as beautiful. The uneasy distance it holds us at is the constant challenge to the aesthetics that would seek to control it, and it resonates with the tension between the *not for us* and *for us* we mentioned earlier. That tension is inseparable from being finite. Finitude, yes. But not simply mine or yours, not even simply ours.

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