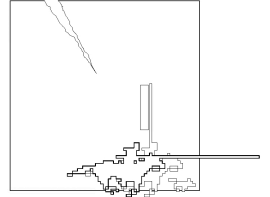


A Z U R E A N SCULPTURE + ARCHITECTURE

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# THE Exquisite Cat

When you want to believe in something, you also have to believe in everything that's necessary for believing in it. Ugo Betti.

The World is divided into armed camps ready to commit genocide just because we can't agree on whose fairy tales to believe. Ed Krebs.

Art is not complicated. You close your eyes, you make a quiet decision,  
you open your eyes, you make it real. It takes between  
a second and a lifetime.

Once upon a time, long, long ago, in a village high in the mountains, there lived a shepherd with no child. Try as she might, she couldn't conceive. And one night, in sheer desperation, she prayed to the universe for a child, any child, even a cat. And so it was that one day she gave birth to a beautiful little cat. She was grateful and determined to raise the little cat exactly as she would a daughter. So the little cat learned of the world and all the ways of a shepherd.

The shepherd died one night in a terrible storm and the cat was left all alone. She had grown strong and even more beautiful. Her sense of life remained very much intact; the world had yet to wrest it from her, interrogate it senseless, pummel it beyond recognition, and toss it back shattered, edgeless and bereft of meaning. She was very young and she wasn't aware of it.

Her grandmother knew. She took her paw on her deathbed and whispered to her, they'll think you're crazy but don't ever let that trouble you. Never explain and don't apologize. And if it is a question of whether you're sane or the world, go with yourself. That was it, then her grandmother touched her cheek softly, smiled gently and died.

There came a day when she needed advice what to do with her life and she asked one of the elders. He laughed and laughed and she excused herself, trying not to hit the door frame through watering eyes, somewhere in the background understanding her grandmother a little more.

She did the only sensible thing she could and left the village, leaving the only world she knew, to seek her fortune. The beautiful cat with her particular sense of life and nothing else. Alone, she wandered down the road, into the void.

Somewhere that day in between two hungry steps that were no different than tens of thousands of other steps, she felt it; a visceral calm of pure potential in which the entire future lay mysteriously full and simultaneously utterly irrelevant. An eternity passed, she enjoyed an exquisite calm. She stretched, lay in the sun, and napped.

Walking on, hours? days? later, she passed through a small village. As luck would have it, the village had enough extravagantly strange characters that no one paid any attention to her. She came across a puppet show no one else seemed to pay any attention to. The stage was plain but the performance was extraordinary.

There were four magnificent puppets and though the same, they were so expertly controlled that they all became alive. Three were in power. They made the one other do horrible things. It was so well done that the little cat wanted to tell the battered puppet to run! She sat for a long time

after the play was over. She watched the rudimentary stage dismantled and saw the four puppets lying on the ground next to each other, identical. She watched them being carefully placed in individual boxes and stored away. Astonishingly, there was only one puppeteer, an old man, who crossed over, sat next to her and with a strange familiarity, said, "In some ways it doesn't matter, there's no real difference, they always end in the boxes. But the thing is, there's a huge difference in the play."

"Did you write the story?" she whispered.

"That is the right question," he responded. "I did not. Each play is different, I hold the strings without which they are chunks of wood, but they guide me as much as I guide them."

He split a sandwich in half and while she thankfully ate, he disappeared and the street was empty.

She meandered out of town and found it difficult to assimilate the whole experience, something wouldn't fit. She found a quiet place away from the road, next to a stream, pondered and slept. Awakening, she walked down to the stream to bathe. She took off her fur, carefully washed it and placed it on a rock to dry and then jumped into the stream. While lost in the cool of the water, three figures appeared on the shore.

One grabbed her cat fur and threatened to burn it if she wasn't nice to them. The second wanted her promise she'd volunteer servitude for as long as they'd live. The third toyed with a huge knife. She faced them, smiled and held out her hand for her fur. The knife man put the blade to her throat and made her swear to it. She stopped smiling and nodded. They relaxed, she got her fur and carefully put it on.

She washed her paws in the stream after relieving their carotid arteries of the gruesome and continued task of keeping them alive. She wandered on.

She came upon a town bent in preparation. The townsfolk were flocking and twittering without any dignity whatsoever. Their king was to ride through their town! And sure enough, the King and his entourage of dazzling knights on giant horses rode through that afternoon. Everyone seemed determined to see whose forehead could leave the biggest dent in the dirt. She stood tall, her tail moving ever so slowly, and she wondered if this was how she wanted to live.

The King stopped his horse in front her. The two closest knights appeared ready to skewer her with their war lances; the King waved them off. He looked straight at her and asked her to join him for a drink if her time permitted, and then recommenced his miniature parade.

Over a ridiculously well shaken, strangely azure coloured martini, he told her everyone was afraid of him and though it came with the territory, it did wear at times. He longed for a night when he was not a King to anyone and he had to admit he had a fondness for cats. She said she was born under peculiar circumstances and though she was used to it, she too felt at times, quite, quite alone. She appreciated a biped without any of the endemic surficial fears.

The mountain cat went back with the King to his castle and stayed for a while. He appreciated her absolute independence, she appreciated his discretion. At night she took off her fur and he never questioned her nor tried to fix things that weren't meant to be fixed. He knew though, and she knew that she was going to leave; her journey wasn't in being a queen.

As elegantly as she had arrived, she silently left. Not to a specific destination but to a certainty that was more real than any castle made of stone.

She continued on her path, which was her fortune and continued wandering all over the place, lived and wandered happily ever after.