

## Don't forget about everything (and what would anything be without everything else?)

### Part 1a (Initial Atmosphere)

I used to work with a man named Muhammad, who came to America later in life from Tanzania, which, honestly, before meeting him I'd just barely heard of. The more I got to know him, the more I liked him (as is apparently true with all humans) but what I really, really loved was that he almost always had a "saying", usually after something tense was discussed in a group, his eyes would twinkle a bit and he'd get a warm smile and then: "We have a saying where I come from..." followed by something like, "my feet were tired and then I saw a man with no legs." They were always short and... *inarguable*. They seemed to unravel whatever conclusions people had settled on, making everything get larger and more expansive, dissolving the narrow and intense answers we so often perform. Solid, true, vast, and with kindness. He usually said "we", so there was an anonymity and humility. The opposite of what we mean when we say "getting the last word." I didn't really recognize the genius of this until years later but, it comes to mind surprisingly often. Especially one instance, after discussing whether or not it was wise for one to "have hope"... "We have a saying in my country... 'The apparent is the bridge to the real.'"

### Part 1b (Initial Tone)

The contract my studio uses is a series of concise, bullet-pointed statements. But the last entry is always "It's All Here" which sounds odd, right? When I asked our lawyer to explain it, he said it was pretty self-explanatory. I think the thing I like best is the "it's" and the "all" and the "here"!

### Part 2c (Imagined Futures Are Real But Not True)

The comedian Garry Shandling did this bit I love that went something like: "Gosh, I've tried *everything*. Yoga. Self-help books. I was vegan. Ate raw foods. Philosophy. Running – I got some great running shoes. Zen. And meditation." Then shrugging and sheepishly smiling for *almost* too long "But you know, it's the damndest thing. I just keep turning into Garry Shandling." (quiet, nervous laughter from the audience) then, after a perfect pause, with some confidence: "And you know what? I *did not* see that coming."

### Part 2d (What's Coming Anyway?)

A few years ago my therapist and I were talking about some expensive fashion stuff I ordered from Margiela that, when I put it on, didn't look anything like I thought it would. I shared the Shandling bit and we had a good laugh. But then he sorta screwed his face up and said, "But Matt, what I need you to "get" is that you *can* see this coming." Damn. I really, *really* knew what he meant. Attention is partly a place and it seems important to remember "the when" of what we "see" when we're there.

### Part 3d (Before the Sky)

There's a great Belle & Sebastian song called "I Didn't See It Coming" that I'd forgotten until about a week before I was invited to write this text. An old favorite. YouTube's algorithm suggested a live version – I hadn't heard the song in years – and suddenly, out of nowhere, I was somewhere with that song again. (I think it was the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk who said "The most important question is 'Where are we?'" I think what I like most about that is the "where" and the "are" and the "we"...)

### Part 3, 2, 1 (Everything: After the Sky)

We had a hot-tub installed in our backyard last fall. We stay home all the time now because of the pandemic and decided to invest in how we live here. We love it... and we totally saw that coming. But something I *didn't* see coming: I've started watching the sky *a lot*. I lay my head back in the spa and watch. One thing I sorta feel like I knew but generally forgot to notice: clouds are often moving at different speeds. There are layers and layers and layers to the sky. It helps me remember... everything.

### Part 4 (The Past is the Material of the Present Even When You're Mistaken)

I have a really bad memory. So bad that I forget about *everything*. And then? I forget I'm forgetful.

### Part 8\*

We live in a neighborhood that has some lakes and spots of woods here and there. It's not so uncommon to see an eagle coasting overhead but it always feels like a fun little treat. I have no idea why really. But when I don't forget, I like to think of all the eagles that *were there*, but that I didn't see.

### Part 8\*\*

You've probably heard people say "I'm of two minds" about something. It's usually spoken with a tone of voice and affect that suggests a struggle to admit that there's a complexity. And I don't know about you – actually I probably sorta do, but – in our modern, Western, milieu... anthropocentric, post-materialist almost macho academic and scientific realism... post-capitalist, transactional logic, reasoned almost to death (whew, sorry about that) let's just

say we're aware of a mysterious force that inherently implies the goal is a *resolve*. A *conclusion*. That we are supposed to be perusing a certainty of some kind. I get the sense that when someone says "I'm of two minds" with a hesitant, uncertain affect they're almost responding to a kind of shame that they don't see it being just one way? So if it's hard for humans to be of many minds all the time, we should get really good at a willingness and openness to changing our minds. Holding ourselves in a spaciousness. I see a continuous change in this body of work by Douglas. Physical and material, but sprawling and spreading through time which gives it a sort of built in *everythingness*.

#### **Part 8 \*\*\***

I started doing yoga classes through YouTube and I often have to open my eyes to look at the screen and see the teacher, and then close my eyes quick to get back to the pose. There's an afterimage on the back of my eyelids for a few moments. Some sort of visual entropy. It's in everything.

#### **Douglas Lance Gibson Text for A History of Humankind at Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney AU**

When Douglas asked me to write a text for this exhibition – his email arrived on my birthday at 1:23pm – he was explaining a bit about this body of work, and he mentioned it was after "a surf" that everything became clearer. The thing I always liked about surfing... you can choose a lotta things about it, the beach, the day, the board, the wave, the wetsuit but you don't actually become a surfer until you surrender to the energy of the wave.

And the thing about everything is that, it's all part of the same thing too – and what would anything be without everything else? It's a wave. There's an entropy to ideas, and images and memories and fictions and realism and knowledge and non-knowledge. We're not of two minds, we're of too many minds.

We don't know what everything is yet... plus, everything is always changing, all of the time. But maybe Douglas's work points us nicely in this direction. It alludes to it, while also being part of it. You can't capture everything with a photo and you definitely can't say everything in a text, but let's *pretend* that you can, and that we did. This is a "didn't see it coming" and a "did see it coming" with a "you don't, you won't, and you can't stop" too.

Imperceptible change isn't the opposite of perceptible change, it's part of it. It, is part of it.

I've always thought that a photo takes care of a part of an experience, or moment, that a person can't have even if they were in it... and maybe that's why I love this body of work so much... because it spills over its edges and in doing so shows us *how* to see as much as it shows us *something* to see. It's an invitation to a way of seeing. It will leave with you. You will never be the same. Truly.

I hope you love it too... and don't forget about everything, ok?

#### **Matt Olson**

OOIEE (Office of Interior Establishing Exterior)  
@ooiee.me