

Hello Everyone,

I'm Jenny Cawood and before anything else, I want to first of all say that I strongly agree with everything my peers just said before me and I, too, want to extend my eternal gratitude to the wonderful people who changed me and my eyes this year — John, Alan, O'Neill, Pauline, Yumna, Pam, Guillaume. Thank you so much.

As you may have guessed, I am here today to tell you exactly how I changed while I was a Master's Student of Art History here in Aix — how I made the choice to let myself be opened up by this place, this light, and these people who taught me; how I learned to experience the color of shadows, how much the light needs those shadows, and the mad ramblings of the wind through the trees. I learned how to see. Or at least, I tried to.

And so I want to talk about seeing.

In the past year, I have come to think of it, not as a mere consequence of my eyes, but as a habit of my heart. An act which can not be taught, but can be practiced.

I was reading one day in March selections from Annie Dillard's book called *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. In this book, Dillard talks about people who had been blind and, after a medical procedure, gained the ability to see. I remember how my heart vibrated in my throat as I read her account of one girl's newly sighted life. Dillard wrote:

"When her doctor took her bandages off and led her into the garden, the girl who was no longer blind saw what she called "the tree with the lights in it". It was for this tree that I searched through the peach orchards of summer, in the forests of fall and down winter and spring for years. Then one day I was walking along Tinker Creek, thinking of nothing at all, and I saw the tree with the lights in it. I saw the backyard cedar where the mourning doves roost, charged and transfigured, each cell buzzing with flame. I stood on the grass with the lights in it, grass that was wholly fire, utterly focused and utterly dreamed. It was less like seeing than like being for the first time seen, knocked breathless by a powerful glance".

I read this for seminar on a day early in spring, birds singing on the other side of my window. The next morning, I walked to marchutz with different feet than the ones I had gone to sleep with. I kept thinking of the flame in the grass and the tree with the lights in it, and I was surprised to find that my new feet were unafraid of the grass and my new eyes unafraid of the trees. I looked up. I saw how the light melted behind and through the clouds — languidly, in the same way butter takes its time softening toast.

As I walked on, I wondered what it would look like to be that butter: to be that gentle and that patient, to take the time because I have it. We all have it. There is no rush. Light moves quickly, but no one would ever know it. It does not seem to hurry, but it fills — it fills your entire world in one moment. I wondered how to properly see such a thing. I thought: maybe by not trying so hard. The ability to see, like being in love, waits within you for a long time before it suddenly announces its presence to you. In the same way, daybreak comes on softly and then all at once — the sun breaking out from behind the mountain, the person seeing you with the powerful glance.

"It was less like seeing than like being for the first time seen". Yes. That is what I found here — the beauty of just that. To see and, at the same time, to truly be seen. Alan one day looked at a painting of mine and said, "I don't feel like I'm looking at this painting, I feel like it is looking at me". When I painted it, I thought of everything and nothing at all — I merely let myself be filled, be opened, be there — as I hope we all have.

If true seeing had a body — if we could distill it into an image — I think it would be the moonflower at dusk: blooming only for a few minutes, and wilting again in the morning.

The moonflower at dusk: open for you, if only you would be present for it.

Thank you.