

Take It Easy on Me

Ian Miller

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Imagination gets perhaps too much credit as the creative inventive motor powering human achievement. There is an exterior and almost living quality to images, the building blocks of imagination, which suggests inherent appetite and motion. Like tapeworms inside our brains, images take nourishment from our thinking being to transform and mutate, lodging in the recesses of our consciousness.

In the creation myth of the Abrahamic religions, a snake appears as a bestial manifestation of Satan. He coerces the individual into exercising free will, challenging God's domain over all creation. On the Gadsden Flag, once a banner of the American Revolution, now an icon for modern day libertarians and proponents of classical liberalism, a snake is coiled above the phrase "Don't tread on me." It serves to characterize the individual's vigilance and resistance toward government coercion. Benjamin Franklin called the creature "an emblem of magnanimity and true courage." Such a fixed image of insurgency endures a dialectal evil becoming good, or moreover disobedience becoming righteous, in an order of historical magnitude.

Ian Miller paints images in that all paintings are images, but seems to cautiously reflect upon the symbolic transformation bestowed upon form and color's acquiescence into representation. In three small paintings rendered with painstaking sharpness are geometric shapes in yellow and black, above and below a track-like pattern, which itself is intersected by diagonal skewing, as if to negate a significance or sense of place. The components which make up the picture are preserved in the encoding process, withholding its categorical denotation as abstract or figurative, seemingly to better recognize a degree of autonomy within the image function.

And yet this work does not appear as the result of compositional study, presenting balanced shapely harmonies with which we are left to meditate on the qualities of an object or element in space. There is little postulation of scenery or narrative surrounding its could-be figurative aspects. Rather it prompts a sense of anticipatory curiosity one might feel staring at the horizon, waiting for a train to pass.

It is generously painted, in that it provides us with exercises for our associative capacities to which there is an inevitable escape inside memory. It gives us the images that modify our encounters with things and experiences, already rooted in some form or another deep in our brains, acting as a genealogical influence on perception passed down from the ancestors of our future selves.

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Marc Matchak, 2025