

Phyllis Webb / extract from THE CRANNIES OF
MATTER: TEXTURE IN ROBIN BLASER'S
LATER "IMAGE-NATIONS"

and Brancusi thought of it, surfaces which are depths
brought to light and shadow, Eve and Plato flickering
side by side. . . .

"Image-Nation 23 (imago mundi" (328-9)

Image-Nation 23 (imago mundi

This is a poem about SCULPTURE. The books are taking a nap.
This is a poem about *abstraction* and *public art*. "Man's" fate as a
TILTED RED CUBE (by Noguchi), the bronze hero knocked off his
big bronze horse. A fall out of ethnocentricity into civility, right propor-
tion, A WORLD VIEW.

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Terrain:

All-weather public space: *agora*, plaza, courtyard, square, park,
public garden.

Pitch:

Mi-voix, level-headed, perfect.

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SCULPTURE/TEXTURE/TEXTUAL/CONTEXTUAL *in the public eye*
THE RHETORIC OF GRAND GESTURES *elided* into Brancusi's
Table of Silence his *Gate of the Kiss*
Noguchi's "Black Sun" in Seattle
"white marble garden at Yale"
OR THE RHETORIC dis-assembled in-to-
Duchamp's

HORSE LAUGH

at retinal folly, as he rummages through the kitsch of the cultural kitchen, his presence in the poem making room for *Robinesque* “dear mundane images” and another (dear) list of touchables—sex cylinder, desire-magneto, scissors, sieves, oculist witnesses, chocolate grinder, etc. Duchamp (“of the field”) an unlikely collaborator with like-minded rhyming Noguchi/Brancusi. What they all three share is their project to de-centre US into:

... a greater chaos
 and a new equilibrium art is an element in asymmetrical
 flux no isolated object
 all function, all linkage
 to our birthplace and back again
 (330)

*

“the unthought truth of materials,” here, words on paper, available if
form opens *space opens*
 and a fresh breeze blows in
 and
 over
surfaces which are depths / **brought to light and shadow**

*

(*en français, enfin:*

sur-face,
 over and under the form . . .
 (329)

*

The talk, the philosophizing here is more relaxed, casual, though learned, verbally peripatetic—isn't it?—than the intellectual passion, the *deep song* of number 22. I am becoming almost languid just listening in on number 23, despite the Midway kick-start of Duchamp's "Large Glass" and the sculptural masses placed along the way. I'm gliding along on the semi-gloss of this silver room of a poem, its streamed lines so unobtrusive. . . . No argument, no contestation here, the poet happy in this good company, alone, afloat in his craft on Ink Lake, making a poem about Public Art, in abstraction, in *imag-i-nation*, a "Civil Elegy" sent aloft on a wing and a prayer, a paper crane.

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You! Run your own tongue over the image nation, tell me about texture in the ear.

And in "the eros of chances among things" as I turn to ask
this question: Why is British Barbara Hepworth
excluded from this scene?

Her Public Art

Her Sculpture Garden

"holes of intelligence"

For Goodness' Sake?

"Eve and Plato flickering / side by side" in the St. Ives rain and sun, in New York (too monumental, heroic?) at the *United Nations*—

abstraction is distance

(invisible the crannies of matter, burning and hidden,
burnished and folded in to the silent *sur-face* where
the I consumes itself

in praise