

on *Silent Revolution* (2018)
by Stefanie Schwarzwimmer

The great majority of plates in art remain still. Although of the finest porcelain, they are nearly inevitably burdened with creatures beautifully dead or barely living: razor-like oysters; lobsters curled or drawn out; piles of hares, rabbits and pheasants with glittering eyes and broken necks. Painted plates are a mere stage for apples, oranges, lemons, nuts, prunes and are invariably weighed down by these highly prized fruits. This pictorial tradition comes to an end in Stefanie Schwarzwimmer's *Silent Revolution*. Here is the brief tale of a plate revolving on its axis and allowed to roam the globe freely, leaving its painted cousins on their silk tablecloths while it dances on floorboards.

Antecedents of objects enjoying this kind of globetrotting freedom are to be found not so much in visual arts as in literature: the eighteenth-century saw a taste for so-called "itnarratives," in which coins and the like are traded or simply roll, passing from owner to owner, disclosing the lives of the thrifty and the generous in so doing. Rarely had objects enjoyed such a life of adventure, satisfying a new fashion for narratives on a global scale: interiors both rich and humble, national and foreign, were offered to Western eyes, and documentary inclinations were more often than not subsumed by an author's satirical impulse. A travelling coin was a reflection of a reader's habits, good and bad, as it was of their fortunes: handled, fondled, then lost. Onto the next lucky owner.

Silent Revolution stages questions of travel, ownership and voyeurism for a new century, one defined by the ubiquity of objects and their images. A plainwhite plate appears, spins in a near constant rhythm on its axis, in households across the globe. It does all this with what can only be qualified as an eerie degree of confidence. Those who witness its arrival are obviously surprised, anxious, excited, and abiding by our most familiar gesture in this now not so new century, pull out a smartphone and film the event. This, the simplest of our daily habits, is the material of *Silent Revolution*, a seeming compilation of many handheld and home-shot films that finish either uploaded for momentary distraction or left to linger in a limbo of data.

Does a glimmer on the plate's face remind us of its illustrious porcelain ancestors? Perhaps. Does it matter? Probably not. What matters is the excitement and awe replayed in each of the interiors the plate takes us into. As it does, we peer into homes rendered with keen realism and that are only reiterations of catalogued choices. Far from the still lifes of Dutch masters and the slow lives of those fortunate enough to own them, the Audrey Hepburn portrait hanging on one of these immaculate walls speaks of a turning point in the history of images. But of course we are well beyond that.