



BERLIN #2

1.

Thursday. October 16th, 2008. Berlin. I'm staying up late to watch the third and final debate between Obama and McCain. It starts at 3am. It's the best entertainment on television in years.

2.

Lost Weekend's new boyfriend who lives in Los Angeles got to town a few days ago. This is his first time abroad. His hair is brown, his face is polite, and he's agreeable to anything. You could ask him if dirt tastes good and he would say, "Yes, I love it."

3.

Sometimes I think I'm depressed, but really all I am is hungry. This happens a lot in Berlin because I only eat one real meal a day. I'm trying to make the money stretch out as long as possible so I skip lunch even when I'm hungry. That's how it is. I just ate a bowl of Pho at a Vietnamese spot not too far from where I live. I eat there three or four times a week. It does the trick. I gave myself a mustache today. I like it. I look like a creep.

4.

I have fifty-two small abstract paintings going. I know it sounds like a lot, but I wish I had more. I have to limit myself in the studio to save money. Tonight Lost Weekend and her boyfriend, Mr. Polite, are having some friends over for dinner. An old friend from Providence, Good Memories, is joining us. Good Memories is a good guy. I haven't seen him in a few years. He just went through some kind of break up so he's in Berlin to let her go.

5.

It's around 2pm. I'm sitting in the back room of a café waiting for Mr. Cappuccino. It's chilly outside. Last night I went to a play in Mitte with Lost Weekend and Mr. Polite. Lost Weekend, Mr. Polite, and I didn't understand anything so we just made up everything we thought it was about. It had to do with love and flies or something. Afterward, I went with Lost Weekend and Mr. Polite to their place for pork chops, rice, asparagus, and lentil soup. Red wine. Candlelight. I smoked a thinly rolled cigarette by the window and looked out at the quiet night and, of course, thought about Good Morning. I'm in love with a ghost. It's awful. I'm



homesick for the United States, but I have nothing to return to. I need money. The story goes on. Tonight we're taking a train to Poland – Krakow. I'm excited to be on the move again. Joe Bradley's show at CANADA, *Kurgan Waves*, opens in New York this Friday. Joe and I were art students in Providence, Rhode Island at the same time. That was about ten years ago.

6.

Saturday evening, not exactly sure of the time. It's dark outside. I'm in bed in a lodge-like hotel in Krakow by myself. Lost Weekend, Mr. Polite, and I went to Auschwitz today on a bus. It was horrible.

7.

Last night was Halloween. Good Memories, Lost Weekend, Mr. Polite, and I took our bikes to a costume dance party across town. Good Memories was dressed up like a depressed person. I saw him in the corner of the room drinking many cups of beer. After a while he left to sleep it off. I got drunk. The music was loud. A beautiful girl in a short black dress walked over. She danced close to me. She looked into my eyes like I was supposed to tell her something important. Her date or boyfriend or whatever he was stood watching like a solemn horse.

8.

It's the beginning of November and I woke up around 11:30am. I just had a long bath. I read in the bathtub every day. Ate a banana. Had a glass of water. Now, I'm getting ready to leave – Art Forum Berlin Art Fair.

9.

I just got home from the Art Forum Berlin Art Fair. I hate art fairs – it all looks like a bunch of shit.

10.

It's one day before the United States gets a new president – God willing, it will be Barack Obama. Another grey day in Berlin. I managed to get some errands done. It cost 32 Euros to send eight paintings to New York, which isn't that bad. I think I can get away with sending a big box of paintings home to Maryland for just over 60 Euros. I had Vietnamese noodles for dinner. An American friend loaned me his copy of *Tropic of Cancer* by Henry Miller because he knew I was out of bathtub reading material. Tonight, I'm stretching canvases and maybe taking another bath. I'm a little bored, but I don't have anyone to call.



11.

I'm in bed alone reading *Tropic of Cancer*. 2:49am. I'm clean-shaven except for my mustache. My face is shiny because I put lotion on it. It's a strange time right now – I'm totally alone, I have no income, and yet, I find myself doing the same things I always do – I go to the art supply store for canvases, I check my email, I buy food to eat, I have a beer or a glass of wine, I read a book. I mean, what the fuck am I supposed to be doing anyway? I'm not qualified to do a damn thing except the things I already do for myself. I don't want a fucking 9-5 job. Fuck no. I still love Good Morning as much as ever. I wonder how she's doing and what she's feeling. Does she ever think about me? Does she feel bad about the way things are between us? It's sad. Before I met Good Morning I often felt like I was busy preparing for my life to begin. It wasn't like that with Good Morning. No, she made me feel like I was living my life instead of waiting for it to come along. Now that she's gone, it's like I'm weightless, floating through these days in Berlin without beginning or end; a melancholic state without happiness or sadness. It's not emptiness I'm feeling either because, creatively speaking, I am full – clear and in control of what I'm making. I miss life though – I can't stay dead forever, can I? I've been smoking cigarettes to remind myself that I'm not dead yet. A lot of people are nervous about the election tomorrow, but I'm not. I am certain Obama will win.

12.

It's 12:22pm. I just woke up. Barack Obama is the new president of the United States! I just watched his acceptance speech on CNN. Tears came to my eyes. I can't believe it. Lost Weekend, Mr. Polite, and I went to an election party last night not too far from here. The room was filled with young Americans and cigarette smoke. A lot of excitement. CNN was projected on a large screen in the corner of the room. Every time Obama won a state we cheered and every time McCain got one we'd boo. It's odd to watch all this happen from across the Atlantic. I am sad to be so detached from my own country. I may go home in December. I'm fucking depressed. Yesterday was an emotional day and I broke down and wrote Good Morning a short email asking her how she's doing. No response.

It is not difficult to be alone if you are poor and a failure. An artist is always alone – if he is an artist. No, what the artist needs is loneliness. – Henry Miller



13.

I'm totally wired again and it's the middle of the night. My mind is going a mile a minute. I've been on the computer for most of the day chatting with various people and sending out emails. Good Morning responded today – she wrote a nice, thoughtful email. Of course, I already made the mistake of sending one back – overly emotional. I feel a little foolish. It's just crazy how she affects me – she's like a drug. Just seeing her name in my inbox makes me jittery like I had twelve cups of coffee. My palms were sweating so much I could hardly type. She told me she moved back to New York from LA and that career opportunities are looking up.

14.

It's 6:19pm and it's black outside like a giant void. I'm listening to *New Morning* by Bob Dylan. I am calm. Stapling canvases. Sad. The usual.

15.

My reading light is illuminating the room. I hear drunk men and women in the street screaming and laughing. It's hard to put into words, but there is something magical about this city. I had a good weekend – can you tell? Peach Tree came to town late Thursday night. She looked beautiful and sturdy like the wind couldn't rustle her branches, even during a winter storm. We shared the bed on Thursday night in the room that used to be her room. It was good to have a warm body next to my own. After dinner on Friday night I met Good Memories at Bar 3. It was packed. Peach Tree was there so I went over and said, "hallo." I switched from wine to beer and smoked a handful of cigarettes. Peach Tree and I didn't talk much – she's the strong, silent type. That's what I like about her – we have an understanding. We ended up here in my bed later in the night. The fucking was better this time around – better than the first time we did it about a month ago. Maybe all the booze helped. Anyhow, I didn't see her yesterday. She had a dream last night that we were walking down the street together in the rain, arm in arm. I was smoking and I told her it was like smoking glue. The smoke was sticking to everything and we just kept on walking through it. She didn't know what it meant and I can't say I do either. I may see her in Paris this weekend because we both have friends with art openings there.

16.

I swear to God every day is the same here, the same dreamlike day over and over on a loop. Today, I woke up at noon instead of 1 or 2 because I had to meet a painter that a friend in New York suggested I visit. The painter spent a lot of time showing me his work. Some of it I liked, although, all and all, he revered paint in a way that I



simply cannot relate to. When I say paint, I literally mean paint. The guy loves paint. There was so much paint everywhere I thought I was going to have an anxiety attack in his studio. It's 5:06pm and I already think of nothing but going to bed.

17.

Today, Tuesday, was another peaceful day. I slept in until 1:30pm. Then I got in the bathtub for an hour. Then I ran a couple errands. The light as the sun was setting this evening was beautiful – pinks and purples and all that jazz. I didn't paint much today. I'll get back to it tomorrow.

18.

I'm waiting for Lost Weekend to call me because we have dinner plans. Mr. Polite went back to Los Angeles a few days ago. Lost Weekend will be joining him soon. They're in love and they want to start their new life together in the sunshine. I don't blame them. As for me, I can't see beyond the grey skies of Germany. I haven't eaten much today except a couple corncakes with peanut butter. Here's another excerpt from Tropic of Cancer:

Let us have a world of men and women with dynamos between their legs, a world that produces ecstasy and not dry farts. I believe that today more than ever a book should be sought after even if it has only one great page in it: we must search for fragments, splinters, toenails, anything that has ore in it, anything capable of resuscitating the body and soul. It may be that we are doomed, that there is no hope for us, any of us, but if that is so then let us set up a last agonizing, blood curdling howl, a screech of defiance, a war whoop! Away with lamentation! Away with elegies and dirges! Away with biographies and histories and libraries and museums! Let the dead eat the dead. Let us living ones dance about the rim of the crater. A last expiring dance, but a dance!

19.

I just smoked a hand-rolled cigarette with my head sticking out Peach Tree's window. Lost Weekend and I had our last dinner together at the Vietnamese spot – the noodles are starting to taste like mush because I go there so often. It was good spending time with Lost Weekend without Mr. Polite. I like Mr. Polite, but you know – sometimes it's just nice to have a friend to yourself. It's hard to believe our time together is coming to a close. I'll miss Lost Weekend a lot. I'm sure I'll see her again before too long. I hope so anyway. It's only a matter of hours now before I catch that plane to Paris to meet Peach Tree.



20.

Paris. I'm on a tiny bed in a tiny room on the 3rd floor of a rickety old hotel on a tiny street. Exhausted, but somewhat content from the roasted chicken and vegetables I just ate for 4 Euros. The entire day was spent traveling, but no hang-ups – easy breezy. I'm reading a new book, which is holding my attention – *Bardot Deneuve Fonda* by Roger Vadim. It's Vadim's story of his life with these three extraordinary women.

21.

Sitting in the Rennes subway station on my way to the Eiffel Tower. I'm wearing a beret. Just kidding. Anyway, now, I'm sitting on a green park bench looking at the Eiffel Tower, which is about 1,000 feet in front of me. The Paris weather today is the same gloomy weather you get in Berlin and everybody can feel winter approaching. Thursday night I went to some little opening with a friend and some friends of friends and so on. I don't really know any of these people. After the opening, we got invited to this amazing meal, paid for by the gallery. Yesterday, I wandered around the city alone. I went to the Picasso Museum. It was great to go in alone and just wander through the rooms with my own thoughts. Then I bumped into another artist in a random convenience store where I was buying razors and he was buying toilet paper. I bought him a coffee and checked out the little gallery where his girlfriend has a show opening later tonight, the show Peach Tree is in Paris to see. My cell phone hasn't been working so Peach Tree and I didn't meet until 3am last night. We have a habit of meeting late at night. She came back to my hotel room with me. We slept in until noon but didn't get out of bed until 1pm.

22.

Monday night. Back in Berlin. So, after the Eiffel Tower, I took the subway to the gallery to see Peach Tree's friend's exhibition. On the way, I bumped into another artist– a young kid from California who looked like my friend Van Hanos. I don't remember his name. We chatted about this and that on the way to the show. He was an intelligent, serious guy. He seemed extremely depressed. I liked him. The opening was pretty uneventful, but I thought the show was good. There were some paintings of matchbooks upstairs, which were well crafted and pleasant to look at. Of course, Peach Tree, who always wears black, was wearing black. After about half an hour, we got in a taxi and went over to the other opening across town. The 2nd opening was more crowded, but not packed - nothing like an opening in New York. After that, we went to the dinner with another guy who's also an artist. Everybody is an artist. You just can't avoid artists – they're in all the big cities. Everybody went



to some crazy bar after the dinner and got fucked up. The drinks were outrageously expensive, but that didn't stop us from closing out at 7am. Peach Tree and I were only able to sleep for three hours back at the hotel because check out was 11am. I'd originally planned to be on a plane back to Berlin at 7:15am, but Air France went on strike so my flight got cancelled. Peach Tree and I stumbled out the hotel door with our bags at 11am on three hours of sleep to a café where we sipped mint tea for five hours watching the funny characters outside pass us by. I think it was National Baguette Day because everyone who walked by was holding one. Peach Tree and I learned a lot about each other that day. I learned that she's never had a boyfriend and that she usually doesn't sleep with the same guy for long because she usually "hates" a guy after she's fucked him. I told her a little about Good Morning for the first time, but I didn't go too far into it and, oddly enough, it all seemed so distant that it almost felt like I was just inventing stories for the hell of it. Peach Tree and I eventually made it over to the airport, but her flight to London got cancelled at the last minute, so, after standing in line for two hours, we got a free room in a swanky hotel with a free dinner and a beverage. I only wish I had had my swim trunks for the indoor pool.

23.

Today I had a pleasant bike ride to the art supply store where I picked up twenty-four 12" x 9" canvases. I also bought some yogurt and bananas, which was a tasty breakfast. I spent the day in my bedroom studio – painting, thinking, reading, and doing emails. It's good to be back in my rhythm although now that Lost Weekend is gone there is much more room for anxieties to tap me on the shoulder. I'm worried about the economy and my financial situation. The money I have isn't going to last forever. I spent way too much on that Paris trip. What am I going to do when I run out? Peach Tree is in Poland on a school field trip. I told her to go to Café Camelot, which is where Lost Weekend, Mr. Polite, and I had lunch when we were there.

24.

Late November. The first time I woke up this morning at 11am it was snowing – the first snow I've seen in Berlin. I think snow will forever remind me of Michigan. I went back to sleep and woke up again at 2pm. I just had a bath. I'm reading *My Life with Elvis*, which is half boring and half interesting. Last night I went to this "Electronic Beats Festival" with two friends and another guy whose name I can't remember. I smoked a bunch of Marlboro Reds, which was fun at the time, but now I feel disgusting. I need to go buy some more yogurt and bananas and maybe eat some noodles. Eating at the noodle spot alone every night makes me feel like a weird loser, but it's so cheap and it's close to my apartment. I've started the process of transcribing my journals onto my computer – my mom sent me the original handwritten books. They date back to late 1998 and it's wild and freaky to re-



experience the past ten years of my life. Mood swings and girls dominate much of the writing, but there are all these little moments that really capture the feeling of a young artist's life in New York. I emailed Ross an excerpt from the day I met him (01/21/1999). He emailed back saying he thinks I'm a great writer and that he really enjoyed it. That made me feel good. I'm starting to think about giving New York another try. I still need time to get my mind centered. Maybe in six months or a year?

25.

I woke up two hours ago at 2pm. It's already dark out. Last night I rode my bike in the middle of a lightening storm blizzard to Good Memories' place in Prenzlauerberg. Not too far from me, but when you're getting pelted in the face with snowballs it seems much farther. Good Memories' place is rustic, like a little cabin in the woods – very different from my place, which is like a four star hotel by comparison. He had Xeroxes of his drawings all over the walls because he said he was trying to get organized. He showed me a photograph of an artist girl in New York he likes. He's nervous because she's young. I told him to stay away from the young ones because they'll break your heart. We each had a beer. He rolled up a hashish joint while I smoked a hand rolled tobacco cigarette and told him about Paris and whatnot. Around 2am we took his dog out. Then we went off to find an open bar on our bikes. Everything was dead so we ended up at Bar 3 again, the spot where everybody knows your name. I've been emailing with Ross – I sent him a few more excerpts from my journal. I asked him how New York is right now and he replied, "It's awful here...I don't remember a time like this ever! All anyone talks about is the economy...like nothing is selling anywhere. Nobody is selling. Blah blah. I'm trying to cut expenses...I think I'm gonna cut back...maybe it's better to stay there (Berlin) till things pick up a little and just concentrate on getting blowjobs."

26.

One of the things I love the most about Berlin is that even on a Monday morning the city has all the quiet charm of a small village. I went to bed last night at 5am and somehow miraculously managed to get out of bed this morning at 7am to go deal with the issue of obtaining a Visa. I saw two cars collide on my way there. Nobody was hurt.

27.

Jesus Christ. I just woke up and it's nearly 5pm. It's pitch black outside. It looks like the inside of a cave deep in the earth where millions of bats hang upside down. I missed the entire day. I feel so relaxed and clean because I just took a hot shower



and ate an apple. I've been intensely preoccupied with transcribing my journals so my sleeping schedule is all screwed up. Tonight, I'm supposed to meet some German artist who shows at Fancy Pants Gallery. A critic friend of mine in New York gave me his email and referred to him as, "one of the most dapper and gentlemanly people I know." Fancy Pants suggested we meet at a club in Mitte. I don't want to go, but I have nothing else to do and he did seem sort of interesting on the phone. I'm not quite sure what to do now - do I eat breakfast, lunch, or dinner? It's all very confusing.