

The first time Parker and I properly hung out, under the premise of putting a show together, the conversation drifted to the topic of dating. As it tends to do, with Geminis. Parker shared his belief that every functioning couple comprises one person who is the flower, and a person who is the gardener. He has flower tendencies, he added, a bit bashfully. I told him that I'd encountered a different dialectic, and that it has, lamentably, never proved wrong: in every relationship, there is a peasant and a noble. It's a quote from a short story I once read, about a feuding couple on vacation in Europe, which I can no longer find.

In lieu of having a boyfriend, I spend a lot of time with my best friend, Tica, going on walks with her dog in the morning and getting matcha, visiting stores, doing some leisure shopping. In the nearly ten years I've known her, Tica has never appreciated having her picture taken. But on one particularly beautiful spring morning at the Arroyo last year, she reached for a blossom on a tree branch, pulled it down to her cheek, and told me to take a photo. I grabbed my phone and snapped it. "My father told me that, if someone takes your picture, you should always pose with a flower," she explained. He passed away just before Tica turned thirteen.

I first met Parker at the after-party for *Longevity Buns*, in early February of 2020. I was a little starstruck; in college, we all thought Parker was the coolest shit around. It was the last opening I attended before the world shut down. My then-boyfriend installed the show and later gave me one of the live orchids that had lined the gallery's walls, slowly wilting in lockdown. Three months prior, I had lugged a large-format camera to Salt Lake City in order to photograph a national orchid show and competition, organized by the Utah Orchid Society. I wanted to disprove this then-boyfriend's assertion that, as a photographer, I was strictly a hobbyist. (Yes, it stung, but he wasn't entirely wrong; like Parker, I had never emphasized technical virtuosity.) Operating a 4x5 camera requires substantial skill and diligence. You need a stationary subject when you're first starting out. Orchids seemed like suitable, compliant candidates. The photos I took of the best-in-show flowers were boring, a total bust. But the competition itself—its technical, totally enigmatic aesthetic criteria—and the judges—old white guys in checkered shirts, fleeces, Oakleys—were something else.

Parker and I are making a show about pictures, photographs, images, whatever, but ultimately what I think we're both jabbing at is the social conditions under which images—including images of art—are crafted and sorted, classed into high or low, deemed hobbyism or mastery, for the peasants or the nobles. To maybe loosen the tourniquet of "taste" a bit and see what comes gushing out. Pierre Bourdieu called photography *un art moyen*, or a "middle-brow art," and wrote that it couldn't become an autonomous medium, outside of its function of—literally—taking family photos. This is largely why I was so struck by Tica's remark about her father that day. And why I think it's amusing and a bit mischievous to scan spreads of Jules Olitski books, making reproductions of reproductions of his paintings, which were so *esteemed* by Greenberg at one point, to use the Kantian phrase. Parker invoked a crap metaphor here, so I'll sign off with TJ Clark on Breugel: "shitting was something [he] habitually painted with affection and seems to have meant it as a sign of life going on regardless." It wasn't "so much cocking a snook at the Law as putting the world of culture in perspective and showing us what of nature will never say die." x