

“TEST MYSELF”:

THE ARTFUL SOLACE OF SARA BAUME'S *A LINE MADE BY WALKING*

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“[W]e humans have a tendency to engage in thinking about life (instead of just continuing to live it) when we are made to confront the prospect of death.”

(9)



JEDEDIAH PURDY

ENVIRONMENTAL IMAGINATION:

“how we see and how we learn to see, how we suppose the world works, how we suppose that it matters, and what we feel we have at stake in it” (6-7)



SARA BAUME

(1984)

- 🍃 “maker of books & miscellaneous objects” (@saraofthebaumes)
- 🍃 “drawn to paradox, and to form” (“Wisdom” 246)
- 🍃 “an underlying sense that the world is dying” (Pilný 197)

A LINE MADE BY WALKING

(2017)

In this paper, and through Affect Theory, I analyze key intermedial connections that illuminate Frankie's characterization and study the author's weaving of an autodiegetic narrative and pictures of dead animals—a personal bestiary that encompasses the character's reflections on humanity, its scope, and its ensuing responsibilities. I contend that through this acute juxtaposition of the artificial and the natural the novel results in what the protagonist herself defines as “conceptual art: by means of nominal material, vast feeling is evoked” (43). In doing so, Baume offers solace amidst the ongoing global crisis and reminds readers that there is hope in how we decide to negotiate our connections with the environment.

SHORTLISTED FOR THE GOLDSMITHS PRIZE 2017

'Original and affecting.' OBSERVER

'Mesmerising.' SUNDAY TIMES

SARA BAUME



A LINE MADE BY WALKING

'Extraordinarily compelling.'

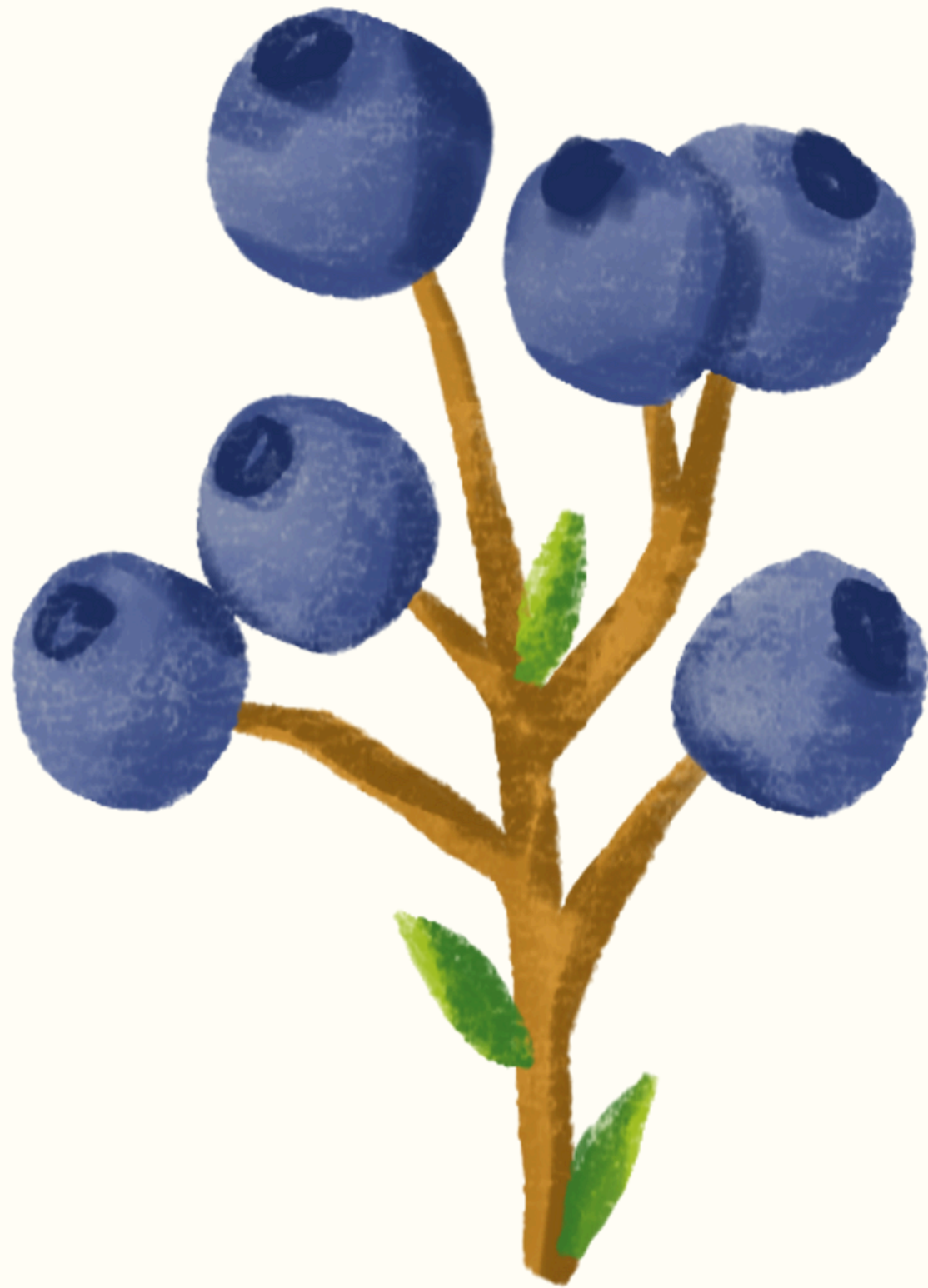
SPECTATOR

'A piece of raw invention.'

GUARDIAN

'A writer of outstanding grace and style.'

COLUM McCANN



BAUME

- ✦ “[T]rying -not-to-cry had become [her] normal state” (Baume 97).
- ✦ “My small world is coming apart because it is swelling and there’s no place for me any longer” (11).
- ✦ “[H]appiness deficiency” (97).

AFFECT THEORY

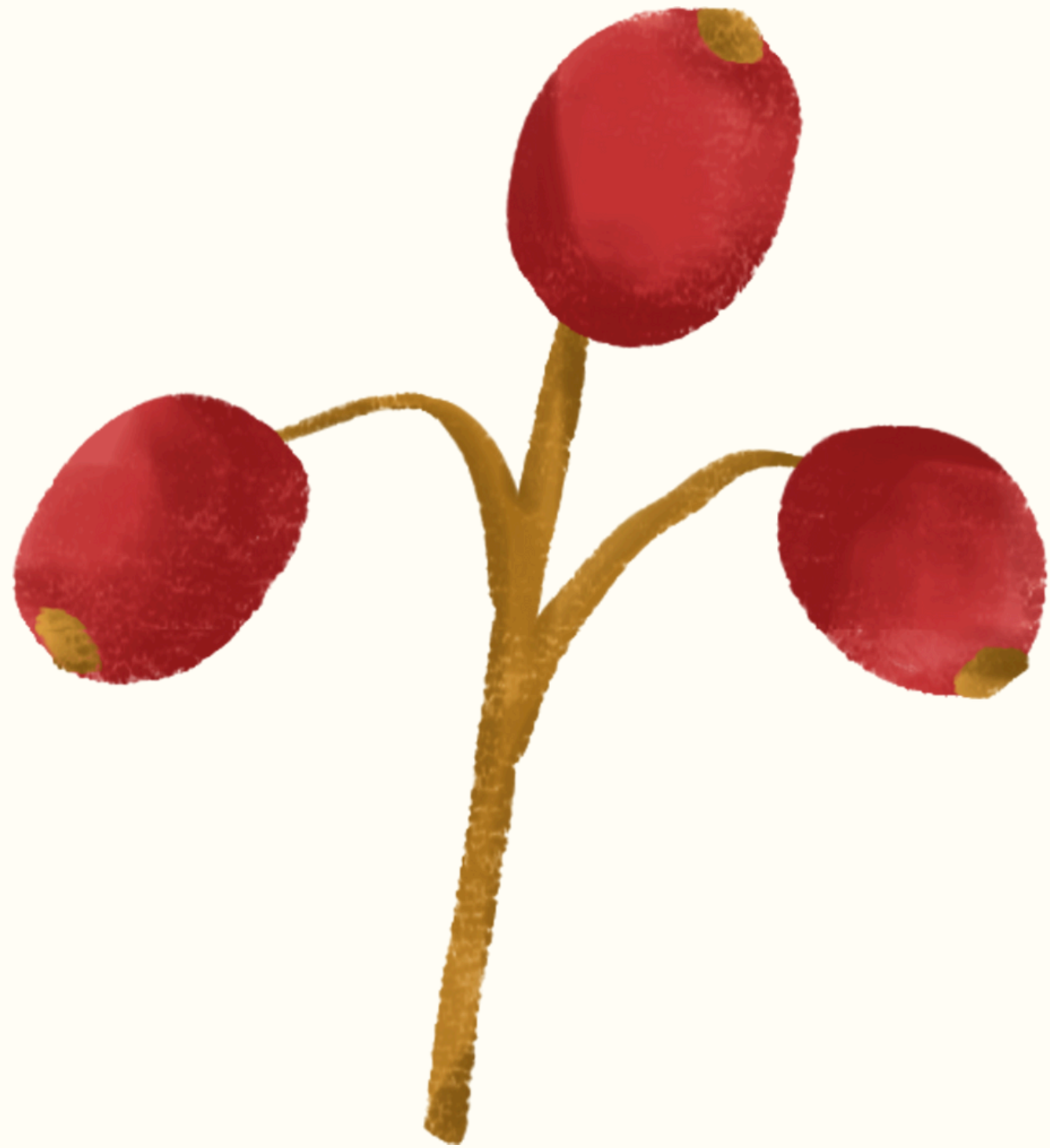


- Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seignworth: **affect** is “found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise)” (1)
- Eric Shouse: **affect** as a “non-conscious experience of intensity; ... a moment of unformed and unstructured potential.”
- Ondřej Pilný: “radical openness to the other” (202).



Encounters at the End of the World (dir. Werner Herzog, 2007)

“[D]eranged penguin” (Baume 201) that, without logical explanation, walks in the opposite direction to its fellows and “towards the hostile, boundless, mountains” (28) and, therefore, to its death.



BAUME

- ✦ “penguinlike” (95)
- ✦ “I want to go home” (15)
- ✦ “everybody’s pursuits are essentially useless” (240)
- ✦ “The world is wrong” (28)
- ✦ “[T]o be an acceptable member of society but to be able to be my own bones both at once” (118)



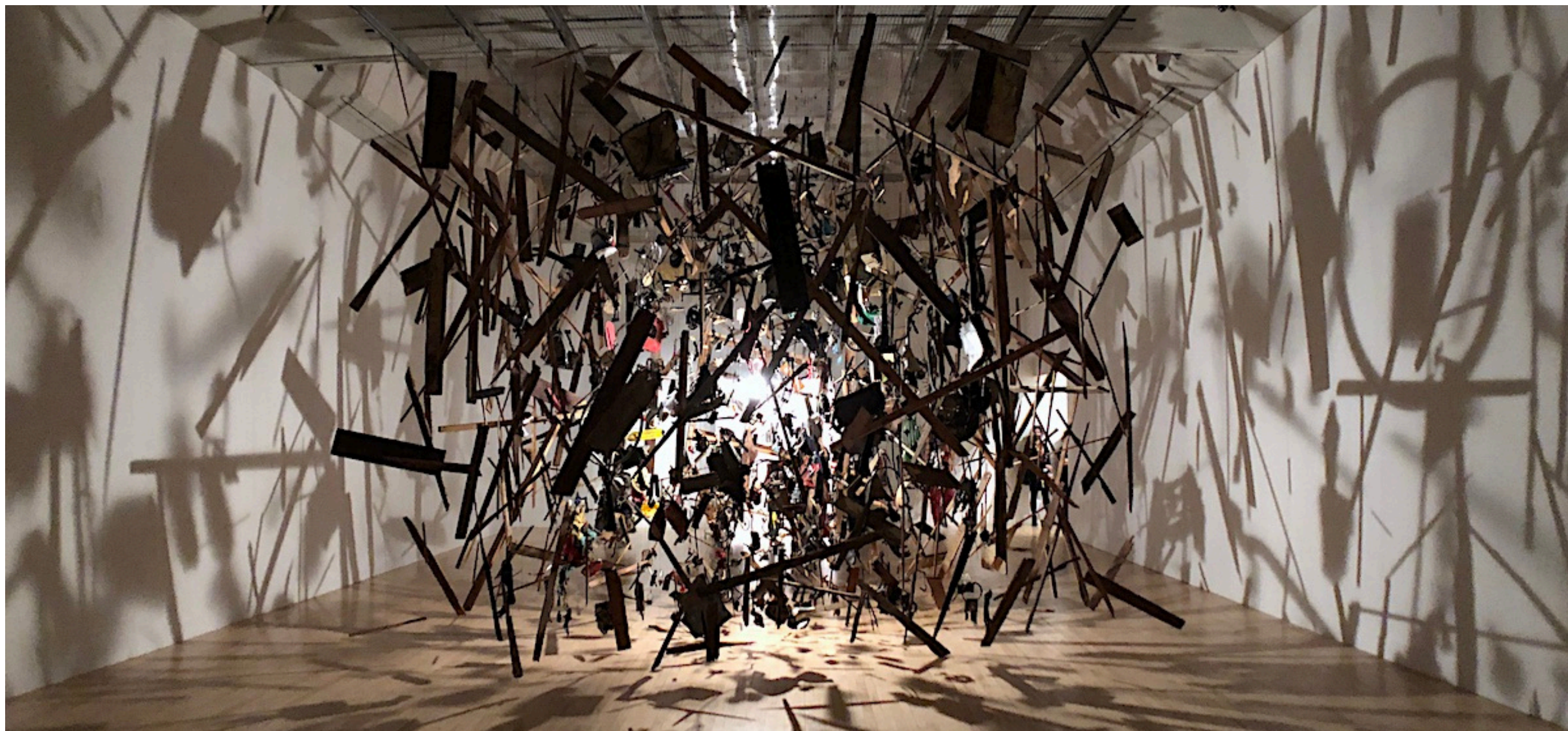
My Bed, Tracey Emin's (1998)

“[T]he easiest piece of art in the world with which to identify” (Baume 40)



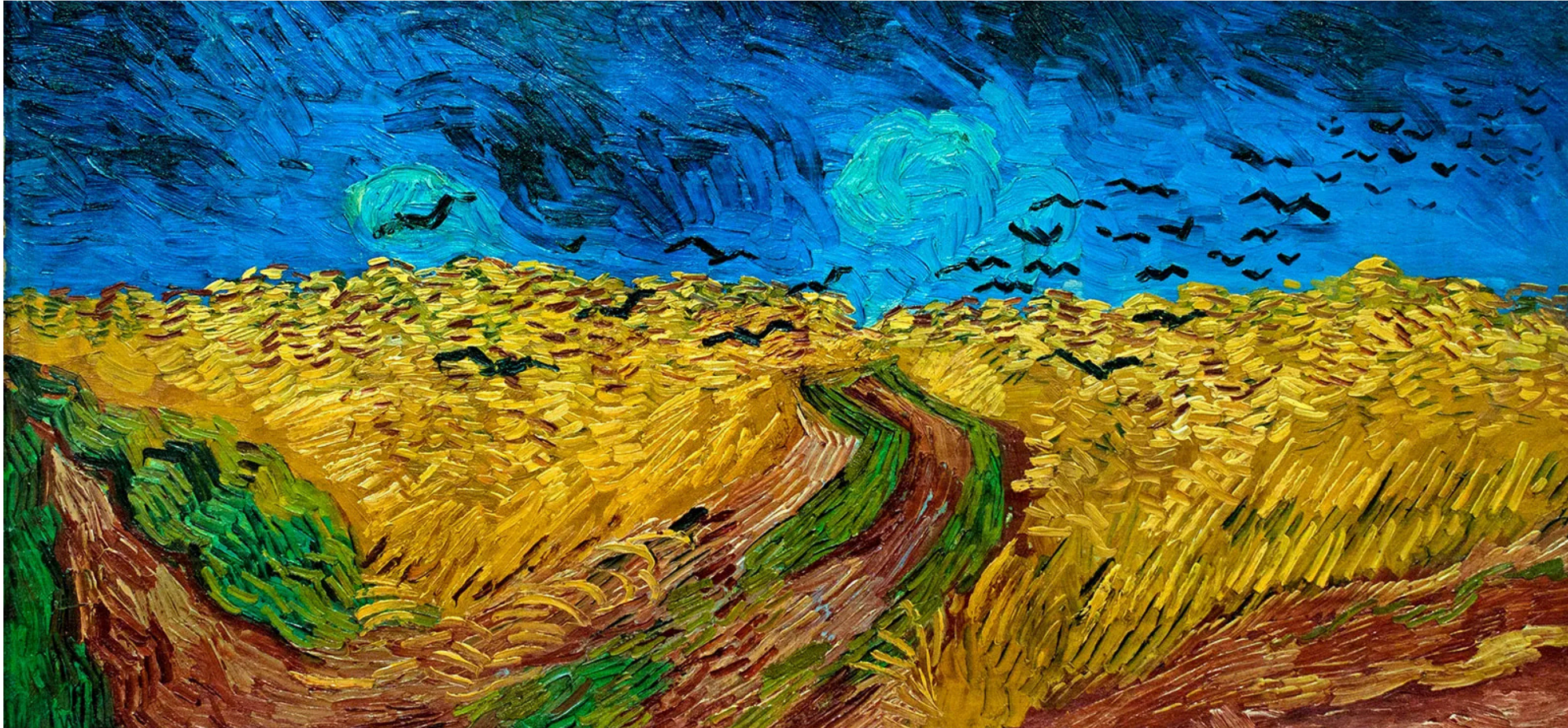
BAUME

- ✦ “condemned by formal education to rationalise, conceptualise, interpret. Not just think, but rethink. Not just look for meaning, but make meaning all by myself” (159).
- ✦ “I made myself up as if I were art too” (159)



Cold Dark Matter. An Exploded View, Cornelia Parker (1991)

“[T]his is something else the best of art does: the seemingly impossible” (Baume 69)



Wheatfield with Crows, Vincent van Gogh (1890)

“[A] line made by walking” (Baume 89) | “[T]he sadness will last forever” (90)



BAUME

- 1 “I’m not allowed to photograph a creature I kill myself; this would only encourage unnecessary barbarism. Or a creature which is wounded but still alive; this would be unnecessarily irreverent” (110).
- 2 “[N]o pets, only wild things. So it can be about the immense poignancy of how, in the course of ordinary life, we only get to look closely at the sublime once it has dropped to the ditch, once the maggots have already arrived at work” (112).



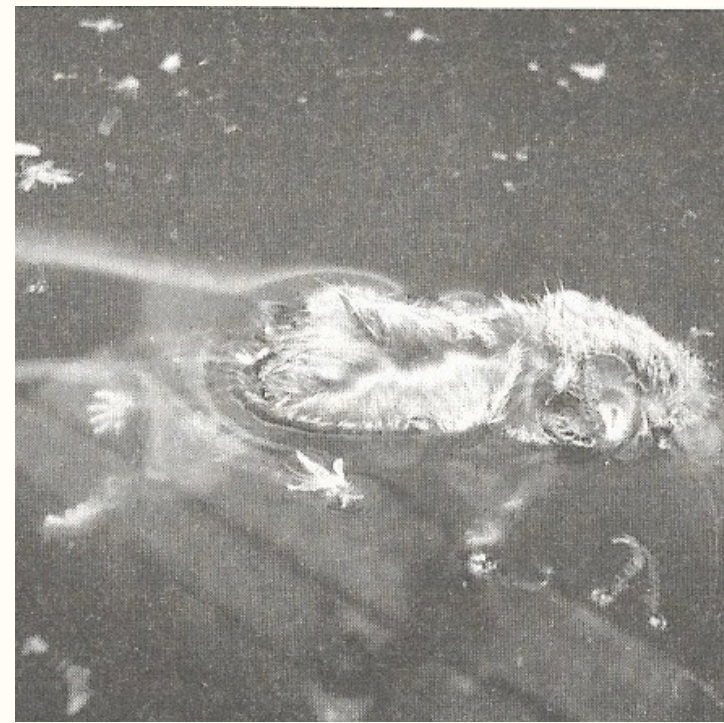
(1) ROBIN



(2) RABBIT



(3) RAT



(4) MOUSE



(5) ROOK



(6) FOX



(7) FROG



(8) HARE



(9) HEDGEHOG



(10) BADGER



Signs that Say What You Want Them to Say and Not Signs that Say What Someone Else Wants You to Say, Gillian Wearing (1992-93)



A Line Made by Walking, Richard Long (1967)

“[B]arely-there art. Pieces which take up as little space in the world as possible. And which do as little damage” (Baume 224)



BAUME:

We are all an enormous waltz ... Our limbs know how to follow the rhythm, like throats to swallow, lungs to breathe. Even though there are no fixed moves, no steps. The waltz is spontaneous, speculative. Some get to join in; others don't. Some end up waltzing against their will.

(137)



BAUME:

“[R]ebellion against ordinary happiness is the greatest vanity of them all” (206).

7000 Oaks, Joseph Beuys (1982)

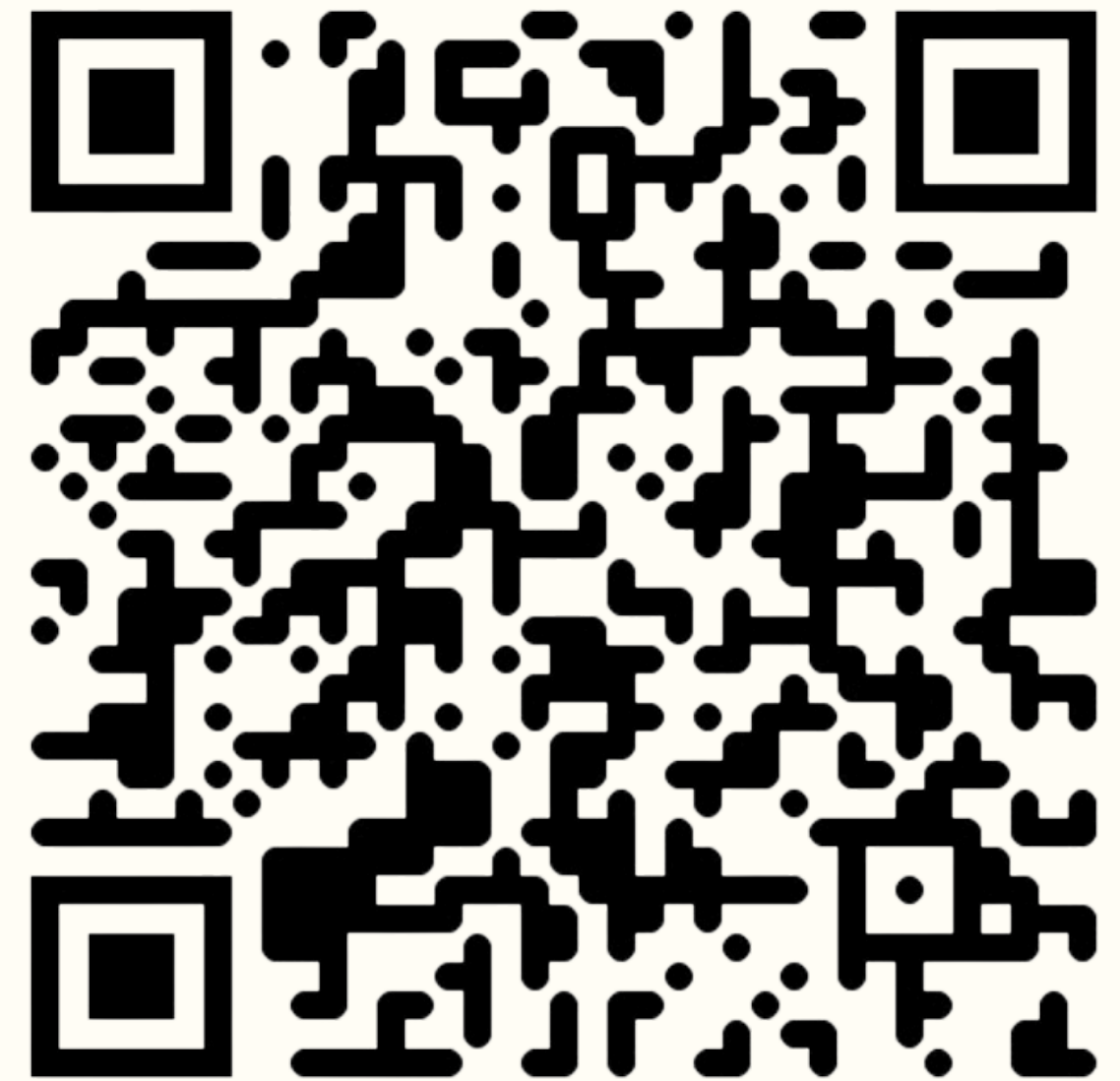
THANK YOU



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