

Emilio

Say I knew Emilio Cruz over forty years. That seems right. Maybe more, I don't want us to sound too old. But then to be really on it, specific, I'd say I knew Emilio best when I lived down here among the Dangs. And him every other day or so, Him , William White, Bob Thompson and I'd have to throw in Joe Overstreet. Notice I sd Throw. We was most tight. My man, Vincent Smith, I'd known longer than any of these dudes except White, But vision this bunch as the Arty Bloods I was closest too. Some of yall knew this little knot of talking talking cussing cussing signifying signifying, laughing, yeh laughing laughin laughin Negroes. Yeh we used to laugh. At any and every, why cause think about it like this, if we wasn't gonna laugh we wdda had to kill a buncha folks, I mean daily.

Of this group Emilio had the most violent, or say the most artistic disposition. Some negroes wanted to shoot dope, some wanted to get drunk or suck they knuckles, some wanted to wheez when they was laughing and take the nut line in any conversation. And some just wanted to knock somebody out. Not just fight , but knock em out.

Emilio and I was athletes. The rest of them dudes cdnt play nuthing but they mouth, and that smoking Art they was turning out. But me and Emilio style ourselves fantasy Olympians. Me I cd play anything. Hear that. But where me and Emilio used to get down was playing baseball or softball.

Every Sunday we would go to some field somewhere in the West Village, with a bunch of other painters and poets and play at least one nine inning game of soft ball. Then go somewhere and admire ourselves with drink. And Emilio could play. He was a short stop most times. Fast, slick, not as slick as he thought he was, but slicker than most of us. He'd stick that apple wheel around and fling it to first base, then pop his fist in the glove, wham. Dig that. Got that somebitch, you dig! Yeh, we'd shout.

But the one thing about Emilio that I'd never forget and if you know his work, his art, you probably can sense it. Maybe. But Emilio had the worst, or the quickest, and the most consistently explosive temper of any creature in Cristendom. In fact, part of my weekly gig was pulling Emilio off some ill fated lame who had ventured an opinion Emilio took as too ignorant to be accidental, or some affront, real imagined or unspoken, and boomaloom . Emilio wd be on them like Lon Chaney, Jr, Full Moon style.

See , a lot of you folks didn't know one of my early gigs was as Kofi Anan of the Lower East Side. And people used to wonder why Emilio was so quickly . urgently violent. Some people used wonder that about me, as drawn to peace as

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I was. The under theme is that the violence , in word and deed, was as an honest replication, a forthright reflection of the place itself.

Remember, all this is pre-Malcolm. This is right around the time Dr King and them walked that walk in Montgomery, a minute or so before Fidel Castro y Los Barbudos lit up Havana with the light of self determination. And all of us, at least the folks I valued most, were leaning into that rhythm, were feeling those vibes even then. We was being whatever skewed version of the near future we could pick up there , here in the craziness.jungle of lower east side Greenwich village usa.

Even much later when I wd check Emilio's violently striking work, human beings assaulted/absorbed by animals, truncated into inanimate subjects, or having their heads and bodies punctured by giant nails, it confirmed for me the negotiated rhythms by which we moved and lived among the so called great artists and intellectuals of the planet. Whether it came out of our mouths, on our canvases, in our scripts, or right there on the baseball field or Cedar tavern, where ever we might be accosted by the foolishness of illegitimate domination.

But then I remember next, and actually deepest, Emilio's howling laugh, like an all-clear signal after an airraid. Especially that was something among the talking talking talking, arting arting arting, laughing laughing dudes that we was. That was daylight confirmation of our intelligence and love for each other and all that was worthwhile, to us, in the world.

So the idea that now there is only Overstreet and Me from that bunch makes me need to hear Emilio laugh again. Makes me understand very very clearly the huge nails stuck in the black dude's skull. The head poking out from under some phantasmagorically outsized thumb.

What we were prefaces too was our own growth, & the past which remains alive as a confirmation ^{that} we understand ourselves. In that craven haven of the informally insane, we had to thrive, to stay alive, and so we used our selves in ways that were like our soul's demanding, yet to breathe, no matter the ghost who clutched at us always was wholly un-

For my man, & from the underseen trap door of our immortal nexus, we were taught on the street, with our hearts and by what we loved, to be always the opposite of silly silent Negro Nuts. . Our nuts was ^{made} from stuff in the sky. They was them. We was not brilliant, we became more than that & so like our best Fathers, could still Shine!

Now, when they wants to go off & check unseen , it makes it difficult to make young whip snappers believe you know what u talking about !

~~Now~~ that funny laugh!

suburban

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In these scramble of words, we was the movement becoming itself as whatever aspect of itself it could then muster. Even your Eulogist has some parable of rep for quick draw mouth & tong & hammer. To be ourselves before we cd as we were becoming, past that where but on it, going to it and so to see Emilio's mature work was pre-understood by us from his projection of himself way back.

Dig?

A person's life , said Keats, "is an allegory".

Later

What some folks, whom others cd rightfully claim were "brilliant", miss is that Emilio was not harsh, he was intolerant with misunderstanding of the obvious. And this trait endeared him to me and me to him. We wd thrust into your "discourse" from reality whether you have a value for it or not. This could cause an indiscretion of a fantasy or naïve politic.

Plus there was, nor is, no conceit too great for us to challenge with the measure of our own emotionally held intellectual winnow of bullshit our then still developing, later more fully constructed organic , instant disperser of jive

And the lames (presidents and worlds) which used that to travel.

Emilio
know
what
me

See you later, man....in a minute, actually!

(Roi) Amiri

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