



## Giving Way to Itself: Confrontations with Becoming

*On the Images of Keira Kotler*

Daniel Coffeen • September 1, 2009

We see colors, soft, even luxurious. They seem to invite, to beckon. But linger with them. These are not peaceful. They are not meditative. They do not confirm their space, blending seamlessly with the decor. They do not confirm the viewer, reassuring her that her life is fine the way it is. Nor do they offer an escape, a respite from the fray, as if they were a portal to serenity.

On the contrary, these images are remnants of the fray itself, moments of the great undulating that is life, that is the always urging always surging of this world. These images are moments of the teeming — physical, affective, sensual, emotive — that swarms and swirls about us which we tend to miss, ignore, tune out. But here they are now, impossible to ignore, confronting this space, confronting the viewer — tumult, even if rarely tumultuous, in our midst. It's as if the volume of life has suddenly been turned up.

The experience is a tad unsettling, uncanny: we know what this is and we don't know what this is. We reach out, try to grab on to something but there are no lines, no forms, no concepts — nothing to hang on to, just intensities, mooded undulations. They provide neither entry nor escape; the images neither recede nor protrude: they confront. They insist on themselves, on their place right there, right now, confrontations with becoming.

It's as if Kotler has summoned all her strength to hedge, contain, and amplify the very flutter and throb of the cosmos and present it to us. These are not images of the world; they are amplified fragments of becoming, the patina of life. Somehow, she has managed to transport to us these micro details of experience writ large. What generosity!

How does she do it? Photographs, paintings, videos: these are the technologies Kotler engages to stipulate, embrace, and transport the cosmic surging. She is not the classical artist who lends form to the formless, Yahweh with his clay. She is not the Romantic, spilling her inner self across the canvas in some act of passionate expression. Her hand is nowhere to be seen. No, she is a modern artist who stands amidst the cosmic winds and hedges here and there, steering these powerful forces into a specific site — this frame. Look at the images: this containment doesn't come easily as they bleed over the edges, looking to extend themselves, unleash themselves.

The cut paintings seem, perhaps, to deviate. But look again. Are these cuts a portal, a way through, a revelation of something else? No. There is nowhere to go, nothing else to see. Where is the cut, anyway? It's not at the surface, revealing the depths. It's immanent to it, a portal to, and of, itself. It's as if this clearly artificial cut with its impossible geometry has reached through in order to teach us what we need to know, what we need to see: this world only gives way to itself.