



Lazarus G. Humphreys

Dots on Glue

By Lazarus G. Humphreys

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On my kitchen island, in a single bedroom apartment in downtown Tucson, sits an unfinished Diamond Painting. It's a large one, a hundred and twenty centimeters by sixty. It's of Chinese mountains and cranes in flight. It's a peaceful image; Solitary, like the hobby. Yes, you can have another person also take up a pen and help, but for the most part you are sitting alone listening to a podcast or YouTube video of a person, or group of people, that feel like friends, but really just mold themselves to give you that impression.

With each dot placed the picture becomes clearer. Like pixels on a TV, the image sharpens.

I like to imagine the many dots as little people. People formed in neat and orderly rows, one by one. I think of stock video footage on Sixty Minutes interviews; of people walking up and down a boulevard, going to work, running errands, with a narrator speaking over them about the obesity crisis, or the opioid crisis, or the housing market crisis, or the immigration crisis, or the refugee crisis, or the debt crisis, or the internet crisis, or the birth rate crisis, or the illegally downloaded music crisis, or the voter crisis... there's been a lot of crises. which ones are actually a real threat? I don't know.

I don't think Barbara Walters does either.

But she, and other faces such as Brian Williams, Anderson Cooper, Tucker Carlson, and other late-night anchors will have you believing the world is ending because fat people and immigrants exist. Will stir the public in just the right ways to fear thy neighbor and buy into the newest diet trend, and of course make you believe that every four years there is going to be the most important election of your life.

But don't despair! There are hobbies that take the stress of existential dread away!

"Diamond Painting, the new hobby sweeping the nation. Helps with anxiety and depression!" So the ad says. Honestly, I just like the pretty pictures and the sense of accomplishment I get after the sometimes months I go working on a single project. But sometimes there are huge swathes of a single color and when you're placing thousands of beads you need a multiplacer tool, it definitely has its flaws; like how the larger the multiplacer the worse your lines will become, leading to more problems later on in the piece. Without careful placement everything can go to shit real fast, throwing lines off, and making the whole picture a mess if not caught quickly enough.

Is being greedy really worth it if you are just going to screw up the collective?

"Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen says about her startling testimony: The thing I saw at Facebook over and over again was there were conflicts of interest between what was good for the public and what was good for Facebook. And Facebook, over and over again, chose to optimize for its own interests, like making more money." This from a CBS news source. I find a lot of the companies I buy my Diamond Paintings from through Instagram, which is owned by Facebook. They know me well, and based on the accounts I follow, the ads I stop and watch, and the tags I look at, it knows that this is a hobby of mine.

Instagram also knows that I'm pagan, into politics, and just generally into all things Nordic.

If you've been to the darker corners of the internet, you already know where I'm going with this and the accounts and people I've been suggested to follow. I was a sheltered kid, homeschooled, with very conservative parents. There were a number of "odd" ideologies I had been exposed to and called bullshit on by the time I was allowed anywhere near social media and the wider world of the internet at fourteen. My sister was not so lucky, and got sucked into the... not pipeline, so much as the sewage drain that is the Alt-Right at twelve. Because as every older sibling knows, the minute *you* get a freedom *they* get the same. It started so innocently too. She was our father's golden child, he made fun of her for not knowing the Pledge of Allegiance at one of her volleyball tournaments and after looking it up on YouTube her fate was sealed. Her whole social media feed at one point was nothing but such chuds as Ben Shapiro, Stephen Crowder, and Blaire White.

Say what you want about it, but at least Tumblr didn't turn me into an Alt-right twerp.

I lost her for about five years, until some of Trump's more detestable moments and ultimately abortion rights were what broke her out of it. Her "bead" got straightened out, but how many others are still displaced? Due to the nature of these websites like YouTube and Facebook, people who can't recognize a dog whistle to save their life get sucked up into these conspiracies without knowing because these algorithms are primed to show you what will get engagement. A like, a scathing comment, a watch, a follow, and before you know it your aunt, who joined facebook for yoga tips and recipes, is now refusing to get the vaccine. Your grandfather who loved football and kids, now thinks there are secret tunnels beneath a pizza place in Washington D.C. to traffic children for the Clinton's sex ring. Or the coworker who was a late bloomer and

lonely because of it, became one of the evil few who screamed “blood and soil” at Charlottesville.

So many avenues one can go down to fuck up their life.

Now that all these beads are screwed up, by using a multiplacer can any of this actually be salvaged? Was it worth the time you “saved” by having to now take a pair of tweezers and pull each bead up one by one, which ruins the glue underneath and wastes even more time? At this point it might just be better to trash the whole thing and start over again on another one.

Make something better.

The Zucc will never do this. Facebook, even though it inspires dangerous conspiracy theories and terrorist attacks to be waged on America and her people, makes money, a shit ton of the stuff, and it uses it’s algorithm to do it. The same algorithm that has led so many to be introduced to such ideologies of hate and fear, loathing, and desperation. You can smell it on people after a while. A putrid funk that lingers after certain inflections of *those people*, a wave of fetid air when the names *Soros* or *Rothschild* pass lips greased by foul words, and a cacophony of horrors to flow out the mouth of those who dare talk about *Cultural Marxism* or *International Jewry*.

But it’s not entirely Facebook’s fault. The problem was already present in America’s (and the world’s) politics.

No, Facebook, and other sites, just heightened it. Just heightened the absolute shit they put on T.V. to be “fair and balanced”; the racism, the anti-Semitism, the climate denial, the vaccination fearmongering, the homophobia, the transphobia, the islamophobia, the sexism, the blind nationalist propaganda, the defense of “lone-wolf” shooters, and the licking of the boots of

corporations that pay to watch the poor of this country die in wage slavery. Go and suck an actual cock, it's less degrading at this point.

You thought I was just talking about Fox? Fuck no.

Every news station will entertain this shit for views. They will turn their back on actual activists to use the most diluted, over exposed, and horrible debaters, to be the face of a movement, the easiest to swallow of any given *controversial* group to quiet the *unruly* and *uppity* ones. The ones that want such things as *equality* and *human rights*, a *living wage*, and *dignity in one's life*.

"How horrible!

"What's that? You'll riot like papa told me people used to do if I don't entertain the thought of giving you those things? Fiiiiiiiiine, but dance for me first. Make a mockery of yourself, piss and cum a bit in your pants, and I just might give you things like liberties. Ugh."

Too far? Fine. I'll tone it down.

I was recently listening to an episode of Chapo Trap House (I know some of you stopped reading for a second, hold on) while Diamond Painting, entitled: "PMC shopping feat. Catherine Liu". Go look at the episode if you want an actual synopsis, but the part that stuck out to me was when they starting talking about Dr.Spock's *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*. Which was sort of revolutionary in the post war era for its lenient approach to childcare summarized in it's first line.

"Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do."

Amber mentions how, with the spread of suburbia after the war, mothers no longer had the help of their mothers and grandmothers. Nobody to tell them *things would be ok*. The book has many flaws associated with it now. And I wouldn't want it anywhere near me when I have kids. No, I have my own ideas for child rearing that I'm sure will be horribly outdated by the time the things turn eighteen. My mother went it alone, and my sister and I are fine...

-ish.

Not to toot my own horn here, but I think my sister and I are the perfect examples of what happens when modern American isolationist tendencies go a bit too far. My mother had no grandmothers to ask advice from, being as they were both dead before she had my sister and me. My Grandma, my father's mother, was never maternal and kind of despised babies, despite having two, and was dying at the rate of molasses my entire early childhood. My Nana, my mother's mother, thought I was the Antichrist for a couple of years because of my father not being Christian. My sister and I, and our *issues*, to her were just confirmation that we were sent to our mother as punishment for her marrying a nonbeliever. The issues in question being: Type 1 Diabetes in my sister's case, that they hoped she would die from. And for me: ADHD and a false diagnosis of Asperger's that they thought I would be put in a home for.

To make a long story short my mom had no help in raising us at all, and we were ~~probably~~ better off for it.

We were both also homeschooled. Public (or private) school isn't *great* for kids with disabilities, whether physical or mental. Which lead to a crippling lack of socialization, being as my mother is a borderline agoraphobe she is so introverted. And my father's brain had already turned to mush from too much Fox news before we were born. To put my childhood into

perspective: imagine the last two years of covid-time, but your entire life; Leaving the house only once a month, the internet and books being the only place of refuge and escapism, being told the outside world would kill you if you set foot in it, not knowing what day or time it really was at any given point, walking around aimlessly in pajamas for weeks at a time, all of your school being done online and without classmates, feeling like a caged animal, with a brain now, that makes up things in the corners of your eyes, to make sense of why you feel watched in an empty house, to explain why you still feel bad after your bare needs of food, shelter, clothes, and water are met, they have eyes, maybe that's why, they give off a bad aura, maybe that's why.

You feel bad... Why do you feel bad...

There's a part of Diamond Paintings that's called "confetti". It's when a section on the canvas cannot easily have one color applied to it at a time. It's a pain in the ass having to switch colors so often; needing multiple trays laid out for each color is a hinderance, but it needs to be done for the picture to come out correctly. Each according to their need and each according to their ability.

Every bead working beside the other to show the bigger picture in solidarity.

When it's finished you take a step back and you feel like God when you look at it. Every bead coming together in harmony to show brilliance captured. There are flaws, but all in all not too bad. Time to pack up this kit and open another. Maybe this *is* how God feels.

When he left us.

I lay out the new canvas on my kitchen island, in my one-bedroom apartment in Tucson. One of many apartments just like it in this building. On a city block where there is one other

skyscraper full of offices, in the metro area surrounded by railway and freeway alike, a transient city where many different types arrive here for many different reasons.

A lonely city.

The only thing you have in common with strangers is just that; you're strangers. We don't even have remembering *Breakfast at Tiffany's* in common. Maybe we would have even both kind of liked it, maybe we wouldn't. When do people become not strangers? When you can remember a face? A name? When you exchange phone numbers? Or meet in person? Maybe we are all actually strangers to one another, forever, till the end of all time.

Maybe it's the one thing we've got.

Or maybe, it's that America became so focused on white expansion, industrialization, and the tearing down of community, that we lost a fundamental part of ourselves. The human part. We were not made to die to oil the gears of capitalism. Industrialization was supposed to make our lives easier; to make it so that another may not starve to death, that one may have decent and functional clothes on one's back, have clean and nourishing water to drink, and a sturdy and temperate home to return to after a fair share of the labor to be done according to one's abilities.

In preventing utopia, we have brought about hell on earth. I guess that is the bigger picture at the end of this essay. Huh.

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