

DALE ROBERTS

The Nearness of Green, 2016
Encaustic on panel, 41 x 45 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

JENNIFER PENKETHMAN

Art is the Opposite of Evil

(an excerpt from *Extinction*)

“I’ve been feeling very . . . different lately,” Hamilton Davis was explaining. We were on a dirt path, along a mostly-dry concrete riverbed, which seemed to follow parallel to the town. I wondered how I’d never encountered this particular spot before. Angela was walking several feet behind us, gazing at the landscape.

Hamilton Davis continued: “It’s like I . . . was going on one path, and then I all of a sudden realized I was actually going down a totally different one. I’ve felt like that a lot, since I met you.”

I looked at the ground, waiting for the moment to pass. Angela did not register any reaction that I could tell.

“It’s like, before I was seeing silence as kind of a growth, like it was something in and of itself,” Hamilton Davis said, both slowly and quickly. The phrases themselves were quick, but spaced between beats. “But now I can see that it’s nothing, it’s just death, just letting things rot and die for no reason, just because I feel sad, or because I feel bored, or apathetic, or whatever.”

“Uh-huh,” I said.

“I’ve been writing so much poetry,” he went on, “and it’s all about—about how I think I’m lost in this forest, right, but I realize that this was where I was trying to get to. Like all the time I was somewhere, when I completely thought I was nowhere, or if not nowhere then somewhere else entirely.”

“Like inside and outside,” I said.

“Sure.” Hamilton Davis seemed to have broken through some kind of verbal limp. “Although I’m interested in what you have to say about all of it, I mean, what you think of all this crazy stuff.”

“She thinks you’re crazy,” Angela said, and she did it in just the right way, pitched right between seriousness and irony, that we all laughed.

“I think . . .” I thought. “I think it’s entirely possible that there is a space that we can’t even access, or think we can’t. I think there’s some kind of space we can’t get to.”

“Yeah, that’s exactly it,” Hamilton Davis said. “Like I thought I knew where that space was, before, but now I really know where it is, and I really know how to get to it.”

“So how do you get to it, then?” This was Angela.

Hamilton Davis looked down at the ground, grinning. “I guess it just has to do with love, that’s all.”

She shot me a definite Look, one I didn’t respond to.