

The Artist
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Claudette was not a gifted artist, but she was a competent one. Though her drawings were imperfect to the trained eye, they offered a flair of drama that attracted the untrained. Her work was done mostly in pencil, which prolonged their sense of unfinishedness and primed her lack of a professional portfolio. Every drawing remained, ultimately, a sketch, a leaf in the book of a prolific, but ultimately amateur, creator.

It wasn't merely a lack of discipline that confined Claudette to the pencil. Her training through the years had been spotty, and none had ever guided her hand with a brush, nor taught her eye how to apply color. Instead of painting, she always found herself simply drawing with paint, leaving expectedly questionable results. The pencil was simple. The pencil was familiar. It could be sharp, dull, light, dark, precise, smudged, scratched, but the soul of it was always the same. Maybe it was its callowness that really drew those to her art.

But of the figure, Claudette was a master. Though her hand may have been too impatient to reflect it, Claudette's eye was a vigilant observer of the human form. On paper she often couldn't be bothered with the foundations of better drawings—spheres, simple shapes, measurements of proportion—but in her mind she never failed to break the anatomy down, even when she wasn't drawing, even when she wasn't conscious of it. Mostly it was not her own lack of patience, but that of others that prevented Claudette from working from models, but every person she encountered became a subject. When waiting at the patisserie, she silently and hungrily dissected every inch of the baker. Her gaze memorized the roundness of his belly, the rhythm of the line that connected one arm to the other across the back, the subtle outward inflection of his elbows as he casually wiped his fingers upon his apron. Total strangers, friends, even lovers ceased to be the bodies of fellow persons, and all became Claudette's secret sculptures, even if she could never hope to reproduce them with the objective perfection with which she saw them.

Yes, Claudette's artistry was far more internal than what ever came into the view of her observers, but so long as she herself knew this to be true, competent was a happy enough place to be.