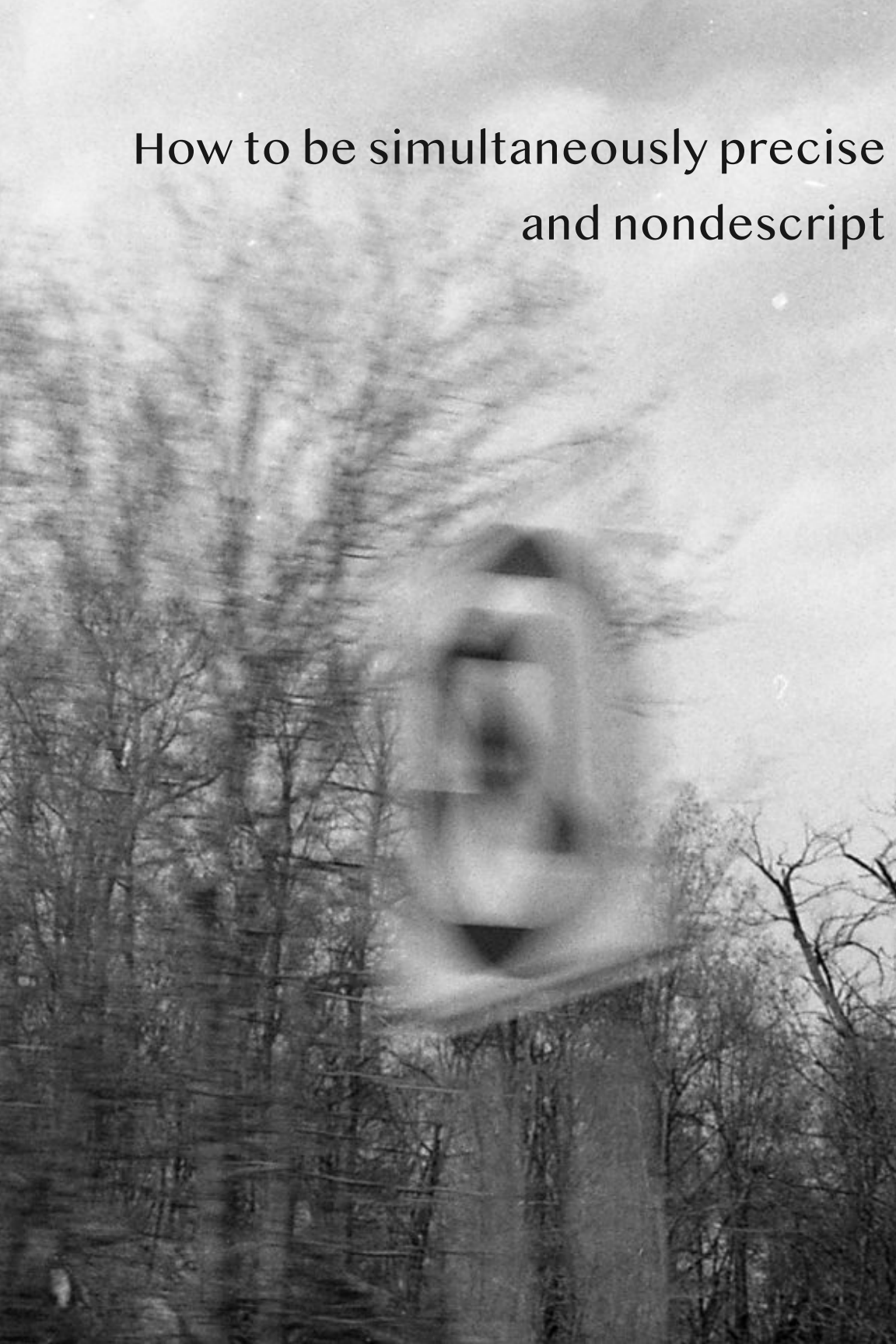


How to be simultaneously precise  
and nondescript



# **How to be simultaneously precise and nondescript**

**McKinzie Trotta**  
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A few weeks ago, I found myself awake too early. A man called me down to the parking lot. It was cold. Quivering under the overcast sky, I stared at the headlight of my vehicle, six feet from where I left it. The police were on their way for almost an hour. In that time, I thought about targets.

*It is more difficult to hit a moving target.* I've lost sight of the circumstance that first taught me this lesson. I know I have heard it often, never needing further explanation. The phrase is direct. The image it evokes is even more poignant. I imagine the moment lobbed up like a slow pitch softball. I scan for the target, standing in uncut grass somewhere between a fence and a lot. On the cusp of a wilder place, trees shake in the breeze. The cap might blow off my head as goosebumps crowd my arms. *Tree shadows shake too.* The wisdom is imparted. With one eye closed, I shoot. As pleasant as this composition is to picture, it evokes no actual memory. The advice is so worn out with daily application, it is unmemorable.

I do remember archery in tenth grade P.E. Stationary targets were set up behind the gym. As we were given quivers of arrows a boy shot (without aim) an arrow as far and high as he could physically manage. Disturbed, Mr. Brandt immediately concluded the archery unit. The rest of the semester we played a much safer sport, dodgeball. Dodgeball is the perfect activity for this advice. Still, I cannot recall referencing the phrase while trying to dodge

a hurtling ball. If I ever thought it, it is beyond common to the point of an internal murmur. Like telling myself the color of the sky; of course, every time I peek outside, I note the color. But, not every time do I note that is what I have done.

As I stood by my car, I kept coming back to the phrase. *It is more difficult to hit a moving target*. This time, it was not just a passing platitude. I thought more. *Just as it is more difficult to intentionally hit a moving target, a moving target is simultaneously more difficult to intentionally miss*. It might be easier to hit a moving target if what one is really trying to do is miss it. Isn't this why car accidents happen? People hit the thing they are by all means trying to avoid. Everyone is in motion and despite mostly going in the same direction, a collision. This may be common sense, but it left me wondering how someone still managed to hit my parked car. It became clear, he was not looking.

Artmaking feels like it can parallel one of these concepts. Not an accident I try to avoid or a target I try to hit; rather, it is like shooting high and far in the direction I want a target to be and then sprinting along the trajectory to plant the target before arrow meets earth. Archers draw their arrows. Artists draw their targets, sometimes still managing to miss the mark (I know I do). It is this state of simultaneity that interests me. *How to be simultaneously precise and nondescript?* I ask this question often. I thought the

more I wrote it in my notebook, the better I would know what I really meant by it.

These are not naturally conflicting states of being, precision and nondescription. To be precise is to hit your mark. Nondescription is everything that is not the mark. To be nondescript is to be markless or simply unremarkable. Ordinary. The nondescript details do not ask questions; they fill out the picture. The challenge is obscuring the line between what is intended and what just happens. I find this is only worth doing when the intention is art.

What has happened has inevitably happened, and what is yet to happen will happen eventually. The actual challenge becomes making work that embraces the inevitability of its own creation. Is a work “made” the day it is finished, or is each work an absorption of *everything* that came prior? I question the ownership I have over the artworks I produce. I talk about how artmaking feels like planting targets. But, as I hunch over with a cramp in my side (remember, I’ve been sprinting), I know the target is where it was always going to be; whether I hit it or not has long been determined. Being an artist gives me permission to suppose there is a chance I too can be God. However, reality is the antithesis of chance. I am content enough to make a successful work, and simultaneously recognize it was an accident.

As my graduate studies end, I mostly miss the conversations between friends. We spent hours at a time entertaining the “trenching questions”. My friend would joke, “If someone offered you 2 million dollars to never make art again, would you take that deal?” My answer was then, and still as I write this, an easy “No.” Another, “If the world was ending in just four hours, who would you spend the next four hours trying to see one last time?” I had an answer then, it has since changed. “Thesis” was always in the background. I had no ideas. “If the deadline is next week or even tomorrow, what would you do?” This unfunny joking always led me down a rabbit hole. “There’s no way.” I said, every time. There is no way I could produce my thesis in a day, certainly not on purpose. “But you know it would be done.” He said, every time.

The conversation would shift, but I still went through it. *What supplies do I have right now that could amount to a viable work? Won't the pressure alone make it impossible? Were the hours spent making something else a waste? Will it be obvious I made this in a day?* For over a year I casually thought about how this might play out in theory, all while working toward “thesis”. It became clear, an accident can be embraced as the catalyst for something that happens on purpose. There might actually be a way to make the thesis in a day, if that was not what I was aiming to do.

I did not wake up on the fifth of May with any intention. I was woken to a call. Soon as I recalled my car had been away, she told me it was fixed. *I should make my way to the auto shop.* The weather was nice. On my way, I decided to make photos.





































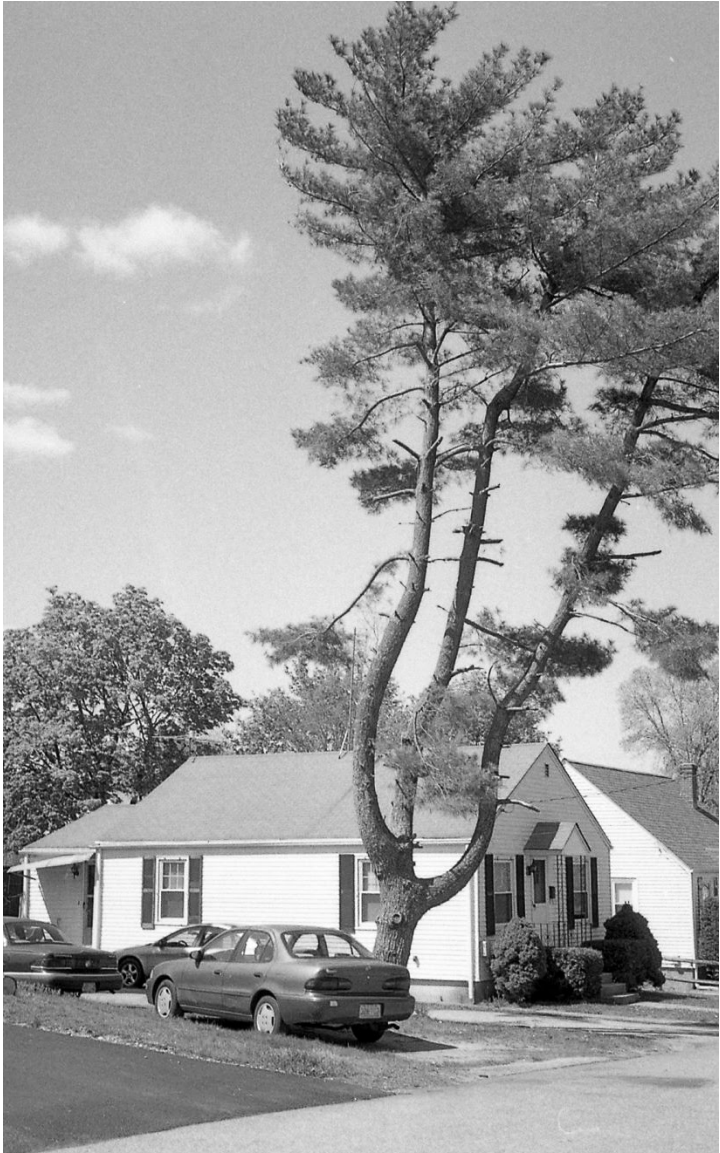












## **Acknowledgements**

To the man who hit my car, though I missed your name, I  
appreciate your negligence, nonetheless.



McKinzie Trotta '20