

*Sunday, December 04, 2005*



On an early tuesday morning in December 1980 my dad and I were having breakfast. We were still in a state of half sleep and were drinking big cups of tea in order to wake up. In the background the radio was playing 'Across the Universe' of The Beatles. Afterwards the announcer said: 'this song was sung by John Lennon who has deceased tonight.' I became wide awake and my first thought was: 'No, this can't be true'. Then I stunningly heard the story that he was murdered at the entrance of his NYC apartment, shot by a fool. I remember that it hit the news and shook the world like the assasination of JFK. As a reaction I made a drawing titled 'The dream is over' with two mourning people (based on a frontpage image of Yoko Ono seeking comfort with producer David Geffen) and a ethearal portrait of Lennon in the background.

And it felt like a personal loss to me. I wonder how come, as I never met him in person. I think there are two main reasons.

Firstly, Lennon is showing himself through his songs. The loss of his mother( 'Mother') , his mood ('Help", 'I am so tired', and 'Crippled inside'), and the love for his child ('Beautiful boy') . All the songs are sung in his characteristic high voice with his Liverpool accent which is so familiar to us.

Secondly, reading his last interviews with David Sheff, I could imagine his story so well. For five years he retreated from music business to take care of his son and was starting a make a come back in music ( 'Just like starting over') , but four bullets destroyed these plans. He ended up dying in a police car speeding to the hospital. One songline of him is often quoted: 'Life is what happens to you while you are busy making other plans'. And one of his last recordings is '(Living on) Borrowed time'. His solo oeuvre is limited and feels unfinished. For instance, I love the song 'Grow old with me', but the sound quality of the demo is painfully bad. He did not have the chance to complete it.



I also appreciate Lennon as a graphic artist. Before he started playing with The Beatles, he was an art student at the renowned Liverpool School of Art. He kept drawing during his whole life, also in order to illustrate his books of poetry and to entertain his little son. His drawings show his good sense of humour. I think this well resembling self-portrait done with just few lines and colors is masterful.

The same day as the tragedy there was a photo session with Annie Leibovitz. The result is a very intimate picture. It has prophetic qualities. Yoko is dressed in black. John is nude. On the sharp photo you can see the freckles on his skin. He looks vulnerable in an embryo position. At the end of his life his pose is the same as in the beginning. And it is like he is making a big farewell kiss.