

Strawberry Fields Forever

by John Olson

Yesterday, I went to see the picture framer. I asked him if he could frame a color for me.

What color, he asked.

Strawberry, I said.

You mean red.

Yes. Red. But not just any red. The red of strawberries.

Strawberries on a June morning with the dew still on them. Lush strawberries. Big strawberries. Strawberries drugged by a cocaine sun.

Let me see your sample.

I showed him the sheet of paper that I had folded in my pocket.

He looked confused.

This paper is blank, he said.

Yes, I said. You have to imagine the color of strawberries. There is nothing literal about the color of strawberries. It is a beauty too celestial for this world. It can only be imagined.

I see, he said. I believe I can do that. What kind of frame would you like?

I pointed at a walnut frame with a satin finish.

Fine, excellent choice, he said. I can have it ready for you tomorrow.

I returned the next day. He showed me the frame. And the color within the frame.

It's perfect, I said. How did you do it?

I imagined strawberries. I imagined them lush and wet with dew. I imagined them among green leaves in a plot of rich black dirt. Then I imagined the frame. I imagined the frame dimensions. I imagined the miter box and handsaw and sawed the imagined wood into 45 degree beautifully imagined angles. I imagined the glue and corner clamps. I imagined the nails and hammer.

This is beautiful, I said.

Thank you, he said.

How much do I owe you?

\$500 dollars.

I gave him five \$100 dollar bills.

What is this? he asked.

Five \$100 dollar bills.

All I see is paper.

Once more, I said, you must use your imagination.

