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There's a nimble fire in all things as Piero saw

Even the most violent passages conceal stains of beauty on which the artist shines

an ultraviolet light like a forensic analyst in search of evidence

excluding no hypothesis

from all that heaven allows a radiance in the trees illuminates the wild hunt that begins

once primal man learns how to set fire to the woods and flush his prey panicked beasts devour one another

bear on wolf lion on bear and man beside centaurs and fauns upon them all

Each slays whatever is in reach



Order begets chaos gods or monsters

Epimetheus fashions Adam and is turned into an ape

Prometheus his twin is gutted like a fish Zeus to torment Hera

defenestrates his own child Hephaestus who then teaches men the art of war

In the Visitation John and Jesus are unborn

In the Strasbourg panel Christ is a baby John's almost full-grown and a radiant

Magdalene dandles the squirming infant

Florence thought Piero strange and wild for making these delectable attractions



Vasari says he lived on boiled eggs and glue

could not stand crying babies clanging bells or chanting friars that he shunned amusement

pursuing his own reveries across the browning summer fields

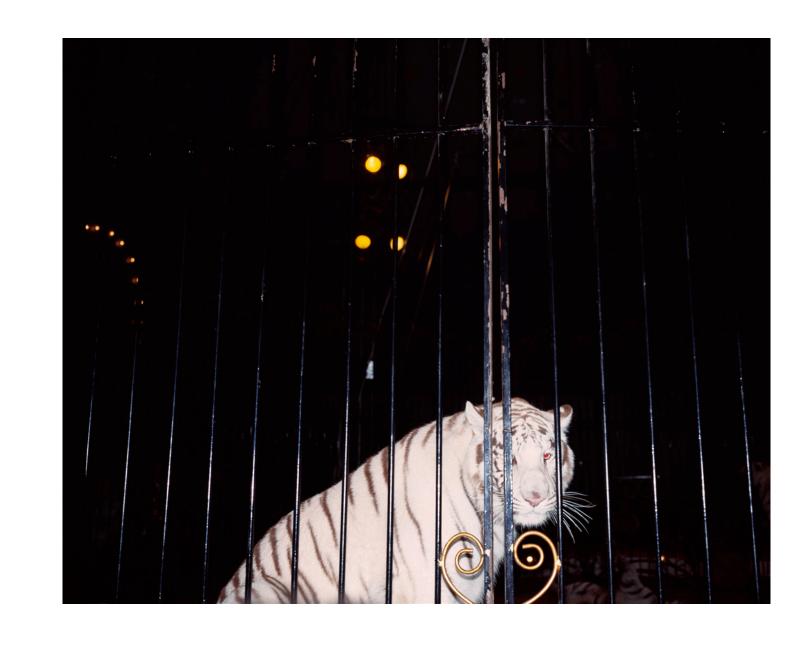
Yet the canvases are antic

Animals and human beings propagate

The biology of sex is there and not in their abundance

A dog spies a fainting nymph a rabbit prods the flank of Venus

sperm-like tadpoles populate a pool at Mary's feet becoming frogs



The Renaissance still trusting metaphysics

saw perfection in the circle John of Patmos conjures a snake that coils up like smoke

Even Magdalene can't take her eyes off his bewitching loveliness while alone

among all nature's flourishing shapes Patmos hesitates and doubts

Resting with books open at his feet

he foresees like Dürer's angel no end to waiting

With each page a door is closed

But the next overleaf reveals an open window

