

The Eyes

One day, I must have been about twenty years old, I had been painting a canvas for weeks. It was so large it took up almost all my little room, and the work wasn't going at all well. All of a sudden, carried away by rage, I violently erased what I had done. And in the middle of the canvas I saw eyes. Eyes that were both terrifying and extremely familiar.

I stared, immobile, at this *thing* until nightfall. I couldn't manage to look away. I belonged to it: it was me. I could feel my heart beating very rapidly, and I was crying. Finally, in the night, I managed to cover it all up.

Today I still don't know where this gaze came from. It appears and disappears continually in my work. It's rarely too violent: it's just at the limit of what I can manage to bear. Even when it isn't there, I know that I am watchful, trying to retain its presence.

For a long time I thought that the day that I first caught sight of it came too early, and I wasn't ready: I thought that one day I would manage to face it down, to make it appear permanently, and after that I wouldn't need to paint any more. But now I believe that I'll keep seeking it until I'm worn out, and that I will never go through the looking-glass.

Mâkhi Xenakis 1993. 2009.