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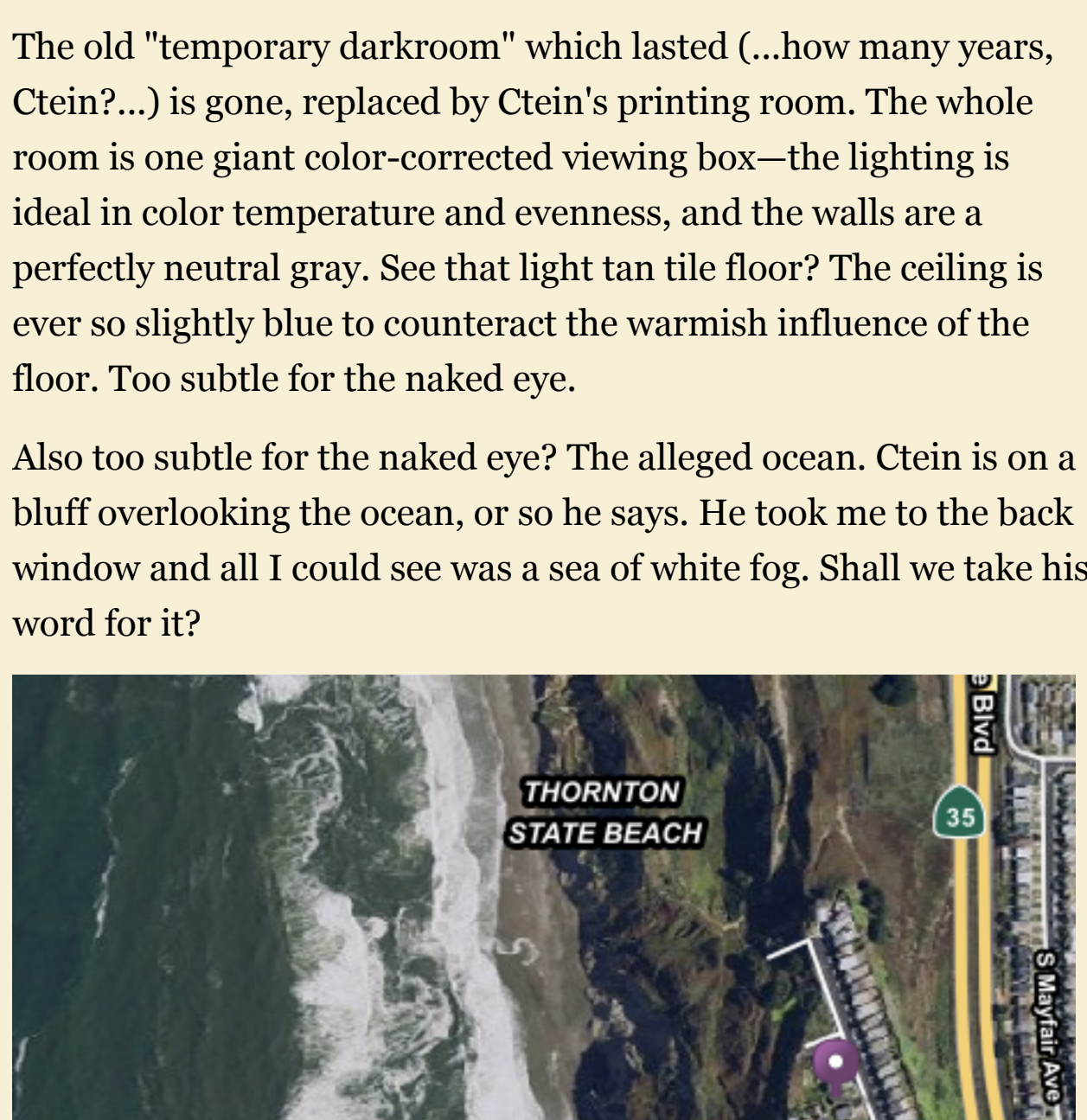
Saturday, 13 June 2015

Ctein In Situ

Siri guided the rented Volkswagen to "[Answer to The Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything](#)," Skyline Drive, number 42. In Daly City, inspiration of the old Malvina Reynolds folksie song:

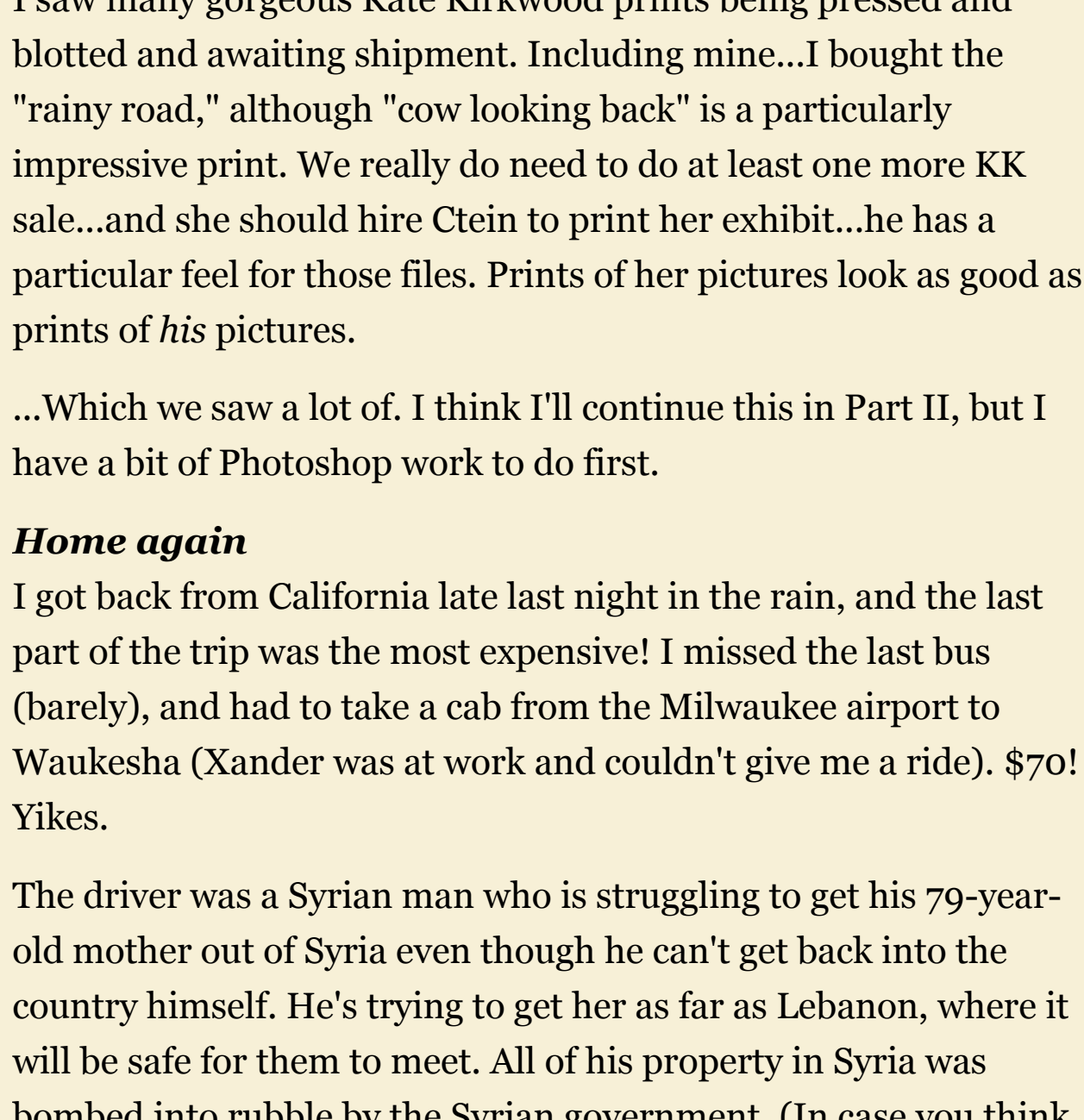
*Little boxes made of ticky tacky,
Little boxes on the hillside,
Little boxes all the same.
There's a green one and a pink one
And a blue one and a yellow one,
And they're all made out of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same.*

(Of course they don't all look just the same. The original little boxes are now valued as "midcentury modern" architecture and cost three times what my house in Wisconsin does. As I learned in several ways on this trip, people who bought in California decades ago and stayed put for a long time were very astute investors.)



The old "temporary darkroom" which lasted (...how many years, Ctein?... is gone, replaced by Ctein's printing room. The whole room is one giant color-corrected viewing box--the lighting is ideal in color temperature and evenness, and the walls are a perfectly neutral gray. See that light tan tile floor? The ceiling is ever so slightly blue to counteract the warmish influence of the floor. Too subtle for the naked eye.

Also too subtle for the naked eye? The alleged ocean. Ctein is on a bluff overlooking the ocean, or so he says. He took me to the back window and all I could see was a sea of white fog. Shall we take his word for it?



The Internet says it's there.

I met his African Grey parrot, Elmo. Elmo declined to talk to me much, except when Ctein said "Let's count--one, two, three..." and Elmo the parrot said "...four." Trust Ctein to have an arithmetical parrot. He likes to hang from his hell and have his red tail pulled! (Elmo, not Ctein.)

I saw many gorgeous Kate Kirkwood prints being pressed and blotted and awaiting shipment. Including mine...I bought the "rainy road," although "cow looking back" is a particularly impressive print. We really do need to do at least one more KK sale...and she should hire Ctein to print her exhibit...he has a particular feel for those files. Prints of her pictures look as good as prints of his pictures.

...Which we saw a lot of. I think I'll continue this in Part II, but I have a bit of Photoshop work to do first.

Home again

I got back from California late last night in the rain, and the last part of the trip was the most expensive! I missed the last bus (barely), and had to take a cab from the Milwaukee airport to Waukesha (Xander was at work and couldn't give me a ride). \$70! Yikes.

The driver was a Syrian man who is struggling to get his 79-year-old mother out of Syria even though he can't get back into the country himself. He's trying to get her as far as Lebanon, where it will be safe for them to meet. All of his property in Syria was bombed into rubble by the Syrian government. (In case you think you have problems.)

Parrot picture coming up, and some thoughts triggered by some of Ctein's photographs. Please stay tuned. More soon.

Mike

(To see all the comments, click on the "Comments" link below.)

Featured Comments from:

Geoff Morgan: "I trust the parrot is also neutral grey. A little like having a flying white-balance target, I suppose?"

Posted on Saturday, 13 June 2015 at 01:13 PM | [Externalink](#)

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Comments

Ctein is on a bluff overlooking the ocean, or so he says. He took me to the back window and all I could see was a sea of white fog. Shall we take his word for it?

You bet. I've only been there a couple of times, walking between Mussel Rock & Fort Funston. Interesting place to spend some time, and the first place I ever shot with my E-M1.

Posted by: [LeftCoastKenney](#) | Saturday, 13 June 2015 at 02:30 PM

You forgot to mention his red-tailed cockatoo. That bird wanted my wife's iPhone as never a bird has wanted something before...

Posted by: [EzraL337d](#) | Saturday, 13 June 2015 at 02:39 PM

San Jose Airport? Geez! We could have had you over for dinner...

Posted by: [G Dan Mitchell](#) | Saturday, 13 June 2015 at 11:08 PM

Eek! If you ever published a photo-map of where I live for the world to see I'd be pissed. Sorry, it just struck me as slightly invasive and not smart.

Posted by: [Tim Smith](#) | Sunday, 14 June 2015 at 09:05 AM

Was it fate or did Ctein purposely move into an address of 42?

Posted by: [Jim Wlkowski](#) | Sunday, 14 June 2015 at 09:30 AM

Ctein is a PK kind of a guy.

Posted by: [Rob Rominski](#) | Sunday, 14 June 2015 at 09:33 AM

Dear Mike,

The darkroom was there for 29 years. But you have the floor plan reversed in your head. I'm astonished you can't remember that kind of thing after a mere two decades-- the last time you visited.

The new print studio is at the front of the house. Where the bookcases are in the third photo here:

Ctein's Remodel Report

The darkroom was at the rear of the house, where the guest room and the new bathroom you so admired are now. Readers can see the edge of the black plastic walls at the right rear of the second photo in the remodel column.

~~~~~

I love the Malvina Reynolds song and regularly refer to this as "ticky tacky city" but it, in fact, turns out to be a base canard. Our construction manager on the remodel was very impressed at how sturdily the house was constructed (it was his first time digging into one of these Doelger homes). Aside from solid redwood being used for the entire structure, in real, old-fashioned dimensions

(e.g., a 4 x 8 beam really was 4" x 8", and the house has plenty of those) all the joints were solid and tight after 60 years and two major earthquakes. They didn't have to do any tightening up of the structure. A pleasant surprise. Probably explains why these houses survived those quakes as well as they did.

Of course, it's better now. Vastly improved seismic codes, which had jurisdiction over our remodeling (one of the major reasons for the skyrocketing cost and time). It's not just that the beams are bolted down to the foundation piers and there's stiffening plywood panels between all the uprights, there are strategically placed rebar concrete foundations in the floor bolted to strong walls. If you noticed the deep window-box style recesses in the guest room and Paula's den, that's the reason for those-- there's a whole set of seismic supports between the interior room wall and the outer house wall.

So far, the most tangible improvement in quality of life from the remodel (we are STILL rearranging and unpacking...) is that we have been mouse-free for an entire year! We had a perpetual, unfixable rodent problem for the previous decade. There were just too many ways for them to get into the house; it was simply too porous. But all the banging and construction drove them out, the remodeling wiped out all the old scent trails, and now everything is completely sealed up, both between the exterior of the house and the interior and between the garage level in the living structure upstairs.

Yes, they could work their way back in if they wanted to. But they have no incentive to do so.

Likely the most expensive home rodent elimination program in history!

Of course past performance is not a predictor of future returns (ahem). But we are hoping.

pax \ Ctein  
[ Please excuse any word-salad. MacSpeech in training! ]  
~~~~~  
-- Ctein's Online Gallery <http://ctein.com>
-- Digital Restorations <http://photo-repair.com>
~~~~~

Posted by: [ctein](#) | Sunday, 14 June 2015 at 01:29 PM

Dear Tim,

If your address is HIGHLY public information, as mine is, but you'd consider an aerial photo showing said address invasive, well...

... get over it, 'cause Google maps is gonna get you there.

Really.

pax / Ctein  
~~~~~  
Posted by: [ctein](#) | Sunday, 14 June 2015 at 08:18 PM

Any idea how stable that cliff is? Did there used to be more houses heading north on the coast side of the road?

I remember a Daly City cliff falling into the ocean during an El Nino winter, as California coast line does all the time. Some homes were redtagged, condemned. Others were close to being redtagged. A homeowner was livid at a city meeting, berating the Mayor that it he was the MAYOR and he had better DO SOMETHING to stop their home from falling into the ocean.

Posted by: [Dan Daniel](#) | Sunday, 14 June 2015 at 08:17 PM

What offsets the color effect of Ctein when he walks in? Not to mention all that brown cardboard?

Posted by: [Ted Durant](#) | Sunday, 14 June 2015 at 09:00 PM

Dear Jim,

Yes.

pax / Ctein
~~~~~  
Posted by: [ctein](#) | Sunday, 14 June 2015 at 11:44 PM

I had assumed that the '42' thing was a purely UK-geek thing thing (like the cricket, I think, with apologies to readers from all other cricket playing nations), but clearly not. Ctein sounds like a guy who really knows where his towel is.

Posted by: [Tim Burke](#) | Monday, 15 June 2015 at 12:41 AM

@Tim Smith

"Eek! If you ever published a photo-map of where I live for the world to see I'd be pissed. Sorry, it just struck me as slightly invasive and not smart."

But Ctein's address is on his web site and Facebook and has been publicised here for sales.

Posted by: [Richard Purkin](#) | Monday, 15 June 2015 at 01:17 AM

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alex\\_%28parrot%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alex_%28parrot%29)

Jeps, that is normal behavior for African Greys!

Greets, Ed.

P.S. good to see Ctein is doing very good!

Posted by: [Ed](#) | Monday, 15 June 2015 at 02:20 AM

to enter the "great white," do you don colorless covering, or just think glowing thoughts?

Posted by: [don](#) | Monday, 15 June 2015 at 08:11 AM

Confirmation that Ctein truly is a hoopy frood - OF COURSE he lives at #42. That just feels right, cosmically.

Posted by: [Adam Langdon](#) | Monday, 15 June 2015 at 02:20 PM

If Ctein didn't really live on top of a cliff with a fine view of the old briny but only claimed that was the case, there would be huge prints of his photos of an ocean scene positioned outside the windows, and you would not be able to tell the difference.

The fact that you looked out to see nothing but white fog indicates that he really does live where he says.

But now I come to think of it, perhaps there's some sort of double bluff going on...

Posted by: [Roece Broadbent](#) | Monday, 15 June 2015 at 02:57 PM

Dear Dan,

Long-term? Highly unstable. Pull up the satellite view in Google maps and zoom in a bit more. It's pretty easy to infer that at one time there was a full court to the north of us just as there is to the south and there were houses lining the western side of Skyline Drive all the way up to the northern terminus. In fact, if you look on the southern tip of that northward court, you can see the overgrown foundation of a house. The owner moved it about five years after I bought my place. Before that, we didn't have an ocean view out the back window.

If you're really, really good at aerial photo interpretation, you can figure out the trace of the next chunk of cliff that's going to slide. When? Could be tomorrow, could be ten years. Paula (who you should remember is an ex-geologist and hydrogeologist) isn't making a prediction but she'd bet on sooner rather than later.

I recall the big slide you referred to. Actually there've been a couple of them. They are all several miles to the south of us, could be on a different planet as far as slide geology's concerned. What's interesting about one of them is that among the chunk of homes it took out was one that I tried to buy before buying this place 30 years ago. Had a great ocean view and a darkroom already built into the finished downstairs. How could I resist? I was outbid.

Turned out to be a good thing.

~~~~~

Dear Richard,

Not to mention that my address is in the very first paragraph of Mike's article! Which is why I found the objection so amusing.

~~~~~

Dear Don,

Neat. I just wrap myself in fog.

pax \ Ctein  
[ Please excuse any word-salad. MacSpeech in training! ]  
~~~~~  
-- Ctein's Online Gallery <http://ctein.com>
-- Digital Restorations <http://photo-repair.com>
~~~~~

Posted by: [ctein](#) | Tuesday, 16 June 2015 at 01:55 AM

> *Ctein is on a bluff overlooking the ocean, or so he says.*  
> *[...all I could see was a sea*

The Mind's Eye cultivate you must. This [Jedi](#) you shall apprentice to.

> *What offsets the color effect of Ctein when he walks in? Not to mention all that brown cardboard?*

No need for any offsetting. When he pores over a print, the sterradians covered by Ctein's flowing gray beard will shepherd any errant color cast towards the righteous Planckian locus.

Furthermore, Ctein's complexion is tuned to model, for neutralization purposes, the radiosity effects of the average caucasian observer poring over Ctein's prints (^\_^;

Posted by: [Bruno Mussot](#) | Wednesday, 17 June 2015 at 01:45 PM

Since Ctein worked so very long in the elegant Dye Transfer process and now prints all digital, it would be interesting for him to talk to us about the differences and how feels (thinks) about the two different methods.

Posted by: [Robert Newcomb](#) | Friday, 19 June 2015 at 01:00 PM

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