

## The Card in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction

Now that Madeline is in art school she has taken it upon herself to elevate the level of family discourse. (This is a project begun by Lauren as a precocious 7-year-old, circa 1992, but abandoned in exasperation at the close of the millennium.) On a recent holiday evening as we gathered around the crackling fire, nibbling home-made panopticon and playing board games that illustrate the destabilization of capitalist hegemony across parrotocracies, she and Lauren resumed their ongoing colloquy concerning the teleological progression of Rile-Smith holiday cards, a tradition originating in 1982 as a collection of hand-drawn “dancing Santa” originals, progressing through a series of systematic Santa Clausian deauthenticiations which was initiated by the introduction of cheap offset printing (combined with hand-coloration, 1987-1996); interrupted briefly by more expensive boom-era two-color offset printing (Babar engendering *Le Père Noël* with Karen’s line-drawing of Lauren and the infant Madeline in tow, 1989); and the abberationally transformational offset-printed appropriation of a way better hand-printed archival silver-gelatin print of the children arrayed in a star pattern, their heads resting in a bed of wet November leaves (of thirty-six frames, the only one in which the infant Calla was not screaming, 1995); and then by a transitory reëmergence of the offset printed line-drawings, mostly by the children (1996-2004); the recapitulation of the heads-in-wet-leaves photograph (2005); an unfortunate experiment with an internet-produced photo-card of Calla twirling (index gives way to icon, 2006, referencing, of course, “Three Twirls, Four Girls, 1994); the Staples™-generated recipe ‘zine (2007); and, finally, the long-anticipated if somewhat self-indulgent embodiment of post-modernism in the form of the meta-card (“Our Excuse of a Card”, 2008).” “I urge you to consider the spec(tac)ular (re)engerization of past(a)iche in the context of lingui(ni)stic transparen(t)cy!” declaimed Madeline, as Calla frantically hunted for her earbuds, and, not finding them backed slowly from the room. “You are arguing by example!” cried Lauren, and not for the first time, her voice hopscotching an octave to be heard above the sudden explosion of violin music in the corner of the room. Caeli looked up briefly from her Paganini caprice. “What does that even mean?” she said, and when no one answered she plunged back into the music. (It’s okay, she’s applying to music school where “theory” has a different signification altogether.)

**Wishing you a PoMo WiHo<sup>\*\*\*</sup> and a Happy 2010!**

--Karen and Larry (The Gaze)

--Lauren and Madeline (The Discursive Subjects)

--Caeli and Calla (The Binary Oppositions)

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\* Of the original seventy-five, only three are known to be extant.

\*\* For the record, a 230-word sentence.

\*\*\* Postmodern Winter Holiday