

This reminds me of something Charles Darwin wrote.

The inventor of evolution?

Yes. He described humor as “a tickling of the mind.”

Interesting. What made you think of that?

Those big, floppy hands, they tickle me.

Your mind, not your body.

Right.

You have a ticklish mind.

So it seems.

I suppose that’s what having a sense of humor is.

I suppose so.

What is it about these hands that tickles you?

On the one hand, I see them as rubbery, fat-fingered hands of funny cartoon characters.

And on the other hand?

I see them not as hands at all but as flat, painted shapes, one brown, the other pink, surrounded by yellow paint.

Now you see ‘em, now you don’t.

Right.

That tickles your mind.

Yes. The back and forth. This way and that. One side and then the other.

Which makes me think of a Zen story:

A youthful monk, journeying home, reached the bank of a vast river. Standing there, he pondered for long on how he could get across. He was about to give up and retrace his steps when he spotted an old Zen teacher standing on the opposite bank. He yelled to him, “Oh master, I am stranded here. Can you tell me how I may get across to the other side?”

The aged teacher thought for a few moments, looking up and down the river. He then shouted back, “My good fellow, you are on the other side!”

I would like to ask that teacher about this painting. I would ask him: Can you see it both ways – as an a composition of flat shapes and three colors *and* as hands in space *at the same time*?

That would be an excellent question. Personally, I’m of two minds about the answer.



Carl Ostendarp, Untitled (Couple Painting - Yellow) (1999) oil on canvas, 68" x 77"