

THE END OF GOD IN 3D

I park in the last row, at the back of the courtyard, climb out and close the car door. I'm about to put my hand in my pocket to return my keys when I notice that all my fingernails are damaged. The rubber gloves don't work, only for a few hours; then the liquids infiltrate and the detergents corrode me as if enamel and leather. The weave of my T-shirt's fabric has absorbed a filter of dust and Vetril, an invisible sculptural layer, an armor of my tiredness to you, to us. I walk toward the industrial building on the far side of the parking lot, a break from my life for which I accept this lack of practicality. The offer to collaborate with this company seemed to me as close to the work that I would have liked to do at NASA two winters ago: to sleep for two months for \$12,000. So, I decided to drag this crappy creature, "with only two arms and two legs, that skin of a nauseating white, and without scales" (Fredric Brown, Sentry, 1954) into this enclosure of the future to echo its precarious proximity. Behind the heavy grey door that excludes the outside, on the right and behind a glass wall, I see the tableaux of an office: two large palms bend their heads under the low ceiling and above three people in blue coats. The girl with the glasses brings my presence into the office where the CEO of the company waits for me. I don't have any scientific skills in the role I'm interviewing for and I accept it. They will give me a desk to familiarize myself with an impenetrable technical language whilst asking as few questions as possible. I don't know what to do with my free time; it's always too much, and the mediocrity of boredom is an annoying playmate. A round table, a working companion of some classes of workers, and a screensaver image (a close-up of a small, young and white breast, without any exaggerating effects) are the first visual elements to delimit my horizon in this office. In a long noticeboard, with thin sliding glass, are the material reports of past research. Some are patented, others not. They are briefly illustrated to me. Inside, hidden among different variations of grey, there is a pink rectangle pierced by six gun holes, each of which is numbered with permanent marker. My ears plunge into a concrete lake and, obtuse, they listen to Lucio Fontana's footsteps fade. The placement of this copy of *The End of God*, between a silicon melt and a carbon structure, betrays its origin, like a bad accent. We become a problem when we describe a problem, so I just look. From the large room next door a slight smell of dust blows out; someone has spilled liquid nitrogen on the ground. The fumes make me cough, even though this element is part of 70% of the atmosphere of planet Earth. The CEO (from now on X) has just returned from a week in Costa Rica, a country that sold its military arsenal to Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaraguan rebels. He tells me about his trip, showing me some photos on his phone, but I am mesmerized by that little pink picture with six holes; my lack of interest in the rest of my environment derails this illustrative conversation. The material has no burns in correspondence to the holes pierced by the bullets. It is the evidence of an old experiment made with a 3D-printed weapon, one of those that would not be picked up by any metal detector. X laughed, describing a former employee who wanted to test the patent by taking the material with him to an isolated field. He was the boy from the ovens, the one who worked eight hours a day on an antioxidant treatment for Formula One brakes, and who over the weekend entertained himself with the molding of weapons. The base, a flesh-colored ceramic bib fixed to a wire mesh, was fired from a distance of five meters in the garage, with a model gun printed in polylactic acid. The craftsman made room for a soulless but faster worker, one whose finger muscles merged with the speed induced by the plastic trigger. Each of the six bullets that crossed this derivative of the *Manifiesto Blanco* is a .341Atlas bullet, a bullet contained in a thin metal casing that is capable of containing the explosion. A painting that has fallen apart, it's the best fake of the *Concetti Universali* I have seen so far. Who knows if Lucio Fontana would have liked it, he who felt in the space age like the man who made the sign on the sand; when he started to make cuts and holes on his canvases he thought of them as waiting for something to happen. X hesitates for a moment but then bursts out laughing, and tells me about a man who proposed to test his bib by making his wife wear it and then shooting her with a kalashnikov purchased on the dark web. The patent for this type of projection was removed in the early 2000s. Until then, the filling of the bulletproof vests was grey hexagonal bulletproof tiles with a diameter of about 5 cm. These small geometries, arranged side by side and assembled with glue, guarantee the jacket to be functional in multiple attacks, provided two different bullets do not hit the same shattered tile (RIP). The pink base, on the other hand, is a sintered material. In a nutshell, the porcelain stoneware it comprises is fixed at 1250° onto a metal mesh, so that when the temperature drops, it causes a contraction in the metal that forces the ceramic to compress. The overall pre-tensioning makes the material highly resistant even after the first bullet; the structure is composed of several tiles that can withstand a multi-shot. The result is anatomically-shaped "shields" that can be adapted to the wearer's body. Lighter than the knights' iron armour in the Middle Ages, but perhaps a little heavy for a minister visiting Kenya dressed in a Garrison Bespoke. I exit the room, perplexed. I think of the porcelain stoneware that I will return to clean tomorrow morning in Mrs. Y's perfectly tidy house. In here I am an intruder, an educational experiment or something similar. I guess they won't know what to do with me in less than a week. I reopen the gray threshold to the outside and enter a stream of men walking slowly towards the car park. In this organized traffic we sway slightly, avoiding touching each other, as if someone or something was directing us. Pulled away from the sight of a way out, we burn in the light of the sky that flames pink above us.