

## CASSIE THORNTON

### Summary of a Cursed Painting

When I was a resident at Headlands Center for the Arts in Marin County, CA, I developed a self-help watercolor practice. I painted to help myself through the disabling anxiety of living in a quiet and beautiful place across the bay from my “my home,” an anti-social tech city of violent wealth inequality, San Francisco. At the time of my residency the US government decided to “shut down” to avoid more debt, closing the federal park where the residency was located. On the same day, there was a massive meteor shower in Russia which broke through architecture and destroyed property. I decided to begin my first watercolor painting—of a hole created in a wall by a meteor.

My watercolor practice was always as soothing for me as it was vengeful. The watercolor paintings in this series were intended to decorate the walls of predatory financial institutions. Each portrays a hole in a wall created by a falling meteorite on a significant day in recent American financial history. When a meteorite strikes a hard surface it reconstitutes our relationship to and imagination of risk. In the neoliberal era of economics, we are bound to an idea that the greatest risk we have as individuals or as a society is scarcity of money or credit. This ideology allows all of us, especially financial workers, to misunderstand what is actually at risk as they pump the world for profit. I hoped to gift these paintings to bankers and finance workers who needed to be blessed with a new relationship to non-financial risk. The imagery of the hole created by a meteor seemed like a proper threat that a banker could live with but never consciously understand. It is meant to curse them with a new irreversible thought, that in contrast to the earthly decimation a celestial object can deliver, mere financial ‘collapse’ suddenly sounds like a knock-knock joke. Each painting comes customized with a blessing that invites the unknown to enter the institution to deliver justice. The paintings are wishes for the finance industry to burn to hell and that these idiots have to find something to do to reverse their extractive financial “contributions” to society thus far.



Hi friends!

I'm on a new quest and I need your help. Do you know anyone who works in finance? They could be eligible to house one of my newest paintings in their office!

Here's the backstory. You are likely aware of my relationship to banks<sup>1</sup>— it is where I do my best work! But you may not be aware of my overflowing love of watercolor. I'm working on a new project inspired by high finance where I use watercolor paintings to make an introduction between the business of finance and the nether regions of space.



Over the past few years I have been painting holes in walls made by meteors on significant days in American Finance. The meteor represents the unknown abundance of outer space. When a meteor strikes a hard surface it creates a hole—and a relation between the inside and the outside of a structure, inside and outside of what is known to us. And because finance has offered such a plethora of creative things to us, I have always dreamed of reciprocating. To do so, I am called to get these paintings on the walls of financial offices, maybe in the office of a bond broker at JP Morgan or Barclays, for example. The images, when hung on the wall, manifest a much needed ‘friendly creative rupture,’ if you will. This is how we will boldly usher creativity and the arts into the space of financial institutions—a place that unfortunately doesn’t yet feel very open to those of us on the outside looking in.

If you would be so kind, would you forward this letter to anyone you know who works in finance? With no financial strings attached I would like to get these paintings into the offices they were always meant to be in. Let me know if you have any questions, and let’s do this!

Thank you for your attention and bold follow through!

Best Wishes,

Cassie Thornton, *watercolorist*

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A few months after I sent this email, I began a social research project in Chicago about the near bankruptcy of the public school system. I learned that there was a specific type of bonds trader who offers high risk loans to public institutions, such as school systems. They offer vulnerable public institutions the riskiest, most expensive loans available, knowing that the institutions will inevitably fail and that they will be able to seize and sell all the assets of the institution. This is happening all over the US to public school systems for children. I decided that I would first focus on delivering the paintings to a bonds trader who profited off of children in this way. Following is the blessing/curse that went into the painting:

## Blessing/Curse:

Asteroids have always been a threat to the earth.  
Just like you are.  
The surface of the earth is pockmarked with impacts, each one  
destroying a home, a car, a wall.  
a big impact might have consequences including the end of  
civilization, as we know it.  
The first thing you should always do  
is understand how big the problem is  
and try to track and understand your enemy.  
We have telescopes staring into the sky  
and when they see something that looks like an asteroid -- there is  
nothing we can do.  
Now we are looking at you.  
you are profiting off of stolen chances.  
When I say stolen chances, I mean children.  
We've been building public education for 381 years.  
A million tiny bets against the future  
can also mean the end of a civilization.  
You will lose your will to survive  
and there's always a risk that you cannot mitigate  
The smaller and darker the asteroid,  
the harder they are to observe.  
You can rest peaceful knowing some of them come from the direction  
of the sun  
Undetectable until they touch down  
You are not a celestial body  
But we can make you one.  
There is an asteroid with your name engraved on it  
"Whatever it costs to defend our security and whatever it costs to  
defend our freedom... we owe it to our children"

The cursed painting was successfully delivered on 6/7/2016:



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<sup>1</sup> cf. "Physical Audit" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8QAooiDNLTM>