

Welcome 2017: So far you're a pain

*Sunday, December 25th 2016 - Sunday, January 15th 2017*

Christmas! Failed scooter maintenance! Fun art museums! Medical Event! Ice! It was a mixed few weeks.



*Path in the Woods*

Normally I talk about the good stuff and leave out the bad (unless it's funny), so this post is slightly different. Because there were a lot of great parts about being at my parents' house for a few weeks, spending time with them and other family. I had a great Christmas at my Aunt & Uncle's house, which is where the forest pictures above and below are. But all that isn't very interesting blogging material.



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*Christmas Hike*

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I'm also shockingly bad of taking photographs of actual people. It's not even intentional, I just don't think about it. Even though I'd rather have pictures of friends and family than just winter forest scenes. Not so bright.



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*Row of Osage Orange Trees*

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The trees were planted many years ago as a property marker. I never get a great photograph of them but I like them a lot. I grew up in the neighboring property so lots of fond memories of these woods.

BUT WAIT! We celebrated New Year's Eve by going to the Boar's Head festival/performance and I remembered to snap a picture! It's blurry but whatever. People. Ha! Not totally useless.



*Family after Boar's Head*



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The performance itself was neat; you can definitely see pagan roots underneath a well developed Christian set of songs and skits. Lots of old songs sung, some familiar and most not; the whole thing was a victory of safety and community over the threat of winter/evil/starvation. Deals arranged with pagan forces had become children-as-sprites helping to light the central candle and bring warmth and Christianity into the church.

The next day was New Year's Day, the first day of 2017. I woke up and noticed my torso was covered in little red dots. They didn't itch or anything, but they weren't there normally! I did the logical thing and ignored them and hoped for the best. Then off to the main Cincinnati Art Museum! They had an exhibit of Van Gogh's work, concentrating on those pieces that featured undergrowth (think the bases and edges of forests) along with pieces by his contemporaries in the same theme. I really liked how it highlighted the discussion among artists. After spending all the time in desert climes recently, it was interesting to see but hard to get too excited about this theme. Pictures not allowed (because the art is TOP SECRET).

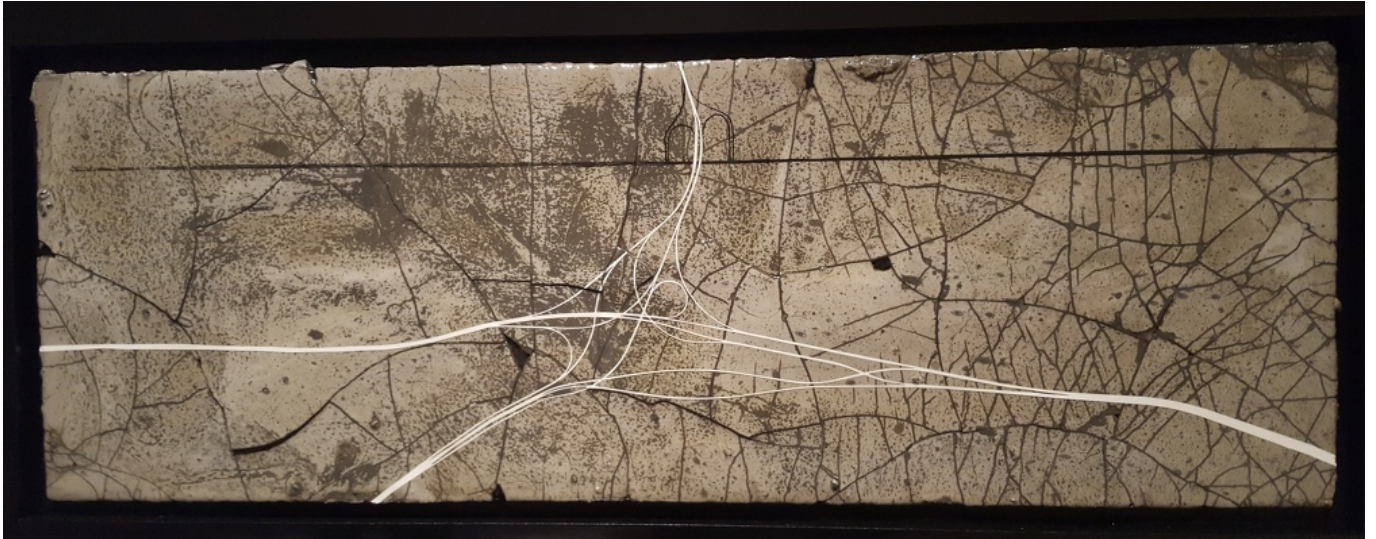
They did allow pictures of a staff exhibit and I enjoyed that a lot more anyways. Cement was used by a variety of artists, which isn't something I normally see.

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*"Gathering of the Moons" by PJ Grimm, 2016 (Paper pulp, cement, acrylic)*

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*"Side by Side Nobody Walks Between Them" by Josh Recentwald (Cement, asphalt shingle, acrylic, epoxy resin, plywood)*

On my way back I stopped to get some of the best food in the city:



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*Fried Tofu Noodle Bowl from Pho Lang Thang*

The rest of Findlay Market might have been shut down but Pho Lang Thang was doing great business. So. Good.

You know what's less good? The mystery rash turning into hives and becoming itchy. Very, very itchy. Like: it was hard to sleep at night and I kept feeling like I was slowly going mad kind of itchy.

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*Something's not quite right...*

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My body was not improving, and on Tuesday I finally went in to the clinic. The doctor there was very impressed (always gratifying), had no idea what was causing it, and put me on steroids. Those took a day or two to kick in (still not sleeping much) but, when they did, the rash vanished. Hurray! Sleep!

Also on Tuesday I took my bike up to Dayton to have the 18,000 mile maintenance done, a new front tire put on and hopefully they could address why it was leaking oil. They replaced the oil, took a look and declared I needed some new gaskets, pulleys and belt. None of which they had in stock nor would they be able to get them for at least a week, maybe 2 or 3. Of course, I was hoping to be gone in a week, and would be told by the next dealer that the pulleys and belt should have been replaced as part of a normal 18,000 mile maintenance. In the meantime, I was wary of driving too much. Wings == clipped.

I did end up arranging a shop in Nashville to get the parts and do the work. I was hoping to go South, and Nashville is one good day away, full of friends, and likely to be warmer.



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*This is pretty but not warmer...*

The weekend I'd originally planned on leaving it was super cold and full of ice. In addition, my run of steroids was over and the rash was slowly coming back. I ended up seeing an allergist who put me on zyrtec which, when taken in mass quantities every day, did eventually start to help.

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*House Finch*

Finally, on Martin Luther King Jr. day, the weather was warm, my body was itching less and I'd gotten most of a night's sleep the past couple of days, so it was time to head south. It had been wonderful to spend time with family, and I was ready to hit the road.