

## Loveliness extreme \* de Morten Søndergaard

'Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.' The sentence is a potential infinity, it is the language that grows and run wild in the grass. If you know Gertrude Stein, you also know that phrase. It was first found in the poem *Sacred Emily* and in that poem *Rose* is a name of a person. Since then, Stein used the phrase in many contexts as a picture of that which is, is what it is. A = A. To use the word *rose* also lets the real rose grow up before your gaze, it makes one recalls the scent and the thorns and emotions and all the memories attached to a rose. A rose is a rose. It sounds simple enough. But it is a matter that has fierce philosophical implications. In medieval scholasticism it was called *the problem of universals*. Very simplified the question was whether ideas could be said to have existence. *Horse, rose, human*, yes, they exist. It concerns the existence of God in the end, so it is no joke. The medieval philosopher Pierre Abélard said "*nulla rosa est*", 'there is no rose', to demonstrate that words could contain the non-existent as well as the destroyed. Umberto Eco's book *The Name of the Rose* is one long the fable of the controversies and implications of *the problem of universals*. For the rose has a name and the roses are found out there in the world, beyond language. Or as Shakespeare puts it in *Romeo and Juliet*:

*'What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet.'*

For *Romeo and Juliet* this is bloody serious, for it is the names of their families that are the core of the tragedy; the two lovers belong to different family names and this costs them their lives. But that's another story.

When Gertrude Stein says '*a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose*', she teases both literature and art. She teases and says that with her rose, the rose became red for the first time in English poetry! Her forever chisel line is also a consideration of repetition. For what is it that we're doing when we repeat something, a word for example? Are we approaching or are we moving away from the rose? Do we get closer to the real flower in the unmanageable reality, or do we move away from it and hear only the sound? Do we only see the four letters flickering

on the page? Do we end up with repetition being the tangled up in language? See, that's a beautiful problem. Like when we were on our way home from school and walked and repeated the same word over and over again, just like to taste the word. We repeated it so many times that it no longer made sense. The word lost its content and became a warm sound in the mouth, a piece of word chewing gum. Try saying *rose* ten times yourself. Eventually it disappears.

Repetition as an aesthetic strategy is well known, just think of Andy Warhol or any minimalist for whom repetition is the method. Repetition reminds us that we are doubled in the world: in language, in images and in the interpretations of art. To carve Stein's sentence into red marble, it is way to play with the infinity of layers of meaning in that sentence. And of course, *Stein* means stone in German – a stone that you can walk around and around until you get dizzy. She already suggested that behavior in her children's book *The World is Round...* 'she would carve on the tree *Rose is a Rose is a Rose is a Rose is a Rose* until it went all the way around'. Gertrude Stein has created a sentence that vibrates between word and thing. And perhaps we simply have to repeat ourselves, as she suggests, in order to take place in both language and reality.

GALERIE

**M A R I A  
L U N D**

48 rue de Turenne  
75003 Paris

T. +33 (0)1 42 76 00 33  
M. +33 (0)6 61 15 99 91

maria@marialund.com  
[marialund.com](http://marialund.com)

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## Sacred Emily de Gertrude Stein

Argonauts.  
That is plenty.  
Cunning saxon symbol.  
Symbol of beauty.  
Thimble of everything.  
Cunning clover thimble.  
Cunning of everything.  
Cunning of thimble.  
Cunning cunning.  
Place in pets.  
Night town.  
Night town a glass.  
Color mahogany.  
Color mahogany center.  
Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.  
Loveliness extreme.  
Extra gaiters.  
Loveliness extreme.  
Sweetest ice-cream.  
Page ages page ages page ages.  
Wiped Wiped wire wire.  
Sweeter than peaches and pears and cream.  
Wiped wire wiped wire  
Extra extreme.  
Put measure treasure.  
Measure treasure.  
Tables track.  
Nursed.  
Dough.  
That will do.  
Cup or cup or.  
Excessively illegitimate.  
Pussy pussy pussy what what.  
Current secret sneezers.  
Ever.  
Mercy for a dog.  
Medal make medal.  
Able able able.  
A go to green and a letter spoke a go to green  
or praise or  
Worships worships worships.  
Door.  
Do or.  
Table linen.  
Wet spoil.

Wet spoil gaiters and knees and little spools  
little spools or ready silk lining.  
Suppose misses misses.  
Curls to butter.  
Curls.  
Curls.  
Settle stretches.  
See at till.  
Louise.  
Sunny.  
Sail or.  
Sail or rustle.  
Mourn in morning.  
The way to say.  
Patter.  
Deal own a.  
Robber.  
A high b and a perfect sight.  
Little things singer.  
Jane.  
Aiming.  
Not in description.  
Day way.  
A blow is delighted.

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