

Zoe Barcza
Nukeface
January 10–March 8, 2020

Two figures face off at a table in a coffee franchise at the central train station. They make each other uncomfortable.

Zoe Barcza: I'm grateful you could find the time. What should I call you? Ms. Face? How does the morning find you?

Her companion visibly seems to be "going through something right now." She alternates between sprawling haphazard over her seat and winding her limbs up into herself. Her internal churning sloshes around inconsiderately. She insists on forcing eye contact that only tunes to dissociated radio static. Her presence is tentacled, and baggy.

Nukeface: I know people are getting tired of me HARPING ON about things . . . I'm AWARE I've been a bit TOO MUCH lately, [taking oversized sips from a plastic champagne flute of nailpolish remover] so I'll just say, positively exhumed . . . ON OVERDRIVE! and leave it at that.

Zoe Barcza: [Under her breath.] Yikes . . . Well, I get it, you're very extra. But where did your boundaries go, honey? You might need those. And would you mind un-entwining your hair from 'twixt my fingers? It's making me queasy.

Nukeface: Sorry. [Reels it in. Thereupon the tip of her nose detaches and goes spinning round the tabletop like a penny.] Boundaries? The way a pot contains boiling soup? Why does sloppy mush annoy you so much? Ozeanische gefühle my decals off baby!

Zoe Barcza: It's not annoying, just cringey . . . Your gratuitous earnestness, it's so . . . uncooked. Pyuck.

Nukeface: Welcome to my mists of mania!!! Dive right in, be dissolved, become nameless!

Zoe Barcza: Alright already . . .

Nukeface: . . . and my guts spill out in a grand schizophrenic rush! An evacuation that leaves me face to face with the Absolute! LOOK WHAT THEY DID TO MY FACE!!! Lick! My! Injuries!

Zoe Barcza: [Letting out a groan.] Do you have to be so unrelentingly creepy?

Nukeface: Speak for yourself you jaded hipster, why don't you ever paint anyone with clothes on?

Zoe Barcza: They did get shoes this time, so they don't get stung by fire ants like on *Naked and Afraid*, but I hear you. I guess it's about trust. A microcosm for relationships in general, like the way therapy works as healthy-mom-dad rewiring. It's something tricky to navigate together with the model on an individual basis . . . I learn things . . .

Nukeface: You do know art's not therapy, right?

Zoe Barcza: Well, let's wrap this up! I think I got enough, thanks Ms. Face. I'm sure you'll be ok.

A goateed man with OCD scuttles purposefully around the train station, touching door frames, ticket turnstiles, and escalator handrails in a secret, patterned rhythm. Unbeknownst to the thousands of patrons moving through the station, his unsung ritual is the only thing holding the fabric of reality together.

*Something . . . happened . . . here.
Something bright and awful kissed the world
. . . and left . . . its smeared . . . blue . . . lipstick-print.
The soil is curdled . . . and all that grows . . .
grows wrong. In a skin of black cinder, puddles reflect fire . . .
Red and wet and glistening like sores.*

*There is a rattle . . .
In the throat . . .
Of the wind . . .
And I am alone.*

*—The Nukeface Papers
Part One: From The Saga of the Swamp Thing #35*

Zoe Barcza (b. 1984) is a Canadian artist based in Stockholm. Recent solo exhibitions include Croy Nielsen, Vienna (2018); Bianca D'Alessandro, Copenhagen (2018); Bonny Poon, Paris (2018); In Extenso, Clermont-Ferrand (2017). Recent group exhibitions include Centre d'art contemporain - la synagogue de Delme, Delme (2019); Ginerva Gambino, Cologne (2019); Galería Mascota, Mexico City (2017); SALTS, Basel (2017); Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen (2017); Team Gallery, New York City (2017).