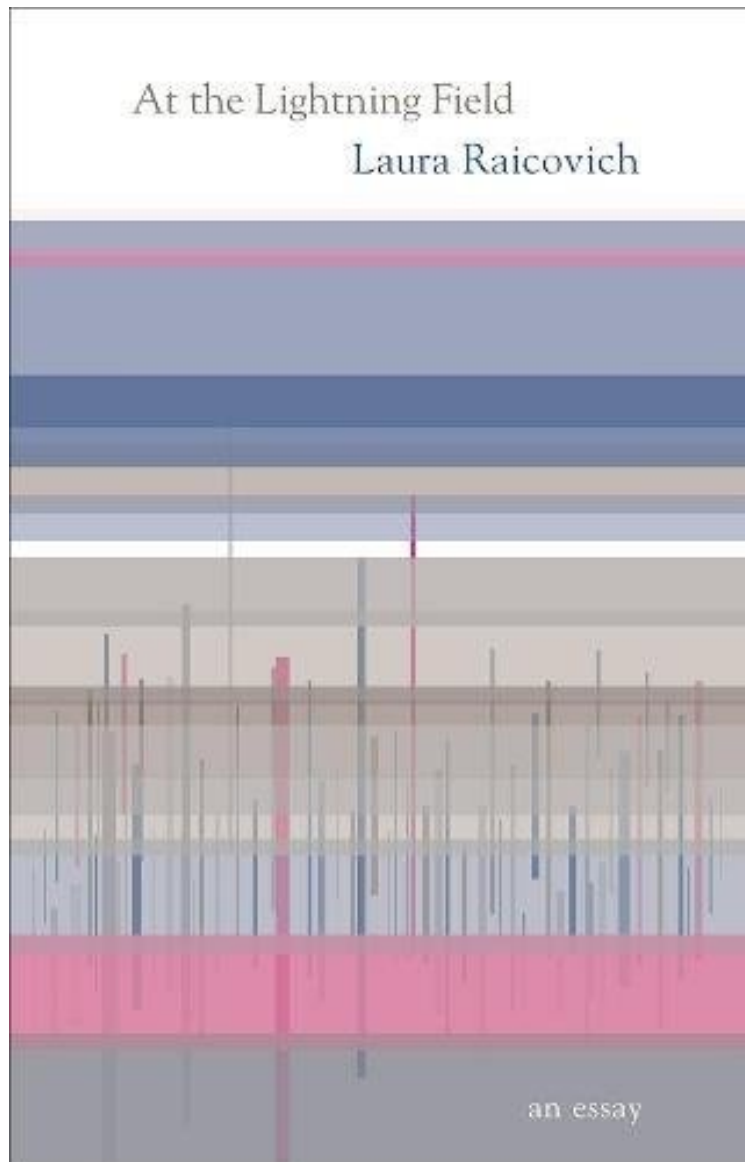


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At the Lightning Field

Laura Raicovich

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Laura Raicovich : At the Lightning Field before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised At the Lightning Field:

Walter De Maria's Lightning Field is 400 stainless steel poles, positioned 220 feet apart, in the desert of central New Mexico. Over the course of several visits, it becomes, for Raicovich, a site for confounding and revealing perceptions

of time, space, duration, and light; how changeable they are, while staying the same. From *At the Lightning Field*: Chaos and coincidences of history: Edward Lorenz was a meteorologist at MIT in the early 1960s. Looking for a devil in the detail of meteorological data, he was trying to forecast global weather patterns (creating forecasting models that would later be applied to economics and financial analysis). Complicated sets of equations, sometimes arbitrary webs of information, measurements of initial conditions churned through a primitive computer. The machine was named the Royal McBee. Laura Raicovich works as President and Executive Director of The Queens Museum. She is the author of *A Diary of Mysterious Difficulties*, a book based on Viagra and Cialis spam (Publication Studio) and is an editor of *Assuming Boycott: Resistance, Agency, and Cultural Production* (O/R Books).

Make a pilgrimage to *The Lightning Field* by walking the lines of this book and building something beautiful in your mind's eye with the author, who will take you there and many places besides. Rebecca Solnit [Raicovich] combines her intimate, studied observations with the writings of a vast array of mathematicians and thinkers, including Benoit Mandelbrot and Gertrude Stein. Attempting to answer the question "How reliable is memory?", the essay is a beautifully chaotic map of thought and experience that both mirrors the experience of a work of art and probes its essence. Publishers Weekly, starred review: "A detailed observation of what it means to make a detailed observation. Kirkus: Raicovich's sharp, almost scientific concessions to confusion and disorder make the essay, like de Marias work, a fiercely poignant treatise in which concentration is more easily achieved, revealing the remarkable. Publishers Weekly, PW Picks: "To read the book is to gain entry into a mind, its streaks and blazes, its patterns and rhythms, sometimes straightforward, sometimes oblique, with bolts of language that dazzle and linger in the mind like a strong light after you close your eyes. Boston Globe: "Into the slim gap between focus and abstraction, Raicovich slips a series of meditations on perceptions, causality, time, weather, and mathematics that have the syntax of a prose poem, the chronology and notation of a journal, and the cohesiveness of an essay. Bookforum [At the Lightning Field] is a surprising, nimble look at a notable work of art, as evocative and unpredictable as the most thought-provokingly conceptual works can be. Vol. 1 Brooklyn: "The experience of the artwork *The Lightning Field* is an immersion experience, a personal experience, where no photographs are allowed, Laura Raicovich has captured this isolation, and the structure of the artwork through her poetic essay. Messenger's Booker [At the Lightning Field] is a beautiful example of a long essay that responds to a work of art in a uniquely linguistic manner, the sort of thing that I myself enjoy writing, and which I feel we should see more of from creative nonfiction writers. Conversational Reading: "Raicovich's long-form essay *At the Lightning Field* is part poetry, part paean and deeply personal. Through Raicovich's beautifully expressed perceptions and ponderings, we get a sense of what it is to be at the remote, untamed expanse of New Mexico's western landscape that holds this iconic piece of land art." Afterimage: "A slim but powerful primer on viewership, *At the Lightning Field* is as enlightening as it is pleasurable to read. Laura Raicovich is in the business of complicating what it means to engage with a work of art, and as she describes her exploration of *The Lightning Field* she draws on the wide-ranging influences that informed her experience, situating the work within a rich matrix of natural, scientific, and cultural activators. Generous and nimbly wrought, *At the Lightning Field* is a model for what rigorous engagement with art should entail. Katharine Solheim, Unabridged Bookstore: "Laura Raicovich's *At the Lightning Field* is a beautiful and striking meditative essay on art, memory, time, and space. The lines on the page dance and, just as the lightning poles on that plateau in New Mexico do, vary in length in order to create an even plane in both space and mind. The rhythm that this pattern instills in the reader fosters an almost mystical quality in the writing that leaves an indelible impact on the mind. This repetitive pattern will urge you to, no, demand that you devour this essay at once. She says, "Permanence: Begin with permanence (a slippery concept despite its will to be otherwise and inextricably tied to time). Permanence makes me look more closely, notice details, large and small, that define moments as they accumulate. That is beautiful. This was a truly pleasurable read. Matt Keliher, Subtext Books: "Laura Raicovich's hauntingly evocative *At the Lightning Field* is not so much a work of criticism or art history as a veritably Rilkean exercise in co-presence, lyrically resonating, that is, off of the Rilke who spoke of that love that consists in this, that two solitudes meet and touch and shelter one another. Lawrence Weschler, author of *Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees*: "Laura Raicovich is a sensitive and eloquent witness to contemporary arts strangeness; she renders the tempo and atmosphere of her pilgrimages to *Walter De Marias The Lightning Field* with an admirable severity, delicacy, and lyricism. Her beautifully distilled and rigorously experimental book will inspire anyone wanting to learn how to take alert notes on an aesthetic experience and then how to transform those notes into complex verbal art. Wayne Koestenbaum: "About the Author: Laura Raicovich: Laura Raicovich works as President and Executive Director of The Queens Museum. She is the author of *A Diary of Mysterious Difficulties*, a book based on Viagra and Cialis spam (Publication Studio) and is an editor of *Assuming Boycott: Resistance, Agency, and Cultural Production* (O/R Books).