# Argentine Metaphysics

From opposite sides of the canvas, two hairy arms (implicitly, the arms of a man) converge on a notebook. Behind the notebook, two knees in jeans are bent and pointing up towards the sky. So the subject is wearing jeans and lying down, writing in his notebook. And you, the viewer, share his point of view. You see what the subject is looking at, almost exactly.

Though not exactly. Because you see the whole canvas. You see everything in the subject's field of vision, all the possible things he could be looking at. But the subject, let's call him the artist Henry Felsman, can only be focusing on one thing in this painting, in this moment frozen in time, and your best guess as to what that is has to be the notebook. But your eyes, not frozen in time, but (to extend the water metaphor) carried by the river of time, move across the canvas, drawn away from the notebook towards another powerful image: a *second* subject in the painting. This, the second subject, is a woman smiling down at you, which is to say, smiling down at the first subject, and you can see her face. And this is significant, because hers is the only face shown; in a way, she's the first subject. The only subject, really. And you, the viewer, (or Felsman, the phantom subject, the artist), are just the frame accentuating her shining face.

In terms of depth, the woman is behind the notebook, but in front of your knees. It's kind of an odd position — she appears to be leaning back a little bit, away from you at an awkward angle — but she has to lean away from you in order to look at you, because probably your head is resting in her lap. She has olive skin and brown hair with blonde highlights. In her right hand, she's holding an accessory that some might recognize as a *mate* gourd. It is brown and shaped like a drop of water, right before it drips, and sticking out from it is a silver-colored straw with a golden-colored

mouthpiece. Her teeth are white and straight, sparkling white and Vitruvian. Besides smiling, you think, she could also be laughing. But since this is a mute moment frozen in time, you can't tell the difference. Nor can you see her left hand. But for some reason, some hint perhaps written in the lines of her lovely face, you get the sensation that she's touching you with it. Caressing you. You smile.

Then you take a closer look at what you, or the first subject, or the artist Felsman, is writing in the notebook. It's not scribble, as in a cartoon image of a letter. The letters are real, detailed. Upper and lower-cased. Paragraphs. In fact — that's right — the words are this very description you, the viewer, have been reading all this time.

And depending on how familiar you are with Felsman's work, you may be able to recognize the woman in the painting. If not, that's okay; he will tell you: she is the same woman as the young woman depicted in his misunderstood masterpiece, *Nude with Crossed Eyes*.