Pigeons Eating KFC

A brown, paper KFC takeout bag leans against a curb. It's daytime. The logo on the side of the bag facing us is torn in many places. It's the torn face of Colonel Sanders, and if it weren't torn, it would cover the whole face of the bag. Two pigeons inspect the contents of the bag. One pigeon stands on the curb, over the torn-open bag, facing us, head bowed in our direction, into the bag. Without the bag, it would look like the pigeon is bowing at us. This is the artist's intent. It's what everyone thinks when they look at this painting — that the pigeon is bowing at them. Thanking you for the KFC.

The other pigeon stands in the street, to the left of the bag, facing the bag. We follow his fat body's profile down to his bowed head, to his beak, to the fried chicken leg he's pecking at in the street, just in front of the base of the bag.

Also leaning against the curb, to the left of the pigeon, is other assorted litter: a crushed red-and-white paper cup (that if we look closely can tell is a KFC cup), a paper airplane made out of a napkin (that might be a KFC napkin), a dirty pink sock (that could be a faded red sock, and could be older than any pigeon or chicken that has ever lived), and of course cigarette butts and broken glass. To the right of the bag is a grated sewer. There is also what appears to be writing engraved into the curb, too small to read.

Behind the pigeon bowing to us, we see the back half of a bike, chained to a street tree, and missing its back tire. Behind the bike frame, we see another bird, a smaller bird, a speckled sparrow, facing us and looking down (at something indistinguishable on the sidewalk), but without giving us the impression that it is bowing at us. The sidewalk is cement, with tufts

of weeds and clovers growing out of the cracks, and a few green leaves strewn about. We presume these leaves are from the tree to which the bike frame is chained. None of the clovers are four leaf clovers.

There is a basement window where the sidewalk meets the building, no other windows. Nothing is reflected clearly in the window. The building is brick and takes up half the picture. The street is the bottom quarter, the sidewalk is the next quarter up, and the brick is the upper half. There is graffiti on the brick that appears mostly meaningless at first glance, like the cigarette butts and broken glass, except for a large depiction, to where the eye is led by the surrounding colors and shapes, of Colonel Sanders (looking almost Lincoln-like, with his beard and KFC top-hat) on a see-saw, and a pirate on the see-saw's opposite side, classically caricatured with eye-patch, bandana, hook, etc. A chicken on the pirate's shoulder, wings raised, head forwards, eyes angry, and coming out of its open, angry beak: fire.

And this reminds you of the KFC, the titular scene in the foreground. The pigeon bowing to you is really just eating the greasy fried chicken, you tell yourself again. His beak disappears behind the torn brown paper, into the dark contents of the bag. What's inside? A wing? His friend, the fat pigeon in the street, is eating the golden leg without a trace of recognition. Would it recognize a wing?

The astute viewer takes a second look at the writing engraved in the curb. Writing is not commonly engraved in curbs, you think. Sidewalks, maybe, but not so much in curbs. This must be the artist's signature.