Is San Luis Obispo really happy?

And Denmark? Well, Denmark is socialist, and so, in a sense, is SLO. SLO’s economy is sustained by two state factories. I am a librarian at Cal Poly, my next-door neighbor is a prison guard at the Men’s Colony. We both make payments on our condos with the 8th largest economy in the world. Remove these factories and SLO collapses economically like a jack-o-lantern in November, like Pontiac or Diablo Canyon. Yet returning to the question of self-reporting, a shadow surrounds the purported happiness of SLO. To the south, near Broad and Orcutt, at twilight and dawn, the homeless with their bags trek to and from the overnight shelter. To the north, frigid Seattle I had to battle the obligatory bimannual snowstorm. I do not miss grueling with rusted traction devices in early morning darkness, scraping my knuckles raw just to get to work. By contrast, SLO has two seasons, brown and green, with genteel, chameleonic shifts between.

Moderation may in fact be the single trait that makes SLO so livable. This trait transcends mere climate, and applies to topography as well. Its modest hills, softly rounded here, and slightly craggy there, leave ample room for vertical vistas of sky and horizontal avenues of space. The gently inclined roads curve, and eschew sharp twists. A temperate fog often burns off to yield a temperate blue day.

So, as you saunter through the galleries probing and nurturing your aesthetic sensibilities on the next First Friday Art After Dark, you may do well to ask yourself: at whose expense and at whose exclusion is my quantum of moderate happiness coming?

Or is it just the apogee of pleasantness?

EDITOR’S NOTE: THIS PIECE WAS ORIGINALLY CREATED FOR READING IN PUBLIC.
A CELEBRATION OF THE WRITTEN WORD BY WAY OF COMMUNITY PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SPACES (READINGINPUBLIC.COM)

BUY THE HAPPY ISSUE AT SANLUIS.MACGLOUD.COM