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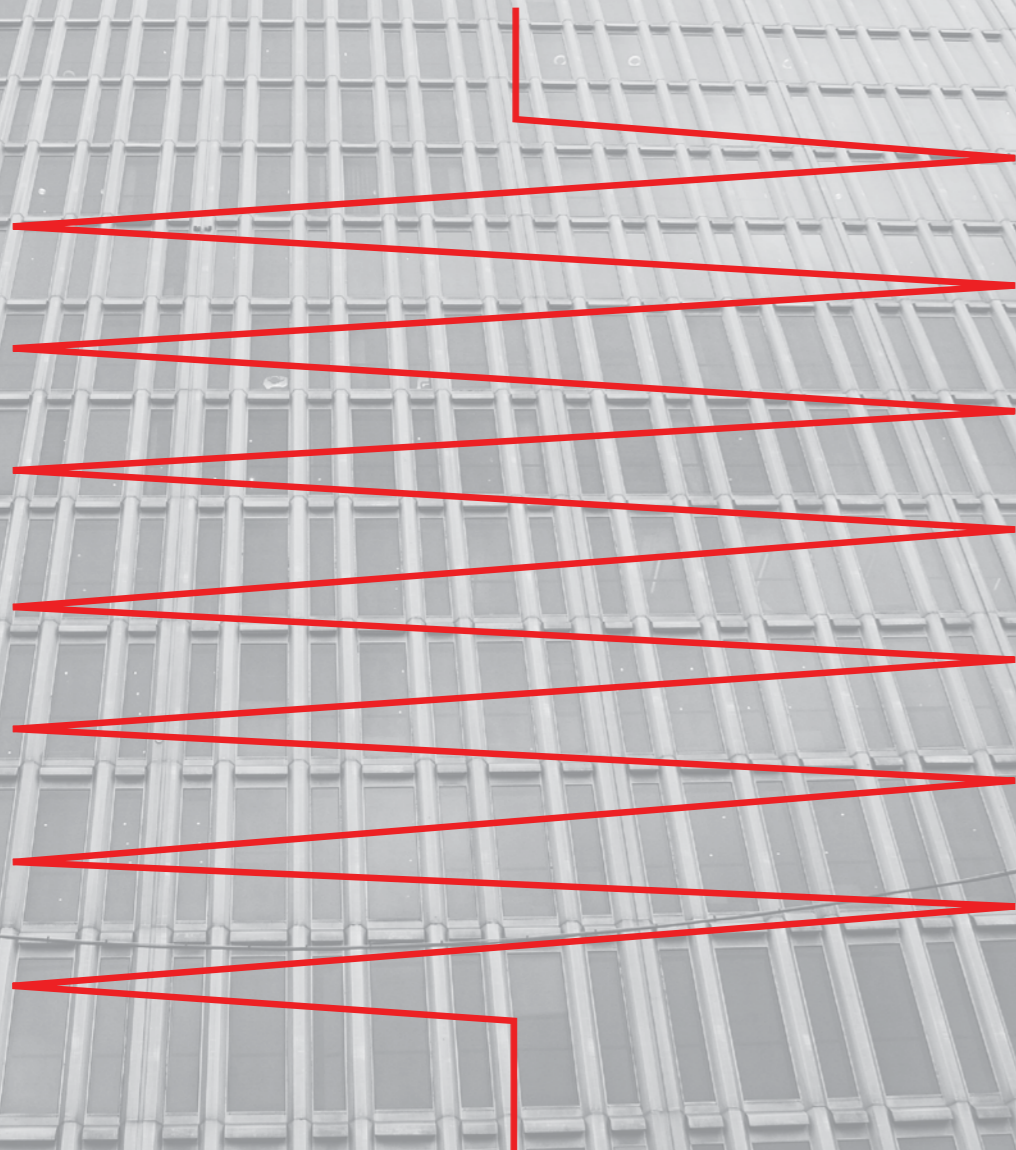
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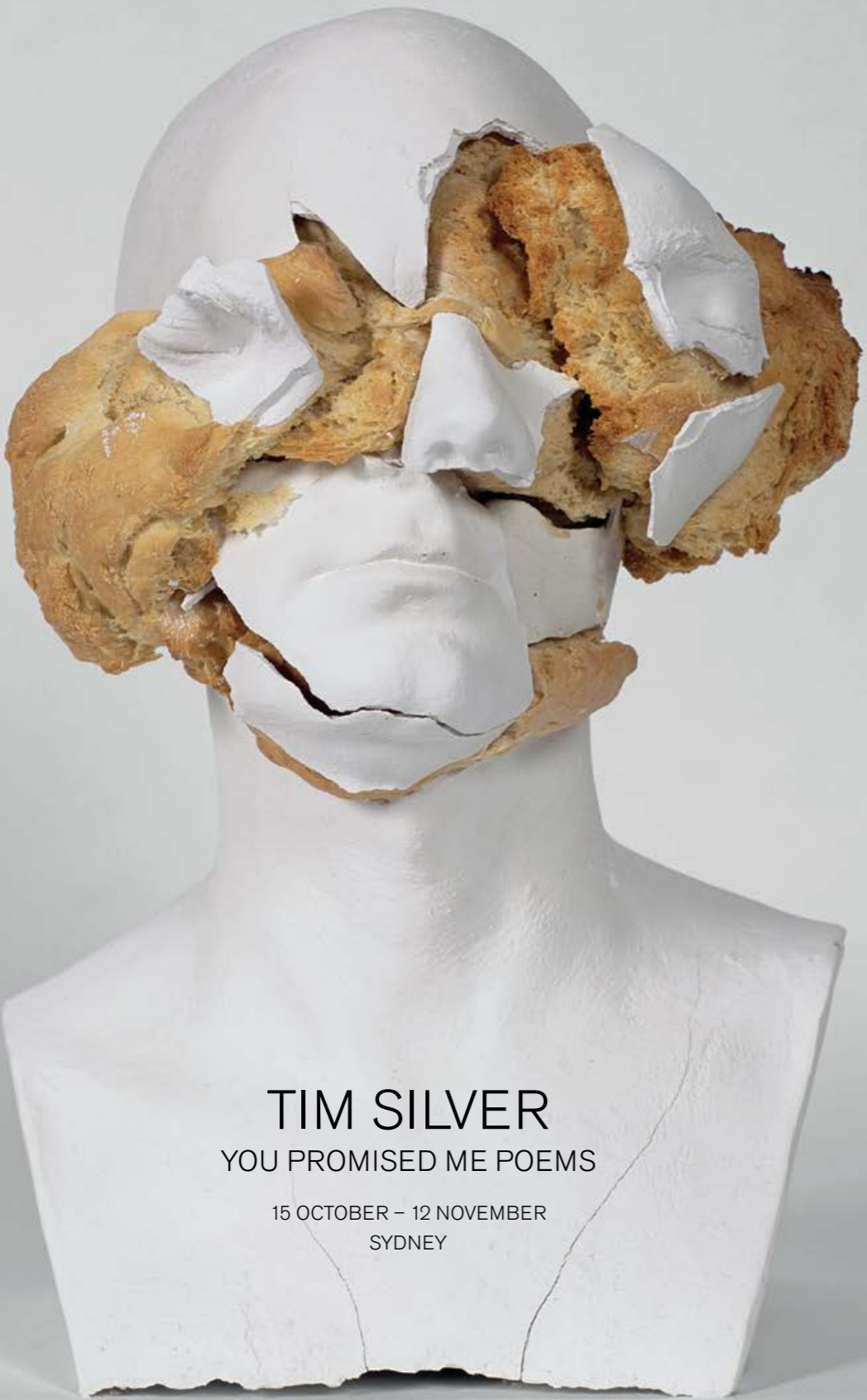
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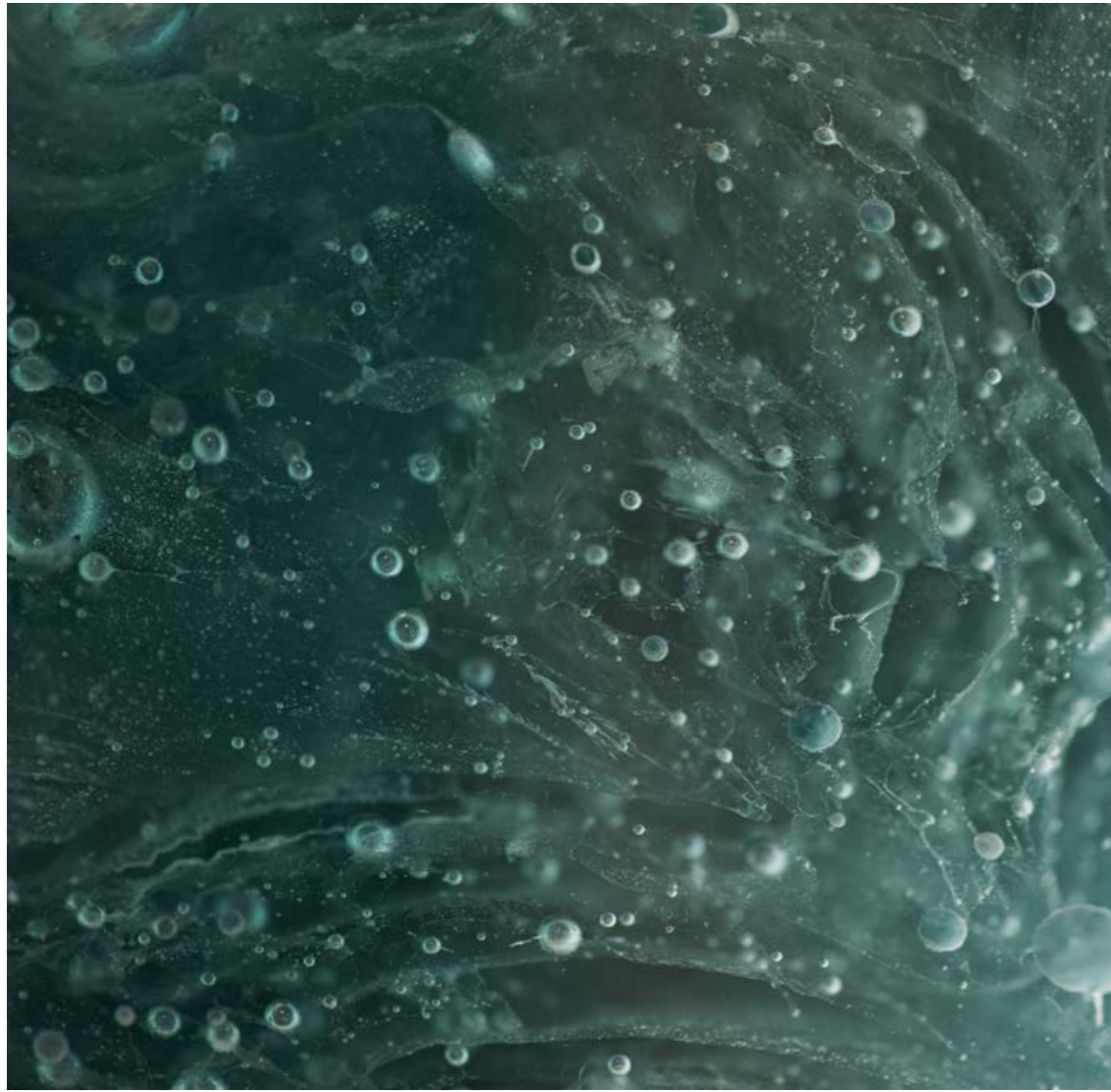
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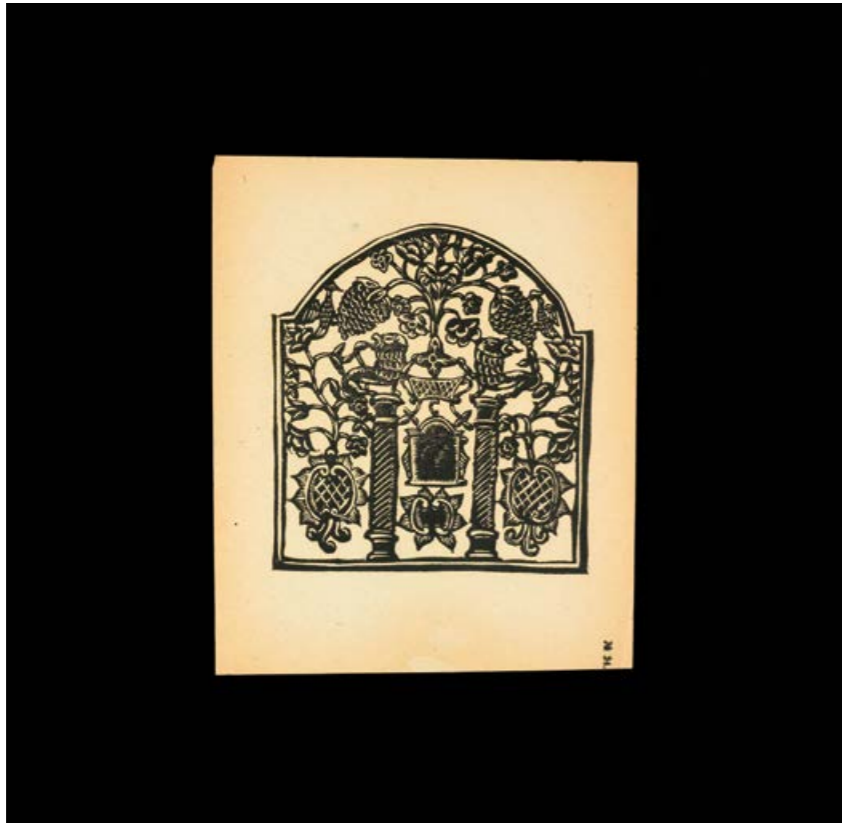








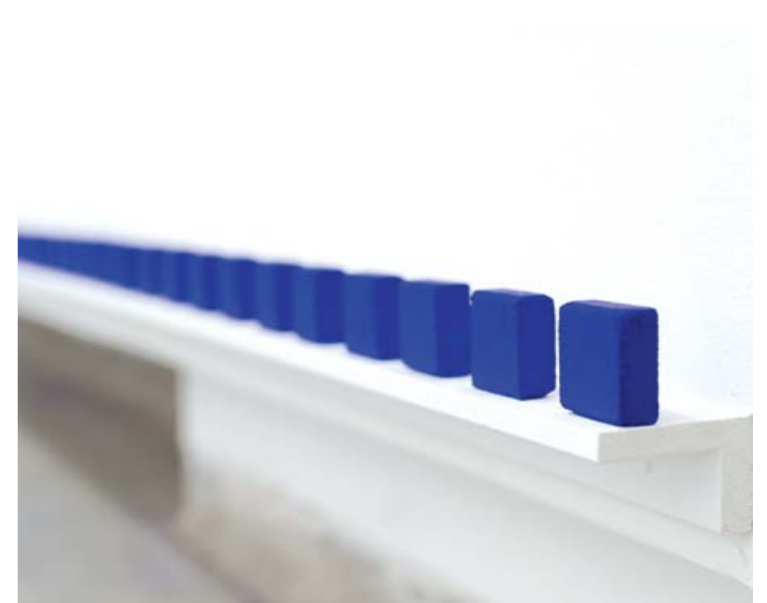


















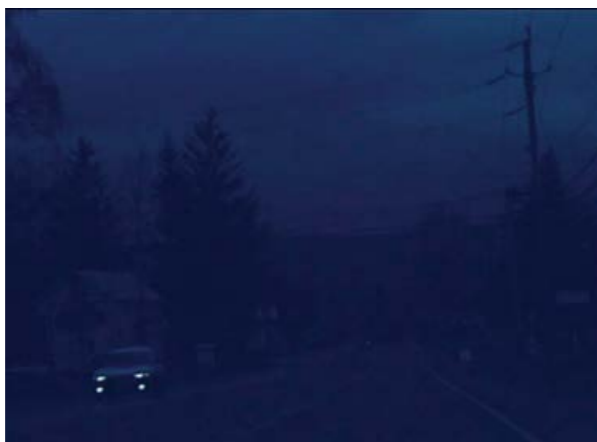
lands to the Saudis. This news confounding because it came on the first day of the fiscal year and the President says he has turned back to Reaganomics. One of the hardest by the Reagan ax is Medicaid. This little girl had tuberculosis since birth and needs considerable care paid for by Medicaid but no check arrived this month and 4300 families. Mitchell earns \$8,600 a year as a 4 year old twins one is asthmatic and has been hospitalized











## Face

——— Chris Kraus

Leka Kavaja-Popescu emailed when I was in northern Minnesota. It was mid-August. I'd been at the cabin almost four weeks, writing about some artists I knew in LA and their abandoned DIY gallery. Now that I'd finished, I was getting ready to drive 2000 miles home to LA. It was beautiful here, but unless I was writing, there was no reason to stay alone in this primitive cabin.

For three summers, I'd rented the cabin from an elderly widow who lives two states away. She can't use the place anymore, but can't bring herself to sell it. The cabin sits by itself in a clearing above South Twin Lake, at the end of a rough quarter-mile road through a forest of oaks, Scotch pines and balsam towering out of a jungle of sumac and ferns. Days at the cabin that summer were mostly sublime. Time was an empty space to be filled. There was no working internet, landline, TV or cell service. Heat, when it was needed, came from an old cast iron woodstove. Built as a schoolteacher's rustic retreat in the 1960s, the cabin had not been improved or updated in any way in the ensuing half-century. The room was a jumble of discarded furniture, shelves full of knick-knacks and mugs, dried floral bouquets and old metal store signs for guns, ammunition and oil. At the cabin, I worked most afternoons and walked down to the lake around 6 for swimming and kayaking. The sun didn't set until 9:30 or 10. Sitting out on the screen porch, I watched it descend through the trees to the darkened horizon, the lake water changing from a shimmering molten gold vat to a pool of black waves. After that, I read novels and studied Intermediate Spanish.

*I feel like I'm recovering from being beat up for months, I emailed my friend Hank Martin. It's quiet and green, and last night I saw two deer, two loons & an eagle. Why not all the time?* That summer, I was at the start of a seemingly simple divorce that would end up dragging on for three years, mostly by email – emails I'd store in a special folder because I couldn't bear looking at them in the inbox. In January, I'd sat with my ex-husband-to-be in a booth at our favourite delicatessen, dividing things up in a good-natured way. *You take this, I'll take that.* Although we'd been legally married for 22 years, we'd lived separately now for more than a decade. He'd lived in New York while I lived in LA, and we'd thought we could go on forever that way, supporting each other's beliefs, obligations, adventures. Our marriage was no longer domestic or sexual. It was something that felt more important: an ongoing conversation about everything that lasted most of our adult lives. The allegiance we'd formed during our separation meant more to me than our marriage, which had been mostly arranged so his employer would pay for my health insurance. Because there was



enough, sharing money was always a given. Let's put these things behind us so we can get back to normal, my ex-husband-to-be said that day in the restaurant. But normal had already changed. My ex-husband had recently moved to LA with his new partner. Despite our cheerful bravado, we were already enmeshed in unspoken calculations, equations.

At first, there were times we could still shout to each other across the widening gulf and know we were heard by the person we knew, and who knew us, the best. But in a shockingly short time, the looping and loopy conversations that took place in bed and on beaches, on the phone and in seminar rooms, were reduced to a terse email exchange about credit card bills, taxes and car insurance. Procedural misunderstandings about filings and grant deed recordings would end in eruptions of rage. Each time I saw my ex-husband's name on an incoming email, I panicked. Most often, these communications seemed merely distant, but for that reason, hostile. There was no longer any way back.

Twice a day I drove to the Calumet Town Hall to check email. The Town Hall had the only free wifi within 25 miles, and although more often than not it was closed, the signal reached, barely, outside. There, I sat on the steps with my laptop and raced through my inbox. Besides whatever messages arrived from my ex, each day there were at least six or eight emails that needed thoughtful replies: edits of art catalogue essays; reference requests from former students; emails from tenants about broken toilets. The book I'd just finished writing would come out early in the new year. I was already planning to travel in Europe that winter to give lectures and readings from the new book, so there were dozens of emails about dates, fees and travel arrangements. The trick was to arrange these engagements consecutively so that all travel expenses would be paid by the venues.

My hosts, by and large, were a cadre of brilliant and striking young curators and gallerists who lived in constant rotation between international art fairs, exhibitions, biennials and conferences. Propelled by invisible wealth, they had similar education and poise and conducted most of their lives in International English. Their places of birth – Estonia, Sydney, London, Shanghai or Latvia – were merely an accent to their personalities. Throughout and beyond their 20s, they lived with an effortless grace in a productive state of permanent transience.

Given these facts, I was surprised when I opened Leka Kavaja-Popescu's first email, which was almost a thousand words long. She'd gotten my contact information from a mutual art world acquaintance. Sitting outside the Calumet Town Hall, I struggled to understand. Her email was dense, like an old-fashioned letter, heavy with words:

*HAND HELD is an independent publishing project based in Berlin, that I have been running for three years. It was originally formulated as a reflection on ways in which artists approach text, and in which, by way of an intimate dialogue, something could be made, infiltrate itself into the world, and find something to do there. Each year, one*

*artist is invited to cast HAND HELD into any form, size, medium, edition, duration and distribution channel ...*

The awkwardness of her language broke through the haze of art world professionalism in what seemed like an interesting way. Still, even though she went on to describe former projects that included a *leporello ... an intervention that only existed as documentation ... an audio piece based on found text*, I had no idea what these things were, much less what she was proposing. She had an odd, double name... Kavaja-Popescu. 'Popescu' was clearly Romanian, but 'Kavaja'? It sounded Arabic – possibly Albanian, Turkish, Khazakstania, Macedonian – but now she lived in Berlin. Although she wrote at length about fees, budgets and schedules, it was hard to discern whether she was acting alone, or as part of an institution. Moreover, *HAND HELD indulges in slowness, keeping deadlines lubricated.*

I wanted to be left alone and it seemed like the best way to do this was to say Yes to everything. I'd be leaving the cabin soon and had no idea what was waiting for me back in LA. She wanted to do a project together? Well, okay. Thanks for your invitation, I replied. *Your work seems intriguing. Perhaps we can talk on the phone?*

That night I dreamt my ex-husband and I were reconciling. It was wildly romantic, a surprise denouement to our legal proceedings. We meet late at night in a bar and confess that we'd always been the true loves of each other's lives. Then we plot to reclaim our old house and let down our two partners as gently as possible.

The loss of a person (a mate or close friend), I wrote in my notebook, is soul-loss, a loss of whatever you thought was your past. Driving around the small Iron Range towns of northeast Minnesota with my dog, the quaint shabby houses, nearly a hundred years old, stood like artifacts of another culture. Built by the mining companies with timber shipped across the Great Lakes from upstate New York, they were for sale for the price of a car, crying out to be saved.

\* \* \*

Leka skyped me two days before I left Minnesota. Sitting outside the Calumet Town Hall, I strained to make out her fluent but heavily accented English. She was also fluent in Swedish, Romanian, German and French, she said. After a long conversation, I still didn't know what Leka actually did, or what she wanted from me. Her tone was official, as if she were speaking administratively, on behalf of an institution, but one without any particular goals. The loops didn't close. If anything, she was administering a state of confusion, though in a sincere and likeable way. She didn't mention her age, but I guessed she was in her late 20s.

She seemed to have the idea that the mysterious 'project' would emerge between us, over time. This didn't sound great. 'Look,' I said. 'Why don't I stop in Berlin and give a reading or talk?' She could publish or post something from my book, and call it another HAND HELD.



\* \* \*

Driving back to LA, four lanes of highway cut straight across North Dakota's flat prairie. Traffic thins out after Fargo. South of the oil fields, I-94 travels a parallel world of tall grass and sky. Small towns with names like Dickinson, Beach and Medora sit just a few miles off the highway, suspended in time. Two blocks of bars, feed stores and diners. At the edge of each town, crisscrossing rail tracks lead to ancient grain elevators. Puffy towers of rain clouds loom overhead. It's either just rained or it's clearing. The towns look like they could be swept off the face of the earth any moment.

I stopped at the Angler Inn in Medora just before dark and exchanged \$40 for the internet password and a room key. Leka had sent a follow-up email:

Hi ... it was a pleasure speaking with you! Sorry for taking so long, I just finished your book, such a beautiful text! I would very much like to hear about your relationship to each chapter. I would of course be more than happy to publish one of them as a HAND HELD if you would interested but the same time I was thinking that since HAND HELD usually is something that grows over a long period of time and is at least as much concerned with the process of looking for that something and the something-to-do of that which becomes the HAND HELD, it would be a shame perhaps to reach already a decision so early on? Do you think it would be possible to delay a conclusion for a while? In the meantime I could send you the previous HAND HELDS (1 & 3, 2 only as documentation of documentation)?

Have a nice trip back to Los Angeles.

I had no idea what she meant. I needed to eat before the bar kitchen shut down. I already wanted to finish this business with Leka. I would very much like to hear about your relationship to each chapter? There was no answering this. Leka's emails were so full of content they led to a void. I told Leka I was excited to read her HAND HELDS and gave her my postal address.

Two months later, a large package arrived. Dispatched in October, it had been returned to Berlin for lack of postage and then mailed again. In it, there was a playlist, some postcards, a few DVDs, a long essay about sculpture and veils, and a thick, hand-made book in accordion folds with collaged black and white photos of Babylonian gargoyles, sculptures, graffiti walls and riot police. There was also a long, dual-language poem in German and Portuguese. I put the envelope into a closet. A few days later, Leka emailed:

Hi ..., Sorry for taking so long again, just returned from London and the Frieze Art Fair ... I've been thinking about your HAND HELD, whether it should be a text, or as you said that day when we talked, something about Baja California ... Then I had a different thought, that seemed to stick, so I thought I would present it to you, as it entails the writing of a (not exactly critical) text and HAND HELD's inherent myopia.

Until now, as you know, each HAND HELD was looking towards the ways in which the invited artists have been engaging with writing or with language. As far as I understand, the writing you had in mind, would be looking towards a practice outside of your own writing. Well, the days after our telephone conversation, my former partner cleared out his things from the flat we had been sharing in the past, and that he had still been using as a storage during his travels. As soon as his belongings found their way out, a cavity emerged, in which I, ever since, and for the first time, have been making some sort of three-dimensional work. It is strange, although I am quite intrigued by the sensation that it must be done, since nobody, including myself, really asked for it. It keeps growing out from a corner, making connections between pieces that I have collected in the past years, some personal belongings, found objects, and some stolen. Since I never went to art school, it feels unnatural to refer to it as something an artist would do, but it is, for sure, some kind of work. I am thinking it could be just another form of writing. Anyway, I have never showed this to anyone since it seems so foreign to me to speak or write about it, and since nobody asked for it in the first place, there is nobody to naturally show it to. But since this activity started around the time of our dialogue, the idea came to me that I would like to show you whatever it is I continue to make, in the flat, that would have you as its only viewer. It brings to mind the spectacle of welcoming ceremonies for diplomatic visits, and would be a comical twist to our meeting. I am also intrigued by the idea that the work would find a purpose, and again quite comical, to produce something intended exclusively for your viewing. Was thinking it would be nice if you as its only viewer would write a review.

A bit unorthodox perhaps, but what do you think?

Clearly, this thick block of text conveyed a demand, but I couldn't actually read what she wrote. Whatever she wanted was way too intense to be processed.

Skimming her email again, I gathered she'd broken up with her boyfriend, he'd moved out and left behind some of his stuff. Did she want me to 'review' her ex-boyfriend's belongings as if they were an artwork? She'd use my visit to get back at her ex while making a joke about the arbitrariness of critical discourse? The fee was 1000 euros and the whole thing seemed no better or worse than most of my art-writing work, so I said yes.

Later, rereading her email I realised I'd missed the point. This was nothing to do with her boyfriend. She was creating an exhibition addressed just to me, for which I'd be the sole viewer. Summoned to her probably awful Berlin apartment as the 'critic', the 'visiting diplomat', she was inviting me into a Pere Ubu-like farce spun from the same ideas I'd advanced in my book about correspondence, performance and relational speech. The fact that we were both women gave the proceedings a still-more uncomfortable spin. Smile. Didn't her very first email warn that HAND HELD 'grows over a long period of time and is concerned with the process of looking...?' Directed and written by Leka, clearly the show had already begun.



That summer at the cabin I'd been reading a strange, poetic case study by the psychoanalyst Beatrice Beebe. Beebe describes what happens when two people really see each other, the way identity is lost and found through a reciprocal gaze. A looks at, and reacts to B; B sees herself reflected in A's face. And when A notices B's recognition, A is subtly changed. Beginning therapy with Beebe, the patient Dolores is frightened, tearful and withdrawn. As Beebe writes about her in *Faces in Relation*, 'she could not look at me, and often could not talk.' 'I do not want to go dead ... Help me wake up,' Dolores said. After eighteen months, Beebe decides to videotape their sessions with the camera pointed at the analyst's face alone. Viewing the tape at home alone, Dolores hears her words off-camera, and sees her words reflected in Beebe's face. 'My face,' she told Beebe afterwards, 'jumped into your eyes.' The space between them is inviting, intimate, but highly charged. 'I was very touched by Dolores,' Beebe reports.

\* \* \*

Arriving in Berlin, I caught the S-Bahn to Mitte from the airport, then took a taxi to the apartment of Leka's friend and gallerist Amanda Baines. Over the months, Leka's plans for our collaboration had evolved. Instead of installing her exhibition in her own apartment, she'd arrange it in Amanda's gallery. I was to visit it alone the following day and then write some kind of catalogue essay about the work.

By the time I got off the S-Bahn it was already dark. The January streets were slushy, cold. The night before I'd been in London, hunched under my coat on the sofa-bed of an acquaintance's unheated flat. I barely slept, and woke up to a dream about discovering messages from my dead friends in supermarket packages of free-range meat. In Berlin, Amanda offered me her (cozy, heated) flat on a quiet street that overlooked the former Wall. She'd stay at Leka's place.

Over drinks, the two friends filled the empty space with talk about art world rules and fashions they opposed. Something about subversion and contemporary art. 'Any successful work of contemporary art must be subversive,' Leka said. I asked, of what? 'The punchline! Every successful work of conceptual art must contain some kind of punchline that disrupts its initial reading.' 'Oh,' I said. 'I guess you're right.' They were talking about stories, I supposed. Stories that preempted other stories. The value of an artwork is created by the stories, usually arbitrary, people tell.

The walk through Mitte to the gallery the next day was clear and cold. When Amanda opened up the gates and doors, all I saw was a white empty room with four dead Christmas trees propped up in front. And then Amanda left. Leka looked at me expectantly. What was there to say?

A pause. Leka led me to the far end of the gallery and pointed to a jeans pocket turned inside out and draped over a radiator valve.

'It is called *Take*.'

For a long time, I considered this. And then she pointed to the tiny butt-end of a hand-rolled cigarette pinned to the opposite wall. 'And this is

*Father*.' Looking closer, the gallery wasn't empty after all. There was a child's necklace (*Pendant*, 2010) hanging on another wall. And on the floor beneath the windows, a small monitor looped a YouTube video of a blossoming rose (*Eblouissant*, 2011).

Unsure what to say, I wrote descriptions of the work. The cigarette butt curled like a crescent moon; the necklace was a ribbon with a tiny cloisonné heart with the name Leticia engraved in cursive script couched between two pink roses. Leka stood close by, expectantly, as I wrote.

'It's a very, ummm, minimal show.'

'Yes?' She looked at me with a half-smile that was both sad and challenging. Charged with ideas, she seemed highly self-assured, but physically she was cramped and stooped, all nerves.

Until now I hadn't thought about Romania, or Leka's past. Wasn't everyone in the art world totally transnational? I thought about the Bucharest I'd visited ten years before, where packs of feral dogs roamed the city streets. Most of the former shops were boarded up or closed. Old bent-backed men in bowler hats shambled down the boulevards like veterans in a parade of human question marks. The World Bank had just imposed a policy of economic shock therapy. While insiders bought and sold, the former middle class lived in apartments lit by kerosene because they couldn't afford to pay electric bills. Doctors, social workers, nurses and psychologists routinely stole clothing and food from the Red Cross.

At a loss for anything to say, I asked Leka if she'd like to talk about her work. She was expecting this, and led me into Amanda's office, setting two chairs about three feet apart in front of Amanda's desk. We settled awkwardly. Or: *It brings to mind the spectacle of welcoming ceremonies for diplomatic visits as she'd emailed the summer before.*

She faced me and laughed. 'So. What shall I tell you? What shall I tell you about my art *pieces*?' Her eyes flashed triumphantly. 'You understand, you are in it.' I looked up from my notes. 'This is not my story. You are in! You are in it.'

From the Town Hall in Calumet, I'd been summoned to this destination in Berlin.

'Four years ago,' Leka began, 'in my first performance, I sat on the steps of an art institution and waited for one hour to get money.'

I didn't have my laptop with me, but decided to write down what she said.

'Perhaps you could say that this was my parody of being Romanian, a nationality that is associated by default with poorness, but in fact, it was my attempt to engage with the style of contemporary art. I knew it was hopeless. And, I did not get a cent. If there is one thing people are reasonable about, it's giving money. Reason erases the shame of one's cheapness. And isn't contemporary art always 'reasonable?' Post-modernity is guilt-free: 'someone' already did it.

'Putting something into an exhibition space is a strange thing. Why would the space need something? Is it stupid? It's like letting a coin drop without looking. Nice pieces come with nice stories, *good* stories; long enough, but never



too long to end without a punchline. A title may pose as nonsense, but language is never too far away, ready to rescue the work from the chaos of chance.'

Leka spoke with absolute control, like a dealer shuffling her deck.

'You should never trust a story, especially one told well. I would like to tell you this, and I would like you not to think about it as something from 'my past'. My past? Anyone's. But to be precise, it was 1989, the day before Christmas, I was too old to believe in Santa, but still wanting to. I committed myself once more to hiding in bed and sneaking out to see what had been put under the tree in the morning. I was conscious about what was expected by an audience.

'But that year there was no tree, just a few things hidden under a tablecloth. It had been arranged to put an end to make-believe, once and for all. Peeking under the tablecloth, I felt ill, understanding the implications. The show was over. I had been had. My mother said we were not doing Christmas this year, people were being shot outside. I turned the tablecloth into a banner. The only old man who dropped by to say hello that Christmas was Nicolae Ceausescu, and he was being tried in a kangaroo court and shot in the head on replay on national TV. We had him for breakfast, lunch, dinner, et cetera. History was being re-edited on TV every day. Each day we'd find out a little bit more about how it had really been. There was no glory in these revelations, there was just "poor us". We had been had. So, what shall I tell? What shall I tell you about my art pieces?

'I was in my dark apartment, a cave, where art began, like the ones at Lascaux, wondering what I would put into this exhibition. *Take* is a gesture for using whatever you have, or have not. The show was made using things that I had, or I found, like the trees.

'Inside the pocket are some brown coins. In all of the currencies, copper is the lowest denomination: the least that you need to get into the game.

'In my performances, I have stood outside of institutions like a beggar. I am Romanian, you know. I can always speak the language of the EU beggar. And copper coins are what you give to beggars.

'In Sweden, they were getting rid of the copper coin while I was there. The new lowest denomination was to be silver. They were also deporting the Romanian beggars. So. The last time I was there, people were still begging, but they'd become *passive* beggars. They were just sitting – not asking for money. They did not want to risk being deported. Just sitting or standing on the steps or in the street. And the Swedes, because of this change in their currency, were giving copper coins to these beggars. In Sweden, people never give anything, but the coins were about to become worthless, so they gave them away.

'Borrowing and begging. The coins have such concrete value, but in art, everything is fluid and subjective. Value is never clearly expressed. It's understated. You can smell it. It's a choreography everyone engages in, but no one speaks about it.

'The pocket, like all the things in this room, is a gesture. They were things I could not get rid of. I found it hard to bring them in here. These were the things I could not give away.

'The heart necklace? I received it as a child. It was a present from my mother's boyfriend while we were still living in Romania. When he came and gave me this, I thought: Who is it for? Leticia wasn't my name. It was maybe Swedish? Or Spanish, or French? EU before EU, I really don't know.'

Unconsciously, I leaned closer in and spoke, assumed my role. 'Leticia was an approximation of your name. It was *almost*, but not really you.'

'You go to a new place, you get a new name,' Leka continued. 'You bloom into "Leticia". It's almost like saying you can *become* this, this, whatever-you. The boyfriend had fled back to Stockholm before Ceausescu's fall. A year later, in 1990, my mother decided this was our chance: we could leave without risking our lives. The boyfriend was just one of her old lovers, and they only stayed together for a few months after we arrived.

'The idea of the self. Moving from Romania to Sweden, it was the first break-up with the idea of self. In Sweden, I attended a German school. It was only upper-middle class kids who attended that school, and we were not that. In Sweden, to support us, for the first time, my mother had to do manual work. In Romania, we'd been among those who would not hesitate to call themselves intellectuals.'

'And so in Sweden as a child, you discovered that your identity can change arbitrarily, at any time.'

'Yes. There are some people who have this experience and become more attached to their identity. For me it was the opposite. My mother refers to the past all the time, but for me, the past is just another presumptuous idea. The pendant refers to a strangeness, a mistake. The way something can be *almost*, and how it then gets stuck.

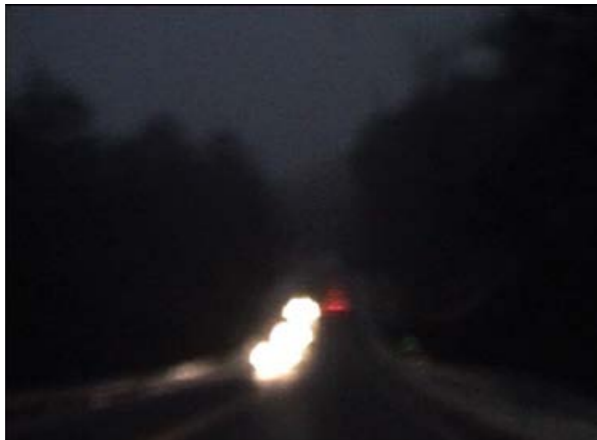
'The roses on the pendant stop when they're in full bloom, just like the rose in the ripped YouTube clip. It's such a generic, predictable image of becoming. It performs the blooming to the *same point* as the pendant; it stops where the roses on the pendant have stopped. No death, no decay. Happy ending.

'Looking at this, I was thinking about production in the art world, trying to resolve to make something on my own behalf. The blooming dramatises the process of making, and in my case, of becoming an "artist". The flower makes itself during the loop. But it's actually *you* who is becoming ready. A lot of art is made conceptually, in advance. You know how it is meant to work. But here, there is no punchline. You are in it. You lose yourself in the distance. You cannot step outside the composition. And this sense of anticipation is connected very much to the trees!'

She pointed to the four dead trees leaning up against the reception desk.

'Mostly when I get this feeling of losing distance, I'm in the street. Street walks become sleepwalks. A tree becomes more like a human than a human. After Christmas, the trees are dumped in the street. They did a good job enhancing the bonding experience during the holidays, but they are unable to exist out of that time. Well, I just found them there, before I even knew what else I would do here. And it just kind of made sense to bring them inside. Like





Prince Charming? I carried them into the corner where they could wait a little longer. This way, they would not be taken to the dump the following day.’ She was about to cry. A strong wave of emotion passed between us. Our eyes remained locked as I wrote.

‘Their time-specificity remained in the space as a vague scent. The trees had been gathered into a bundle, but as soon as I untied them in the gallery they broke into this human scale: a tall one, a short one, a half one. It became, a little bit like taking care of them. And they had these anthropomorphic qualities, this kind of group. They were all kind of sad looking, just hanging there. This art therapy was not going well.’

‘The trees have a connection to time – ’

‘Yes, of course. Like the pocket, I think in general they are something that does not have a punchline. But now I will tell you about the cigarette butt.

‘I was in Dusseldorf, doing an internship at the Kunsthalle in 2008, and I had brought cheesecake for the staff on my last day. And that day, the well-known curator Kasper Koenig showed up, and since the director he was meaning to see was not there, he ended up joining us for this cheesecake session. There was no smoking allowed in the museum, but because he was there, an ashtray was found.

‘And basically, he just rolled a cigarette and smoked it. The cigarette was the duration for his being there.

‘At the end – he’d been talking about what he was working on – but at the end he asked me, *So what are you going to do?* Because he knew it was my last day. When he left, the rest of the staff left too. I was alone there with his remains in the ashtray. I had just moved to Germany, with my diploma and all that, and had been licking envelopes for the past three months. When I left I took the cigarette butt, wrapped it in a napkin and put it in my pocket.

‘The question is, *What triggered me to take the cigarette?* It’s very clear: You position yourself in relation to power. Obviously, as an object, it has no value. But it was in a way – the fun of taking a piece of him, and keeping it. The ridiculousness of the gesture offset by the great care with which the object carrying his DNA was encapsulated. The gesture was a compensation for being forced into the violence of the question, which Barthes writes about so well in *The Neutral*. And then “father”, or “papa”, in Romanian means “bye-bye”. It was sort of an answer.’

‘Or maybe a punchline?’

‘The only punchline here is that there is no escape from the composition. While I was putting this exhibition together my mother told me she actually wasn’t sure about who my father was. The cigarette butt was then framed, so it could, in theory, be used for a future testing.

‘These objects refer to things concerning identity, but they don’t really mean anything. Still, I had to keep the cigarette butt. The objects are serious, only because they are so generic and standard.’

And then abruptly she stopped talking and stood up. When I down looked at my watch, exactly 50 minutes had passed. ●



# Difference in air, communities of dust

———— Denis Beaubois

Objects are bodies. They have their own way of reacting to the world. I sometimes imagine a reason for their behavior.

I was on a plane returning to Australia. In the last hour of the flight, as the plane began its descent into Sydney, I witnessed the slow constriction and eventual crushing of my empty water bottle. In those moments of descent, a basic imbalance between the air from high altitude, trapped in the bottle, and the lower altitude air at the destination drove the external forces to crush the bottle.

I thought about migration and perceived a likeness between the atmospheric pressures that impose themselves onto a sealed bottle as a plane descends for landing, and the social pressures encountered by migrants. I kept the plastic water bottle that was crushed by atmospheric pressure upon entry into Australia (*Arrival (Keep Australia Beautiful)*, 2000) and repeated the process on subsequent flights.

The collected bottles quickly became human bodies, while the pressure against them suggested situational obstacles encountered by migrants.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the at times brutal effect of the forces against the bottle upon landing inferred an even stronger level of opposition, akin to racism or xenophobia.

While travelling, it became clear that the crushing of water bottles/bodies was not unique to a single location or culture. This phenomenon of pressure against the foreign body was pervasive. Wherever I landed there were the same oppositional forces bearing down upon the body of this symbolic foreigner, suggesting that humanity ends at the borders of one's own tribe (Lévi-Strauss 1952).

According to Lévi-Strauss, for millennia we humans distrusted whoever resided outside of our broader circles:

*Humanity is confined to the borders of the tribe, the linguistic group, or even in some instances, to the village, so that many so-called primitive peoples describe themselves as 'the men' (or sometimes – though hardly more discretely – as 'the good'...thus implying that the other tribes, groups or villages have no part in human virtues. (Lévi-Strauss, 1952, p. 12)*

Such an elevation of one's own culture over that of others can also be looked at as a potent form of nationalism.<sup>2</sup> However, it would be difficult to attribute a pervasive rejection of migrants, foreigners and asylum seekers to a sense of nationalism, unless such a sentiment had twisted, as Ghassan Hage suggests, into a paranoia.

In his writings on 'Hope', Hage navigates possible causes for these innate oppositional forces. Through a mixture of compassion fatigue, coupled with a sense of worrying for the nation state, citizens, in an effort to 'restore the nation state to ideas of former glory' (Hage 2003), adopt what Hage terms a 'paranoid nationalism', where caring about the nation is substituted with an overt defensiveness. A defensiveness that manifests itself in the form of a worried, guarded and closed society, with little reserve for generosity and for openness. According to Hage, a society that contains a deficit of hope is unable to offer support or compassion to migrants. The pertinent distinction he makes is that this rejection of migrants is not a choice and therefore cannot be turned around by reason or arguments about morality. He cites the policies of neoliberalism, combined with the dynamics of globalisation and transcendental capitalism, as having eroded the nation state's propensity to distribute hope among its citizens. The steady erosion of the welfare safety net, coupled with increasing instability of employment, create a climate where many citizens – including the middle class, who aren't historically accustomed to dealing with a deficit of hope – feel forsaken by the nation state.

But what happens when the model of the nation state and the nationalistic virtues associated with it become less desirable? When ethnically hybrid models of community present themselves as alternatives to a traditional territorial model, in which allegiance is bound to a single nation state or culture? The traditional delineation of difference through borders and territory is being challenged by certain aspects of globalisation (Castles 2002). Within this current landscape, transnational communities have emerged as a model of citizenship that does not necessarily reflect allegiance to a single or specific nation state. With increased mobility and travel there are communities of migrants forming that do not subscribe to old-style nationalism and instead connect more to a local, hybridised cosmopolitan culture. These transnational communities are based on a common ethnicity rather than a long-distance allegiance to the home country or a forced allegiance to the host country. Transnational communities are established within metropolitan areas where 'hybridity rather than nationalism' (Castles 2002) becomes the unifying force. These metropolitan areas, referred to as global cities, exist not as autonomous zones but as part of the nation state. If such communities grow in an environment of discrimination, exclusion

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1 Obstacles that might include language barriers, financial hurdles or cultural isolation.

2 Nationalism is defined in part by the Oxford dictionary as 'An extreme form of patriotism marked by a feeling of superiority over other countries'





or forced assimilation there is a greater risk of the transnational community becoming closed and isolated from the host country. Conversely, if the policies of multiculturalism are robust, allowing the community to maintain both local and cross-border links, the result is a community that does not undermine national identity and is perceived, rather, as cosmopolitan (Castles 2002).

Whilst travelling, I used a carpet sweeper to collect dust from the departure lounges of numerous airports, including JFK, Frankfurt and Perth. The sweeper-gathered fragments left behind by bodies in transit became *No Longer Adrift* (2013). A macro video camera pans across the dust collected by the sweeper to reveal an entangled landscape of individual fragments shed by people and objects in transit. Remnants of meals, pieces of people, fibres from clothes and unidentified bits of nothing all lie caught in the pile, adrift from their host. The strokes of the carpet sweeper brought disparate fragments together, weaving them into a composite of different things, spaces and times that eventually became a solid brick-like object. This object is formed from an enforced grouping through circumstance, where every fibre is stripped of its history and identity and made into dust. *No Longer Adrift* evidences the formation of a mixed community of people, separated from their homeland, who have been brought together through a shared ethnicity in relation to the host nation. It references the phenomenon of transnational communities, while also suggesting the possibility of newly formed composite territories.

The formation of new borders and territories might appear somewhat

anachronistic at a time when the forces of globalisation are testing and even eroding the boundaries of the nation state. There are however, current ideas that link these forces to the formation of new territories in the form of various 'zones'.

*The zone – a.k.a., the Free Trade Zone, Foreign Trade Zone, Special Economic Zone, Export Processing Zone, or any of the dozens of variants – is a dynamic crossroads of trade, finance, management and communication. (Keller Easterling 2012)*

These zones primarily exist as entities within nation states and are granted legal and financial concessions to attract investment and promote growth within the host state. The concessions vary 'but in the most extreme cases, the zone is exempt from civil law and government control...' (Keller Easterling 2012).

Easterling uses the term 'Extrastatecraft' to describe the rise of multinational companies to a level where they function in a similar fashion or alongside the state within such zones. When the state allows international and transnational companies the authority to provide and decide upon the necessary infrastructure for the creation and management of such zones, it can lead to a surreptitious form of governance. Not surprisingly, such systems do not share the same legislative processes when making decisions about development in the zone. While the state would normally approach infrastructure development through consultations with relevant experts, the zone does not necessarily have the same systems or safeguards in place. Decisions taken within the zones are largely driven by financial institutions and multinational investors (Easterling 2014), who often have to prioritise the welfare of shareholders over that of citizens.

Back at the airport I finish my sweep of the departure lounge at JFK. I empty the dust into a ziplock bag and look at the contents, unresolved. I imagine the collection of enough dust to create a small footprint, enough to cover a room. An embassy. A new territory composed of the discarded fragments from travellers. A community built from the byproduct of mass travel, immigration and globalisation. A community free from the allegiance of single state nationalism and a community of dust. ●

# A bristlecone cannot survive indoors

———— Naomi Riddle

1.

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!  
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout  
Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!  
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,  
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,  
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,  
Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world!  
Crack nature's moulds, an germens spill at once,  
That make ingrateful man!  
— William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (1606), Act 3 Scene 2

I was looking at a painting. It's a peculiar work, poster-size, with nothing special stylistically; there are a few weirdly assertive broad brushstrokes that seem misplaced. It's difficult to tell whether it was deliberately painted in a naïve style or whether the painter just couldn't get the figures and perspective quite right.

It's not a very good painting. I can't make out the signature on the bottom of the print, and on the wall in a sharehouse it exists just to be on the wall, to avoid the casual forlornness of an empty hook. You might briefly glance at it on your way past or, more likely, not even notice it at all. But in an in-between moment of waiting around, I began to peer more closely.

There's a mass of dark blue, the deep inky hue of a sky on the cusp of nightfall, when bright sunlight is swapped for shadow. There's the ground, or what you'd call a thin layer of earth, painted in as a thick black line, and then, underneath the sediment, a whirl of colours, oranges and pinks and violent greens, a burst of patterned flowers, leaves and branches.

This is the first strangeness: that such a display of nature has been placed under ground and not above, sealed in and contained. The second is the group of human figures that have been painted in black against the ultramarine. You would think that the figures are the intended focus of the work, but given the heavy saturation of the sky, you can't see them clearly. Most of them are floating mid-air with their arms outstretched up to the heavens, and they form

a cascading chain from the top right hand corner of the painting down to the black layer of earth below. The figures appear to be ascending skyward, on their way towards heavenly rapture.

And yet, after sitting there for a while, I began to think that maybe this isn't the scene I'm meant to be seeing at all, that maybe these figures aren't rising but *falling*, that the arms outstretched don't signal pleasure or delight, the anticipation of an embrace, but instead fear, despair, the horror of a plummeting descent. It's possible this confusion is intended, that these people are neither ascending nor descending, but stuck in a kind of immovable stasis.

But this static conundrum is not what makes me come back to this innocuous painting, to dawdle mid-step. For all my confusion, the humans are not what catch the eye. You don't linger on their plight – if anything the figures begin to seem minor, a triviality.

This isn't what you're looking at.

It's the seething, writhing, surging mass of Nature below: the tendrils of branches and flowers and leaves aching to break through an impertinent layer placed so unjustly on top of them, the splash of orange radiating the warm heat of rage, of spite and wrath and retribution, and one vine reaching up up up, a thrashing serpent about to burst forth and reclaim all that empty space above, just on the cusp of obliterating those petty pesky little figures within the frame.

\* \* \*

2.

*He could pretend, in the surround sound of wind, water, leaf and bird, that the forest was pristine, that he was born to it and belonged.*

— Mireille Juchau, *The World Without Us* (2015), p. 4

We are now living in the era of the Anthropocene. Coming after the relatively stable Holocene, this geological epoch ushers in a new period defined by the way humans have radically impacted and altered the makeup of the planet. Whilst the era's existence is still being contested, the case has been remade as recently as January of this year, with the Anthropocene Working Group arguing that 'humanity's impacts on Earth should now be regarded as pervasive and sufficiently disruptive to justify a separate classification.'<sup>1</sup> Yet the term itself is problematic, with some debating that the very use of the word reaffirms our belief in our power and dominion over the world; that it does nothing for dismantling the pervasive idea that the earth is here for us alone.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Jonathan Amos, "'Case is Made' for the New Anthropocene Epoch", *BBC News*, 08/01/16, [www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-35259194](http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-35259194)  
2 Ross Andersen, 'Nature has lost its meaning', *The Atlantic*, 30/11/15, [www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2015/11/nature-has-lost-its-meaning/417918](http://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2015/11/nature-has-lost-its-meaning/417918)



It's also misleading in the scale and balance of human impact: a large portion of geological disruption and the changing climate can be attributed to a few select, developed nations, and yet many of the consequences are to be laid at the feet of poor and developing countries.<sup>3</sup> The term is useful in this instance because it represents a powerful marker in denoting humankind's effect on the entire biosphere: its very existence and the controversy surrounding the terminology forces us to return to and explore fundamental questions about our relationship with the earth and Nature. As Ben Valentine suggests, what the Anthropocene represents 'is a large-scale admission of guilt', and the recognition of such guilt is what 'hold[s] the power to move us to action.'<sup>4</sup>

This is because the issues of climate change are as much about what we understand Nature to be and how we think of human existence itself as they are about lowering emissions, challenging world trade agreements and diversifying economies. Because what lies at the heart of the Anthropocene is a dichotomy between the undeniable central and dramatic impact that we have had on the planet, and the dawning realisation that the human species is something fragile and fleeting. Our existence is not essential; it is entirely insignificant and inconsequential when measured against the deep time-scale of the planet. The artist Robert Smithson, when questioned about entropy and geological time in 1974, quipped 'it may be that humans beings are just different from dinosaurs rather than better.'<sup>5</sup>

Cultural theorist Naomi Klein attempts to understand why so many people ignore the dire warnings, why it is that climate change and the scale of impending disaster evoke apathy rather than action:

Maybe we do look – really look – but then, inevitably, we seem to forget. Remember and then forget again. Climate change is like that; it's hard to keep it in your head for very long. We engage in this odd form of on-again-off-again ecological amnesia.<sup>6</sup>

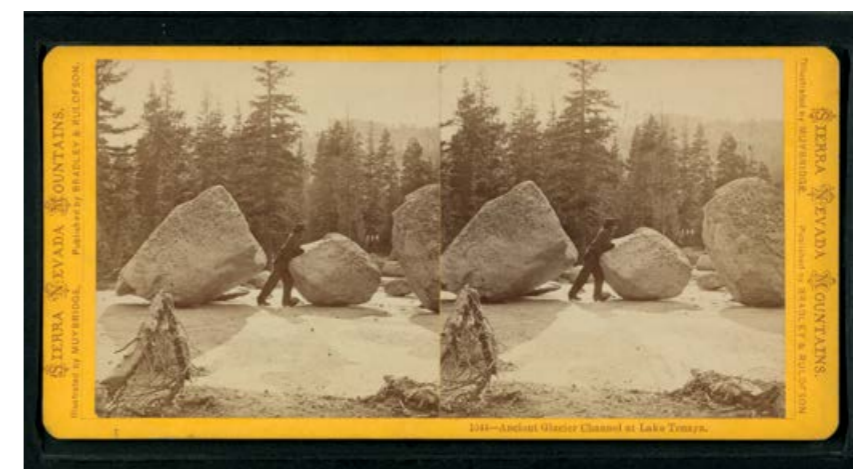
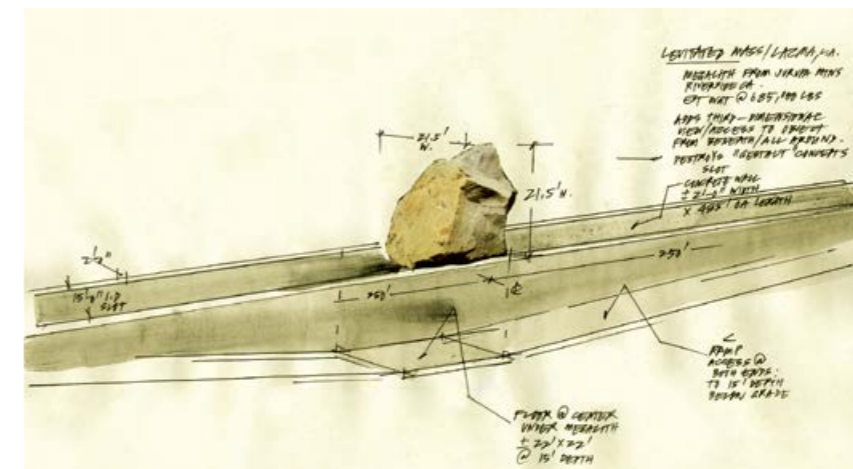
And over the last three decades, when increases in the earth's temperature moved from a gentle curve to a straight line; when we saw the white blotch of a polar bear adrift on a tiny chunk of abandoned ice, surrounded by an undulating arctic sea; when Jacarandas bloomed too early or too late and the first tender sprigs of crocuses appeared in the middle of Winter, we turned our gaze elsewhere. What is behind this, this turning of the other cheek? 'We deny',

3 For further discussion on the political implication and issues with the term see Jedediah Purdy, 'Anthropocene Fever', *Aeon*, 31/03/15, <https://aeon.co/essays/should-we-be-suspicious-of-the-anthropocene-idea>; Dana Luciano, 'The Inhuman Anthropocene', *Avidly*, 22/03/15, <http://avidly.lareviewofbooks.org/2015/03/22/the-inhuman-anthropocene/>

4 Ben Valentine, 'Plastigomerase, the Anthropocene's New Stone', *Hyperallergic*, 25/11/15

5 Robert Smithson, *Entropy Made Visible* (1973) [www.robertsmithson.com/essays/entropy.htm](http://www.robertsmithson.com/essays/entropy.htm)

6 Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything*, (London: Allen Lane, 2014), p. 4



writes Klein, 'because we fear that letting in the full reality of this crisis will change everything.'<sup>7</sup>

Because in recognising the Anthropocene and truly acknowledging the consequences of climate change, traditional and safe understandings of Nature also begin to fall away. 'Nature has lost its meaning', declares Professor Jedediah Purdy in his interview with *The Atlantic's* Ross Andersen, particularly when we accept that 'no part of the natural world tells us how to value it, let alone how to live and relate to one another'.<sup>8</sup> Whatever value we ascribe is a one-way exchange; it is to be valued only by us and most often our values stem from hubris – that we should and will continue to inhabit this world, even as the power we have exerted over it accelerates our demise. Nature may be apathetic or indifferent, but with wilder storms and fiercer heat it is nothing if not insistent in its presence, in reasserting itself in the face of our flimsy ideas of control. The world, however altered, will continue once we are gone.

It is Nature's indifference, this blank face that is hard to accept. Learning to live in the Anthropocene requires a very rare thing indeed: it requires us to be humble. And yet, as Meera Subramanian plaintively asks on her return to the Oregon woods of her childhood, 'when have humans ever looked at something we need, or even just want, and walked away?'<sup>9</sup>

\* \* \*

### 3.

Dust, almost nothing in itself, gathers and makes visible what is otherwise unseen.  
— Andrea Barrett, 'Dust', *The Paris Review* (Summer 2014), p. 233

Always this urge to anthropomorphise grips us, as if the awe – or panic, or even, deep down, rage – provoked in us by a landscape without human meaning were too great to bear.

— Helen Garner, *Regions of Thick-ribbed Ice* (2001), p. 37

The American art critic Ben Davis was in New York City when Hurricane Sandy hit in 2012, as many of the galleries in Chelsea and the collections housed

within them were damaged. The much-loved Printed Matter, Inc. lost an entire basement of archives. For Davis, 'images of dealers salvaging sodden canvases and mucking the sludge from their ravaged spaces were like allegories of the impotence of art before the massiveness of environmental change.'<sup>10</sup> Similarly, for the Japanese art collective Chim^Pom, the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, followed by the Fukushima nuclear disaster, provoked feelings of despondency and helplessness. But as the magnitude of Fukushima continued to unfold, as an exclusion zone was put in place and people were forced to evacuate from a threat they could not smell, hear or see, Chim^Pom found themselves returning to the importance of artistic intervention: 'when everything stop[s] functioning properly, what an artist create[s]...mean[s] a lot,' particularly given Fukushima has become a symbol, 'a petri dish for certain struggles that we will all have to face in the future.'<sup>11</sup> The significance here, when considering the Anthropocene, Nature and the place of humanity within it, is this: art, forms of representation, are key to understanding these concerns. It appears, as Davis attests, that 'the ecological crisis is also a crisis of the imagination.'<sup>12</sup>

For the Canadian Kelly Jazvac, her sculptural pieces entitled *Plastigomerate Samples* (2013) walk the blurry line between science and art. The works themselves are made of a new material recently found off the coast of Hawaii – a strange combination of molten lava flow and plastic garbage. In order to collect this material for her sculptures, Jazvac collaborated with geologist Patricia Corcoran and oceanographer Charles Moore, and their discovery of plastigomerate is considered important evidence in proving the existence of the Anthropocene. Looking at Jazvac's sculptures is a disquieting experience: on the one hand the rocks appear entirely natural, even with the unexpected streaks of colour from melted waste, and yet they also look other-worldly, like dusty moon-rocks housed in glass cases. Plastigomerate is a visual representation of the dichotomy of the Anthropocene – this material has been created by humans, but at the same time is completely alien, uncanny in the true Freudian sense, both familiar and not. We know that 'climate change is so large and all encompassing it's actually hard to "see" it in its entirety' but these samples reinforce the scale of our impact, the end result of need and consumption.<sup>13</sup> The character Brian Glassic, a master of waste disposal in Don DeLillo's *Underworld* (1997), on observing mountains of garbage, finds that what comes with it is 'a sting of enlightenment': 'the landfill showed him smack-on how the waste stream ended, where all the appetites and hankerings, the sodden second thoughts came runneling out, the things you wanted ardently and then did not.'<sup>14</sup> If we were turning our cheek away at the news of climate change, Jazvac's sculptures turn this gaze back around, encouraging us to pause and consider our sodden second thoughts. What is natural at this point; what would the feel of this rock be in the hand, this rock that will last for thousands of years with discarded plastic bags embedded in its core? And why, strangely, do I long to hold that particular one, so hopelessly beautiful with its sapphire-toned garland atop the dull grey of molten lava?

7 *ibid* p. 4

8 Ross Andersen, 'Nature has lost its meaning', *The Atlantic*, 30/11/15,

9 Meera Subramanian 'The Age of Loneliness', *Guernica*, 15/09/15, [www.guernicamag.com/features/the-age-of-loneliness/](http://www.guernicamag.com/features/the-age-of-loneliness/)

10 Ben Davis, 'Art and the ecological', *Miami Rail*, Spring 2015, <http://miamirail.org/summer-2015/art-and-the-ecological/>

11 Chim^Pom, 'Radioactive Art in Fukushima: Don't Follow The Wind', *The Creators Project* (2015)

12 Davis, 'Art and the ecological'.

13 Kelly Jazvac in Ben Valentine, 'Plastigomerate, the Anthropocene's New Stone', *Hyperallergic*, 25/11/15

14 Don DeLillo, *Underworld*, (London: Picador, 1999), p. 284-5



Trevor Paglen's *Trinity Cube* (2015) is a similarly confounding object, glowing a glassy turquoise that looks like the glint of green you see on old buildings, the thin patina layer where copper has oxidised to rust. It's small in scale (only 20cm<sup>3</sup>) and, like Jazvac's samples, it is made up of Anthropocene material: trinitite, a glass substance found in New Mexico that has been formed by sand melting during the atomic blast testing, and irradiated broken glass collected from the Fukushima exclusion zone. Two historical moments of humankind's play with Nature exposed in a material substance, and in this instance, bonded together to form a balanced geometrical object. *Trinity Cube* is part of Chim^Pom's *Don't Follow The Wind* (2015), an exhibition of works placed amongst the ruins of Fukushima, to be seen by no one until the radiation disappears. Whilst Jazvac's work is about the visibility of climate change, Paglen is concerned with erasure and absence, as this object, which is radioactive in the very substance it is made of, is removed from us, sitting isolated in an abandoned room that may not be accessible for 30,000 years. The power of the works in *Don't Follow The Wind* comes from their removal, from their ability to exist in a place that is unsafe for humans. Chim^Pom offers a response to ecological disaster that is physically impenetrable and entirely imaginative: it is what comes with the thought of a cube, silently waiting in a room.

In the novel *The World Without Us* (2015), Mireille Juchau writes of *sfumato*, 'a way to hold opposite ideas at once'.<sup>15</sup> *Sfumato* also refers to a Renaissance painting technique, where tones and colours are shaded in such a way that they appear to merge together, producing hazy and softened forms. You can think of the Anthropocene in these terms, where two ideas, our dominion and impact over the world and the fleetingness of humanity in the face of an indifferent Nature hazily merge. Both Jazvac and Paglen, and indeed many other artists preoccupied with climate change, give us a visual image of this merging, as the shades and tones of geological material are quite literally fused together. Think of Michael Heizer's *Levitated Mass* (2012) at LACMA, a 340-tonne rock that gains its sublime power in the magnitude of the installation feat, of dragging a rock of this size and weight through the streets of Los Angeles, but at the same time there it is perched, suspended above us. It would be a feat indeed to be able to stand underneath a 150 million-year-old granite boulder and not feel a twinge of humility in our own smallness, to not have those slight sideways thoughts of what if, what if; but what would happen if it were to fall?

\* \* \*

15 Mireille Juchau, *The World Without Us*, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2016), p. 71

16 Carolina A. Miranda, 'The ghost of Prometheus: a long-gone tree and the artist who resurrected its memory' *LA Times*, 27/2/15

17 For a lengthier account of the tree's demise, see Carolina A. Miranda, 'Follow Up: More tales of the Prometheus tree and how it died', *LA Times*, 28/02/15

18 Roy Scranton, 'We're Doomed. Now What?' *The Stone: The New York Times*, 21/12/15

4.

'Because everything connects in the end, or only seems to, or seems to only because it does.'

— Don DeLillo, *Underworld*, p. 729–30

1964 was the year of a quiet but no less significant event on Wheeler Peak in Eastern Nevada. Wheeler Peak is where bristlecone pines grow. They're a hardy tree, able to survive at high altitudes with little water, and although slow-growing, they still reach immense heights. The trunk forms in such a way that makes it look like a badly wrapped tourniquet or a wet towel that has been wrung out. Their contortions seem, well, painful, and they are without the better-known redwood's soft and stately dusky hues. Bristlecones also have an odd survival mechanism: 'over centuries, as mountains move and the ground shifts, roots will become exposed and pieces of a bristlecone pine will die, even as others go on living', and they become leery and lopsided with these sacrificed limbs.<sup>16</sup>

On Wheeler Peak in 1964 a 17-foot bristlecone pine was continuing to grow. The pine had been named Prometheus, and it would most likely be the oldest living thing ever recorded, having lived on the earth for at least 4,862 years. But when scientist Donald Currey came across Prometheus, he did not yet know its age. What Currey was interested in was geology and historical weather patterns, which could be read in the rings of a tree's trunk.<sup>17</sup> On first glance, given the nature of the Bristlecone's exposed roots, to the untrained eye the tree appeared to be dead.

So Currey ordered the tree to be cut down.

And it was in this moment that the world's oldest tree, a tree born in 2898 BCE, was felled in the name of science, the same quest for knowledge that left Prometheus' namesake chained to a boulder for all eternity with an eagle pecking at his liver.

But if anything, in the telling of this event, I am guilty of placing too much meaning onto Nature – the disbelief and swift flash of anger that I feel at the falling of the axe, the worth I place on the history and age of the tree, is entirely human. I am guilty of what Helen Garner calls our endless need to anthropomorphise, to make meaning out of a natural landscape that is devoid of it. It is what Roy Scranton refers to as our perpetual desire for 'symbolic constellations of meaning': 'when forced to...we would choose meaningful self-annihilation over meaningless bare life.'<sup>18</sup>

For Prometheus, for a Bristlecone, the worth attached to its own history and age is immaterial, it only needs to exist, to be and to continue, to extend roots into the dry earth and to reach that one branch closer to the arc of the sun. Like the admission of guilt that lies in the very naming of the Anthropocene, our guilt in this instance is ours to bear alone. ●

# Vortices and abstraction: and in the end relations

———— Marian Tubbs

Think of capitalism in the 19th century: it sees the flowing of a pole of flow that is, literally, a flow, the flow of workers, a proletariat flow: well, what is this which flows, which flows wickedly and which carries away our earth, where are we headed?<sup>1</sup>

China's Yellow River of Lanzhou recently turned a 'biblical red'. On other occasions it has appeared bright pink from contamination by industrial dye waste. The glossy black surface of the Mississippi River at the Gulf of Mexico is the result of multiple oil spills. In Hong Kong, bacteria feeding off human sewage illuminate the coastline in phosphorescent light.

With international corporate aesthetics making spectacular statements in the form of material accidents, there is no need for an artist to turn a river green to ponder these environmental evolutions. They do, however, need titles. While official name changes to affected bodies of water are yet to happen (new nomenclature would be an admission of degradation) it is significant that there are neologisms for these recent chemical phenomena. Without these new words, we cannot see how what once belonged to the realm of science fiction is now real.

*Pelagic*, deriving from the Greek (*pélagos*), means 'open sea'. There are pelagic fish, pelagic birds, pelagic reptiles and different pelagic zones to describe depth. There are now also 'pelagic plastics'. These congeal across five major ocean gyres in multicultural, morphing assemblages into what are most commonly called the 'Great Ocean Garbage Patches' or 'Trash Vortexes'. Though an estimated six kilograms of plastic exist for every kilogram of plankton in these areas, most parts of them are deceptively invisible from above and on approach; as such, there is little photographic evidence of many of the patches, islands and vortices that make them up. The real has a dearth of representable force; abstraction, and then absence, create a non-story. This is the nature of water flows; in fluid dynamics a vortex is a region of liquid where rotation occurs around an axis line; the plastic assemblages are in continual movement including dispersals of dilution.

It is not the level of information but how it is conveyed that creates a culturally appealing narrative. Molecules of water are now understood by some to be able to reveal their own history; water has memory and when we drink it, we drink information. 'Rain is a data medium carrying information to the world.'<sup>2</sup> Rain is the internet! It appears all cool and invisible in its data streams, but in fact it carries information of serious consequence. What is less chill, is to address such information (the political) directly in artistic narratives – there has to be some subtle distance created or, more boldly, almost no transformation. The action of putting up a mirror, to skip artistic translation, and simply make 'balls-out, great' work. This term has stuck with me since hearing the defence that artist Richard Prince made when being sued by photojournalist Patrick Cariou. In the case, Prince defended his slight changes to Cariou's journalistic images of Rastafarians (he added paint blobs and collaged guitars in the subjects' hands) as original works of art. There would have been no infringement of copyright if the works were deemed as satire or parody in the US. Prince testified with an unprovable naïve jokiness that seemed to undermine his own conceptual practice and aimed to make ruling as difficult as possible. Prince's presence or *performance* in the courtroom was even denoted as 'legal art' – artwork that seeks to define or trouble the law. He claimed that the work just aimed to be a 'balls-out, great, unbelievably looking, great painting'<sup>3</sup> that would communicate, 'Hey, this guy is playing the guitar...that had to do with a kind of rock-and-roll painting on the radical side, and on a conservative side something to do with Cézanne's bathers.'<sup>4</sup> The comedic commentary rubbed up against a problematic core modernist thrust, that is, to achieve 'objectively good work'. I stick with this however because Prince's lucid anti-statements went further; his deliberate buffoonery and obfuscation displayed a resistance to clarity, itself becoming another abstraction at play in the artwork.

To return to my rubric of water, something that is 'abstract but real'<sup>5</sup> is how Christopher L. Miller describes the political physics of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of flow. This could be a way of approaching the molecular flows of water, but can I successfully use a concept defined around humans? *Where are we headed?*<sup>6</sup> I can, because pelagic plastics are a hydro-bio-political issue. That is, when we eat sealife the toxic plastic particles that ocean

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- 1 Gilles Deleuze, 'Capitalism, flows, the decoding of flows, capitalism and schizophrenia, psychoanalysis, Spinoza'. Lecture, Cours Vincennes, 16/11/1971
  - 2 [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILSyt\\_Hhbjg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILSyt_Hhbjg), 'Water has Memory', Oasis Channel and Stuttgart University, accessed 24/12/2015
  - 3 Dan Duray, Observer, <http://observer.com/2012/05/court-jester-is-richard-prince-using-the-legal-system-as-a-medium/>, accessed 24/12/2015
  - 4 *ibid*
  - 5 Christopher L. Miller, *Deleuze and Guattari: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*, ed. Gary Gonesko, NY, 2001, p 1140.
  - 6 Gilles Deleuze, 'Capitalism, flows, the decoding of flows, capitalism and schizophrenia, psychoanalysis, Spinoza'. Lecture, Cours Vincennes, 16/11/1971





animals have ingested pass onto us, and before this the particles themselves, during their flows, act like sponges for waterborne contaminants. We are the creators, predators and consumers of the plastic; abstract flows have real effects on the human.

Dead sealife torn open with plastics or drowned and sputtering in thick oil constitute the figurative harrowing news image; cleat particles do not. Ambivalent abstractions that can be found in floating garbage patches are hard to picture and hard to understand but continually emerging. I think of Nairy Baghramian, Yuji Agematsu and Clare Milledge, artists whose abstract visions speak to themselves and in whose work there is no need for linguistic correlation, just indexical hints. Retreat in Milledge's sculptural and painting compositions seems key to her movements between information and cogitation. The artist simply drops a loaded word on a piece of glass slunk with hessian and then refuses to deliver more: what is out of reach or absent also constructs. In Baghramian's *Retainer* (2013), a butter-coloured, engineered polycarbonate is stretched to jagged margins and fixed to frail aluminium structures. The scale and precariousness of these works call to an intimacy with the body, while their materiality shies away from it, instead invoking the exact factory discards that would be found in any of the waterways I have mentioned.

There is something abjectly satisfying about the words engaged in flows and current molecular evolutions: chemical sludge, flotsam, muck, jetsam and

debris. This could be because flows are healthy for organic matter; if we're not moving we're dead. This is something that Jane Bennett's beautiful *Vibrant Matter* (2009) works with: the agency of organic waste, dead matter and non-human matter to create influential systems to which we are subject today. This is the Anthropocene, a place of red, pink, black and clear-but-blocked water that is spectacular, banal, seductive and dull. I do not wish to bathe in the liquid,<sup>7</sup> but it is essential to spend time with these and additional chemicals to consider how new material flows are infecting and changing our world.<sup>8</sup> I believe in their potency more than the marketed purity of mountain spring water of the Swiss Alps or Himalayas. I have been to the Himalayas across the world's highest road and shat on giant excrement piles in collaboration with military personnel and tourists in open-air snowy patches. I am not saying there is a bottled water company that operates from there specifically, I'm just saying I was in a situation. How then to get higher?

Without easy space travel, or even affordable public transport, the abstract and the virtual are creative escapes and points for reflection on the problems of the real. Virtual worlds can be retreats from hegemonic and political spheres; they can be places for specific, singular, creative experiences.<sup>9</sup> Resistance to correlation in abstract and virtual expression can also be a necessity; as an artist I cannot travel to the five gyres and collect plastics to make abstract art right now (I have applied for multiple grants to do this over the last three years) – currently I don't have the means. In lieu, I have sat at my computer and made soup-like plastic worlds, searched through jpegs for sexy and gross plastic, put on video wobble filters and added beats. Sometimes the self in virtual space seems to have a more direct shot to real material speculation. While I am bowled over by the prettiness of perfectly shot high-definition Instagram videos that depict endangered whales breaching, simultaneously representations of worthless matter and non-correlative aesthetic retreats push me to meditate on a more common world. And I've barely begun to talk about the human. ●

7 My editor discerningly signaled that maybe we cannot still call such changed molecules water.

8 Beatriz Preciado's *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, And Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* largely testifies to this throughout. For instance, focusing again on the human, Preciado writes, 'Modern subjectivity is the management of self-intoxication in a chemically harmful environment. Smoking in the plastic-electric-nuclear metropolis can be seen simply as one way of vaccinating yourself against environmental poisoning by means of homeopathic inoculation.' (NY, The Feminist Press, 2008), 360

9 Elvia Wilk, 'Where looks don't matter and only the best writers get laid: Subjectivity and other unfulfilled promises of the text-based Internet', (*networked*) *Every whisper a crash on my ears* (London, Arcadia Misa, 2014), 37–38.



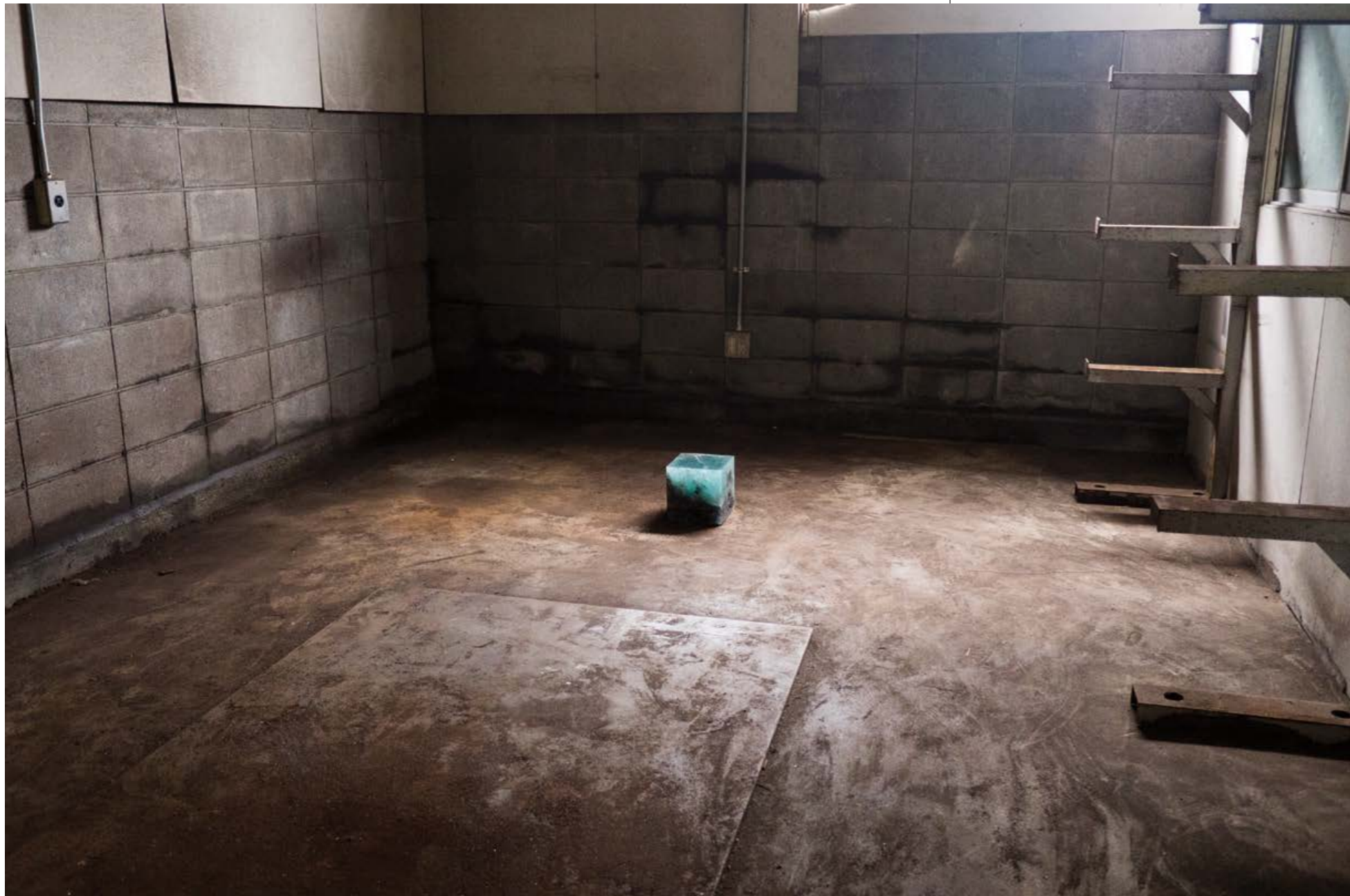








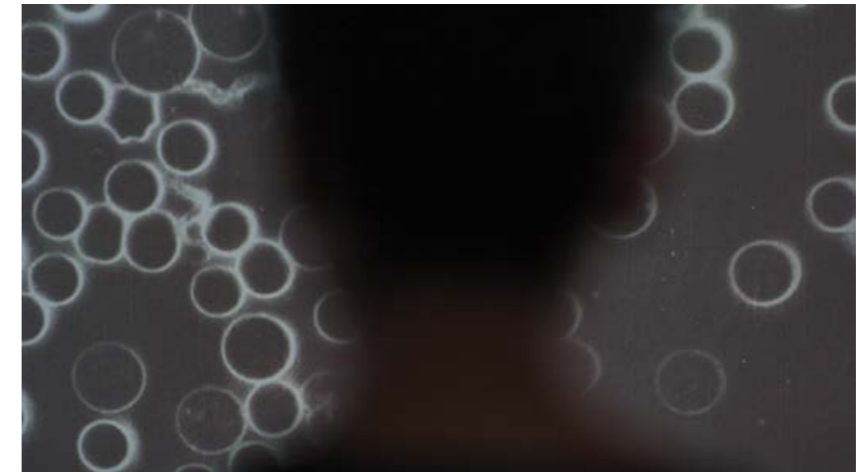




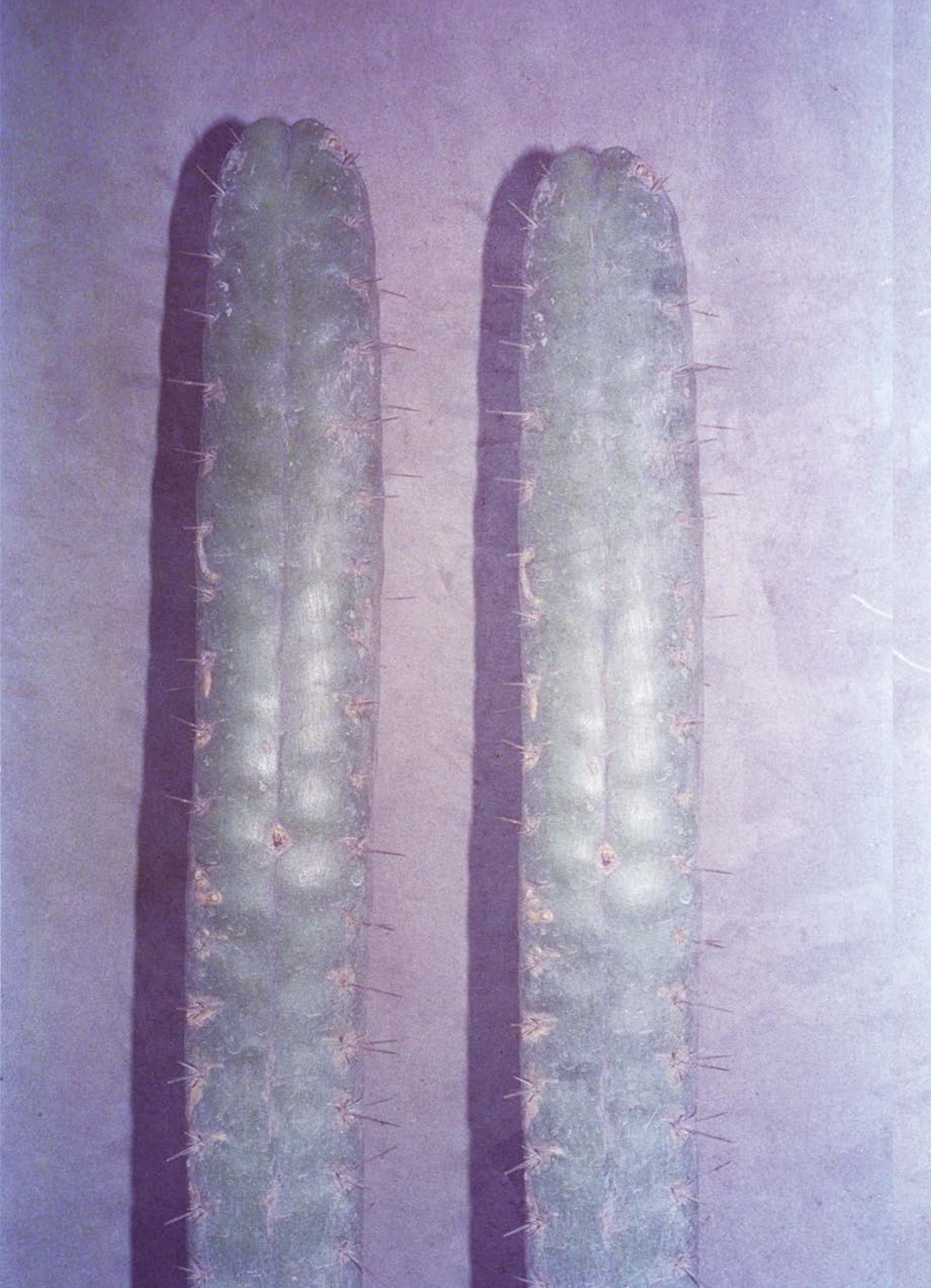








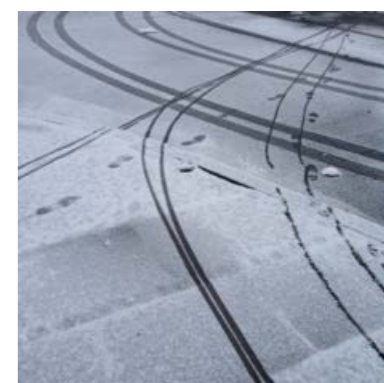
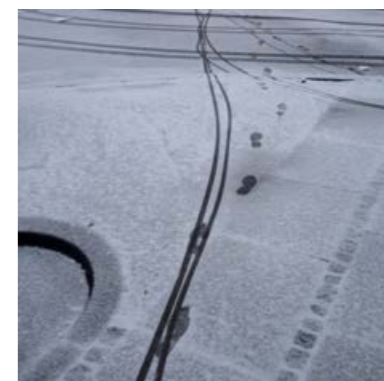


















## (notes on Sector IX B)

——— Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc

The starting point of the film *Sector IX B* was the discovery of an old family photo album containing a series of pictures of objects, and a series of pictures of individuals, families, officers and landscapes. All these photographs were shot in Gabon by my grandfather over a period of three years, from 1931 to 1934.

In 1931, health worker Emile Abonnenc had a position in Lastoursville in central Gabon, and he undertook his collection of objects during his time there. He very likely followed the instructions written by Michel Leiris and Marcel Griaule, the 'Short List of Instructions for Collectors of Ethnographic Objects', published by the Museum of Ethnology the same year. Its introduction calls on 'those who live or circulate far from the city—civil servants, travellers, tourists or colonists—to help create collections', in order to 'restore our Museum of Ethnography to its deserved place among the world's greatest museums'.<sup>1</sup>

And yet we know little about the acquisition conditions of these objects, most of which are now lost. Their photographs and index cards remain silent about their creators and owners.

When it was published in 1934, *l'Afrique Fantôme* (Ghost Africa) was brutally rejected by the scientific community, particularly by Marcel Griaule, who held something of a grudge against the author and collaborator, Michel Leiris. If the Dakar-Djibouti Mission plan was to gather objects on an unprecedented scale in order to build the collections of the future Musée de l'Homme in Paris, Leiris's text confronted it with a kind of passive resistance by minutely describing the mechanics of this kind of project and the environment in which it operated. As a participant, the narrator lays himself open, showing his doubts, his frustrations, as well as his erotic and morbid fantasies. An unwitting precursor of so-called reflexive anthropology, Leiris' text offers a key document whose originality is in 'provid[ing] an account that is still unique to this day, about the conditions of ethnographic practice under colonialism.'<sup>2</sup>

To get the objects of the health worker Abonnenc to speak, we would have to twist the different ways of building narratives and linking historical moments with the truth of facts, we would need to hallucinate history, take

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1 'Instructions sommaires pour les collecteurs d'objets ethnographiques', Musée d'Ethnographie, Paris, 1931, p. 7  
2 Jean Jamin, 'Foreword to Ghost Africa', in Leiris. *Miroir de l'Afrique*, ed. Gallimard, 1996, p. 69



stock of Heritage to better rid ourselves of it, to better squander it.

To help us with this task, we have Michel Leiris' account of the collecting of objects during the Dakar-Djibouti mission in 1931–1933, an account that is bitter, disillusioned and contaminated by the author's distress.

Apart from that, there is only that absence, that space left vacant, that I had to refill by speculating about hypothetical encounters, effecting a kind of 'to-and-fro between striking reality and elusive reality', linking these stories 'like an impression with an imprint, keeping in mind the amount of darkness each side will have contributed to the void.'<sup>3</sup>

*Sector IX B* is a fiction film, almost a science-fiction film, which seeks to address political issues as well as scientific and artistic narratives, echoes of which still inform national and international relations in the former colonial empire today. The idea of the project was to re-read a personal initiative of collecting and classifying objects, in the light of a wider collective history. Among all the collecting campaigns, the Dakar-Djibouti mission and its role in the creation of the Musée de l'Homme is the most significant example available, especially thanks to Michel Leiris' diary.

*Sector IX B* deals with the policies of cultural appropriation, of places and modes of production of knowledge, and how we can question this scientific legacy in the present day.

On the one hand, the film aims to subvert the homogeneity of the narratives of scientific adventures in a colonial context; on the other hand, it aims to question the place each individual occupied – in this specific case my grandfather – in the processes of cultural appropriation and of accumulation of symbolic and economic wealth.

The main character is a young anthropologist who tries to redefine the boundaries of her discipline. In order to do this, she reconstitutes the pharmacy box and the medical prescriptions given to the members of the famous Dakar-Djibouti Mission, then she tests the effects of the drugs on herself. She falls slowly in a fantastical world, and sinks into a hallucination, entirely produced by the synthetic substances. Step by step, the viewer will doubt the reality of what is happening to her.

As Johannes Fabian writes in the introduction to his book *Out of our minds*: 'In recent anthropology there has been much criticism of the disembodied scientific mind. The importance of gender has been recognized; senses other than vision have, as it were, been rehabilitated, emotions have received attention, and the body as a site of knowledge has been rediscovered. In the perspective opened up by these developments, a critical study of the objective conditions that determined knowledge of the Other as reported in travelogues and early ethnographies must consider the effects of alcohol, drugs, illness, sex, brutality, and terror, as well as the role of conviviality, friendship, play, and performance. Included in this approach are the sounds, movements, and objects that made up performance – music, dance, art, material culture, whatever mediated encounters and made it possible for the participants to transcend their

psychological and social boundaries.'<sup>4</sup>

Even more than enabling this transcendence of boundaries, it appears that all these stimuli, including chemical stimuli, produced these fantastical images of the 'Others', these distorted and violent images, that still irrigate the Western collective mind.

Each of the artists, theorists or architects I have invited to participate in this issue of *Oberon* share some of the concerns of the film *Sector IX B*. I envisioned these invitations as a way to discuss several of the empiric conclusions contained in *Sector IX B*. Candice Lin's text brings us to a place where the divisions between nature and culture, object and subject, human and non-human are blurred, defining a co-evolutionary mode of survival as an urgent political necessity.

Mexican-based artists Julia Rometti & Victor Costales share their visit to anthropologist Anthony Henman's San Pedro cactus garden. Known for its psychoactive effects, the San Pedro cactus was used in rituals in pre-Columbian times in Peru. This interview with Henman unfolds a whole continent contained in the modest scale of a garden.

In his contribution, Jorge Satorre analyses his series *Emic Etic?* This body of work echoes two different methodologies – those developed by Marcel Griaule, which consist of describing cultures, rituals and traditions from an outsider ('objective') point of view, and those developed by Michel Leiris who proposes describing them from one's own (subjective) point of view.

Ethnography has been widely discussed and criticised for its objectification and consumption of the 'Other', the cultures it tried to describe and 'salvage'. The geography of this consumption lies mostly across an asymmetrical North-West axis of power relationships. With her contribution, Sarah Frioux-Salgas proposes an alternative route with the figure of ethnographer Shalom An-sky. Famous for his play *The Dibbouk*, a classic of the Yiddish folklore, An-sky travelled during the early 1990s through eastern Russia and gathered folktales, stories and documents from the *shtetlech* (small Jewish settlements) that had endured the pogrom led by the Russian Empire. An-sky's collecting complicates the 'salvage' paradigm<sup>5</sup> by giving us access to fragile stories that are at the same time a subtle testimony of his own attachment to them. It is precisely this ambiguous state of attachment to the object of research that captures the subjectivity Leiris conjured in *l'Afrique Fantôme*, and how these few contributions materialise in a strange speculative landscape. ●

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3 Annie Le Brun, 'Raymond Roussel – Source de rayons réels...', in Michel Leiris. Roussel & Co, ed. Fayard, 1998, p. 17

4 Johannes Fabian, *Out of Our Minds. Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa*, University of California Press, 2000, pp. 6–7

5 'The salvage paradigm designates the peak period of ethnographic collecting, led by the idea of the preservation of the material culture of societies that were about to change fundamentally in the forced renewals of colonial exchange relations.' Lotte Arndt in *Crawling Doubles. Colonial Collecting and Affect*, Mathieu K. Abonnenc, Lotte Arndt & Catalina Lozano (eds.), B42, Paris, 2016, p. 56

# Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc and the alchemy of archives

——— El Hadji Malick Ndiaye

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The reflexive nature of the work of art is one of the basic features of the avant-gardes, which culminated in their break with modernity. The simultaneous return of artistic work to the nature of its own medium, and criticism of the institutions accommodating it, ushered in a postmodern spirit. This latter also appeared among artists whose works focused on an exegesis of history through the presentation of archives. As a result, in the face of these new visual features, the ever closer relations between art and research are positing something that remains to be formulated: the nature of the knowledge that issues from these two concepts. In order to take a closer look at the relations between art praxis and scientific research, I will be discussing the work of Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc.

## I – The Historical Event and the Labour of Art

Abonnenc's work is situated within an overall criticism of the visual culture: he invites our eye to place itself between the ambiguity of the image and the complexity of history. This interstice is reflected in the three works I will be discussing, *Préface à des fusils pour Banta* (2011), *Africa Addio* (2012) and *Sector IX B* (2014). *Préface à des fusils pour Banta* is above all a dialogue between Mathieu Abonnenc and Sarah Maldoror.<sup>1</sup> In 1970, Sarah Maldoror filmed *Des fusils pour Banta* in the Bijagos archipelago (Guinea-Bissau). It is based on the life of Awa, a militant woman in the PAIGC's liberation army (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde). When she returned to Algeria, the film reels were confiscated by the Algerian army, which had commissioned the film. In 2011, using photos of the shoot and interviews with the filmmaker, Mathieu Abonnenc's *Préface à des fusils pour Banta* exhumed Sarah Maldoror's film, which had never seen the light of day. The 2011 film, which consists of fragments of Sarah Maldoror's memory, evokes the revolution, resistance and history of the Tricontinentale.

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<sup>1</sup> Born Sarah Ducados, Sarah Maldoror studied in Moscow during the 1960s where her classes were marked by Soviet realist cinema. She worked with the anti-fascist Italian film-maker Gillo Pontecorvo (1919–2006) on the making of what would turn out to be *The Battle of Algiers* (1966).





*Africa Addio* (2012) recounts an episode involving the melting down of Katanga Crosses. These traditional copper coins are symbols of the power of pre-colonial kingdoms, and also demonstrate a knowledge of copper mining processes prior to the arrival of the Belgians. The transformation of this cultural heritage into objects of merchandise is an alchemy which monetises the secular value of memory as a form of modern wealth in the Western sense of the term. This reduction of heritage to just its monetary value is a metaphor of the exploitation of African resources. It establishes a link between colonisation and the history of capitalism.

*Sector IX B* (2014) tells the story of a researcher who sets out to look for vestiges of the colonial period by way of inert museum objects and natural specimens collected on that occasion.<sup>2</sup> The narrative juxtaposes three tableaux that connect different time-frames. The first tableau describes the character's obsession with finishing the book she is writing, and her doubts about her methodology. Her methodology echoes that of researchers who were studying Trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness). In this account, ethnologists are compared to 'carriers' like tsetse flies, and the objects collected are likened to active viral agents, whose job is to alter the bodies of their hosts, which is what museums are. The second tableau depicts the character's introspection and psychological tension. It is translated by a voice in the background, guiding us through thoughts which are darkened by the regular ingestion of chemical substances. The third tableau is an allegory – set against a sharp acoustic background and psychedelic imagery – that projects the character into the darkness of a parallel and mysterious world.

From a structural analysis of the three works, it emerges that Mathieu Abonnenc tracks the ghosts of history by gaining access to the colonial past thanks to inert witnesses (Katanga Crosses, and the archives of Sarah Maldoror and Michel Leiris). The history is recounted by way of archives which are themselves productions of other authors.<sup>3</sup> The artist's desire to use artefacts to understand the Other involves an interpretative relation to historical documents and museum collections. These collections trace the intellectual trajectory of the first scientific missions in Africa. They have been developed in tandem with the great machine of modernity against a backdrop of selection, collecting, recording and classification. They have been used as a basis for the colonial undertaking that linked the power/knowledge dialectic, the traces of which are enclosed in the memory of heritage objects. From then on, the labour of art on these objects has created a crisis in the epistemological frameworks at work in the history of power relations.

In the field of the humanities, analysis of this new critical order has been marked by the 'linguistic turn', a shifting of philosophers' focus towards linguistics, which has helped to show that history is a construct that takes form in language. Echoing this change in the development of philosophy, WJT Mitchell has announced a new turn, which he calls a 'pictorial turn'.<sup>4</sup> This paradigm invites us to rediscover the image within the context of new forms of visuality, decipherment and interpretation, underpinned by research that questions the critical faculty of art praxis. It is precisely in this history of ideas that the spirit and approach of these three works by Abonnenc can be situated.

The idea that art may be a form of research began to be developed through the term 'practice-led research' by practitioners who sought to demonstrate that their activity was as essential for knowledge as theoretical, critical and empirical research methods.<sup>5</sup> However, the desire to add a surplus value to knowledge is very definitely divided in the dialogue set up between artist and archive, the recurrence of which seems to be a challenge to the amnesia of our contemporary societies.<sup>6</sup>

## II – The Critical Range of Artistic Research in Sector IX B

The archive retains its own rationality, which is frequently challenged by artists working on historical documents. The archive sets the past at some remove while at the same time connecting us with timeframes whose representation art must negotiate. It firmly encompasses forms of testimony and, for this reason, releases a power which stems from its legitimate 'authority' to make pronouncements about time that has elapsed. In the face of the archive, the audiovisual medium plays a complicated part, because – by dint of its technical specificity – the treatment and processing that it applies to the historical documents proceed by way of editing, where the meaning issues more from the presentation than from the archives themselves. The particular features of editing put the archive at the centre of a logic of interpretation and reconstruction, which confines history within a fragile stance of ongoing re-creation. This situation is probably typical of our contemporary societies, which Jean-Pierre Faye announced as *sociétés du montage* (societies of editing).<sup>7</sup> Because editing is not limited to playing with the liaison of different places: it cuts up time and reorganises it. It offers a timeframe that is no longer one of linear time, but the time of modern life, which excludes all forms of compartmentalisation between timeframes which are endlessly overlapping and intersecting within the experience of day-to-day life.<sup>8</sup> As a result, editing updates a constructivist approach to history. This is probably why Jacques Rancière regards

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- 2 The film shows a woman walking in empty downtown streets, where we recognise places with symbolic names: Pharmacie Pasteur, the Institut Pasteur with its typical Sahelian architecture with the following words in bas-relief on the façade: *A Pasteur, l'Afrique noire reconnaissante*. She ends up in Place Soweto. After walking past the railings of the parliament which represents the people, she comes to the Théodore Monod Museum of African Art of the IFAN/Cheikh Anta Diop, which holds thousands of ethnographical works, the first collections of which date back to the 1930s.
  - 3 Between Mathieu Abonnenc and the authors he talks with, there is a succession of metaphors of erasure. Erasure of archives in the face of new forms of reading. Erasure of amnesiac memory in the face of the construction of new narratives. Erasure of time shrinking, rendering us contemporary with historical events.
  - 4 WJT Mitchell, 'The Pictorial Turn' in WJT Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 11–34.
  - 5 Hazel Smith and Roger T Dean, *Practice-led research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*. Edinburgh University Press. 2009, p. 2.
  - 6 Sue Breakell, Victoria Worsley, 'Collecting the traces: an archives perspective' in *Journal of Visual Arts Practice*. Volume 6 Number 3, 2007, p. 177.
  - 7 cf. Jean Pierre Faye, 'Montage Production' in *Le Montage*, Change n°1. Paris. Seuil. 1968.
  - 8 Jean Caune, 'Le montage : une écriture et une conception de la réalité' in Jean Caune, *La démocratisation culturelle*. Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 2006, p. 180.

it as the very sense of history, since it contributes to organising a clash and constructing a continuum.

*The space of clashes and the space of the continuum may even have the same name, that of History. History may in fact be two contradictory things: the discontinuous line of revelatory clashes, and the continuum of joint presence. The liaison of heterogeneous things constructs and at the same time reflects a sense of history which shifts between these two poles.*<sup>9</sup>

Be this as it may, if in history there is no insurmountable dichotomy between explanation and understanding<sup>10</sup>, the symbolic re-use of the historical events by filmed archives situates art as the medium of a criticism that plays on two tableaux. In fact the construction of the film narrative involves an artistic creation, hence an ambiguous knowledge, on the basis of archives whose meaning is meant to be unambiguous. This kind of synergy seems to introduce a paradox in terms between art and research. At the root of this contradiction, it is the nature of the research which must be re-described, in spite of the fact that philosophical tradition has posited it as the foundation of knowledge. Knowledge has often been regarded as digital and verbal, not taking either the visual or the acoustic into account. The fact is that, as understood by postmodernism, knowledge can be affectively loaded, unstable, ambiguous and multi-dimensional.<sup>11</sup>

*In fact, if we mean by ‘criticism’ not the direct restoration of the state of things, but the exercise of an informed evaluative judgement and the distancing of reality (which involves a distancing of oneself), it thus becomes clear that both the creation of works and the way they are received contain, by their very nature, critical aspects.*<sup>12</sup>

According to Graeme Sullivan, the critical scope of art resides in the theoretical aspect which joins the different areas of research together. It has three dimensions which go hand-in-hand with this theoretical dimension: the conceptual, the dialectical and the contextual. Conceptual praxis is the idea that the artist-cum-researcher has to think within a medium and give it form through artifacts, which are one part of the research process. Dialectical praxis draws from the artist’s experience, being a form of questioning through which the artist-cum-researcher explores the human process of knowledge construction by way of lived and re-interpreted experiences. Contextual praxis, last of all, thinks of the long tradition of the arts as a critical form of questioning, where the idea is to introduce a social change.<sup>13</sup> Graeme Sullivan’s model defines criticism more as a process than a product, whose main capacity resides in questioning. If the work is intrinsically critical, this is because it conceives itself at the same time as it develops itself, and because the process of its elaboration includes thinking within it.<sup>14</sup>

In its narrative process, Sector IX B situates the differing realities connected with criticism, research and archives. On the one hand, by placing themselves at the crossroads of the history of the sciences by way of natural collections, several clues punctuate the narrative. First and foremost, the character is surrounded with attributes that link them with the history of a contextualised science.<sup>15</sup> Next, the film enshrines the legacy of the early colonial missions in Africa

in the experience of the researcher’s modern subjectivity. By focusing on the method which made the ‘native’ an object of research, it leads a representation of the world astray, a representation made by a colonial knowledge, which has constructed a way of looking at the Other. But this subjectivity is confronted by its own limits – the plot causes itself to lose its head, the plot is perverted by its own tools: the drugs of the mighty colonial pharmacy that quintessentially change the way in which reality is perceived.

On the other hand, forms of heritage act as the basis for the parts of the plot that unfolds in various museums, with, as its backdrop, the figure of Michel Leiris, whose words are quoted at the start of the film, like an epigraph.<sup>16</sup> The leading character – who says she has the impression of visiting Leiris’ unconscious – serves as a communication channel for a criticism of heritages. She walks in the huge site of the Musée de l’Homme [Museum of Mankind], emerges between two columns in the Théodore Monod Museum, walks past the profile of a sculpture, descends into the reserves and leafs through a few archives. This criticism becomes more radical when, all of a sudden, dogs hurtle along the Musée de l’Homme’s staircases and invade the corridors of the site. The colonisation of the heritage areas by the dogs creates a strange and ambiguous feeling, because it puts violence in the middle of the circuit through the artefacts.

National history and colonial history may be inseparable, but the fact remains that they are not compatible in the narrative of nation states. How does the national cultural heritage make links with histories that are as repressed as colonisation? In what manner is the past of the nation state connected with its present? What should the discourse of a cultural policy be in a multi-ethnic state? These questions do not directly name the word amnesia, but they make us think of it, because they bring into play the difficult dialogue between the old empire and colonial memories. This is a complexity that the discourse of Sector IX B tries to solve from the viewpoint of archives re-visited through the

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- 9 Jacques Rancière, ‘Montage dialectique, montage symbolique’ in *Le destin des images*. Paris, Editions la Fabrique. 2003, p. 70.
  - 10 Paul Ricoeur, ‘L’écriture de l’histoire et la représentation du passé’ in *Annales, Histoire, Sciences Sociales*. 55th year, N. 4, 2000, p. 739.
  - 11 Hazel Smith and Roger T Dean, Practice-led research, *Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*. Edinburgh University Press. 2009, p. 1–3.
  - 12 Marie-Noëlle Ryan, ‘La portée critique de l’œuvre d’art’, p. 293, in Evelyne Toussaint, *La fonction critique de l’art. Dynamiques et ambiguïtés*. La Lettre volée, 2009, p. 297.
  - 13 Graeme Sullivan, ‘Making Space: the Purpose and Place of Practice-led Research’, in Hazel Smith and Roger T Dean, *Practice-led research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*. Edinburgh University Press. 2009. p. 49–50.
  - 14 Michel Métayer, ‘Jan Svoboda, critique hors critique’, in Evelyne Toussaint, *La fonction critique de l’art. Dynamiques et ambiguïtés*. La Lettre volée, 2009, p. 279–280.
  - 15 An article from the journal *Sciences sociales et santé* (vol. III n° 3–4 November 1985) titled ‘Quand les pastoriens traquaient la maladie du sommeil’ lies next to a box of cigarettes. An insect is a prisoner in a glass jar while another pricked with a needle is viewed and pictured in a laboratory through the prism of a microscope.
  - 16 On the desk of the main character lies a book by the author of *L’Afrique fantôme* and a group photo of people looking at a Bambara mask, in which we recognise Marcel Griaule, Georges Henri Rivière, Henri Manuel, Al Brown and Lumianski.



grammar of adventure films in the last scene. The last act ends with workers who, while looking for a place to carve a tunnel, stumble upon a laboratory which has preserved the memory of a past day and age.<sup>17</sup>

By way of archives, Abonnenc jams the disk of history and illuminates the blind spot of unfinished masterpieces. This blind spot is an unknown quantity that the public can appropriate as it sees fit, opening up the way to re-writings of a colonial history whose limits are those of our imagination. By trying to reconcile the time of memorial experience and the time of history, *Sector IX B* lends visibility to the complex mechanism through which history happens. This conception of history keeps one or two strange affinities with Reinhardt Koselleck's thesis, in which past and present merge while at the same time retaining a future part. With the sole difference that, in *Sector IX B*, amnesia is laid bare before our field of experience, in such a way that it *endlessly introduces new unknowns, with the result that in the face of the very complexity of these unknowns, the present shies away into the inexpressible.*<sup>18</sup> ●

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17 They discover archives and a whole lot of scientific equipment, packages and drawers, boxes, pictures of the installation, photos of Marcel Griaule on a rock, and photos of a mask dance.

18 Reinhart Koselleck, *Le futur passe. Contribution à la sémantique des temps historiques*. Ecole des Hautes Études en sciences sociales. Paris. 2005, p. 32.

## The long-lasting intimacy of strangers

———— Candice Lin

Filmmaker and writer Ousmane Sembène, in response to Jean Rouch's question as to why Sembène did not like his 'purely ethnographic films,' replied: 'Because you show, you fix a reality without seeing the evolution. What I hold against you and the Africanists is that you look at us as if we were insects.'<sup>1</sup> Ousmane Sembène's objection reminds me of what writer Mel Y Chen described in *Animacies* as the 'animacy hierarchy',<sup>2</sup> the way in which sexuality, gender and race are shaped by our social divisions between the animate and inanimate, the human and the animal, male and female. This hierarchy of power echoes the effects of what Alfred Whitehead described as the bifurcation of two realities – nature vs. culture, object vs. subject<sup>3</sup> – and the language we use to strip agency from that which is naturalised.

In the animacy hierarchy, we begin with an able-bodied man. The first insult is to call him a girl. The second insult is a part of a body: an asshole. Later he becomes a large animal – a cow, a bitch, a monkey – to be diminutised as a rat, a vermin, a maggot, a louse – or worse, what the animal excreted and left behind. A foul insult in Chinese is to call someone's mother a turtle's egg. Sembène objects to the demotion in the hierarchy, to the ways in which Jean Rouch uses a lens of distance so that the scale of the Other shrinks to its most inhuman yet still animate form of life, that of the insect. The only rung below remaining is to become inert matter: dirt or rock.

The animacy hierarchy reveals itself in language that is built around assigning power and agency to those we see as subjects and assigning passivity to those we see as objects. Within a co-evolutionary model, these political distinctions and hierarchies made between subject and object, nature and culture, animate and inanimate collapse in the recognition of mutual

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1 'A Historic Confrontation between Jean Rouch and Ousmane Sembène in 1965', *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945–1994*, edited by Okwui Enwezor, (New York: Prestel), 2001, p. 440.

2 Mel Y Chen, *Animacies* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press), 2012.

3 Alfred Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1920, Chapter 2, p. 26–48.

dependence. ‘To be a subject is not to act autonomously in front of an objective background, but to share agency with other subjects that have also lost their autonomy.’<sup>4</sup> The scientist Lynn Margulis once used the phrase ‘the long-lasting intimacy of strangers’ to describe her controversial but now accepted notion that evolution occurs not by competition and ‘survival of the fittest’ but through co-evolving symbiotic relationships. At the micro level, bacterial mergers agree to uneasy truces in cases where they cannot fully devour the other, or where it is more useful to use the parts of another than to destroy them.

In Australia, the Coridromius bug is held up as an example of co-evolution. The male insect has plunged its hypodermic needle-like penis into the sides of the female so often that vaginal sheaths evolved in all the vulnerable cracks of the female’s exoskeleton. The female is not able to resist or counter the male insect’s attacks, nor does she die from infection and leave the species to die out. The sheer force and violence of desire twists out a new, pragmatic form of survival, in time literally reshaping the hard, resinous body of the insect herself. Like the female Coridromius bug, the bodies of the colonised are constantly evolving in relationship to continued violence and transgression, non-naturalised to oneself with double-consciousness. Within the violences of colonialism – the wiping out of the colonised’s ‘metaphysics... customs and the sources on which they [are] based’ – ‘every ontology is made unattainable.’<sup>5</sup>

In Frantz Fanon’s interpretation of Hegel, desire is what occurs when the self ‘encounters resistance from the other’ who, by refusing to recognise him, threatens ‘his own human worth and reality’. This desire for recognition at the cost of possible death is a refusal of objecthood. ‘As soon as I desire I am asking to be considered. I am not merely here-and-now, sealed into thingness.’<sup>6</sup>

But what if we were to take and preserve the lessons of postcolonialism and the politics of decolonial struggles and separate them from the flawed Object/Subject division reliant on the denial of objects’ agencies? The illusion of objectivity prized by ‘Westernised’ science ‘renders materiality incomprehensible... we benefit from plenty of magnificent ethnographic accounts... of rituals but so little description of what it is to be a computer, a termite, an ecosystem... Those “colonial objects” have not been as decolonised as the “colonial subjects”.’<sup>7</sup> It is perhaps dangerous to say *objects have agency*, all things are ontologically equal when subjects are still bent unwillingly into objects without rights. But the potential gains for both humans and objects outweigh the dangers if we can develop a larger framework of decolonialisation where the

4 Bruno Latour, ‘Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene’, *New Literary History*, Vol 45, 2014, p. 5.

5 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York, Grove Press), 1967, p. 109–110.

6 *ibid.*, p. 218

7 Bruno Latour, ‘Waking up from “conjecture” as well as from “dream”: a presentation of AIME’, *American Anthropology Association*, Chicago, November 21, 2013, p. 9.

8 *ibid.*, p. 3.

9 Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: UC Press), 1990, p. 9–10.



thingness (of persons and of objects) exists, not as inert matter but as an active, affective agent of change.

If colonialism, for Fanon, is the making unattainable of one’s ontology, under what circumstances are ontologies made and attained? For Bruno Latour, ‘ontology emerges over the course of encounters where the inquirer feels him or herself corseted by too narrow a set of legitimate agencies.’<sup>8</sup> The seeming conflict between Latour’s concept of being and becoming and Fanon’s perhaps rests upon the exclusive nature of the either/or predicament of Hegel’s Master/Slave dialectic that Fanon subscribes to. It reminds me of Edouard Glissant’s notion of creolisation that emerged parallel to and in reaction to the monolithic constructions of race within some parts of the Negritude movement. Rather than taking the strategy of purposeful valuation of the denigrated object (in this case African heritage) and fighting for the humanist, liberal recognition of their equality, creolisation instead bred new tangled ontologies that co-evolved out of relation to, and interdependent with, one another, asserting equality through affect and inextricability.

In a similar parallel, Eve Sedgwick examines the construction of heterosexuality and homosexuality, noting the surprising complexity within the supposed binary in that ‘the question of priority between the supposed central and the supposed marginal category of each dyad is irresolvably unstable, an instability caused by the fact that term B is constituted as at once internal and external to term A.’<sup>9</sup> For Sigmund Freud examining the case of Daniel Paul



Schreber (a prominent German judge in the 1880s to early 1900s who was committed to an insane asylum for believing that God was transforming his body into a female body), Schreber's new ontology emerges from 'the fragility of the subject's relation to the other, of the destabilisation of the subject's ability to believe in the reality of a[n]... object invested with... power.' Like the psyche shaped by colonialism, Schreber's becoming-woman is fraught with the internalised values of heterosexual supremacy: 'bird-souls with girls' names inject "corpse-poison" into his body' and he is mocked and slighted in other sexist ways reflecting the animacy hierarchy. Still, though the new ontology Schreber reaches for is object-like in its sensuous passivity, it is full of agency and power (God depends upon his womanhood to propagate the human race).

From the 1990s, when Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* emerged as a seminal queer text, to now, we see the shift in mainstream culture towards an argument for acceptance of homosexuality as equal to heterosexuality in the Marriage Equality movement in the United States and elsewhere. Although as political gains these hard-won achievements are not to be dismissed, they calcify rather than flatten the binary by agreeing to operate within the same value system, as long as they are included too. Inadvertently, by basing arguments for equality within a philosophy of humanistic liberalism in which one human is as good as another despite sexual orientation, race, class or gender, one submits to a limited existence, rather than breeding new ontologies of the self. The more hopeful progressions I see in queer theory nowadays are the areas of confusions, slipperiness of boundaries, and hybridising of sexualities and genders that emerge from the larger queer and trans lived presences and discourses. It is here we see the most promising aspects of the 'irresolvable instability' and the crumbling of a heterosexual value hierarchy, rather than a false argument with a closed language.

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As an animist, Robert Mapplethorpe spoke in the language of rocks and flowers, cocks and leather. His photos were declarations of unabashed homosexuality; they were lambasted and censored by the NEA<sup>10</sup> as pornographic and disgusting in 1989, a few months after his death. But his images have persisted and even found their way into the canon of Western art. By virtue of their formalist compositions and haunting imagery, they seduced audiences beyond the normative 1980s knee-jerk rejection of gay and BDSM<sup>11</sup> subcultures as deviant or repulsive. In the same language of formal beauty, Mapplethorpe created his 1986 solo exhibition 'Black Males' and later *The Black Book* consisting of images

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10 The National Endowment for the Arts, the U.S. governmental organisation that funds art and culture.

11 BDSM stands for bondage, discipline and sadomasochism, but involves a wide array of sexual activities and relationships.

12 Quote from the film *Les Statues Meurent Aussi (Statues Also Die)* (1953), directed by Chris Marker and Alain Resnais.

of 91 black men posed like flowers and rocks. He spoke of how he preferred the way light reflected off of black skin, like granite or polished stone. These images come to us with a loaded history, lauded by some for their representations of the marginalised, for beautifying that which was denigrated, and virulently criticised by others for their exotification and exploitation of black bodies.

Why then, return to reconsider the Mapplethorpe images – these exploitative and seductive images that invert the Pygmalion myth in which a sculpture comes to life? I am imagining Robert Mapplethorpe in the last days of his battle with AIDS, thin and frail in a wheelchair, surrounded by statues of polished black granite and marble. 'When men die, they enter history. When statues die, they enter into art. This botany of death is what we call culture.'<sup>12</sup> But what about when men die to become statues hewn of rocks – and, as statues, die again to become culture... culture that makes men?

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I avoided the 2009 film *Avatar* for two years after its release, fearing yet another version, this time CGI, of *Dances with Wolves* (the trite storyline of a good white male protagonist who swoops in to save the naïve natives from destruction at the hands of the bad, greedy white people). While that narrative is certainly present in *Avatar*, the film for me was redeemed and made extremely interesting by the fact that its white male protagonist was disabled in body and dependent on the native Na'vi and larger life-force/ecosystem/goddess Eywa to gain his able-bodiedness, and the larger message of Eywa as a metaphor for Gaia – James Lovelock's idea, which Lynn Margulis avidly supported, that the Earth is a whole living organism.

Within the infinite baroque of *Avatar*, the avatar stands not for a one-to-one substitute ratio, a virtual identity, but rather for an infinite series of switchings or connections to other beings. Switchings, that, by the end of the movie, become embodied, lived. In the movie, colonial white scientists, the futuristic equivalent of missionaries – Dr Grace Augustine and the disabled main character Jake Sully – plug in to machines that turn them into Na'vi; in their Na'vi bodies they learn they can plug their dreadlock-like neural hair extensions into the neural networks of animals, trees and other beings. This animism is to be expected in a sci-fi film with a strong native vs. colonist theme; animism is a racialised topic, often projected in anthropology and sociology onto the 'primitive' mind. Yet it is in animism precisely, as in object-oriented philosophy, that we find a political motivation for dismantling the mechanisms of the animacy hierarchy and the nature/culture divide.

There is no way to devise a successor to nature, if we do not tackle the tricky question of animism anew... For purely anthropocentric – that is, political – reasons, naturalists have built their collective to make sure that subjects and objects, culture and nature remain utterly distinct, only the first ones having any sort of agency. Extraordinary feat: having made, for purely anthropocentric reasons, the

accusation of being anthropomorphic a deadly weapon! ...The accusation of anthropomorphism is so strong that it paralyses all the efforts of many scientists in many fields – but especially biology – to go beyond the narrow constraints of what is believed to be ‘materialism’ or ‘reductionism’... Add agency? You must be mad or definitely marginal. Consider Lovelock for instance with his ‘absurd idea’ of the Earth as a quasi-organism – or the Na’vis with their ‘prescientific’ connections to Eywa.<sup>13</sup>

Science fiction interests me as a site of ultimate contradiction – in this genre we have the worst of white supremacist nostalgic fantasies and fears – like the HG Wells story *Time Machine* and its 1960s Hollywood film version in which a child-like race of white people are ruled and raised by dark, brutish Morlocks as livestock, or the 1971 film *Omega Man*, in which ‘100% pure Anglo-Saxon blood’ is used as the antidote to prevent people from becoming infected and mutating into black hooded zombies whose fist-raising chants have been compared to subliminal fears of racial uprising embodied by groups like the Black Panther Party.<sup>14</sup> But while science fiction is a vessel for colonialist fantasy and white supremacist fears and longings, it is also a site of radical utopianism, as exemplified by Afrofuturism, postcolonial science fiction, or feminist, gender-fluid, queer fantasies.<sup>15</sup>

Science fiction often uses, as it does in *Avatar*, the language of metaphor to speak of philosophical ideas and alternate world-views, but it can also point to alterity-as-potential through the use of a ‘skeletal... language... stripped of all its attributes,’ as it does in the writings of William Hope Hodgson or HP Lovecraft.<sup>16</sup> For the philosopher Eugene Thacker, having lost the ability to describe and communicate an object to a subject creates a blackness that expands and blurs the boundaries of the Object/Subject system. Blackness is a negative, a limit that marks the end of human comprehension and the widening field of the inhuman whether it takes the form of oil, necromancy or music, as it does in Thacker’s analysis, or – I would argue – race.

When Robert Mapplethorpe composed the people modelling for his *Black Book* photographs, he framed and lit them in ways that highlighted their formal qualities, abstracting and obscuring what was human: a shaved head becomes a hill in a landscape, a thigh is lit and sculpted like a vase waiting to be filled with flowers, a torso like a lunar landscape, and a back curled over, its vertebrae appearing as a malformed alien face. In re-representing Mapplethorpe’s iconic images, digitally painted in the racialised colours of sci-fi (the ‘Blue is the New Black’ ideology that *Avatar* illuminates), the naturalised use of contrasting light and ‘blackness’ as a projection ground for the mysterious, inhuman and unknowable is disrupted. The distancing tactics of formalism are made disjunctive rather than seductive. Their alien objecthood is thrown into relief.

What Mapplethorpe emphasises in these photos are his models’ object-ness, their rock-like immutability and the inscrutability of our relationship to them as subjects. Even when we see the model’s face (these are the least well-known of the *Black Book* images), the expression is one well aware of its

positioning as an object – seductive, challenging or staring wide-eyed at the camera. The expressions of these faces do not open into an interior, but hold the viewer at arm’s length. This obdurate, stone surface holds endless appeal for Mapplethorpe as it did for the medievalists:

Stones possess potentialities that are theirs alone, regardless of human actions. Medieval writers called these abilities *vertu*... a kind of will that may be possessed by things, rendering them volitional. Like will, a noun that applies almost exclusively to humans and the divine, the impulses of *vertu* unfolds include ‘a disposition, an inclination, an urge,’ and ‘a natural tendency,’ as well as what might be called ‘carnal desire or craving.’ Yet *vertu* is excreted by, among many other objects of the world, cold and lifeless stones.<sup>17</sup>

This quality that draws us towards stones and draws some to turn others into stone can be seen not as merely anthropocentric (many stones have no use-value for us and yet we collect and treasure them) nor anthropomorphic (we value stones as stones not for their likeness as people, and in this case the people are turned into stone for the very qualities of inhuman-ness, the exoticism of not-understanding). The human desire we feel for stones is governed by something intrinsic to the stone itself, yet displaced so as to be forever receding from our understanding.<sup>18</sup>

In this manner it holds the fetishism of a displaced longing, and yet the ‘carnal desire’ we feel is not misguided or intended for a subject like ourselves, but is instead predicated and dependent upon our inability to comprehend and master it. The object is not a substitute but the intangible source of our lust. This fetishism is expansive and holds within it the power of unknowability and our desire for it. Can we look again at this fetishism and racial exotification from beyond the value system of subjects-devalued-as-objects (while not losing

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13 Bruno Latour, ‘An attempt at writing a Compositionist Manifesto’, *New Literary History*, Vol. 41, 2010, p. 481.

14 Adilifu Nama, *Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction Film*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008, p. 15-18 and p. 47-72.

15 While there is some crossover between sci-fi writers interested in postcolonial themes as well as renegotiations of gender, sexuality and bodily limits, such as Nalo Hopkinson and Nisi Shawl, other writers I think of as utilising themes of postcolonialism would be Octavia Butler, Vandana Singh, and yet others engaging with topics of sexuality and gender that come to mind are Joanna Russ, Ursula Le Guin and Samuel Delaney.

16 Eugene Thacker in *Leper Creativity: Cyclonopedia Symposium*, edited by Ed Keller, Nicola Masciandaro, & Eugene Thacker (New York: Punctum Books), 2012, p. 177. Ideas of blackness as a limit are also further explored in Thacker’s *In the Dust of This Planet*, (Winchester, UK: Zero Books), 2011.

17 ‘The Sex Life of Stone’, by Jeffery Jerome Cohen, *From Beasts to Souls: Gender and Embodiment in Medieval Europe*, edited by E. Jane Burns and Peggy McCracken (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press), 2013, p. 26.

18 This idea of the object’s withdrawal is indebted to the writings of object-oriented philosopher Graham Harman, who, in *Guerilla Metaphysics*, describes the ‘allure’ of objects as the ‘separation of an object from its qualities.’ Is that not a form of displaced but non-substitutional fetishism by another name? Graham Harman, *Guerilla Metaphysics* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company), 2005, p. 153.



sight of these politics) and see instead a potential in the object asserting itself, its ‘right to opacity’?<sup>19</sup> The object is saying, *you cannot know me, you cannot limit me with your knowledge nor grasp me with your desire, I am larger than your imagination and I affect you infinitely*. This is a position of anything but powerlessness. Yet it is beyond a simple relation of subject-object power because, like the creole or the queer, the entangled hybridity of identity itself destabilises the value system dependent on the separation of categories.

I would like to suggest that co-evolution offers a pragmatic model for recomposing this new reality devoid of the Object/Subject value system. In a co-evolutionary model, it becomes just as impossible to ignore the limits of Gaia’s ability to sustain human life as it would be to void our systems of bacteria and still be alive. For example, if we could consider our bodies as a collective microbiome rather than an individuated, enclosed self, how might Western medicine’s assaultive relationship to our bodies change? How might it influence our relationship to the flow of material in and out of our bodies? Yet acknowledging the living agency of objects is more than granting an extended sense of subjecthood to rocks or bacteria, but rather an entangled state of constantly re-negotiated boundaries that destroys the paradigm of power as we know it.

Lynn Margulis reminds us that 9 out of 10 cells in our ‘human’ bodies are bacterial and theorises that even what we think of as human consciousness, what makes this writing possible, is simply the evolution of mass bacterial movements towards stimuli like warmth and food and light.<sup>20</sup> If we can reframe even the thing we think of as most individuated, most human – consciousness itself – and see it as indebted and enmeshed with the actions and movements of others, this has huge ramifications for how power is distributed in our social networks and how consensus decisions are made.

If we consider human global politics from a co-evolutionary lens, we move from the hard-won but difficult-to-enforce, liberal, humanist motivations – *I do not oppress or objectify my neighbor because he is human as I am, and it is wrong to do – to that of pragmatism and necessity: I depend upon the other for my very survival*. In a co-evolving reality, alterity would swim alongside us, nearly indistinguishable at times and not fully open to our comprehension, but not denied or sublimated. In a co-evolutionary model, this new conception of Object-Subject as a melded, entangled, hybrid being would dictate and shape even the possible directions of our decisions and actions. ●

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19 As considered in Edouard Glissant’s *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 1997, p. 189–194.

20 Lynn Margulis, ‘Prejudice and Bacterial Consciousness’, *New England Watershed* (April–May 2006); later reprinted in *Dazzle Gradually* (White River Junction, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing), p. 36–41.

## Beyond the ‘Post’ and evil

### Preliminary considerations regarding a post-ethnographic museum

————— Xavier Wrona

*Well first, let me tell you something about the ‘post’. I am totally opposed to the intellectual laziness and the resignation of thought that goes into the post. Post-modernism, post-colonial, the post-human, the post-ideological, post-political, post-historical... Every keyword that has been mobilised to try to make people think critically and historically has now been bracketed by ‘well we’re after that’, ‘that’s behind us’ or ‘we don’t do that anymore, we have something new’. And, it is fine to say there’s something new but why don’t you say what it is? (...) All it is to me is a rhetorical confession of the inability to think clearly.*<sup>1</sup>

In our first collaboration in 2011, Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc had asked our architecture office *Est-ce ainsi* to manifest in the space of his exhibition what might be the mental construct of the colonised’s mind, as portrayed in the writings of Frantz Fanon.<sup>2</sup> This led to the construction of a spatial manifestation of the general law regarding egresses in exhibition spaces which states:

*It shall be unlawful to alter a building or structure in a manner that will reduce the number of exits or the minimum width or required capacity of the means of egress to less than required by this code.*

The question was, what would be the minimum space of circulation allowed by code in the given space of the museum? This ‘scenography’ consisted of the built manifestation of this law. The minimum space allowed was built, generating corridors that forbade the visitor to be part of the exhibition. The spaces displaying the artworks were somehow not allowed to be accessed. They were to be taken, seized. Not being spontaneously ‘given’ to the visitor, the largest part of this exhibition somehow echoed Fanon’s statement that:

*The symbols of social order – the police, the bugle calls in the barracks, military parades and the waving flags – are at one and the same time inhibitory and*

1 WJT Mitchell in the TV interview ‘After the Revolution: a Review of Architecture’s Massive Consequences’ Part IX. October 2016. Retrieved from <http://after-the-revolution.tumblr.com/>  
2 Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc, *Orphelins de Fanon*. La Ferme du Buisson, 2011

stimulating: for they do not convey the message 'Don't dare to budge'; rather, they cry out 'Get ready to attack.'<sup>3</sup>

This small spatial construct is probably a good way to understand what I believe to be the true meaning of the word architecture. An understanding in which no distinction can ever be drawn between the built and 'non-built' dimensions of a building: the built form is the tautological manifestation in space of a mental construct, and a mental construct is an attempt at ordering reality as a whole, which entails a radical transformation of reality. In the case of our building code for instance: the wall is the law, and the law is the wall.

Therefore, when referring to architecture, one can no longer only refer to the 'built things' with disregard for the anthropological reasons that led to the necessity of their appearance in reality.

Indeed, the prevailing misinterpretation of the term architecture leads one to believe that an architecture is a building. In fact, an architecture would be something more like an idea, a comprehension of reality that is embodied in a building. Thus, whoever wanders in a building is immersed in a reified system of belief about what the order of reality is hereby supposed to be, a system of belief of the order of things that the building tries to replicate at its own scale. Why else would the buildings designed by architects have been symmetrical since antiquity, if not because of the prevailing belief that 'nature created symmetry' as demonstrated on the human body and that architects ought to follow the 'rules of nature' in order to order and build reality? Architecture is both the plan of ordering reality, and its factual reordering as commonly manifested in buildings.

This misunderstanding of the role of architecture in society usually goes unnoticed. But the mistake becomes quite obvious in the case of what are called museums of 'primitive arts'. When confronted by such museums, it somehow seems more broadly understood that the term 'architecture' refers to 'the built object' as well as 'the institution' that it embodies in space. For once, it seems impossible to dissociate the 'colonial project' (which led to *expand-educate-bring-back-and-exhibit-'the-other'*) from the 'scientific project' (which led to the symmetrical-white-'pure'-building-typology that displays it). The building presents us with both the exhibited 'taken' objects, and the project that put the white *occidental man* in the position of taking these objects.

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3 Full quote: 'The native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor. The symbols of social order – the police, the bugle calls in the barracks, military parades and the waving flags – are at one and the same time inhibitory and stimulating: for they do not convey the message "Don't dare to budge"; rather, they cry out "Get ready to attack." And, in fact, if the native had any tendency to fall asleep and to forget, the settler's hauteur and the settler's anxiety to test the strength of the colonial system would remind him at every turn that the great showdown cannot be put off indefinitely. That impulse to take the settler's place implies a tonicity of muscles the whole time; and in fact we know that in certain emotional conditions the presence of an obstacle accentuates the tendency toward motion.' Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*.





### Reason's set of forms: first as a tragedy, then as a farce

It is necessary for us to reform (or heal) the meaning of the word architecture in order to understand what is at stake in the hypothesis of a post-ethnographic museum. What Jean Nouvel says about the project for the Quai Branly museum exemplifies it rather well. Describing his project he states:

*A new, great museum for Paris, which exists in a way that I would characterise as being different from the way occidental museums usually present themselves, with their large esplanade, large staircases and all the rest of it...<sup>4</sup>*

In his words, it is expected that the embodiment of a Western conservatory institution, if formally expressed in its own cultural terms, would manifest itself through a large esplanade, a large staircase, and 'all the rest of it'. This rest, although he declines to bother describing it, would most likely entail: symmetry, 90-degree angles, white 'cleanliness', the claim of a 'scientific' distance from the exhibited objects, and so on... In other words, a unified set of intellectual and formal rules that within the history of architecture we would refer to as 'the architecture of reason'.

There are several sets of forms that accompany the history of thought. And to paraphrase Marx in his *Brumaire*,<sup>5</sup> one is tempted to claim that the project of reason has had two kinds of formal moments: the first was a tragedy and the second a farce.

The tragic moment is the one of purity, of the belief in the possibility for objectivity. There seems indeed to be very strong ties between the rigour of abstract thought, systematic thinking, the fetishisation of 'details' that occur in the architectural theory of the Enlightenment and the 'scientific' interest in 'the other' developed in Western thought. These ties culminate in institutions such as the 'Musée d'ethnographie' or the 'Musée de l'homme' which, in their scientific modes of exhibition, display objects at a distance, behind glass, with a handwritten tag, in linear, symmetrical white spaces.

The second moment, which could be read as a farce, is our current one, in which the form of the museum, its plan, section, details, while they are still being designed by Western architects in their long tradition of rational thinking, are attempts to design in 'non-rational' terms.

4 Jean Nouvel, TV interview retrieved from [www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqyn47jBVsQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqyn47jBVsQ)

5 'Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. Caussidière for Danton, Louis Blanc for Robespierre, the Montagne of 1848 to 1851 for the Montagne of 1793 to 1795, the nephew for the uncle. And the same caricature occurs in the circumstances of the second edition of the *Eighteenth Brumaire*.' *The Eighteenth Brumaire* of Louis Bonaparte. Karl Marx, 1852.

6 'This architecture could not be the same as the one of any other Parisian office building. One had to understand through its colors and shapes that this building was dedicated to art, a non-occidental art, an art that comes from somewhere else.' — Jean Nouvel TV interview retrieved from [www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3SNXVe0dGg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3SNXVe0dGg)

7 Jean Nouvel TV interview retrieved from [www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3SNXVe0dGg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I3SNXVe0dGg)

8 Jean Nouvel TV interview retrieved from [www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqyn47jBVsQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqyn47jBVsQ)

The Quai Branly building's design policy for instance has been to somehow renounce one's architectural tradition.<sup>6</sup> Because they try to exhibit 'the other' in its own terms the forms of Reason deployed in the Quai Branly here trump their own inner logic by pretending to exist as what they understand as their anti-self.

According to Jean Nouvel, this building had to express the character of a non-Western way of thinking and as such would forbid the use of an esplanade, a large staircase, and so on... The building is then an 'unstable and improbable space'<sup>7</sup>, an 'initiatory journey'<sup>8</sup>, which constitutes an addition of clichés regarding 'non-rational thinking' that the West has long projected onto the mind of the black man, the savage, the oriental, etc. The desire to represent 'the other' in its own terms somehow ends up being a portrait of the white man's colonial imagined 'other'.

I believe one way to go beyond the interesting, risky but nevertheless failed attempt of the Quai Branly is to take on WJT Mitchell's advice cited in the introduction. Trying to name what is after the 'post', as well as to give it a form.

If a museum were to be understood as an institution dedicated to the 'truth', there would be no need to try to go beyond this 'post'. It would seem only fair and real to dedicate the contents of all museums to the violent, 'evil', unbearable exploitation of the non-Western by the West for many years to come. But it seems that museums are no such a thing. Whether ethnographic or post-ethnographic, museums seem to exist as matrices of fiction rather than receptacles for truth, as the Quai Branly demonstrates.

Can we unapologetically discard the dream for truth-based museums and recognise the ontologically fictional nature of such institutions? Can we dare try to have a glance beyond both the 'post' and the 'evil' of the ethnographic moment and try to see what might lie ahead?

### The museum as salutary fiction machine

If we were to imagine a place both beyond the 'evil' that occurred during the historical moment of ethnography as well as beyond the 'post', as a criticism of a concept that does not allow us to foresee what might be next, then one very first question that we might have to deal with might be the following:

In a non-colonial/post-ethnographic world, would there be any reason to exhibit 'the other'? Would an 'other' even exist? Outside of *the-belief-in-one's-culture-that-led-to-claim-to-educate-as-well-as-document-'the-other'*, would we have such a project/institution/space? Would we have this complex of built and un-built form consisting in the display of the difference supposedly existing outside one's own culture? In such a place, we might get rid of museums once and for all. But within this hypothetical place, doing so might be throwing the baby out with the bathwater. If museums 'of the other' are a kind of failed utopia of righteous presentation of the diversity of mankind, such a mistake might incidentally have engendered a very fertile apparatus: one that could help us redesign the future, beyond the 'post' and evil. In such a place, what would matter then in museums wouldn't be the exhibited artifacts themselves but rather the ideological discourses able to construct overall meaningful understandings of their presence in such a place. If we were to accept that museums are *production engines of fictions* of what the world might mean, then museums might become interesting and fertile means to go beyond the 'post'.

A way out, a device for the creation of potential alternative futures, might be to rely on the capacity of objects to accept fictional meanings, as well as the capacity of museums to generate fictions. In this proposed system, fictions would not be understood as lies, the way fascism instrumentalised artifacts. It could not be the case since, unlike in Nazism, such fictions would not claim to be truths. Accepted and self-declared as fictions, their only goal would be to generate alternative meanings, other plausible understandings of what we are confronted with when looking at the collected artifacts.

Modernity has projected a particular discourse on the objects accumulated in the 'Musée de l'Homme', a discourse which makes it difficult for anyone to perceive them beyond this narrative. Let us forget the belief that such a discourse stands for 'the truth' or 'reality' and use the power of objects to intensify and carry this kind of narrative to the point where alternative understandings of reality might emerge. Could it be possible to use the vessels that are called museums to perpetually re-fictionalise what lies in them in ever-different terms? The historical moment of colonial-modernist-ethological-ethnology has demonstrated the capacity of a mythical discourse to reform the totality of the real. Both the societies that projected the mythical discourse of modernity on others and the societies that had to bear such stories as their own, were drastically transformed in these fictional processes. Both were transformed beyond recognition.

Instead of embodying the official national discourse on the people, and, as such, being always subject to suspicion, museums could then become a full-scale social science of alternative 'grand narratives'.

### First attempt in Adamic language

The success of Bataille's short definition of Formless in the realm of contemporary arts makes it difficult to read it today without being drawn into associations with particular works of art. As if formlessness had somehow taken form. But paralleling 'form' with 'history' and 'formless' with 'fiction' might allow one to find one's way back into some of its daunting original subversive energy.

*A dictionary would start from the moment in which it no longer provides the meaning of words but their job. Formless is thus not merely an adjective with such and such a meaning but a term for lowering status with its implied requirement that everything have a form. Whatever it (formless) designates lacks entitlement in every sense and is crushed on the spot, like a spider or an earthworm. For academics to be content, the universe would have to assume a form. All of philosophy has no other goal: it is a matter of fitting what is there into a formal coat, a mathematical overcoat. On the other hand to assert that the universe resembles nothing else and is only formless comes down to stating that the universe is something like a spider or a spit.<sup>9</sup>*

Maybe then, in Bataillan terms, the job of a post-ethnographic museum could be to undress the past, the artifacts, *whatever is there from their formal coat* in order to allow the future to resemble nothing. It would require for societies to not equate anymore what lacks entitlement with a *spider or a spit*. And it would then allow societies to rediscover the possibility for an 'Adamic' experience of the future.

The story goes like this: when Adam was for the first time walking the earth, his language was the one with which he named all things, in a perpetual state of discovery as well as of privileged contact with the objects he named. Whoever would come after would not name but use an existing name, a kind of *formal coat*.

A post-ethnographic museum might start from the moment in which it no longer provides a formal coat to what there is, but rather would perform a never-ending parade of alternative wardrobes for mankind's histories as well as possible futures.

What would such a museum physically be like? What place would such a museum be in? What would a window, a door, a faucet, a floor, a wall, a door handle look like? A first go at it would consist, I believe, in trying to question the articulation of Names/Spaces/Functions which acts as a very dominant 'architecture' for the production of contemporary buildings. If during the Middle Ages a castle offered spaces to which no particular functions were assigned, the bourgeois revolution of housing seals the massive assignment of particular functions to particular spaces via particular names. Living units become the surface of multiplication of bourgeois rituals such as *smoking room, antechamber, corridor...* and there aren't spaces left that do not have an embedded function and a codified set of behaviours attached. Museums are not deprived from such deterministic logics, in fact they kind of apply the same logics to entire nations.

Attempting to undress spaces from names and codified uses might be a start. Two ways of experimentation come to mind. One, which we started to explore with *Est-ce ainsi*, would consist in merging/collaging functions in one space, as was done in the Levy apartment where a bathroom was mixed with a staircase. This allows us to liberate behaviours from predefined and codified uses since no such space has ever been codified.

A second intriguing experiment was explored by a student in an architecture studio at school a couple of years ago. While discovering Marcel Duchamp's uses and misuses of language, he unveiled a space between his native English language and the French he was learning in Paris to generate forms. A 'balcon' (balcony) if bluntly phonetically translated into English would give us a ball-coin. In his building, the form of the balcony was designed as the encounter between a ball and a coin.

However anecdotal they might appear, I believe such tactics start to open a space of experimentation that can reconfigure the deep logics of thought that govern the production of buildings in a way that does not fall into the objectification of the other. Rather they open a field of hypothesis to construct forms and spaces within the logics already at work in the production of spaces. This seems to me like a good start to a never-ending Adamic relationship to both the past and the future in what can, for now, only be named a post-ethnographic museum. ●

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<sup>9</sup> Bataille, Georges. 'Formless', in Documents 1, Paris, 1929, p. 382, quoted in Hollier, Denis *Against Architecture* 1992, MIT press, p. 30



Songe pantelant  
Changé en  
Mélodie d'os.  
Combien de bras?  
Combien de têtes?  
Quelle sorte d'âme  
pour cette marionnette?  
Quelle pluie factice  
pour nous?

—— Clément Rodzielski



A gasping fantasy  
Turned into  
A bone melody.  
How many arms?  
How many heads?  
What sort of soul  
for this puppet?  
What is this false rain  
Falling on us?





# Dybbuk, An-sky, Future Anterior

———— Sarah Frioux-Salgas

Head of Archives and Collections Documentation, Médiathèque,

musée du quai Branly, Paris

Translated by Matthew Cunningham

## Dybbuk

Anyone who reads the borderline elicit Zohar too attentively exposes his soul to relentless activity and reincarnation. Once the dybbuk has found a living body, it takes up residence, clings to its often sinful host, expressing itself through his mouth. Ah, you buried me, but I came back. To get rid of the dybbuk me-ru’ah ra’ah (the cleavage of an evil spirit), a special exorcism ceremony is necessary. Stiff-necked Dybbuk I place you back in the powerful hands of the high spirits. The term is first found in the literature of the 18th century, inspired by the spoken language of German and Polish Jews.

— Extract from ‘Fantôme qu’à ce lieu son pur éclat assigne: Un glossaire’ by Suzanne Doppelt, Vacarme, no. 20, 2002.

## An-sky

An-sky (Shloyme-Zanvl Rapoport), b. 1863, Vitebsk, Belarus – d. 1920, Otwock, Poland. Ethnographer An-sky is best known as the author of the mythical-themed play *Der Dibek* (The Dybbuk), first staged a few months after his death by the Vilner Trupe in Warsaw. Less famous are his political commitments, which led him, in 1902, to compose the hymn of the Bund (the General Jewish Labour Bund in Lithuania, Poland and Russia), entitled *Di Shvue* and written in Yiddish.

DI SHVUE – די שבועה –  
ברידער און שוועסטער פֿון אַרבען און נויט  
אַלע וואָס זײַנען צעזײט און צעשפּרײט  
צוזאַמען צוזאַמען די פֿאַן איז גרייט  
זי פֿלאַטערט פֿון צאַרן פֿון בלוט איז זי רויט  
אַ שבועה אַ שבועה אַויף לעבן און טויט  
הימל און ערד וועלן אונדז אויסהערן  
עדות וועלן זײַן די ליכטיקע שטערן  
אַ שבועה פֿון בלוט און אַ שבועה פֿון טרערן  
מיר שווערן, מיר שווערן, אַויף לעבן און  
טויט  
מיר שווערן אַ טרײַהייט אָן גרענעצן צום  
בונד  
נאָר ער קען די שקלאַפֿן באַרפֿרײען אַצינד  
די פֿאַן די רויטע איז הייך פֿון ברייט  
זי פֿלאַטערט פֿון צאַרן פֿון בלוט איז זי רויט  
אַ שבועה אַ שבועה אַויף לעבן און טויט

Brothers and sisters in labour and poverty  
All those who dispersed together together  
The flag is ready  
It waves in anger, it is red with blood  
An oath, an oath to life and death  
Heaven and earth will hear us  
The bright stars will be our witness  
An oath of blood and an oath of tears  
We swear boundless allegiance to the Bund.  
Only it can free the slaves now.  
The red flag, high and wide.  
It waves in anger, it is red with blood  
An oath, an oath to life and death.

## Future Anterior: The Avant-Garde and the Yiddish Book (1914–1939) Museum of the Art and History of Judaism, Paris, 2009

Extracts from the catalogue<sup>1</sup>:

1. An-sky embodies modern Jewish culture at its peak. Speaking several languages, and having been a successful writer in Russian, he decided to write in Yiddish from the day he became convinced that Jews had to open themselves to modernism, show that they were an authentic people, and head down the road to democratic socialism. Between 1911 and 1914, he initiated the very first ethnographic missions to Volhynia and Podolie to collect objects of material culture, folk tales and legends, traditional melodies, Mizrahi Purim plays, groggers and other expressions of folk art; the photographs and lists of Jewish gravestone taken by his nephew Youdovine and others were to become sources of inspiration for Lissitzky and Altman. An-sky provided the intellectual impetus that made it possible to conceive a Jewish cultural revival that, following the Russian model, was based on decorative motifs and folk traditions.

Although classically constructed, his play painted a radically new picture of the Hassidic world of Eastern Europe, culminating in a possession and exorcism scene right inside a rabbinical court. For the nostalgic post-WWI audience, this play – first written in Russian for the MKHAT (the Moscow theatre directed by Stanislavsky) and then translated into Yiddish by An-sky himself – proved Jews also had their own rich spiritual heritage that, by means of art, could serve as a foundation to build a new people, a new culture. Directed in Hebrew by Vakhtangov in 1922 at Moscow’s Habima (the Hebrew chamber theatre), with a set designed by Altman, the play shook the capital and became, throughout the world, the emblematic work of modern Jewish culture.

— Seth L Wolitz, *Di goldene pave iz gefloygn avek.../Le paon doré s’est envolé... La culture ashkénaze, 1860–1940: une trop brève renaissance.* [‘The golden peacock has flown away’, Ashkenazic culture, 1860–1940: an all too brief renaissance]

2. Everything leads one to believe that An-sky’s expedition inspired Ryback to tour Ukraine’s shetlekh on his own initiative in 1915 [...]. In 1916, he undertook a lengthy journey along the Dnieper River accompanied by El Lissitzky. It was an official project financed by the Jewish Society for History and Ethnography in St Petersburg, whose goal was to catalogue gravestones, synagogue paintings and architectural drawings.

Unlike Ryback, Lissitzky took only a temporary interest in Jewish folk art, from 1916

<sup>1</sup> Musée d'art et d'histoire du judaïsme. (2009). *Futur antérieur: l'avant-garde et le livre yiddish, 1914-1939.* Nathalie Hazan-Brunet (Branch) Paris: Skira Flammarion.

to 1922; this episode is mentioned in his 1941 autobiography, under the title "Jewish Books from 1917 to 1920".

— Ruth Apter-Gabriel, 'Un passé qui renaît, un futur qui s'évanouit. Les sources de l'art populaire dans le nouvel art juif russe' ['A Reviving Past, a Vanishing Future. Sources of the Folk Art in New Russian Jewish Art']

3.

Illustrations for the song Had Gadya from the Passover ritual (Seder), Haggadah. El Lissitsky. Kiev, Kultur-Lige Publications, 1919. Collection of the Museum of the Art and History of Judaism, Paris.

Had Gadya ('little goat', 'kid' in Armenian) is the name of a Passover song that is found in the Haggadah, and is usually sung at the end of the Seder. [...] The text contains ten verses that each describe a chain of disasters, and it concludes with a divine intervention that puts an end to this cycle of misfortune. [...] Had Gadya is also generally perceived as a parable on God's deliverance of the Jewish people [...] Lissitsky's Had Gadya work differs from traditional illustrations, especially in his choice to deal with the song on its own, independently of the rest of Haggadah, perhaps thus expressing the artist's distance from the traditional Jewish world. For the first time, Lissitsky asserted his adherence to the October Revolution [or Bolshevik Revolution] by addressing himself to a Jewish audience through traditional symbols [...].'

— Ruth Apter-Gabriel

### Sector IX B – Dybbuk: a genealogy

FTP MOI (the immigrant force of the Francs-tireurs et partisans), USSR, Vincennes, Blanche Grinbaum, Vladimir Maïakovski, Lili Brik, Alexandre Rodtchenko, The Secular Jewish Children's Club (CLEJ – Corvol), BUND (the General Jewish Labour Bund in Lithuania, Poland and Russia), Witold Gombrowicz, Pierre Goldman, Frantz Fanon, Edouard Glissant, 17 October 1961, Rwanda 1994, Madeleine Mukabamabano, Romain Garry, The Dance of Genghis Cohn, slavery, Ouidah, Martinique, Louis Delgrés, the Museum of the Art and History of Judaism, the Musée du quai Branly, archivist, the Museum of Man, the Ethnographic Museum of the Trocadéro, Michel Leiris, the Dakar-Djibouti mission, 'Futur Antérieur', Présence Africaine, Sarah Maldoror, Dakar, Mathieu, Continental Drift, year 69, Desfigures Toxiques, Olga Rozenblum, Sector IX B, Dybbuk, An-sky.



There once was a goat





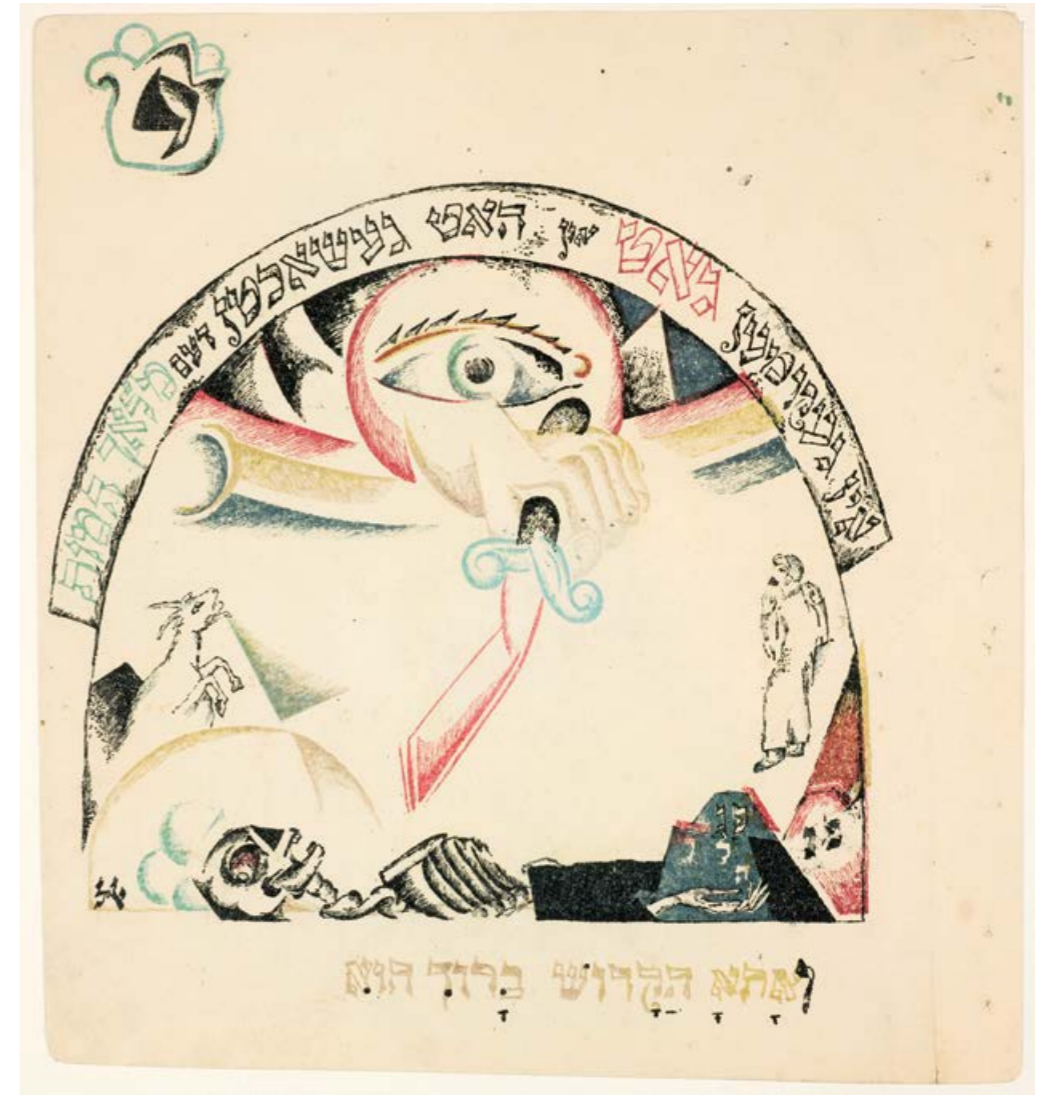
My father bought a goat for two cents



The cat came and ate the goat



The angel of death came and killed the butcher



Then the Holy One came and killed the angel of death



Two ants gaze up at the star-studded sky.  
One of them says to the other:  
'makes you feel small, doesn't it?'<sup>1</sup>

————— Jorge Satorre  
Translated by Christopher Fraga

*It was a bird with black feathers, tinged with yellow and green; it had a bunch of red feathers on top of its head. It was a large bird, as large as a moa. Its rival was the hawk. The hawk said it could reach the heavens; the hokioi said it could reach the heavens; there was contention between them. The hokioi said to the hawk, 'What shall be your sign?' The hawk replied, 'kei' (the peculiar cry of the hawk). Then the hawk asked, 'What is to be your sign?' The hokioi replied, 'hokioi-hokioi-hu-u.' These were their words. They then flew and approached the heavens. The winds and the clouds came. The hawk called out 'kei' and descended. It could go no further on account of the winds and the clouds, but the hokioi disappeared into the heavens.<sup>2</sup>*

On Sunday, March 26, 1871, the taxidermist Frederick R Fuller, assistant to the geologist Julius Haast, was supervising an excavation of some moa remains in Glenmark, New Zealand, when he discovered a femur, a rib and two claws belonging to what is still to this day the largest eagle ever known to have existed, the Haast's eagle. That day, in the Western eye, the Hokioi stopped being a myth and became a scientific fact.

It is believed that this giant eagle disappeared around the middle of the fifteenth century, although there are reports from European colonisers that speak of enormous 'falcons' in the 1860s. What is certain, having been corroborated by discoveries of remains of Haast's eagle in human settlements, is that it went extinct after the arrival of the Polynesians.

I came across this story after being invited to develop a proposal for an individual exhibition in Auckland, some four years ago. The first thing that went through my head upon getting the invitation was to propose something that had to do with the implications of living on an island. From there, in the early stages of my research, I learned about the effects of insular evolution on birds, and then I learned about the story of Haast's eagle. This amazing case brought up some obvious considerations related to scale, a recurring theme in several of my projects for some years now. Indeed, I have been influenced by the work of Italian microhistorians who, after the uprisings of 1968, proposed a methodology by which a situation can be approached through the reduction of the scale of analysis, starting with the most basic and even apparently irrelevant or anomalous parts, in order to then leap into the examination

of their relationship to the more general, hegemonic aspects.

The cultural and geographical distance that separates me from New Zealand, as a Mexican living in Mexico City, enabled me to decide, relatively quickly, on the delicate choice of formulating a tautological question: what would happen if, from the standpoint of this distance, I tried to respond to a culture that is absolutely foreign to me and to turn the implications of this approach into the intent of the exhibition? I knew then, though not as well as I do now, that this question would lead me into tricky territory and that at best it would function as an experiment by placing me in a position that I would normally criticise.

In fact, I remember having at the time a feeling of discomfort that was not unfamiliar to me, and that is not easy for me to explain, a discomfort quite similar to the one that I feel as I write this text, faced with the difficulty of verbalising objects and images that I had hoped would speak for themselves.

The modern claim to disinterested and totally objective observation has been dismantled. So, as an artist, approaching this kind of work in such a way and believing that it could be the purpose of my work would be absurd. This is especially true when operating within an institutionalised regime of art that asks for and facilitates responses to specific contexts within spatiotemporal frameworks that are pretty limited. Maybe the solution to this problem would be to refuse to respond to the context and to focus the work on a single point of interest, but I don't want to become a specialist, in spite of all the risks that such a choice implies.

An 'observer' affects and is affected by that which he or she is attempting to analyse, and this is as true for the hard sciences as for anthropology or other social sciences. To me, a context-specific art project does not necessarily speak about or describe a place, but it would show the changes that an artist's ideas undergo by working in a new context. This implies not reflecting a static reality, but rather a sometimes fragile position at specific moments and in specific places; whence derives, probably, that discomfort I was describing before.

In 1950 the linguist Kenneth Pike coined the epistemological concepts of the 'emic' and the 'etic'; these were later re-formulated by the anthropologist Marvin Harris. These terms, which derive from the phonemic and phonetic aspects of languages, attempted to distinguish (in studies of culture) descriptions that came from the point of view of the participant (emic) and those that came from the perspective of the observer (etic). From a positivist, Occidental, and generalising standpoint, Harris, unlike Pike, privileged the etic point of view, that of the scientific observer, conferring on the latter a predominant, indispensable role in fieldwork. Pike, by contrast, argued that etics implied 'an approach by an outsider to an inside system, in which the outsider brings his own structure and

<sup>1</sup> Cartoon by Charlie Hankin for *The New Yorker*.

<sup>2</sup> *Te Hokioi*, adapted from [www.nzbirds.com/birds/hokioi.html](http://www.nzbirds.com/birds/hokioi.html)



partly superimposes his observations on the inside view, interpreting the inside in reference to his outside starting point.<sup>3</sup> The title of the exhibition came out of the discrepancy between the positions of Pike and Harris: *Emic Etic?*

The resulting objects and images posed in themselves a question of scale and, as products of my state of estrangement in New Zealand, they turned my circumstances there into the very meaning of the work. My point of departure consisted of two of the clearest topics that any foreign visitor can identify and consume, but which do not for all that cease to be representative, meaningful elements of Maori culture and its relationship to the colonial history of New Zealand: jade and birds.

It is difficult to compare the sacred value of jade in New Zealand to other cultures. Just recently in 1997 the exclusive right to mine and distribute jade was returned to the Ngai Tahu iwi (tribe) on South Island, which holds the only known deposits of pounamu, as jade (or greenstone in New Zealand English) is called in Maori. This came after a seven-generation-long battle to make effective the Treaty of Waitangi, which was signed in 1840 and served as the founding document of the British colony. In the concrete case of the Ngai Tahu, most of their lands were sold to the British Crown in exchange for the provision of schools and hospitals and for their right to ten percent of the territory, which would enable them to survive. The 1997 settlement included an apology from the British Crown, a NZD\$170 million payment, and the return of 3.4 million acres.

Currently all legal pounamu has a registered trademark and a unique traceability code, which enables one to know the origin and *whakapapa* or genealogy of the stone or carved object, the site from which it was extracted, the means used to extract and process it, and the name of the person who worked it.

The central piece of *Emic Etic?* emerged from a collaboration with New Zealand artist Joe Sheehan, who is part of a *pakeha* family (that is, descended from Europeans) that make their living by carving and selling jade. It seems important to specify that Joe is not Maori because for me it was essential that this be the case in order to preclude any facile, conciliatory, politically correct reading of the meaning of the piece.

The project involved sending him a piece of rough Guatemalan jade that had been broken into two pieces with the aim of having him reproduce them in New Zealand greenstone with the incredible detail and technical mastery characteristic of his work as a carver. (The Motagua River Valley in Guatemala was the source of jade for ancient Mesoamerican peoples.) The peculiarity of my request to Joe was that, when copying the fragments, each one should take on the mass of the other; that is, the copy of the smaller fragment would have the same mass as the bigger fragment of the original piece of jade, and the copy of

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Marvin Harris, *Theories of Culture in Postmodern Times* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1999), p. 32



the bigger fragment would be the same size as the original smaller fragment – at which point, the two pieces of the replica would no longer fit together.

I wonder now whether it was my sense of detachment from the context of New Zealand that made it possible for me to propose such a project. In truth the work was sufficiently enigmatic as not to adopt an openly visible position, but I suppose that if the author of the piece had been a local, either Maori or *pakeha*, the reading would have been quite different; simpler, perhaps reducible to a question of identity. In my view, certain critical issues within the art field tend to get easily and reductively pigeonholed. As long as the artist doesn't espouse an openly reactionary position, it is assumed by default that he or she is on the side of righteous denunciation. In my case, even though nobody explicitly asked me, I always felt that there was a question hanging in the air: 'Why are you doing this?' Or, more likely, this was nothing more than an internal voice that was questioning the forced closeness in which I had decided to put myself.

No, my proposal wasn't neutral. It involved the act of breaking pieces of jade but I did the same with the jade that I sent from Mexico, supplied by a jewellery maker that uses the stone to make decorative objects, the same fate that would probably have befallen the greenstone supplied by Joe. For me, the act of breaking the jade and the fragments that resulted from it served to bring together everything I'm trying to develop here, all of my discomfort, of course, as well as the discomfort I was able to provoke.

A review of the exhibition – with which I disagree in some respects, although it wasn't entirely off-base – will serve here to point out a couple of things that emerged as indications of points of weakness that now seem worth mentioning. In this review, Jon Bywater classifies me as an emergent type of 'itinerant artist' after looking over my CV. He also observes that the curators of the exhibition, Caterina Riva and Claudia Arozqueta, are foreigners. Bywater's categorisations strike me as being relevant because we're talking about distance, and in the sense that, as I've already mentioned, this is largely what the exhibition was addressing. But Bywater used it as a shortcut to question my level of commitment to the problem of *pounamu*, observing that I did not engage with 'things like the *tikanga*, or protocols appropriate to *pounamu* and its status as *taonga*, or precious object in Maori tradition [...].' I suspect that, in some way, geographical distance and, in this case, the inscrutability of the piece became arguments for a moral criticism from within.

I don't know how much of the jade that circulates and gets consumed in New Zealand today follows the appropriate protocols. Much of it is actually Chinese jade pretending to be *pounamu*, according to the Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu website. As I mentioned above, I didn't want for my intentions to be reduced to those of a visitor with a conciliatory attitude. My work was not trying to pass a moral judgment, so putting myself on the safe side didn't make any sense. It seemed to me that in order to allow for a more inclusive form of complexity it was necessary to work with a carver who bears the most problematic aspects of *pounamu*, coming from a *pakeha* family who has been

making their living by selling it for decades, and, in Joe's case, with an artistic craftsmanship that reflects this.

As far as I know, there was no negative response on the part of the Maori community, so the questions that I'm raising are largely things I was asking myself while being aware of treading on foreign territory, as well as observing the care and concern with which the preparations for the exhibition were developed by the people who had invited me.

\* \* \*

Another piece, consisting of two parts, came out of the case of the Haast's eagle, and the particular evolution that the birds of New Zealand underwent as a result of the total absence of terrestrial mammals on the islands. Birds of prey came to occupy the ecological niches that would normally have been filled by mammalian predators. These niches were even comparable to those that would have been occupied by a tiger or a lion in other contexts, and resulted in an evolutionary effect of gigantism. In the specific case of the eagle, this may have been a result of the same growth process acting on potential prey and because there was direct competition with the falcon (as the story of the *hokioi* and the *kei* describes). In contrast, most of the other birds underwent a reduction in size and lost the ability to fly because of the few threats they faced.

We now know that the Haast's eagle probably evolved from an Australian species (*Hieraetus morphnoides*) that weighed less than a kilogram, over the course of an incredibly short period (in evolutionary terms) – between 0.7 and 1.8 million years long. It had a wingspan of 2.6 metres and could carry prey that weighed up to 20 times its own weight, that is, over 180 kilograms.

A few months before opening the exhibition in Auckland, I had my first experience using clay while working on another project. There I learned that this material gets 10 to 15 percent smaller in the process of drying and firing. This shrinking effect, along with the scientific practice of making copies of the remains of important discoveries in order to send them off to be analysed by colleagues in other countries, gave rise to the decision to materialise the evolutionary process of the growth of the Haast's eagle, only in reverse.

Using actual, authentic bones that we were allowed to analyse at the Canterbury Museum in Christchurch as a reference, as well as notes and drawings from that era, I modelled reproductions that were 15 percent bigger than the original size of the four bones that were found in 1871. Later, with the use of moulds, I carried out the tedious work of casting in clay, letting it dry, firing it, and then making another mould of each of the resulting bones. I did this sixteen times until I reached the size of the Australian little eagle that was supposedly the origin of the Haast's eagle.

The other piece associated with the clay bones consisted of 58 figurines of birds cast in metal, maintaining the relations of scale between them, making evident the effects of insular evolution that I mentioned above. The group represented the total set of extinct birds after the arrival of the Polynesians in





the thirteenth century and later, British colonisers. The introduction of new species of small mammals, hunting and deforestation, among other factors, were the reasons for this mass extermination. This piece, which draws on obvious parallels to the little lead soldiers that offer a playful representation of the history of Western colonial expansion, did not generate any sort of concern or criticism. I'm not sure whether this was because they were read as a condemnation of colonial extermination about which there exists a relative consensus, especially in art, or because, by comparison to the case of the pounamu and the recent return of its control to the Ngai Tahu, the distance in time that separates us from the respective events determines the degree of our moral involvements. For as Carlo Ginzburg explains in his book *Wooden Eyes*, in reference to a passage from Aristotle's *Poetics* in which the philosopher describes the different emotions produced in theatre: 'too great a distance gives rise to indifference; too great proximity may awaken compassion, or provoke murderous rivalry.'<sup>4</sup>

Another piece in the exhibition functioned in counterpoint to the contextual dimension addressed by the birds and the jade. Its intentionally different appearance went poorly with the rest of the pieces, even though the questions that both sides were pointing toward were closely related. The two walls flanking the hunks of jade featured paintings of two large cartoons, one of them by Guy Body, a cartoonist for the *New Zealand Herald*, and the other by Rafael 'El Fisgón' Barajas from the newspaper *La Jornada* in Mexico City. Like Joe, they agreed to do an exercise in 'scale reversal' in their work, for which they would turn their backs on the interests of their readers, producing an image that would function in diametric opposition to that of their usual job as journalists. Instead of caricaturing a social event relevant to that day, they gave a kind of confession in the form of a cartoon with an absolutely intimate dimension, something pertaining only to themselves and that only they would be able to explain, or not even: a mental scene that haunts them, but that they cannot necessarily trace back to its origin. In these scenes distance is reduced to the point of reaching the impossibility of understanding themselves; precisely the opposite of what this text is trying to do, perhaps.

I wonder what the lives of these works will be beyond the experiment. My intuition is that they will be short, that their specificity will cause them to cancel themselves out. The distance that I cut short four years ago seems to be getting longer again. Perhaps a real resistance in the face of the accelerated circulation of art would be to maintain an extreme specificity, to resist consensus and return to small discussions, to fold back in upon our own demons, like Guy and El Fisgón. ●

The works described in this text were produced in duplicate and presented simultaneously in October 2013 at Artspace in Auckland and Enjoy Public Art Gallery in Wellington, under completely different conditions. *Emic Etic?* was curated by Caterina Riva and Claudia Arozqueta.

<sup>4</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *Wooden Eyes: Nine Reflections on Distance*, translated by Martin Ryle and Kate Soper (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 160

## Those were the mythical monster felines

————— Rometti Costales

Translated by Gabriela Jauregui

*The teacher or entheogenic plants<sup>1</sup> have proved to be essential in the formation of knowledge for multiple communities over thousands of years. Currently San Pedro (Echinopsis Pachanoi), also called Gigantón or Huachuma, is widely used all across the Andes, from Ecuador to the north of Chile and Argentina. And yet, the studies around this fantastic plant are scarce and very generic. Anthony Richard Henman<sup>2</sup> has spent the last 20 years researching the relationship between this cactus and the humans. What follows is an extract of a long conversation we had with him during the southern hemisphere winter of 2015.*

These I have planted as a fence. I saw this idea in Loja, Ecuador, probably to make an enclosure with San Pedros – to plant them so close to each other that after about twenty years they become impenetrable, even for pigs and hens. You can probably use them as a cage. That's where I planted that variety, the kind that grows faster, like a domestic clone but almost thornless. And on this side I planted the large plant you see outside. I started cutting bits and planting them here. It's a sort of domestic Pachanoi; and this is a Peruvianus, most likely with some Pachanoi hybridisation, because it's straight and not bending. And so you can see all the varieties, over here I placed all the offshoots from the one that is out there, and the one I found here.

To the right is the north and to the left is the south.

Over there you find all the valleys that drop off towards the Pacific, and on this side are all the valleys that drop off towards the Amazon, so the water

- <sup>1</sup> The term *Plantas Maestras* or Teacher Plants refers to all kinds of entheogenic plants – a neologism created by ethnobotanist Richard Evans Schultes and others, literally meaning 'generating the divine within' and referring to plants that contain a high grade of psychoactive alkaloids, which are regularly employed in shamanic practices, rituals or to alter states of consciousness. Today's syncretic shamanic experience in Latin America usually involves four teacher plants: hallucinogenic mushrooms, ayahuasca vine, peyote cactus and San Pedro cactus, and each one plays a significant role. Many of the peoples who make use of such plants call them *La Medicina* or *Medicine*.
- <sup>2</sup> '...I think anti-prohibitionists should face squarely the uncomfortable political fact that what we are defending is actually the right to alter your consciousness if you want to and without any obligation to do so in some spiritually uplifting manner.' — Anthony Henman, 'Is there a politics of anti-prohibitionism?', *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 1991

divider is more or less right here, in the middle. Coming from here, from the one over here, those ones, which you see in the northern part of the Lima region and the southern part of the Ancash region are a variety that has this tendency to creep. Normally it grows on cliffs and hangs downward like giant spaghetti about 25–30 metres long – it doesn't stay straight, after a certain length it bends and falls sideways.

Here I think there's been an intergeneric hybridisation between San Pedro or *Echinopsis* or *Trychosereus* and this one over here which is more like a *Cleistocactus*, I think. You see that plant that's different from all the others? It has a little bit of that one's characteristics. I believe that's what it is – an intergeneric hybrid between San Pedro and the *Cleistocactus*.

Here's the transition towards the kind from the north. So there, at the end, are the ones from Ecuador and Piura, beyond that we start heading down towards Lambayeque, Moche river which is in Trujillo, and here's the row for the ones from Huaylas, Ancash. The northern part of the Lima region and Ancash are the places with the most ancient ceremonial sites. This would seem to be the cradle, so to speak, of central Andean civilisation. I suppose that in that zone, San Pedros from the North were introduced from early on. Because in the Huaylas valley one sees some, even side by side, which have lots of thorns and some that have almost none and it would be strange if that happened for strictly natural reasons. I think it's really the result of human introduction throughout millennia.

So when one passes near Trujillo, more or less, that influence of the Peruvianus with more thorns disappears, and you've got your domestic Pachanoi which is almost thornless, and the wild Pachanoi which does have thorns but relatively short ones, very different from the Peruvianus. It's almost like there's a cleavage, which operates in Ancash, more or less, between northern and central Peru, but as I said there's probably many hybridisations and mixes. But when you get to the North, I mean the northernmost part, to the Piura Sierra and to Ecuador, then this kind predominates entirely and you don't see any more Peruvianus. Some of these Pachanoi can have relatively long thorns – it's not like they're totally thornless, some have reasonable thorns.

These are all wild, taken from cliffs and places where no-one would have planted them, basically.

Afterwards, the ones over here, more or less up to those little flowers were all collected from places where they were definitely being planted, next to homes or fences. Basically 80 percent of these are of the Pachanoi kind, the domesticated almost-thornless one. This one over here comes from the Ayabaca plaza, a village in the Piura Sierra, near the border with Ecuador. And there in the plaza they had this one, which is probably one of those. It's been domesticated but only recently introduced, and this one too, you see?

And here we have the hillsides that drop down into the Amazon: this is Cajamarca, this is the Marañón river and Chavín. In Chavín we find the famous representation of a healer with a feline mask carrying a piece of San Pedro

in his hand. And strangely, in the surroundings of Chavín we don't find the thornless variety much. We can't know which one they used five thousand years ago, but the ones found in the area today are of the more or less classical Peruvianus type. Sometimes the healers call them female San Pedro or male San Pedro, depending on how many thorns they have, but basically it's a question of geographical variety.

When you get here, this little grouping is from Huanuco, from Alto Huallaga, which is also a very ancient zone of prehistoric settlements, and this is where we find the kinds with four ribs – here are some, and here are others who used to have four and now have five. In Huanuco it's a little bit like in Ancash – both regions are where the south and north meet in the central part of Peru. Often times there you can find some side by side that are real thorny like this one, with others that are practically thornless.

Huanuco seems to be one of those zones where there was a lot of mixing. And for some reason they have so many of those they call the Four Winds, I have no idea why... I have never seen a Four Wind San Pedro except in Huanuco. And in some places in Huanuco I have seen 20 or 30 side by side. Look, this one here is also a four [rib] one, and it's relatively large. This one had four but the archeologist from the Huaca del Brujo, a place near Trujillo, asked me for a Four Wind one and so I cut it and now it has five ribs. Then, when we keep moving more towards the south, especially on this side of the cordillera, the eastern side, we begin to see varieties that some call *Cuzcoensis*, which are skinnier compared to the classical Peruvianus of the Pacific coast, but they're also very thorny and they have this colour... sometimes I feel like they have a deeper green. What characterises them is that we see here that we're definitely entering a more thorny territory – that is, the situation is getting thornier. Afterwards we'll see a section where I have studied that idea of the possible existence of *Cuzcoensis* as a species. I have my doubts about it really being a separate species.

And there, going towards the south on the Pacific coast we follow this kind over here more or less... Here's Huancavelica, Arequipa, all the way to Moquegua and the border with Chile. There's not much difference, really I mean you could find this one here in the hills and you'd think it's from over there since there's nothing that distinguishes them. This one is a little strange because it comes from Moquegua, near the sea and from a lesser altitude. In general, here in central Peru you don't find native San Pedros under an altitude of 1800 metres, that's more or less their limit. But since the climate is cooler in Moquegua, and more humid or what have you, then you can find these at an altitude of 300–500 metres above sea level.

That is the place, so to speak, where San Pedro naturally comes closest to the sea – the southernmost edge of Peru and northernmost edge of Chile, in Arica. I haven't seen them but I have seen botanical illustrations and apparently in Arica there are San Pedros growing on the cliffs. There's a famous hill in Arica where there was a battle during the war with Chile and it seems like



there are native San Pedros growing there on the cliffs and the sea is there, 200 metres away, so they almost reach the beach. But there's a clear rupture there between the ones from the coast and these ones from La Paz.

The ones from La Paz are all from the valleys which run more towards the Amazon, and they would be botanically and geographically separated by the Andean Altiplano where they don't grow because the altitude is too high. Their evolution was separate for thousands and thousands of years. There's definitely a separation there, this species for instance is sometimes called *Bridgesii* or *Lageniformis* but it's basically the La Paz species. There are varieties within them, and some have more or less thorns. This one is the same one as the one over there, I planted one so we can see the difference. These other ones are classical La Paz. Some of the reasons why they're good in terms of effects is that they're not so thick and possibly have more mescaline since the centre part is not so thick.

Evidence is direct and indirect.

They found some bits of San Pedro at a ceremonial site called Las Haldas on the coast of Ancash near Casma. People had cut the exterior part and had put it out to dry with the Sierra sun to take it to the coast for their rituals since it doesn't grow well over there. They've found chunks and rolls of bark that would work perfectly well to prepare the San Pedro. This is direct evidence. Indirect evidence is found in all the representations, like the engraved stone in Chavín, and even more in ceramics. I suppose that what the Las Haldas site shows us is that they were using San Pedro in all the ceremonial sites in the coast from the very beginning. It must have been an essential part of their ritual.

For instance in the Tiahuanaco culture or the Wari culture – both of whom are intermediaries between Chavín and the Inca – you always find those figurines with keros<sup>3</sup> in hand and it's often been interpreted that they're drinking chicha but I often think that keros represent a drink that could very well be San Pedro. Especially when so many times they have a tablet in the other hand which was used to sniff huilca<sup>4</sup> powder that contains DMT [Dimethyltryptamine] and there is much evidence of the use of huilca: those faces in Chavín with the swollen and dripping noses which turn from human to feline... The same tablets have been found in various places, especially in the North of Chile, in Atacama, hundreds have been found, same as in Tiahuanaco,

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<sup>3</sup> A kero is an ancient Incan drinking vessel.

<sup>4</sup> Huilca (*Anadenanthera colubrina*), is a medium-size tree of the Leguminosae family. It contains bufotenin (5-HO-DMT, N, N-dimethylserotonin) and usually the dry seeds are smoked or snuffed. This plant has been widely used for its entheogenic properties for more than 4,500 years in the western part of the American continent. There is a lot of evidence about the profound influence this plant has exercised on the Tiahuanaco culture in Bolivia. Nowadays its usage has been almost totally forgotten. It is believed that the indigenous botanist healers from Bolivia, Callahuayas, have been recently rediscovering the properties of huilca seeds.

in Chavín fewer but also the same tablets with the little tubes to inhale.

All these ceremonial sites have similar structures: circular plazas sunken in front of a pyramid. And in Chavín, in the circular sunken plaza they found the man carrying the San Pedro and my interpretation is that people would get together in that plaza and would take the San Pedro there, then spend two or three hours dancing, singing, helping their metabolisms activate and in this way getting through that bad moment, which is when we sort of change gears, changing from one state to another and the body resents it... you need something to motivate you and so people would sing and dance and make sounds in the sunken plaza. The ideal things to get through that changing state. And afterwards you'd go to the upper part of the pyramid, or in the case of Chavín, one of the many subterranean passages.

In Chavín there are these rooms that are tiny but they're like little chambers, like sensory deprivation cells you could say, where you have no light and there are water canals going through the entire pyramid and so you could make sound and wind-like effects... All of this would lead you to a state where you're more sensitive to the effects of the San Pedro. That's where they would probably potentiate the effects with huilca too.

DMT greatly intensifies visions and visual alterations become much stronger. With San Pedro and with mescaline you see mandala-like forms, intensification of colors, fractal shapes and the like. But with DMT you start to see spirals and much crazier things where you can start to hallucinate completely and see things that aren't there. It's not that you're seeing things that are there under a new light but rather you are seeing things that come straight out of your imagination. And that has to have been the basis for all that feline transformation.

It was probably linked to a cult of ancestors, who were descended from the jaguar. Here, until humans arrived, there used to be a giant cat, *Smilodon*, which had fangs about 20–30 centimetres long. It's not known for certain whether the *Smilodon* still existed when the first human inhabitants arrived circa 12000–14000 BCE. It's possible that some of them still lived but became rapidly extinct. It's also possible men killed them or that they became naturally extinct. What is certain is that those first men, walking around the mountains would have sought refuge in caves, the very same places the *Smilodon* would have lived in, and it's entirely possible that in those caves they encountered, if not the live animal then at least its fangs. And they used this as proof that 'these were the mythical feline monsters'. So I think that the *Smilodon*, the *Smilodon*'s fang is what's behind that imagery.

The feedback is part of the feline transformation. I mean, you have sensations in the body, if you're feeling different you seek out another model in your surroundings that could help you explain these situations. Physical sensations that end up being reinterpreted in the shape of ideas and beliefs. And being culturally reinforced, they become standardised, in a way. Now, there is always the case that in the ayahuasca cults, for instance, which are very

disciplined in this sense, intoxication through ayahuasca is interpreted in a very rigid way – you don't have the right to a feline transformation. You have a right to see the 'rainha da floresta'. This is what you're supposed to see in the Santo Daime doctrine. Because it has that Christian element, with the Virgin and all that.

But it's possible that, even within Santo Daime, people could have reactions that end in a feedback cycle of their own sensations which end up producing other visions and other things that are not within the institution's plans. This is an argument that goes a little against a too-rigid interpretation of these ideas of set and setting – the ideas that the frame, the expectations, determine the effect. It's true to a certain extent. But there's always the possibility that people will interpret things in an autonomous, different and unexplainable way. And this happens through feedback cycles that come from within one's head and which are difficult to interpret so that the culture can attempt to standardise them. It's always something imperfect. There could have been people in Chavín that never transformed into felines, 'I don't know what you're talking about!' 'I take it, I have a good time, but feline transformation... me?! Never!' And so then it's a bit contradictory that an anthropologist argues that culture is not the principal instrument for disciplining those experiences. It is useful and it works and it allows people to have more good and controlled experiences instead of bad or uncontrolled ones. I think that precisely what's interesting in the experience: to leave it a little loose, so that new things and new interpretations can arise each time.

I think it's quite viable that alkaloids are conductors of perception of relations that cannot be perceived in any other way. Because obviously there are so many connections between these flowers, this bird, this insect and everything else... things that are intimately intertwined and that one cannot feel in a normal state. In lucid states one perceives about five percent and nothing else. So having a much sharper sensibility thanks to San Pedro, huilca, et cetera indeed makes us tend to interpret the interrelations between species and times and places and states with all their variables. What we do in a normal state is to try to reduce those variables to a more or less manageable minimum in order to function. If we let ourselves go, let's say to a plenitude or an infinity of understanding of the interrelation between everything, we would probably be incapable of acting. In order to act, we must reduce it a little. All cognitive functioning is constantly trying to eliminate things that aren't totally relevant to the purpose we have at that particular moment. These substances allow us to revert this process a little, and I think that's healthy. I see it as two complementary processes.

The idea that humans can somehow transform into an animal – that's where we find Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's entire question about seeing the world from the perspective of a different species, transforming our point of view, the basis for shamanism – all of that seems quite logical to me. What's a little sad with all this, is that the theory seems to be relatively self-sustaining,

considering the evidence, yet it is still quite frowned upon in classical archeological circles, and museums never speak of this: the idea that Andean civilisation could have been born from the knowledge of psychotropic plants, like say coca or San Pedro or huilca. ●

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Anthony Henman, independent scholar, author and activist, is one of the pioneers of the sociological discussion on drugs in Brazil. He was born in São Paulo to an Argentine mother and English father, and earned his Masters in Anthropology from Cambridge University. After traveling to Colombia in the early 1970s he began studying the traditional uses of coca among the Paez of Cauca, Colombia. His pseudonymously penned book based on this research, *Mama Coca* (1978), is one of the first contemporary academic works to address the indigenous uses of coca leaf and denounce the cocaine industry. Aside from coca, his research topics have included the use of diamba (*Cannabis sativa*) among the Tenetehara Indians of Maranhão; the União do Vegetal ayahuasca religion; guaraná among the Sateré-Maué; heroin and cocaine use in Europe and the United States; *Psilocybe semilanceata* mushroom in Wales; and harm reduction policies. He also served as Executive Secretary of the International Anti-Prohibitionist League.

Prior to retreating from formal academia, Henman taught at the University of Cauca, Popayán, Colombia, and the Institute of Philosophy and Humanities at the State University of Campinas, Brazil (IFCH-UNICAMP). He has been a researcher and consultant on psychoactive substances for the State Council on Narcotic Drugs of São Paulo (CONEN-SP), the European Parliament, the World Health Organization, the Geopolitical Drug Observatory (Observatoire des Drogues Géopolitique, Paris), and the AIDS prevention program of New York state's Department of Health. Today Henman is dedicated to research on the Teacher Plants of Peru, especially coca (*Erythroxylum coca*), the San Pedro cactus (*Trichocereus/Echinopsis* spp.), and huilca (*Anadenanthera colubrina*).





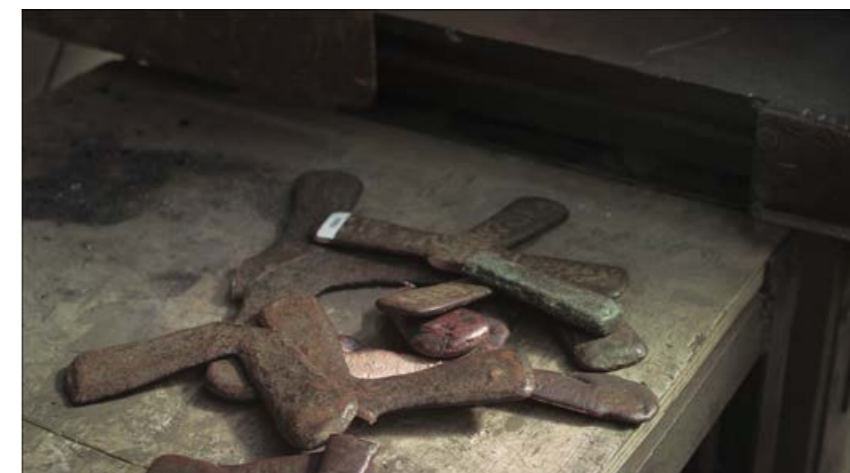
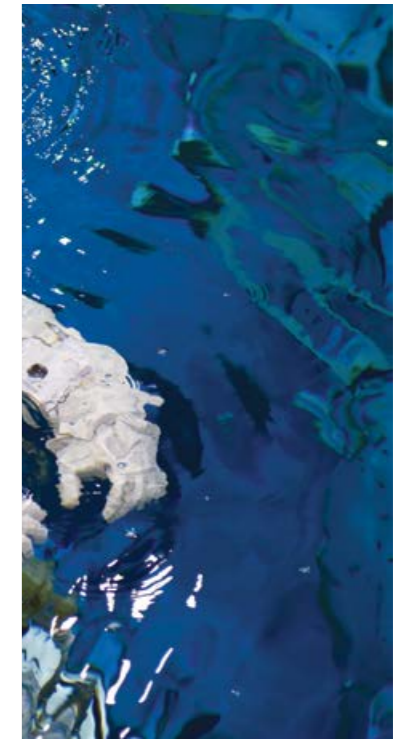




















## Annotated index of images



**Page 10**  
Candice Lin  
Coevolution by Traumatic Insemination:  
Coridromius, 2015 (detail)  
2015  
Stainless steel, forged steel, kangaroo lace,  
hair  
58.5" x 31" x 1.75"

Courtesy of the artist and Ghebaly Gallery,  
Los Angeles.

**11**  
Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc  
An Italian Film (Africa Addio).  
First part: copper, 2012  
HD film, colour, sound, 26 min  
Production Pavilion, Leeds and Ecole des  
Beaux-Arts de Nantes  
collection MAC/VAL, Vitry-sur-Seine

Courtesy of the artist and Marcelle Alix, Paris



**12 (top)**  
Trevor Paglen  
Trinity Cube, 2015 (detail)  
Irradiated glass from the Fukushima  
Exclusion Zone, Trinitite  
20 x 20 x 20cm

Courtesy of the artist and Don't Follow the Wind  
(an inaccessible exhibition within the evacuated  
radioactive zone surrounding the Fukushima  
Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in Japan).

**12 (bottom)**  
Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc  
Sector IX B, 2015  
HD video, colour, sound, 41 min 58  
Production red shoes / Coproduction  
Centre Pompidou Metz, CAC Brétigny,  
Marcelle Alix

Courtesy of the artist and Marcelle Alix, Paris

**13**  
Rometti Costales  
Study for altered forms and colours  
colour photographs, in progress.

Photo: the artists

**14 (top)**  
Yudovin Solomon  
Illustration from Yiddish folk-ornament,  
1920  
ink (drawing), 19cm x 25cm  
Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme, Paris

Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (musée d'art et  
d'histoire du judaïsme) / Michel Urtado



**14 (bottom)**  
Kelly Jazvac  
Plastiglomerate Samples, 2013  
plastic and beach sediment, including sand,  
basalt rock, wood and coral.  
These found-object artworks are the results  
of a collaboration between Jazvac, geologist  
Patricia Corcoran, and oceanographer  
Charles Moore.

Photography by Jeff Elstone

**15**  
Candice Lin  
The Hand of an Important Man, 2015  
Graphite, archival pigment printed images,  
dried plant, silkscreened text on paper.  
33" x 25.75" x 2.75"

Courtesy of the artist and Ghebaly Gallery,  
Los Angeles.

Black and white image caption reads:  
Ectoplasm manifested by the spirit medium  
Mina "Margery" Crandon. Crandon's  
ectoplasm often took phallic or hand-  
like shapes that manifested near or from  
her genitalia. It was rumoured that her  
husband, a surgeon, had surgically altered

her genitalia to produce these ectoplasm.

Large quote reads: "This is one of the  
reasons, as other historians of Spiritualism  
have pointed out, that female Spiritualists  
often claimed to be just the channels,  
not the initiators, of political speeches  
or acts. And who better to claim as the  
inspiration or guide than a revered (or at  
least recognised) male political figure from  
the past. Thus the proliferation of mediums  
claiming to be in touch with the spirits of  
George Washington, Benjamin Franklin,  
Abraham Lincoln, or similar entities who  
could give legitimacy and authority to their  
voices."

Amy Lehman, *Victorian Women and the  
Theatre of Trance* (Jefferson, North Carolina:  
McFarland), 2009, p. 112.



**16(top)**  
Hayley Silverman  
Respect, 2015  
Ceramic bowl, polyurethane food  
ingredients (mushrooms, cauliflower,  
radishes, carrots), epoxy resin, phone dial  
and girl in time out figurine  
6.5" x 9" x 9"  
Part of Silverman's "Flood" series of figurines  
caught in soups of artificial vegetables.

Courtesy of the artist and Bodega, New York

**16 (bottom)**  
Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc  
Sector IX B, 2015  
HD video, colour, sound, 41 min 58  
Production red shoes / Coproduction  
Centre Pompidou Metz, CAC Brétigny,  
Marcelle Alix

Courtesy of the artist and Marcelle Alix, Paris

**17 (left column)**  
Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc  
Sector IX B, 2015  
HD video, colour, sound, 41 min 58  
Production red shoes / Coproduction  
Centre Pompidou Metz, CAC Brétigny,  
Marcelle Alix

Courtesy of the artist and Marcelle Alix, Paris

Voiceover: She is starting to wonder what she  
is looking for here. She associates this state to her  
advancing experience, which implies regular intakes  
of chemical substances, substances that cause her  
to wake with hollow eyes. Consumed by troubling  
images, her experiment focuses on the subjectivity  
of the researcher; a modern subjectivity, devoid

of reason, under the influence of laudanum,  
quinoplasmine, Stovarsol, and all these age-old  
drugs – a legacy of the first scientific and colonial  
expeditions to Africa.

...

Each of the pills she swallows is like a condensed  
medicine box. These drugs profoundly modify her  
perception of reality. She writes that it is when  
subjectivity reaches its climax that one achieves  
objectivity. That by writing subjectively the value  
of her account is increased.

**17 (right column)**  
Stills from *Un Chant d'Amour* (Song of love),  
1950  
26 min, silent

Written and Directed by Jean Genet

**18 (top)**  
Denis Beaubois  
*No Longer Adrift*, 2013 (detail)  
Dust from airport departure lounge.

Courtesy and © the artist

**18 (bottom)**  
Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc  
Sector IX B, 2015  
HD video, colour, sound, 41 min 58  
Production red shoes / Coproduction  
Centre Pompidou Metz, CAC Brétigny,  
Marcelle Alix

Courtesy of the artist and Marcelle Alix, Paris



**19 (bottom)**  
Stella Rosa McDonald  
*Sixteen Days At Sea* (three hundred and eighty-four  
cubes of Reckitt's Blue laundry powder), 2014  
384 cubes of Reckitt's Blue, timber.  
Installation view, Firstdraft, Sydney.

Photo: Zan Wimberley

In 1952, after a large number of his  
paintings were destroyed in transit, the  
British-born painter Ian Fairweather made  
a sixteen-day journey by raft from Darwin  
toward the coast of Portugese Timor – an  
island where he believed he had made  
some of his best work. Set adrift on the  
currents of the Timor Sea, Fairweather  
arrived, instead, on the initially hostile Roti  
Island in newly independent Indonesia.  
This work conflates Fairweather's journey  
with his use of Reckitt's Blue—a domestic  
bleaching agent he often used in his  
paintings as a substitute for blue pigment.  
His personal life—hermit, artist, migrant—

was as soluble and unstable as the materials  
he chose to work with from his studio on  
Bribie Island off the Coast of Queensland,  
Australia. The pellets of Reckitt's Blue line  
the walls, with each one representing an  
hour spent at sea.

Stella Rosa McDonald



**20**  
Hannah Ryggen  
*Livet Glir Forbi* (Life slips by), 1938  
190 x 185cm, Tapestry in wool and linen

Photo: Steffen Wesselvold Holden  
© Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum  
© Hannah Ryggen / Image Copyright 2015  
Courtesy of the The National Museum of Art,  
Architecture and Design, Norway

This tapestry is reported to depict the life  
of the French painter Paul Gauguin.



**21 (top left)**  
JSC2009-E-082997, 10 April 2009 (detail)  
Astronaut Mike Foreman, STS-129 mission  
specialist, attired in a training version of  
his Extravehicular Mobility Unit spacesuit,  
is submerged in the waters of the Neutral  
Buoyancy Laboratory near NASA's Johnson  
Space Center. Divers (out of frame) are in  
the water to assist Foreman in his rehearsal,  
which is intended to help prepare him for  
work on the exterior of the International  
Space Station.

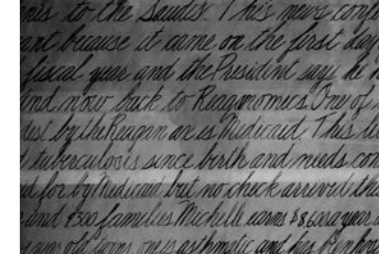
Image: NASA (STS-129 Shuttle Mission Imagery)

**21 (top right)**  
Michael Stevenson  
*Rute Migrasi Lama*, 2004 (detail)  
Acrylic on canvas, maple, string  
191cm x 149cm

Courtesy of the artist and Darren Knight Gallery,  
Sydney

**21 (bottom)**  
Stella Rosa McDonald  
*Sixteen Days At Sea* (three hundred and eighty-four  
cubes of Reckitt's Blue laundry powder), 2014  
384 cubes of Reckitt's Blue, timber.  
Installation view, Firstdraft, Sydney.

Image Credit: Zan Wimberley



**22 (top)**  
Mimi Smith  
October 1, 1981, 1982  
detail of painting, acrylic on silk  
Installation west wall of the lobby at Chase  
Manhattan Plaza, NYC

© and courtesy of the artist.

The piece was based on the TV newscast  
from October 1, which is the start of the  
federal fiscal year in the U.S. It combined  
information from the news with other  
material related to money that I gathered in  
the downtown Manhattan financial district  
on both the paintings and audio. The  
audiotape is titled, October 1, *Money Money*.

Mimi Smith

**22 (bottom)**  
Mimi Smith  
October 1, 1981, 1982  
four acrylic paintings on silk, 88" x 106"  
each, and audiotape  
Installation west wall of the lobby at Chase  
Manhattan Plaza, NYC

© and courtesy of the artist.

Mimi Smith's account of the news on  
October 1, 1981—including Ronald  
Reagan's address to congress on the  
first day of the financial year—later sat  
alongside two other silkscreens of the  
daily news in red and blue, in the foyer  
windows of the Chase Manhattan Bank.  
On February 28, 1982 Smith's prints  
(re)entered the news as four bombs  
exploded in near succession outside the  
New York Stock Exchange, the American  
Stock Exchange, and the Chase Manhattan  
Bank headquarters at 1 Chase Plaza. Smith's  
work—which had been the target of  
complaints from bank staff who said it  
was being "read too much" and was likely  
disturbing passers by who might confuse  
its content for that day's news—was  
damaged in the blast. The Puerto Rican  
nationalist group FALN (Fuerzas Armadas  
de Liberación Nacional Puertorriqueña —  
the Armed Forces of National Liberation)



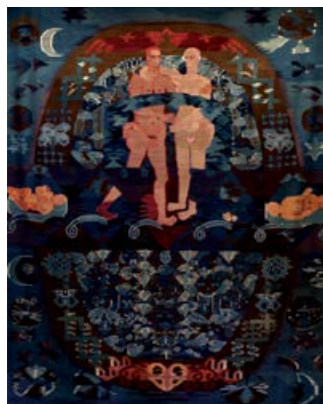
were the perpetrators of the 'Wall Street bombings'. Published news images of that day show a bank security guard lifting a corner of October 1, 1981 above his head to peer out the wrecked façade of the building. The blasted silkscreen recedes into the background, glass and debris litter the plaza, the entrance doors are bent and ruined. The news cycle remains unbroken.

SRM



**23**  
Stills from *Un Chant d'Amour* (Song of love), 1950  
26 min, silent

Written and Directed by Jean Genet



**24**  
Hannah Ryggen  
*We are living on a star* (Vi lever på en stjerne), 1958  
400 x 300cm, Tapestry in wool and linen

Photo: Steffen Wesselvold Holden  
© Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum  
© Hannah Ryggen / Image Copyright 2015  
Courtesy of the Moderna Museet, Malmö

Since 1958, floors two to twelve of the "Høyblokken" building in Oslo housed the offices of the Norwegian Justice Ministry; floors thirteen to seventeen housed the Office of the Prime Minister. On July 22, 2011 a man parked a van outside of the seventeen-storey building with a 950kg bomb inside. A short time later the bomb exploded, killing eight people and causing catastrophic damage to neighboring buildings. Hannah Ryggen's tapestry, *We are living on a star*—made the same year the Modernist Oslo high-rise was built—hung

in the foyer of the "Høyblokken" a large tear in its lower right hand corner—now mended—remains as a testament to the violence that day.

Ryggen's tapestries commonly detailed the rise of fascism in Europe and were imbued with her identity as a pacifist, communist, and woman. Her chosen medium has been described as 'unsuspicious', and the "Høyblokken" tapestry is her most hopeful work. In it, a man and a woman lie suspended in the cosmos, their awkward bodies entangled above a sea of clasped blue hands. On either side of them two naked babies lie curled in utero. The work is composed emblematically; a coat of arms for a wished-for country. The man who parked the van that day went on to murder seventy-seven people.

SRM



**25**  
Chimbu Sheild, Papua New Guinea  
Wisimei vill (Kerawang district) Simbu (Chimbu) province.  
Awale in language.  
Owner: Kosmas Maynei.  
Maker Aiyre (his father).

Courtesy the private collection of Ruark Lewis.  
Photo: Nick Garner

Reckitts' Blue—a domestic bleaching agent used to make whites whiter—appeared as early as the 1880s in Aboriginal rock paintings from Western Arnhem land. The use of trade goods and introduced European materials (including the use of soap as a pigment) in indigenous art from Papua New Guinea to Australia's northern tip heralded a departure from the natural world as subject and medium to colonial society and a new monetary economy.

SRM

The below text is an excerpt from *O I 8 something queer*, written by Gerry Bibby for his regular column for the birds, in "Starship magazine". SPRING 2016 issue. (ISSN 1619-2052)

In the Summer issue I began with *O* as the character under question in *Crumbs*, with a fragment I'd found written a year

earlier, and some writing about birds. I've often written with a bird, or birds, occupying a pivotal role. That might not be surprising as I often write outdoors. But you see, the thing is, *O*'s been giving me the shits!

Perhaps I'm envious of *O* but I'm torn. He does take up more space than I. There is a certainty to his form, like the column, the I—perhaps one of the most impervious of shapes anyone could isolate amongst the other shapes here. *O* looks so good from here!

Even when lips pronounce his name they mimic his form. Perhaps this was a way to introduce a different kind of *O*, one that didn't annoy me so much, to imagine his impervious line as lips, or an asshole for that matter, one more to my liking!

I've even imagined *O* as a hoola-hoop rotating around my waist, the inside of his rim tracing lines around me.

If I imagine him like this though—he must be a he because I've written it so—I get stuck, I become so curious about his appearance that I almost forget what this particular *O* has been up to.

The story of *O* no doubt has precedents— notions from which I will acknowledge are part of his becoming—and begins with a breakfast he's decided to spend some saved up coins on. He then goes about recognising himself in all these things around him. This actually begins with the coins, but moves on to the table he sits at, and the saucer and lip of his coffee cup. It then happens that a pigeon whose legs have by some accident come to be tied together enters the scene; shackled as the story goes, but this is where *O* fails to intuit a resemblance. He instead scoffs at the bird's situation. Do you see my initial distaste with *O*? It's his relayed misanthropy: relayed because there are a few things about his situation that echo the bird's predicament, the most obvious being an awfully lot of attention paid to the consumption of food, *Crumbs*. Or is it the 'anthropy' bit in general? Must *O* project his likeness like that onto everything, 'mis' or not?

A year later Kafka comes along with a few lines of something about futility and control. *K*'s few lines introduce an opportunity to imagine *O* empathising with the bird having difficulty walking about because of an encounter with a length of string; not the most perilous of obstacles in an urban landscape. This was an attempt to read the story of *O* in another way, to think about care as a possible motivation. But even an attempt at altering his mood, at introducing an imagined benevolence, reduced the pigeon to his own understanding of freedom, got all caught up in a master-slave relationship. *O* did recognise his difference from the bird in question and that makes sense: different animal, different.

Returning to the screen, the white inside of *O* was simply a portion of what it was he

was sitting on. He was marked as different simply because of that unbroken circular line. I started to think if the piece of white that line captured was really at all different from the white it had been sitting on.

I began thinking of *O* as a geography, an Island instead of a character/person, no nagging letters left or right, just an ocean of white to consider.



**26**  
Video stills from *The New World*, 2013  
United Kingdom/United States/Israel, 23 minutes.

Written and Directed by Ruth Novaczek.  
Editor, Lucy Harris.

Courtesy of Ruth Novaczek



**36**  
Video still from *A Woman Returns from a Journey*, 2015  
United Kingdom/United States  
digital video and super 8, 11 minutes.

Written and directed by Ruth Novaczek.  
with Jelena Stojkovic, Ayca Ciftci and Linda Salerno, featuring Eileen Myles' *Dissolution*.  
Editor, Lucy Harris.

Narrator: "There were a few seemingly insignificant clues I kept poring over. A postcard, a novel underlined with notes in the margins. I had to go back and try to remember.

I had to go back and try to remember, but mostly I'd been trying to forget.

And I tried to remember what it is I'd forgotten. There were clues, she'd left me clues. I reread all her letters.

What do you remember. There was a rug with birds on it. And. And a cabin by a pool. And.

Our friend was running from death, and then a madman shot him. Wrong place, wrong time."

**40**

Denis Beaubois  
*No Longer Adrift*, 2013 (video still)  
HD Video, 13 minutes.

Courtesy and © Denis Beaubois

**45 (top)**

Michael Heizer  
*Levitated Mass*, 2012  
Los Angeles County Museum of Art

© Michael Heizer

**47 (middle)**

Michael Heizer  
preliminary sketch for *Levitated Mass*, 2011

Courtesy and © Michael Heizer

**45 (bottom)**

Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904)  
*Ancient Glacier Channel at Lake Tenaya, 1868 – 1873*  
The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Photography Collection, The New York Public Library.



**54**

Clare Milledge  
*Palaeo-Internet*, 2015  
Cyathea fern, metal hook, dimensions variable.  
exhibited at Minerva in "Casual Conversation", 2015

Photo by Jessica Maurer  
Courtesy of the artist and The Commercial, Sydney

**55**

Hayley Silverman  
*CRUDE CURRENCY*, 2015 (detail)  
coin currencies (Chinese, Greek, Swedish, Canadian, Israeli, Russian,...), energy currencies (lumps of metal, rice, spices, bee pollen, berries), wheelbarrow  
Courtesy of the artist and Bodega, New York



**56 (top)**

Kelly Jazvac  
*Plastiglomerate Samples*, 2013  
plastic and beach sediment, including sand, basalt rock, wood and coral.  
These found-object artworks are the results of a collaboration between Jazvac, geologist Patricia Corcoran, and oceanographer Charles Moore.

Photography by Jeff Elstone



**56 (bottom)**

Bianca Baldi  
*Zero Latitude*, 2014  
Video installation comprising HD video (colour, silent), stretched printed voile on wooden frame, mounted C-prints in Wenge frames

Courtesy and © Bianca Baldi

**57 (left)**

Chimbu Sheild, Papua New Guinea  
Wisimei vill (Kerawang district) Simbu (Chimbu) province.  
Awale in language.  
Owner: Kosmas Maynei.  
Maker Aiyre (his father).

Courtesy the private collection of Ruark Lewis.  
Photo: Nick Garner



**57 (right column)**

R. G. Dwyer  
*Untitled* (Copenhagen snow series), 2016

Courtesy of the artist.





**58**  
Candice Lin  
*Minimizing Males*, 2015  
Graphite, archival pigment printed images, dried plant, silkscreened text on paper.  
33" x 25.75" x 2.75"

Courtesy of the artist and Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles.

Black and white image caption reads: Wolbachia, a genus of bacteria that infects atropod species, killing off the male sex or transforming them into females with parthenogenesis, the ability to reproduce on their own.

Large quote reads: "This fanciful notion that males are, indeed, capable of producing milk was popular among naturalists. Aristotle had considered it an omen of extraordinary good fortune when a male goat produced milk in such quantities that cheese could be made from it. Eighteenth-century naturalists reported the secretion of a fatty milky substance – "witch's milk" – from the breasts of male as well as female newborns. Buffon related many examples of the male breast filling with milk at the onset of puberty. A boy of fifteen, for example, pressed from one of his breasts more than a spoonful of "true" milk. John Hunter offered the example of a father who nursed his eight children.

Londa L. Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers UP), 2004, p.389.

**59 (top)**  
Mimi Smith  
April 16, 1978, *The 11 O'Clock News*, 1978  
colored pencil, graphite, ink, on black paper, 30 x 40 inches.

Courtesy and © the artist

**59 (bottom left)**  
JSC2009-E-082997, 10 April 2009 (detail)  
Astronaut Mike Foreman submerged in the waters of the Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory  
Image: NASA (STS-129 Shuttle Mission Imagery)



**61 (bottom right)**  
Nils Hansteen  
*Langs kysten, Snetykkke (Along the coast, Drifting Snow)*, 1890

Courtesy and © Nasjonalmuseet, Norway



**60 (top)**  
Trevor Paglen  
*Trinity Cube*, 2015  
Irradiated glass from the Fukushima Exclusion Zone, Trinitite  
20 x 20 x 20cm

Courtesy of the artist and Don't Follow the Wind (an inaccessible exhibition within the evacuated radioactive zone surrounding the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in Japan).

**60 (bottom)**  
Kelly Jazvac  
*Plastiglomerate Samples*, 2013  
plastic and beach sediment, including sand, basalt rock, wood and coral.  
These found-object artworks are the results of a collaboration between Jazvac, geologist Patricia Corcoran, and oceanographer Charles Moore.

Photography by Jeff Elstone

Also in Hell,  
I do not doubt it, there exist these opulent gardens  
With flowers as large as trees, wilting, of course,  
Very quickly, if they are not watered with very expensive water. And fruit markets  
With great leaps of fruit, which nonetheless  
Possess neither scent nor taste. And endless trains  
of autos,

Lighter than their own shadows, swifter than Foolish thoughts, shimmering vehicles, in which Rosy people, coming from nowhere, go nowhere. And houses, designed for happiness, standing empty, Even when inhabited.

Excerpt from Bertolt Brecht's "Contemplating Hell", quoted in Anne Boyer, *There exist these opulent gardens*, Poetry Foundation (25/01/16), <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2016/01/there-exist-these-opulent-gardens/>

**61**  
Stills from *Un Chant d'Amour (Song of love)*, 1950  
26 min, silent

Written and Directed by Jean Genet



**62**  
Rometti Costales  
*Study for altered forms and colours colour photographs, in progress.*

Photo: the artists



**63**  
Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc  
*Sector IX B*, 2015  
HD video, colour, sound, 41 min 58  
Production red shoes / Coproduction Centre Pompidou Metz, CAC Brétigny, Marcelle Alix

Courtesy of the artist and Marcelle Alix, Paris

**64 (top)**  
El Lissitzky  
*Had Gadya / There once was a goat*, 1919 (detail)  
from a series of 10 lithographs, 30 x 33cm  
Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme, Paris

Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme) / Michel Urtado



**64 (bottom)**  
Hannah Ryggen  
*Gru (Fear)*, 1936  
150 x 180cm, Tapestry in wool and linen

© Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum  
© Hannah Ryggen / Image Copyright 2015  
Courtesy of the Moderna Museet, Malmö

*Mourning the Civil War in Spain.*



**65**  
Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc  
*Sector IX B*, 2015  
HD video, colour, sound, 41 min 58  
Production red shoes / Coproduction Centre Pompidou Metz, CAC Brétigny, Marcelle Alix

Courtesy of the artist and Marcelle Alix, Paris

Lecturer: "I'm going to start with three sequences, that come from a film dating from 1924. This film is called *Trypanosoma gambiense*, a vector for sleeping sickness. So, I believe these three sequences are relevant because they define sleeping sickness as a system of typological associations, also typical of educational and humanitarian movies from 1930 to 1950, also present in more contemporary films.

So the first sequence introduces this context, the African context of sleeping sickness, and when looking at this image there is nothing unusual about this man. But the caption tells us he suffers from sleeping sickness. We know nothing

about him, nothing about his identity is revealed, and yet, very rapidly, he becomes a pathological subject, as if this image became a pretext to analyse the microbiological field. The second image, here, shows us the *Glossina palpalis*, a type of fly, a tsetse fly, a transmitter of sleeping sickness. And lastly the film's final segment: the camera travels around the universe of a microscopic specimen.

We witness how in contact with parasites, these originally normal cells, with circular shapes, undergo a mutation and become octagonal. The *Trypanosoma*, the parasite, infects a blood sample by reconfiguring and transforming healthy blood cells. In this film the capacity to treat a patient is the capacity to penetrate inside the body, to see beyond human vision, to interpret and define parameters of action. By the way the capacity to see beyond human vision is the same one used in aerial photography by ethnologists like Griaule, who employed it frequently."

I would now like you to think about what I have shown you, I'd like you to think of it as two types of stories. On one hand there is a story that acts like a puzzle, whose adjusted pieces would reveal an image. Then there is another story: a story like a hologram whose image would be the result of projected light onto fragments. The image before us would become animated, vibrating, in three dimensions, if we were to look at it under a constant light. I'm speaking of this because this is a strategy. History is written in a strategic manner. It's a way to make different types of knowledge obvious. So, I think we could see ethnologists – those who make the collections, collections that are founded today in French museums – we could see them as carriers, flies, tsetse flies, and the objects they bring back act as agents who, like the *Trypanosoma*, would modify their host's body. They would modify and reconfigure the museums.

**66**  
Rometti Costales  
*Study for altered forms and colours colour photographs, in progress.*

Photo: the artists



**67 (top)**  
Candice Lin  
*Animal within the Animal*, 2015 (Detail)  
Coloured pencil and acrylic, archival pigment printed images, dried plant, silkscreened text on paper.  
33" x 25.75" x 2.75"

Courtesy of the artist and Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles.

Small image caption reads: Cordyceps, a genus of parasitic fungus erupting from the body of its host, a tarantula.

Large quote reads: "In the middle of the flanks of women lies the womb, a female viscous, closely resembling an animal; for it is moved of itself hither and thither, also upwards in a direct line to below the cartilage of the thorax, and also obliquely to the right or left, either to the liver or spleen; and it likewise is subject to prolapsus downwards, and, in a word, it is altogether erratic. It delights, also, in fragrant smells, and advances towards them; and it has an aversion to fetid smells, and flees from them; and, on the whole, the womb is like an animal within an animal."

From Aretaeus of Cappadocia's *The Causes and Symptoms of Acute Diseases of the 2nd century AD*, quoted from *The Extant Work of Aretaeus, the Cappadocian*, edited by Francis Adams (trans.) (Boston: Milford House, Inc.), 1972 reprint, Book II, Chapter XI, p.42

**67 (bottom)**  
Hannah Ryggen  
*A Mother's heart (Mors hjerte)*, 1947  
190x195 cm, tapestry in wool and linen  
Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum, Trondheim

© Hannah Ryggen/ Bildupphovsrätt 2015



**68**  
Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc  
*An Italian Film (Africa Addio)*. First part: copper, 2012  
HD film, colour, sound, 26 min  
Production Pavilion, Leeds and Ecole des Beaux-Arts de Nantes  
collection MAC/VAL, Vitry-sur-Seine

Courtesy of the artist and Marcelle Alix, Paris



**69 (top)**  
Yudovin Solomon  
Illustration from Yiddishsher folk-ornament,  
1920  
ink (drawing), 19cm x 25cm  
Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme, Paris

Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (musée d'art et d'histoire du judaïsme) / Michel Urtado

**69 (bottom)**  
View into sprint silo  
Stanley R. Mickelsen Safeguard Complex,  
Missile Launch Area, Within Exclusion  
Area, Nekoma, Cavalier County, ND –  
dated June 1993  
4" x 5"

Photo: Gerald Greenwood

**70 (top)**  
Hannah Ryggen  
Petter Dass, 1940  
147 x 258.5 cm, Tapestry in wool and linen

Photo: Frode Larsen  
© Nordenfjeldske Kunstmuseum  
© Hannah Ryggen / Image Copyright 2015  
Courtesy of the Moderna Museet, Malmö



**70 (bottom)**  
A photo shot 16ms after detonation of  
Trinity, the first nuclear weapon to be  
tested. (July 16, 1945, in New Mexico,  
United States)

**71 (right column)**  
R. G. Dwyer  
Untitled (Copenhagen snow series), 2016  
Courtesy of the artist.

**72 (top)**  
Candice Lin  
Coevolution by Traumatic Insemination:  
Coridromius, 2015  
2015  
Stainless steel, forged steel, kangaroo lace,  
hair  
58.5" x 31" x 1.75"

Courtesy of the artist and Ghebaly Gallery,  
Los Angeles.



**72 (bottom)**  
Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc  
Untitled, 2013  
lambda print mounted on pvc, framed  
49 x 62 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Marcelle Alix, Paris



**73**  
Candice Lin  
Recipe for Spontaneous Generation: Baby Mice,  
2015  
Fabric, dried wheat, baby mice, alcohol,  
glass jar, airlock, copper pipe  
26" x 4" x 4"

All works exhibited in *You are a spacious fluid*  
sac, Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles, 2015

Photography by Robert Wedemeyer  
Courtesy of the artist and Ghebaly Gallery,  
Los Angeles.

**74**  
Video still from *A Woman Returns from a*  
*Journey*, 2015  
United Kingdom/United States  
digital video and super 8, 11 minutes.

Written and directed by Ruth Novaczek.  
with Jelena Stojkovic, Ayca Ciftci and Linda  
Salerno, featuring Eileen Myles' *Dissolution*.  
Editor, Lucy Harris.

Narrator: "It's dangerous to get what  
you want she said, it sets you up for  
tragedy. This, she said, is how you solve a  
mystery."

**79**  
Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc  
Sector IX B, 2015  
HD video, colour, sound, 41 min 58  
Production red shoes / Coproduction  
Centre Pompidou Metz, CAC Brétigny,  
Marcelle Alix

Courtesy of the artist and Marcelle Alix, Paris

The Tricontinental quarterly appears in  
Cuba in 1967 in the aftermath of the  
Tricontinentale Conference that was held in  
Havana in January 1966.

Created under the impetus of Medhi  
Ben Barka and Ernesto Guevara, the  
Tricontinental Conference placed  
itself under the banner of the struggle  
against imperialism, colonialism and  
neocolonialism. It brought together no less  
than 82 delegations, among which one  
finds Amílcar Cabral's PAIGC, Turcios Lima  
representing Guatemala, Phoumi Vongvichit  
from Pathet Lao from Laos, Michel Mongali  
from Congo, and Mario de Andrade and  
Luis de Almeida for Angola's MPLA.

The conference represented a fresh start  
and echoed the Bandung Conference, held  
11 years earlier, in April 1955, which  
had for the first time strongly affirmed  
the presence and will of Third World and  
Non-Aligned Nations in showing solidarity.  
If the Vietnam War was the main focus of  
debate at the time, the fact remains that the  
Tricontinental enables on the one hand the  
identification of the movements, political  
parties and revolutionary intellectuals  
at work at the time but also the ability  
to truly map the places of conflicts that  
multiplied during the intervening decade.  
It is thus a tool to imagine how the  
alliances and strategies were nurtured, so  
as to create a network of intercontinental  
solidarity. OSPAAAL (the Organisation of  
Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and  
Latin America) was founded at the end of  
the conference: its aim is to "coordinate,  
support and stimulate active and  
revolutionary solidarity between the people  
of Africa, Asia and Latin America".

The Tricontinentale magazine incidentally  
claims to be "OSPAAAL's executive body,

whose goal was to be the platform for  
ideas where the essential problems of three  
continents are debated so that an observer  
– whatever their standpoint – can have the  
best opportunity to know and analyse how  
the Third World man lives and loves; how  
he thinks and how he acts."

The publication rate was bi-monthly  
but it was also implemented with a  
lighter edition coming out every month  
called the *Tricontinentale Bulletin*. All these  
publications were published from Cuba in  
English, Spanish and French versions.

MKA



**87**  
Candice Lin  
*You are a parasite*, 2015  
Fiberglass and polyester resin, acrylic  
paint, papier-mâché, foam, cochineal-dyed  
sheepskins and acrylic faux sheepskins,  
cordyceps tea and other offerings.  
7'7" x 11'2" x 11'7"  
Fabrication assistance: Stephen Linderoth,  
Christine Fuqua, and Lance Bird  
Installation View, *You are a spacious fluid sac*,  
Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles, 2015

Photography by Robert Wedemeyer  
Courtesy of the artist and Ghebaly Gallery,  
Los Angeles.

**95**  
Video still from *A Woman Returns from*  
*a Journey*, 2015  
United Kingdom/United States  
digital video and super 8, 11 minutes.

Written and directed by Ruth Novaczek.  
with Jelena Stojkovic, Ayca Ciftci and Linda  
Salerno, featuring Eileen Myles' *Dissolution*.  
Editor, Lucy Harris.

**100 – 103**  
Clément Rodzielski  
Betty Tchomanga (Betty in Sector IX B)  
manipulating a puppet of cardboard and fake-blood,  
2016  
Poem and Photographs  
Commissioned for Oberon 2 by Mathieu  
Kleyebe Abonnenc

Courtesy and © the artist.



**107 – 111**  
El Lissitzky  
*Had Gadya*, 1919  
selections from a series of 10 lithographs,  
30cm x 33cm  
Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme, Paris

Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée d'Art et  
d'Histoire du Judaïsme) / Michel Urtado

There once was a goat  
My father bought a goat for two cents  
The cat came and ate the goat  
The dog came and bit the cat  
The stick came and beat the dog  
The fire came and burned the stick  
The water came and put out the fire  
The ox came and drank the water  
The butcher came and killed the ox  
The angel of death came and killed the butcher  
Then the Holy One came and killed the angel of death

These illustrations of the Passover song  
describe a series of characters that  
successively consume each other until  
the Angel of Death is destroyed by God.  
While this has been seen as a parable of  
the Russian Revolution, there is also a  
certain ambivalence towards the revolution  
in the work and others of that period.  
According to Victor Margolin, Lissitzky was  
caught between the affirmation of a new  
secular Yiddish culture and the Bolshevik  
government's attempt to eradicate it.  
See Victor Margolin's commentary on  
El Lissitzky, "Had Gadya Suite, 1919"  
in *Major Intersections* (New York: Yeshiva  
University, 2000).

**114, 118, 119**  
(series of 7 images for Jorge Satorre)

- 1.
- A. Eagle end toe bones (the larger one is a  
plaster cast)
- B. Harrier end toe bones
- C. Eagle left thigh bone (plaster cast)
- D. Harrier left thigh bone

The bones here show the difference in size  
between Haasts' eagle and the Australasian  
harrier (*Circus approximans*), the common  
hawk in New Zealand today. Auckland War  
Memorial Museum.

2.  
Piece of rough Guatemalan jade from  
where the two fragments used come from.  
Julio Roldan's workshop, Mexico City.

3.  
Broken Guatemalan jade together with the  
New Zealand greenstone during the "scale  
reversal" and replica process. Joe Sheehan's  
workshop, Auckland.

4.  
Process of casting progressively smaller clay  
replicas of the Haast's eagle's bones. Jorge  
Satorre's studio, Mexico City.

5.  
Visual references used for the modeling  
of the 58 birds. Thanks to Dr. Colin  
Miskelly, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa  
Tongarewa, Drawings by Paul Martinson.  
Sourced from New Zealand Birds online  
(<http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz>).

6.  
Tin cast of New Zealand little bittern.

7.  
El Fisgón's "scale reversal" cartoon.

Images courtesy of Jorge Satorre



**128**  
Bianca Baldi  
*Zero Latitude*, 2014  
Video installation comprising HD video  
(colour, silent), stretched printed voile  
on wooden frame, mounted C-prints in  
Wenge frames

Courtesy and © Bianca Baldi

Film Credits  
Assistant director: Emilien Abibou  
D.O.P : Olivier Guerbois  
Assistant camera: Davy Bauret  
Gaffer: Félix Marmorat  
Post-production: Christopher Hummel  
Character i : Julien Peltier  
Character ii: Vincent Berthe

Filmed at the Musée du Quai Branly,  
Paris, France.  
With the support of Goethe-Institut,  
Johannesburg  
Thanks to Louis Vuitton Malletier, Paris;  
Musée du quai Branly, Paris; Médiathèque  
de l'architecture et du patrimoine,  
Montigny-le-Bretonneux; Kadist Art  
Foundation

Online Publication  
[www.zero-latitude.net](http://www.zero-latitude.net)



129

Rometti Costales  
Succulent Strategies – Estrategias Suculentas, 2014 (detail)  
cacti, concrete posts and reinforcement rods  
Exhibition view of *Vamoose all cacti jut torrid nites* at Kunsthalle Basel.

Courtesy the artists and Galerie Jousse entreprise, Paris. Photo: the artists



130 – 131

Bianca Baldi  
*Zero Latitude (The River)*, 2014  
Video installation comprising HD video (colour, silent), stretched printed voile on wooden frame, mounted C-prints in Wenge frames

Courtesy and © Bianca Baldi

132

Bianca Baldi  
*Zero Latitude*, 2014  
Video installation comprising HD video (colour, silent), stretched printed voile on wooden frame, mounted C-prints in Wenge frames

Courtesy and © Bianca Baldi



133 (top)

Bianca Baldi  
*Zero Latitude (De Brazza)*, 2014  
Video installation comprising HD video (colour, silent), stretched printed voile on wooden frame, mounted C-prints in Wenge frames

Courtesy and © Bianca Baldi

Zero Latitude

When I first discovered this film by South African artist Bianca Baldi, I remembered Xavier de Maistre's 1794 book *Voyage autour de ma chambre* (*Voyage Around My Room*), in which de Maistre, locked in his room for having killed an Italian officer, transformed his 42 days imprisonment into an epic journey by describing each of the details of his room like he was discovering a new continent. Travelling without moving.

*Zero Latitude* powerfully yet subtly associates two fetish figures: the great Italian explorer Savorgnan de Brazza, who opened the road to French colonisation in Central Africa, as Henry Morton Stanley did for the British, and a Luis Vuitton bed, The Explorer, commissioned by de Brazza for his expedition in Congo. Watching two men in grey suits unfolds this elegant bed, now stored in the Quai Branly Museum, I imagined de Brazza or Michel Leiris after him, lying on their beds, struck by fever, setting 'free the uncontrollable play of the unconscious in dreams, the rise of repressed desires.'

(Lotte Arndt, 'The End of Good Sleep. Some Consideration's on Mathieu K Abonnenc's "Sector IX B prophylaxis of Sleeping Sickness" in *Crawling Doubles. Colonial Collecting and Affect*, Mathieu K. Abonnenc, Lotte Arndt & Catalina Lozano (eds.), B42, Paris, 2016, p. 84)

Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc

133 (bottom)

Candice Lin  
*Coevolution by Traumatic Insemination: Bedbug*, 2015  
Stainless steel, kangaroo lace  
58.5" x 36" x 1.75"

Courtesy of the artist and Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles.



134 (top)

Video still from *A Woman Returns from a Journey*, 2015  
United Kingdom/United States  
digital video and super 8, 11 minutes.

Written and directed by Ruth Novaczek with Jelena Stojkovic, Ayca Ciftci and Linda Salerno, featuring Eileen Myles' *Dissolution*. Editor, Lucy Harris.

Narrator: "Hell had come down fast on a little slice of paradise, she lay by her mother's body, silently, until they came to take her away. This was how she became a lie detector."

It's no map at all, it's a diagram. It's not topographical, but topological.

Was everyone asleep or was it amnesia. Was it zombies?"

134 (bottom)

Rometti Costales  
*Psychonautic scales of a space of equality in bloom*, 2015-2016  
acacia tenuiflora branches  
Exhibition view of *Azul Jacinto Marino*, CAC-Synagogue de Delme.

Courtesy the artists and Galerie Jousse entreprise, Paris and José García, Mexico. Photo: the artists

How long does it take for a cigarette to burn? What determines how quickly it burns away? Approximately 19 minutes, when forgotten on the edge of an ashtray. And where is this ashtray located—is it in the mountains or at sea level? Is it being smoked calmly while having a coffee, each puff savoured, or is it being smoked hastily because half your cigarette break has already vanished during the time it took to get from the 17th-floor office to the lobby: 5 minutes before lighting the cigarette, 2 minutes to smoke it, 5 and a half minutes to go back up to the office. It depends. Fortunately in Delme, there is no 17-storey building. How much distance could be travelled in the average time span of a cigarette? And what is the distance between two or three ideas while smoking? It can be said that the very approximate average duration of smoking a cigarette is 4 to 7 minutes. The perimeter of the synagogue's ground floor space measures 425 cigarettes smoked by the people of Delme (*Smoked Space-Time*). Roughly between 1700 and 2950 minutes up in smoke.

Smokers can adapt the measurements to their own temporality, and for those who don't smoke, they can ask the first smoker they know, maybe this will make those people think a bit about their habits. If up-in-smoke time makes the downstairs perimeter's measurements so variable, it is possible that *Psychonautic Scales of a Space of Equality in Bloom* may serve as a more accurate referent. Photographic scales are used in archaeology as a referent to document found objects or to visualise the depth of an excavation site. The function of these tools only becomes tangible through the image that is made of them. The scales in the exhibition are made of Huisache branches (*Acacia Tenuiflora*), from a tree belonging to the most common family of acacias found in the semiarid zones of Mexico. Its bark contains DMT, a very powerful psychotropic substance. Is it possible to use a branch as a reference for scale? What size is an object if its only referent is a psychoactive acacia branch? How can a psychotropic substance resize an object's measurements and volume? We don't know and we probably never will.

Rometti Costales, 2015  
Extract from Catalogue Text  
*Azul Jacinto Marino*, CAC-Synagogue de Delme

135 (top)

Rometti Costales  
*Study for altered forms and colours*  
colour photographs, in progress.

Photo: the artists



135 (bottom left and right)

Candice Lin  
*Female Penis / Beast of Burden*, 2015  
Graphite, archival pigment printed images, dried plant, silkscreened text on paper.  
33" x 25.75" x 2.75"

Courtesy of the artist and Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles.

Black and white image caption reads: A detail of the female penis of the Brazilian insect *Neotrogla*, with which it pierces the male and extracts sperm and nutrients for matings lasting up to 70 hours.

Large quote reads: "All [Bougainville] says is that after Baret admitted to being a woman, "it was difficult to prevent the sailors from alarming her modesty." At a stroke, a woman who has spent over a year in the company of three hundred men, enduring their rites of passage and acting as her lover's "beast of burden" is reduced to a skittish ingenue, embarrassed and affronted by the male sex at every turn."

Glynis Ridley, *The Discovery of Jean Baret: A Story of Science, the High Seas, and the First Woman to Circumnavigate the Globe*, (New York: Broadway Books), 2011, p.161-162.

136

Candice Lin  
*Cannibalizing Cultural Memory*, 2015  
Graphite, archival pigment printed images, dried plant, silkscreened text on paper.  
33" x 25.75" x 2.75"

Courtesy of the artist and Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles.

Black and white image caption reads: A planarian (non-parasitic flatworm) in the process of regrowing parts of its severed body parts into multiple planarians. Planarians can regenerate themselves from a piece as little as 1/279th the size of it

original body and can retain the memories of the original planarian's experiences.

Large quote reads: "In as much as we find such anthropophagy disgusting, [Lévi-Strauss] suggests that our own judicial penal customs constitute an equally repulsive form of 'anthropoemie' (from Greek *emein*, meaning to vomit). Some societies (anthropophagic) absorb the liminal, the evil, or the enemy into the social body in order to control their power, while others (athropoemic) expel or emit such problematic entities through customs of isolation, segregation, and social death. Thus he sees symmetry in such cultural practices, and each appears barbaric in the worldview of the other. Although he appears to overcome his own cultural biases, however, his relativism is achieved through the practice of ethnographic travel and travel writing (*Tristes Tropiques*), which paradoxically reinforces his own Western superiority in knowledge and mobility. Only he can 'translate' cannibal cultures for 'us' at home.

Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, (New York: Routledge), 2003, p. 148-149.

137 (top left)

Rometti Costales  
*Studies for altered forms and colours*  
colour photographs, in progress.

Photo: the artist

137 (top right)

JSC2009-E-082997, 10 April 2009 (detail)  
Astronaut Mike Foreman submerged in the waters of the Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory  
Image: NASA (STS-129 Shuttle Mission Imagery)

137 (bottom)

Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc  
*An Italian Film (Africa Addio)*. First part: copper, 2012  
HD film, colour, sound, 26 min

Production Pavilion, Leeds and Ecole des Beaux-Arts de Nantes  
collection MAC/VAL, Vitry-sur-Seine

Courtesy of the artist and Marcelle Alix, Paris

138

Details from the archeological site of Sechín, Peru.

Photo: Rometti Costales' personal archive

139 (top)

Kelly Jazvac  
*Plastiglomerate Samples*, 2013  
plastic and beach sediment, including sand, basalt rock, wood and coral.  
These found-object artworks are the results of a collaboration between Jazvac, geologist Patricia Corcoran, and oceanographer Charles Moore.

Photography by Jeff Elstone

139 (bottom)

El Lissitzky  
*Had Gadya / and came the cat that ate the goat*, 1919 (detail)  
from a series of 10 lithographs, 30 x 33cm  
Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme, Paris

Photo © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaïsme) / Michel Urtado



140

Hannah Ryggen  
*Morgengry (Dawn)* previously titled *The Hitler carpet*, 1936  
297cm x 181cm, Tapestry in wool

© Hannah Ryggen / Image Copyright 2015  
Courtesy of The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Norway



141

Candice Lin  
*Coevolution by Traumatic Insemination: Bedbug*, 2015 (detail)  
2015  
Stainless steel, kangaroo lace  
58.5" x 36" x 1.75"

Courtesy of the artist and Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles.



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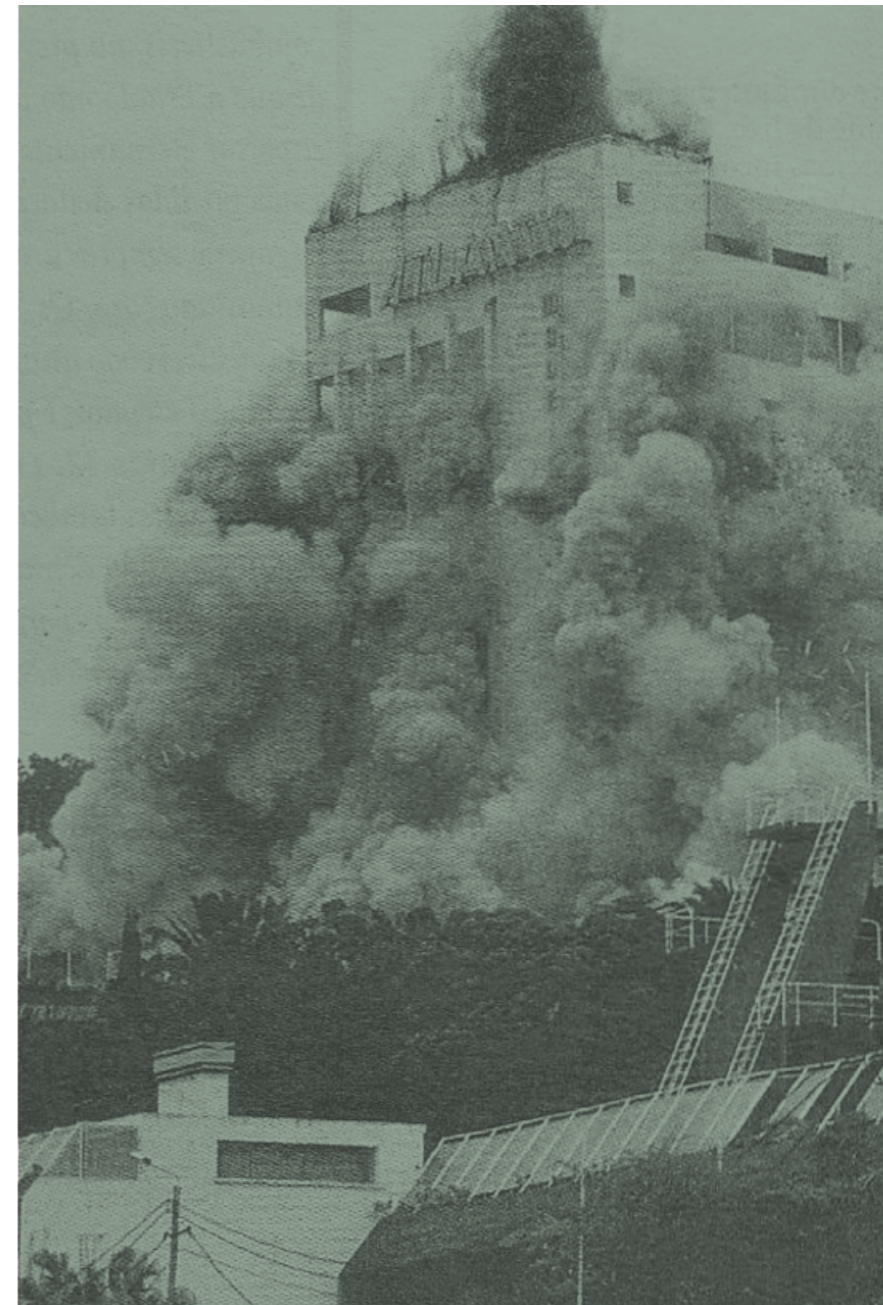
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*The English Channel*, 2015  
stainless steel  
edition of 3

Photo: Jennifer French  
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