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…would like to thank our co-editor SW for both occupying a sub-editorial role and taking on broader editorial leadership with us. hand and hand, we, and etc etc etc. okay. we’d also like to thank all of the contributors for taking the freedom of their containers (or whatever they wanted to call them; their clearings) and extending their practices how they saw fit, with no guidance from and no dialogue with us. we’d also also like to thank the un board for allowing the total experiment that has been this two part two thousand and fourteen. they have been patient and professional beyond measure. thanks to BH for filling the design with pep and PM for her ultra super eagle proofing eyes. finally, thanks to everyone who has taken the plunge with us, for opening theses pages, for reading these words, for skipping to the comics. biggest thank you, and for whomever-this-may-concern, for working through this with us. *un* would not be and etc, without you, without this blind transference. stay tuned. our frequencies have further plans for you…
While talking about the internet, we should never forget about the (admittedly, increasingly thin) distinction between online life and 'real' life. It fascinates me that an informational hierarchy with its basis in a networked system could give rise to a very physical/neural connection that did not exist prior to the brain's interface with the digital. By way of analogy it can be said that online networks or the networks perspective they've provoked in us has contributed to a similar degree of empowerment, as clearly evidenced in the way we now connect with one another, caught in a state of constant communication. This emergent rhetoric of emancipation through immersion is of course deeply linked to the rise of the network as the defining paradigm of a new economy rooted in information, immaterial labor, and the speedy transport of ideas.

The discussion about the engagement with technology and new processes for making art often presents false dichotomies between the digital, the virtual and the physical. From this perspective, cyberspace is not only part of the 'real' spatial order, but also the other way round: what we do in cyberspace must and will ultimately find its measure in its relation to spatial, real-life events. All information on the web is physically instantiated somewhere. It is never not real. In fact, much internet art, like Jon Rafman's Koolaid Man in Second Life serves to mock antiquated Beaudrillardian notions of the virtual "through the looking glass" notion of the hyper-real. The relationship between the internet and the real world is not analogous to physical body and ethereal soul, but physical data to abstract patterns of information over time, as Australian artist Ry David Bradley points to in his forthcoming essay Lets Get Physical. The contemporary internet artist

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2 Kate Steciw in Kate Steciw and Amy Knight, ‘Interview with Kate Steciw’, in *Symbol Issue 2*, ed. Amy Knight (Symbol, 2012), 20.
Alana Kushnir: Tabularium Excerpt

does not (or should not) explore the gulf between real and virtual. What should be explored is the (ironic) contrast between what is promised in contemporary society, and what is truly offered. Placing contemporary internet artists in the cannon: Placing art within a cannon has always seemed a kind of pointless exercise to me.7

We have to turn to the contemporary theory of art to fully understand it. There one can find the notion of Post Internet Art as the expression of growing skepticism, or better, an increasingly colder, disillusioned relationship towards cyberspace that is often described as ‘Internet awareness’.8 Olson’s use of the term ‘post-internet’, which implies an ability to stand outside the internet to some extent, contrasts with more recent practices that have been associated with the same term, in which the artist, even art itself, is assumed to be fully immersed in networked culture and is no longer quite able to assume the position of an observer.9 It’s art that embodies the conditions of life in network culture, art after the internet.10 In fact, there are many overlapping interests between internet art, post-internet, and the New Aesthetic – ideas that developed cotermiously due to the artistic use of the internet as a mass medium, and the translation of its underpinning ideas into physical spaces.11 I think that the term postinternet art is admittedly marked – in fact doubly marked – by temporal terms. The ‘post’ may make it sound as if it is on borrowed time, ticking into the eleventh hour of some experimental phase; and that phase itself, the precedent to which the ‘post’ is wed is internet art, a form of practice that most of the mainstream artworld really hadn’t had time to wrap its head around before being hit with another wave.

Perhaps the most significant lasting consequences of the canon of so-called ‘Post-Internet Art’ that has emerged in recent years will be its conception of the site of the gallery as only a part of a wider system of networked distribution.12 The internet is not only a convenient distributive platform for those wanting, or in some cases, needing, to accelerate and carry out actions of opposition – but also a disruption of these processes. It is this same internet that capitalizes on these very user’s movements through online space – amassing and dispensing data with ulterior intentionality. This former function however – the social web’s role as political instigator – is too often a questionable one, as its user’s actions and efforts are easily relegated to the seemingly effortless and ambiguous, symbolic clicks of a button. For example, the Like button on Facebook which has been the center of much critique and diverse theorization, has been often attacked specifically for these very notions of effortless, guiltless, action that is at the footing of what many

deem a ‘slacktivist’ mentality. But, this critique is also met with complement, and at the slacktivist defense, many take positive note in conveying its ‘opportunistic’ potentialities.\textsuperscript{13}

If the internet is a public space, it is metonymic for larger shifts in publicness: no distinct counterpoint to ‘official discourse’ is mandated here, but instead limitless splinters of clustered subcultures are formed by individuals in front of screens.\textsuperscript{14} Maybe, then, the Internet is not a place for hiding, for irony, coldness and nostalgia, but a place that makes sincere, open, warm, and human gestures in art.\textsuperscript{15} The internet is now more potent than ever. It has not only sparked but fully capture the imagination, attention and productivity of more people than at any other point before. Never before have more people been dependent on, embedded into, surveilled by, and exploited by the web. It seems overwhelming, bedazzling and without immediate alternative. The internet is probably not dead. It has rather gone all-out. Or more precisely: it is all over!\textsuperscript{16}

I think it’s a question we indeed have to ask ourselves. It’s interesting because it also depends a lot on what kind of generation one belongs to and how one grows up. I mean I grew up totally analogue and still have a very big analogue archive. For me what I’m really reliant on are conversations more than data.\textsuperscript{17} It amazes me that I still get asked over Facebook if I have a website and where my work can be seen, despite my web address being clearly listed as my place of work on my profile. When I come across a person or thing that is interesting to me, on a blog, in a gallery or elsewhere, the first thing I do is Google or Facebook it. Most people have direct access to mobile internet via their phones, which makes the whole process of understanding the network relations a lot easier than it would have been before and it also changes the way we interact with the material world.\textsuperscript{18} I think that nowadays when you look on the internet you skim the surface of a lot of different kinds of information, but maybe not in depth or with any sort of discrimination – just at face value. I sort of imagined it to be this gathering of just so much information that’s not collected in exactly a good way, just a mass...\textsuperscript{19} When I look at Google Streetview, I like to scroll up; & up up. Until all I see is sky.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{18} Iain Ball in Iain Ball and Amy Knight, ‘Interview with Iain ball’, in Symbol Issue 4, ed. Amy Knight (Symbol, 2013), 12.
\textsuperscript{19} Daniel Swan in Daniel Swan and Amy Knight, ‘Interview with Daniel Swan’, Symbol Issue 1, ed. Amy Knight (Symbol, 2012), 28.
\textsuperscript{20} Jesse Darling, Back C@talogue, (Jesse Darling, 2012), unnumbered.
Selfies are a fun tool, allowing us to create imagery of ourselves and thereby giving us the power to determine how we would like to be represented. These images are now shared instantly through social media, representing this contemporary activity of constantly shifting and representing the self in an unquiet and nervour manner, presenting us with technology, all with a backdrop of cloud and the non-places of airports. This is not a travelogue, but a catalogue, adopting the representational technology of Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat, rolling it into a specific time, telling of our time, not of travel. The internet provides a plethora of extremely complex contexts through which the user has to navigate and perform in as themselves (as opposed to an anonymous avatar) on a daily basis through emails, chats, financial transactions, and yes, the management of relationship. Nowhere is this relationship more evident than the online profiles of young artists who use social media to disseminate their work. The seemingly paradoxical dispositions of these artists are reflective of their effort to simultaneously navigate the art world and social media in tandem.

Documentation, online self-branding and independent net collectives all changes the dynamics of how we experience art as well as connecting and empowering artists. For the first time the web becomes a context where one can showcase art. And for the generation of artists coming of age today, it is the high-volume, fast-paced endeavour of social media’s attention economy that mimics the digital economy of stock trading, a market increasingly dominated by computer-automated algorithmic trades. For these artists, art is no longer merely traded like a stock – it’s created like one, too. The online distribution of art is a product of an ongoing social media conversation where individuals promote one another until those very promotions materialise into group shows, categorised by a curator and legitimised by a gallery, ... Artists look at each other’s Facebook pages more than each other’s art nowadays; attention economy certainly is a new form of labour, but no-one is getting paid for it and activity just keeps on increasing. The surplus of this work is knowledge and mediation. ... the internet seems like the ideal place for artists. It is a nimble, malleable, and responsive sphere that enables a degree of autonomy, which most artists crave but are often unable to achieve due to the hierarchical nature of the art world and its

institutions." On the internet the artist has no boss, no mediator. There is no institutional structure, no publisher, no one between the artist and the audience.²⁹

There’s a kind of sexy post-digital Avatar-Na‘vi-MMORPG-Skyrim-2020 nature that a lot of artists are finding, making and presenting online now.³⁰ Online, even if they usually have a good knowledge and understanding of internet and desktop languages and technologies, they often decide to use them in a very simple way, playing with ‘defaults’ and common settings, and contributing content to or rearranging content form the internet as any average user does, filling up YouTube with videos and Tumblr with images.³¹ They are confronting the two authorities of the internet, Google and Wiki. Both of them are a bit the voice of ‘truth’ and rationality, isn’t it?³² These artists create images that convey usually short, pseudo-ironic/embarrassingly poetic and/or “sincere” short poems that, at their most successful, function like little monuments to feelings. How it feels to be in a relationship online. How the internet arrests and limits the forms of expression; how we must distill our emotions to emoticons.³³ "<html><h1>NEXTASY FASHION ART (*NOWONLINE*)</h1> # From now on(line) we r specifying only looks with strong positive plot values (‘’) plot (x, y, main="art online at any cost means baby $$6$ Baby"), sub="building a Mad Fold-In of sustainable existence in Silicon Valley. {Paris edition} ‘finally’ she gushes (in2 your ear 2014 ‘already??’), xlab="X-axis nomadic knitwear label!", ylab="y=axix your t-shirt label?" is <inside out>-, <HEAVEN> “eyebrows piercing with a pearl”<HELLA>.

I am always drawing from my own personal failures in the digital realm. Conversely, I am interested in the way these platforms fail me.³¹ We are bombarded with fragmentary impressions and overwhelmed with data, but we often see too much and register nothing. In the past, religion and ideologies often provided a framework to order our experience; now, Google has laid an

²⁸ Omar Kholeif, preamble to *Your Are Here: Art After the Internet*, ed. Omar Kholeif (Cornerhouse and SPACE, 2014), 12.
³² Irene Liverani, e-mail message to Rosemary Willink, August 6, 2013 in *Can We Please Play the Internet?* ed. Rosemary Willink (Rosemary Willink, 2014), unnumbered.
³⁵ Kate Steciw in Kate Steciw and Amy Knight, ‘Interview with Kate Steciw’, in *Symbol Issue 2*, ed. Amy Knight (Symbol, 2012), 20.
imperial claim to organize information for us.\textsuperscript{36} Taking a closer look, Google’s algorithms also seem to have a way to select certain types of aerial photographs over others, so as more photographs are taken, the better ones get selected. ... Nothing draws more attention to the temporality of these images than the simple observation that the clouds are disappearing from Google Earth.\textsuperscript{37} An interactive map on the Guardian website shows clouds of smoke and silt, ash skidding across the Southern Hemisphere in realtime.\textsuperscript{38} ‘The Cloud’ is actually a group of objects in a remote place that holds information but isn’t immaterial.\textsuperscript{39} ...being so busy and creative, we missed the moment when Web2.0 was replaced by a new trend, The Cloud: users in front of dumb terminals, feeding centralized databases and über computer clusters.\textsuperscript{40} Reality has been augmented. Pure information hovers over us, touches us. I’m more a constellation of data than a being.\textsuperscript{41} “I” become a pile of data that demonstrates certain behaviours.\textsuperscript{42} Does data age? Does a stream of digits that codes for the shape of a stone for rendering in a three-dimensional modeling program replace itself over and over through time? Does it make mistakes and replicate those mistakes? Does it accidentally develop a wrinkle, or a cancer? Does time exist, there?\textsuperscript{43} Creating data makes me much happier than consuming data. I always try to have a good input/output data ratio. ... There is so much incredible content out there, I see nothing wrong with deciding to just read and watch movies and listen to music for the rest of your life. But when I don’t create data, when I just absorb data, I start to feel restless.\textsuperscript{44}

I have always been pretty reliant on the internet in general since I can remember, but I think I try to mediate my intake of ‘internet culture’ fairly carefully.\textsuperscript{45} In this context, it no longer makes sense for artists to attempt to come to terms with ‘internet culture’, because now ‘internet culture’

\textsuperscript{38} Holly Childs, No Limit (Hologram, 2014), 13 – 14.
\textsuperscript{40} Dragan Espenschied and Olia Lialina, ‘Do You Believe in Users?’, in Digital Folklore, ed. Dragan Espenschied and Olia Lialina (merz & solitude, 2009), 11.
\textsuperscript{42} Rebecca La Marre in Rebecca La Marre and Jaako Pallasvuo, Full Disclosure (Rebecca La Marre and Jaako Pallasvuo, 2013), 11.
\textsuperscript{43} Daniel Baird, ‘This New Ocean, by Daniel J. Glendening’, in Appendix, ed. Amy Bernstein et al. (Container Corps, 2013), 93.
\textsuperscript{44} Rafaël Rozendaal in Phillippe Karrer, Spheres: Rafaël Rozendaal Issue Nr. 2 (Phillipe Karrer, 2013), unnumbered.
\textsuperscript{45} Kitty Clark in Kitty Clark and Amy Knight, ‘Interview with Kitty Clark’, in Symbol Issue 1, ed. Amy Knight (Symbol, 2012), 6.
is increasingly just ‘culture.’\textsuperscript{46} The existing structures of our (Western) mode of thinking and being including the flows of energy and value, the domain of aesthetics, the currency of art, and our role in the process that is civilization are being reshaped and re-articulated. The scale of these changes are reflected in the dynamics of formats – files, gadgets, species, identities, ideologies, brands, styles, cultures, natural disasters, memes, technologies – entering the ultimate platform and player of dissemination: Internet.\textsuperscript{47} What are world politics in the West today, but images and text, again, made up of code?\textsuperscript{48} Could we abstract Foucault’s pattern of reason to propose that today, the Internet, rather than a technological structure, is a mode of relating to reality?\textsuperscript{49} Could we one day see this excerpt from the Tabularium Archive as a record of time passed, rather than time lost?


Cultural Material Conservation
According to Immortal Mortals
Albertine Hamilton
Preamble

David Hockney once reasoned: ‘Love will decide what is kept, and science will decide how it is kept.’¹ What this statement does not consider is for whom we keep things and why. Context is everything. The idea for this piece emerged during a conservation symposium in early 2014, when I noted a trend among the papers—perhaps more accurately described as a common frustration—which, at a cursory glance, seemed related to a profession striving to achieve best practice within the bounds of standards that could not always answer the changing needs and dynamics of culture and its materials: that is, the who and the why.

The primary hindrance seemed to be related to the systems of value appended to the conservator’s practice. One speaker asked: why are collecting institutions so quick to separate artworks from their artist-made frames? Doesn’t our ethical code tell us that we should respect original materials, not to mention artists’ intent? And why do we still undervalue works of art on paper in preference for their painted counterparts? Another dissected current exhibition standards, highlighting the failings of developing light-fastness categories based on broad material types, because not all materials behave in a uniform way, nor are they always easily identified—and besides, some objects were not made to last and could in clear conscience be displayed to the public’s contentment: in high light levels for as long as the item allows.

I felt inspired. As a fairly recent addition to the field, I had been under the impression that conservators had all the answers: possessed some kind of impervious moral compass. But, instead, I found myself among others who also felt the need to re-evaluate their principles and methodologies with each new object, reminding themselves of the fine line between conservation intervention and human interference. This is probably the point at which I decided to articulate my own doubts, starting with the fundamental question: are all objects made equal? As you might have guessed, the answer is invariably ‘no’. Yet my own conscience says: ‘but all things are significant in some way to someone.’ Which brings us to my next question: why do I feel guilty at the mere thought of applying a hierarchical system of values to material culture? That is, why do I experience feelings of iniquity when, for example, withholding stabilising treatment from one badly damaged item because there is another copy available in better condition? Practically, it makes more sense to dedicate available time and resources to the less damaged of the two.

I propose that this is a familiar but much more complex problem: linked, on the one hand, to human ontology and its increased identification with, and application to, objects of perceived value—would-be ‘buried treasure’ that can tell us more about ourselves—and, on the other, to the professionalisation of the conservation field within a Western hegemony. The two are interconnected; conservation of cultural material exists in every modern society and is known to shape the society for which it exists as much as it is itself shaped by the nuances of that society.² At some point, the products of this association become ‘cultural heritage’, and suddenly we are concerned with their protection. These artefacts inevitably come to represent a sense of identity for a person, community, nation, generation—until one day society affords the object the rights of a ‘living being’. Eventually,
this right is bestowed upon all objects of \textit{a priori} value almost arbitrarily.

The concept of cultural material as ‘living’, with its implication of ‘dying’, is particularly absorbing and will ultimately inform my enquiry: how does the reflexive state of being human influence the values of conservation? Why do we preserve our material heritage and for whom do we preserve it? Though obviously related, I will not suggest that this is purely an issue of anthropomorphism. Rather, I would propose that human beings—the custodians of cultural heritage—think and act from the perspective of ‘immortality’, something other than a ‘being-for-death’, which inexorably informs our already anthropocentric treatment of the world and its resources. Remembering that ‘to be immortal’ does not only denote the quality of living forever in the corporal sense, but can also refer to the enduring memory.

\textbf{Cultural Material Conservation According to Immortal Mortals}

Let us reflect on the societal values of twenty-first-century Western civilisation, as enshrined in our laws, institutions and formal declarations (though perhaps not always our actions): we are a self-professed democracy that champions human rights and ethical culture; we believe in the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all living beings. ‘Fair go’ and all that. It seems obvious that this attitude has become magnified since the twentieth-century, with advances in public health, nutrition and medicine ensuring that the death of Western Man comes only under the most serious, or perhaps just unpredictable, of circumstances. In other words, we are no longer used to death. No more is it common for mothers to die in childbirth, for infants to die of sickness, for whole communities to die of disease; and if they do, it is a tragedy felt by all. People cry: ‘No one should have to die that way’, when really the subconscious is saying: ‘No one should have to die.’ That is to say, not only do we fear death, we seem to reject the fact that death is the natural consequence of living. We seem determined to evade any question of our own mortality, except to occasionally discuss the idea of a ‘good’ or ‘respectable passing’: out of sight, quietly, at the right (old) age. How often does one hear that ‘illness killed him’, or, ‘she was killed in an accident’? People are ‘killed’, indicating an outside force that takes lives; they don’t just die. It is apparent that general consensus identifies death as the worst thing that can be inflicted upon human beings, graver than any manner of suffering or degradation. Indeed, such bioethical issues as euthanasia and abortion are still taboo. Death

\begin{center}
\textbf{Morning brooch made from the hair of Miss Anne Drysdale, ca. 1853. Creator: Unidentified. Source: State Library of Victoria.}
\end{center}
is the enemy, and it is by way of the emotional link of mankind to his material possessions—an anthropomorphism—that it has become increasingly acceptable to apply these considerations to heritage objects.

The life expectancy of cultural property has also increased—particularly those living in the stores of collecting institutions—except that ‘advances in public health, nutrition and medicine’ become advances in cultural awareness, environmental controls, and material science. One cannot help but note the fact that, if transposed to a human model, the institution of the heritage object is analogous with the retirement home for the elderly or the hospice for the sick; all but for one distinction: while the goal of life-extension holds true for both facilities, in the human prototype there is a sense of working against time (waiting for death), while the collecting institution seems to aspire to nothing less than retarding time (preventing death)—more like the cryonic chamber, only this analogy assumes that the ‘beings’ are dead or dying. The notion of the collecting institution as church or burial ground is not new—consider Marinetti’s diatribe in the Futurist Manifesto of 1908: ‘We will free Italy from her numberless museums which cover her with countless cemeteries museums [sic], cemeteries!’ But it is interesting nonetheless.

Indeed, we know that objects ‘age’, but do they die? Wilfully ignoring the fact that we are not talking about living, breathing organisms, is there a point at which we can identify a material resource as ‘dead’ or beyond repair? Is it perhaps when the physical frame is so deteriorated and broken that it can no longer perform the basic functions intended by its maker? Most conservators will agree that this is a question of ‘value’ and ‘original intent’; that an object only experiences a mortal life where the maker intended that it should do so. Consider the ephemera—the millions of postcards, novelty items, pressed flowers, newspapers—carefully housed in our collections. Letting things pass quietly out of existence is simply not in our nature. Rather than a matter of life and death, do objects go into theoretical ‘hibernation’ between periods of human interaction? After all, if an item is made specifically for human use and enjoyment, what is its value when no longer useful? I’m thinking of the proverbial tree falling with no one around to hear it, or perhaps Heidegger’s hammer.

One must ask the question: why do we preserve anything at all? My professional response would be: ‘to safeguard our cultural heritage for future generations.’ My amateur philosophical reply: ‘to ensure immortality through legacy’; since the human body cannot endure, the material evidence must. If we preserve a part of ourselves, whether that consists of biological matter or material heritage, we ensure that we are ‘present’ in the future, that we live on. Moreover, by choosing what is preserved and the terms by which it is preserved, we can participate in future dialogue; even dictate the point of view that future generations will have of us. I suppose that this is technically nothing new, writing one’s own history is a matter of course for most nations. What is interesting is the evident human predisposition for seeing things from an historical perspective: we tend to see ourselves as we (think we) will be seen by future generations. We are legacy-making machines, which in itself must be proof of our aspiration for immortality (or something other than a ‘being-for-death’), because the concept of preserving heritage for an anonymous
future is an impossibility. How can one predict the kinds of information that will one day be considered significant or valuable? Perhaps it won’t be the verbatim content so much as the original materials or functionality; this is curious to consider in view of the current trend for producing digital copies in place of the ‘real thing’. Moreover, as heritage items are so inherently bound to aspects of their relative culture, surely their meanings or ‘nature’—intended as vehicles of our cultural identity—would be lost if knowledge of their cultural framework were unfamiliar. As Arthur C. Danto so aptly speculated: ‘It is as though we must transmit the whole of our culture if any part of it—any work—is to be more than a pickled object, so to speak.’5 Perhaps cultural institutions need to be more specific in their collections and collecting criteria, as is typically the case with their smaller or externally funded counterparts. Consider the success of the Musée de l’Orangerie in Paris, Dia:Beacon in upstate New York, or the Chinati Foundation in Texas. By committing to contextualisation, an audience is able to immerse themselves in a collection, space, idea or time.

I would suggest that the contemporary fixation with preserving material culture is not only a way of safeguarding these resources for future generations, but also a means of establishing a carefully-constructed trail of breadcrumbs, placed in such a way that future generations may feel compelled to keep our memory alive—in a way that fits with our own self perception. If all relevant items may be collected and housed in the one place, kudos to the institution: Picasso? Tick! Greek urn? Tick! Alessi corkscrew? Tick! One could even say that this ideology has transcended the bureaus of professionals who determine which items ‘make the cut’ (as representative of society) and filtered right to the source: to the makers of culture. I have been privy to many conversations between artists and arts professionals where one or the other impresses the importance not only of finding commercial success, but creating legacy—generally via acquisition by large collecting institutions. Many artists now work from this principle; creating works that are ‘strong’ enough for formal representation in terms of aesthetic and conceptual presence, but also configured for material longevity, even permanency. One might argue that placing so much focus on ‘tomorrow’ in the creation of culture results in historical works. After all, if we accept that an object will be historic tomorrow, why not treat it in that way today?

The professionalisation of conservation has obviously engaged with and encouraged such questions. In fact, as public interest in the field has burgeoned, so has the erroneous notion of conservators as cultural police. While the discipline of conservation is commonly linked to the Enlightenment, the so-called ‘professionalisation’ of the field did not occur in any systematic way until—again—the twentieth-century, culminating in the formation of professional bodies and codes of ethics. Most conservators will celebrate this time as the realisation of professional and ethical maturity, however others would contend with this view. One historian protested that ‘the priesthood of professionals [has been] formally placed between the people and their past’; insinuating a move away from community-wide enquiry in favour of standardised practice within the impenetrable walls of large institutions: a kind of cultivated cultural detachment.6 It is interesting to note
that conservators, too, trace the profession back to a religious origin, to the priests who watched over ancient temples in service of their community.²

If one accepts the notion that conservation values follow those of civilisation, then it is not the conservation field that demands neutrality, but contemporary society. Just as the ethics of conservation seem to incite respect for all things, the ethics of human rights suggest that there is only one human subject, and that everyone has the right to life irrespective of the state of ‘living’. In fact, ‘human rights’ are by definition the rights of humankind against that which has the potential to cause injury or suffering, a concept that by its very nature seems to presuppose that all living beings are would-be victims. It is the field of ethics that provides us with the ability to identify and, with any luck, protect ourselves from these perils.⁸ This presents a provocative idea: it has been frequently demonstrated by society, particularly through religion and politics, that it is easier to establish consensus regarding what is evil (wrong, immoral) than what is good (right, moral).⁹ In the heritage sphere, society seems to have established that life is good, and death or decay is bad. It doesn’t take a genius to spot the hand of Man: indeed, contemporary Western civilisation seems to value life and vitality—or at least the appearances of—above all. This presents an interesting dichotomy: while ageing in human beings is considered largely degenerative, ageing in objects tends to result in an enhancement of value, particularly when original materials are retained. Equally, enhancement of human beings through replacement or augmentation of ‘parts’ is largely accepted, while the same treatment of a heritage object would result in decreased worth. Take the comic book industry, for example: one would never remove original staples, even if they were rusted and actively
eroding the book itself.

But we're getting sidetracked. Many conservators have spoken out about the problems of delineating moral law—an inherently subjective enquiry—as it gives rise to an ‘ethical relativism’, and accordingly the profession has tried to remain as flexible as possible. To be sure, codes of ethics relating to cultural materials are careful to acknowledge that every object has its own particular ‘nature’. However, when faced with items of accepted cultural significance—whether the soiled boots of a hero since passed, or the neon and natural rubber installation of a celebrated artist—each is inevitably afforded the same right to ‘life’ and respect as the next. While the modes of value clearly differ—on the one hand, an item of socio-historic significance; on the other, an important aesthetic object—once identified as culturally significant, universal heritage standards determine that both items be handled, housed and displayed in an almost identical manner—as in human rights. There are obviously some exceptions to the rule, as with items whose significance is archival, but generally speaking the mode of value is secondary to the fact of having value at all. Consider this statement from the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works.¹⁰

Every day, the vision of artists, the identity of peoples, and the very existence of history all threaten to disappear. Left alone, old buildings will crumble. The Declaration of Independence will disintegrate. The photographed faces of battle-weary Civil War soldiers will fade away. ... Our past is under attack.

Not only are we asked to accept a string of values as equally ‘valuable’, we are encouraged to emotionally identify with the objects in question—and we do. One cannot help but empathise with the application of such inherently human anxieties: loss of identity, living alone, passing out of existence unnoticed, and particularly, death. While it might seem absurd to expect cultural property or resources to ‘feel’ such suffering, there is no doubt that a human being may feel these things on their account.

While this proclamation is obviously of a particularly crude variety, angled towards human compassion for the purposes of winning favour, I feel it presents an apt conclusion for the endless problems herein raised. We have identified that the ethical code of heritage materials is inextricably linked to those of human rights, because we wrote them and it is our nature to identify with our surroundings. We have acknowledged that human society has transcended their nature as ‘beings-for-death’, and that we inevitably apply these considerations to our cultural property. We have also established that material heritage is increasingly significant to contemporary civilisation, because it offers the promise of immortality through memory, and now more than ever we have seized control of this power. The point is to ask questions. What is the object? Who is it for? What are its cultural values, provenance, and future outlook? How should we treat the object? Should we adopt transient codes and standards? Should we do away with codes and standards? Does an object lose its ‘true nature’ if isolated from its cultural context or retired from its intended function? Perhaps we should just tell everyone to pack a towel.

Albertine Hamilton is a paper conservator based in Melbourne, Australia.


Everything exists to end in a photograph — Susan Sontag.

In a period in which we have accepted and embraced the proliferation of imaging systems, our collective gaze is capable of traversing known space and time.

From Hubble's technicoloured explosions of distant nebulae to whatever those splatters are in the search for the Higgs boson. The idea that the world has almost been replaced by its double is not so unusual, and it leads to the notion that all that remains is to fill the holes in between these two extremes of inner and outer space.

These holes in between are being filled, and at an unprecedented rate, with image data generated voluntarily and involuntarily by individuals as they move through real and electronic space. It is difficult to imagine life without being imaged. Sometimes being imaged precedes being. The DNA molecules of our first child were photographed, and later video recorded, as they were implanted in utero. The Christian doctrine 'God created man in his own image,' that is, that the image is the source of life, resonates in the dimly lit clinic as we nervously joke with the nurses. But we need to return to this idea of being imaged preceding being in another place, here we are discussing the image as the end of existence and not its beginning.

So the straightforward premise is that the widespread collective production, dissemination and control of images has reached significant proportions. Not only are we speaking of the photographs taken by humans with cameras—and about 10% of all photos ever taken have been taken in the last year—but also the countless images acquired through CCTV, satellite, Google streetview, and anything else that has been invented since our writing this.

Vilém Flusser said "the new photo will hold objects in contempt." Technology can hand reality its ass right now. Just ask anyone with Photoshop and some time on their hands to see how prescient Flusser’s words remain almost 30 years later. The image becomes a riff, following us around like a puppy a pop song. Accomplices in the trickery, we share in chorus.

Meanwhile, the perception of a constant all-encompassing surveillance has generated a collective *horror vacui*, resulting in our need to obsessively fill the entire surface of the world with images of increasing detail. In a seemingly unstoppable upgrade cycle, images are not only increasing in number but in how closely they defy reality.

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The world imagined has been gradually displaced by the world imaged via infoglomerates like the Church, the State or Google, and increasingly panoptic hybrids of the three, resulting in a ubiquity of the image that triggers both our schizophrenic repulsion and obsessive return to it. The gradual displacement of the unknown with the image, despite our informed distrust of the photograph, constitutes what Groys calls a metaphysical search for the truth. Groys argues that it is in our separate perception of both the materiality and meaning of the photograph that we intuit the presence of a superior power (like we said, God, and/or Google, and/or State) piloting our interpretation of the image and the world.3


un Magazine 8.2
When Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 and its 239 passengers vanished while en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, over 3 million volunteers participated in the search for evidence of what happened, forming the largest search party in history. Vast areas of the Gulf of Thailand were subdivided into smaller areas to be examined by individuals through the online site Tomnod, as two dedicated DigitalGlobe satellites were repositioned to image the hypothetical crash site. Despite the tagging of over 12.8 million objects, the endeavour failed to uncover a life-raft or piece of wreckage. White caps on the waves.

As the news cycled down from the initial scramble to scoop the first images of the event from the ocean, the speculative reenactments, 3D renderings and expert interviews were gradually replaced by the disquieting possibility that no photographic evidence of the tragedy would be discovered.

In the months following the incident, various reports have uncovered data packets exchanged between the aircraft’s instruments and a satellite; technology’s encrypted handshakes have adjusted the field of view; there are realignments and new foci. Yet despite this scientific analysis the xenophobia does not abate and the image is still expected to save our souls come to our aid. Until the tragedy claims an accompanying image we are awash in an anachronistic sea of words, which is to say the imagined. Our news feeds offer little comfort, only speculation that leaves fertile ground for the conspiracy theorists who provide a kind of image-surrogate to which we turn in moments of suspended truth.

Perversely, the failure of the satellite image to provide the key to uncovering the unknown story of the flight is misconstrued as a lack of detail or resolvable
information in the image, generally referred to as resolution. So the event or subject’s visibility is dependent on its resolution (dpi), while the resolution of an image (its assignment as key) depends on what is visible. Go Phoenix dredges the bottom of the Indian Ocean with an automated camera, seeking this dual resolution. The contemporary image is caught between its inability to return a truth (that ship has sailed) and its irrational, yet persistent role as evidence, instigator, potential narrator of an event. In the expansive fields of view offered by satellites overhead or prosthetic cameras in the depths below, this dual-resolution of the image is repeatedly deferred to a later time, until the next image. The image becomes less a document and more promissory note, an IOU of the truth. This continual deferral of closure is a defining force of the post-photograph.

French symbolist, school teacher, poet—granddaddy of the cubists, futurists Stéphane Mallarmé wrote of a fictional disaster at sea just before the turn of the 19th century. Mallarmé’s poem is about a captain, called The Master, who faces a terrible storm after losing his ship, which presumably is disappearing into the depths below him (tbh we are not told). In his hand he holds dice that he hesitates to throw, for he knows that the results of throwing these dice may reveal an utterly important truth, which Mallarmé called The Number. The poem is called A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance. Clicking image after image, we roll the dice and move across the board, hoping to abolish chance.

Like Mallarmé’s captain, in the deluge of the image (faithful, fake, fabricated), we do our best to ride out the storm. We negotiate images like waves, because the image is never singular but accumulates with exponential force as it moves closer. Helen of Troy’s beauty today would be measured not in thousands of ships but in millions of tweets. We surf the surface of Kim Kardashian’s ass, Di Caprio’s tears, kittens endlessly playing piano, sunsets.

“Everything exists to end in a photograph.” Sontag’s words most likely are intended to mean that ‘everything exists to end up in a photograph’ (she was riffing on her own translation of a phrase by Mallarmé) but another meaning could emerge from those words – that everything exists in order to end in a photograph. The role of the photograph, in this sense, is not as preserver of the thing that it images, nor even as evidence against the transient nature of existence, but as the end itself. Non memento, solum mori.

We sit before a glowing screen, hand cupped around dice that we hesitate to throw, because we are aware of the importance of the result. If everything exists to end in a photograph, the end we reveal may be our own. We click next image.

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5 The original quote by Mallarmé is “Le monde est fait pour aboutir à un livre”, where aboutir can mean achieve, attain, result or simply ‘end up’. So it’s a safe bet that Sontag also intended this sense in her paraphrase, our interpretation is purely speculative. From ‘Le Livre, instrument spirituel’ in Stéphane Mallarmé, Oeuvres Complètes ed. by Henri Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry (Paris: Gallimard, Collection ‘Bibliothèque de la Pléiade’, 1945) p.378
Edward John Colless: Ununciation
message," declares Michel Serres, which "transforms the Word into a flesh that is living, thinking, and divine. On its own, language is a chattering noise, hollow and empty; it means nothing until it is embodied, made flesh." Infantile gurgling or the babble of a crowd: this hubbub, like angelic putti tumbling in clouds with a restless playful chaos, provides the choragic ground of and precedent for communication. Ave gratia plena Dominus tecum. (Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee). The angel Gabriel's famous salutation to Mary, derived from the Christian gospel of Luke (1:28) is, in many medieval and early modern depictions of the scene, inscribed literally as text issuing from the angel's mouth in a ray or written on an unfurling banderole. The unrolling script of the proclamation introduces a performative immediacy and eventfulness within what is usually required to be a prudently hieric composition; and it prompts the viewer to enunciate it mimetically in the mode of a devotional prayer. In the Latin tradition of scholastic commentary on the Annunciation (notably through Thomas Aquinas) the pronunciation of incarnation is identical with, in fact consubstantial with, the act of inception or insemination. Under these circumstances, any mediation or intercession or commentary by the angelic medium would be a prophylactic interference; it would be a mispronunciation.

8.2 Is the Blob a divine abortion? Let's consider it at least as a ruinous instance of divine incarnation. If the aesthetic mode of the Annunciation is a performative and devotional embodiment of Creation as perfect communication, as a figure of perfection against the ground of the angelic and hermeneutic interpretation, then the Blob is ungrounded, disowned by Creation and excommunicated: an exclusion from the faith and discipline of communion and coloquy. Annunciation is an inseminating communication of the word by the ray of intelligibility or by the radiant light of the divine in nature, a fecund radiation of the world by the divine order incarnate. What is excommunicated is purged utterly from this radiance: heretical, unavailable, a dark remainder, not of creation but uncreation. Unnatural and unfathered, it is what remains (in decay) of the unworldly divine, what is being hideously unmade. This excommunication of Creation deserves one more maddeningly anamorphic and degrading neologism: call it "Unnunciation", and bring it forth not as silence or as babble, not as background atmosphere or white noise, but as the radiation sickness of the divine ray. Neither the fertilizing felicitous salutation of a visiting angel, nor its counterpart in the bleached skull's holy, pious reminder of the terminus of death. Not these, but divinity as disease and rot and dooom, interminable and unbearable: as the toxic relic of a black art.
negativity to capture the ghastliness of its dispossession: it has a face that no mother could ever love, not because it is disfigured or denatured but because it is unfigured, unfaced.

6.2 The Papal Ass is an unnatural thing, to be sure. But redeemed from its depravity as an omen. It is an ugly duckling: its disfiguration is the face of an obscurely readable message of providence and deliverance; deodorable once the hierophantic code is broken, like an apocalyptic seal. Despite its malformation it can be trusted. Despite its opacity it is revelatory. The Blob, however, is untrustworthy and unbearable, it is an irredeemable catastrophe of communication, the disaggregated remains of an anonymous corpse of nature.

7. UNLETTERED

7.1 Even divine communication can, of course, be dubious, if not devious. Mercury, the fifth-century BCE Roman appropriation of the Greek messenger Hermes, was quick on his winged feet because—like his counterpart—he was sly, unsettled, elastic (“mercurial”). Or volatile. (In Latin, volatilis includes all things possessing wings; volatility describes a substance capable of changing state or disappearing precipitately.) Both the Greek and Roman courier gods were also, at various times, patrons of the market: the Latin god’s name is affiliated with merc or merchandise; and thus Mercury was god of the swiftly profitable deal, usually made on the run. As divine go-betweens and regulous marketeers, Mercury and Hermes would be encountered in the moment of seized opportunity and departure, in the defly fraudulent exchanges of the festival or market town or caravanserai, on the borders of domesticity and commerce (at the food counter, with the baby-sitter, or the sex worker) or at the threshold between divinity and mortality. In all cases, theirs was the province of surrogacy and trickery, of prostitution and circulocation, of diplomacy, duplicity and the licence of the traveller. In a Homeric hymn, Hermes is called ἄγελος (our “angel”), both divine emissary or herald and a chaperone for travellers, when travellers are led astray by the gods. In Biblical and mythological agendas, angelic messages are often mischievously misheard or overheard. Hermes and Mercury might convey a divine truth, but as in the idiom of the market place it would be delivered indirectly, mediated: cajoling yet also seductive, obfuscatory, morally ambiguous and promiscuous.

7.2 Hermeneutics is the symmetrical inverse of hermetic encoding: the interpretative method (ermeneusis) of critique and criticism that lures truth from a text or image or gesture by a sort of chicanery, mistrusting the manifest and seeming self-evident statement as a cover for what lies latent, whispered beneath and misheard on the surface of signification; a method for coaxing a concealed or barely spoken truth from the text’s contradictions or elisions or repressions. It’s fitting that Hermes is identified with a far older god of the Egyptian city known in Greek as Hermopolis. This god was the scribe Thoth: a model bureaucrat who calculated the harvest, logged taxes and documented legal proceedings, recorded apotropaic magic spells and conjurations of the Pharaoh’s names; and who, in Plato’s account in the Phaedo and Philebus, was identified as inventor of hieroglyphic writing which—until its translation in the early nineteenth-century—was presumed to be the impenetrable medium of an arcane oracular literary tradition. From the Coptic Egyptian era until the seventeenth-century (with some isolated survivals even into the twentieth century), Hermes—“thrice great” or Trismegistus—and son of the gods Isis and Osiris, is the legendary author of one of the most famously influential books of occult philosophy, the Corpus Hermeticum. With a literacy and fluency owed to the pagan gods, Luther and Melanchthon could announce a critique of the papacy that they divined from the excremental compost of a monster’s composite of body parts. The Papal Ass confesses under interrogation to be an immaculate hermetic insignia. The Blob is something else: unlettered, inarticulately, a chronic symptom but as a macula or blur or blot, a black spot: index and conductor of a curse, of disease and of rot.

8. UNNUNCIATION

8.1 In contrast to the infidelity, volatility and subtlety of communication and command through Hermetic or Mercurial angels, there is, however, an impossibly intelligible divine message, if demonstrated in an archetypal rape: the Annunciation. “The perfect
features instead heretically promotes God's profligacy: which makes not for a glyph but a glitch. Within the evolutionary logic of life, too, a Blob would be a ferocious mistake or lapse, an abortion, gibberish, drivel or debris. Any science of images—any iconology—will be smeared or streaked, stigmatized, defiled by the appearance of such a Blob. Less not more than reason can conceive, it should be called a “discompose” image. And, unlike the fervid and fertile bustle of compost, the Blob's decomposing corpse encourages no growth or regeneration ... it is unregenerate faecal mire.

5. UNMOTHERED

5.1 The Papal Ass is a conjectural entity. One almost sees the formulation of an empirical science in its method of decoding the composite image: teratology as the glimmer of palaeontology, criminology, medical symptomatology, pathology, archaeology... all descendants from ancient divinatory practices (of reading animal entrails, tasting urine or mud or blood, smelling the wind to interpret the gods’ disposition toward our future or fate), and which also are abstractions of the hunter's method of decoding tracks or faecal droppings to discern the prey's passage. Carlo Ginzburg calls these modern narratives of divination “retrospective predictions”. (There's a fiery portent of this in Nietzsche's abrasive polemio from The Gay Science: 'Do you really believe,' scolds Nietzsche, “that the sciences would ever have originated and grown if the way had not been prepared by magicians, alchemists, astrologers, and witches whose promises and pretensions first had to create a thirst, a hunger, a taste for hidden and forbidden powers?”) The hunter’s conjectural procedure presumes the grounding of these indetical traces of the creature. The prey’s imprint or deposit (drippings, fossils, footprints and so on) are literally figures on a ground; the creature's inscription within the primary potency of nature is evidence of its own animating naturalness and its fate. Like a pattern of broken twigs or blood splatters on a wall to the eye of such a detective, the Papal Ass is diagrammatic evidence, and prey to a hermeneutic method. For all its accident or nonsense as much as its divine monstrously, the Papal Ass is a figure, a Thing, grounded and so belonging in nature, if momentarily disenfranchised, misrecognized, displaced and seeking its origin and thus birthright.

5.2 To read the Blob as a portent or message, to hunt down its true identity, would likewise be to ground it, restoring what could be called its terrestrial entitlement, its ethos. But something errant and illicit about this Blob must be surrendered, given up and forgiven for this Blob to be naturalized, given citizenship and natural rights in the world, even as a horrific or malformed Thing. The nature that expansively accepts miscegenations such as the Blob is a nature that expresses love: not in any sentimental way, but rather as a will that is nothing else than the open possibility of substance, a decisive avowal that occurs in the announcement of the world: this is the utterance of creation as pure impersonal but insinadescend affirmation—"let there be light"—that engenders nature and shines radiantly with a love of creation. It could be the pronouncement or enunciation of “mother nature” who, no matter how violent or capricious, can turn away none of her progeny. But what would happen if instead of encouraging an enlightening artistry we were to officiate the Blob's unmothered nativity? This Blob would issue from the unlit exterior or anterior of Creation, conveying darkness into the open as a contagion, a disease outbreak, as a black spot or tumour rotting away mother nature's vulval medium.

6. UNNATURED

6.1 This Blob would come from a black universe, and its dark life would be more than simply an unnatural phenomenon. The “unnatural” is a generative deviation from or non-conformism to normative moral or physical conduct; but it sounds glibly confident and poised when addressed to the Blob. We need a slurred and treacherous deformation or anamorphosis of this adjective to capture the Blob’s smut and degradation. It may sound reckless, but let’s go with “unnatured”; for what would be at stake with this word is not a neutral conceptual negation of nature (which ironically affirms the contrasting non-natural as synthetic or artificial, for instance), nor a pathology that can portray the deviation as a treatable and thus tolerable, sufferable perversion. The unnatured Blob could not be treated, cannot be enfranchised and convivially welcomed into the world of natural things. And we need a Möbius-like twist in this
it had a gargantuan appetite, or drive, it couldn’t be killed; only frozen and despatched to that toxic dump and Dorian Gray attic of xenomorphs, the polar ice. Since all the Blob did was feed, getting bigger with each feast by enveloping and absorbing its victims, it was—like its Tasmanian correlative—a gaping orifice: a vulval stomach, a swollen and inflamed organ. John Carpenter’s The Thing remodelled The Blob (arguably more so than it remediated the original Howard Hawks’ sci-fi movie), unfreezing a demon that was viral rather than gelatinous. Carpenter’s “Thing” was a pseudo-body aggregated in cartilaginous and fibrous and tumorous syntheses of whatever organic material it indiscriminately copulated with, the ingredients of which (human heads and spiders’ legs, for instance—reminiscent of Odilon Redon’s hallucinatory emblematic monsters) flare like sunspots throughout its seething and clotting biomass. It wouldn’t be impossible to anatomize this Thing: indeed a dissection is performed on what is mistakenly assumed to be its corpse, to reveal a thicket of its tempestuous infections, mutations and differentiations. But, in contrast, it would be pointless anatomizing the Blob. The dissection of the Thing, fatally explosive as this proved to be, nonetheless provided knowledge to combat it. No matter what the Blob seems to resemble, be derived from or be assembled from, those distinctions all collapse into goop.

4. UNREGENERATE

4.1 Compare the account of the Tasmanian Blob for a moment to another, more famous, monstrous corpse washed up allegedly on a bank of the Tiber River in Rome in 1495. Named some decades later as the “Papal Ass”, this was an almost comically grotesque hybrid, and an occasion for searing political scorn laced with apocalyptic portent. “It had the head of an ass,” reported one of its greatest enthusiasts, Martin Luther, “a woman’s breast and belly, and an elephant’s foot in the place of its right hand, fish scales on its legs, and a dragon’s head on its hinder parts, etc. By which,” he continues in a coup of forensic analysis, “it signifies the Papacy, and God’s great wrath and punishment. Such a succession of signs will bring something greater than reason can conceive.” Lucas Cranach’s iconic black and white woodcut image of the creature, commissioned to illustrate a 1523 anti-Papal pamphlet penned by Luther and his close associate in Reformation polemic, Philipp Melanchthon, shows the creature hieratically posing in front of Rome’s Castel Sant’Angelo, above which flies the Papal flag. Its awkwardly segmented assembly of signifying body parts reiterates the emblematic formula of the composite sea beast named 666 from the Christian Book of Revelation, as well as the punning or cryptic conjunction of disparate symbols in secular medieval heraldic shields. For Luther and Melanchthon, the Papal Ass is a marvellous emblematic code, a “succession of signs”, issued as a communiqué from God; the monstrosity of which is the medium for its miraculous, mercurial and hermetic—not just metaphor—a-message. Incarnating a dispatch greater than reason can conceive, this monstrous clutter is like a pontecostal and auspicious signature of God, an abundant if ominous providential flourish for those with the wit and faith and protocols by which to decipher it. In contrast to this iconological spectacle, the amateure, blurry photograph and dodgy description of the Blob on the front page of Tasmania’s Mercury newspaper make up a derisory and risible slurry, a foul porridge of metonymic affects; not just mutable but decaying. Yet how could the evidence for the Blob be anything but blurred when the thing itself is such a blur, such a corruption of form and image?

4.2 The anatomical corruption of the Blob doesn’t generate a hybrid creature, as do the different human and animal body parts clumped together in the Papal Ass. The Blob is not metamorphic but anamorphic: an obscene exaggeration, comparable to Lemuel Gulliver’s nauseating vision of human sexual allure distended and amplified within the queen’s bed-chamber in the gigantic world of Brobdingnag, when he becomes a sexual toy for the ladies-in-waiting. Lost, dear reader, you imagine this to have been a pleasurable experience, warns Gulliver, picture every blemish on the skin of these women, their organs and their scent scaled up to twelve times his size, just as he was twelve times the size of the Lilliputians he’d met on his previous voyage. Far from composure, this anamorphic sexuality is decomposing: a suffocating, rank, putrid, foetid stew of necrotic deformity. From the vantage of Providence, monsters like the Papal Ass are extravagant follies of God’s creation, redeemable through the consoling proverbialism of Ecclesiastes, by which there is a reason (concealed or otherwise) to everything in Creation just as it there is a time. But the Blob’s slurry of anachronistic and atopic
the grimace of the gorgonion (the open-mouthed but unexpressively empty-eyed mask of the Gorgon)? It’s an easy entertainment to superimpose the Blob on a more celebrated ancestral castreating creature issuing from the depths of an amniotic and intestinal id, the great open maws of the white shark of Spielberg’s Jaws. As ambiguously phallic and ferociously feminine as the dinosaurs of Jurassic Park, that shark’s predatory aptitude was complemented with an undeniably photogenic sex appeal: it spectacularly mounts a fishing boat from behind, thrusting into as if mating with it, while simultaneously opening itself to receive, mutilate and consume the lower half of the shark hunter’s phallic body. Its sexual lure was not dissimilar to the Cheshire-cat grin of lithe and lethally intelligent femininity expressed by the sister raptores from Jurassic Park during their insatiable jaw-snapping pursuit of prey, or the grinning hypnagogic rapaciousness of Alien’s red queen, the sleekly predatory wasp mother. Even with an orientation toward grotesqueness and horror, our repertoire of the xenomorphic monstrous feminine incorporates maternal brooding and mating as universal and naturalizing imperatives. When the incandescent aliens from Monsters are finally revealed, free of their discretionary camouflage clothing of the Mexican jungle, the movie adopts the rhetorical address of an Attenborough nature documentary, recording—in silent awe—the creatures embroiling in blissful throes of sexual intercourse. Situated in this inventory of fabulous sexuality, the Tasmanian Blob could be affectionately idealised with the aesthetic disavowal of Botticelli or Cabanel as the miraculous offspring from a divine castration: a desublimated Aphrodite driven onto that desolate shoreline in the cusp of a frothy spermatic wave unleashed when Saturn huries into the sea the testicles of his father Uranus, whom he has castrated with a sickle. Naked maternal body and Venus trap: this Blob could be in the cast of Hesiod’s Theogony; it could be the feverishly carnal focus of Courbet’s Origin of the World.

3. UNCLAIMED

3.1 Yet it’s precisely this photogenic and sumptuous embodiment that the Blob lacks, and can never possess. And tempting as this mythological itinerary and transgressive iconography is, it doesn’t do justice to the Blob’s morphological collapse as an unstable as well as cryptic entity. “Here there be monsters” is the famous warning of legendary depredations of form that lurk at the peripheral vision of a science, in the manner that fabulous hybrid and hallucinatory beings populated margins in ancient cartography. As fable, myth or hallucination, the Blob would be a case of mistaken or misrepresented identity; it would be a creature whose true form is in disguise or in disarray, and whose identity will eventually be redeemed or given away (by some detail of knowledge forthcoming, but which is as yet unobserved or uncharted, such as a DNA signature). It was, more than likely, and in the end, a whale. Disposed of accordingly, “Blob” would be a class of things that, as yet, have no definite identity, like unclaimed corpses waiting in a morgue all named “Jane Doe”. If that’s what a Blob is—a taxonomic waiting room, a matter of insufficient information to a bureaucratic observer or to linguist administrators or philosopher-police-informants—then any field or crowd or mass of anonymous individuals (prostesters in a city square, insects in a swarm, water droplets in a storm, leaves of grass on a prairie) are nominally Blobs, inasmuch as they may as well be the summary painterly jabs and daubs of an Impressionist landscape or the pixelated mosaic of an inadequate image file. But if so, at what degree of proximity or familiarity or clarity is a Blob dispelled? Is a Blob simply a cartographic phantasm from that zone about which we don’t yet know enough? There’s no answer to this without bloohness becoming banal and ubiquitous. And benign. But picture the Blob among the unclaimed corpses of the earth and the sea; picture it as an uncharted stretch of ocean or desert. It is more than a field without signposts or a poignantly orphaned body: it is instead an insurrection by the morgue’s corpses, a desert overrun with djinn; it is the Bermuda Triangle, the Sargasso Sea, the Lofoten maestrom. A perilously insurgent turmoil of corruption and contamination.

3.2 The Tasmanian Blob’s movie namesake was a Heraclitean translucent jelly-like substance that appeared with hypnagogic precociousness, induced in a spell of Cold War political anxiety, to attack a small American town throughout one magical night, slithering down streets and corridors in visous, voluptuous, persistatin waves in pursuit of its prey. Because it had no internal organs and no skin (no distinct or stable profile, no Gestalt) it could mould into and around obstacles, and disperse and fuse back into undifferentiated lumps. While
1. UNGESTALT

1.1 In 1960 the corpse of a ghastly, primordial or mutant, degenerate sea creature was found washed ashore on a remote and virtually inaccessible beach of the rough northwest coastline of Tasmania. The two fishermen who encountered the grey lump flocked with spume from the stinging surf, and which had been stranded on the sand under assault by shrieking gulls, may have recognised it for what it most likely was: carrion — a decomposing whale, cruelly deformed by weather and scavengers. But they were either unnerved enough by its grotesqueness or excited enough by the opportunity for a hoax to be prompted into taking a photograph—a poor one but more suggestively fantastic for its obscurity, which made this otherwise disfigured but mundane creature a piece of hapless cargo or jetsam from science fiction, from supernatural adventure, weird fiction, or from nightmare. The carcass vomited out of that region’s quite palpably abyssal surf was (in the dimensions of the time) twenty feet long, eighteen feet wide and four feet thick: the shape of an unnaturally large sea lion or walrus, but lacking their familiar features. According to the two eye-witnesses, it was squid-like but without tentacles, had a gaping ugly orifice and slits within the folds of its rubbery lobes; but it had the bulk and, seemingly, the pel t of a mammal.

1.2 It must have been like looking at a Rosicrucian rite. Mammalian fur, a gaping orifice within labial lobes? An exegesis of the lurid genital phantasm summoned by its eye-witnesses’ symptomatic portrait may not be as inspired as Coleridge’s “savage place” from Kubla Khan, haunted by a woman waiting for her demon lover. “...Oh that deep romantic chasm! Whose slanted down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!” Not as invocatory but just as precisely placed, anatomically. The chain of abrupt negations, lapses of attention, indecisive and qualified similitudes that conjure up this creature as an exaggerated, bloated but ragged, anamorphic sexual organ gaping open and straddling the shoreline of an oceanic unconscious is indicative of an enthralling dread—and recoil—prompted by its creaturely otherness. Rather than being featureless, this thing was an especially engorged feature; like the flower which Hegel found so repulsively effusive: an obscenely complacent exteriorization of sexual presentation, lacking the discreet configuration (Gestalt) of form and function that induces the sublimation of appetite in the animal body. We imagine this freakish creature to be more dreadful than marvellous, more of a depravity than a curiosity, because it flaunts the desublimation of animality, a collapse (Ungestalt) into florid sexuality.

2. UNHOLY

2.1 Cloaked with the reeking ambience of an entity ostensibly archaic and rotten and harvested by black oceanic currents from the viscous gloom of some hidden or unfathomable trench, the fishermen’s description of the creature might well have been hatched from the Cthulhu Mythos of H.P.Lovecraft’s horror fiction: notably, the crawling vermiculate, tendrilled and twisting mutability of the “Old Ones”—worm-ridden, primeval and alien; and otherwise entombed in the earth or at the bottom of the sea. During its briefly chronicled celebrity in the tabloid newspapers in Australia and overseas that published its blurred and blotchy picture, this beached organism became dubbed, with droll topical allusion to the eponymous, amoebic alien carnivore from a 1958 US horror film, the Tasmanian “Blob”. On crypto-zoology websites it takes a place among the X-files trivia of similarly glutinous “globsters” carried up from the deep over the past century from New Zealand to Newfoundland to Natal. But, apart from a blurry archival document surviving in a museum ward lined with once fabled if damned creatures, the Tasmanian Blob has slipped back into the lost world of its historical or evolutionary sump. Is there a case for dredging its corpse back? I think so. There are compelling aesthetic issues about this Blob which may make it a provocative agent today, which exceed the generic pathology of its historical cultural context, and which warrant its unholy resurrection.

2.2 A filthy miracle, to be sure, this requires a necromantic rather than a restorative therapeutic language. But, if we take the eye-witness testimony at its word, don’t we slide facilely into dissiping the Blob as yet another phobic instance of the “monstrous feminine”: the narcissistic wound of a castration anxiety manifesting in the hallucinatory vagina dentata or Edward John Colless: Ununnciation
Unnunciation

Edward Colless

The Mercury

NEARLY AS BIG AS A HOUSE!
IT WAS COVERED WITH FINE HAIR

ABOUT 30ft. long, 16ft. wide and about 4ft. thick, with an estimated weight of
between five and 10 tons. These are the dimensions of a sea monster
which sighted in the Baltic off the coast of Sweden. The creature was
first spotted by the crew of a fishing boat, who later told how they
had seen it pent-up in a cove, with its head raised and its eyes shining.

AN expedition returned to Hobart from the West Coast yester-
day with a story of a “sea monster” which could arouse world-
wide interest.

They described the remains as conforming to no known animal, and examination
may bring to light the fact that it is, indeed, unique.

The body of the fish was 40 feet long and measured
across its back 12 feet and its width 10 feet. The creature
had a long tail which was 20 feet long, and a broad
head. The face was covered with a layer of brown
hair, which was about 4 inches long. The creature
had six bony fins, which were a foot long, and it had
long claws on its fingers. The creature was covered
with a layer of barnacles, and its eyes were large and
shining. The creature was found in a cove, where it was
pent-up, and the crew of the fishing boat had seen it with
its head raised and its eyes shining. The creature was
about 30 feet long, 16 feet wide, and about 4 feet thick.

The creature was covered with a layer of brown
hair, which was about 4 inches long. The creature
had six bony fins, which were a foot long, and it had
long claws on its fingers. The creature was covered
with a layer of barnacles, and its eyes were large and
shining. The creature was about 30 feet long, 16 feet wide,
and about 4 feet thick.
You do not know me. We have never met, and it is always strange to first meet someone through their text and not in person. Actually, this is how I first ‘met’ you - through your Negative Money essay - but we’ll come to that later. For now, an introduction seems appropriate. My name is Henry.

Last year, whilst living in Germany, I was introduced to your record label Care Of Editions. I can clearly recall scrolling through the website, reading and re-reading your very astute essay. I was so taken (then and now) by the idea of a label that would pay its listeners to download music. It’s true what you say, that ‘now is exactly the wrong time to start [a record label]’ and that it is exactly in this vacuum of need that the possibility for something interesting opens up[1]. I thought of Yves Klein’s Zones of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility, where Klein would invite collectors to exchange a sum of gold for a receipt which would then burn whilst Klein disposed of the gold. All that is then left over is the the experience of buying the work and the memory of that experience (and perhaps some buyer’s regret).[2] I thought also of the Australian artist Denis Beaubois who used a $20,000 grant from the Australia Council to make a sculpture of stacked $100 notes which he sold at auction. So the money becomes an art object (and the serial numbers can verify its authenticity) but it may still be used to buy groceries if the collector so chooses.[3] Like Care Of, these are projects which only really come into existence in the moments they are bought and sold.

I remember the excitement of discovering Care Of and how I had wanted to write about the label to better understand it; something about how I saw the project more in terms of the theatrical act of downloading and paying for music than in terms of either the music or the money. But I got quite busy - moved from Berlin to Melbourne, back again to Berlin - and it wasn’t until a year or so later that I pitched the essay to an Australian art journal called un. The commission came shortly after via email. The email was quite long and I won’t reproduce it here (except in parts). One part read: ‘instead, however, of you simply producing an essay for the issue we are dividing eight point two into twelve separate magazines… we’re calling these containers actually…’ To me, this sentence felt like a trap – I felt tangled up by its many ellipses – because this wasn’t the situation I thought I was asking to be part of. I had gone in wanting to simply produce an essay and now I was caught up in a much more conceptual framework and one in which I did not properly find myself.

The situation put me in mind of what my old teacher, the composer Peter Abling, used to say: that artists are no longer the architects of their own work but only the interior architects. It occurred to me that un’s self description of this issue (issue eight point two) as ‘a magazine about its own magazine-ness’ could equally be applied to Care Of, a record label about its own label-ness. I suddenly wondered about the artists that you represent, how they feel to have their work tied into this grand curatorial framework. Because, actually, I mostly like the music you distribute, and yet I would still find the project just as interesting if I didn’t. The music is not really the point. It is not present as itself, but because something needs to be present. I wonder whether your artists feel uneasy about being flattened down into an image of themselves or whether they are just excited to be part of such an interesting project. I think I would be excited actually, but it’s hard to know from a distance.

Did any of the artists that you represent make music which reflected the label’s situation, do you feel? Was there any sense of a resistance to the greater framework of the project? I would not criticise the artists for simply putting out the kind of music they had originally wanted (this can be a form of resistance too: ‘Fine! Keep your framework, I’ll do just as I please!’) but the label presents a unique opportunity for something ‘site specific’ (to use too clunky a term) and, in a way, I would be somewhat saddened to discover that none of the musicians considered the possibility.

I know that the editors of un meant to open up eight point two as a generous gesture. I know this because their email says, ‘try to write for yourself and your own intrinsic reasons for writing’. But a generous gesture can be just as disempowering as an aggressive one. Its a paradox, I know, but it is in the invitation to write for myself that the trap becomes complete – because how can one write for themselves under the direction to do so? The editors get to hide behind their framework and their
invocation of freedom. If I write something interesting they can lay some claim to it as curators. If I write something dull no one will hold them accountable - because it is the form of this issue, not its content, that will define it.

I don’t point this out in order to make some stand against the commission. Would I really be so oppositional, so desperate to mark myself amongst the non-naive? Isn’t writing - being paid to write - the privileged position here? The answers to these questions are ‘no’ and ‘that depends’ respectively. Over a grainy Skype line with one of eight point two’s editors, I was asked if it wasn’t the framework of the issue that was constricting me so much as it was my own reflection on that framework. The editors, too, have their own set of constraints to work with. I take them at their word that they want this issue to be a writer’s utopia and I know they really have had to fight for it – fight with the board and with their funding bodies. But I was not with them on the front lines where this utopia was won. I was not asked if emancipation was what I wanted. So whose utopia is this really?

I was reminded of an essay by Jan Verwoert where he writes about a similar unease: Wait! What you expect me to do is something I cannot possibly fulfil [...] What I will say on your behalf are not the words you would want to appear in print under your name. And I won’t decide - in your stead, on your behalf, in your name - what it is that you might crave; I refuse to represent to you what you desire for yourself. It’s the hardest thing to admit, but I cannot mystify you. I do not have what it takes to make you feel like you never knew the truth about what you want. [4]

So if I cannot write for myself, is there still the possibility to write as myself? Becoming the subject of one’s own sentences requires more than just first person grammar. It asks also for an understanding of one’s relation to the framework, because without a firm sense of position, it’s quite easy to get lost in something so large. I’m not scared to disappear into the magazine actually, but I am becoming acutely aware of how complete its hold over me really is. The situation is Janus-headed - ‘write for yourself’ meets my gaze from any angle. It’s been pointed out by seemingly everybody writing on the subject now, that institutional critique is basically impossible because it is expected by its institutions. Like the example you give of Dan Graham getting a commission from the Dia Art Foundation to make a work on their rooftop. So of course he attempted some critique, but it was always going to be safe. I would even say that his reluctance to enact a more critical gesture may well come from something closer to resignation than to resistance. He must have known that no amount of extremity would prevent his work from being essentially a monument to the museum.

Which is not to say that the critique that is expected can’t be critical. Of course it can, but somehow it feels different, tamer. It is a critique made from within the situation it purports to oppose. As much as institutions need the critique of artists in order to remain relevant, the artists need the institutions - both as a source of funding and as something to rail against. So, as a resistance, the whole situation is far too circular and closed-off to ever make any real change in the world. Without the Dia Art Foundation there is no Dan Graham, without the market of music distribution there is no Care Of Editions and without un this text would never have been written. Think of the serpent that swallows its own tail. What would it be to step outside of this cycle now? To make one’s comments from the outside looking in?

Giorgio Agamben, in his short text Magic and Happiness, asserts that it is possible to explicate an idea of worth that rests outside of simple economic systems of exchange (‘What a disaster if a woman loved you because you deserved it! How boring to receive happiness as the reward for work well done’). [5] For me, this text is amongst Agamben’s most beautiful writing - poetic and almost naive. Still, as beautiful as it is, Agamben’s conclusion, that happiness can only come through magic, is not fully satisfactory. Because one can only live by magic for so long. Eventually ‘real things’ - coins and bills and houses and rent - start to make ever more demands on one’s attention.

For me, the musician Goodiepal (who I first encountered through your writing) could almost serve as the patron saint of Care Of Editions. Goodiepal, like Care Of, asks his questions about art’s value from a place of generosity. Selling his records at a loss (even including his bank details in the record sleeve), he completely uproots the logic of buying and selling music. Goodiepal’s generosity
is not even ‘bad business’ as such – it may better be described as ‘not business’. It makes no sense to assess these sales from the perspective of a business transaction. In line with Agamben’s notion of magic, Goodiepal’s gift economy locates itself completely outside capitalist axioms of worth, invoking the possibility of ‘stepping outside’ of one’s framework. Sadly though, such blanket generosity is no more sustainable than magic, and Goodiepal was only able to sell his records in this way by going quite massively into debt.[6] Travel too long and you’ll forget yourself from sheer exhaustion.

To speak clearly then, about any institutional framework (the market not withstanding) requires both magic and ‘real things’, both travel and somewhere to come back to. There is something quite elegant about the projects by Yves Klein, Denis Beaubois and yourself, something in the way that they each stand with one foot in the market and one foot outside. (‘Half rooted’ was the term you used and it made me laugh. In Australian slang to be ‘rooted’ is both to be exhausted and to be fucked, each of which could describe some element of art’s relationship with its market). I once asked Peter Abinger about the works of his that are shown in art galleries and about how he related them to his compositions. He told me that he only made such works to gain a better perspective on his music. ‘I stand with my back to visual arts’ he said, looking in at the concert hall’.

So what would it take for me to peer in at myself as a writer? Could I still turn down the commission, or ignore the framework and just write the essay I had originally wanted to? Somehow, both now seem inadequate as responses. To simply write an essay now would be invisible as a resistance; it would just look as if I missed the point. To turn down the commission is even less visible as a mode of resistance because I’ll simply be replaced. The ground I stand on is not really my own, and if I won’t till it, I can be certain someone else will. In both these cases, I would step so far outside this issue’s framework that I would lose the view from inside.

un offered each of the writers of this issue $666.00 AUD for their contribution (even this figure seems like a provocation) which is higher than I would usually work for. Still, how long have I worked at this email - rewritten three times? How many hours have I spent reading and thinking about these words? Stretched out by this logic, each word, each hour of my time, is worth almost nothing. In the past, attempts at establishing something like a basic hourly wage for artists have always been undermined by a great mass of impossibilities – not least that of differentiating between artists and non-artists or between making art and simply thinking about making art. All these things bleed together. (I’m thinking here mostly of the problems of the ‘official artists’ scheme of the Soviet years and of the lack of influence wielded by artist unions in England during the same time period but there are many other examples, I’m sure.)

The website Elance offers contractors a platform to reach freelance workers from around the world. It is used mostly by people seeking designers, translators and ghost-writers. I’m told it is popular amongst university and high school students looking to outsource essay writing. At one stage last year - desperately broke - I even had a profile on the site, offering my services as a ghost writer. I was never hired. The price I set as the lowest hourly rate I was prepared to work for was too high, I suspect. I got priced out by more qualified people prepared to work for less money. Sites like Elance allow for some fairly abusive examples of free-market capitalism. Because everything goes through a central body (the site), the workers of Elance are unable to contact one another making it impossible for them to unionise. So the freelancers are always in direct competition with one another, and as the globalised network of the site includes developing countries with lower wage standards, labour costs are greatly and constantly forced downward. (I mention this only in passing. The inequity of globalisation is not really the topic I wish to discuss here.)

On September 18, I posted my original essay proposal (the one I pitched to you back at the start of all this) on Elance as a kind of ‘open call’, looking for ghost-writers to complete it. The call was answered by a total of 12 writers who quoted costs for the whole project (1200 words) ranging from $60.00 to $480.00 USD. Finally, I awarded the job to Word House, a small, Pakistan-based writing firm who specialise in student essays (with a focus on business and market studies). Word House’s project fee of $80.00 was not the lowest quote, but the company’s impersonality seemed to
suit the situation. The characters in Bertolt Brecht plays are given names like "Villager" and "Soldier" which are meant to allow them to stand for concepts larger than an individual person. I thought it was appropriate too, that my ghost writer be another "blank" actor – faceless, ageless, genderless etc. (Word House very deliberately wouldn’t tell me anything about whoever will eventually write the essay but in the end it’s not so important.)

This is not an original gesture. It quite obviously enacts the same power relationships that Santiago Sierra’s Workers Paid to Remain Inside Cardboard Boxes or Johannes Kriedler’s Fremdarbeit use for their own ends. Sierra payed illegal immigrants terrible wages for a pointless task while Kriedler hired a Chinese composer to write music ‘in the style of Johannes Kreidler’. For me though, the action wasn’t so much a question of wealth disparity (as for Sierra) or of authorship (as for Kreidler). It references those things, certainly, but the question I was interested in was how a writer is owned. I wanted to know what exactly one is buying when they hire a writer. The writer’s time? Their words? Their opinions? Their critique? Their proximity to their subject?

More than any of that, I think, I had wanted to write and to be written by somebody else. I wanted to stand with one foot inside the framework of eight point two and one foot outside to see how my perspective might change. In Synechoche, New York, the late Philip Seymour Hoffman plays a theatre director who tries to better understand his own position in the world by writing a play about his daily existence. He obsessively attempts to see himself from outside of the frame of his own life, to become an audience to himself. In attempting to do so, he continually steps further and further back as the play takes up more of his time and territory until he finally writes himself completely out of existence. Is that really what I was trying to do here? I imagine receiving the email from Word House in my inbox, opening it up and reading: ‘I refuse to represent to you what you desire for yourself. I do not have what it takes to make you feel like you never knew the truth about what you want.’ Somehow though, it seems unlikely.

I am writing to you with all of this only because it felt strange to keep you out of the loop. Care Of is probably an obscure enough project that it is not the subject of a great deal of writing and I wanted to let you know that I was thinking about it, even in so far as it ended up not really being the point of all this. I wanted to offer you a right of reply as well, to say (if you wanted) what you think. Because now you are a character in the story I am telling and I would like to let you play yourself. But, of course, this is a writing device as well as an email and I won’t force you into the narrative. So I offer you a chance to reply - and if you like I will publish the reply alongside this text – but you may also choose not to, or choose to reply ‘off-the-record’ as you see fit.

(Due to the tight time frame of the publication, could you please let me know as soon as possible whether you plan to reply. Final submissions for eight point two are due October 13th, so for your reply to be included I would need it by Saturday the 11th at the latest.)

Kind Regards,
Henry Andersen

(cc: Henry Andersen)

Hi Chris,

The other day I was contacted by someone who’s writing about the label, and he said that whatever my response, it would figure into his work somehow. I thought maybe it’s better to let his questions figure into our emailing. So, if you don’t mind, I’ll send him a little of our dialogue, but after this email, we’ll go back off the record.

So about this divide between local and global: we might also think of it in terms of situation and concept. I wouldn’t go so far as to let concepts entirely replace sensory relations, but we need to be able to navigate our situation according to something less bound-up in the relativism of our
individual experiences. [...] Have you read Alain Badiou? His work fleshes out the terrain between theory and presence, and this is the kind of work I’m very much compelled by right now. He essentially translates a mathematical framework into a language that resonates within the specific situation of philosophical discourse. This kind of translation, from concept to practice, needs to take place uniquely within each situation in a way that really connects to the discourse of that field.

A good example is Suhail Malik’s writing on contemporary art. He shows how dominant what’s local and particular has become over the global. For instance, it’s nearly impossible to address the situation of contemporary art itself by trying to define its criteria. Instead, we’re automatically deferred to individual encounters with individual artworks or, at best, some trends. So it’s merely by default, due to an artwork’s local place in time, or its mortality, that it can be called contemporary. There is no cut that would separate future artworks from being anything other than a continuation or reshuffling of what is already contemporary today.

The apparent lack of a unifying logic actually conforms to a state of relativism: what Malik calls indeterminacy. Like Badiou, he argues that every situation is structured by a logic and that these logics have blind spots. So he calls for an exit from this logic by approaching the specific structural blindness of the situation. For him, that means resisting the use of particular artworks as examples, which would only reinforce the dominant logic. Then again, he also admits how the distance that critique traditionally places between itself and sources of power can leave critique powerless. I get the sense something like a curatorial critique would help replace those that are defined by an antagonism towards power.

Still, even if every logic is escapable in theory, it’s not clear that every logic is escapable, in particular, by us. Brassier writes that the very notion of ‘us’ is rooted at the deepest level in the system of capital relations: class relations. There is no outside for us to escape to, nor a system beyond ourselves to overcome.

It’s really an echo of Badiou when he writes that the State is not particular to a political situation. It springs inevitably from within every situation as that which reaffirms the dominant logic; it represents what can be presented or thought within that situation. So the State is not founded on the existence of class relations nor the antagonism between them, nor can politics truly be defined as an assault against the State. For Badiou, the State is non-political: ‘it cannot change, save hands’. Rearranging or nullifying the differences between classes might be a step towards suppressing the State, but the initial liberating effects could soon again turn into oppressive ones.

Even though music is, at most, a metaphor for politics, I imagine that a politics of music would establish itself as indifferent to the very differences held in place or discounted by the State, or any combination thereof. The question, then, is what this would look like, if not very similar to the now-dominant practice of making hybrids? Somehow, I don’t see an exchange program as being enough, whether that’s between classes or genres, nor does the flirtation of musicianship and conceptual restraints necessarily translate into a real development. The resources of one world become a metaphysical reservoir for the other: lending calculated freshness from abroad. It’s true, something about Care Of is a mix between popular and experimental forms: maybe a self-defeating gimmick. Also, the topic of capital is overly-specific to our time, which puts Negative Money at odds with the critique of time-centric paradigms.

I’m curious: where is a practice is held? [For the next iteration of Care Of] I want to pull focus on the underlying framework of the streaming era, and given that the label takes its name from a form of distribution, that’s been a natural place to start. But even though one of the most common strategies for changing a dominant framework is to pull it into the frame or to give it consideration, this becomes increasingly difficult as the notion of frame becomes distributed and dispersed. Nonetheless, I would imagine that expressing a real disinterest in the current state, whether or not that’s the system of capital relations, would require a means of discerning differences that are not wholly against the State, but that still embrace certain elements as long as they’re still liberating. I’m really glad you’re interested in doing an album. Let’s talk more soon.

Henry Anderson: Dear Gerhard,
Dear Gerhard,

Thank you for sending me parts of your correspondence with Chris. Sorry to say I have had to edit it down quite a bit for publication ('real things' again: ink and paper and trees and deadlines). Just a quick note to say that I received the commissioned essay on Care Of Editions (attached). It's a strange read, definitely unlike anything I would have written myself, so at least in this sense successful. Amazingly, the figures used in the tables seem to be totally invented and the ghost-writer's research doesn't go beyond my proposal, the opening paragraphs of Negative Money and the wikipedia entry on vinyl records (this section made me laugh). Still, I don't want to reduce the essay to a joke because as an insight into the writer's approach it is still interesting, even if as an essay on Care Of it doesn't really give any useful information.

I am very interested in this notion of 'us' that you reference in your email. Coincidentally, on a long bus ride last night I was reading an essay by Nadia Urbinati that touched on the concept. Urbinati's critique is loosely tied to class relations but her focus is more on the rise of nationalism and other identity-based politics in the wake of globalisation.[7] Whatever its specific context (racial, sexual, sub-cultural etc.), the invocation of 'us' is always territorial – 'us' makes and is made by the concept of 'them'. Or, put another way, we can't talk about an inside without being able to at least imagine an outside.

So for the commission, we can consider the ghost-writer as resolutely not 'us' (or at least not 'me'). The writer's inclusion is a chance to see what friction might arise if we extend the logic of eight point - two's 'write for yourself' outside of the limits of people who usually care about such things. This is what makes the writer's response interesting to me. Their resistance (though it is likely not consciously one) is to just invent the research and take the money. I would be surprised to learn that the essay took more than an hour or so to complete and even with several unknown figures in the equation (administrative and office overheads etc.), it occurs to me that the ghost-writer's hourly rate for this commission was likely higher than my own. If the writer's 'intrinsic reason for writing' is to trade their skills for a simple wage then I cannot (nor would I want to) deny them this agency.

Best,
Henry
Introduction

The project under consideration is Berlin Label Care of Editions. It is a project of one year aimed to promote the music and revive the vinyl records. Primarily, the project is a temporary experience by the Care of Editions. The idea for the project has been derived from the Ruiz Stephenson's Black Coast's Lost Treasure and Yves Klein's Zones of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility. Both these projects are related to art pieces. These projects aim to promote the art pieces including paintings, abstract art, sculpture and calligraphy pieces.

The art products are sold online to the interested customers. Moreover, the artists providing these art pieces are paid by the website. The project of Berlin Label Care of Editions is similar to Stephenson's and Klein's project; however, the Berlin Label project would focus on music instead of art pieces. The website for the Berlin Label would be hired for a year and at the end of the project, the website would be abandoned. It is forecasted that the project would conclude at break-even point where the project expenses would be equal to the total income generated from the project.

Business Model

The project would be initiated through an ecommerce website. The website would use a business to customer (B2C) business model. The customers would approach the Berlin Label Care of Editions website directly where they can view the range of vinyl records offered by the website. The customer would be able to choose any vinyl and place the order. A notification confirming the order would be sent to customer's email and the selected vinyl record would be delivered to the customer's given address.

Revenue Model

The Berlin Label Care of Editions primarily aims to promote the music and revive the trend of vinyl records. For this purpose, the users downloading the music would be paid according to the number of downloads. On the other hand, the vinyl records would be sold on the website. The loss earned by paying off the users for downloads would be compensated by the revenue generated by vinyl sales.

Music Downloads

The Berlin Label would pay off the listeners to download its music. The users would register with the website and logon to their accounts for downloading the music. Each user would be allowed to download maximum 15 sound tracks per day. The users would also have an option of playing these sound tracks online. If a user plays a sound track online and listens to it, it would be counted as a single download by the user. The amount earned by the users would be added to their online accounts and at the end of each month; the users would be able to withdraw the accumulated amount. In order to withdraw the amount, the users would need to make a request for a cheque. Berlin Label Care of Editions would make the payments in form of cheques. The cheques can either be cashed or retained as an art object.

Vinyl Sales

Vinyl records or gramophone records were used for listening music from 1950s to 1980s (Osborne, 2013). In the mid of 1990's these records were replaced by compact discs. The increasing trend of Vinyl records is depicted by the increase in vinyl sales. Garvan (2013) reported that the vinyl sales in UK reached the highest level of the decade in year 2013. On the other hand, the vinyl sales in US increased 38 percent in year 2013 as compared to year 2012 (Resnikoff, 2014). The increasing trend in vinyl sales indicates that the music customers are taking high interest in buying vinyl records. In order to benefit from the opportunity, the Berlin Label Care of Editions would sell vinyl on its website. The vinyl records would contain the music and soundtracks recorded in 1980s. These vinyl records are aimed to promote and revive the music of stars like Elvis Presley, Beatles, The Specials, and The Beat etc. The customers would be able to place the order for vinyl record which would be delivered to the provided addresses.

Revenue Generation

The users downloading the music would be paid $10 per downloaded track. The loss would be compensated by the sale of vinyl records which would be sold for $180 per record. As per the estimate, the direct cost per vinyl record would be $65. The costs associated with the project and launching the website is projected to be $10,500. Furthermore, the amount paid for downloads over the entire project life would be $24,000 for 2400 downloads according to the estimate. There would be no net income or loss at the end of the project period. Alternatively, the project would conclude at break-even point. Therefore, the Berlin Label Care of Editions would not have to bear any expenses for this experimental project. The income from the project would pay off the compensations for downloads to the users downloading music. Hence, the objective of the project would be met by incurring no costs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Projected Music Downloads</th>
<th>2,400</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount Per Download</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Amount</td>
<td>$24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue from Vinyl Sales</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Projected Units</td>
<td>180</td>
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<tr>
<td>Price Per Unit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Revenue</td>
<td>$54,000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Net Income</td>
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<td>Total Revenue</td>
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<td>Total Variable Costs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Initial Costs</td>
<td>10,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Download Expenses</td>
<td>24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Fixed Costs</td>
<td>(34,500)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Income/Loss</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The net income or loss of zero indicates that the project would be over at break-even point. In order to elucidate the conclusion of project at break-even point, the break-even for the project has been illustrated.

| Break Even                      |       |
| Price Per Vinyl                 | 180   |
| Variable Cost Per Vinyl         | 65    |
| Total Fixed Cost                | 34,500 |
| (Including Downloads Compensation) |       |
| Contribution per Unit           | 115   |
| Breakeven Point in Units        | 34,500 + 115 |
|                                | 300 Units |
| Break Even Point in Dollars     | 180 x 300 |
|                                | $54,000 |

Assumptions

It is assumed that the listeners would download 200 soundtracks per month on average. The total downloads over the project period are assumed to be 2400. The amount paid for downloads would be $2,000 per month. The total amount paid for downloads over the whole project would be $24,000. It is assumed that the price for vinyl records would remain constant over the year. Moreover, the sale of vinyl would vary per month over the whole year. The units sold in summer and winter would be about 350 per month; however, the units sold in autumn and spring would be 250 per month. Therefore, it is assumed that 300 vinyl records would be sold over the year.
[commissioned essay completed by ‘Word House’]

Notes:

[2] In reality, the work is more complex and not so conceptually rounded as I have described, as collectors were offered the choice to forego the ceremony and simply keep the certificate (as was the case in four of the eight ‘editions’ of this work). Even where collectors opted to complete the full ceremony Klein kept half of the gold. Denys Riout, Wes Klein: Expressing the Immaterial trans. Chrisoula Petridis (Paris: Vitrous Dilesta; New York: Distributed Art Pub., 2010) 95-109
'Once upon a time, pleasure was repressed by power. Now it is advertised and promised, and simultaneously postponed and deceived. This is the pornographic feature of semio-production in the sphere of the market.

The eye has taken the central place of human sensory life, but this ocular domination is a domination of merchandise, of promises that are never fulfilled and always postponed. In the current conditions of capitalist competition, acceleration is the trigger for panic, and panic is the premise to depression. Singularity is forgotten, erased, and cancelled in the erotic domain of semio-capitalism. The singularity of the voice and the singularity of words are subjected to the homogenization of exchange and valorization.

Social communication is submitted to techno-linguistic interfaces: in order to exchange meaning in the sphere of connectivity, conscious organisms have to adapt to the digital environment.

In order to accelerate the circulation of value, meaning is reduced to information, and techno-linguistic devices act as the communicative matrix. The matrix takes the place of the mother in the process of generating language.

But language and information do not overlap, and language cannot be resolved in exchangeability. In Ferdinand de Saussure’s parlance, we may say that the infinity of the parole exceeds the recombinant logic of the langue, such that language can escape from the matrix and reinvent a social sphere of singular vibrations intermingling and projecting a new space for sharing, producing, and living.

Poetry opens the doors of perception to singularity. Poetry is language’s excess: poetry is what in language cannot be reduced to information, and is not exchangeable, but gives way to a new common ground of understanding, of shared meaning: the creation of a new world.’

no debt

The suggestive, libidinal operation of the collaborator in an unconstrained space; greasy crumb of a pastry, bike locks or summer shirts. An affinity is the choice of where to stand and with whom (summer shirt crossover).

Or: The list form as incantation: to occasion a species is to inaugurate a new weaponry, ecstatic noun parties.

Or: How the act of writing materialises non-living but technically animate bugs.

Or: Vagueness as no debt. Against clarity the vague thing offers itself endlessly to new forms of critical labour or inquiry. Vagueness is anti-future, anti-state, anticouplet, anti-bro. The vague scene is one without an appeal to logic. The vague scene is a sweep across possible edges or beginnings. Inhabiting vagueness is a kind of soft terrorism. The vague plan is an enjoyment of the possibility of bungles. To be vague is to refuse to campaign. Vagueness hovers at the edge of what is legible, slips out of aesthetic judgement, is never fully a charge. Loving vagueness is a way of de-eroticising the libido. Libidinal excitement is nothing if not vague.

Or: Against an economy of the erotics: the libido as a vague assembly, crushing for the affinitive, blocked off pharma and small shrug trade-up, loose dollar gowns, projected knitwear, no-cop square mugs, poetry like extinction, the threat of the dug-out (little void) sex drive, on the run, razing a clubhouse.

Astrid Lorange
beach comb

tear
grump
lozenge
drip pool
anarchic angel
length of ribbon
honey badger in a cream bonnet
criticality
dots of sweet sweat
collar bones exposed
tap shoes folly
bulldog clip
suspenders
slovenly
beach buggy
tall skinny
albino turtleneck bleach splade
dates
pippies
lippomace
hairties
natural materials strewn
non violent fights
augmental
impartial arguments
romper
babies politics
money kiln
kilt
rope ladder
swollen nip
chain sweater
underlined texts
corpus christi
brink
turns in time
lul
peach
polish
stone
sill
lip
axis
ripple

Christopher LG Hill
on election weeks and other matters

1.
A pigeon in the crumbling window frame of a half demolished building. A woman yells at me to not take photos of her. I point to the pigeon. She says if you like you can take a photo of me. I oblige.

2.
I walk to the polling booth and stand in the line while various people offer me pamphlets on how to vote for the various parties. I don’t know the protocol. I take a couple and shove them in my handbag and feel bad for the people I ignore. I’ve been ignoring people all week.

3.
I look at my Facebook feed and feel at once guilty for not expressing any opinion, happy so many feel passionate about something, angry at the rhetoric that surrounds both the election campaign itself and the way people talk about it, and a loud, almost overwhelming desire to scream, preferably underwater, for a very long time.

4.
There is no ultimate Truth. The dialectic is an amusing mechanism which guides us, in a banal kind of way, to the opinions we had in the first place. Does anyone think that, by a minute refinement of logic, they have demonstrated the truth and established the correctness of these opinions? Logic imprisoned by the senses is an organic disease. We observe, we regard from one or more points of view, we choose them among the millions that exist.

5.
She looks more frail than I remember. And I remember her frail; I know her as frail. People smile at me as I ask for her. Not yet, they say, but soon.

6.
Blossoms comfort a low-hanging branch. I break them off as I pass. The man passes me a ballot sheet and comments on the smell of my blossoms. They are not mine so I give them to him. I fill in the bottom line, one to seventy-three, very carefully. The sheet doesn’t fit in my booth so I have to push part of it up against the side. Who do I hate the most?

7.
Like the surrealists, I think of representing the actual functioning of thought. I turn on my keyboard and my delay pedal. Turn up the feedback then cluster-chord-it-the-fuck-up.

Kelli Rowe
two thirds of a second

Read Pam’s poems

write to Sal — make, at

any rate

notes, of things I want to say

& begin them: so,

already I am writing to her

The letter to Pam

will be easier

because we’re swapping writing:

“this bit works

/ this bit doesn’t” sort of thing

except one of the poems is for her friend —

someone I knew too

or met

gone now.

I remember her, & I remember Pam.

Can you say, as they say, “too” too much?

Anyway, the last hours of the night, when life kicks in

Ken Bolton
I am all garage sale

I am all garage sale
I am all irony
All free seeing
All opening
All no wonder
All panting
All seeing
All no worries
I am all never
I am all never skip a beat
I am all effortless
I am not on time
I am all the party

Hello Kitty™

I talk to my old boss about sex
She calls it making love
And you can’t help but think
II
Last time I saw you we were both drunk
But you drunker and
I thought I could definitely kiss you if I wanted
But I didn’t
III
I just read that Hello Kitty™
Is not a cat at all but a person
What else have we got wrong?

Jess Miley

daily exercise

Smaller screens offer relief from looking behind. Efficient escape.
Buckets full of holes are not containers. Anticipation breeds
deflationary diseases. Simple sorrow success. Hardening requires
drying off, old memories. Balancing ratios requires difference.
Precipitation is a transaction. Negotiate heaviness. Daily diet
diaries. Decompression inverts.

You are always falling gases.

Sit upright. Issue an outlining. Production produce. Archived posts
offer group support. Bottles of time, emptied content. Semblance
reflects. Like something.

John Pagnozzi
any form whatsoever

Looking for a—

*(way; not a word)*

of describing

just a little *sharp point*—an exact pattern for a delicate thread

weaving lacework like a precision snowflake that holds form when free. Better that I attach it to thee or a wave of the sea and wash myself of that rather weighty blame. Fix my intoxication, a black pearl of opium on a white hot tip, with gluey gossamer stretching slender strands to a future dross. Worn down to a vintage nub, serving as joints in the limbs of paper dolls, as anchors to cunning hats tilted on coils of hair set in similar prongs. So wonderfully bright and brave! Silvered and straight to the point, creator of bantam palimpsests scarred by the finest scrapings. Restless pulsing star tips in a midnight velvet, attached to a mass glacier-dull under the stout moon gaze. Gown'd for evening, an orchid in a loop of ribbon fixed on such stuff dreams are made—a carnation split at the stem weeping milky resin on a sharp lapel. All the bugs in my glass-cased curio collection have brittle legs and wings that need fixing and marking. In motion *push*: through the heart of paper memos and significant sundries to a point of collection on a corkboard. In motion *pull*: a finger looped through a ring attached to the hand shrouding a green grenade. *Push* again, a medal for the fallen on khaki canvas. A uniform circle used in sewing, tight holes fastening blades in, beaded heads out, or else a satin mound surrounded by Chinese children bracing a boundary. My arm is caught behind my back! beneath a rock or a rod, or else it’s you who’ve put me in this position. Do the same to bracket a broken bone, take to dough and ply til the elastic’s smoothed. On skin, secret panels that moisture rolls to in monsoon, each a tiny red sting with a pink aureole. Straight or safe? Through the nose, navel, brow, any tender flap, puckered into punk. On the tail of a donkey. Over stone it limns a white line, then blunts. If dropped into a crowded room it falls unnoticed, sliding down the air like a long drop of rain, unseen and barely felt; in a silent chamber or under a dome, it deafens. A needling pressure, a palpable sliver, a prick, a point, a rupture. Rapture. Your number, my back. Your mouth, a seam.

Grasping any form whatsoever

of a

*wordlike*

\`\`pin\`

to keep my hem from trailing.

Kathryn Hummel

*John Pagnozzi: 01-01*
the image of thought

I know another cups, temple rest tight-roped to the past
who shifts the break as glass that finds the sweet guide of your fingers in
measure of blue waves sleep colour
between you of deepening in blood
us you reticence that has glass
that refuses to be read chaos for notes
the shock between me
she and you

sleek chaos
that will not place itself between me
pulls back into beside and you
the body another

like peace between me
within disturbed by a

feather another

"no, no more now” alone with the thought

my second pure force
my thought that levels the
to breathe difference and
time

that forces me to breathe another

my urge pure force

a violence that that levels the
forces me to think difference and
do not laugh”
do not lightly

my hand over the cry which_
and muffle speaks

a lost object

sings so loud

perpetual and
still

and stretches

fights

between

resurrection in
memory

piano and
forte

"let go”

as salt into
water

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Yves Klein Eyes, film still 2014
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Nancy Mauro-Flude: Occult computing for artists

un.

Figure 0 John Dee Obsidian Mirror. Photo: © Trustees of the British Museum.

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Preface

The text _A Guest + A Host = A Ghost_ once appeared in black print on a green wrapper around a candy given out by Duchamp at an exhibition. This artwork is considered as a point of departure because of its timely connection to theatrical performance and occult computing. This piece of writing does not travel the well-traversed boulevard that Duchamp once paved, nor does it further explore his relationships to Dada, Surrealism and Situationism, whose activities irrefutably stamped them into the canon of twentieth-century autonomous art (in which its institutions and artists still avidly dredge).

It comes in a wave of great relief that we cannot predict every instance, nor control the production and reception of every variable in the sending of a code nor in the multitude of ways (possible) communication is received and may flow. But the alarming ability of people and organizations to misappropriate and reconscript wild configurations and marvelous tactics, condensing them into a homogenous version for easy digestion, is not to be overlooked. An analogy of a blue and white _Nivea_ container comes to mind, its vast soothing thick viscera spreads over continents persuading the local people to forget their own balm. In this genealogy the act of creating is defined, like most things in the twentieth-first century, by acts of consumption.

A change of tack, the artwork from which this text transcends epitomizes the notion of a code and cypher key and thus gives insight into the arcane and ubiquitous nature of central technologies existing among us (and their cultural, political and occult substructures). Precisely relating to the manifold of time in which we exist, this small monograph, albeit briefly, both critiques and draws parallels between contemporary computer culture, performance and arcane cultural practices such as divination, cyphers, scrying on black obsidian surfaces, and their simultaneous concurrence and conflict with present-day modes of expression in contemporary art forms.

01 A Guest + A Host = A Ghost

_A Guest + A Host = A Ghost_

Marcel DUCHAMP

This text by Marcel Duchamp initially appeared in black print on green tinfoil wrapped around chewy caramel candy (see Figure 01). In 1953, Duchamp stood at the entrance of Galerie Iris Clert, Paris, and handed out this candy at William Copley's opening.[1] Duchamp's _A Guest + A Host = A Ghost_ is an obscure work to which very little commentary or explication has been devoted (Gould 2000). The chewy caramel as symbolic object migrates across the dividing line that separates artist and audience. Its consumptive edible form had haptic repercussions for what an art object means. This emphasis on the 'post optical' (Arns 2004) and the paraphernalia associated with haptic chewy caramel with which the artwork exists was executed well before relational aesthetics (about which we will not and simply cannot speak anymore about, in case we die of overconsumption).

Duchamp placed an emphasis on the underlying speculative performance of the estranged everyday object in the context of the art gallery space. This concept of the 'hacked' estranged, object (or, even more recently the so called détournement of graphical search engines and various other commercial software-think _tubejaying_) has become almost an interminable derivative, recurring as if on repeat command with variation, in almost every contemporary art exhibition since _Fountain_, the glorious (male) urinal put up for reappraisal by R. MULL. Woefully forgotten are the complex codes in the titles that accompany these works, bearing numerous meanings and overtones simultaneously in many languages.

Codes are left to distil over centuries, brewing away with potency, an alchemical function, as background process. According to Gould (2000) _A Guest + A Host = A Ghost_ is arguably his most profound work with regard to the 'reader'. It inspires contemplation by (remote and local) audiences; a deliberately obfuscated work functioning as cypher. The idea of an active 'reader' and therefore 'writer' is especially notable in the processes of consumerism when applied to technology. At the moment, regular unsuspecting computer users are people who are relegated into being 'read' only 'users', they are denied the ability to participate in less cursory or 'writerly' modes of communication with the digital culture realm. Read/Write exceeds the so called, unparalleled 'freedom' of typing a status update in standard commercial Read/Only media (think Facebook, Tumblr, Google+ [your choice of social media here]). Apart from talking about the _Death of the Author_ (a notion most seem to claim to know about but have never read the source text) Barthes extends 'writerly' to have a performative function where the reader is 'no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text' (1974, p. 4). Furthermore, Lawrence
Lessig uses the terms ‘Read/Write (RW)’ and ‘Read/Only (RO)’ to describe cultural obstacles when it comes to one’s access to permissions and rights. The former Read/Write ‘analogy is to the permissions that might attach to a particular file on a computer. If the user has “RW” permissions, then he is allowed to both read the file and make changes to it. If he has “Read/Only” permissions, he is allowed only to read the file’ (2008, p. 28). Read/Only, he claims, is ‘less practiced in performance or amateur creativity, and more comfortable (think: couch) with simple consumption’ (2008, p. 28). Repetition of Read/Only tasks makes us seem more like naive scripted robots or instrumental mechanisms than humans. For instance, regular (unsuspecting or uncritical) users of social media outlets could be thought of as guests on a cruise ship, they do not have to think about navigation and are in the meantime exploited and controlled beyond all means within the simple role of they consumer that they endorse. They are regulated and subject to surveillance and must play firmly within all rules. In this way, we can now see how the word consumption has been restored to its root origin, the Latin _consumere_ meaning to squander and waste. It must also be noted that the word consumption was used in the Middle Ages to describe a terminal disease (tuberculosis), something threatening that could literally devour you.

Figure 01
_A Guest + A Host = A Ghost Marcel DUCHAMP_ The remaining wrapper, black print on green tinfoil once wrapped around a candy. Image: Claire Copley

For persons who possess an awareness of technical code, there are alternative user paradigms with enhanced privacy measures, and for those _who know_ there is also the deep web or darknet/z/s, which according to Lee Brannon (2014) could very well be like ‘Paris in the 1920s’. These darknets are a constructed interchange of forked URL sites and server mirrors; a covert tool for the implementation and dissemination of data across numerous servers, with noone centralised location, for instance the Tor project or Freenet allow such discrete browsing to take place. These spaces are not indexed by commercial search engines therefore they are places to communicate electronically in relative freedom (depending on technical competency) where one is able to freely enact multiple presences, share and carve up data (returning the modality of the cut-up to its former status as a weapon against consumption).

02 Self Determinism Vs. Being Spoken

Now that we have well and truly set sail in our pirate ship from the relative safety of the cruise vessel into the wild and deep waters of unfathomable darkness, we can breathe in the magic void of the shell (computer terminal) and marvellous mess of codes, constellations, nebulae, interstellar gaps and awesome gullies that can be found in one’s computer console. In the console shell you feel a tremendous sense of freedom and awareness. A sense of vertigo arises, perhaps as if you were hanging from earth upside down on the brink of infinite space. But, as a pirate knows, freedom comes with risk and responsibility, and can only exist when you have the ability and sense to acknowledge the rules and then go beyond that to abandon them.

Command line computing is an expressive language within a shell console or computer terminal interface where code is executed. An alternative to the Graphical User Interfaces (GUI) also widely used in operating systems (OS) such as Windows or Mac based systems (GNU/Linux also uses GUI but has more of a sophisticated user base who potentially know the command line). Put simply, the ins and outs, codes, and install initiates are often problematic to comprehend for someone unacquainted with
To entirely reference shell basics, permission groups, types and *nix command line culture per se, would exceed the scope of this little ditty.

Figure 02 /dev/null Ever wonder where it all goes? /dev/null is a *nix file where unwanted files are redirected — could be understood as a void or a very sophisticated ‘trash’[OsX] or ‘recycle bin’[Windows]. Photo: Nancy Mauro-Flude

Let’s take a very brief detour to explicitly define permission types: r — Read w — Write x — Execute. This was touched on already in regard to Read/Write and Read/Only. Technically, these are file permissions and the shell is merely an interface to manipulate them. They are not explicit functions of the shell per se as one can use other languages to manipulate permissions. For instance, potential assignment operators are + (plus) and - (minus); these commands tell an operating system whether to add or remove the specific permissions. As an example, say I have a file named HOST_GUEST_GHOST.txt that currently has the permissions set to rw_rw_rw, which means that the owner, group and all users have ‘Read/Write’ permission. The command to change permissions is ‘chmod’. So to set a file to permissions on HOST_GUEST_GHOST to simply Read/Only, you would enter this full command line to change permissions:

```
#chmod 740 HOST_GUEST_GHOST.txt
Then to check your computation you write:
#ls -lah
```

This shows the permission status of the files: -lah, meaning ‘list all human’ readable files in this directory (this is a more than human realm).

Figure 03) T-Shirt ‘Go away or I will replace you with a very small shell script’. Image: Nancy Mauro-Flude

A Guest + A Host = A Ghost performs a function with an equation, a cryptic summoning wrapped up in cyphers. The structure of Duchamp’s equation A Guest + A Host = A Ghost is analogous to the command line and when broken down has three separate components; command, (+) options, and (=) parameters. The options flow on from the command and define the parameters the command should act on.

I will spare the reader too many *nix specifics, and besides, the terminal in which commands execute can also be cruel and cursed at times, not unlike the rough sea, or the raw truth.

Instead of being Read/Only, or even Read/Writerly, there is also a notion of being ‘spoken’, where one becomes a medium and as such not the measure of one’s actions entirely. If we add the conceptual notion of spoken (or re-written), we are
also acknowledging there is more than a deterministic control to the measure of our actions at play. Perhaps to be ‘re-written’ or ‘spoken’ is to surrender oneself to something larger than oneself. This ritualistic form treats the human being not as the full source of the action but rather as an ontological vessel. Put simply, this reveals evidence of other forces at work that could be _jouissant_ or malign, in which code as a parable comes to the fore. As we can see in figures 2 & 3, instead of hidden in a candy wrapper these GNU/Linux initiates wear their preferred code on their T-shirt.

03 A Guest + A Host (+ 127.0.0.1 | local host) = Ghost

The artwork _A Guest + A Host = A Ghost_ provides a reflection on what it is to be a channel, or a medium for agency, rather than an individual fully in control of one’s actions. Augmenting the host, guest, ghost (unsuspecting visitor) continuum, Duchamp twists the roles of the consumer — producer, sender — receiver, reader — writer by subverting the cultural paradigm of the performer audience continuum. It is important to note that the candy may at first travel in the pocket of the unwary audience who on entering may grab the candy and place it there for later. In these circumstances, the artwork secures remote access while remaining undetected. The host (Duchamp) invites the (unsuspecting) guest, while an uninvited presence (ghost or hacker) comes through the ‘backdoor’. The back door is, in computer science, a maintenance or testing tool but also a clandestine entrance, known to an intimate few, perhaps deliberately put in place (by someone for good or for evil/black or white hat) or left by a lazy system administer or unsuspecting user for a hacker to uncover and gain access. The slippage of personhood, from guest to host to ghost, depending on the ‘consumption’ of the object, and the position of Duchamp as a gatekeeper at the entrance, is a thought-provoking play on agency and the notion of a cypher. It also clearly references The Holy Trinity: by obtaining a ‘host’ from the priest during a Catholic ritual of communion, from the priest, one achieves closer contact with the source, the Holy Ghost. _A Guest + A Host = A Ghost_ is a formulation of instruction, a simple equation expressed in an intelligible language, which is executed in accordance with logical and conditional patterns. Once interpreted (read and executed [written]), it does not give rise to a definite result; instead, the cypher encourages sumptuous play, in Duchamp’s performance of code, he takes pleasure in re-writing the existence of an object of candy as paraphernalia, and the oral gesture of chewing as another way to be spoken, or _speak in tongues_.

Another speculation is that perhaps if Duchamp were with us today he might have added a further equation:

\[
\text{A Guest + A Host (+ 127.0.0.1 | local host) = Ghost.}
\]

It is not so outrageous to claim that he may very well be with us now simultaneously speaking through us reading this monograph.

Whatever the case, if we for a moment assume that Duchamp is a Dantesque (grey hat) type hacker (the preferred one for this author) in GNU/Linux (**nix) terms, in this equation the artwork extends and channels or pipes () the Ghost through 127.0.0.1, also referred to as ‘localhost’, an IP address. A webserver is a process that requires an IP address and runs on a personal computer. A common saying in hacker culture is ‘There’s no place like 127.0.0.1’ (home), a play on the chant, ‘There’s no place like home’ (an incantation prayer by Dorothy from _The Wizard of Oz_ who, by clicking her heels together three times and repeating these magic words, executes a code — a perfect example of a speech act — and is magically transported home to safety).[2] This is where Computer Science and Cabaret join forces, alas this is a small preview, I will leave that sumptuous passage for another moment.

04 Performances by Coders

Now that we are coasting along the deep and choppy waters, let us consider for a moment the notion of performance as a magical act — in particular, the performance by Richard Stallman, the founder of the Free Software Foundation, whose alter ego St IGNUcious often manifests at the end of his lectures (see Figure 4). Initially, Stallman pragmatically and fluently relates a genealogy/nativity-type story about the GNU system, explaining how Linux is one of its kernels, underscoring the fact that the media have locked onto the term Linux but have neglected to acknowledge that the system should instead be called GNU/Linux.[3] The audience is presented with technical facts, evidence, and a variety of opinions which expound how:

- GNU is a longstanding project developing and advocating for access to source code and creation of free operating system tools;
- Linux, a kernel developed by Linus Torvalds, was the last missing piece; and

Nancy Mauro-Flude: Occult computing for artists
There are numerous similarities between Unix and Linux systems but they should not be conflated – for instance, apparently one is required by law to write ‘nix instead of UNIX because the latter is trademarked.[4]

Included in Stallman's monologue is a description how Emacs (a programmable lineage of text editors and extensions he has written) became a way of life, bordering on a religion, as well as one of the most powerful computer tools.

Stallman ends this talk by turning his back to the audience, donning a cloak and headdress, and then revolving back to face the crowd as the smiling St IGNUcius. He then begins to sing the free software song:

Join us now and share the software;
You’ll be free, hackers, you’ll be free.
Join us now and share the software;
You’ll be free, hackers, you’ll be free.[5]

Figure 04 Stallman as St. IGNUcius

'I am St. IGNUcius of the Church of Emacs and I bless your computer, my child. Long may you run.' – St. IGNUcius on an AMD64. This text is performed by Richard Stallman. In this mystical act he discusses his accoutrements, 'That is no computer disk, that is my halo – but it was a disk platter in a former life. No information is available about what kind of computer it came from or what data was stored on it. However, you can rest assured that no non-free software is readable from it today'.[6]

Before the current wave of international surveillance scandals, contemporary electronic movements (anonymous, darknets and cyberpunk communities) and related computer sub-cultures had been obscure in popular culture. Accomplished hackers sought anonymity for many personal and political reasons. In general, they avoided celebrity. The recent Assange and Snowden global surveillance revelations may have temporarily masked the fact that espionage, surveillance and control are not new, although the scale and depth of their mechanisation is unprecedented.

A forefather in espionage was John Dee, the Elizabethan occult magician/polymath whose cypher system of mirrors for remote communication was implemented for the British Naval command. Concurrently, Dee's transcendental ability to connect with elementals and ghosts in the ether, via an Aztec black obsidian mirror (Figure 0), amongst other devices, led such state of the art developments. Therefore, we can see in this small example how ciphers and their coded implementations fall vertically across disciplines, genres and time; and hence, if we dig a little deeper, we find out how the activities of these obstinate characters and their subsequent exposes have been exploited.

Stallman seems to have an alter ego, not only in his transformation into St IGNUcius, but also through the very manner in which he conducts himself; wearing no shoes in formal university settings and surrounded by an entourage of Eastern European women who sell Free Software Foundation merchandise and give away propaganda stickers. Stallman issues his words and actions with an authority all of his own, transforming himself into an agent provocateur working outside (some) conventions. The Romantic performance of the heroic outsider artist or rebel figure relates to many free culture advocates, such as WikiLeaks' main representative Julian Assange. For instance, Assange is now a household name even though his site itself runs on the anonymising Tor network [a.k.a. darknet]. Magazines like Rolling Stone feature articles on hackers as if they are a new genre of rock star.[7]

For the purposes of this introduction, the important components are the
performance of code, the hacker, and how these slot into the advocacy of a free software code base which functions as a dynamic open repository (perhaps even a deep vault) for people (who know how) to extend upon it.[8] Barbara Maria Stafford reflects upon the recurrent idea of the ‘digital magoi’ and their ability to be ‘in direct contact with code’ (Stafford 2008). Also, Florian Cramer argues that, ‘Information as a code that executes into political action and into utopia existed before the Free Software movement. It was central to – the original 1614 Rosicrucian manifesto Fama Fraternitas – (1998, p. 51). We can draw similarities between occultism, the free software movement, and the philosophes of the Reformation who were protesting – among other things – the authority of the priestly hierarchy as the sole interface to God and who demanded that everybody be able to read the Bible (source code) in order to establish their own relationship with Him.

04 User insisted too much, dying badly

Authorship and acknowledgement of prior or existing art are not new, but they have been brought to prominence through the twentieth century corporatization of techné (creative industries). Thanks to that, the upper middle class are now able to purchase hardcore status from online band merch, dissidence from the tattoo parlor, activism from Greenpeace, and feminism at Chanel.[9] However it is the discussion of where people draw the line in acknowledging technical contributions to an artwork that is the pertinent topic; for instance, designers or artists who never acknowledge the coders’ contribution. In principle, the tools of free software remove the stern barrier between software users and developers (Read/Only) as the software’s source code is made available for users to modify and extend. It delightfully and undoubtedly becomes exposed to idiosyncratic configurations in a process often termed ‘forking’ (in version control systems such as GitHub, a shared code repository). But it is vital to share not only the source of the concept and/or code but also the genealogies, histories, traditions and philosophies that play out in this collaborative field.

The ramifications of the free software movement for me as an artist are that I’m able to both acknowledge, build on and respect another person’s work. This is not to say that I ruthlessly mine my lover’s, mentor’s (place intimate role here) deep thoughts and show them in an exhibition premise at a much later date, or that I overtly discuss on social media the considerations of someone else as if my own. Instead to acknowledge that one is influenced throws individual authorship into high relief.

Of Stallman’s _GNU Manifesto_, Ayméric Mansoux writes ‘Looking at the text itself, we can see that the tone and the writing style used by Stallman make the _GNU Manifesto_ closer to an art manifesto, than to yet another programmer’s rant or technical guideline’ (Mansoux 2011). The way in which the ‘legal system has had to deal with collaboration in its management of difference within the aesthetic and information economy is suggestive of a path applicable to other new and immaterial forms of production’, in which Mansoux’s text _My Lawyer is an Artist_ (2011) articulates a concise position for the artistic decision to choose an alternative to standard copyright and licenses for artwork.

The individual that gave his or her name to a discovery did not create or discover it all ex nihilo; rather, he or she was the one who brought together many separate streams. Source code contributes to a larger body of knowledge for people to acknowledge, extend and tweak to their personal disposition; the beauty of it is that it allows for complexity.

If we wormhole back in time to the publication of the first ‘How To’ manuals, or ‘machine books’; the necessity for idiosyncratic custom builds was discussed in the seventeenth century. Jan Lazarzidz highlights how these early ‘how to’ manuals, or ‘machine books’ emphasise the Readerly/Writerly activities of the machine, quoting the ingenious engineer Heinrich Zeising, for the general social body:

(emphasizing and explaining the technical apparatus. This pointing gesture... collapses the role of the viewer in the picture with that of the viewer in front of the picture: ‘I hope to please every refined person who looks carefully at these machines and reads their principles and properties. The gentle reader is truly considered... the most blissful person since he can benefit from these inventions for his own purpose with ease and free from worries’ (Lazarzidz 2009, p. 158, my italics).

Here we see how the seventeenth century engineer Zeising thinks it is worthwhile to have a Read/Write mode. That is, to be able to acknowledge and then copy an invention and, in so doing, gain an understanding of how its creator thought and felt, while always bringing in one’s own idiosyncrasies and vision in the understanding that all these efforts are related and have a larger common purpose.

Nancy Mauro-Flude: Occult computing for artists
As artists, programmers and/or users in a networked community we are always faced with our own necessary processes of self-discovery which, for regular users of computers, should also entail finding out how operating systems work and how to discover a computer’s internal system, language and power. What is of deeper interest to me are the ongoing connections with the occult.

While Lanier’s point may be accurate, he neglects to take into account how the movement’s innovation has flourished elsewhere as a social and economic process. The GNU/Linux Free Software Foundation campaigns for computer users’ freedom to cooperate and control their own computing conduct. There is an argument that Open Source software principles of ‘freedom of information’ and ‘universal interoperability of systems’ (open standards) are more valuable than the principle of ‘knowledge sharing’ passionately emphasised by the Free Software Foundation. The former includes the latter, but the latter inevitably does not include the former.

With its eclectic combination of earnestness and missionary zeal, Stallman’s _Saint IGNUScius’s_ act is a radical manifestation of this philosophical connection between performance and occult, of technocentrism and the often-intangible nature of software development.

The dilemma is not that it is proprietary software (closed to the source) being used to program the computer (some proprietary applications are open source and cost money) it is rather an ethical, and arguably, a spiritual issue. When the source code is both copyrighted and closed a problematic situation arises; the user may be unable to modify the software to his or her needs or acknowledge the source. We need to be in direct contact with the source code, lest we may die of thirst. We are not the measure of our actions, not entirely, so in the end it depends on how one would prefer to be ‘spoken’; by mercantile forces or by something quenching, vast and incomprehensible. It is unfortunate that many of us have lost an inner sense of the mystical (which lies outside of the consumer standard). Perhaps artists today must first restore their sense of the spiritual, for without that nothing matters anyhow.

05 Endnotes


2 For instance, this subculture shows many of their favourite codes via T-shirts fashion featuring witty idioms as shown on the ThinkGeek Merchandise site, viewed 18 December 2013. [http://www.thinkgeek.com/product/5d6a/]. L. Frank Baum’s 1900 novel and MGM’s 1939 motion picture The Wizard of Oz starring Judy Garland.

3 I attended Stallman’s lecture ‘Free Software in Ethics and in Practice’ at Stanley Burbury Theatre, University of Tasmania on September 30th, 2010.

4 For an account of the genealogy of the Unix machine and its offspring of *nix derivatives see Hardie, N (2007). I am required by law to write *nix, instead of UNIX as Selkirk, C writes ‘I used the term “*nix” to denote Unix, or more precisely Unix-like operating systems, this is due to the fact that Unix” is a trademark, and as such cannot be used in this way. However, as the operating systems we are discussing owe their historical roots to AT&T’s “Unix”, we will describe them generically as “*nix” (2004).


7 This is quite diverse and one could claim the ‘Hacker’ is the new celebrity which can be seen in diverse mass media coverage, from respected computer magazine Wired or popular culture arbiter Rolling Stone to more vernacular publications, for instance _Mirror UK_. See Quinn Norton, (2012); Rich, N 2010, ‘The American WikiLeaks Hacker: Jacob Appelbaum Rights repressive regimes around the world – including his own’, in Rolling Stone’, 15 December 2010, viewed December 2 2013, [http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/news/meet-the-american-hacker-behind-wikileaks-20101220].

8 Richard Stallman states, ‘Some people don’t realize that Saint IGNUScius is Saint IGNUScius’s way of not taking himself too seriously. Therefore, Warning: paying the Church of Emacs (or any church) too seriously may be hazardous to your health.’ Viewed 10 September 2013, <http://stallman.org/saint.html>.  

An Magazine 8.2
AND MAYBE SAYING WAS THE WRONG FORM OF ITS SAYING, AND THE SAME FOR THE ASKING (BEING THE WRONG FORM OF ITS ASKING)

AND THE SAME FOR THE QUESTIONS

Robert Cook & Benjamin Forster: and maybe saying was the wrong form...
AND it, this bit, has been edited by BF and RC. Yes. Because we contributed to the editing of this edition of un (with our editorial colleague SW) you’d think that this writing here should offer some kind of explanation about what is happening elsewhere in the mag, or at least some snappy editorialising about the world (probably the art world) and how the other sections of the mag shape new worlds or rage or academise at various targets. It doesn’t.

Robert Cook: Questions, asking. They abound. And here we are at the start of our second, and, for us, final un magazine. Our involvement started because un asked for an editor via a callout. A random ask. I then asked you, and then we asked them. And then we asked others. All random, this asking. And in the asking there is an expecting ... and, well ... in it, in them ... what? I will put it as a question to you, even though we’ve spoken, already, about it, on the Skype machine ... is the asking a more insistent thing, a thing that is somehow part of the structural essence of the art world ... as you live it ... artist boy?

No. It doesn’t because we haven’t read the other sections. No. This is what happened. No. Out of the entries gathered from the callout, we asked 10 contributors to contribute contributions (until that word sounded like Fanta repeated, Fanta Fanta).

Benjamin Forster: So, yeah, my entire personal history can easily be analysed as a series of intertwined askings. Art school - where I asked, got an interview, they asked, I answered, to which they answered ... heartbreakingly ... No (there may have even been tears). Anyway, this I think begins to illustrate it; a very boring process of articulating how each asking, and its answer determines our trajectory. Every grant application, every exhibition invitation, every residency, every callout, is an instant in which our desires face each other. In a way, our individual histories are reduced to a sequence of Yes, No, Yes, Yes, No ... (binary?) We are then as much defined by rejection – the Noes – as we are by acceptance – the Yeses. But there is something more here. In a sense the answer does not so much matter, but that the question is asked. But, why do we ask? What is the impulse? The need? (This is bigger than the ‘art’ world.) And who has the power? Is it in the asking or in the answering? Or do both positions exercise a certain agency?

Yes. We divided the mag up evenly and gave them each a section of space. After much fussing, we called the sections containers (but only really between ourselves and the un board by way of describing what we wanted to do). Sure. In these, they could contribute contributions that were rather-like-pretty-much-what they submitted, or edit their own mini-magazine. We gave the contributors minimal guidelines for their contributions.

RC: I feel like this is an idea I read once but I actually do think we simply exist in the doubling of the question and answer format. ‘Our’ agency is split then, and no one has it in a pure sense, and so (again maybe I read this somewhere and only half got it) there is both total power and no power and this is how we live, pulsing between poles, never safe, never stable, except in the necessary narrative dramas around permissions and invitations and applications ... and so ‘the question of asking’ is rooted in a fantasy about the possibility of not asking, of pure agency. And thereby this whole issue is pure fantasy – the fantasy of our hugely naive idea, and the ways that everything exists for us mostly as unknown territory. What are we ‘editing’? It is nothing but gaps ... especially to me. BF, how does this work for you, as the erotic editor who seems to have really connected with people through the process of ask and response? You are the mucous membrane, so to speak.

Ok. Indeed, the only real thing was to consider their work as not as a kind of thing that answers to un, but as a thing that is, as far as it is possible, an ongoing part of their practices. Yes. What we were hoping was to set up a country of un, of which there would be certain laws - style, page numbers, etc. The writers would then be self-governing!

BF: It comes to the question of meaning, where is meaning located? How is it produced? What is meaning? These are half-baked questions, but I would propose that the meaning of these uns is located in the sum of all the personal connections and conversations. Those with the contributors, but even more broadly, the interactions with the board of un, SW, all those who asked to be a part of both eight point one and two, those who felt alienated by the callouts, the advertisers, even the fluidity between you and I, etc. For me, this object, which is probably now in a reader’s hand, is not really the point, more just the physical manifestation of these ‘erotics’. Okay, well, of course this magazine is the point, but only as a reason to have these conversations, and also as continuation of this essential process of asking. It now sits as a question to the readers (or skimmers). It’s asking them – implicitly, as all statements act as questions – do you accept this? (Calvino comes to mind – that all comprehensible writing impresses itself onto the reader – asking quite violently for a Yes or a No. Picking up a book is inviting these questions; whereas advertising or graffiti intrude upon us unasked.)

But just to try and express this succinctly as I think that maybe all literary and artistic discourse operates like this. (There can be no science to literary criticism, and as such all of the writing around writing is merely to keep discussion alive.) un has been a process of continual conversations, invited and uninvited, hostile and generous. It is the material product of this constellation of askings, and as such now acts as another question.
Our ideas were a point of entry, sure, but I think that the questioning and challenging of others forced our position to take this form. To that point, our position is not really ours but a part of this process of asking. Don’t you think we could probably even locate our initial position as an answering back to previous issues of un, and the other art pulp?

Yes. They would be free states of the union. No. As implied then we decided that we would not edit or manage or comment. No. We mostly achieved this, except when courtesy demanded otherwise. Basically, it turned out to be tricky and we failed at maintaining it throughout. But we maintained it enough for it to be a real-conceit not a conceitful-conceit (if that’s how those words go).

I think I emailed you this quote some time ago?

...there exists something (“me”) and another thing (this other “me” that represents the possible) to which I relate myself in order for me to ask myself if there exists something of the sort that I think of as possible. This something coexists at least as much as “me.” But this needs to be drawn out in the following way: there does not exist just these “me”s understood as subjects-of-representation, because along with the real difference between two “me”s is given the difference between things in general, the difference between my body and many bodies. This variation on an older style of philosophizing is only meant to point out that there has never been, nor will there ever be, any [real] philosophical solipsism. In a certain way, there never has been, and never will be, a philosophy “of the subject” in the sense of the final [infinite] closure in itself of a for-itself.


Maybe. Even so, under all of this was that freedom seemed to be what this issue was about. However, as a way of not making our conscripts feel too lonely, as a way of helping individual states feel part of the union, this issue’s other editor, Suzette Wearne, offered shepherd guidance and knot un-tangle-ment, as a roaming island operator, who ended up knowing more about this issue than we do.

RC: I misread you when you had the quote thing above. I thought you said I wrote it. Then I looked again and thought you said I sent it to you. Then, finally, I got it — you sent me the quote. In the first reading I thought what???? did I really write that? And I half convinced myself I did. And then I wondered what happened to that person, that thinker? Where did he go? (I am always losing myself, so it wasn’t destabilising.) Then the second misreading was about what it was, and I thought that, well, I have no idea who wrote it but it sounded good, and I was probably trying to keep up a dialogue at some point and figured it would make me sound engaged. But then I find out you sent it, and the quote has become a kind of filtered mush to me. I cannot read it anymore. My questions have sent it into another space, a Fanta space. Which rather conveniently describes people’s responses to anything that does not adhere to the existing laws of art-storytelling. To not describe, to not make a judgment, these absences cannot be tolerated. It is all just Fanta.

Totally. We guess we wanted to offer pure-ish freedom (like bottled spring water) or at least its possibility (like ‘organic’ tomatoes), or at least its threat (like stuff Sartre probably wrote about). Again, quite naively.

BF: As an aside to your points about agency and decisions, could we not frame this differently, that we have no agency except in those moments where we give over to another, when we ask? To be super deterministic about it, in making decisions there is no real alternative — the choice was always your’s and you would decide the same regardless. It is only an illusion of choice. Whereas in deferring to another, in asking to ... you open up alternatives. This is the moment you make real possibilities. They are the only moments that matter, as the answers are unknowable.

Yes. Quit. In an undefendably under-grad-ish way.

RC: Yes. I like that! Buddhist boy! And in the asking is the idea of an approach. And, art exists in these spaces (spaces that are unknown, in exactly the same way as the rest of un is unknown to me, to us) and then one way this might be spoken is like this:
Doh la, mm goi (到了，唔該) [or Here is good, Thanks]
KK+JLD

It’s 2:24am and we have just made it through the Beijing airport depressurisation zone (customs). T2 has an Hourly Lounge where you can buy periods of rest. Past midnight, you can only buy one day’s worth of rest, but if you’re lucky they’ll let you have only six to eight hours which is roughly 50 bucks – discounted rest.

Walk west along the equator ‘gaining time’, buy some for $50 and use it for sleeping.

Don’t expect too much; it is still indefinite that your favourite star will come.

Somehow there are mosquitos in this little underground airport hotel room.

I didn’t mean to meet my old friend at the airport; it was just a haphazard meeting.

Small things that are the product of really big things. Like faded paper being the product of light from many, many kilometres away.

About real vs. fake.
Insurance is simply coat-hangers and bags with the brand legitimising trust, the idea of providing use value. Insuring getting lucky? Instead of ‘risking it’ – trusted to do it for you – they’ll JUST DO IT for you.
Brands are surplus, you buy them so people know you’re in surplus.

Unexpected expenses diminished the size of my bank account.

In a clothes market in the middle of Beijing there are lots of shops with the same stuff but a few variations – the perfect number of tiny changes between shops to keep you interested.
In between two kind of identical stalls there’s a tiny tattoo parlour with a kid inside having a big skull tattooed onto his shoulder blade. He briefly smiles.

The discussion curtailed when the fire alarm went off.

Sitting in Shanghai drinking Starbucks and thinking about self-regulatory systems as a typhoon mangles the streets outside.

A constant wind deformed the tree.

Rushing across Rainy City at night to find black and white size S Shanghai exclusive Adidas skirt. Eyeballs unprotected from lower level umbrellas.

Painting as video / video as painting, framing TV screens, Kanye sublime.

The television screen accumulates dust.

I’m leaning in the corner of a gallery (OCAT) holding my guts. I want to cry. I wish it was emotional but it’s just a bad Pepes Ikan I had in Indonesia.

Pass me the fluoro pink and yellow hand fire machine cos I’m going to smoke a middle south sea beside a picture of the ocean in my head.

Max smokes but he is not addicted.

Behind smoke curdling the light between the curtains, I stare out tracing the landscape with my eyeballs.

Plastic bags contract when being heated.

Going to sail a bodyboard bag full of weed back to Australia.

To find the true self, one is suggested to live a secluded life for a while.

Up late at night after driving. Had a big cola in Bali that must have had more caffeine than I thought. All I can think is: If I could
pop-shove-it I would do one right now over a small bookcase that contains a single philosophical text lying on its side.

As the plane lurches all the people go oooaaaahh and my head spins hard forward.

Summer salts.
Iron deficient.

Crescent moon
Slow boat

The picnic was casual, so we all wore shirts.

Heartfelt
Heavyset

Glow
in
the
dark

The silence was broken by an occasional scream.

Got McDonald’s depression in 798. It’s funny how a big city can depress you. Compress you. Beijing doesn’t feel heavy, despite the density of pollution, but I do. Brain in a fog, reason for being here kind of sliding away towards ‘fuuuuck this’. But the city is cool and weird and green. It’s holding this art stuff up against everything that’s grinding me down.

A bus transported the emaciated refugees to the camp.

Landscape orientation here (China) is portrait both traditionally and now contemporarily regarding highrise buildings and urban spaces.

You will be having dinner tonight in one of the world’s most densely populated areas.

The moon was screened by clouds.

Mustard Seed is going to provide you with movements.

Work hard
Works on paper
(Zhu Ziqian)

Using an app called Shanghai WOW to find MOCA to buy a fake bust of David that fits in your pocket.

You must cushion fragile objects carefully when you pack them.

At the West Bund Art Fair I notice that the gallery booths smell like PVA and wet drying paint.

There is something about the compression of these things that makes it all feel a little too much like visiting a crazy relative.

The kettle boiling is like the wind on the top of a mountain.

You have overlooked several of the mistakes in this work.


Yes. Cat eyes. Voodoo dolls. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWbFdlClpJE. We miss having full tote bags.

JLD: …

KK: …

No. It is like having a Scatleptic set as a kid and then not having anyone to play it with, or in front of. You attend to it as a thing you reached for, and then, what actually is it? This route, this fixed pattern of motion that is really not even motion.

BF & RC: …

KK: …

JLD: …

KK: …

BF & RC: …

KK: …

JLD: …

BF: before this:

Not quite another form of nostalgia for Cixous … and … http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=AKkQLZEEY
You /but there’s always plenty of other fish in the sea/ Me

Kaho Hashimoto

You stared at me like a cat staring mindlessly into an afternoon drizzle, blank but intimate, and I knew you were thinking of him while looking at me, and you probably thought that I could never really tell, and maybe that was the problem. All my big mouthed poetry doesn’t seem to be getting us anywhere, probably because I’m too afraid to actually say it to your face and I wish you would say something more to me than agree with your subtle sighs.

You got me thinking,

The weather was never in our favour, and it’s not like we were going anywhere with our heads like London weather. I tried thinking it was the winter, but it probably wasn’t because both of us weren’t good enough to write anything on our own. I have a theory in mind that you probably won’t like, but I’m pretty sure that most of the 19th century Russian writers you adore more than you adore me only wrote the way they wrote not because they dreamt about forever but because they didn’t have anything else better to write about in their endlessly empty winters.

on how it’s hard to trust a fish, unless it’s in a fish bowl

The moon is too far, and the clouds are too close, and nothing matters more than your traditions and that’s why we stopped drinking coffee together in the morning. You grew up believing in the moon, I grew up supposedly believing in the sun, but never faithfully lived up to it because of the grave fear of skin cancer and plastered myself with sunscreen for protection as if everyday were Halloween. We don’t celebrate anything that everyone else seems to celebrate – not that that’s a problem – but what would we ever speak about if we weren’t afraid of what we wanted?

because you never know where it goes or when it leaves or when it hides

You’re not my muse or anything. No, it’s not like that. It’s not really about the way you make me feel, but rather the way you do little things, like the way you picked up Dubliners by James Joyce that one time you dropped it in the bookstore, and picked it up in the most appropriate way ever imagined to pick up an accidentally dropped dusty copy of Dubliners and put it quietly back in its original emptiness between Ulysses and Finnegans Wake, where it belonged. There’s a funny charm to the fleeting edge of your movements, a similar sort of charm to when I look out the window from the train and become gently absorbed into the passing night lights, particularly just after Southern Cross, and realize that I’m charmed more by the passing sense of the lights rather than the actual lights themselves.

or when it dies

It’s sort of like listening to The Smiths on record, it doesn’t really matter what Morrissey whines about but he whines well, and I don’t exactly remember where we were but it was almost summer and the back of my neck was tickling with sweat because a few days earlier I didn’t have enough guts to chop my hair off and ended up running out of the hairdresser’s. That day you surprised me by telling me that you’ve never properly listened to The Smiths, and everything started to make sense; my brooding, self-loathing heart still somehow charmed you, only because Morrissey hadn’t worn you out before with his own moping words.

But you’ve got to trust me when I say

‘You are what you eat’ was what my mother used to say. In that case I’m a disappointing bowl of cereal, and I guess that kind of
Robert Cook & Benjamin Forster: and maybe saying was the wrong form...

makes sense of how I’m always waiting for the rain but am never committed enough to dance for it. And that day was the first time it rained in two weeks, and I guess I should’ve known that there was something wrong when the only thing I felt after having lunch with you was that weird fuzzy spinach feel painted across the surface of my teeth. It’s the same unfortunate discomfort that lingers after bad sex, or when French films accidentally get translated with different pronouns, with a subtitle written across the screen half a second later than it’s meant to.

I’d charm all the fish out the sea to be with you

We go together like philosophy and poetry. And it in that sense I’m not trying to make anything happen. I was never interested in lasting, because you’d frown whenever I used other romantic’s words but say that it’s too heavy when I mouth my own. I’ve wondered how long I could keep something so weightless up in the air for, kind of like how the wind would play with abandoned plastic bags during an oncoming storm, and the only thing I knew was that I liked the way your eyes looked when they weren’t looking at me.

I’m trying to think lightly.

RC: Lightly. And so, thinking, trying, Kaho, in this piece, art, culture, writing, constructions of self are blurred, blended. I wonder how you’ve been working at developing this approach over your practice to date? Also was there a sense of oppositionality to what you are doing? I mean did you think, no, I do not want to write in a didactic, critical vein, and I must find another mode?

Kaho Hashimoto: I never felt like I was developing anything, I guess I write a lot in general in a hazy blur; I’ve got this ongoing word document from the start of this year where I just write daily about everything I feel endlessly without structure. I never had a sense of opposition or never promised myself not to write in certain ways – I’m bad at keeping promises.

Yeah. But what happens after freedom? This backwards and forwards. In asking to establish little provinces of un within un, we also gave ourselves freedom from un within un. Freedom not to editorialise or academicise.

Freedom from playing dress ups, and freedom from the fatigue of the effort to oversee/control, etc., ‘cultural production’... it can play by itself...

RC: I also wonder, how do you start a piece ... with a fragment, a feeling, or a sense of wanting/need to talk about something by way of not talking about it even? Part of me wants it to be the last bit there...

No. Yes. But also and mostly freedom to ‘do something’ despite all that and now freedom to return to how this all started. A conversation via email. Pathetically honest emails of pretend poetry that ended up being pretend-pretend poetry. This is the beginning in a new way, not of the poetry or even the us-ness, but of the opening of it up, as a leaving it all behind (to near-quote Ride).

KH: I’m probably the most passive-aggressive person ever, not that I mean to be ... but you’re kind of right, I’m always missing something and everything I write is everything I am ashamed of saying out loud.

Perhaps. One thing that is missing from all this is ... But really, it does not ... No. Questions may linger and some answers may come, evolve, ossify into the form of answers to questions, the only one being here-being the oversaying, oversaid, overstated answer that everything is about the approach, so much so that we’d love simply to make a suburban ice-cream van of things and keep culture in these terms, it all understood, forever and now as a perpetual, audible moving towards, it all, it-all-everything a kind of non-commitment commitment that draws us out of our houses with no shoes on ... Towards who? Alto whom?

BF: Your words are addressed to a You, an endless you in various situations, how do you think about the You? Is it a way of talking to an unnamed someone, or is the You a technique of unravelling situations in serial (the connective thread of universalism)?

Hmmm. We still yearn-dream of anchors though.

KH: It's a bit of both. In the beginning You used to be someone unnamed, something whole and complete, but recently I realised that You became a funny abstract morph of bits and pieces of everything I long for. It's kind of like when you repeat a word over and over again and it doesn't really sound like anything anymore, and in a way that happened with You for me.

Yes. And besides, there is a simple, flat, fatigue dropped on, and dug into, our ocean bed, with this dumb awareness that so much of what we have talked about is not really here, was not even pushing against the iceberg. Like the gaps between questions, and other sudden ice-melts. Feeling her/his fingers/hair gently slip through the gaps between mine/my arms until we were holding hands/freezing/thawing and almost museum-gelled into a shared coma. We were fifteen/we were one hundred and fifteen, and she never called me back/gave me my bugle/change back. Yes. No. Fuck the werewolf. www.fuckthewerewolf.com
AND IN THAT RE-MEMBER THESE?

ITS ENTRY POINT AND THEN THIS?

AN INDEX POINTS CONTRAPUN AND OUT-TOWARDS

CONTRIBUTORS

KK+JLD Kailana Sommer and Jack Lanagan Dunbar have been working to-gather since the beginning of 2013. kkiplusjld.com

Kaho Hashimoto is a 21 year old lass from Singapore/ Japan with a mysterious persona who likes books and art. Enjoys the sight of a good eggplant.*

Benjamin Forster is Robert Cook works
Sarah Rose: Interviewing Nina Simone
Interviewing Nina Simone

The first version of Interviewing Nina Simone was published in February 2014 as part of an exhibition pamphlet for the Speaking In Tongues exhibition at the Centre for Contemporary Art in Glasgow.

INTENSE FEELINGS

Often sheet music has to be written out by hand. I attempted to play the guitar for a while at school. The music was chosen by my tutor and was written out note by note, word for word, by hand. At the time I thought he was being anti-institutional, the handwritten instructions undermining the authority of print. His sheet music felt familiar, friendly, but also cheap. I have later realised that this is a musical tradition with a long history, one that actually gives recognition to its copywriter. It is customary practice to take a copy of the original score and inscribe it in one’s own hand for use in performance. This allows for a new version of the score to exist, while tiptoeing copyright issues and performance rights. Musicians have mentioned to me that their teachers also asked them to hand copy scores, encouraging them as students to read through the material carefully and get to know it well.

The copying and circulation of material both preserves and distorts the original. Copies create an archive more like an oral history. Rather than peering into the stagnant object and hoping that it will do the work for you, the score activates the user in production and reproduction. This idea resonates when hauling out the archive and making a document ready for an exhibition. Inevitably the content gets framed differently, the documents performing culturally and physically around their own score. Like an oral history passing through a mouth to another, from one YouTube user to another, the exchange maps the inter-relationships of peoples; it is testament to the expression of the idea rather than the idea—the score—the song itself.

Nina Simone’s ten-minute performance of the three and a half minute song “Feelings” at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 1976 comes to my mind. Originally, the song was written and composed by Louis Gasté and Albert Morris. Simone performed many covers, for example, “Strange Fruit” by Billie Holiday or “I Put a Spell on You” by Screamin’ Jay Hawkins. She performed unpredictably, taking the expectations of the song and rearranging them to be confrontational. Simone undoes the compulsions of high performance that were fed to her through classical music training and an entertainment career. Simone antagonizes the control regulated by the perceived score.

Nina Simone “Feelings” (Montreux Jazz Festival)
Uploaded by jerdo9110, 7 years ago
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mH6ZESN8cxU

Simone’s performance 1976 of “Feelings” is a powerful act of resistance. Early in the piece, she stops playing and says: “I do not believe in the conditions that produced a situation that demanded a song like that.” Simone breaks rules, defiantly ruptures the relationships between score and the performer, the
performer and the audience. There is a moment in the song where, after playing like a machine, she looks out at the audience as if she can no longer go on (I expect her to bound off stage). And yet a moment later, the audience’s presence urges her forward and she continues to play. Simone pauses, demands attention, questions and carries on, taking the tempo, pace, and original song lyrics as she wants to produce a new kind of situation. In doing so she demonstrates the capacity and possibility of will.

Although it is often assumed that will is a basic component of the human condition, it is a capacity that has been denied many people. As Lisa Blackman writes, “Will was seen as a distinctly human capacity that could be removed or suspended, intensified or destroyed.” For the periods that Simone performs, it seems she recovers a will, a way out of no way. However, securing power to assert control of her own is not simple. During the performance she says “Feed me, feed me, feed me.” She is still under constraint, and at the mercy and nourishment of the audience. Over-exuberance in her playing at Montreux mimics the service expected from her. At other times she is exhausted and lectures the crowd. In a particularly pertinent moment, she plays the piano in the air, as if to show her body’s inability—or perhaps ability? It could be either way—to obtain autonomy.

[07:09 -07:26]

It is understood that there are many emotions driving Simone’s interpretation of the score. Simone’s visible artistic practice at this time had become increasingly political. Following the imprisonment of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1964, Simone’s songs and performances can be characterised as a form of African-American civil rights activism. To give context to Simone’s performance at Montreux, she had often played at this festival, but before this specific performance she had not played publicly for several years. Prior to this she worked at a small jazz club, in order to make money. Simone’s boss at one of the clubs told her that he would fire her unless she sang, so she started. From the footage it seems as though she was playing to a predominantly white audience. She was also possibly suffering from mental illness, although this was retroactively defined. ³

[08:31-09:43]

Her entire performance at the Montreux Festival in 1976 could be described as episodic. She moves from a seated quiet whisper to scraping her deep grainy voice across the stage in a growling march. She changes, often mid-sentence. Her persona on stage is erratic. Within each song there are multiple different moods. Biographical details may suggest interpretations for this changeability, but her complex performance rhetoric makes analysis of her behaviour deeply difficult. She did not wish to simply entertain us with this song. Simone is cultivating a presence as a manipulated and exercised force; she is making us grapple with presumed underlying assumptions and her complex identity on stage.

[00:16 - 00:40]

“Feelings” is performed in stops, starts and splutters. Simone seems to throw herself into the song, dedicated to the process of unpacking it. At times she is lost in it, sometimes confused and at other times even distressed. In moments she is playing with vigorous exaltation. Her gestures repetitive, actions mechanised; she is fighting to play it. At one point she refers to herself as a “robot.” In carrying out the service of performing, she withdraws herself: Mike Sperling, a conceptual artist part of Orders & Co says an instruction work is characterised by the “rhetoric of withdrawal.” For long parts of the performance Simone appears vacant, her body merely an extension of the machine, a prosthesis. She is the piano and the piano becomes her. Simone’s “Feelings” is not only a statement about misery, but also about dignity. Her withdrawal of expression becomes a form of anti-performance: a way of being public whilst keeping something for herself.

[05:37 - 07:43]

I access Simone’s subjectivity from within layers of objectivity. She never once acknowledges the camera. In doing so it seems the camera is external to her performance: it never has a visible impact on the performance itself. The camera frame captures only her head or at times her hands. Watching the clip, I am lip-smackingly face-to-face. The footage is mesmerising and yet it is unbearably claustrophobic. Only a few times does the frame give space to Simone’s upper body. I am brought through the eye of the camera to the actual performance. Nina Simone, so personal and physical.

[07:14 - 07:40]

In the recording of this performance I see what I do not want to see. I see Simone’s ticks, her rapid eye movements, her sweaty, pock-marked skin and the second camera that preys in on her from the other side of the stage. In what is more than just a recital, she invites the viewer right in, breaking down the wall between the audience and the entertainer. I am in it, a part of it, not a consumer or receiver but pushed and pulled as I am roused and then broken within the same line. She devours me totally through her image control. I am incredibly attentive.
Inter
Feel
Sarah Rose: Interviewing Nina Simone
And then suddenly I become self-conscious to the viewing of the viewing. I am hiding the image in my writing, reading the image with the song, re-writing the image as a still and stagnant document, and reconstructing the image with every letter. I am losing the subject and finding a new one. Alternating between the screen of my writing and the window of her performance, with every tap of my finger attempting to digest a feeling that will not settle, I become suddenly aware of my default position while writing this, my hands hold a lump. This lump wavers stupidly over the keys. Like I often do while writing, I have developed yet another psychosomatic toothache. This happens often when I write, as writing makes me anxious. But it is only in writing that I also find my cure: another machine?

I view her performance from an impossible position. The camera’s eye gives access to a space that cannot be occupied physically in any other way; the audience is allowed on stage. YouTube is a concert for one. It has set up Simone for an analysis of a very intimate kind. It is the visibility made possible by this recording that has a profound effect. I am brought into proper communication with a living spectre.

In the 1990s, talk shows rose to prominence. They offered “an active, even aggressive, in-your-face identity to people who have been represented as victims ... by the dominant culture.” Talk shows could create the right conditions to provoke and capture human expression. This encouraged an emotional identification with the participants ensuring engagement in the issues raised in the programme. Talk shows used affective labour, human contact and improvised interactions as content.

I have thought about this piece of writing as being like an interview on a talk show programme. New morphed into something else, the origin of the word interview is s’entrevouer, meaning to see each other. Staging Simone’s “Feelings” is similar to a talk-show experience. The presence of an audience (usually seated behind a camera) is a vital element. Watching Simone’s performance on YouTube, my experience is similar; the implied public helps trigger a sensation of social connectedness. By connection I mean that what I am watching engages me in the same way as a live public and social event does.

It is hard to know whether Simone is enjoying herself. She understands that labour is not just physical but also emotional. Emotional labour “Requires us to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others.” Rather than confusing my eyes and ears in a play of misrepresentation (as many contemporary music videos do) she confuses my mind and feelings. She boils me up, and then turns off the gas. In manipulating my emotional resources, she fractures a source of self I honour proudly as being integral to my individuality.

As an entertainer she co-opts the emotional mechanisms that society encourages and service industries capitalise on. This stimulation is painful, making me think about all the other intrusive instruments of communication that I simply take for granted.

[0:27-0:33]

[1:09-9:06]

[2:08 -2:55]

[8:25 -9:06]

Words, and their authority, suddenly seem so futile, as they can be understood too easily. Emotions too. Wordlessness and emotionlessness seem to have an equally transgressive function. Simone’s quiet does not take me to an easily articulated, convivial or comfortable place. Perhaps the clip could be described as a slow and aggressive massage at a place that really aches. I can describe what I see and hear in the clip, but transcriptions fall short of the articulation of feeling that is evoked by Simone. There is no clarity to her expressions, especially when she is devoid of them. It is most difficult when her expression is empty and voice is mute, making us aware of the feelings not visible. How do you describe feelings when they are too subtle and uncertain? Because they cannot be pinpointed, they remain abstracted, unregulated and without a score. Is it then that Simone’s feelings are freed from constraints?

[5:02- 5:30]

Simone does not ease the dynamics of the situation, she enforces them and not from outside, but from within. She maintains critical distance between the self and the other; the audience and performer. Simone keeps me as a viewer desirous and distant, whilst complicit. I do not try to identify with Simone by putting myself in her position, but rather the dynamic of being complicit induces my capacity for empathy.

[0:37- 0:47]

Much like work songs made throughout histories of labour, Simone’s songs navigate the brutal realities of a hostile environment. I am reminded that her songs are part of a society that made her. John Blacking says, “A person may create music for financial gain, for private pleasure, for entertainment, or to occupy a variety of social occasions and he need not express a concern for the human condition. But his music can not escape the stamp of society that made its creator human and the kind of music he composes will be related to his
consciousness of and his concern for fellow human beings." I am conditioned to think that happiness is achieved through our own self-actualisation and individual inclinations. But does this then suggest that I am cut off from others, dealing with a reality only from within? Simone's performance of someone else's song makes clear I am not. Her call and response tactic emphasizes integration of an individual effort into a more powerful whole: the concert in all its capacity.

[0:43- 0:56]

[06:29- 07:09]

The Montreux clip offers an ever-present performance. Simone is a spectre not dead, but living. Functioning as documentation, the footage has a power that transcends its original presentation as a live, staged act. Agency exists in the nature of Simone's performance as well as the document itself. Simone needs a reaction! The clip implicates the audience watching it, extending out to include the space in which it is viewed. Simone uses the score only to arrive at another score. I am in the process of playing it. She disintegrates the limits of the score as an instruction to occupy the "world at large — life, itself, material."* I am astounded at the way time has collapsed. With technology's aid, 1976 extends its effect to the present.

And even when contributing to un Magazine as an online and print version, I am aware of the copy, the reproduction of material into a greater narrative*, the many possible versions a document has and the space available for neglect. I feel the power of Simone's performance only in watching this clip, aware that it is nestled in amongst other versions of the song on YouTube. I am aware of the significance of the environment in which the original performance existed, with an audience, camera crew, and lighting rig. It could be said that this was part of Simone's band. And fittingly, this recording finds its place back amongst a collective viewing platform, as an upload amongst the contributions of many other YouTube users. It is active and heard, playing on and with me as a viewer.

The recording negates the performance's singularity as an event. For me, this recording transcends the idea of the original performance. Had I been present in Montreux in 1976, I would have been far back from the stage. All I would have heard would have been the audio, the stamp and bump of the people around me, all hovering for a glimpse. Instead, I can watch it again and again. Each time I am caught in new details.

This writing acknowledges many other voices including those of Will Holder, Alex Waterman, Sarah Tripp, Rebecca Wilcox, Kendra Sullivan, Kari Owynar, Scott Rogers, Isla Leaver-Yap, LUX in Glasgow, and Alexander Storey-Gordon.

(Endnotes)
2 "Make a Way Out of No Way" was the title given to Episode 6 of a festival dedicated to the art and politics of wayward communities who refuse to be bound by the fictions of race and sex. The festival was held in Glasgow 26-28 September 2014.
3 Facts about Simone's mental illness only came out in 2003 when Sylvia Hampton and David Nathan, fan club founders published "Nina Simone: Break Down & Let It All Out" (2004)
9 Early in the 1976 concert at Montreux, Simone said that she had written five albums but there were 77 bootlegs.
Anselm Kiefer came to me via a lover. Photos of leaden books with wings littered his office and his home. The time and place of my first conscious encounter with Kiefer’s work are marked with the metallic slag of romantic memory, a memory that has burnedish quickly. Only later did I realize that an image I have seen myself in for decades is a Kiefer painting. A woman wields a torch in the forest—she is at a distance, in a white vestment, the forest is a red-grey watery soot and she seems to revel in the menace of her burning switch. She is a phantasm that gestures to Heidi in her somnambulist interlude, to Hansel in the witch’s oven, to a pagan way of being in the world that modern Germany has never truly exorcised.

Thinking through the connection between these manifestations of Anselm Kiefer’s work in my life, I am unsettled. This is an artist who needles me in incredibly intimate places. On the one hand, his work distils my professional anxiety about never knowing enough of human history to write anything useful before it melts away in my hands. On the other hand, Kiefer’s work muffles the dissonance of being female in a masculinist world. His work is often described as ‘masculine’, yet his dexterous use of irony reminds us to be careful with meaning. A man giving the Nazi salute is not necessarily a Nazi. And a woman in the forest is not necessarily a woman.

 Positioned in the opening room of the Royal Academy exhibition, the latest sculpture in Kiefer’s winged book series, Die Sprache des Vögel [The Language of the Birds], 2013, transforms the foyer and marks it as the threshold of Kiefer’s world. We are in the presence of the eagle of Germany, a Frankenstein cobbled out of folk tales and fiction into a raptor of war. Yet also here is the vulture of history; we are about to pick over the bones of the dead.

In the first room of the exhibition I find my painting of the woman in white, who is not a woman but Kiefer himself. In the flesh, the painting seems to drip with liquid red; the forest becomes the womb in which his future work gestates. Mann im Wald [Man in the Forest], 1971, is by no means Kiefer’s most technically proficient painting, yet it remains my favourite. It functions as a quiet reminder that we are all—man, woman, child—vulnerable to fear and fire and darkness. Underneath that white sheath is a naked body whose age and gender is unimportant in the face of the industrialised murder that stalks much of Kiefer’s work.

In the works curated by the Royal Academy, Kiefer frequently plays with the inconsequentiality of age and gender. Where he paints human forms, distinctions between man, woman and child often blur and become unimportant in the face of industry, landscape and time. A key philosophical ambivalence in Kiefer’s work presents itself in this dissolution of the human subject into land and sky: the industrialised genocide of the Holocaust dehumanized us all, but in the context of cyclical time, nothing is ever truly lost or gained. Our humanity will return and be lost over and over again.

At least, this is the impression given in the sculpture Die Erdzeitalter [Ages of the World], 2014, a work created specifically for the snug, domed alcove in the Royal Academy where it is displayed. A stratified pile of discarded canvases has become a forgotten dump, accreting toward the sky; weedy sunflowers poke out from the layers of human mess. On the walls is Kiefer’s handwritten scrawl, reproducing a chart of geological time. We could be led to an impression of the futility of art in the face of inevitable annihilation, but peculiarly the inverse impression prevails: although we may not understand the value of our art and poetry in the moment it is produced, there will be others who look for and find meaning in what we leave behind. This is the hope in Kiefer’s work—not that we will understand ourselves as individuals, but that humanity as a species will learn of itself in the eternal return of time.

This mysticism is reflected in the seeming lightness of Kiefer’s ego as represented in his works. He recurrently depicts himself...
in sivasana, yogic corpse pose, and lets
the lives of others take over his paintings.
The Romanian poet Paul Celan is such a
presence in this retrospective as to seem
a necessary companion on any journey
through Kiefer’s work. As a child, Celan
was interned along with his family in a
concentration camp in Transnistria, a
wartime territory that is no longer
recognized to exist. Kiefer’s diptych
Todesfuge, 1981 is based on a Celan
poem written in that camp (Death Fugue,
originally published in Romanian as Death
Tango in 1948).

The two paintings of Todesfuge, Margarethe and Sulamiet, are quietly
subversive meditations on the way female
purity is used to define racial identity.
Celan’s poetic characters seem at first to
be opposed—Margarethe, the Aryan camp
guard with her straw blonde hair, and
Sulamiet, the dark-headed Semitic
prisoner. Yet on close reflection, the two
paintings converse in a bewildering back
and forth of symbolic resonances. At the
distant vanishing point of the arched brick
tomb depicted in Sulamiet are seven
candles; the sunlit straw of Margarethe
seems charred at its roots. We can smell
the hair burning, and yet it is not
Sulamiet’s. Together, the two works
suggest that, in attempting to destroy
European Jewry, the grand dream of
Germany destroyed itself. This is not a
loss that Kiefer necessarily mourns.

This is not to say, of course, that Kiefer
does not mourn his dead. There are
bodies just under the surface of most of
these works. Having survived the murder
of his entire family in Transnistria in 1945,
Celan committed suicide in 1970.
Ingeborg Bachmann, the Austrian poet
and one-time lover of Celan to whom
Kiefer dedicates the work Für Ingeborg
Bachmann, died due to complications of
barbiturate abuse in 1973. The combined
effect of all this death is a sense of the
inevitability of human wretchedness.
Kiefer seems determined to impress upon
the viewer that there are horrors that must
be ever relearned as waves of human
generations mature and pass away before
their memories can be sieved through for
meaning. Ultimately, this effort works;
there is a dread that builds through this
exhibition just as it builds through life, as
fervently as we may wish to postpone it:
we will not live long enough to make
sense of the grand events that affect our
lives. Suicide is not an unreasonable
response. And then, following the long,
slow dawning of this dread across three
decades of his works, comes the almost
cheerful winking of For Robert Fludd: The
Secret Life of Plants, 2001. Fludd was a
sixteenth-century philosopher and
alchemist who believed that each plant on
earth had a correlating star in the
firmament. In his honour, Kiefer has
created a set of works comprising
constellations of diamonds set into lead
sheets, startling the viewer out of this
death reverie with a simple message: look
up. See the stars. That we do not
understand the meaning of our lives does
not mean there is none, and wonder is a
magical impulse.

The final room in the exhibition serves to
pull these two opposing impressions of
humanity into some kind of harmony. The
Rhine (Melancholia), 1982–2013, consists
of a warped concertina of wall-sized
canvases that convey the impression of
walking along the Rhine amongst bare
linocut trees and floating polyhedrons. The
word ‘melancolia’ is scrawled into the sky
and functions as a conclusion to the
retrospective. Kiefer’s invocation of
melancholy is perhaps the most human
gesture of them all. It is melancholy that
inspires art and poetry; and it is art and
poetry that will ultimately make sense of
our lives—long after we ourselves have
loved and lost and gone to join our dead in
the ground.

Cait Storr is an academic writer. She is
currently researching German colonialism
in the late nineteenth century.
Piecing it together

Anton Veenstra

Recently in Melbourne Paul Yore was trialed for producing and displaying allegedly paedophilic imagery. A member of the police force collecting evidence felt emboldened to cut out examples for the benefit of the court, in my book that's an all-time low for barbarian vandalism. A defense witness from the National Gallery of Victoria produced a definition of contextualisation, whereby the artist changed the frame of reference (and certainly the intention of the work) by découpage. It seems extraordinary that anyone could find the resulting artwork successfully lascivious, and worthy of a complaint. How true it is that evil is in the eye of the beholder; likewise extremes of sexual depravity. I once wrote a letter that was published in the Sydney Morning Herald; it resulted in a sex phone call from someone living in the outback, who rang to talk dirty; it had been provoked by the use in my letter of the word 'gangbang'. Both perspective and intention need to be considered in evaluating art.

My attention in the Paul Yore matter was drawn to the profusion and accumulation of his art practice. Similarly, Gaudi makes use of ceramic tiles of several differently patterns. In a process similar to fabric applique, he fractures and then re-assembles them; his only structural principle is columns of the same tile pattern, a vertical visual unifying element. I find it intriguing to ruminate how it is possible to fracture a visual pattern, and then create further interest by re-assembling the pieces in new ways. Gaudi nods to certain Mediterranean traditions, from Roman mosaic work to the Renaissance work of della Robbia. He supports the weight and sharp edges of broken tiles by making them an intrinsic part of his architecture and thus more than mere decoration.

In the age of modernist art there are few predecessors and mentors—I feel I have discovered mine in Gaudi's decorative practice, for my own button and object assemblage.

Anton Veenstra is a Sydney-based artist and writer.

Suzette Wearne: The Blind
Nobody cares but you

Suzette Wearne

In this room there’s a narrow floor-to-ceiling window facing east onto Church Street. Fleur’s rail-thin bones are sunken deep in a swamp of orange beanbag/dressing gown in front of the window. I can see one of her grey-soled feet and a patch of chenille draped over a vertical snag that might be her arm, guarding her peace from the life of the room. If not for that dressing gown and foot you wouldn’t notice she’s there. She’s sort of a malnourished Yolandi Visser, a twenty-eight-kilogram creature: mentally probably fourteen years old. I don’t know what normal dopamine receptors look like but if you asked me to draw Fleur’s I’d take a 2H and sketch a dozen strands of burnt hair. I mean, there’s almost nothing there. This place doesn’t know what to do with patients at her range, on that threshold of life and death and bent on annihilation. We don’t know now that in three weeks Fleur will be on the nasogastric tube at the Royal Women’s because even though the only room they have for her in life’s thrall is a airless cell, all exits are guarded by Stasi in nurse costume.

There are eight of us in art group this morning, not including Fleur. Paula, our diminutive therapist with yearbook hair and glasses, distributes pens and worksheets and says that for the first half of the session we’re to list three challenging things that happened this week. I’m not paying much attention to her, but the gist is that in the second part of the session we’re supposed to collage from a stack of non-triggering women’s magazines (Vogue Living, That’s Life) and draw and scrab all our misunderstanding on butcher’s paper.

The others are losing their shit on their worksheets, all their little right hemispheres in overdrive during the wrong half of the session. These past few weeks, only a couple of us have shown enthusiasm about the actual art-making part of creative therapy. I love it, but the others carry on as though it’s some kind of absurdist craft gulag. At the moment I’m happily stitching a picture onto a patch of yellowing pillowcase, from a photo of Richard I found on the CCAS blog, the one with his hand up someone else’s top. See? We’ve all regressed to various degrees to our fourteen-year-old selves, some of us physically, each of us emotionally—irascible, fascinated with ourselves, crushing on older boys.

The Richard project is provisionally allowed by Paula, after I made a deal with her in last week’s session, away from the others. I stayed back putting pencils in tubs and cleaning dried Clag off the tables. In exchange for my help she was forced to listen to the story about the low-grade nervous breakdown I had when I moved back to Melbourne, how I got a job in arts administration, and then how challenging I personally found it to create therapeutically ‘outside my own designated parameters’, or some wank like that. Then I told her about the patchwork Diana quilt I finished just before I was admitted, and the way I told it—as though I’m neck deep in a PhD—was stomach-turning. I used terms that have no relevance to my quilts, words like ‘seriality’, ‘narrative’ and ‘biographical determinism’. Full-tilt MUMA artist’s talk.

(In fact, that particular quilt, roughly queen size, was sewn together from tea towels commemorating the anniversary of the wedding of Lady Diana and Prince Charles. Each of their faces had been reproduced faithfully on linen, and over Diana’s I had embroidered in red wool things about talking to plants that Charles had been recorded as saying. I cut the tea towels into fifteen-centimeter squares and reassembled them in a basic grid. The alternating squares were patches of used serviettes that I’d embroidered with aphorisms about Diana’s mental illness. I worked on it for about eighteen months. It’s lined with wool and weighs a ton.)
topped and effete. Let’s call him Brendan. When I met Brendan I mistook for interesting the fact that he didn’t have a mobile phone. It turned out he was just a tight-ass, and, as most tight-asses are, morose and eternally coming down with a cold. We didn’t like each other much but a shared love of Alicia Keys and Boardwalk Empire kept us in each other’s beds every other night for a winter and a spring. We disagreed fundamentally on art and I lost each argument by crying. Not having studied at that university of hyper-academic non-objective artists where Brendan got his MFA, and not understanding the value of art on its own terms (actually having a limited grasp of what those words together even mean), I was at a great disadvantage. The crying didn’t help. Brendan had learnt somewhere to articulate with eloquence and authority what makes great art great, and how to impose upon non-great art an idea that makes it so.

Brendan had a savant-like knowledge of American art history and knew about the 1971 exhibition *Abstract Design in American Quilts* at the Whitney. In one of too many conversations we had about it I’d mentioned my Diana quilt. One day he found it on the top shelf of my wardrobe, pulled it out and, holding onto two corners, threw it open across the floorboards of my room. The throwing made a phloopp sound and lured clumps of dust and hair from the under the bed. He sneezed, wiped his nose on the cuff of his navy Marc’s jumper, and looked down at the quilt. Wrinkled and humiliated, it looked back at him.

I waited for a response.

He sneezed again.

Later that day, after two fingers of vodka, I called Brendan’s housemate’s mobile and asked to speak to him.

‘What did you think,’ I said, flatly.

‘About?’

‘The quilt.’

He said ‘It’s fine. I guess I just ... I thought there would be more ... space.’

My face flushed hot. Incidentally, this is exactly what I will say if my parents ever sit me down and ask for feedback on the brain they gave me.

‘I’m thinking of exhibiting it,’ I said, defensively.

‘In Melbourne?’

‘Yeah.’

It was quiet on the other end for a moment and then he said; ‘I ... don’t think that’s a good idea, career-wise.’

‘Right. Because it lacks space and order. Because it isn’t meta enough.’

‘No, it’s not that,’ he said. ‘I think you should be careful what you make public about yourself. The Melbourne scene can be cruel.’

I bristled.

Of course Brendan was right about those two things, and neither of them was necessarily his fault. Some people can stay an hour and a half at a Gertrude opening talking exclusively about surface texture, can efface themselves almost entirely from their creativity and their work, and can craft an answer that references *Conceptual Art in Moscow 1960–1990* by Boris Groys when someone asks them what they had for lunch. Which is to say that some people are either off-the-charts
intelligent or innately self-protective. These people are good at Melbourne, and I'm jealous of that skill they probably take for granted. Brendan claimed to agree that the 'Melbourne scene' was a mean-faced blowhard on a good day, but he had struck up a much more civilized relationship with her than I ever could. Back then, Melbourne seemed a karmic response from the universe to everything I'd done wrong when I lived in the Territory. As well as being paranoid, I was unutterably cold. The staff say it was probably the low BMI, but they're wrong. People are quite delusional about the livability of a city that is as glacial as Melbourne is for most parts of the year. Again, the weather wasn't technically Brendan's fault. Nevertheless, my resentment towards him eventually gave birth to a rancorous harpy with fangs; I challenged his loyalty constantly, deleting his emails and yelling at him in public until he met a girl he decided was much less likely to kill him in his sleep and left me for her. I was shattered.)

I don't mind Paula, but Dialectical Behavioural Therapy is all over the shop and to be honest I couldn't work out if she was serious. There are generally two kinds of staff here: the Nurse Ratched-y types who don't even talk to you when they take your obs in the morning and may as well do their laps of the ward at night in a helicopter with Wagner's Ride of the Valkyries roaring from a PA (I'm willfully combining film references here), and the ones with the kind eyes who work to the doctrine of 'the patient is expert'. I have more respect for the former, because the way I see it, we're not experts, we're fucking lunatics, and we're scared and desperate enough to need to submit to nothing short of a whole new order of living for six weeks.

'Are you serious?' I asked.

'Yes. You're quite emotionally insightful.'

'So was Elliott Smith.'

'Who?'

'Elliott Smith. He—Never mind. It didn't end well. Look, I'm flattered by the suggestion, but ... I don't think I have anything helpful to say. Plus audiences kind of bring out the fraud in me.'

'They can't do anything that you don't let them, Miss.'

I pictured myself in a black turtleneck and an earpiece, fingertips pressed together, pacing the stage at a TEDx conference. 'What if you could embroider the pathway to a better world?' I posted. I'm quite an accomplished public speaker in the land of possibility that is my imagination, so when I finished, to no applause whatsoever, I was surprised. Even the final rousing cadences of my own fantasy failed to ignite a solitary clap. Then the auditorium lights went up, and I realized why. The audience consisted only of Fleur, dressing-gown-clad and Zeldoxed to within millimeters of a coma, snoring quietly in the second row. I smiled. Because this is the thing: sometimes the most liberating fact in the world is that nobody cares but you. As in me. Us. And if you (reader) make it to the end without
having to pay a bunch of people to teach you how to care much, much less, you've had an easier run than I. Well done.

'Miss...?'

'... Hmm?'

'Would you talk to the group about your work? How about two weeks from now?'

'Okay,' I said. 'Why not.'

'Great. And if you'd like to work on your stitching next week, I think that would be fine. Just, um, make sure you give the scissors and needles back to me at the end of the session.'

That's how I got a mandate to sew a photo of Richard onto a pillowcase I stole from the linen cupboard of the Substance Withdrawal Unit this morning. I'm trying to decide whether in my presentation next week I'll attach this work to a theory about the force of repressed desires of middle-aged men, or whether I'll tell them I fell in love with the bastard and we did it in the bathroom during a visit to The Mad Square at the NGV.
Artist seeks
woman to attend
gallery openings with
on a weekly basis. I'm
told that's something I should
be doing if I want to get
shows here. U must be well
dressed like in an interesting
way not an art fashion way
like you've just come from
the gym but your not one
bit sweaty, ie, just have your
own style. Would be great
to meet beforehand so you can
advise me on what to wear
and people will think we are a
great looking couple. Socialiability is
a plus because in those environ-
ments I mostly like to stand
in small groups and throw in border-
line inappropriate but I reckon
still funny comments. Even better
though would be if we just hang
out off to the side somewhere in our
own little inspired universe while
surrounded by mediocre art. Id
want people to know we aren't
just friends though so some PDA
encouraged. PM if this sounds like u.

Artist seeks
woman to make
life difficult. I'm
generally
a headspace apparently.
My mate ben ever told that
to his friend who he was seeing
recently for a short while. Warned
her I guess. I reckon my problem
is more that I'm a bit too open
and intense and hopeful when
I meet girls. But also perhaps that
I lack a certain self knowledge or
much in the way of a libido. What
I really need I think is an obsta-
culation, something that gives me hard
ship in a way that I will want to be
or be forced to overcome it. It will be
good for making art I guess nothing else.
As for what that is I have no idea.
Maybe its giving homosexual a
proper go. Maybe its someone who
really likes me but is sexually inward
and doesn't wanna date right now.
Maybe I should marry a chinese woman
off the internet for money. Maybe I
just need to learn to LOVE MYSELF.
I guess call if you are one of the above?
Btw im on antidepressant medication.

Artist seeks
woman for semi-
regular hookups mostly
on Saturday nights. Be best
if you just showed up at my
place after whatever you were
doing with your friends, even
or especially even if you were
sweaty from dancing. Most Sths
I stay in bcs im tired bcs im
old and going out costs too much.
And I only really enjoy it when
im chashing tail which is where
you come In. If its late you could just
let yourself in and crawl into bed
and touch my back with your cold
hands to wake me. I like to fuck
in a half-dream state before my
thoughts get too loud. Please
have soft skin and hair that don't
smell too organic. In the
morning we could do the same if my
dreams weren't too violent and id make
you coffee and we'd kiss with un-
self-conscious coffee breath
and then drive you home unless you
say its ok not to. Would probably
be a fair bit younger because they
usually are. I live in Brunswick.

Artist seeks
woman for benefactor
style relationship. Gotta
say right off the bat that
I hate talking and thinking
about money, so if this is
going to work you have to
make it convincingly clear
from the start that you are
happy paying for everything.
Although I do work at café
2 days a week and I like
it there so I can use that as
a kind of everyday allowance.
I don't really know what in
this for you except for maybe
my youth, which is relative. Im
34 now and concede sometimes
have issues maintaining an erec-
tion. I seldom look at mature porn
but will try my best to satisfy you
sexually if you want that. Mum
and I are close, so that should
help with understanding not older
women go through. Although,
communication is obviously still
key. Speaking of mum not sure
what she'd say but I guess ill
let Freud do the talking. Lol.

Artist seeks
woman to go to Stuart
Ringholt's naked tour next
Wednesday. What's the way
to get to know each other
than to see art in the nude?
I've already booked a ticket so you
should do the same. Bc she's free. Usually
door preference the introduction to my penis
is to its erect state coz im more
a grower than a shower. But like
Stuart says naked bodies are often
less sexualized than clothed ones
and this will be a good opportunity
to just put it all out there in the
open from day 1 and maybe that
can extend to how we treat each other
in the future. Being lied to is
type of pet peeve of mine and I
believe trust is super important
in relationships. The idea of naturism
is pretty cool isn't it, that what
they call doing normal things in the
nude I think. You don't have to
have saggy boobs or be a perry
to get into it. Ive noticed that when
I don't wear underwear I get more
erections so imagine not wearing
clothes at all would be like! Ok thanks.

reply to: artistseekswoman@hotmail.com
Patricia Wood & Angela Goh: Speaking About Dance
Lizzie Thomson and Angela Goh: Email conversations, abridged.

Dear Angela, Or maybe Boris? Jerome?
I’ve just re-listened to Marten Spangberg’s interview on RN and really enjoyed it this time, not sure why it annoyed me so much the first time (other than his joke about sexy ladies). He talks about the importance of dance being current and asking the question ‘And what now?’ Following the Keir project, I’ve been wondering what it means to be contemporary and if there’s a difference between aging and dating (not online dating! Or maybe that too?!?) but the process of how ideas and dance aesthetics age or become dated and if these things have to do with youthfulness or not... in fashion and pop culture yes of course, but in dance surely it’s possible to keep growing older and cooler. I guess I’ve been worrying about how I’m making work that’s responding to the past – and what does this have to do with now? After seeing Nat Abbott’s show, I had a conversation about it with Victoria Hunt. She thinks the dancing body doesn’t date and then went on to point out that the nike shoes in Maximum will be out of fashion next week.
But I think the dancing body does date.
I had a nice realisation though, sitting next to you, thinking about my body as archive project. I realized that I’d been thinking, in terms of the ghosts that haunt my body, of people who are older than me. I guess that’s the logic of inheritance. But of course in dance, ideas circulate in all sorts of directions and I’ve also inherited stuff from you. It’s a very obvious point now. I’d forgotten that history isn’t just a decade ago but also this morning.
I was thinking that maybe your work with the psychic approaches choreography from the opposite end to my work with the body as archive... would you say you’re almost coming at the present from the future, or a prediction of the future?
Boris … or Jerome
xx

Dear Lizzie, Boris, and Jerome,
Yes, maybe nike shoes will be out of fashion next week, but who cares? They are in fashion now, and that is what is important. I don’t really believe in this aversion to ‘fashion’ that some artists have. I have the feeling that I don’t care to make ‘timeless’ work, I want to make work specific to now, which means that, yes, it might be out of fashion later down the track, but I don’t care about later down the track, I’m interested in now. I kind of love the idea of being part of a fad, because it means you are part of a time, that you are ‘of’ your time, maybe that you are, in fact, contemporary. Perhaps that is naïve, totally superficial, and maybe it means I’m not a real artist, but oh well... Maybe it means the work is not original, but I definitely think there is something authentic about it. I think fashion/time can be an anchor too... timeless work is somehow like a lost soul floating around, fad-like art belongs, it speaks to a specific moment in time, and somehow I think there is nothing more historical than that. But being in time, of your time, and in fashion is constant work because time moves, and quickly, and while it is good to be in fashion, to be just out of fashion is very bad. This makes me want to say fuck fashion, I don’t want this kind of imposed thing taking away the agency I have over my own artistic time, let me do what I want! So... I guess I’m in two minds and there is some sort of internal struggle going on. Aha! maybe I am a real artist after all!
There is something about legacy that is very chronological. But the future effects the present as much as the past does. I think maybe legacy and inheritance does instinctually have more to do with things being passed down, and maybe influence has more to do with things being
Dear Trajal Harrell and Keith Hennessy,
I love the way you go from discussing a desire to be with fashion into fuck fashion let me do what I want! I have just had a similar process! I’ve been really fascinated with contemporary choreographers’ use of sneakers recently. I’ve been looking at them almost as a symbol of now and wondering if contemporaneity is simply an aesthetic. And since I have also been entirely preoccupied with the question of what’s the relevance of history to contemporaneity, yesterday I thought I’d get myself a pair of cool sneakers to perform in for Alaska on Sunday. But when I tried on all these cool sneakers, they just didn’t do it for me. Too token maybe? After sitting down and writing, a thought made its way into me (obviously from God) that what I really needed for this piece was a pair of Jesus Sandals. A pair of shoes with a good historical narrative. I started imagining a pair of shoes that my Jewish ancestors maybe even wore in Israel centuries ago! Anyway, I never found a pair of Jesus Sandals. The closest I could find was a pair of brown Hush Puppies sandals for men. They are so unlike anything I would usually wear and I love them. I’m going to have to wear them with socks for Alaska and the funny thing is that I think I might have unintentionally got myself a pair of shoes that are actually way more fashionable than a pair of nikes. And I don’t mind that. Because I’m thinking of them as my Jesus Sandals, sent to me from God, they stimulate my imagination.
I came across some great quotes by Martha Graham last night from her book Blood Memory. Like: ‘One becomes in some area an athlete of God’. I was wondering what the relationship between spirituality and your choreographic practice are. Is dance spiritual for you? Is spirituality a joke?
Oh I have so much more to say, but need to go to a meeting so I’ll write another one soon.
Just thought I’d leave you with another Martha Graham quote that I love, ‘Looking at the past is like lolling about in a rocking chair. It is so relaxing and you can rock back and forth on the porch, and never go forward. It is not for me.’
I love this image of futile rocking that never gets anywhere. Even though it’s about reflecting on the past, it actually makes me think of your ideas around making work that is specific to now, not original, not aiming to be relevant in the future, just rocking in the eternal present.
Much love,
Martha Graham and Ralph Lemon

Dear Xavier,
Sneakers as a contemporary aesthetic seems quite right, but i also wonder about how sneakers are so kind of judson dance era. did they go out of fashion and then come back? or have they been in fashion since the 60’s? Are they in fashion now for a different reason i wonder? never mind anyway, sneakers are old news, everyone will be sporting jesus sandals from now on. obviously.
hmmm. i think there is not so much of a connection between my practice and spirituality per se, what i am more interested in is how things can become real through the act of performing
them. Lately I have been really loving to do fake things, like fake marina abramovic techniques, fake hip hop, fake ‘authentic movement’. It is never a joke though, it is always about doing the fake thing with sincerity, like, the hip hop is fake, but my engagement in the fake hip hop is completely real. I think it also opens up a situation where because it is fake, it cannot be judged by the usual standards, like, fake hip hop can’t possibly be judged against real hip hop, what can fake hip hop actually be compared too, in terms of judgement, expectation, critique? I think my entire practice at this moment is just making kind of elaborate concepts and structures so that I can do things which inherently deny critique. Maybe what I can say is, my practice is that I take responsibility for my irresponsibility. And, it’s not because I am scared of judgement or critique, but it is because I think that it kind of frees the spectator too, they can go beyond their own judgements and really see something.

I think this turn to ‘spirituality’ or to new age practices is kind of widespread across art making at the moment. I find it quite interesting to ask why… is it because we are living in an experience economy, where even yoga is commodified? perhaps this is just capitalism infiltrating artistic practice under the guise of new age practices?? maybe it is because we are in this state of the post-ironic, we all already know about irony, so now we can all just get over it and do things sincerely. maybe it is because everyone is a bit over critique? hasn’t there been a movement of critique of critique? It’s too much, maybe everyone just wants to get behind something rather than always pushing against it, maybe people are just tired… maybe everyone is just ready to believe because everyone has been brainwashed by commercial appropriations of yoga ‘philosophy’… who knows…

I wonder about how relevant martha graham quotes could be now? I wonder about the time problem with pioneers. They were pioneering because of how they were acting and reacting to a particular historical moment, and now we are in a different historical moment. I wonder if maybe art can only be art if it is fulfilling itself now, which of course means dance or performance is the only true art, because of its ephemerality, because it never stays long enough to become a relic… or maybe you would disagree? is it just your body you think of as an archive, or dance itself? I’m not sure I even agree with it, I’m going kind of stream of conscious now… which probably means I am babbling, I’ll stop now. but I’ll write more about my exorcism project next time.

From Yvonne, Deborah, and Merce
NAMING BEFORE KNOWING: PATRICIA WOOD’s UNWRITTEN THESIS AND THE COMPLEXITIES OF NOT YET KNOWING EVEN THOUGH THE DEADLINE IS HERE, or, ANGELA GOH’s RECONFIGURATION OF PATRICIA’s ESSAY INTO POTENTIAL TITLES, or, TITLES WITHOUT ARTICLES, or, TITLES LACKING CONTENT AND REFERENCES, or, BIG IDEAS AND NO TIME LEFT TO WRITE, or, JUST TITLES AND YOU IMAGINE THE REST, or, NOT QUALIFIED TO SAY YET BUT THIS IS WHAT I’M WORKING ON, or, THE AESTHETICS OF ACADEMIC FRAMEWORKS, or, THE OPPOSITE TO ‘UNTITLED’, or, TITLE AS CONTENT.

An Embodied Exploration in Two Different Contexts: From dance improvisation to the Gisalo of the Kaluli People, Papua New Guinea.

OR

Sound and Sentiment: Kaluli notions of sonic transformation and the relationship of songs to western audience

OR

Dance as Embodied Transformation: A comparison of the body in Bosavi dance practices and contemporary improvisational practices

OR

Gendered Transformations: Uncovering the role of women’s dances in the Bosavi region

OR

Animal-Human Transformations: From inter-species ethnography to environmental acoustemology

OR

The constraints of western dichotomous thought

OR

Entering the Non-human World; Transcending humanness

OR

Dance Environmentalism: Western concerns with origins, evolution and development from originating forms

OR

Intra-person and Inter-species: How transformations are represented and unrepresented in the medium of dance

OR

The Living and The Dead: Co-presence in the Bosavi’s Gisalo

OR

On the Borderline Between Fanciful and Interesting: Suggesting a possibility

OR

Natural History and Symbolism: Unifying zoology and myth

OR

Physiological Shifts: The embodied subject of the dancer

OR

Witnessing Transformations: The Kaluli and their audience

OR

An argument for the dancing body and its role in Bosavi poetics
An Embodied Exploration in two different contexts:
from Dance Improvisation to the **ritual** of the **People, New **

By **Who**

**argue that has successfully presented a**
comprehensive understanding of the **speaker's** relationship with their environment as a cultural acoustic. **also used **ethnography of the **speakers living in the **of **New **, sound and sentiment, to **rituals**

accounts of the **ritual - a **mourning ceremony. I
am interested in the absence of the dance from **account, after all **is a [and ethno **%

I want to focus on the idea of dance as embodied transformation - involving a comparison between the **dancers' transformations into bush spirits, the dead and places linked to the dead. These transformations are gendered with **more clearly engaging in such transformations than **. However , **lack dance specific accounts of these transformations from the **region so I
would like to explore this area without claiming to be writing ethnography of dance. I simply want to learn some **dances and some of the background to such dances.

Between **and **%

In this article I seek to situate **dance practices in parallel, to contemporary improvisation dance practices, specifically those of Australian artist **and scoring system, **as a way to generate juxtapositions between **and contemporary dance.

I then want to compare **experiences in **dance with the kinds of transformations promoted by **dance practices in Sydney. **work focuses on animal–human transformations but also extends to embody more ambiguous architectural life forms such as crustacean's exoskeletons. **pieces can be understood as part of broader shifts in WesternThe culture thinking about ecology and environment that are now termed inter-species ethnography and where human 'nature' is understood to be defined by inter-species relationships. Such changes are also reflected in **attempts to develop a specifically **environmental acoustemology of the rainforest.

In contrast to **acoustic emphasis which relies significantly on **ideas, **has developed a scoring system that allow practitioners to enter a non-human world and transcend their 'humanness' for 'other' while at the same time remaining within some of the constraints of Western dichotomous thought. **choreographic system, **is a structure that references and is inspired by the classification systems scientists use to categorise organic life. The movement system acts as a series of signifiers, providing the dancer with definitions of a physical language uncovered by **research into **habitats. **defines **domains of **-emulating the

classificatory demands of science:
- Human/animal – humans embodying animal attributes / physiologies
- Ecology, habitat and environmental references
- Sensory Imagery – inscriptions, states and inner spatial studies

The system acts as a template for the exploration of dance environmentalism albeit one that seeks to emphasize a 'primordial' state in ways that replicate Western concerns with origins, evolution and development from originating forms.

The people of **are not so concerned with categorising nature into a systematic account and are not committed to notions of distinct species except as the naturalistic appearance of life forms in this world. The **believe that these appearances mask (and reflect) an astounding array of unseen transformations and that most involve different kinds of persons (spirits, ancestors and the dead). Many **involve inter-species transformations between humans and major **(such as pigs, cassowaries, wallabies). In this context I seek to learn how such transformations, either intra-person or inter-species, are represented, if at all, in the specific medium of dance.

Rituals involving the transformation of the dead into the living as articulated in the **are salient cultural values that involve transformations between domains Western science would or could separate – the living and the dead. So the **interest in the dead and dancing their compassionate co-presence with the living is perhaps a parallel construction to **dancing of primordial human–animal transformation.

**Background

But to even suggest such a possibility (that is on the borderline of fanciful and interesting) requires some respect of **realities. Let us start with some images of life in **%

**speaking people live north of Mt. **, deep in the tropical rainforest on the Great **plateau in the southern **of **New **. The **society is egalitarian and celebrates reciprocity. It is highly visible in every day culture and is a major part of everyday transactions such as bridewealth, hunting and in traditional **ceremonies. **described reciprocity as "a lens through which to view some fundamental issues of **life and society". Persons (as humans and animals) can change bodies as a result of spiritual transformations and to an extent can exchange their lives.

Another fundamental component is the **understanding of animals especially **as a basis to understanding the **'s acoustic ecology. **analyses the **emotional responses to **as a complex and many-layered cultural system that intersects with other modes of thought and action, predominantly involving an essential unity of natural history and symbolism. This approach acted to unify zoology and myth instead of treating them as distinct and separate modes
of observation and deduction (as occurs in the distinction between ‘indigenous knowledge’ as ethnobiology and another form of knowledge found in ‘myth’).

The Dance of [unintelligible]

[unintelligible] argues that see types of animals and plants and their symbolism as a unified given, that the [unintelligible] believe that all things have a visible and invisible aspect; that sounds and behaviours have an outside, an inside and an underneath; and that human relationships are reflected in the ecology and natural order of the [unintelligible]. One aspect of [unintelligible] life that highlights the last point in the preceding sentence is their performance of [unintelligible]. The main objective of [unintelligible] is to evoke a sadness and grief that will move the audience to tears. The words of [unintelligible] songs are for the [unintelligible] a multi layered language, one that the [unintelligible] say has “insides” and “underneaths” that allow the listener to follow and climax or “harden” at the culmination of the aesthetic tension of the song.

The main movement in [unintelligible] as described by [unintelligible] is a repetitive bobbing movement that travels up and down the floor of the [unintelligible]. The dance of [unintelligible] is heavily influenced by the movements of the Giant [unintelligible].

[unintelligible] is one of the most prominent symbols of loss and human animal transformation is outlined in the story “the [unintelligible] who became a [unintelligible]”. This [unintelligible] represents all those who are dead, lost, or abandoned.

The [unintelligible] makes the same bobbing movement as the dancers and is part of a group of [unintelligible] that the composers use to shape, code and perform the same the melodic intervals as the [unintelligible] calls. I am interested in knowing what kind of physiological shift occurs for the dancer. As the dance slowly builds in intensity and the ‘hardening’ process is almost complete, where is the embodied subject position of the dancer/singer? Is it a spirit of the dead or a person?

And what of the audience as a witness to these transformations and as an effect of the same transformations? When the [unintelligible] compose and perform songs they assume that their audience will be prepared to listen to them in a reflective and nostalgic way. They consciously utilise this assumption to construct texts that will make their audiences attend to and think about poetic imagery in an emotionally amplified manner. Poetic communication requires very detailed personal and highly contextual knowledge of the subject of the song and audience expectations. The audience expect the song to shift them out of their present location and traverse the places of lost relatives or friends.

Despite the power of the [unintelligible] poetics revealed by [unintelligible] I argue there is space for the dancing body to be further analysed as an expressive form concerning the embodied transformations linked to [unintelligible] (and the [unintelligible] similar). Correlations between the two systems of transformation are evident and needing further investigation.

Works Cited

[unintelligible]

[unintelligible]

[unintelligible]

I am currently half way through my first year of an MA in Dance and Anthropology. This is an excerpt of a larger article that I am writing and is a response to my current dilemma of taking two very separate ontologies and claiming that there is an overlap without being an expert in either. By removing most of the nouns and proper nouns and all of the references so heavily relied upon in academic writing, does the idea still stand?

I wrote this text (about the gisalo, a Bosavi grieving ritual) from beside my granddad’s hospital bed in his last few days. Perhaps by blocking the text, in a way I am blocking the full representation of my Poppa’s last days.

Patricia Wood
Victor and Hester: Bomber Jacket for Marilyn Waring

- GLOSSARY OF TERMS A and C

- BOMBER JACKET TO MARILYN WARING

- VICTOR & HESTER
Preface

*Bomber Jacket for Marilyn Waring: Glossary of Terms A and C* has come from conversations between artists Emma Fitts and Victor & Hester and graphic designers Kaisa Lassinaro and Ella Sutherland.

Using this Glossary

This Glossary takes its structure from ‘A Dictionary of Economic Terms’. Terms have been arranged in alphabetical order on the basis of the whole term, rather than the initial word. Where an economic term is used in another term it is printed in *italics* for further reference. A cross reference (such as ‘see’ or ‘cf.’) is given where additional information would be useful.

Abstraction: Of movement; of dense political documents; of the landscape; of bodies. ‘Since representing an object means showing some of its properties, it follows that at times the purpose can be achieved best by greatly deviating from its “photographic” appearance. This is most evident in diagrams.’

Illustrated in Marlow Moss’s work *Balanced Forms in Gunmetal on Cornish Granite* (1956-7).

Account: A statement of money received, money spent and the balance.

EF: Do you see an account as a physical or ephemeral form?

V&H: Something errant and fleeting. A voice is both more than and less than a body. It can be somewhere else, other than where the body is. There were times that we tried to make these accounts concrete, but realised, in the process, that we constantly searched for cracks to slip through, or to make cracks so that we could slip through them. In this way it can be self-defeating, and a simultaneous attack and defense.

Applied economics: That branch of economics that makes use of economic theory and applies it to a practical situation to solve economic problems.

EF: Do you see a branch of economics that makes use of economic theory and applies it to a practical situation to solve graphic design problems?
KL: Graphic design is used to make economic statistics, graphs, and diagrams visually accessible. It can be used to make the abstractions of capitalism visible—matter-of-fact chart representations of social conditions, as demonstrated in Who’s Counting?, a 1995 documentary on Marilyn Waring, where women’s work and leisure time in a Pakistani village were calculated and charted and then compared against a similar men’s chart. Diagrams, curves, and data “speak”, “express” themselves, and “communicate”, for, by making visible, comparable, and manipulable the most diverse flows of information (mechanic translatability), they forcefully contribute to decision-making and price-setting ... Enunciation would be completely different without these asemiotic modes of writing and without machines ... they suggest, enable, solicit, instigate, encourage, and prevent certain actions, thoughts, affects or promote others.”

Archery: A horizontal line has just as much potential to penetrate the vertical as the vertical does the horizontal.

Appreciation: A rise in the price (exchange rate) of the currency of one country in terms of the currency of another country. cf. Depreciation.
EF: Do you think that any connections can be drawn between the appreciation of money and appreciation of our work?

KL: Only work that can be measured in monetary value is recognised in this capitalist culture and work that brings in the biggest monetary value is work that is appreciated. No other kind of work has recognition within it.

EF: Where is work?

KL: Work should be at home, or work could be at the end of its line ... 'Sociology and industrial psychology only recognise “work” (“work assigned”, “work accomplished”, “work experience”, etc.) and completely neglect the fact that “work” is always “capitalist labour”; that the concept itself exists nowhere else but in capitalist society. They project the category “labour” onto the past and the future by making it a “universal” spanning all of history.'

Assembly line: An arrangement of machines and workers in a factory so that a number of specialised operations may be performed on a good as it moves along the line.

EF: Do you think that an assembly line has to be linear or do you think that the line could morph into a circle? For example, moving forwards to try to touch its tail, and it is the friction of this chase that creates the goods within the circle?

KL: (See Circular flow) A simplified model of the working of a free enterprise economy, showing the movement of resources and goods and services, together with the resulting flows of income and expenditure. A closed circle outside of which those without capital, property, and wealth are placed within an assembly line, where the subjects are chasing the unattainable to them, the desires produced by neo-capitalism. 'Neo-capitalist culture puts models of desire into circulation and imposes models of subjection (models of childhood, the father, the mother, etc.) ... Capitalism manufactures the individual, moulding his body and his psyche, equipping him with modes of perception, semiotisation, and an unconscious endeavouring to introduce a “bourgeois property-owner in every worker.”'

Asset: Something of value, which is owned.

Automation: A technique that replaces human effort by machines. Automation is typically associated with technological unemployment, but this need not occur if automation permits increases in labour productivity.
Capital: 1) A factor of production. The man-made resources used in the production of goods and services, including machinery and buildings. 2) Money available to a firm with which to purchase capital goods. 3) The net worth of an enterprise.

Capital gain: The increase in the value of an asset over time.

EF: Do you think that you can give capital gain to an idea through repetition?

ES: Repetition engages an active position with the present in the sense that, when something is repeated, one has no choice but to engage with it as a present reality. The gesture is not nostalgic, but a repositioning and retesting in the present.

The action toward the object did not change, nor did the action change the object—what the action did change was the impression and understanding of the object in the mind of the other. The action in this case means power; it provides the agency to produce knowledge into being and the agency for knowledge to produce power.

Capital goods: Those goods used by producers, i.e. goods purchased to assist in the production of other goods or services. cf. Consumer goods.

Capitalism: An economic system based on private ownership of productive resources and allocation of goods according to the signals provided by free markets. (See Market economy) cf. Communism / Command economy / Socialism; mixed economy

Care: In its physical form actions are presented, copied, practiced (See Repetition). In its material form the pictogram coexists with or is complemented by written instruction.
EF: Is the idea of an economy of care aligned more with a physical, material or conceptual form?

'What might a model of the economy look like that takes the reality of care and its complexities seriously? ... Each quadrant is a schematic representation of the processes associated with a systems component of the overall process of economic output and value production. The model does not claim to be comprehensive. It simply serves as a schematic summary of a context-based process that builds on the familiar schematic description of economic production and expands it to account for neglected care-services.'

Choice: Making decisions between different possibilities. People have a wide range of wants but the means to satisfy only some of them. Incomes are limited and in order to get some goods and services it is necessary to do without others, i.e. choices have to be made.

'The government wins the 1981 election with a majority of one. Most of my colleagues are fearful to be politicians. But what are they doing here if they have never contemplated the possibility that it may have to be their solitary vote that changes the course of something? Isn't anything that important to them?'

EF: Did you use choice as a tool to bring history into the present in your work?

ES: Someone will always be around to steal your things. To demand, to legitimise, to legitimise the demand. We wondered if she used history to discuss her work as it felt like a way to articulate, or even validate, the intangible in her practice.

Does fascination mean blindness? Choosing a line and flipping through fact, looking to say what one cannot say from a comfortable spot on another axis. It's a paradox; to demand, to legitimise, to legitimise the demand. Stumbling over time for attitudes of explanation in the footnotes, in the street, on the phone, in-between. Forgetting and remembering are the same but we can only remember that which has already been forgotten and, with every instance, what are we missing? (See Capital goods).

Circular flow: A simplified model of the working of a free enterprise economy, showing the movement of resources and goods and services, together with the resulting flows of income and expenditure.
Clothing: Checked shirt, sports jackets, men’s clothing, work clothing, clothing triggering reaction. (See Hair). Sports jackets were adopted by some women in the 1920s as an identifier of underground lesbian gangs. The checked shirt became a contemporary lesbian code.

We make an anorak for Rowena Cade, sports jacket for Marlow Moss, and bomber jacket for Marilyn Waring.

EF: When working, do you think of texture?

ES: The texture is not singular, but composed of many interrelated and interdependent parts. While this would assume clarity, in a sense it retains a certain ambiguity due to an essence that is not a part of the whole structure or the whole structure itself. Rational and irrational. Coming and going. What does it sound like?

Conglomerate: A large company whose size is derived from a variety of activities in many fields, rather than from its dominance in a single industry.

Constructivism: Britain is now claiming Moss to be one of its most influential Constructivist painters. (‘Moss is considered to be one of Britain’s most influential’) KL.

EF: What drew you to the work of Moss? Can you draw an economy of line?

ES: The movement of a place is unable to be articulated in any other way than with the openness of proposition. As statements fall both toward and away from supposed surroundings, you realise that, despite the urge to form a narrative, there is no whole. Does economy save you? Will economy expose you? Everything is a line postured with expectation. You are a camera stuffed in a bag, lens pressed against the seam; you are looking around the sandy, smooth perfect room trying to remember how to order. You wonder, do the horrors of everyday life, this close, feel better rendered in such economic resolution?

Convex curve: A curve on a graph that bows inward towards the zero point, so that it appears convex when viewed from the zero point of the graph.

Currency: Coins and paper money.

2. Lucy Lippard, *I see/you mean*, Chrysalis Books, Los Angeles, 1979, p. 84.


11. Wall Hanging ‘With Verticals’ by Anni Albers, 1946, published on page 180 (plate 97) in *On Weaving* (1965). Woven cotton and linen on two or more warp (vertical) and weft (horizontal) yarns produces twill (diagonal lines) on the face of the fabric.


13. Diagram analysing limb design of the drawn bow, published on page 208 of Thomas Grissom’s *Principles of Traditional Archery* (2013). Note the use of diagonal lines to track movement, non-material production and invisibility.

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