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# Katherina Zakravsky

## everything Editorial

*'I have only one aim left  
To force brutal people  
To be gentle...'*

**K:** It will be more of a talk than an interview.

**e:** That's better, there are only 75 minutes left anyway.

**K:** 75 minutes are enough to say everything that can be said about the world?

**e:** No, I don't suppose so, no.

**K:** Well, that leads already to some aspects that interest me, like... **TIMING!**

**e:** What about the timing in your performance – because I noticed when I saw one of your performances, that there was a secession rather than an ending, it seemed like you were making a decision; right, it's going to stop now.

**K:** It was a very spontaneous decision made out of some sort of exhaustion. When you work with media – video or film – you usually don't show the moment of exhaustion; with the power to cut anywhere you want, you usually cut out all the moments where a person would show signs of exhaustion, or staggering or stuttering, whatever.

I used to work with dancers in a live situation. We did improvisation. The whole idea: what would happen, how much would happen, how long it would happen and in which density, was left to the situation. There was no predefined information-per-minute unit. And I know that improvisers, even if they are quite experienced, usually have a problem with ending, to know how and when to end. Because sometimes they tend to accept some empty kilometres because there is still some tension left and then it can start up again and maybe this last bit of energetic action will be the best of the whole piece.

If you are relying not just on technical formats but also on some sort of energetic body issue you have to handle rhythms; so it can go up and down and up and down and you don't really know what kind of wave-length it will have.

In the case of *Frame* (the performance in Bonbonniere Theatre) I used both fixed text and improvised text. Maybe it is some sort of routine or some lack of courage, I don't really know, but I like to compose structured materials with improvised materials. And in this case I improvised a speech about love and when I had the feeling I run out of – because it was about talking very quickly, with a lot of power – when I had the feeling I run out of energy and I cannot slip into another mode I added this poem that I already had used for 2 years or so, so it was very fixed in my system.

*[ For many years  
I went pregnant with the dead  
And their metaphysical hunger  
To survive in my living head  
Became my body's fat*

*But now I feel like  
I could spend the rest  
Of my life  
With your soul on my mind  
And the rest of the night  
With your dick in my mouth ]*

**e:** The things are rehearsed maybe in an internal conversation with yourself, not necessarily a script.  
**K:** Yes. And there is also the question of addressing. Whom do I address? I commented on the very well-known and popular genre of the pop song. In the love songs it's a very tricky situation of a speech act. The love song always addresses a 'You'; this 'You' is supposed to be a highly individualised person and of course all those love songs are about how unique 'You' are, 'You' can never be replaced and so on and so on. But if you switch to the analysis of the genre itself of course these texts are completely abstract and this 'You' is completely replaceable. If the radio is broadcasting these songs it should confirm some romantic situation that the listener would be in anyway. But if you are not engaged in such a situation you feel almost bombarded by some Orwell-like tyranny that gives the command: put yourself in such a position. Direct all your thoughts and activities towards this romantic duo situation of 'me' and 'you' against the world.

**e:** It's a floating promise though, isn't it?

**K:** The radio is a very cheap and popular medium. Everyone knows it from an early age. So it is really a world medium, but the love song is stating the private unit against the world; so the world is obviously talking against itself through the radio. Like it would say: forget about me, just retreat to privacy. Just the two of us.

*[ ... and I am really standing every day under this spray of semantics and I am hearing every day those trivial, those trivial I[aw]love songs that are supposed to be addressed to someone, but I don't know whom they are addressing anyway and I don't feel addressed anyway and, on the other hand, I feel addressed all the time and I don't know how to react... ]*

**e:** I was thinking about this relationship in your work to philosophy and performance. Because it seems to me that your practice is about living out a particular idea about philosophy; that philosophy can be lived out in some way, and also having to do with relationships to people.

**K:** It seems very naive to think that philosophy is something that should be lived, because by now we just know philosophy as a very dry, academic discipline. And all professional academic philosophers I met, at least in Vienna, would be extremely cynical about this whole relation between philosophy and life. At first glance, it looks like taking philosophy out of academia to use it in performance would be some sort of anti-theoretical move. **e:** A populist move.

**K:** Yes, and a sort of corruption and contamination of a proper philosophical training. But if you look back, we just know that the term philosophy is an invention of Greek society. It is anyway a tricky thing to claim that philosophy is universal. When you look at the Greek sources you realise that both Socrates but even more so Diogenes... if you would forget everything about your conventional knowledge about philosophy, they would have to be considered far more performers than academic theorists. We just know about Diogenes through anecdotes telling little stories about strange behavior in public. What we know about the things he might have uttered, we can just take at face value, none of his writings were preserved, we know Diogenes as a speaking philosopher, we know just a few phrases his pupils would write down. They are all embedded in a certain situation.

**e:** And Diogenes is also related to the idea of the prophet. In that he lived his life, supposedly, to provide some sort of example. He goes to the market place to test people's moral proprieties. He would walk around with the minimum of possessions. So he performed his philosophy as a moral example.



**K:** The interesting thing about the cynical move is that it is always questioning social behavior, at the very point where social behavior is really linked to the seemingly elementary, physical facts of life: like food, sex, sleep. A very famous example is Diogenes masturbating out in the open, out in the streets. Another interesting story treats one of his little fights with Plato. Plato tried to define the human being and would claim that it is a naked animal walking on two legs. Diogenes took a cock and pulled off his feathers – a quite brutal action – and then said, this is Plato's human being. So he would question a theoretical definition that is probably supposed to be not sufficient, but a first approach; and he would do this through a performative act, that is also a bit sadistic.

**e:** Can you think of any instance where you might do the same, not necessarily as graphic and simplistic as stripping a hen?

**K:** I tried to read a book by Peggy Phelan about performance art, *The Ends of Performance*, and I was amazed that she would state two poles of research within which the theory of performance would be stretched out; the science of theatre and anthropology. Any form of modern art defines and chooses its own material and does not take it as a given; and if I follow Peggy Phelan here the human being is sort of the primary material of performance. If you use yourself, and I don't know any performance art that does not tend to use oneself as a material, then you also always use yourself as an example of the so-called human being. Yet this practice of performance art is obviously coinciding with the larger historical tendency of the human being becoming questionable; and not just the human being in general, but the female human being in particular. That's what makes the presence of women in performance art so strange and eminent. And I am, as a performer, already reflecting on this fact.

**e:** Also we were talking earlier about the idea of the confessional, the woman's role as the one who is supposed to confess both her sins and her inner life. And on the other hand this emphasis on the body, which may be past now; whereas with you there is a great emphasis on your voice and on what you say.

**K:** Well, the thing about the body... I mean, if you choose your material and the material of your art happens to be your body, then it is almost impossible to neutralise it.



Director's Cut, 1999

That was a little discussion I had with the dance people I used to work with. If they want to be professional dancers they claim to be not sentimental about the fact that by chance the body and not colour or sound is the material of their work. But it is never the same as any other material. But in any art practice it is also very problematic to stay sentimental or naïve or, let's say, private about your own body. If you use it, in a video, for example, there is an element of distance. When you use your female body in a statement that is supposed to be feminist, that is, by now, not enough, that is not the whole story. And also, what does it mean, to expose your own body, out of your own decision; you might still go into the trap of fulfilling the fetishist projections directed towards the female body. The voice used to be considered as the link between the material nature of the body and some sort of spiritual, invisible, immaterial element. And the voice is more attached to the body than writing.

e: And it's the mediator.

**K:** Right. An academic philosopher – and it looked like I would also become one – has usually two identities. He or she, but usually still he, writes, transports general thoughts into the public, and on the other hand he or she also talks in class, because they usually also teach. When I use speech I always hover between two classical, but very different genres. One is the didactic speech of the professor, and I also used to teach philosophy, the other genre is the diva thing. Within this whole tricky universe around the social identity of women the diva character is of special interest, because the diva is supposed to transport her privacy into the public. And the archetypal scene, and I am still very fascinated by all those scenes that appear in almost every Marlene Dietrich movie, is the diva coming on stage in some sort of club and singing out the song of love or misery. This transgresses the border between privacy and public. But this particular public just consists of a small group of male listeners, maybe with some women among them, it's just a half public, it's all about the half public, the half light, le demi-monde, as it were. As a female performance artist you are always in danger of staying within this half privacy made public.

And then I use some historical reference that makes it even more weird. Lets take for example this video performance *Director's Cut* that is a real-time shot without

Director's Cut, 1989





cuts, and all the shifts within the video happen within the unity of space and time. It is all set in one garden, where I move around, it is a quite big, but still private garden. I move from one spot to the next, like in a stationary drama or procession. And I start with this supposedly public speech of the theorist defining and analysing the three genres theatre, film and video in context of performance; and then suddenly I shift to the persona of Catherine the Great. The persona of a queen seems to be the most public female figure you can imagine, but anachronistic of course. So in a way the queen is a figure that existed before the public sphere was even defined as such. The public as a republican and democratic institution is an invention of post feudal society. If you embody a queen it is a ridiculous move. Or it reminds you of a drag queen etc, etc. The woman as the queen also implicates the idea of the full subject, the human being as a whole.

*[When some performer, male or female, wants some fixed trace of their performance on some kind of medium they simply hire some person to do a video. And of course this video director has not much to say.*

*So we come full circle, the whole way from the so called omnipotent director of sixties conceptual theatre who rapes the actors to fulfill his crazy wishes, to the contemporary video worker who simply records every gesture the performance diva acts out.*

*Lately I bought myself an international peace keeping force. You see, it's quite well balanced... But my favorite is this one, one of those charming, pretentious adjutants that were so dear to the empress, to the tsarina Catherine the Great.]*

e: But there is also a desire to be honest, to say that there is some private truth in Marlene Dietrich, who is a completely phony example, of course, because she is completely a diva, absolutely a mask.

K: Well, I get from your statement that the whole attempt to be honest and reveal the whole depth of your persona can only produce a mask.

e: I am asking this question in relation to forms of art that are supposedly confessional or open. I realise that this has something to do with the subject position of women or the position that women are subjected to as the sister or the mother.



**K:** Yes, defined by family relations... the relation between honesty and mask is very difficult anyway, but I assume we take it as a given that we would always encounter people in specific functions. We exchange not just goods, but also signs and services, only on a particular basis. If you would ask more of your fellow person it would mean to invade the privacy and intimacy, it would almost be an act of violation. But I am talking still about a standard situation among equals that are supposed to be men or neutralised women. But as soon as the woman is involved there is always this projection that the woman should supply more than this particular aspect or function. Women are so present in all sorts of service industries, but their services are taken as some sort of gift of love. All these services in families, in marriages, in the education of children are of course not paid, which reflects the whole function of women in society, that they are supposed to fulfil no particular function, or just the pure function of being women itself, which means to be the pure image of something you cannot really embody. The woman is taken out of the common exchange system of society.

If you play a diva role you seem to confirm this anachronistic identity of the woman, but on the other hand you point out that it is just another mask or another function. You would probably not say that the professional people you meet would wear the mask of the lawyer, the medical doctor, the politician, let alone the computer engineer, unless you are already a critical observer.  
e: And the diva is also someone who is paid for her services.

**K:** Also, so it is about timing again, she just plays this part as long as she's on stage. And coming back to Marlene Dietrich, that she would be so phony. It is funny that she had at least these two faces and one was just this obedient daughter of a Prussian family with a military background. I always found it interesting that she would stage her own diva appearance with a strict Prussian attitude. She was very strict about any detail; there was no luscious sensuality about it. She would give commands about how her face should be lit. It is like staging sensuality with military discipline. In this sense she is still a good model for a lot of typical female character populating the public sphere, such as film stars, models, rock stars etc.

e: To continue the topic of the confession, let's talk about the *Political Boudoir*. This reminded me of a confessional.



**K:** This is really quite a crazy shift between public and private. I did not invent the setup myself, one important idea came from my partner. It's a duo collaboration and neither of us invented the concept whereas the other one would realise it; concept and performance was done equally by two women. I worked with the curator and theorist Ana Peraica, then my colleague at the Jan van Eyck Academy. She comes from Croatia and has her own views on war, because she went through war herself. I wanted to invite her to a conversation, because I am in the middle of a series of events, lecture events or conversational events, solo, duo or group events, called *Welcome to Oracle Beach*. And she said spontaneously, that we must have that conversation in the toilet of the Academy. So it was clear that it would not be two people sitting at a table talking while the audience would sit in front of them, but it would be a very artificial setup making a place visible that is usually completely invisible.

It is about making public a very private space and funnily enough the female toilet is supposed to be especially closed. The women should not see each other. There is a very clear convention that standing side by side is no problem for men, but for women it would be awful to be visible to each other. This bodily function is supposed to be very private, but still there are of course public toilets and the toilet of the academy shared by about 20 or 30 people is another semi-private or semi-public space. Thus the site of the toilet as such is already a perfect paradox between public and private. And we, or rather she, called it *Political Boudoir*.

A video camera would hang right above our heads and would show these two cabins, because the dividing walls would not reach up to the ceiling, thus blocking the view but funnily enough not the sound, so both cabins share the same ceiling. And this had of course a clear reference to public surveillance cameras that invade privacy on a technical basis in order to prevent violations of privacy again. The surveillance system is violating privacy in order to save privacy, a system that has been going on for some decades already, getting more and more absurd.

And this image would be transported live to a TV monitor right in front of the toilet door. The audience would sit in a theatre setup in the corridor.

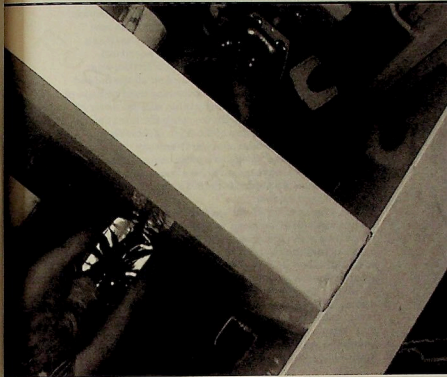


Well, you would assume, and that would have been also interesting, that a video camera spying on the toilet conversation of two women would reveal some chat on makeup, clothes and boyfriends etc. But it was decided already before we went for the toilet thing that the conversation would be about the notorious September 11th event about a month after it had happened. So we were talking about the most public issue of world politics that is taken as a public affair affecting any citizen of the Western world or even any human being on earth. But people just know about it through their TV sets and the media they consume. One should react as a public and political subject, but one lacks any public platform or forum to do so. You cannot go out on the streets and demonstrate. Against what? It is probably one of the first events where we are witnessing world politics as an internal affair. Suddenly there is no outside anymore, there is just internal politics of the globe as such. But on the other hand this new global internal politics is initiated by a breakthrough of something extreme that is also linked to another huge cultural sphere that was always supposed to be the big 'other' of the west as such. And the more the West, or one particular superpower of the West, is claiming to stand for the whole globe as such this other powerful cultural block is driven, and drives itself into a position of a global outsider. That is why this act of terrorism shows this striking similarity to an extraterrestrial attack, at least for our perception that is contaminated and imprinted by sci-fi cinema.

**e:** I was astonished when a guy came up to me saying it's like a science fiction film. A lot of people said that, like *Independence Day* and you use this reference in the *Political Boudoir* when you were talking about the disk, the UFO.

**K:** This is this object from outer space that is obviously extra-terrestrial, because it looks like it would be made of some extremely heavy material, not even metal, rather some sort of stone, but it is hovering above Manhattan, so this whole tricking of gravity must be due to some sort of extraterrestrial technology.

**e:** Well, there is the island of Laputa, in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, which floats in the sky and is powered by loadstones; these are magnetic stones which are repelled by the earth's magnetic field and which allow it to float.



If the peasants on the earth below become obstreperous the island simply hovers above their land, depriving them of light – they soon become compliant. The myth of being over-shadowed is very potent.

**K:** The whole myth of Manhattan always implied the hubris against the gods. The monumental urban landscape of Manhattan is in itself a provocation against heaven and even more so because it is set at the margins of the utterly religious Empire of the US. New York is the centre of impiety, of hard business, consumption, sex, pleasure etc. It always took itself as some sort of Babylon. And already with Giuliani's reign we witness this new hypocritical approach to New York restaging itself as a clean and patriotic place, as some sort of heartland metropolis. To put it very bluntly, the terrorist act was answering the provocation of heaven. And all the indeed deplorable victims of this attack were also kept hostage of the world power they were working for, and the tower of Babel they were placed in. On the symbolic level this event is also one fulfillment of the myth of New York. One cannot play shocked afterwards and say, oh, someone sees these towers as a provocation, because Manhattan was always meant to be a provocation.

**e:** Also a provocation for the United States itself, because it is a reversed frontier.

**K:** Yes, a harbour for all the desperate and frustrated Europeans, still in the same vein as the USA was conceived in the first place, with this promise to leave social boundaries behind.

**e:** It is an urban frontier, whereas the American ideal is a rural frontier or a wilderness.

**K:** We can already foresee that in the long run this will be a complete symbolic defeat of the terrorists' goals, because the whole myth of the WTC will be much bigger than these towers ever were. These two buildings are becoming martyrs and the idea of the martyr is that after his life he leads an even more intense life.

*After so much hassle  
With the so called social  
Its misery, its order  
Its fruitless regime  
Of vanity and anger  
I've got only one aim left  
To force brutal people  
To be gentle  
That's what I call my Antigonism  
That's what I call my Antigonism  
To somehow heal this deadly sadness  
Of the entertainment prostitute*

Interview by Steve Rushton



**END**

## Agantic States

Steve Rushton

25

'The Milgram Re-enactment is an authentic reconstruction of one part of Stanley Milgram's Obedience to Authority experiment conducted at Yale University in Connecticut from 1960 for several years.

### 1960

During the original experiment subjects were asked to give seemingly real electric shocks to another individual. Ostensibly the experiment was to test the limit to which subjects were prepared to follow the orders of an experimenter.

The experiment involved a considerable amount of artifice, not least to persuade each subject that the shocks they were administering were real. The experiment employed the services of actors to carry out these roles.

### 2002

The Milgram Re-enactment was initiated by artist Rod Dickinson.

It took place at the Centre for Contemporary Art, Glasgow on February 15th and 17th 2002. After the re-enactment, a documentation was presented in the Gallery in the form of a 4 hour unedited film of the Re-enactment alongside a faithful reconstruction of Milgram's Laboratory in which the experiments took place.'

Source: Milgram Re-enactment website

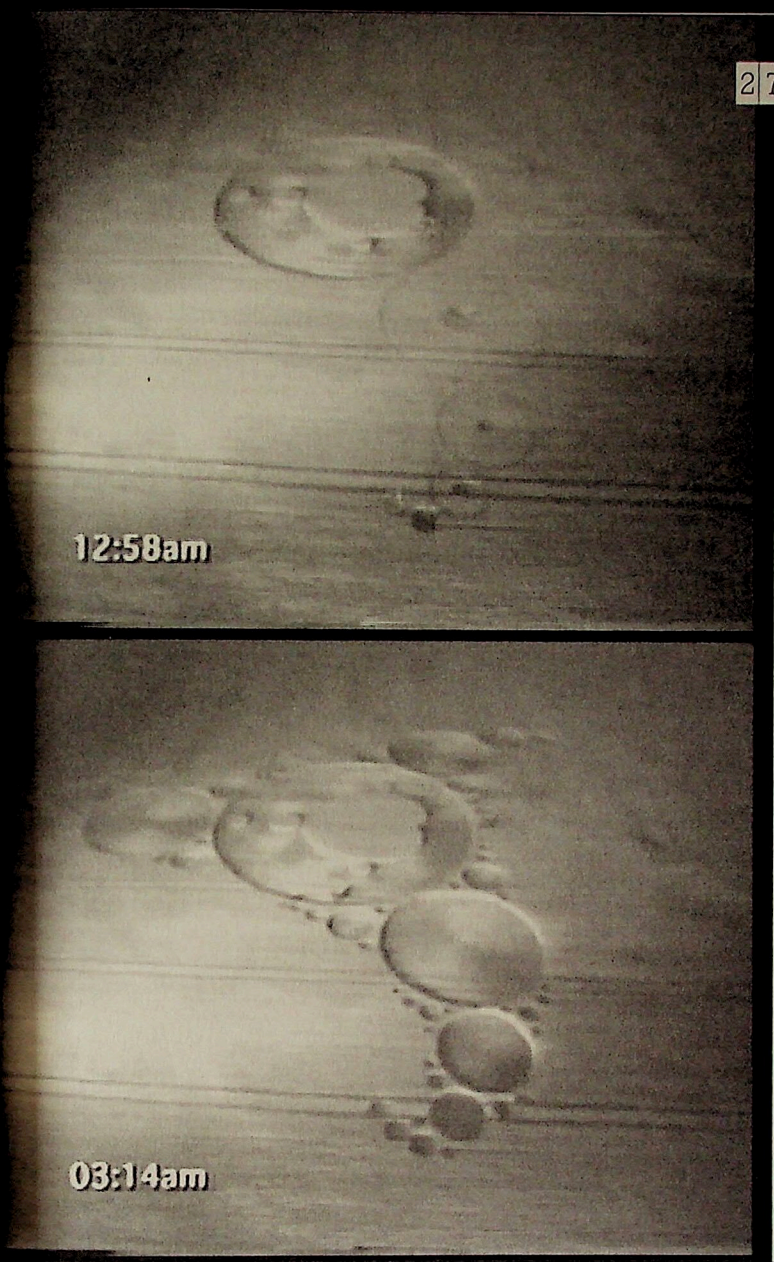
I would like to focus on a figure that has regularly appeared in Rod Dickinson's work over the past ten years. This is the figure of the trickster. The re-enactment of the Milgram experiment understandably produces an anxiety about whether what is being represented is a representation of the truth – or more particularly a profound truth about the suggestibility of human beings.

The ongoing obsession with the re-enactment (as the pastime of many hobbyist historians) reflects an anxiety about whether an image or an event can be represented faithfully. I would argue that there is a thread running thorough Dickinson's work – the crop circles, the Jonestown re-enactment and the re-enactment of Stanley Milgram's obedience experiment – that constitutes an investigation into the ethics of representation.

Dickinson has in the past been a circle-maker and a great deal of his art during the 90s dealt with this topic. This was along with an engagement with subjects where there is invariably some element of mystery – where all parts of the story can't be accounted for: UFO sightings, accounts of alien abduction etc.

Circle-makers are responsible for the strange configurations that appear in the fields of England every summer and which are variously attributed to aliens, hoaxers or to freak weather conditions. The phenomena of crop circles started in earnest in the mid 70s. The credit for the authorship of the genre is generally attributed to Doug Bower and Dave Chorley. Both were quite disarming about their reasons for creating circles. In the late 90s, in an interview for the BBC's *Country File*, Bower said: 'we wanted to create a thing that was circular... so the general public would believe that aliens had made them during the night'. In 1991 Dickinson and other artists started to make circles – you might say that this amounted to the appropriation of a genre created by Bower, Chorley and their colleagues. After that time the circles became more complex – displaying a more detailed understanding of how they might more readily be given any number of interpretations, by being situated in particular locations and being formed into particular configurations.

The circles were installed in a way that accorded multiple readings. This might be seen as a form of multiple coding – in one context they meant one thing and in another something else – different meanings were produced by the discussion between the groups that believed them to have different origins. And from this point it was also possible to see the circles as part of the discourse about contemporary art, a discourse which is itself situated within a broader debate about how meaning is mediated in contemporary society.





01:32am



04:05am

These images float through the channels of the media, co-opted by various belief groups who put them to work on affirming their own belief system. (It wouldn't be stretching the point, of course, to see the art world as another form of belief group.) At the same time the images of the circles were routinely employed as fodder for the mass media who re-cycled the same binary debate: 'are they real or are they a hoax?' and typically these questions would remain in suspension.

This suspension of a final verdict is actually a necessary part of the construction of their meaning – because if they are to mean anything their meaning must rest in suspension. This paradox was illustrated well by the circle analyst Dr Rupert Sheldrake. On the occasion of a crop circle-making contest, sponsored by the Guardian Newspaper in the early 90s (a contest which produced remarkably 'convincing' circles), Sheldrake stated: 'This shows that circles can be hoaxed, but we know that forgers can produce twenty pound notes that look very like the real thing, but that doesn't prove that all twenty pound notes are forgeries' [1]. This is an impeccable logic.

The circles occupy a curious place in our culture. They might be seen, in one sense, as a-signifiers. They are images with no inherent meaning where the intention of the artist is not apparent. However, in another sense, they are strongly suggestive – they trace the shape that can be accommodated by a potentially compatible belief system.

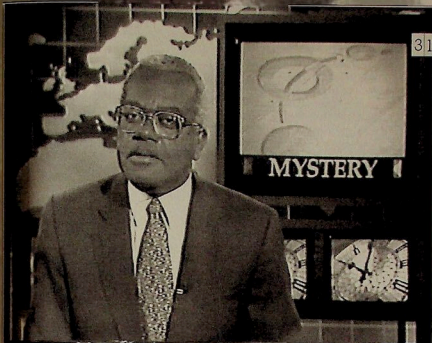
Felix Guattari coined a term that might be useful in helping us understand the circles. The term is post-media. It indicates an era after the mass media – that would develop in parallel to our move into a post-industrial society. In a footnote to *The Guattari Reader* he says that such an era would be characterised by 'redefinition between producers and consumers' and the 'institution of new social practices and their interference with the development of the media'. Guattari goes on to outline the context in which these developments might occur, namely 'after the development of information technologies'. And it's easy to see this model instanced in the work of the circle-makers, with their reliance on small media enclaves, communities that self-mediate, that manoeuvre around the mass media and fall through the frame the mass media constructs for them [2].

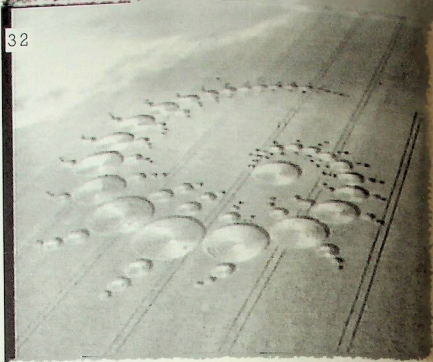


In our appreciation of the circles we can see the relationship between what we might call micro-media groups – the web, small media enclaves – and the mass media. The irritation for believers and cereologists is that at least some circles are hoaxes – just as some twenty-pound notes are forgeries. It's evident that no final resolution will be found. Despite the co-dependency of these groups it is imperative – for the debate to have any meaning – that parties to the debate don't acknowledge the human agency of all circles. Dickinson's involvement in this is aligned with an examination – a practical demonstration – or perhaps fieldwork – for an experiment in modern mediation. And in this respect there is a clear relationship between the *Milgram Re-enactment* and the production of the circles; the experiment relies on a trick.

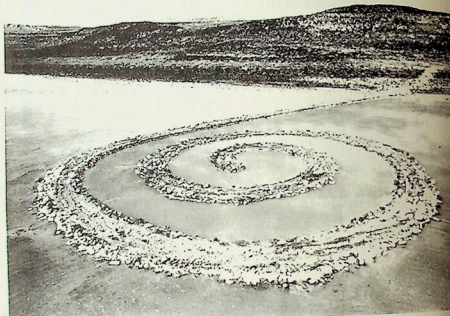
A further complication, which is echoed in the re-enactment of the Milgram experiment, comes when we consider the relationship of the work to the discursive space of the art world. The circles have been shown in galleries and written about in newspapers and art journals. In this context it may be said they are a little like land art – and here we don't have to change our focus – they are gestures without inherent significance that just happen to find a viable discursive space within the art world. Again they suggest a shape in which argumentation about their role in recent art history can take place. And this isn't to say that such interpretations are misplaced but rather that the creation of the circles create the possibility that such a debate can take place. In the manner of the readymade it is the indeterminate meaning of the work that solicits legitimate questions around its status as a work of art. And in common with art after Duchamp's readymades it is the discussion around it which serves to constitute it as a work of art – this is what Thierry de Duve, in *Kant after Duchamp*, suggests is the paradigm shift in our appreciation of art after Duchamp's declaration of the readymade in 1917. That our understanding of art centres on the linguistic turn – that after that time art is seen to be essentially about language and the relationship of an object or gesture to discourse.

Incidentally, now that I've indicated that it is legitimate to talk about the circles as art, it's worth re-viewing Robert Smithson's 1970 film *Spiral Jetty* to see how a relationship with the landscape and the cosmos is suggested – this relationship is one of the buttons the





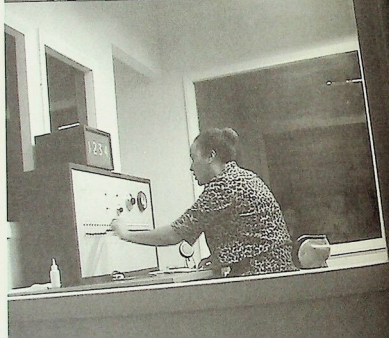
Source: 'Reverend's' Copp Circle Communion 2 Circlevision, 1994



Spiral Jetty, Robert Smithson, 1970

circles press. In the film there is a shot taken of the jetty from above – reflecting the sky – providing a mirror between the creation of the landscape, the planet (a cosmological occurrence), the spiral jetty and of the spiral arm of the milky way, in which our planet is situated. But at the same time one can also read Smithson's work by reading the standard October script: as a critique of the institution of the museum and gallery, or as a critique of the minimalist emphasis on the specificity of the object. So we see that Spiral Jetty can simultaneously be framed by the theoretical debates being conducted when it was made and also elide those debates – slip through the frame and say something else. In this sense both Dickinson and Smithson can be regarded as post-media artists.

The trick in the Milgram experiment might be seen as expedient. The means of the trick – to fool volunteers into believing that they are administering potentially lethal doses of electricity to another human being – might justify the ends of the experiment. We may conclude that people are obedient to authority – and that their need to adhere to it is greater than any ethical consideration that may over-ride it. We might also conclude that the fooling the volunteers is necessary to the experiment – perhaps in the name of science. In the 1960 film of Milgram's Obedience Experiments we are actually looking at a series of re-enactments. In fact it's in the nature of a scientific experiment that it should be enacted and re-enacted. It might be better to use the words 'acted out' because the original experiment required a stage set, a cast with a script and an unwitting lead actor who played out a role imposed upon him or her by the set, by the other actors and by the conditions of the experiment. The theatre, in this case, is the theatre of science – where a particular procedure is acted out. This theatre has its own modes of behaviour and language – a particular set of scientific discourses. This might be described as a discursive space where particular words and gestures are used in a particular way to perform and achieve a particular result. Words and actions achieve expected ends. But it would be naive to suggest that this world is hermetically sealed, that no other influences can bleed into the experiment, that no outside element could influence the experiment.



This outlines Arendt's idea that Eichmann's banality was anything but routine, and later in the postscript of the book she goes to some length to indicate the dangers of making generalisations about human nature from the particular case of Eichmann: 'It can be held that the issue is no longer a particular human being... but rather the German people in general, or anti-Semitism in all its forms, or the whole of modern society, or the nature of man and original sin - so that ultimately the entire human race sits invisibly beside the defendant in the dock. All this has often been argued, and especially by those who will not rest until they have discovered an 'Eichmann in everyone of us'.' [8]

And emphatically, Arendt writes (also in the postscript): '[...] when I speak of the banality of evil, I do so only on a strictly factual level, pointing to the phenomenon which stared me in the face at the trial. Eichmann was not Iago and not Macbeth, and nothing would be farther from his mind than to determine with Richard III 'to prove a villain'... he was not stupid. It was sheer thoughtlessness - something by no means identical with stupidity - that predisposed him to become one of the greatest criminals of that period... Such remoteness from reality and such thoughtlessness can wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts taken together which, perhaps, are inherent in man - that was, in fact, the lesson one could learn in Jerusalem. But it was a lesson, neither an explanation of the phenomenon nor a theory about it.'

It seems the obedience experiment allowed Milgram to draw conclusions that Arendt found she could not. For Arendt the banality of Eichmann's character was particular to Eichmann; a *spectacular*, remarkable lack of imagination, whereas Milgram makes the interpretation that Eichmann's banality was commonplace and from this interpretation we can easily move toward the conclusion that there is indeed an 'Eichmann in everyone of us'

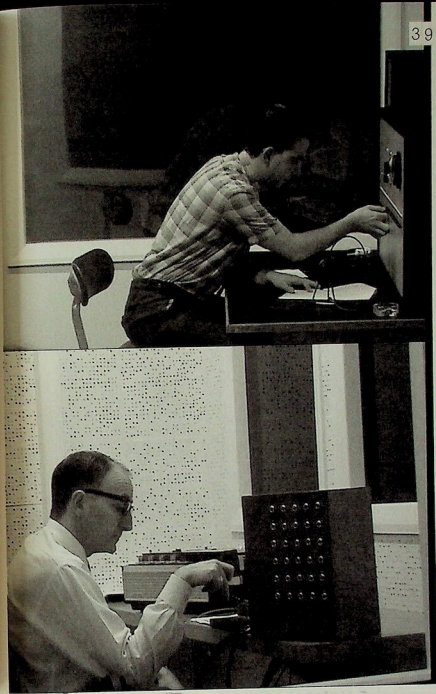
But the experiment was always a form of theatre - the degree to which Milgram fine tunes the procedures of his experiment to ensure the expected result - establishing a form of organisational hierarchy within the laboratory, the elaborate electrical devices, all conform to the dictates of the discourse that he was operating within. He needed an environment that couldn't allow for contingency, he wanted to demonstrate that the experiment was procedurally correct in all respect.

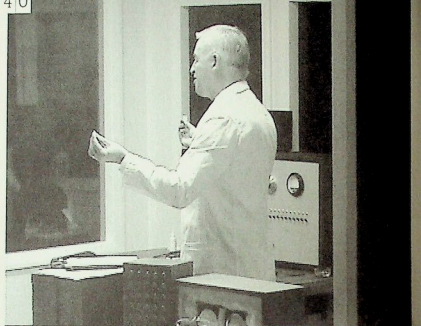
This is a necessary response to the regimen imposed on him by the requirements of scientific experimentation. In this sense Milgram became a lab rat in his own experiment. Performing science to science.

The Milgram experiment, like Arendt's work on Eichmann might yield a more humble result than proving that a great percentage of us are capable of murder – it is 'neither an explanation of the phenomenon nor a theory about it'. It was a lesson.

I would like to propose an alternative starting point, which, operating on a different premise, would yield different results. Such an experiment would require a different view of the way power relations operate to the way Milgram viewed power. In *Obedience*, Milgram took the classic hierarchical structure as his starting point. This is a pyramidal structure where power comes from the top: God – the king – the administrators of the kingdom – the people. Milgram uses the terms 'boss' and 'followers' and all the cast members, including Milgram himself, have specific roles in this hierarchy: teacher, learner experimenter. This schema is illustrated diagrammatically. This view of power can be contrasted with another classical view which sees one group in contestation with another [classically, capital in conflict with labour] the events of history and the behaviour of people within society can then be seen as an unfolding of this dialectic.

The third view is proposed by Foucault. This is the notion of a form of power which is exercised discreetly and which changes the behaviour of the subject who operates in a multiplicity of social systems: the school, the workplace, the prison, the family. For Foucault the establishment of the Panopticon represented the moment when society moved from a paradigm of punishment to one of discipline. The panopticon structure, designed as a prison, was developed by the Utilitarian Jeremy Bentham in the 1790s. It is a central tower, which is surrounded by a peripheral ring so that the people in the tower can see the people in the building around it but the people in the ring building can't see their observers. This causes a change in the behaviour of those being watched and represents the birth of human surveillance as a mechanism for retaining social order (and, perhaps the birth of modern paranoia).





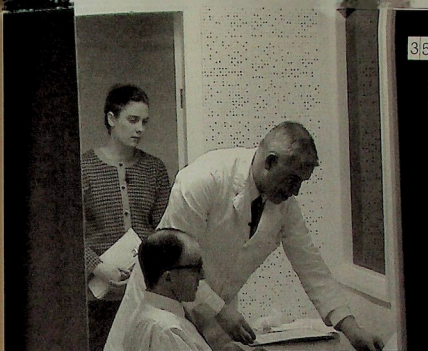
Here the hierarchical model begins to fall away because people not only begin to police themselves, regulate their behaviour (to normalise), but also take on a new set of subject positions. In this schema, power is transferring between different people and institutions and also allows for contingencies across the fields of power. If this model were applied in Milgram's laboratory the experiment would be unworkable, or more to the point it could not be staged without the fixed hierarchical model which regulates the behaviour of the 'teacher'. It was essential, for the experiment to succeed, that no allowance for contingency be made.

It might be my job in this situation, perhaps a self-appointed task, perhaps a task imposed upon me by the institution of this publication, to bring the bodies of work by Dickinson together into some conceptual whole. This would be a forlorn task because they are not illustrations of a concept but are rather engaged with the problems concepts have living together. I mentioned at the outset that the figure of the trickster and the trick are common to all three phases of Dickinson's work over the last ten years (the circles, Jonestown and Milgram re-enactments). They also have in common the figure of the obsessive – whether they are destructive or creative forms of obsession. These are all valid interpretations but, for me, key to the work is a concern about how a gesture or an event is installed. This installation is made possible through the power of different discourses which could never agree but are always co-dependent (like the internal conflict within Milgram's experiment: using the authority of science to make a moral observation about people's need to obey authority – including the authority of science). Through this conflict and dependency a different space is produced. Different forces that make claim to the same historical event, as in Jonestown, point to an investigation into how a gesture or an image can be installed – but not in the sense of installing itself in an existing space, of taking over existing territory. The work appears to be one thing but turns out to be something else, and that something is unfamiliar. It appears to be moving in one territory and takes an unexpected turn. This movement, this slight of hand, this oblique entry, has a bearing on a statement made by Marcel Duchamp in 1961: 'At another time wanting to expose the basic antinomy between art and the readymade I imagined a 'reciprocal readymade': use a Rembrandt as an ironing board.' [9]

Furthermore the scientific experiment necessitates such a double coding, to reinforce the proof of the experiment Milgram must move into different spaces. Milgram cites Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* [published three years after the beginning of the obedience experiment] [3], and other texts, to underline a moral point about the general nature of human beings. The experiment demonstrated something – but Milgram calls on events that happened after the beginning of the experiments: the trial of Eichmann in 1961, the massacre at My Lai in 1968, to make a wider ethical and moral point [4]. One reading of the experiment's value would be to indicate that in the modern world people see science and technology as the authority to be followed without question – this would be a plausible conclusion if the experiment had happened only in 1960. But this conclusion about people's belief in the authority of science is double coded against historical and ethical publications so that more general conclusions about the nature of human beings can be made: that obedience '...is the dispositional cement that binds men to systems of authority' [5]. Such a move is necessary if the central contradiction – that scientific methods are used to discredit the authority of science – is to be resolved.

Milgram's reading of Arendt's book is clear; in *Obedience to Authority* he writes: 'This is perhaps the most fundamental lesson of [Arendt's] study: ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process. Moreover, even when the destructive effects of their work become patently clear, and they are asked to carry out actions incompatible with fundamental standards of morality, relatively few people have the resources needed to resist authority.' [6]

This wasn't, however, the conclusion Hannah Arendt drew about Eichmann in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. And here I will quote at some length from the book; firstly from the account of Eichmann's execution: '[Eichmann] then proceeded: 'After a short time, Gentlemen, we shall meet again. Such is the fate of all men. Long live Germany, long live Argentina, long live Austria. I shall not forget them.' In the face of death, he had found the cliché used in funeral oratory. Under the gallows, his memory played him the last trick; he was 'elated' and he forgot this was his own funeral.' [7]



Duchamp's use of the term antinomy is a reference to Kant's notion of the perturbation created when one is presented with two propositions which contradict each other and yet have equal validity – for instance: the universe is infinite against the universe has a limit. Dickinson's work is situated in an area where the perturbations between different, sometimes equally valid, claims on the same event occur – including the origins of the circles, the fate of the followers of Jim Jones and the scientific claims of the Milgram experiment, which plays against the experiment's pure artifice.

The sign above Jim Jones's throne read 'those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it'. This saying is now so familiar to us that it has become something of a truism. The experiments and the re-enactments make a series of circles in time – the event is defined by references outside of it – the event is installed covertly – stepping around the moment of installation. It is never able to capture something 'essential' about its origin and so remains incommensurable, indeterminate – never telling us enough and yet always anxiously, repeatedly fixing it. In a strange echo of the truism above Jim Jones's throne, the Milgram experiment and Dickinson's re-enactments are always remembering the mistakes from the past and always repeating them.

Steve Rushton, 2002

This is a version of a text presented at the CCA, Glasgow on 16th February 2002 and is an extended version of a shorter essay 'In the Name of Science' which was published in *The Tenth Level*, CCA Glasgow, 2002.

Thanks to Norman Bryson at the Jan van Eyck Academy, Maastricht for jogging my memory about the Panopticon.

For more on Dickinson's work as a circlemaker see John Roberts' *Trickster*.  
www.circlemakers.com

#### Notes

[1] Video, 'Revelations' *Crop Circle Communiqué* 2, Circlevision, 1994

[2] This observation comes out of conversations with Howard Slater. See also *everything Magazine*, volume 3 issue 2, Howard Slater and Mathew Fuller/everything Editorial, 1999, pp.36–38.

[3] *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* was first published in 1963 – however the trial of Eichmann took place in 1961 and was widely reported, including by Arendt for *The New Yorker*. The effect of the trial on the public imagination cannot be underestimated. An effect that is reflected in the raw data relating to Milgram's obedience experiment itself. A year after the experiment Milgram's 'teachers' – the subjects of the experiments who thought they were administering shocks, were questioned about their experiences. 'teachers' – the subjects of the experiments who thought they were administering shocks, were questioned about their experiences. One a 'teacher' reported that his wife had stated – after learning of her husband's indifference to the fate of the learner – 'you should call yourself Eichmann'. (Milgram's *Obedience to Authority* Harper Colophon, 1974, p.54)

[4] Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority*, Harper Colophon, 1974

[5] *Ibid*

[6] *Ibid*, p.6

[7] *Op Cit*, p.252

[8] *Ibid*, p.286

[9] *Apropos of 'Readymades' in The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, Thames and Hudson 1975, p141

### Brief for a club night poster

design by Maud vande Veire, participant, Werkplaats Typografie, Arnhem

It is an A0 poster for a club night at a well-known venue on the outskirts of Amsterdam. The poster will act as a fly-poster that will be pasted to billboards and derelict buildings around the city. The design should be functional: its purpose is to spread the word and increase ticket sales. The music is light techno; dub lounge music, not hardcore. Like all these kinds of things, the main purpose of the night is to bring lots of sexy looking people together in one room, so everyone feels better about themselves.

Information to be included in the poster:

- \* It is at 'Club de Ville' at 'Westergasfabriek'
- \* The night is called 'Brown Corduroy Lounge'
- \* It is held on the '17th of March'
- \* The 'Doors open at 10pm'
- \* The 'Dress code' is 'sports casual'
- \* The night is 'Featuring: DJ Vla, DJ Heugem, VJ Low and two little ducks'
- \* This text should appear discreetly somewhere:  
'Tickets available from AUB /Get Records/[www.royalcorduroy.com](http://www.royalcorduroy.com)'

### Brief for a film release poster

design by Stuart Bailey, graphic designer, Amsterdam/London

This doesn't have to be pastiche of the generalized look of posters for films. The film is on the cusp between mainstream and artzzy. It's a drama called 'Walking Teal Home', a British film with a mostly British cast, set in the modern day. The setting for the film takes place between a small seaside town called Llandudno in North Wales, with some scenes in London. It is set in deep winter, when the seaside town is all shut down. Lots of old ladies battle against the weather along the promenade. It's a bit like a Smiths song.

I am not too sure of the plot but the following are some elements that feature or make up the film: A new beginning for a family that move to North Wales from London, because something SERIOUS happened in London, so they are sort of leaving a bad history behind and trying to start again. It is difficult for them to fit in to the small coastal town lifestyle. The pier is a key element to the narrative of the story; a lot of scenes take place there. There is something a little bit thunderous and creepy about the whole thing. The scenes in Wales are shot very dark, but the scenes in the city are more bright and colourful, they show daily life without all the sinister mystery. There are quite a few scenes set on train journeys between the two places. The father is probably a writer and he is restoring a little boat. It might be that the family is in a long-term witness protection program or something like that, but that's not the main line of the plot.

The poster should probably include the following things:

- \* The name of the film 'Walking Teal Home'. If you think it's really bad, you can make one up and we can talk about it (but let me know, so that I can agree with it (it has to have a real colour in the title (but not green, white or grey)))
- \* A by-line: 'Starring Joshua Roberts, Elizabeth Dunn and Etienne Nys'
- \* A review quote on the film from *Premiere* magazine. Something like 'A cinematic dream from a desolate landscape.'
- \* The film's slogan or by-line: '???' (you decide)
- \* The director 'Nathaniel Evans'
- \* The BBFC Viewers Age rating '18'
- \* 'Distributed by Corduroy Cushion Home Entertainment, in association with Channel 4 films'





# Glossary A-M

An Illustrated



## A

**Art** An autonomous activity influenced like all our activities by the material existence of being. *Herbert Read*

**Artist** A kid in a playground shouting 'Look what I can do'



## B

**Bereft of orthodox talent** A person accepted by the Club

**Burnt Out and Crushed** Definitive display of Club counter-culture curated by Bono and Sting

## C

**Canvey Island** Spiritual home and holiday destination of Club members *see also STRETCHY MONKEY CAKE*

**Conceptual Art** Deliberately banal or paradoxical representation of concepts drawn from philosophy, art criticism and ordinary life *Ben Martin-Hoogewerf*

**Creative Nihilism** *see GLOSSARY*

## D

**Derbyshire Street Arts** An East-end dereliction of studios. Club headquarters 1995-99 *see also INVER-LOCHIE BAR.*

## Disco Of The Spoken Word

J. Krishnamurti backed by the Waikiki Beach Boys

**Ding Dong Twist** A way of being *see also VINYL*

## E

**Emblematic Realism** The collection and study of worthless and ephemeral artefacts which once held sentimental value to a member of the general public

## F

**Free Smell** Damp wallpaper and sandwich spread, bananas and methane, melted plastic and boiled mince, yellow net curtains and cement dust.

**Forty Five** The number of a page in a book *see also VINYL*

## H

**Hospitality Suite** Generic term for any Club installation which invites casual eating and drinking *see also PIES, SUPERLAGER*

## Halku



Beer jackets worn  
With sensible trousers and shirts  
By men in trainers

**Hot Melt Glue Gun** Device for channeling the creative process *see also GAFFER TAPE, COOKING FOIL, FELT PENS, BEER TINS, VINYL*

## I

**Inverlochle Bar** 3MX1.5M Lilliputian drinking club with bar, dining area, dance floor and Rock-Ola jukebox. Once served coffee and biscuits to patrons of the Tate. *see HOSPITALITY SUITE*

**Interviews** A device for gaining entry to the houses of mad or deluded nit-wit popstars who think they have been touched by the hand of anyone from 'Bill' De Kooning to David Oxtoby.

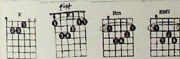
## J

**John Lee Hooker's Money Box** An exhibit from the Club's **Travelling Museum Of Entertainment Memorabilia**

## K

### Ken Ardley Playboys

Seminal art-rock band and bastard child of the Club's anti-aesthetic sensibilities *see also NOISEJUNK*



## L

### Land Based Text Piece



## uncheon

### Meat

*see also SALAD CREAM, OPENING, HOSPITALITY SUITE*



## FOR THE WRONG PEOPLE

### AND THE RIGHT MONEY

the Club has been known to undertake outside catering for openings *see also TATLER MAGAZINE*

## M

### Meaning Of Dreams

Unexplicable neurological impulses which are usually an accurate prediction of future events enabling one to map out ones life and courses of action e.g. a bent pair of spectacles lying on the

floor of a corrugated hut, the hut is on a raft heading for the rapids and you can't escape because there is no door etc *see also SURREALISM*

**Mad Dog** Colour coded alcoholic flavouring for both palettes *see also PETS*

**Multi-talented** Term of abuse

**Brief for a Poster for the Announcement of a Seminar**  
design by John Morgan, graphic designer, London

The seminar/panel discussion is called 'On Camouflage' and will consist of a two-hour discussion on the use of 'Role-play', 'The Fictitious Persona', 'The Fragmentation of the Self' and 'The Staging of Realities', by artists and authors, as a means to articulate their practice. The lecture will take place at 'Beursschouwburg' on Kazernestraat, Rue de la Caserne in Brussels, Bruxelles, Belgium, on the 18th of September. Doors will open at 18.30/6.30pm and the seminar will begin at 19.00/7.00pm. The discussion will be chaired by François de Domégnon-Mauve; the other three people on the panel will be Rose Duvall, Akiro Sontoshisan-kuso and Boris van den Geel. This seminar has been organized on the occasion of and in response to the exhibition 'On Camouflage' at the Paleis voor Schone Kunsten/Palais des Beaux-Arts Brussels, Bruxelles, Belgie. The discussion will, amongst others, concentrate on the works of 'Fernado Pessoa' for literature, and the recent examples of 'rt.Mark' and 'Atelier van Lieshout' for the visual arts.

The following information must feature in the poster:

- \* The title 'On Camouflage'
- \* Chaired by 'François de Domégnon-Mauve'
- \* Panel to include 'Rose Duvall, Akiro Sontoshisan-kuso and Boris van den Geel'
- \* The date '18th of September'
- \* The time '19:00/7.00pm'
- \* The Address 'Beursschouwburg, Kazernestraat 37, Rue de la Caserne, Brussels 1000'
- \* The cost 'BF.300'
- \* Where the tickets can be purchased from: 'Fnac, Music Mania, JJ Records, Paleis voor Schone Kunsten/Palais des Beaux-Arts'
- \* The website '<http://beursschouwburg.vgc.be>'
- \* These short Biographies 'Chair of panel: François de Domégnon-Mauve (Curator of Exhibitions, Paleis voor Schone Kunsten/Palais des Beaux-Arts Brussels, Bruxelles, Belgie). Panel: Rose Duvall (Artist, Paris, France); Akiro Sontoshisan-kuso (Author/Theorist, Tokyo, Japan); Boris van den Geel (Author/Art Critic, Antwerpen, Belgie).

- \* This somewhere: 'This seminar has been organized on the occasion of and in response to the exhibition "On Camouflage" at the Paleis voor Schone Kunsten/Palais des Beaux-Arts Brussels, Bruxelles, Belgie'
- \* And this somewhere: 'The discussion will amongst others will concentrate on the works of Fernado Pessoa for literature, and the recent examples of rt.Mark and Atelier van Lieshout for the visual arts'

### Brief for Play-Station game poster

design by Sara De Bondt, participant, Jan van Eyck Akademie, Maastricht

The game is called 'Sudden White'. The game has been manufactured to be played on the new Sony PS2 and is aimed at a teenage and young adult male market. The objective of this adventure game is for the player to survive and escape an arctic environment. The character in the game finds himself the only survivor of a plane crash and then lost in an arctic wilderness, where he must firstly survive and then travel great distances in extreme conditions to find civilization. Some elements that feature in the game play include: snow, forests, wolves, snow bikes, skis, climbing equipment, sniper rifles, mountains, blizzards and avalanches.

The design should be functional; it is essential to sell this game in the market place. This doesn't have to be pastiche of the generalized look of posters for PS2 Games, but it is possible to find previous examples of the general aesthetic of these posters from game covers and adverts in Play-Station magazines.

The poster must include the following things:

- \* The name 'Sudden White'
- \* The game's slogan or by-line 'The dark is the last thing to be afraid of'
- \* The PS2 logo
- \* European age rating logo '15' (see most game covers for the look of the logo)
- \* The game's website address 'www.sudden-white.com'
- \* The producers' logo 'nori games' (to be made up)
- \* The producers' website address 'www.nori-games.com'
- \* A Tiny line of text at the bottom of the poster reading 'nori games and the nori games logo are trademarks of nori games interactive software corporation. Copyright 2001 all rights reserved.'

### Brief for a band's 12-inch release poster

design by Paul Elliman, graphic designer/teacher, Yale, New Haven

The band is called 'Earl Gray'. The poster is the sort one would find fly-posted on derelict buildings. It is to advertise the bands first 12-inch Single called 'With Coyotes Eyes'. The band is really good. I think you would like them a lot, but the record company is not behind them all the way, so their marketing and promotions are a bit messed up. The band consists of three boys and two girls. They make music in a room in a Salford tower block. Two of the members are rich kids from Alderley Edge out in the Cheshire countryside. The others are from and have always lived on the north side of Manchester, so there is a bit of a class conflict within the band. The other thing is, if this single flops then they won't get an album contract, so although the rich kids can run home to mummy and daddy, the other three will still be on the dole. Therefore, for some of them this is a real endeavor, whilst the others treat it as a 'project'.

The Sound of the Music: A drum machine, but used sensitively. Poetic and beautiful (even too sickly-sweet at times) about love, life and aspirations. Many references to the everyday (i.e. toffee crisps, shagging a girl behind Halfords on an out-of-town retail park, tea (of course), other bands and stuff. There are a couple of guitars, bass, female posh melody vocals with a male drone/talking.

The poster must include the following things:

- \* The band name 'Earl Gray'
- \* The 12-inch single name 'With Coyotes Eyes'
- \* The release date '14th April'
- \* The fact that it is their debut single
- \* The fact that it is 'Available on CD and 12-inch vinyl'
- \* In small type at the bottom: 'Colourful recordings 2002 copyright' (the record company name) and 'Jacksie distribution copyright' (the distributors' name)
- \* The information 'Tracks on the CD/12" are: SIDE A - Track 1 'With Coyotes Eyes', Track 2 'Halfords from Behind'; SIDE B - Track 3 'But my chain fell off', Track 4: 'And one with a Citrus Cigar'



VELASQUEZ: LAS MENINAS  
 reproduced by courtesy of  
 the Museo del Prado

# Bunbury exploded

AN AESTHETIC ENCOUNTER IN SIX ACTS

JOHN TOZER

The Persons of the Play

JACK WORTHING, JP  
 HON GWENDOLEN FAIRFAX  
 ALGERNON MONCRIEFF  
 MISS PRISM

The Scenes of the play

ACT I

Mostly on a bed in a rented room,  
 somewhere in southern California

ACT II

Also mostly on a bed

ACT III

Still Mostly on a bed

ACT IV

On a bed

ACT V

Mostly also on a bed

ACT VI

Still on a bed

## SCENE

A rented room, somewhere in southern California. On one wall is a large mirror, opposite are a pair of French windows through which can be seen a garden. It is a nice day. Miss Prism and the Hon Gwendolen Fairfax are arranged on a bed. Jack Worthing is conducting experiments into the elasticity of the flesh and muscular tissues, while Algernon Moncrieff wields a video camera.

[JACK has his tongue planted firmly between the cheeks of PRISM, while GWENDOLEN inserts fingers into her backside. ALGERNON can be heard grunting behind a video camera.]

**ALGERNON:** She's already got her finger deep in her arse. Let's have a bit of pussy.

**GWENDOLEN:** Oh yes! Feels so good ...

**PRISM:** How's that feel? Is that good for you? Oh Yeah! I love to get spanked.

**GWENDOLEN:** Let's see. [Removes fingers from bottom.]

The Taste Test. Mmm, very good! You have nothing to worry about, my friend. Now for a little pussy.

[Manoeuvres herself beneath PRISM, who is felating ALGERNON, or possibly JACK.] That is so clear and beautiful.

**JACK:** Yeah!

[GWENDOLEN is seen in close beaver shot, with PRISM investigating front and back vents.]

**PRISM:** That's nice.

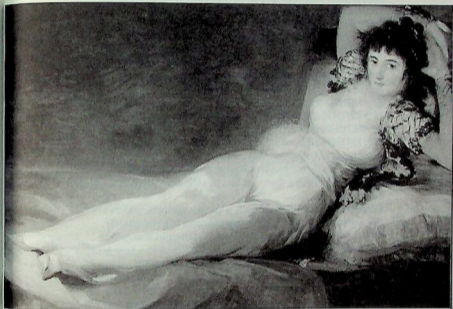
**ALGERNON:** Yeah. That does look good, doesn't it? Oh my Lordy! Does that look good!

**GWENDOLEN:** [removes JACK's penis from mouth. Continues to investigate PRISM's back passage with forefingers.] Aahh! Fuck-yeah! I'm gonna ...

[ALGERNON's hand appears.] Get your fingers in there. Aah! Let's fuck her.

**PRISM:** Oohhh! Fuck-yeah!

**GWENDOLEN:** Fuck-yeah! That's so fucking good! Ha, ha, ha! Yeah! Oh, yeah! Fuck-yeah! Aahhh! Fuck-yeah! Oh, fuck! Yeah! Fuck it! Fuck I come on! Shit! Arsehole! Fuck-yeah! Aha! Three fingers in her arse! Hmm.



Francisco de Goya: *The Clothed Maja*, 1801-03, Museo del Prado, Madrid

Fuck-yeah! Fuck-yeah! Oh Yeah! Come on Baby! Ha, ha, ha! Oh boy! This is so fun! Fuck-yeah! I feel your fingers in her Algernon, deep in her pussy! Fuck-yeah! Come on Baby! Come on Prism! We're not going to stop, Baby! Come on! Come on! Come on! Come on! Come on! Come on! Gnnnn ... Fuck-yeah!

**PRISM:** [quaking with emotion] Oh God! You make me come!

**GWENDOLEN:** Yeah!

**PRISM:** Oh God I'm going to come.

**GWENDOLEN:** Oh Prism, you're so good! Fuck-yeah!

[A small but evidently powerful object that sounds like a microlight aircraft is introduced to PRISM's genitals by GWENDOLEN, accompanied by knowingly enthusiastic noises from the cast.]

**GWENDOLEN:** Three fingers in her pussy, and a thumb in her arse ... See? Shall I show you?

**ALGERNON:** Oh Yeah!

**GWENDOLEN:** Three, in here (she loves that!)

**ALGERNON:** Yeah, yeah ...

**GWENDOLEN:** And then ... in here ... And then you rub your fingers together.

**PRISM:** [makes wine tasting-type noises, while her tongue passes in a flurry of hot breath across JACK's anus] Ah! Fuck!

**GWENDOLEN:** [tugging on a length of electrical cable that emerges from PRISM's bottom and is presumably attached to the microlight] Mmm! Come on! Shove that thing in your arse! You like that Prism? I got to know how you like it!

**PRISM:** [makes appreciative noises] That feels so fucking good.

**GWENDOLEN:** [who has swapped positions and now joins PRISM at JACK's arse] Oh Yeah! Two fingers in Jack's arse!

## THE SECOND ACT

### SCENE

The cast are in the same room, arranged on the bed.

[GWENDOLEN is on the bed. Enter JACK from behind.]

**PRISM:** That looks so good!

**GWENDOLEN:** [peering through her legs] Hey! You can watch it in the mirror! Oh Yeah!

[Camera pans 180 degrees to where cast and camera can be seen entangled on bed. All laugh.]

**PRISM:** Gwendolen? I have a surprise for you! [Sound of microlight being started up.]

**GWENDOLEN:** Oh yeah! Fuck-yeah!

**PRISM:** [applying microlight to JACK's bottom] Does that feel good?

**JACK:** Yeah!

**GWENDOLEN:** Oooh! Yeah!

**JACK:** Oh Yeah!

**PRISM:** Yeah!

**GWENDOLEN:** Fuck-yeah! Ooh Yeah! Fuck-yeah! I'm going to come. Fuck-yeah! Oh God! Mmm!

## THE THIRD ACT

### SCENE

The cast are reconfigured on the bed.

**GWENDOLEN:** The secret potion! [Waves bottle of lube at camera then inserts anointed digits into PRISM's bottom.]

**ALGERNON:** [with evident approval] Did that finger slide into your arse easy!

**PRISM:** I'm a true Tushy Girl!

**ALGERNON:** Oh boy! That looks like two fingers to me!

**GWENDOLEN:** Yeah, and then Jack's penis!

**PRISM:** Oh! Fuck-yeah!

**GWENDOLEN:** Come on Prism!

**PRISM:** Oh God! Don't stop! Don't stop!

**GWENDOLEN:** Come on! Yeah! Come! Look at that arse!

## SCENE

The cast are reconfigured on the bed. JACK is above PRISM, with GWENDOLEN's fingers in his bottom.

**GWENDOLEN:** Oh! Fuck-yeah!

**PRISM:** Oh Yeah!

**GWENDOLEN:** Oh yeah! Fuck!

[GWENDOLEN, PRISM and JACK re-arrange themselves, with JACK underneath, PRISM on top and GWENDOLEN behind her.]

**GWENDOLEN:** [withdraws JACK's penis from her mouth and introduces it to PRISM's anus] Sit back on this fucker! Oh yeah!

**PRISM:** Yeah!

**GWENDOLEN:** Oh yes! Spread your arse. This is so hard for you right now. Come on! Come on! Oh yeah! Oh fuck-yeah! We did it! Oh see that fuck-yeah it went right in. Fucking lubed up those fingers first.

**PRISM:** I love it up my arse!

**GWENDOLEN:** Much better than the dildo I put up your arse at home, huh?

**PRISM:** Yeah! Oh God! Oh fuck-yeah!

**ALGERNON:** She's licking Jack's cock as it goes in and out of your arse!

**PRISM:** [glancing over her shoulder at mirror] Yeah, I know! I'm watching!

**GWENDOLEN:** [turning to camera] And I'm watching you!

**PRISM:** I love it deep in my arse!

**GWENDOLEN:** I know what you're going to love ...

[The microlight is powered up again and applied to PRISM's genitals.]

**PRISM:** Oh yeah! Right on my clit! Oooh! Right there! Right there!

**GWENDOLEN:** Yeah!

**PRISM:** Oh fuck

**GWENDOLEN and PRISM together:** Yeah!

**PRISM:** Oooh!

**GWENDOLEN:** This fucking cock in your arse I could suck it off. Fuck-yeah!



Francisco de Goya: *The Naked Maja*, 1800, Museo del Prado, Madrid

**PRISM:** Oh God! That's so fucking good! Oh ...

**GWENDOLEN:** Yeah! Fuck it! Mmm ... fuck-yeah!

**PRISM:** Oooh!

**GWENDOLEN:** [to camera] Ok! My turn! I'll give it back, but please ... just give me a taste! I miss it!

[GWENDOLEN transfers JACK's penis to her mouth, while PRISM sits on JACK's face.]

**GWENDOLEN:** Mmm! Yeah!

## THE FIFTH ACT

### SCENE

The cast are reconfigured on the bed. JACK is ravishing GWENDOLEN's bottom, while PRISM plays a supporting role to JACK's testicles.

**GWENDOLEN:** Oh yeah! Come on! Mmm yeah I'm going to come. Yeah! Oh yes fuck me! Oh God! Oh God yes! Aaah!

**PRISM:** [withdrawing JACK's penis from GWENDOLEN] Yeah that tastes so good!

**GWENDOLEN:** Yeah oh fuck! Oh Jack! Oh my God! I'm going to come so fucking good! Oh God-yeah! Oh Yeah! Oh God! Oh fuck-yeah! Oh fuck! Aaah yeah! Oh God! Oh fuck-yeah! Oh fuck! Oh God I'm still coming! Oh fuck, yeah! Oh yes! I'm going to come again! Yeeeahh! Oh God! Oh fuck! Oh yeah! Oh fuck-yeah! Aaah fuck my arse! Aaah yeah! Oh! Fuck-yeah! Mmmmm Mmmmm!

**PRISM:** Come on fucky!

**GWENDOLEN:** Fuck me! Come on and fuck-yeah! Oh God! Oh! I love it in my fucking arse! Oh God fuck me! Oh Prism!

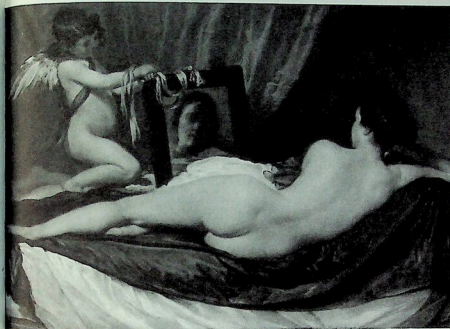
[The cast collapse, exhausted]

**JACK:** Oh shit! Ah shit!

**GWENDOLEN:** I'm going to sleep good tonight!

**PRISM:** Oh! I want to have this in me! Let me suck on it first!

**JACK:** Yeah!



Diego Velázquez: *Venus at her Mirror (The Rokeby Venus)*, c1644–48, National Gallery London



## SCENE

The cast are reconfigured on the bed. PRISM is impaled on JACK's penis while GWENDOLEN fists her lightly.

**PRISM:** Oh yeah!

**GWENDOLEN:** Can I lend a hand?

**PRISM:** Oh yeah! Oh fuck-yeah! Ooooh! Fuck my arse!

**GWENDOLEN:** Yeah, you like that arse fucked. I can feel it. Fuck-yeah!

**PRISM:** Oh yeah!

**GWENDOLEN:** Aaah fuck-yeah. Oh fuck-yeah feel that fucking pussy she's about to come. Oh yeah! Come on! Oh yeah, you're coming! Come on! Come on! Yeah! I can feel your pussy's going to come again!

**GWENDOLEN and PRISM together:** Yeah!

**PRISM:** Oh God oh fuck-yeah!

**GWENDOLEN:** Come on Prism, come! Fuck-yeah you fucking Tushy Girl! Fuck-yeah! Fuck, yeah! Fuck-yeah, I'm proud to be your partner! Oh yeah! Fuck-yeah! OK! I've got to have it!

[The cast reconfigure themselves on the bed.

GWENDOLEN is now sitting on JACK's penis. A certain sense of expectancy pervades the set]

**GWENDOLEN:** Aah, yeah! Fuck! Oh ... fuck-yeah. Mmm. Oh fuck-yeah, come on, fuck it ... Fuck-yeah! Oh yeah! Fuck me! Kiss me! That feels so ...

**PRISM:** That feels so good.

**GWENDOLEN:** Oh, you can come on our fucking faces. I think we'd like that. Fanny. Oh, I'm coming! Oh Fuck! Am I coming!

**JACK:** [Grunts]

**PRISM:** Oh yeah! I want you to come right in my mouth! Ah, come right in my mouth!

**JACK:** [in the throws of a copious orgasm] Ugh!

**GWENDOLEN:** Ah! Right in my eye!

**PRISM:** Oh, yeah!

**JACK:** Aah, shit!

**PRISM:** Aah, tastes so good.

**GWENDOLEN:** [to the camera] Are we messy enough for you?

**GWENDOLEN and PRISM:** That was so good.

**JACK:** So good.

**ALGERNON:** Cool.

TABLEAU

CURTAIN



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# The Convoluted Subject: Prosthetic Materialism in the Found Photographic Image

Paul O'Neill

*The finding of an object serves here exactly the same purpose as the dream, in the sense that it frees the individual from paralysing affective scruples, comforts him and makes him understand that the obstacle he might have thought insurmountable is cleared.*

– André Breton, *Mad Love*.

*The true, unrecognised passion of the collector is always anarchistic, destructive. For him this is its dialectic: loyalty to the thing, the individual thing, salvaged by him, he evokes an obstinate, subversive protest against the typical, the classifiable.*

– Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*.

On the 10th October, 2000, I was travelling home on the Underground, when I noticed a number of torn up pieces of paper that had been recklessly discarded underneath a bench at Euston station. Upon close examination, I discovered that these fragments all belonged to a singular source. I gathered each piece carefully and when I returned home, I meticulously adhered each piece of the jigsaw puzzle back together again. Upon completion, there was a small fragment missing, but I could clearly recognise that this was a photographic image of an attractive young woman. To the left of the photograph, she was staring out at me and apparently smiling towards the camera, which had recorded this incidental moment and frozen it in time. Since my discovery, I have been burdened by the reasoning as to why such a violent act had been carried out on this image, and why had it been thrown away in such an impulsive manner. It is not the actual biographical history of the person in the photograph that interests me, nor the possible narrative contained within the frame of the image, but instead, the more general phenomena of the photographic image as a perceived extension of the ontological self and its ability to provoke such a reaction in the owner/subject of the photograph.

In this essay, I will investigate both this question and examine equally, the compulsive urge that I, as the collector, displayed in recovering, possessing and giving meaning to such an artefact; the *trouville* [1]. Much of the answers are located in the writings of Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes, and more specifically in their relationship with the technology of *mimetics*. Through photography, mimesis has been central to the role of changing attitudes towards aesthetics which, I will argue, sees the advent of a shift away from the technics of anaesthetics [2] and towards a more prosthetic culture which proceeds to break down the subject-object binary in our relationship with the material world. The key to this transformation lies in the cognitive abilities of the individual to see themselves as an unconscious as well as conscious being.

### Imagining the Unconscious

Walter Benjamin (relying considerably on Freud) highlighted the idea of the consciousness as a shield protecting the organism against stimuli from 'excessive energies', by preventing their retention, and by resisting

their impress as memory. As he writes: 'The threat from these energies [that is, the excessive energies of the external world] is one of shocks. The more readily consciousness registers these shocks, the less likely they are to have a traumatic effect.' [3] Consciousness is used as a buffer against any external stimuli and, by isolating the present state of consciousness from the past memory, it fills this temporal gap, by putting the event into the past. The conscious self converts the 'incident into a moment that has been lived' [4] in order to deal with the shock of the experience: it is a form of self-anaesthetisation and all the while,

'... the greater the share of the shock factor in particular impressions, the more constantly consciousness has to be alert as a screen against stimuli; the more efficiently it does so, the less do these impressions enter experience (Erfahrung), tending to remain in the sphere of a certain hour in one's life (Erlebnis). Perhaps the special achievement of shock defence may be seen in consciousness at the cost of the integrity of its contents.' [5]

As Benjamin acknowledges in his essay 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', the *sensation of the fright* is that which is experienced when this shock defence fails in its mechanics to ward off the unconscious. The unconscious is, for Benjamin, that human-attribute that restores a degree of *perceptibility* to the present moment of the experience and when these perceptions are fixed, they are made available for intervention and manipulation. With the technological use of photographic imaging, the experience of the shock itself is transformed into the eventful moment as 'a posthumous shock' which is fixed in time. Here, any event at any time can be given a permanent record, thus extending the range of what Benjamin calls *mémoire volontaire*. What is shocking about such a manifestation is that the event as experienced and the *aura* [6] – as that which tends to emanate from the object of experience as traces of the *practised hand* [7] that are left within it – is aligned with this moment of perceptibility that is more associative with the *mémoire involontaire* and here, the involuntary activities of the unconscious mind is given a conscious form in the representation of the photographic image. Involuntary memory, as that which summons up the past in an impromptu and unanticipated manner, provides the link between an experience in the present and one in the past, but the taking of a photograph as a voluntary act

of recording memory, makes visible the unconscious in a certain form, while producing a new form (the photographic image) that may not fully correspond with the intention. The act of constructing the voluntary memory can bring that which is repressed and excluded into conscious life. An encounter with such a resulting image can – like a dream [8] – bring forth the unconscious into the conscious, whilst breaching its inherent capacity to repress the involuntary. As Miriam Bratu Hansen points out in her analysis of Benjamin and cinema, there is something lost within the process of voluntary memory or remembrance that '... is not merely the peculiar structure of auratic experience, that of investing the phenomenon we experience with the ability to return the gaze, a potentially destabilising encounter with otherness; what is also lost is the element of *temporal disjunction* in this experience, the intrusion of a forgotten past that disrupts the fictitious progress of chronological time.' [9] Like in the disruptive behaviour of the *snapshot*, where the photographic process does not simply render precisely the past, which was visible, though unclear, to the photographer: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject [10]. What is exposed by the camera is a different nature than opens to the naked eye. There is a prosthetic extension of perception that Benjamin suggests gives a more complete vision of ourselves (through variable framing and editing), as the camera assumes 'messianic-prophetic power' [11]. As Benjamin describes this momentous transition of the conscious subject into the optically unconscious self by '... an unconsciously penetrated space [that] is substituted for a space consciously explored by man ... the camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses' [12]. The mimetic qualities of photography are called into question, as any attempt to reproduce memory into a closed, conscious and fully meaningful photographic image, as that which is manifest in its contents and conditions of production, are considerably misplaced. Instead there is a kind of self-miscognition, constituted by the registering of an imaginary self, where the body and image-space, as separate entities, are collapsed in on themselves. In what Benjamin calls the 'process of mimetic innervation' [13], there entails a new dynamic in that of a decentered and extended human sensorium that goes beyond the individual body and its image: the subject enters into the world that stimulates and attracts

new forms of self-perception, that are realised through reproductive mechanisms and, where there is, '... an introjection, ingestion, or incorporation of the object or device, be it an external rhythm, a familiar madelaine, or an alien(ating) apparatus.' [14] And when viewing an image of oneself or of another, this new form of sensory perception comes into play that does not reside in the realm of conscious thinking or self-cognition. Instead, 'if theory is correct that sensory perception [empfindung] does not reside in the head, that we perceive a window, a cloud, a tree not in our brains but rather where we see them, then we are, in looking at our beloved, too, *outside ourselves*' [15]

### Mediating Difference

Photography as a bodily mediation of the subject/object binary is both metamorphic and coincidental, whilst its mimetic quality makes possible the production of the self (in the form of a replicant image), that is similar, and (as I have already highlighted) different from the environment in which one physically interacts. This metonymic relationship operates from both within and outside the realm of representation: both within and beyond the frame. It has the potential to enable a dissociation of the senses that disturbs the coherence of the individual, for it is concerned with a sensation that escapes the subject of representation itself [16]. Herein lies a crisis of identity which presents the individual with the difficulty of a coming to terms with what Barthes called, 'the advent of myself as other: a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity' [17] and is further complicated by what Benjamin locates in the same subject, that of a desire/wish 'to become and behave like something else' [18].

Within such a dilemma, the individual is identified through an amalgam of elements that are outside itself. The existence of the individual at a particular time and in a particular place, is given material testimony through a Cartesian instrument that confirms the moment as having happened – as I can see myself in this image, I have proof as to how I looked and evidence that I was there. Photography makes possible the disappearance of the distance between cause and effect, object and subject, bringing closer together that which has been seen as object and that which has been experienced. The rendering of everything that is grasped through the

camera's lens is made visible onto celluloid, thus producing a transference of reality from the thing to its reproduction, as the mode of reproduction appears to seamlessly adhere a bond between the referent and the image. This is a process of what Siegfried Kracauer called indifferentiation, as the framing of the image encourages a view of the object or referent as it could be seen from all positions at once, as if in a multiple spatial continuum. Here, contexts are multiplied and rendered a matter of apparent choice or selective framing. The photograph's ability to freeze time and fix its object in space creates a dimension 'in which the future perfect of the photographic image – as this will have been – may be suspended, manipulated and reworked to become past perfected. Reductive prophecy is thus identified as a key concept of the power of the image in prosthetic culture' [19], and the individual can be dis-/re-assembled as a part or in whole through a process of outcontextualisation [20], where the subject can lay claim to certain features of the context or environment and possess them as extensions of their self-identity. There is a perceptual movement away from the Cartesian 'I think, therefore I am', and a reconstitution of the individual as extended-self in the relation 'I can, therefore I am'. Through the self-reproductive capabilities of the camera, the individual can recognise in its resulting image a unique appearance of him/herself in his/her re-presentation as conceived in a material form that is external to the conscious physical-self. The adoption of this new edict (I can ...) is offered a consolidation of possessive individualism, as the prosthetic device of the photographic image is able to produce the material evidence in the form of 'a kind of intractable supplement of identity' [21]. A process of self-identification in exterior forms is made all the more by what Benjamin calls 'the image's lack of appearance, its inability or refusal to shore up appearances' [22]. Thus, a flexibility of both context and content in the image, creates an endless stream of narrative possibilities. This has ambivalent implications for self-identity, as that which is constituted in relations between the body, memory, consciousness, leaving open the potential for multiple reconfigurations of difference. We can exist in many different forms at once in the representational (reproductive) world. The individual can identify in a countless number of images, certain resemblances of themselves at various stages in their history. In what Barthes acknowledged as a seeing of

oneself on the scale of history (*Camera Lucida*), there is a recognition of the self as a reproducible double: a kind of material prosthesis of the subject in an image of itself as other; a sometimes younger, uglier, older-looking, different, more beautiful, recognisable referent to the self. This is what Barthes termed a *heautoscopical* self, as that which the self, identity and recognition of the role of the image which we have of ourselves in the formation of our subjectivities. It is a way of talking about the *sight* of self, as an access point into a definition of identity in the external image of oneself, other than that of the reflective mirror. As Michel Foucault pointed out in *The Order of Things*, it is this seeking of the self in external forms to the conscious self, that arguably makes modern man different to the classical Cartesian and Kantian subject of the nineteenth century, in which there is a desire to unveil the nonconscious and seek 'the truth of all the sciences of man' [23] that is found in the *unthought* – that cross-over point between the unconscious and 'the other' [24]. In the same way, within the photographic image, there is an othering of the self, both past and present, that reaffirms the uniqueness of the individual through opposition and a conservation of the self through dialectical reflexivity. Looking at the photograph in the Barthesian form of 'the advent of myself as other', can cause a conscious reaction in the viewer, that are similar to 'that can't be me', 'I look wonderful there', 'I seemed so happy then', 'I was once so young', 'I don't remember that happening', 'is that me?', 'that must be someone else', 'that reminds me of then'. That which appeared, at that very moment of viewing, unconscious or hidden, becomes played out in a disturbing contestation of the self – in a kind of self-conscious-othering.

#### **Allegoresis and Historical Memory**

To understand further Benjamin's ideas on photography and reproductive technologies, it is worth looking at a recurring leitmotif in the historiographic writings of Walter Benjamin and his interest in re-collection. He has a tendency to see a grander narrative within a specific object, or within a material fragment of everyday life. Benjamin acknowledged that the material object was history's most *conservative* vessel, within which was embedded the fragmented nature of history. As material objects themselves are ultimately empty carriers of signification, it is the role of the translator, the collector,

and more importantly the *divine* allegorist to make them meaning-full. For Benjamin, the way to approach the past is through its material forms and it is in the specific object that historical knowledge comes into contact with the whole of its origin, production, use and value across time. The object makes history transmissible through its materiality, which can thereafter be passed on to others in its original form. Within the construct of the *true collector* [25] of such objects, Benjamin identifies a transcendent of the Hegelian subject [26]; but although dialectic in its reasoning, Benjamin's collector clearly departs from the process of *Absolute spirit* coming to self-consciousness in the consciousness of those embedded in the historically material. By and through the *fragmented* nature of his/her activity, the collector inherits only certain historical fragments or parts of the material past. This inheritance of the past through the historical objects – that have been gathered in a fractured and ad-hoc manner – emphasises the ruinous and fragmented nature of his/her historical past. When that which is embedded within the object becomes an integral part of the subject, the same subject can make these fragments of the past transmissible onto others, through the act of storytelling and representation of their histories. As the collector passes on the collection, the storyteller retells narratives of the past. For Benjamin, it is at this level of responsibility that the collector feels towards his/her property, that must be translated, purveyed and transmitted as a mode of social responsibility. Where the importance of a common tradition that unites the experience of the historical that is embedded within the material object, just as it is in these allegorical manifestations that 'memory creates the chain of tradition which passes a happening on from generation to generation' [27] and as Benjamin wrote of the role of the storyteller:

'There is nothing that commends a story to memory more effectively than that chaste compactness which precludes psychological analysis. And the more natural the process by which the storyteller forgoes psychological shading, the greater becomes the story's claim to a place in the memory of the listener, the more completely is it integrated into his own experience, the greater will be his inclination to repeat it to someone else someday, sooner or later.' [28]

This idea that an object can transcend its mere usefulness and instead be animated with both allegorical and historical meaning is an attempt to disengage the objects

from their functionality – in a sense to give them subjectivity. If historical memory is capable of being transmitted from one person to another, by means of the transfer of material objects, then there is a suggestion that memory and the histories contained within these things can be collated as a collective form of identity. For Benjamin, the past is a site of remembrance which is compressed into a semantically dense iconic simultaneity. This can be seen, when he writes: 'While the relations of past and present is a purely temporal one, that of the 'has-been' [das Gewesene] to the 'now' is a dialectical one: it is iconic, not temporal in character' [29]. Here and elsewhere in his writings, Benjamin's presents a notion of history as that which is determined by the potential to recollect history, to master memory and to articulate the past in all its experiential sedimentation and make it relevant to the present. In this non-linear view of history, the objects of the present are also those of the past historical. Any number of narratives can be placed upon such an allegorical collection of iconic objects, while the present can be located and authenticated in the meanings that are placed upon the objects of the past. Therefore, in order to understand the nature of everyday existence one must also understand the past as embodied in the objects of its production. What Benjamin recognised in the reproductive technologies of photography was a means of transcending the distance between the objects of the past and the conditions of the modern subject. When he wrote: 'It is only as an image one can hold onto the past' [30], he located a means by which the past could be transmitted in a more accessible and reproductive manner, thus making history more transmissible in all its fragmented forms. This is not a desire to relive or even relocate the past as it really was (in image form), but the wish to seize hold of the present as that which is in danger of disappearing irretrievably. Photography made possible an immersion in the details of the physiognomical aspects of the visual world which dwells in the smallest and apparently most insignificant things – what Theodor Adorno called Benjamin's 'microscopic gaze'. For Benjamin, photography reveals secrets; when the viewer becomes totally immersed in an image, this is a desire to know more about the subject of the image, that goes well beyond the testimony to the aesthetic values of the photographer's art. This is when photography could capture fleeting and secret moments whose images would paralyse the associative

mechanisms in the beholder. As he describes the experience:

'... the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search such a picture for a tiny spark of contingency, of the Here and Now, with which reality has so to speak seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where lies the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future subsists so eloquently that we, looking back, may rediscover it.' [31]

In 'The Origin of German Tragic Drama', he had connected this looking-back activity with the moment when 'the amount of meaning is in exact proportion to the presence of death and the power of decay' [32], and it was this factor that made it possible to find meaning in life, in all the 'dead occurrences of the past which are euphemistically known as experience' [33].

### Return of the Living Dead

For Benjamin, it is when and only because the past is dead can it be read or recollected, and this is made possible only because history is fetishised in physical objects which are available to the reader, so that it can be understood. In this sense, the photograph was an immediate form of death which highlighted the temporality of life, and the contingency of the 'Here and Now'. By emphasising the sense of the transitory nature of the present moment in historical time, it could translate the subject of this history into material form and produce *death images* of the living subject. The grand diegesis of history could be punctuated by the still image as a rupturous break in its forward movement, and represent the inevitability of its outcome. As Roland Barthes later suggested in *Camera Lucida*, the *eidōs* of the photograph was ultimately death – as that which was sought by the subject when a photograph was taken of him/her – when the photograph of the living speaks of a future death, as the dead live on through their photographic representation. It is at this point in his theories on photography, that Barthes departs from Benjamin's thinking of photography as a powerful vehicle for to conjuring up the past. For although Benjamin believed that the photograph was an important for a contemplation of history in the smallest things, and a means of bringing the unconscious into a form of conscious materiality, he claimed that the *aura* – as that which invests the object with uniqueness – was lost in the reproductive processes

of photography [34]. Reproduction was responsible for stripping bare the object of its mysterious power, that in the aura of the original (work of art), displayed 'a strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of distance, now matter how close the object may be' [35]. It was this distance (between both different times and different things) that Barthes claimed provided the viewer's gaze with the aura in representational form – as the aura of lost time, lost memory, could be relocated in the photograph through an intimate, close relationship with its subject/referent. This is most evident in his search for an image of his dead mother, that would keep alive her memory – found in 'an image which would be both justice and accuracy – justesse: just and image, but a just image' [36]. He claimed that the photograph makes appear what we could never see in a real face (or that of a mirror reflection), and produces a fragment of oneself that was more insidious, more penetrating, more touching, than any conscious notion of a likeness that was previously thought to exist in the genetic features of the living subject.

As Barthes noted in *Camera Lucida*, it is the viewer that is always the subject of the image, and not the referent/subject contained within the frame. The image ultimately says more about *us*, than it does about *them*. This is evident in the writings of both Benjamin and Barthes and highlights a vulnerability, and a self-questioning, that I have not located in their writings on any other subject. The power of the photograph is its ability to conjure up contingent emotions, that are always reflective and capable of measuring out our fragile temporalities in our appearances. It is possible that, on the 10th of October, 2000, at Euston Station, London, someone decided that one of these imagined appearances did not cohere with the memory of that moment. The reproduction of the self in material form did not correspond with either the perception of those appearances or with the conscious notion of the remembered self. What was recorded in the photograph that I found, had not (or maybe had too accurately) represented that which was remembered in the moment of a past event or experience. It was to become an unwanted fragment of the extended-self, the process of prosthetic materialism as a selective procedure of self identification was self-consciously enacted. What was at one moment discarded by someone, as an undesirable reproduction of the subject of history, was to become

a catalyst for self-reflection in another. As Benjamin had frequently written of material history, the role of the collector and the transmissibility of the collected, are intrinsically linked.

#### Notes

- [1] A *trouvaille* is the term coined by André Breton to describe the found object; l'objet trouvé in *Mad Love*.
- [2] For a detailed analysis of the relationship between aesthetics and anaesthetics in the writings of Walter Benjamin, see Buck-Morss, Susan, 'Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay' in *October* 62
- [3] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 159
- [4] *Ibid*
- [5] *Ibid*
- [6] For Benjamin, the aura firstly appears in all things and not just specific things that are imagined by the subject, and secondly, it changes completely and fundamentally with each movement or change made by the object whose aura is in it. Thirdly, the genuine aura 'can in no way be thought of as the immaculate, spiritualistic magic ray as depicted and described in vulgar, mystical books. On the contrary, the distinguished feature of the genuine aura is the ornament, an ornament periphery in which the thing or being lies fixed, as if confined in a sheath.' See, Buck-Morss, Susan; *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: The Free Press, London: Collier; MacMillan, 1977), p. 275
- [7] *Ibid*, pp. 173-190
- [8] In *Mad Love*, André Breton suggests that the accidental discovery of a found object is similar to the dream in psychoanalysis. That which was previously insignificant can manifest itself as significant (like in a dream) to the finder. In the same way, the temporal process of photograph where there is a time lapse between the taking of a photograph, and through to its development, means that the outcome can contain aspects, symbolic or other, which the photographer may not have consciously intended. See pp. 20-35
- [9] Hansen, Miriam Bratu, 'Benjamin and Cinema: Not a One-Way Street' in *Critical Inquiry*, Winter, 1998, p. 311
- [10] Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Illuminations*, p. 230
- [11] *Op. cit.*, Hansen, Miriam Bratu, p. 323
- [12] *Ibid*, p. 230
- [13] Inervation is a term derived from a neurophysiological process that mediates between internal and external, psychic and motoric, human and mechanical registers.
- [14] *Op. cit.*, Hansen, Miriam Bratu, p. 331
- [15] *Ibid*, p. 332

- [16] See Celia Lury's 'Identity and Prosthetic Culture' in *Prosthetic Culture: Photography, Memory and Identity*
- [17] Barthes, Roland; *Camera Lucida*, p. 12
- [18] This is the problem with numerics that Benjamin suggests is a false '... nature that culture uses to create a second nature, the faculty to copy, imitate, make models, explore difference'. Cited on p. xiii of M. Taussig's *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*.
- [19] See pp. 3-16 of Celia Lury's 'Identity and Prosthetic Culture' in *Prosthetic Culture: Photography, Memory and Identity*
- [20] *Ibid*, p. 3
- [21] Barthes, Roland; *Camera Lucida*, p. 109
- [22] *Ibid*
- [23] See Foucault, Michel; *The Order of Things*
- [24] *Ibid*
- [25] Benjamin makes a distinction between two types of collectors: one which is merely interested in materialist investment and '... a real collector, a collector as he ought to be - ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them. So I have erected one of his dwellings, with books as the building stones, before you, and now he is going to disappear inside, as is only fitting' and again he writes: '... for a true collector the whole background of an item adds up to the magic encyclopedia whose quintessence is the fate of his object'. Pages 69 and 62 respectively of 'Unpacking My Library' in Benjamin, *Illuminations*. This is the collector to which I am referring.
- [26] For Hegel, the subject of world history is represented by '... the development of the spirits consciousness of its own freedom and the consequent realisation of this freedom' and where the historical subject is the living product of earlier generations through which he/she has inherited the their past, which is more knowledgeable than the previous generation of that history. See pp. 124-151 of Hegel, George Wilhelm Friedrich; *Lectures on Philosophy of World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).
- [27] Benjamin; 'The Storyteller', *Illuminations*, p. 98
- [28] *Ibid*, p. 90
- [29] Benjamin; *The Arcades Project*
- [30] Benjamin; 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', *Illuminations*, p. 247

- [31] Benjamin; 'A Short History of Photography', *Illuminations*, p. 243
- [32] Cited in Susan Sontag's introduction in Benjamin's *One-Way Street*, pp. 7-28
- [33] *Ibid*
- [34] Although in his essay, 'A Short History of Photography', there is a suggestion that older photographs of the pre-1920s, contained certain auratic elements.
- [35] Benjamin; 'A Short History of Photography', *One-Way Street*, p. 250
- [36] Barthes writes of the famous 'Winter Garden Photograph' of his dead mother, within which she is depicted as both alive and young; see *Camera Lucida*

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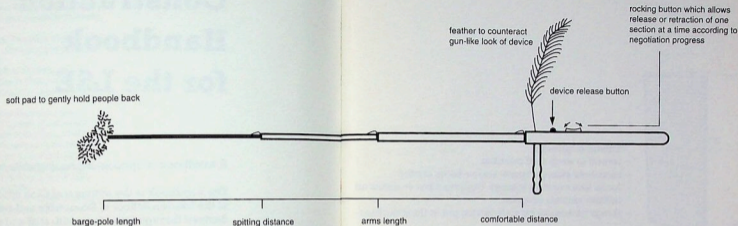
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# Missile Construction Handbook for the LSE

A handbook of opinion-expressing objects

The handbook is the outcome of Cleo Broda's residency at the London School of Economics and contains objects devised through interviews with staff and students at the School

**Dominic's space and time device**  
the device that allows you space and time



**Main aim of device:**

Freedom of expression – combatting situations where you can't express your opinion.

**Description:**

A linear distance-keeping device which allows for controlled engagement.

**For use if you are in danger of:**

Being spoken for, being manipulated, people presuming what your opinion is.

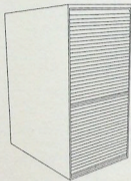
**What the device does:**

Keeps people at a distance while you say what you really mean, gives you time to say 'hold on, you don't know what I think', gives you time to think.

**Positive results/outcomes of using device:**

Being able to express yourself fully, being self-sufficient/contained.

**Jane's devices and objects for a calmer working environment**  
(within an open-plan office setting)

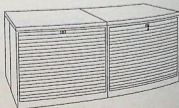


**Tardis cupboard**

- issued to each staff member
- increases storage space and reduces clutter
- looks like average storage cupboard but contains an infinite amount of space
- things unwanted by staff can be put in their tardises

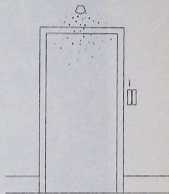
**Isolation zone**

- looks like an average grey cupboard but is in fact an isolation zone for cantankerous academics who think that their work is more important than other things



**Office recreational zone**

- looks like mini storage system
- allows you to enter and experience in real-time whatever place you desire or miss
- especially useful for international employees who are home-sick or for busy employees who don't have time to travel but want to experience different parts of the world or other times



**Common sense dosage device**

- activated when people swipe their way into office
- the device gives the appropriate dosage of common sense to staff
- dosage decided by central administration



**FABIENNE AUDEOUD  
& JOHN RUSSELL**

For The Opening The Artists Will Be Well Dressed  
9th November 2001

At the opening of Abstract Painting  
at The International 3, Manchester.

*Agnes b.*

# The Trace Meaning Meande

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Martina Kapopki

' - call for pen and ink - here -  
sit down, Sir, paint her to your own ..  
mistress as you can - as unlike your wite .  
will let you - 'tis all one to me - please put you.  
fancy in it.'

In *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* Laurence Sterne, in the voice of the eponymous hero, invites his readers to draw the portrait of the Widow Wadman (the Widow Wadman being the object of Toby's desire - Toby being Shandy's uncle). This invitation, as Mingford Blim suggests, represents one of the first works in which the position of the authority of the author against the passive consumption of the reader is problematised. It is not fanciful to suggest, therefore, that this invitation represents a prototype of the interactive, cross media, artwork in the sense that the authorship of the work is shared by those who choose to interact with it. It is also the case that, as the book has been continually reprinted since the last of the nine volumes was published in 1767, that the work will never be fully complete. The invitation provides the possibility that the work can never be finished. It is also through the refusal to allow closure through the meandering of Shandy's narrative that, and in a very real sense, perhaps, the work represents an assault on textual normatively.

## **Becoming Possible**

As Blim has succinctly observed 'The inter-textuality of Sterne, his labyrinthine convolutions, his refusal to accord to the normative prerequisite of what, in colloquial

... called 'sticking to the point', is elided  
... elision, this temporal slippage,  
... 'sticking' creates an indeterminate space in  
... produces a series of points which carry  
... critique of the notion that the work in itself  
... a point. This desire to delay, to defer, even to  
... installs a shift in the paradigm of the text's  
... of the exclusive and excluding space of  
... esis.'

... Sterne, therefore, a promise is simultaneously made  
... and broken. The promise implied, which is the promise of  
... all stories, is that the story will end and that the story will  
... arrive at a point of relevance. But this, in the manner of  
... Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* or  
... Shahrazad's *1001 Nights*, provides the ground for endless  
... digression, providing the means by which the fulfilment  
... of the promise moves into the realm of indeterminacy.  
... The proto-postmodernity of Sterne has been commented  
... on most eloquently by Hildegard Blam, who sees its  
... refusal of the paradigm of the metanarrative as a clear  
... indicator of a future that would recognise the importance  
... of the multiplicity of times in textual practice.

A multiplicity which resists closure, which exorcises  
... the spectre which inhabits the text in the form of  
... 'the metaphysics of presence' through delay and  
... digression. Therefore, as Daphne Bloome observed,  
... with characteristic pithiness, '[In Sterne] it is no longer  
... an issue of centralisation of authorship under the canopy  
... of the 'avatar/author' but is rather the play of difference  
... between the reader/author, author/avatar, the  
... author/reader that, naturally, implies the daisy chain of  
... reader/author/avatar/reader/avatar/author. In this way  
... the mutually stabilising nature of the traditional '69'  
... relationship between author and reader is exploded  
... into the realm of what Sonya Nys calls 'possibilisation'.  
... Which is more than the suggestion of the possible but  
... rather the suggestion of the possibility of the possible  
... becoming possible, which of course, is different to  
... mere possibility in and of itself, as such. Nys therefore,  
... sees Sterne's invitation to textual intervention as  
... 'the beginnings of a textual orgy which stretches and  
... writhes, shudders and jerks, into an unknown future.  
... A future in which possibility is itself travelling on  
... the rope soled sandal of the suggestion of a possibility'.

## Curtain Rings

Sterne/Shandy is at pains to describe the shape of his  
... narrative, in an ecstasy of literalism he draws lines that  
... wander across the page describing the peaks and  
... declinations of the story so far. It is this reflexivity,  
... this consciousness of the process that situates Shandy  
... as the model of proto-conceptualism. The desire to divert  
... from the line completely, to travel trajectory into other  
... discursive regimens, is not yet achieved, however;  
... nor is the status of non-linearity, as such, arrived at nor,  
... of course, that of hypertextuality. But, nevertheless,  
... the reflexivity on the process of production instances a  
... desire to break out of the constraints dictated by the  
... modes of intellectual production under which Sterne/  
... Shandy laboured. This was exactly at the point in history  
... that produced the author as s/he is seen today – namely  
... an individual with a 'unique voice' in collaboration with  
... the machinery of mass production, which defines the  
... subject positions of the 'mass readership' in relation to  
... the 'individual author'. Sterne/Shandy breaks with this  
... dialectical binary by insisting on the intervention of the  
... reader and questioning the authority of the narrative by  
... making visible the system of production that normally,  
... by necessity, in order for the binary to cohere, must be  
... made invisible.

In Peregrine Serpico's *I Was on Drugs When I Wrote this*,  
... *By the Way* the figure of Shandy is given contemporary  
... form in the character of Ted Smith. The Internet provider  
... Hotmail employs Smith as an email trash bin emptier  
... who on idle hours during his night shift writes long  
... descriptions of the things that surround him in his office  
... and emails them to millions of hotmail account holders  
... around the globe. This activity involves a great deal of  
... research, which is conducted on the web, research into  
... the origins of the component parts of Smith's cigarette  
... lighter, for instance, or the chemical constituency of  
... the plastic that his computer is made of. He also compiles  
... imaginary biographies of hotmail clients who reject his  
... messages with a 'block sender' command – a command  
... that he overrides. Smith demands interaction from  
... his 'readers' as does Serpico in the narrative of *I Was*  
... on *Drugs*.

But, the question is repeatedly asked, to what end?  
... This begs further, more general, questions: what is  
... the promise of the intervention? And what, if any,  
... is its inherent virtue? In the 80s José Maria da Tosca

reformulated the term situationism, uncoupling it from its association with the writings of Guy Debord, Eduardo Rothe, Rene Vienet, Raoul Veneigem and others and, in a new formulation, suggested the following definition for the situationist gesture: 'artistic gestures which create perturbations of the hegemony of a given space be it the space of a gallery, a publication or museum'. But rather than break this hegemony, da Toseca argues, such gestures serve to expand the definition of the space they occupy. The space, which would not allow the intervention of discourses outside of itself, becomes one that does. This, da Toseca states, represents the internalisation of the debate on intervention and argued, 'the non intervention into no space should be vigorously pursued'. She argues further that many interventions simply act out 'the rhetoric of intervention and the promise of interaction and social engagement in the production of art' they are simply the outworking of a system which renews itself through critiques which it routinely and effortlessly normalises. Her untimely death, after being savaged by a bull mastiff whilst quietly sun bathing on a deserted beach on the island of Taramasalata, put an end to her own investigations into non-intervention. But again, we see that Sterne/Shandy have anticipated such a problematic. This is realised through a strategy of withdrawal from the expectations that the system, in this case the promise of the narrative. This non-compliance with the prerequisites of the narrative represents a non-intervention into the space of an unrealised narrative so that paradoxically Sterne/Shandy leave not only the possibility of another narrative being told but also the possibility of such a possibility becoming possible.

Martina Kapopkin 2002

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George Best is in a hotel room; talents squandered, career already over at age 27, boozed up and fallen from grace but still somehow living 'the high life'. Sat on the big double bed is the former Miss World (Mary Stavin) and strewn around her is a large amount of cash which Best has apparently won in a high-stakes card game. Late night a room service waiter brings Champagne and on entering the room takes a moment to decipher the scene. He looks from the drunk George Best to the scattered money and the former Miss World. He says, 'George, George, where did it all go wrong?'

The well known story about George Best where he has just completed a gig where he has to do a speech at some fancy dinner in London and has been paid a lot of money in cash. He's going out with a beautiful blonde who is the former Miss World and when they get back to their hotel she strips to her underwear and reclines on the bed while George counts the money. Job done a contented George rings room service to order Champagne and a tray of smoked salmon sandwiches. By complete chance the waiter who arrives post haste with the order is a fellow Irishman, whose mouth falls open at the sight of Best, the recumbent former Miss World and the huge stack of tenners. He turns to George and, in a sorrowful voice, asks: 'Ah Bejahsus, Mr. Best, where did it all go wrong?'

One night, George Best has a big night on the town, pulls a couple of blonde girls who are actually twins, goes to the Casino and wins some money with an extravagant bet. When he gets back to the hotel, the calls to room service for champagne, and the bell boy who brings it asks him 'Where did it all go wrong?' George looks round the room; there's \$25,000 in cash on the bed (the Casino in question is in America), and two blonde identical twins in the bath. George Best laughs with a twinkle in his eye and asks 'How can you say I've gone wrong?'

Legend has it that the footballer George Best is in town to open a Supermarket. Late at night he is sitting motionless on a hotel bed with a bellhop when Miss World comes into the room carrying a large amount of cash and some caviar. She takes in the scene with George and the bellhop sat together in silence on the bed. With hardly a pause for breath she says 'Oh, George, where did it all go wrong?'

Best is in a Hotel on the Spanish Riviera, returning to his room with a large amount of cash (his winnings from the Casino). In the elevator he encounters two blonde lovelies who are running their hands suggestively over the bellhop and giggling a lot. As Best leaves the elevator, cash spilling from his holdall, one of the blondes calls after him, 'Where did you learn that song?' It seems that Best has been singing in the elevator without realising it.

The version I heard is that two blonde girls send a bottle of champagne as a gift to George Best's hotel room. When the night porter comes in Best is sat on the bed alone, naked, drunk and counting fifty pounds from out of a dirty manilla envelope. The night porter takes one look at this scene and then asks, 'George, George, where did it all go wrong?' George cannot think of what to say in reply. The incident supposedly happened in 1978.

Out of luck and desperate for cash George Best gets a job as a bell hop in a Belfast Hotel. Late one night he has to take two bottles of Champagne on ice to the room of the current Miss World. Best takes the tray in and notices that she's been crying. He asks 'Where did it all go wrong?' and she gestures sadly to the £20,000 in cash (which she has apparently been paid to open a supermarket) and which now lies floating in the water of her bath ...

The story of how Best is working in a Casino as a waiter and a former Miss World is also working there, serving free champagne and oysters to the guests who are celebrities from the world of pop and fashion. Best and the other workers are tired. A band are playing. It is some kind of charity thing. At the climax of the entertainment the band play a song called 'Where Did It All Go Wrong?', from the back of the crowd Best yells 'how can you say it's gone wrong?' and is hastily ejected from the establishment by the inexperienced over-zealous security team.

Best and a hotel waiter are apparently in a hotel room counting about 500 pounds worth of loose change that they have just robbed from the fruit machines in a nearby Casino. A former beauty queen comes out of the bathroom wearing only a skimpy T-shirt emblazoned with the slogan 'Where Did It All Go Wrong?'

A night porter at Belfast's Europe Hotel (?) wins 20,000 in a Casino and to treat himself checks into a hotel suite which was once famously stayed in by the footballer George Best. At 3 o'clock in the morning the phone rings and the bloke answers it, confused to find that Mary Stavin (a former Miss World) is at the other end. Legend has it that she asks him 'Where did it all go wrong?'

George Best is in a hotel room when he gets a phone call. The guy at the other end says nothing at all. 'Who is this? Who is this?' says Best but there's just a lot of silence and heavy breathing. Best says 'Who is this? Who is this?' again with a twinkle in his eye and the voice replies 'Come on Georgie, where did it all go wrong?' Later, when Best goes to reception the management apologises because the entire phone system has been disfunctional all night - there's no way any calls could possibly have been put through to his room.

There is an amusing story doing the rounds at the moment that George Best stumbles out of bed one morning, tripping over the slinky dress that he ripped off some beauty-queen or another the night before and clattering through discarded beer bottles by his bed. When he gets down-stairs, on the doormat, beneath the letter box lies a postcard from an old friend bearing a picture of a half-constructed hotel. Best picks up the postcard and flips it over. On the back it says simply: 'Where did it all go wrong?' Best is reduced to tears and promises that he will not drink again.

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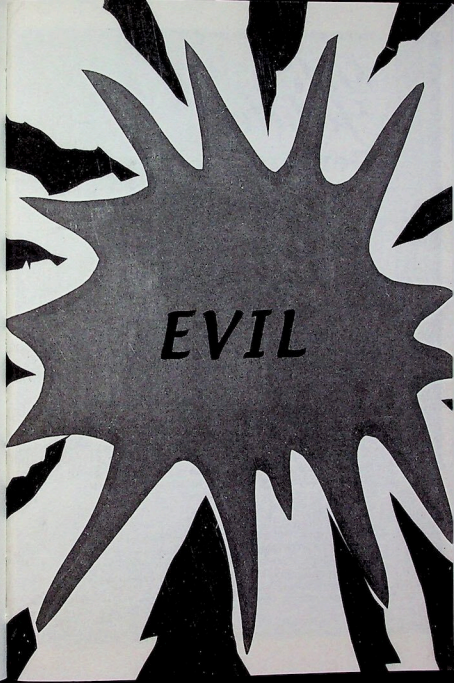
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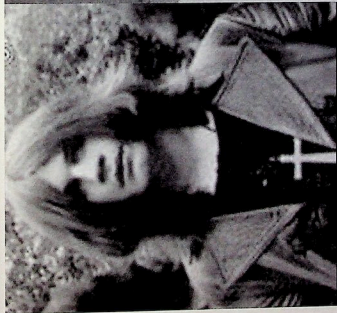
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