

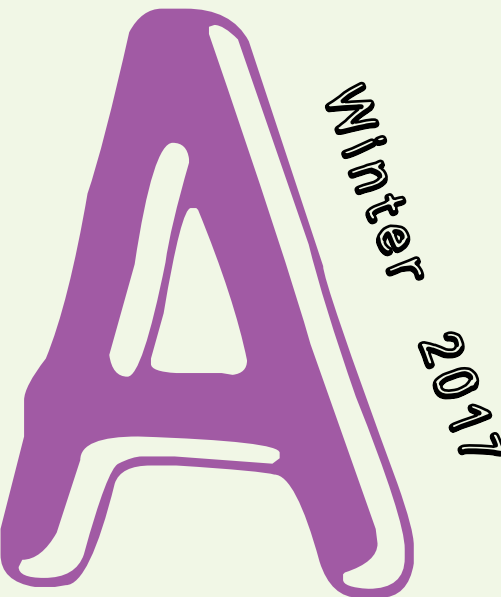




NO COLLECTIVE presents

# MATTERS OF ACT

A Journal of Ideas



Brooklyn, New York



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No Collective

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No Collective

**ACCOMPLISHED ACTS** gather as many facts as possible to convey the fact that something happened.

**INTERVIEWS** are conducted with people we are interested in, but who for one reason or another nobody else seems to know.

**PROTOCOLCOMPUTATIONS** are concrete figures for processing abstract entities devised by a five-year old.

**DONE IDEAS** are just that, in various ways, and a repository thereof.

**INTERNAL MEASUREMENTS** are situated observations of unknown phenomena and the registering of their effects on the observer as much as the observed.

**MICROFICTIONS** are assemblies of miniature texts and images whose morals and connectivities hang in mid-air.

**CON-NOTATIONS** examine idiosyncratic forms of notation and their peculiar implications.

**REVIEWS** try to withhold value judgment in order to capture the complexity of an event.

**MINORITY REPORTS** are well-reasoned and well-seasoned assessment by minors of artifacts made by adults.



# MATTERS OF ACT: A Journal of Ideas

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### December 2012 - Los Angeles

My two-year-old son throws a tantrum at the playground and I tell him to stop. I do so in a relatively loud voice so that other adults around can hear me. It suffices that my utterance took place in the world and was acknowledged by others. Whether this performance succeeds in actually silencing my son is a matter of consequence that is ultimately inconsequential. For the primary concern of my speech act is not the conveyance of message X but the conveyance of the 'fact' that X was uttered. [YN]

### June 2010 - Rome

Tourists take photographs of places wherever they go, mindless of the fact that there are hundreds of far better pictures sold as souvenir postcards or scattered across the internet. The only way to explain this strange act is to think that the tourists are documenting not what they are seeing but the 'fact' that they are seeing. In other words, their photographs are intended to record not the scenery but the relationship between the photographer and the scenery. The degree of 'success' of the photograph taken is secondary to the 'fact' that it was taken at all. [EL]

### October 1955 - Boston

J.L. Austin states the distinction between "constative" and "performative" utterances. But a certain ambiguity lies at the heart of this statement of fact. Whether a performative speech act is 'happy' and succeeds in doing what was intended, or 'unhappy' and fails, only matters as long as the utterance follows two conditions: it must be (1) teleological, and (2) contextual. In order to discern the success of a speech act (e.g. "I now pronounce you husband and wife"), the speech needs to be anchored within a specific context (e.g. marriage) and have a clear goal (e.g. getting married). Austin's performative, in other words, only works in the present. But what the philosopher did not know was that there was no way for him to know how the very 'fact' of his statement—and not his statement of fact—would act far beyond the context of its production. [KF]

### January 2014 - New York

I am taken to see a bad theatre piece. Sitting there, confined in my seat for two hours, gives me good ideas. There is thus a certain efficacy to "bad" works. To put it differently, a bad work is only "bad" if one confines its workings to the content of what was staged: i.e., the performance in the work. The performance of the work, on the other hand, cannot be fully assessed, determined, or even identified, until much later (if at all). The works that works do always surpass the author's intention, the audience's perception, and the critic's interpretation. It goes out of time and out of control. All that is needed to trigger this uncontrollable consequence is for the piece to have been realized as a 'fact.' [AC]

### September 2012 - Tokyo

I take my son for vaccination and he screams and he cries. Immunization is like a curse that works in reverse. Its effect in the present is only negative: it hurts, could make him sick, and worse comes to worst even kill him. And all this for nothing—quite literally so. For the long-term effect of immunization is not to cause something, not to add a new thing to the world, but quite the opposite: to prevent new things from happening. It puts a child's present in jeopardy so that nothing happens in the future. Therefore, like all forms of insurance, it is the very 'fact' that my son has been vaccinated that is important. The performativity of this act succeeds by not taking place. [YN]

### August 2016 - San Diego

The presence of performance is from the beginning the presence of the factuality that it was performed at all. In other words, a fact will always appear accomplished, always outside its original present, always embedded in its transmission over time and space—always out of control. In the end, therefore, what is transmitted is the fact of the transmission of the fact. My act at the playground may never have taken place, but my writing about it surely did, because it has reached you. ☺



INTERVIEW

Anonymous, "ANOTHER LANGUAGE / OUT OF BATTLE: THE POETRY OF THE GREAT WAR / TWO PLUS TWO / UP THE LINE OF DEATH / TALKING TO THE GODS / To Exercise Our Talents / The Forms of Youth / BEFORE STARTING OVER" or "BEFORE STARTING OVER / The Forms of Youth / To Exercise Our Talents / TALKING TO THE GODS / UP THE LINE OF DEATH / TWO PLUS TWO / OUT OF BATTLE: THE POETRY OF THE GREAT WAR / ANOTHER LANGUAGE" (2016, commission from No Collective)

TITLES,

ONE TOO MANY

INTERVIEW WITH ANONYMOUS POET

BY KAY FESTA

The poet-librarian, who wishes to remain anonymous, is an obscure local legend in New York City where he writes poems by discreetly rearranging books in libraries and bookstores. Kay Festa from No Collective tracked down this elusive figure, commissioned him a new work, and obtained the first interview in more than twenty years.

...

STEFANS

BEFORE  
STARTING  
OVER

PR  
604  
.S74  
2006

Burt

The Forms of Youth

PR  
605  
.A33  
B87  
2007

HILLIARD

To Exercise Our Talents

PR  
478  
.S57  
H55  
2006

GRAF

TALKING TO THE GODS

PR  
478  
.S64  
G73  
2015

GARDNER

UP THE LINE TO DEATH

PR  
1227  
.G3  
1964

TWO  
PLUS  
TWO

1987

PN  
6010  
.A15

SILKIN

OUT OF  
BATTLE

*The Poetry  
of the  
Great War*

PR  
610  
.S45

ANOTHER LANGUAGE

PR  
612  
.A56  
2005



**KAY FESTA** When I first contacted you about this interview you said you would do it only if we didn't reveal your name. So I complied. But could you at least talk about the reason why you don't want to put your name on the journal?

**ANONYMOUS POET** The short answer is because I am a poet.

**KF** Okay. So what's the long answer?

**AP** As a poet, I work with language. I use letters, words, sentences, and compose a certain configuration of these elements that says something to the world. I am responsible for that. But what is a name if not a word—composed of letters just like any other word. And if it is a word, then it is something I need to think in relation to my work. But the use of my name renders me irresponsible for at least two reasons. The first is that I did not choose that name, and the second is that I did not choose its attachment to my work. The first was the work of my parents and the second that of convention. The only thing I can do therefore is to choose not to attach it to what I make.

**KF** But can't you think of your name in the same way as titles of works?

**AP** I can and I have—that is why my works do not have titles. Names and titles are placeholders but there is no need to hold a place in the first place. You only need a tag if you are selling something, which I am not. But I suppose you are?

**KF** So you don't want me to put a title to this interview?

**AP** It's your choice. In the end it will say that the interview is "by Kay Festa," so if my name is not there people will think that it is your work—perhaps even that you wrote the whole thing.

**KF** Very well, let me think about that then. As you know, I came across one of your works in the New York Public Library and was so thrilled by it that I was determined to find out who you are. And after a very difficult search, I managed to meet you. In your works you "write" solely with the titles of books in the library, placing the books together so that visitors can read the poem across the book spines. So for one thing, I know that these works you make in the library don't have a title—or rather, they have too many!

**AP** Titles are always one too many. So in my works I let them cease to be titles. They instead become what they are: words. Another important factor in my works that you didn't mention is that after placing the books together, I leave the work to be disintegrated over time, as books become relocated or new ones added. So the content of the poem is constantly changing.

**KF** Yes, of course. But you also use a pile of books as a bookend to signal the presence of works.

**AP** Yes, a small marker, like quotation marks. But because these are also made by books, they

too join the process of relocation, get pulled into the flux. It is important that unlike names or titles, this framing device is material, and as such, exists on the same level as what it seeks to frame.

**KF** Another feature of your work, which derives from the nature of how book titles are printed, is that your poems can be read both from directions: left to right and right to left.

**AP** I always write at least two poems at once.

**KF** It works because the basic unit of your writing is a title which often times is not just a word. The reversal doesn't mess up the grammar, though the meaning changes dramatically. For instance, in the new work you wrote for us, a line reads "the forms of youth / before starting over" in one direction, and "before starting over / the forms of youth" in the other. In the former, "the forms of youth" is something that exists before starting over, whereas in the latter, it becomes the very thing that is started over.

**AP** If you include the names of authors that are sometimes printed on the spine, as well as the library call numbers, the possible number of readings proliferate even more. I can't con-

trol how much people read.

**KF** Could you talk a bit about why you write in this way?

**AP** I think surprising encounters are the essence of reading. When you read a book there are many things you know beforehand: the size of the book, roughly how long it is, the synopsis, and perhaps even the story. But you read it anyways because there are still many surprises that you could not have anticipated. As they

say, you can't judge a book by its cover. And then, when you finish reading, you don't remember all the details of what you read. What you remember are the encounters you had. I take this experience of reading books and try to re-

alize it outside the books, using books themselves as my writing tools. My writing therefore becomes an allegory of reading.

**KF** So in that analogy, the library becomes a big book of its own, and each book a word.

**AP** Some libraries are shaped like books.

**KF** Yes, like the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris! Do you ever make works in different libraries or bookstores?



National Library of France, Paris

**AP** I always try to write new works in every city I go to. As I don't keep any tracks, I'm not sure how many of them still exist. And yes, I also write in bookstores. It is naturally more difficult since I need to research what books a store has and make sure I don't get caught. But I usually get more readers in bookstores than in libraries so it's worth the trouble.

**KF** *Do you tell people about your works? Or is it always a chance encounter?*

**AP** I've announced works in the past, but have always refrained from telling exactly where they are in the library so that people need to look for them on their own. Sometimes people write to me afterwards and report about a poem they encountered—but many of them are actually not my works! They would encounter a certain configuration of books and find poetry there.

**KF** *Well, it's exactly like you say: you can't control how much people read. I think your pursuit of surprising encounters inevitably results in making the presence of your works indeterminate. One is never quite sure where the work is, or what point of 'disintegration' it's at. Obviously the ambiguous status of the markers you leave, as well as the choice of not putting your name or title to the work—the absence of exterior framing devices—increases the vagueness of the work. I am very interested in this mechanism, as artists are generally concerned about the framing of what they produce. They want people to notice their doings.*

**AP** The experience of reading a book is more about reading and less about the book. In other words, what is important is not the work but the experience of the work. And that experience, by nature, is not something you can put a cage around in advance. As far as other artists go...well, look, I work as a librarian. And do you know what librarians do? They mediate readers with books. And as mediators they function better if they remain anonymous. I think poets are no different. In a sense, all I do is to facilitate an encounter.

**KF** *It's interesting to think about that in relation to your earlier claim on responsibility. On one hand you don't allow exterior framing devices to be attached to what you write, but that prohibition is precisely to blur the separation between what you write and all the other writings in the library. It's like you suppress one form of outside in order to invite in another.*

**AP** Well there is one kind of exteriority that is inevitably part of the experience since there is no way to read my work without going past other books in the library, but the other kind of exteriority can be bypassed because its just a convention. It doesn't matter—quite literally so, since it's not a matter.

**KF** *But don't you have any ambition or desire to reach more people?*

**AP** If I managed to solve an artistic problem, the world cannot erase that fact, even if it was not made public. If one created the cause, the

effect will appear in one form or another. It will inevitably affect the world.

**KF** *So it's not always that you take photos of your own work, like you did this time for the cover of this journal?*

**AP** No, and it betrays the spirit of the work. But sometimes it's nice to have a souvenir. It's like those postcards that they sell for tourists. You get them to remind yourself of the experience you once had, not to relive the trip. Most of what happened is not in the pretty picture.

**KF** *Your works seem to have a complicated relationship to contemporary poetry. They go against the current trend while having at the same time some striking resemblances. Do you know, for instance, about "conceptual writing" and the works of Kenneth Goldsmith?*

**AP** Yes, I do.

**KF** *What do you think about Goldsmith's use of ready-made materials?*

**AP** Well I read that he bases his approach on the existence of the internet, claiming that, with the internet, the creative author writing an original work is gone and all that is left to do is to copy and paste. But I must ask: since when did poetry become an art that simply operated on the *content* level of the media? On the contrary, poetry has always carved itself out of the struggle against the media of language on one hand, and language *as* media on

the other. Media is therefore the component of poetry and not the other way around. But more importantly, the internet is not something that fell out of the sky and landed on poets one day. The very existence of internet is a matter of language—it is being written and re-written everyday. It's no secret that an HTML, for instance, is a "script." So the media which Goldsmith thinks rendered creative writing obsolete is itself created through writing. The internet is obviously poetic.

**KF** *It strikes me that Goldsmith's repeated claim that his works are conceptual, and thus what is important is not to read them but to appreciate the concept, also goes directly against your stance of not relying on external framing devices.*

**AP** Well, let's say that you happen to agree with Goldsmith that there is no creativity anymore and everything is simply a matter of copy-and-pasting found material. But even then, there remains the question of why *name* yourself the author. The fact that he *names* himself, along with his style, and that they are recognized as such, disproves his claim and proves in turn that nothing has changed. The realization that everything is ready-made and all you can ever do is copy and paste certainly did not emerge with the internet. Language is a found material from the beginning. So the very act of writing can be nothing other than copying and pasting. But this does not prevent the existence of authors—it conditions it. The creativity of a poet does not reside in the *making* of materials, but always in the *choosing* thereof.



**KF** But what do you think about the term “conceptual”? I mean, I can see how people would call your approach to poetry “conceptual” as well...

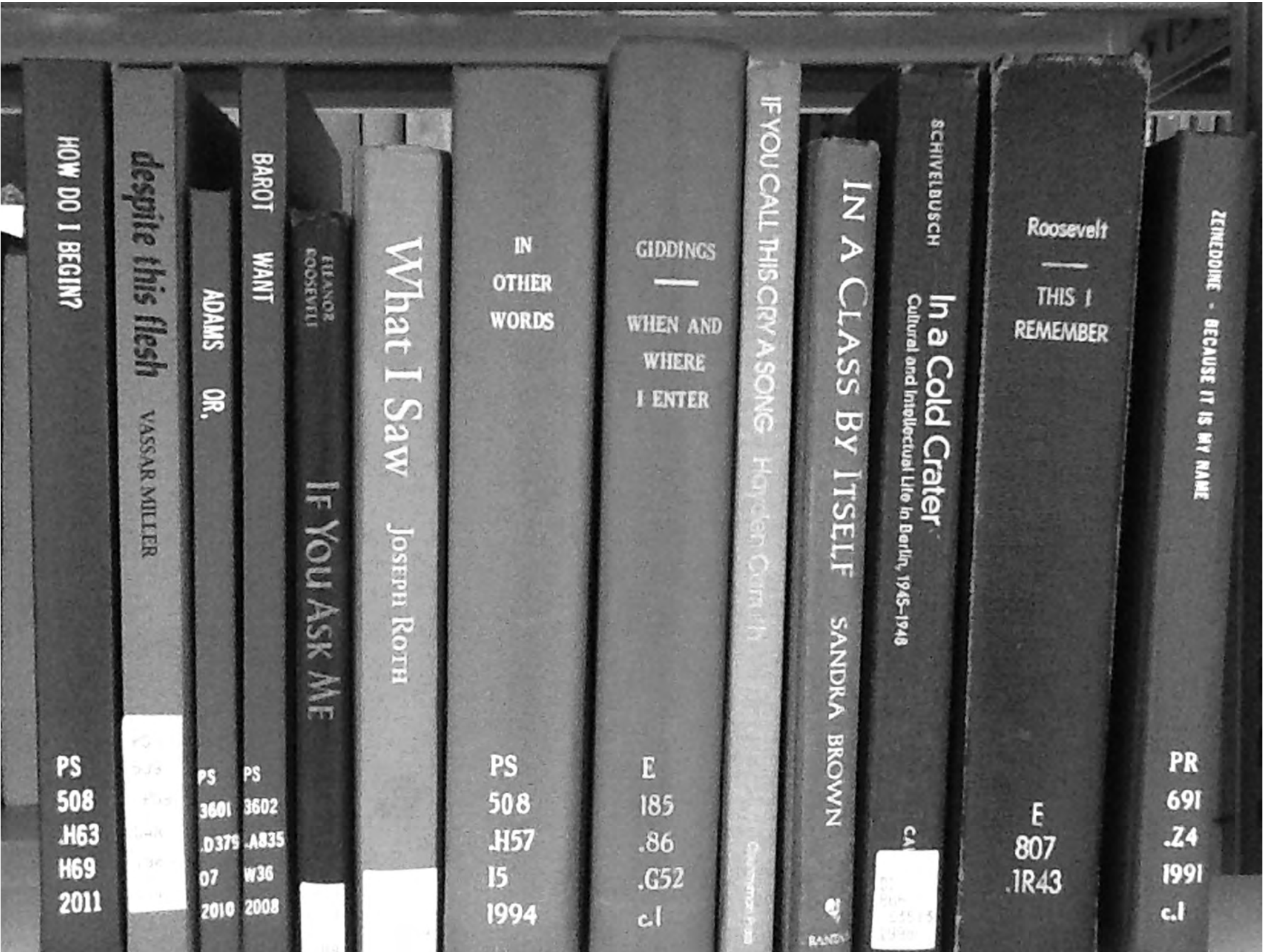
**AP** To conceive is to write—so writing is conceptual! Think of all the “conceptual artists” who came out in the late 1960s. Contrary to popular belief, what they did was not to “dematerialize” art works, but to expose the materiality of media that had supported visual art until then. Naturally, this inquiry ended up targeting two things: language and the body. So the artists who were conceptual either became poets or performance artists or both. Calling a specific kind of writing as “conceptual” is therefore redundant. But it’s more than just redundant—it’s lame. What can be less conceptual than calling yourself conceptual? Simply put, it’s a bad word choice. And for anyone who claims to be a poet that is a serious problem.

**KF** So what kind of poet does that make you?

**AP** It makes me a poet, not a kind thereof.



Anonymous, “HOW DO I BEGIN? / despite this flesh / OR, / WANT / IF YOU ASK ME / What I Saw / IN OTHER WORDS / WHEN AND WHERE I ENTER / IF YOU CALL THIS CRY A SONG / IN A CLASS BY ITSELF / In a Cold Crator / THIS I REMEMBER / BECAUSE IT IS MY NAME” or “BECAUSE IT IS MY NAME / THIS I REMEMBER / In a Cold Crator / IN A CLASS BY ITSELF / IF YOU CALL THIS CRY A SONG / WHEN AND WHERE I ENTER / IN OTHER WORDS / What I Saw / IF YOU ASK ME / WANT / OR, / despite this flesh / HOW DO I BEGIN?” 2012.





9 + 6 + 3 + 6





[ACCOMPLISHED ACT]

# Site-Specific Fictions (Miyagi)

by Robert  
Smithson  
Without  
Robert  
Smithson





ROBERT SMITHSON WITHOUT ROBERT SMITHSON

Several years after 1973 when Robert Smithson supposedly died in a plane crash, crop circles started appearing in England. People became obsessed in finding their creator. Various speculations swirled around, ranging from aliens, UFOs, ancient spirits, magic, to natural phenomena such as tornados, micro-bursts, or plasmas. Adding to the flurry were new circles made by copycats. Then in the early 1990s two English men confessed that they were the true authors. Today the appearance of new circles has decreased. The crop circles seem to have been reduced to a form of Earth Works, one among the many that appeared in the 1970s. Although the two men convincingly explained and demonstrated the process of making a crop circle (which remained an enigma until then) we do not believe that they were the actual culprits. The true author, we posit instead, was Robert Smithson; or more accurately, "Robert Smithson without Robert Smithson."

We are all trapped in the facile assumption that in order to interpret something it is necessary to posit the existence of an agent who made that thing. From ancient times, we have imagined the mighty Creator to understand nature, and then, artists in order to understand art works. An author provides objectivity to the phantasmagoria that is experienced. It relieves one from being responsible, by reframing the ghost-like sighting as a re-cognition of what was first seen by the Other. However, the true phantom in this process is, of course, none other than the figure of the "author."

Robert Smithson realized that the very notion of "author" was a metaphysical fiction. He therefore attempted to do away with the phantoms of "creation" or "originality" that pestered art, and to instead observe the material world directly. The notion of author dissipates therein, for humans do not have power to create even the smallest mass. All that is there is a contiguous time, a constant increase of entropy. Every moment you see and interpret something, time proceeds in an irreversible manner. That is why the retrospective endeavor of finding the correct "Robert Smithson" amidst innumerable wrong ones is bound to end up in vain. For "Robert Smithson" is likewise subject to the inevitable process of collapse and decay. But this also means that there is no way to truly dispel the phantoms. It is for this reason that, whereas Smithson himself decided to feign his death in order to continue his activities anonymously, we choose to excavate the buried name and carry it as our banner. In contrast to Smithson who thought making his 1965 work "Enantiomorphic Chambers" disappear was a significant move, we choose to re-materialize the same work fifty years later. The project "Robert Smithson without Robert Smithson" thus proceeds in a timely manner.

From 2014 to 2015, "Robert Smithson without Robert Smithson" created several Earthworks in Miyagi prefecture, Japan. These are real sites created by a fictional author and thus they constitute "Site-specific Fictions."

An Art Users Conference

Map of Site-Specific Fictions

(Kazenosawa Museum, Katakozawa, Miyagi)



Numbers and letters indicate Earthworks, several surrounding sites, and an exhibition of documents





**A Documents “Robert Smithson without Robert Smithson”:  
The Remains of the Remains of Takamori**

*Robert Smithson without Robert Smithson | 2014 (1986) | Earthwork | Tsukuridate, Kuwabara City, Miyagi Prefecture*

In 1986, a small stone tool was buried into a 290,000 years old stratum. This was the deed of Shin-ichi Fujimura, an amateur archeologist known as “God’s Hands,” who for quarter of a century had single-handedly rewritten the history of the Paleolithic era in Japan through a series of astonishing excavations. His performance made humans appear at the Takamori site of 290,000 years ago. The illusion of history makes us think that a ruin pertains solely to the past, as if it has nothing to do with the present. But now, its “author” has been exposed to the light of day. In 2000, it was revealed that Fujimori had planted forged artifacts at the Takamori site and later investigation identified similar fabrication of archeological evidence in more than 31 sites he had excavated. The cluster of ruins related to this notorious “Paleolithic Hoax” will never be inscribed within history. The remains of remains thus become traces of past that only exist in the past.





**B This House Moves**

*Robert Smithson without Robert Smithson | 2014 | Earthwork | House, Planet Earth*

If one remained in the same space without being dragged by Earth’s gravitational pull, various sites around the world that exist on the same latitude will pass by one after the other. Or, if one hitched a ride on this house as if it were a vehicle and moved along with the planet’s rotation, it will be possible to visit those sites: the space that had been inhabited by the international date line (Pacific Ocean) three hours ago; the space that had been inhabited by the Spiral Jetty (Utah) seven hours ago; the space that had been inhabited by the Smithsonian Museum (Washington D.C.) nine hours ago; the space that had been inhabited by the Atlantis tanker thirteen hours ago; the space that had been inhabited by the Temple of Apollo (Delphi) sixteen hours ago; the space that had been inhabited by The Gates of Hell (Turkmenistan) eighteen hours ago; and the space that had been inhabited the Tiananmen Square (Beijing) twenty-two hours ago. This house moves at a speed of 1300 km per hour and revolves around the Earth in twenty-four hours.







**C** Solar System (Fingerprint of the Giant)

Robert Smithson without Robert Smithson | 2014 | Tree Stump



**D** Landslide (Blindfold of the Giant)

Robert Smithson without Robert Smithson | 2014 | Precipice



**E** Worm-eaten Letter: יוטיבה שורִיפּ המ (What does it mean?)

Robert Smithson without Robert Smithson | 2014 | Worm-eaten Wood



## 1 RUBBLE EARTH (2014)

"When he found the tiny celluloid float that the fisherman had thrown away, he put it in his pocket. That was also a strange habit of Nobuo. He would fill his pocket with shiny objects on the roadside or things that interested him for a moment. And then he would immediately forget what he picked up." (Teru Miyamoto, "Mud River")

The road for managing the village forest traverses the Earthwork. The road was paved with rubble so that car wheels wouldn't sink in the mud. Countless fragments of concrete, limestone, gravel, tile, brick, river sand, granite, glass, volcanic rock, basalt, wood chip, and PVC, scatter across the soil formed by volcanic ashes and decomposed plants. Similar to the layers of volcanic ash that have sedimented over long periods of time, these fragments have also journeyed over eons. But the lime in the concrete does not retain the memories of the time it used to be a shell or a bone of an organism, and the PVC that was divorced from fossil fuel does not remember the time when it was alive as bacteria. The artificial movement and mixing of soil, and the precipitation of chemical reactions give birth to these rubbles removed from both date and place of origin. Like the ground at the end of time where entropy has maximized, the *Rubble Earth* emits an inactive air. At times, green glass fragments reflect the sun light and glitter like emeralds. An emerald is created through the encounter between beryl and chrome which are produced in completely different geological conditions. It is proof of the blending of heterogeneous earth crusts through the collision of moving continents.

The *Rubble Earth* appears to be at once a natural object and an artificial construct; it is like material but also akin to wastage. For the exhibit, minerals were collected from an imitation emerald mine. 2,000 kilograms of rubble and 2,000 posters of the *Rubble Earth* were scattered across the floor of the exhibition space.



The documentation of the Rubble Earth was printed as a poster (841x594mm) with a real-size photograph of the work on the front, and the back divided by eight Earthworks and their corresponding texts.





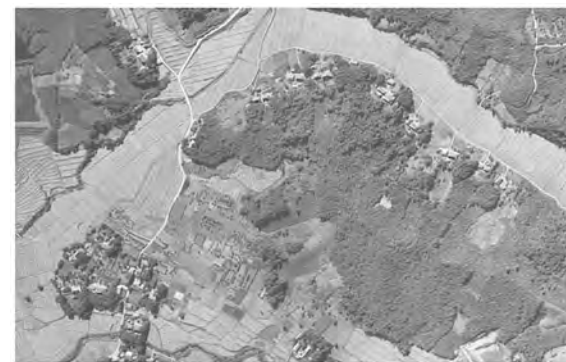
## 2 EROSION AND SEDIMENTATION (2014)

The ground never stops to decay. Any ground is either in the midst of erosion or sedimentation. Culture and technology attempt to overcome decay and death by creating invariant logic or durable material. The fact that logic lacks the notion of time is not an indication of its incompleteness, but of its wishful thinking. The nature of time is neither dialectic contradiction nor creative evolution, but an irreversible process towards decay and death. It is impossible to completely conceal the fundamental erosion and sedimentation processes of the ground. The deposit of volcanic ash exposed at the path that cuts right through the ground reveals the longevity of its generative process. It is impossible to detach the transformation of the ground that has continued since time immemorial from the making of the Earthwork.

*Erosion and Sedimentation* was created by tampering with the site of an abandoned rice terrace. The rice terrace had in turn been created by tampering with a glen. Hence, traces of the rice terrace as well as those of the glen remain there. The myth of “creation” is supported by the blind belief that space precedes matter. For “creation” is production of something inside an empty space. But any man-made artifact is created from materials of nature, and every material is already formed. When one becomes aware of contiguous time, the notion of creation dissipates, and artifacts and natural objects are de-differentiated. The notion of “ready-made” decays the illusion of artistic creation.



Poster of Godzilla (1964)



Aerial photograph of Katakazawa from 1947.  
The mouth of the Godzilla-looking landscape is  
the site for Erosion and Sedimentation



Erosion and Sedimentation (Plan) (2014)



Erosion and Sedimentation (1976)



Erosion and Sedimentation (1947)



### 3 MUDDY WALK (2014)

*"I thought I suddenly felt myself spreading and dissipating like a cloud, mixing with everything around me. It was a good feeling, Joseph. And then the owl went over, and I was afraid that if I mixed too much with the hills I might never be able to collapse into Elizabeth again."* (John Steinbeck, "To an Unknown God")

*"When he first saw, he was so far from making any judgment about distances, that he thought all objects whatever touched his eyes (as he express'd it) as what he felt did his skin; [...] he knew not the shape of anything, nor any one thing from another, however different in shape or magnitude"* (George Berkeley, "The Theory of Vision or Visual Language, Vindicated and Explained")

The small-size hydraulic shovel scrapes the leaf mold and the chernozem soil, digging out the silt that has sedimented in layers. There was a time when these volcanic ashes, now buried underground, composed the surface of this land. The rubble of countless sedimented surfaces pours down onto the excavated ground. The water that spreads out from the cracks between strata mixes with silt, and the ground ceases to be solid. The mushy mud swallows your boots. As you proceed through the *Muddy Walk* lifting your sinking feet, the surrounding wall gradually grows higher until the view field is entirely covered. Vision attempts to efface the very condition of its existence: its distance to the object-figure. The only thing left here is ground—the ground above your head, the stratum wall formed by countless sedimented grounds, and the ground that swallows up your feet. They all mix up and deprive figure from vision.



The linguistic description of *Muddy Walk* becomes dull and glum. As contours disappear both physically as well as visually, the senses become obtuse and the walk slowly sinks into the bosom of nature. Lurking behind the worshiping of nature is a desire to return to the mother's womb. The undifferentiated vision before the separation of figure from ground, the undifferentiated form of existence before the self becomes detached from the world—these are reminisced as lost origins, mixing the images of birth and death in an ambiguous manner. But every time you try to remember, the very thing you try to retrieve crumbles apart. The more a child grows up and learns about his mother, the more he forgets what she used to be.





4 DOUBLE FOCAL POINT (2014)

Nature reveals completely different aspects according to shifts in the scale of perspective. Mountain climbers are often surprised at the sheer lack of similitude between the mountain seen from afar and the mountain beneath their feet. It is difficult to imagine a space in which the world viewed through a microscope co-exists with that viewed through a telescope. That is why the micro-world tends to be detached from the macro-world, and nature becomes confined into a singular scale.

*Double Focal Point* functions as an observation apparatus that changes the focal length through which nature is viewed. As one starts walking the path that cuts through the earth, the ground on both sides gradually approaches the eyes. As the ground thus draws close, so does the focal point of vision, enticing the viewer into a more microscopic scale of observation. As one proceeds and goes below the ground level, the silt wall enwraps the view field. Within this all-over vision the object of nature becomes undifferentiated, achieving thus a certain kind of blindness. Without the necessary distance to the object, its image is lost.

On the other hand, when walking on the levee (bank), the water surface gradually moves away from the eye, distancing the focal point and inviting the viewer to a macroscopic scale of observation. The gaze thrusts itself into the mirror of the water surface, and the reflected sky covers half of the view field. The object of nature is de-differentiated within a vision where real image and its mirrored reflection oppose one another, attaining thus another kind of blindness. When the object cannot be unified, its image is lost. Microscopic and macroscopic views together constitute the fundamental paradox of vision.



The levee going around the water is a slightly slanted walking path. The absence of things that may serve as criteria for measuring flatness, along with the drop between the planes on both sides of the path, upsets the walker's sense of equilibrium and focus, giving rise to a mild vertigo. On the one side, the surface of the water indicates a level plane. On the other, however, the vertical drop to the ground level distorts the focal length. The water is right there but the sky reflected on it lies at infinity.

The roots of trees submerging into the water are rotten. Aerobic bacteria (*mitochondria*) and an-aerobic bacteria (*chloroplast*) cohabitate inside plants. The latter bacteria decomposes plants which have been severed from the provision of oxygen into inorganic material.

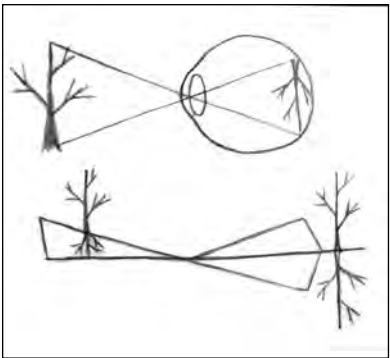
Standing at the edge of the jetty, a cliff can be seen to the right. The water flowing out of the crevice between the strata of chernozem soil and volcanic ash has scraped the surface of this cliff, bringing out a finger-like shape and making the whole precipice look like the head of a giant covering his eyes with both hands. At the top of the cliff is a scenic overlook, which, when imagined from below, seems to provide a bird's-eye view of *Double Focal Point* where the viewer stands. But the pussy willow sticking out from the side of the jetty actually creates a blind spot that conceals people for the view from above. You do not exist in the world seen from the overlook.

The notion of segmented scales produces the false sensation that you do not exist inside the universe and that no bacteria exist inside you. But the ground is part of the universe, just as bacterias form a part of you. Miyagi prefecture, the Earth, and the solar system are all seen at the same time through the microscope.

When looking through a microscope one sees countless microbes swarming inside a drop of water. It may seem that microbes are too small to be seen by the naked eye. However, they appear as "turbidity of water" which can be seen from afar. It forms an undifferentiated "color" without "shape." When viewed from above, *Double Focal Point* becomes a giant hieroglyph in the shape of a flagellata, endowing gigantic contours to the microscopic organism. And the sun reflects on the surface of water.



Magnified water sample from Double Focal Point (flagellata)



Double Focal Point (Plan)





5 EYESPOT (2014)

*“The Pendulum told me that, as everything moved--earth, solar system, nebulae and black holes, all the children of the great cosmic expansion--one single point stood still: a pivot, bolt, or hook around which the universe could move.” (Umberto Eco, “Foucault’s Pendulum”)*

*“To ensure an optimal stability without compromising the maneuverability, the Bebop Drone analyzes data from numerous sensors automatically: 3-axes accelerometer, gyroscope, magnetometer, one ultrasound sensor with an 8 meters reach, one pressure sensor and a vertical camera to track the speed” (Parrot.com)*

A Buddhist priest from a temple in Kurihara City helps us with the airborne filming. The drone operated by the priest takes off, the sound of its propellers clattering in the air. The drone films as it moves from west to east. Its gyroscope stabilizes the camera. A gyroscope extracts the movement not of the object it is attached to, but of itself.

There are many people who believe that the Earth rotates. But where is the immobile spot from which the rotation of the planet can be observed? Leon Foucault proved the rotation of the Earth using a pendulum. The direction of the pendulum’s oscillation is fixed in relation to space. Foucault called the pendulum, a “gyroscope.” If space itself doesn’t move, the Earth’s rotation is moving us east, along with the earth’s crust of Miyagi prefecture, at a high speed of 1,300 km per hour. In seven

hours we shall arrive to the space formerly known as Utah.

The ground covered in green is captured in the drone’s camera. The sunlight on the surface of the leaves makes them shine in brilliant green. Inside a leaf the chloroplast takes in the sunlight and converts it into energy. The green is caused by the chloroplast, but the chloroplast only takes in and converts the blue and red rays of sunlight into energy. In other words, green is the light that the chloroplast rejected. A certain reversal takes place on the interface of perception, and the light that the surface bounces off allows us to see what is on its other side.

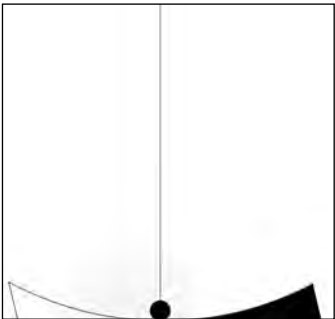
At the base of the flagellum of euglena, there is a primitive visual organ called the “eyespot.” This organ functions not as a lens that delivers light to the photosensitive part, but as a cover that blocks the light from reaching the photosensitive part of the organism. The photosensitive part of the euglena, an organism that moves by rotating its body, senses its own body through the regular obstruction of exterior light. The perceptive organ functions to differentiate the inside from the outside even before exterior information is taken in.

The drone desperately resists Earth’s gravity that tries to pull everything to the ground. The camera would certainly break if it collides into a stone. But what is the stiffness of a stone? When a finger touches a stone, what transforms is not the object that is touched but the finger tip, and what is sensed is this transformation. But the transformation of the finger then becomes reversed and projected onto the stone as *its* stiffness. Would it be possible to further reverse this mechanism as the softness of the finger tip? The separation between inside and outside, and their reversals, are always taking place on the surface of sensory receptors.

Hands clasped in prayer (*Gassho*) creates an experience akin to a coupled mirror. The sensation caused by the transformation of the right hand surface is projected as an attribute of the left hand, and vice versa. The process of reversal never stops.



Drone photographing its own reflection



Plan for Eyespot



Gassho | 2015 | Mirror and Gesture





## 6 DUG SLANT (2014)

“Once a upon a time, Ootsuchi-hiko (Ootsuchiga-mori Forest) and Ohitsu-hime (Hitsuga-mori Forest) lived in Monji but the two did not get along together at all and were always fighting. They would throw rocks to each other and wage wars, but the head of Ootsuchi-hiko grew taller with the accumulated rocks that Ohitsu-hime threw, and the head of Ohitsu-hime became flat because she was throwing all the rocks.” (Toru Shibasaki, “The Celebrated Mountains of Miyagi”)

“The idea of the absolute nought, in the sense of the annihilation of everything, is a self-destructive idea, a pseudo-idea, a mere word. If suppressing a thing consists in replacing it by another, if thinking the absence of one thing is only possible by the more or less explicit representation of the presence of some other thing, if, in short, annihilation signifies before anything else substitution, the idea of an “annihilation of everything” is as absurd as that of a square circle.” (Henri Bergson, “Creative Evolution”)

The folklore describing the creative process of Monji-sanzan Mountains differentiates a “place” where space and matter and name are undifferentiated, and thereby transforms the concept of “creation.” Is “space” a concept that emerged from a sense of loss? The mountain peak of Oodoga-mori forest was created with dirt taken from Hitsuga-mori forest. “Histuga-mori” is the name of the space where the mountain exists, as well as the name of matter that constitutes the mountain. If the dirt that consti-



## Site-Specific Fictions (Miyagi)



Monji Sanzan | Robert  
Smithson without Robert  
Smithson | 2015 | Scenery  
(From Left to Right: Oodoga-  
mori, Nakano-mori, Hitsuga-  
mori)

tutes Hitsuga-mori forest had been entirely transposed elsewhere, would the name “Hitsuga-mori” address the space that remains or the entity that was removed?

*Dug Slant* was conceived as a walking trail that extends in both directions from the road facing the fallow field. One path goes towards the slopes of the village forest, while the other goes in the opposite direction towards the fallow field. The two dead-ends make the people take a u-turn and return to the place of origin.

To walk back and forth on this trail is not to move between “places.” This is because one end of the trail is a *Dug Slant* as a *space* created by removing the slant surface, and the other end is a *Dug Slant* as *matter* created from the removed dirt. The “place” called *Dug Slant* therefore remains singular. The walking trail in this way connects space and matter, exterior form and interior content, making the singular “place” oscillate between the two poles and triggering a conceptual earthquake.

The water reflects *Dug Slant*, creating the latter’s representation beneath its surface. The same “place,” *Dug Slant*, now exists in two different “places”: above and under the water. Moreover, the representation of *Dug Slant* is printed on various surfaces of paper as photograph or as letters, reproduced and disseminated. The rain and wind cracks the slant surface and causes it to decay. Similarly, the object cracks every time it is represented, as do letters every time it is read or written. Neither matter nor information can escape the law of entropy increase.

The shaking of the ground beneath our feet creates a sensation of fear. But inside that vertigo, there are different kinds of emotion that are irreducible to fear. Why are children amused by earthquake-simulating vehicles? Wouldn’t this suggest that there is a certain pleasure within the Freudian “death-drive”? Vertigo is the pleasure of dying, the intuition of an entropic time.





7 KATAKOZAWA NOSE (2014)

“He woke up and happened to glance at the mirror--there was his nose! He grabbed it with his hand to make sure--but there was no doubt this time. ‘Aha!’ cried Kovalyov, and if Ivan hadn’t come in at that very moment, he would have joyfully danced a trepak round the room in his bare feet. He ordered some soap and water, and as he washed himself looked into the mirror again; the nose was there. He had another look as he dried himself--yes, the nose was still there!” (Nikolai Gogol, “The Nose”)

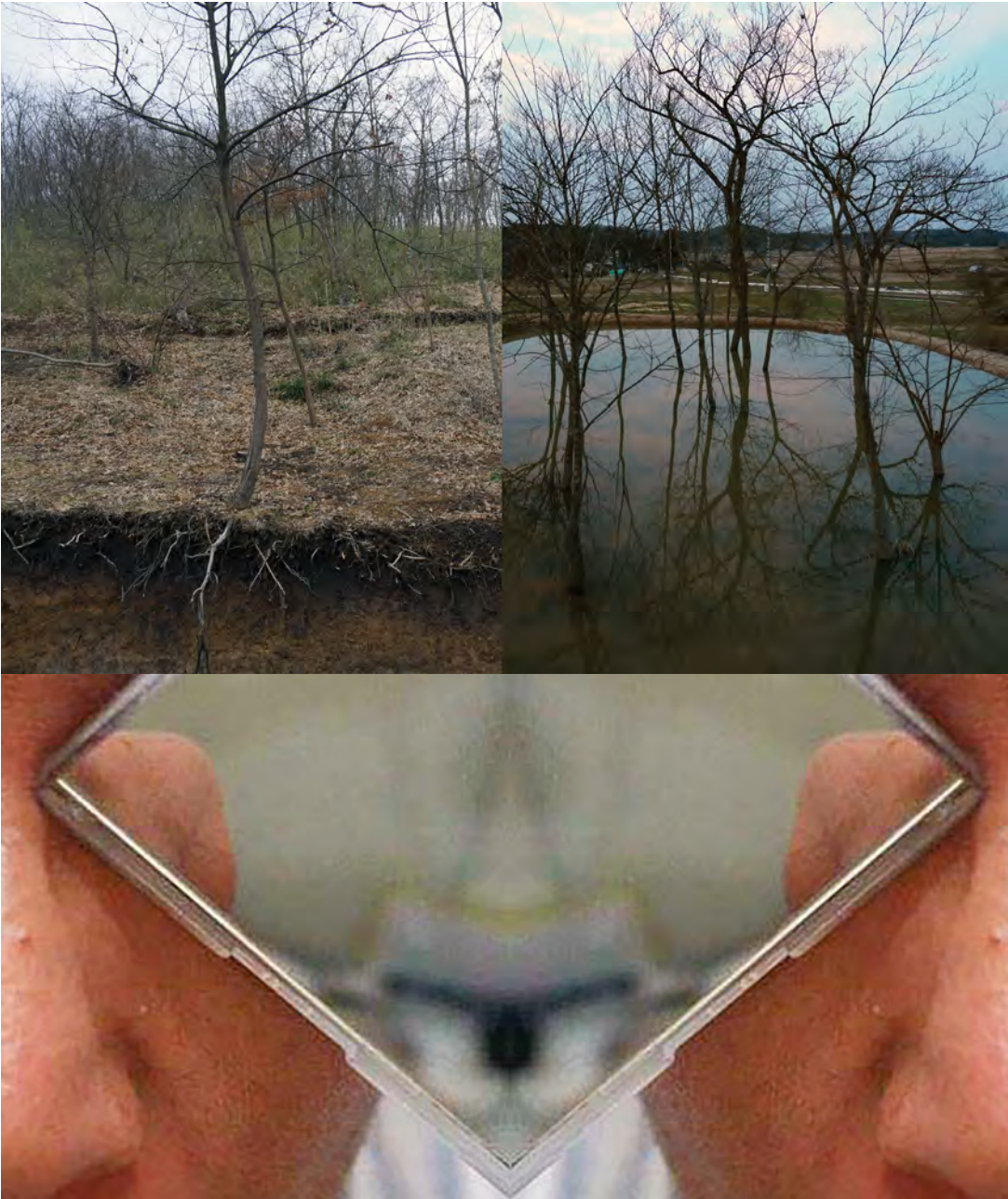
Where is one’s nose? In the mirror; at the periphery of the visual field—the nose appears everywhere. But to discern its exact location is not an easy task.

*Katakozawa Nose* was created by mounding the soil from the slope of the village forest. As one advances towards the tip of the *Nose*, the ground recedes and the vista expands. People tend to long for a bird-eye viewpoint that looks down at the world, encompassing great many things within the gaze. But what one encounters at the tip of the *Nose* is a scenery that relegates half of the visual field to mirrors. The surface of the water inverts the sky and the trees, producing a mirror-image world.

Is it possible to have a single overview of the real world and the mirrored one? When the real image of a tree and its reflection are regarded as a continuous figure, the inverted image of the tree on the water becomes the tree’s root, visible through a transparent ground. The tree thus takes root in a ground that is both real and unreal. But this ambivalence comes with a price, for now our own viewpoint which sees the tree becomes torn between the world of real images and that of mirrored ones. Just like you would do from a path that cuts through the ground, you look up at the exposed tree roots from the water surface below.

If the person inside and outside the mirror switched places at the precise moment you glanced into the mirror, you would not be able to realize it. This is because the eye-ball that captures the inverted world also inverts itself. In other words, there is no way to deny that this kind of thing is not actually happening. Jacques Lacan suggested that the mirror is involved in the structuring of the “self.” When you recognize your mirror image as “yourself,” you are traversing the world of mirror and the real one.

When you perceive the real image of a tree and its mirrored reflection as a continuous figure, the person standing at the tip of the real *Nose* and the person standing at the tip of the *Nose* reflected on the water might be switching their places at an incredible speed while retaining a pseudo-continuity (like the workings of film). This structure corresponds to that of the right and left eyes, torn apart by the nose. For the right and left eye-balls mirror one another. “Katago,” the name of the location, signifies a person torn in half. How can one deny the fact that one is always torn between the world inside and outside the mirror traversing the bridge of the nose?



A logical map to indicate the location of the nose

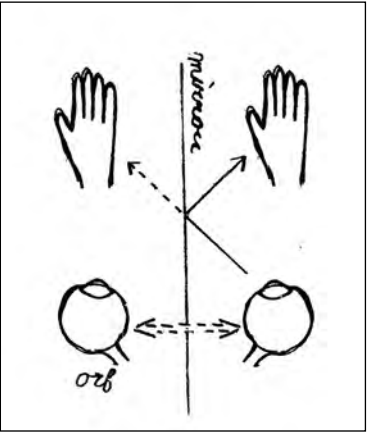
When the world is synthesized: Far-sight  
The nose seen with the right eye is on the left side of the world      The nose seen with the left eye is on the right side of the world  
The nose seen with both eyes is on both the right and left side of the world  
When the nose is synthesized: Near-sight  
The world seen with the right eye is on the left side of the nose      The world seen with the left eye is on the right side of the nose  
The world seen with both eyes is on both the right and left side of the nose





If there is something akin to the notion of death within the life-cycle of unicellular organisms that propagate through cell division, it must be connected to the moment when one individual splits in two. But if, as Plato’s myth suggests, our own present form is that of a Katako, an individual split in two, what is the individual that preceded the split? When an arm is cut off, it is not the arm, but the rest of the body that feels the pain. But this pain also seems to pertain to the arm that has been cut off. When a person is split instantly in half with a sword, right along the nose, it is very likely to be painful. But who is feeling this pain? The right half of the body feels it as the pain of the detached left half, while the left half feels it as the pain of the detached right half. But since the two sides are now cut apart, there is no way for the right half to feel the pain on the left nor for the left to feel the pain on the right. It could be said that the person is split into two individuals, even if it were only for an instant.

Between unicellular organisms and multi-cellular organisms there exists not only a quantitative difference concerning the number of cells constituting an individual, but also a qualitative difference. The splitting of an egg cell (which doesn’t happen vertically, but horizontally, from left to right) seems to be the definitive moment that repeats phyletic evolution from unicellular to multi-cellular organisms inside the growth of a single individual. But a more substantial difference lies in the fact that whereas the splitting produces two different individuals in the case of unicellular organisms, it forms a single individual in the case of multi-cellular organisms. A strange bond is formed between two individuals that have been split apart. We are composed of what has been split apart; we are born out of a unicellular organism’s death. *Katagozawa Nose*, created by dividing a circular water surface in two equal parts, reminds one of the primordial fissure that once split a cell in half. ☹️



The process through which the two eye-balls split between the inside and outside of the mirror identifies the right hand (as opposed to the left hand):  
A. The real eye-ball sees the real hand.  
B. The eye-ball in the mirror sees the hand in the mirror and believes that this hand is outside the mirror.  
C. The eye-ball in the mirror believes that it is outside the mirror.

**8 AFTERTHOUGHT:  
KATAKOZAWA NOSE (2014)**

“And if we are not obedient to the gods, there is a danger that we shall be split up again and go about in basso-relievo, like the profile figures having only half a nose which are sculptured on monuments, and that we shall be like tallies.” (Plato, “Symposium”)

“The task for contemporary Japanese is to not let Katako (a half-breed between a human and an ogre) commit suicide, or let him be killed in the hopes for a Western-style of transformation. We must instead strive to oversee what kind of new fantasy can be created by letting the Katako live. We need to place our efforts in living this new fantasy.” (Hayao Kawai, “The Tragedy of Half-man”)



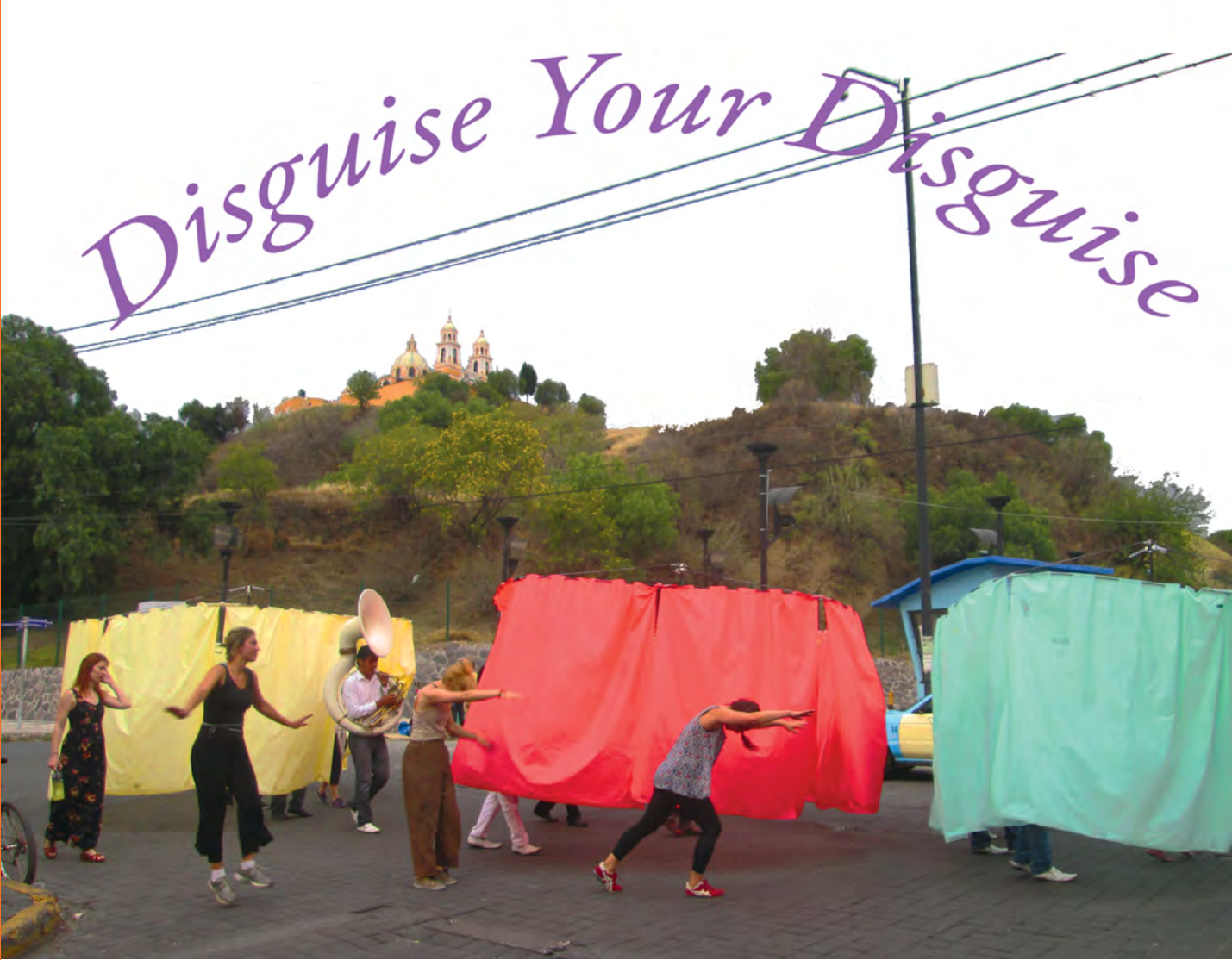




New York is a divided city. Many of the richest people in the world reside here while the streets are filled with starving and freezing homeless human beings. And these two extremes never seem to converge. The main reason why passersby and subway passengers tend to ignore the desperate pleas of people asking for food or money is because there is no return. Spending money is always a form of investment in our society and unless you are a billionaire who needs to worry about public image or tax deduction, giving money away for free seems like a senseless act. Nevertheless, there are things in this world for which people gladly spend their money, fully aware of the immense possibility of there being no return. One example of this form of seemingly nonproductive expenditure is, of course, the lottery.

So plant one or several ‘Jackpot Homeless’ people in New York. Announce the project widely. If you give money to the Jackpot Homeless you get back whatever the amount you gave multiplied by X.

— Jay Barnacle + You Nakai



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## *The Judson Dancers* (FALL 2013/WINTER 2014 SEASON)

& events / judson / application

**Applications for the Spring 2014 Season are due on September 30, 2013.**

***Click here for the application form***

***Click here to read the guidelines***

**NEW INFORMATION:** This year all proposals must be submitted via the online form, and we will ONLY accept online work samples. You must provide a link to a URL, either youtube, vimeo, or other.

**Questions? Email [apply@movementresearch.org](mailto:apply@movementresearch.org)**

*Compiled by Lindsey Drury & Dee Ali*  
**support Movement Research**

*A collection of applications that were submitted to Movement Research in Fall 2013, for the performance series at Judson Church. Some of them were accepted, others were not.*

**MOVEMENT  
RESEARCH  
PERFORMANCE  
JOURNAL**

*Engaging current  
issues of dance and  
performance*



# Austin Epik

## SIGN LANGUAGE DANCE I: JUST A DREAM

**From:** Movement Research <[apply@movementresearch.org](mailto:apply@movementresearch.org)>  
**To:** [austinepik@yahoo.com](mailto:austinepik@yahoo.com)  
**Sent:** Monday, April 15, 2013 11:16 PM  
**Subject:** Movement Research at the Judson Church Fall 2013 Application

Thank you for applying to the Movement Research at the Judson Church Fall 2013 Season!  
You can review your application below. We will contact you if we have any questions.

Question	Answer
Full Name	Austin Epik
Address	3887 Chesswood Dr., Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 2R8000000
Phone Number	(647) -725-2060
E-mail	<a href="mailto:austinepik@yahoo.com">austinepik@yahoo.com</a>
Website	<a href="http://www.epikproductions.ca/">http://www.epikproductions.ca/</a>



### Project Description



### Ssolo No Loss

Ssolo No Loss is my first work of avant garde Sign Language Dancing. I have been developing it since I read Yvonne Rainer's "No Manifesto." I had never been interested in postmodern dance until I read her manifesto, because I think for the first time some one had explained to me what exactly postmodernism in dance was dealing with. I thought it was interesting that Rainer's manifesto had to be in text and not in dance for me to understand it. But I thought, if she had made No Manifesto as a sign language dance, no one would have ever argued that dance needs language to act as discourse around it. Sign Language dance solves this issue by making dance itself a method of clear communication. If dancers learned sign language they could talk with their bodies all they wanted, and people would know what they're talking about. They wouldn't even need to write proposals like this anymore if they didn't want to, there would be no more rift between the act of articulating a dance, and the act of performing a dance. In Sign Language dance, this can be one and the same. An added bonus is that postmodern dancers could completely divorce from music for their sign language dances because the people who would understand their works best would all be deaf, and so they wouldn't need music at all.

So, I've read that Yvonne Rainer's Trio A is the work that most exemplifies her Manifesto. So what I propose to perform at Judson Church is a remake of Trio A as a sign language dance. As you can see from my video, I am able to place sign language in the context of very complex dancing, so it won't be a problem for me to do this in the end, I just need a little training to become familiar with these modern dance moves. I've already started ballet classes, I know its not very modern, but that's still the technical basis of current experimental dance forms, no?

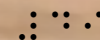
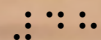


So for a while I considered learning Trio A and doing the signing for No Manifesto as a part of it to some really hip music. But some how it didn't seem like a very pure idea. So I'll do it in silence and invite deaf people I know in New York.

The other thing is that I was thinking how, well, my piece isn't a trio, its a solo, and second of all, at this point in time, No Manifesto doesn't articulate what has actually been erased from dance. What No Manifesto articulates now is precisely that we haven't lost anything she was talking about getting rid of: virtuosity, glamour, transformation, magic, transcendency, heroics, spectacle, style, camp, seduction, eccentricity, its all still at work. So I decided to title the work Ssolo No Loss because that's what it is- A solo that loses nothing.

And I misspelled solo because otherwise it wouldn't be a palindrome.

Artist Bio	Austin Epik runs Epik Productions in Toronto. He is fascinated with music, and was raised by deaf parents, so he knows sign language. In 2005, he began performing Sign Language Dances in Toronto dance clubs.
Work Sample Title	Sign Language Dance 1: Just a Dream
Work Sample Venue	Front Lawn
Date Performed	March 2, 2012
Duration	3:56
Collaborators	None
Work Sample Cue Point	0:40
Work Sample URL:	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlyj_xGb3rA">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlyj_xGb3rA</a>
Password: (provide if online work sample is password protected)	
Work Sample Description (150 words or less)	This is the only documentation I have thus far. This video is online to "test the waters" of interest in Sign Language Dances online, as I would like to start up a new project in my production company called Epik Silence, which would produce Sign Language Dance videos for deaf viewers of online music video materials. My goal is to have Sign Language Dancers eventually incorporated into music videos online for deaf viewers.







# Jackie Bennington Weiss

## PROTEIN SYNTHESIS: AN EPIC ON THE CELLULAR LEVEL

To: [jackiebweiss@outlook.com](mailto:jackiebweiss@outlook.com)  
Subject: Movement Research at the Judson Church Fall 2013 Application  
Date: Mon, 15 Apr 2013 22:58:32 -0400  
From: [apply@movementresearch.org](mailto:apply@movementresearch.org)

Thank you for applying to the Movement Research at the Judson Church Fall 2013 Season!  
You can review your application below. We will contact you if we have any questions.

Question	Answer
Full Name	Jackie Benington Weiss
Address	3231 Waring Ct, Oceanside, CA 92056
Phone Number	(760) 630-5613
E-mail	<a href="mailto:jackiebweiss@outlook.com">jackiebweiss@outlook.com</a>
Website	**please note I had a problem with my first submission! Sorry, I'm old, and not good with email! So I resubmitted with my new outlook address!**
Project Description	<div></div> <p>At Stanford University in 1971, 200 students, fortified by complimentary wine, began a Bacchanalian dance replicating the process of DNA formation. I was the choreographer of that landmark dance, that has since been a tradition in Chemistry classes over the last 40ish years. As the years have passed, I have begun to understand the Protein Synthesis dance as unique in experimental dance history in the USA because it is only celebrated within scientific circles. In fact, the sole reconstruction of the dance was led by a Biology professor Joan Slonczewski, in 2006. The artistic integrity of the work has only ever been argued by scientists, and its legacy continues to be shaped by the scientists who use it as an educational device.</p> <div></div> <p>However, the film itself enters into larger discourses. It was created 5 years after the 1966 Armory Exhibition <i>9 Evenings: Theatre &amp; Engineering</i>, a series which involved Robert Rauschenberg, John Cage, David Tudor, Yvonne Rainer, Deborah Hay, Robert Whitman, Steve Paxton, Alex Hay, Lucinda Childs and Öyvind Fahlström. This exhibition made a link between postmodernist choreographers and scientists, who worked collaboratively to build projects. The film's narrator, Nobel Laureate Paul Berg, called it a "Molecular Happening," obviously relating the project to Allan Kaprow (who took part in Judson). The Academic Film Archive of North America calls it "The film is, in addition to being a superior example of affective filmmaking, a landmark film defining the early 1970s San Francisco Bay Area art, performance, and alternative lifestyles culture."</p>

<div></div> <div></div>	<p>Movement Research has itself been involved in addressing the history of postmodern dance in the past year, as a part of the "Judson at 50" platform. I understand the Protein Synthesis dance as both independent of Judson and deeply related to it, a parallel development that manifested from cultural loosening and that that intermingled art and science. My argument is that while Judson artists were concerned with challenging the rigid confines of dance practices at the time, the Protein Synthesis dance emerged to challenge the same rigidity in science education.</p> <p>The question I bring to Judson is this: What artistic value might the Protein Synthesis have, not merely as a part of the history of science education in the US, but also as a part of dance history? I propose to Movement Research a reenactment of the Protein Synthesis dance for the Judson series. I will work my own notes, memory, and with documentation to reproduce this work as faithfully as possible to how it took shape in 1971.</p> <p>Upon acceptance into the Judson series, I will arrange a one-week rehearsal period and will gather performers for this project through Dance NYC, Craigslist, and other online forums. I prefer to work with students of the sciences. To follow my original methods, I will have each "process" in the dance led by a versed modern dancer. My husband Gabriel and I will reach out to University Students around NYC to take part.</p>
Artist Bio	<p>Jackie Benington Weiss was at Stanford University in 1971 finishing her Master's degree in Education. She was a high school dance and aerobics instructor, and California's Junior Miss in 1969. She went on to dance in the work of Donald McKayle in the 1980s. She is the mother of two children, and has been married to Gabriel Weiss (the filmmaker for this work and now MD and author) for more than 40 years.</p>
Work Sample Title	Protein Synthesis: An Epic on the Cellular Level
Work Sample Venue	A playing field at Stanford University
Date Performed	1971
Duration	9:22
Collaborators	Paul Berg, Robert Alan (Gabriel) Weiss, Chem, Biochem, Med students at Stanford 1971
Work Sample Cue Point	2:00
Work Sample URL:	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nmqhdozuf7Y">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nmqhdozuf7Y</a>
Password: (provide if online work sample is password protected)	
Work Sample Description (150 words or less)	<p>I created the choreography for the 1971 film "Protein Synthesis: An Epic on the Cellular Level" The film was hosted by Paul Berg, filmed at Stanford University by Robert Alan Weiss, and directed by Gabriel Weiss for the Chemistry Department. I also am in this performance as the dancer "Initiation Factor Two," who performs a small solo starting around 2 minutes. Martha Graham called this work "The Best Film I've ever seen about Protein Synthesis."</p>
<div></div>	





Lyndon Alec

HOOP DANCE

To: [lyndonalec@live.com](mailto:lyndonalec@live.com)  
Subject: Movement Research at the Judson Church Fall 2013 Application  
Date: Tue, 16 Apr 2013 13:02:12 -0400  
From: [apply@movementresearch.org](mailto:apply@movementresearch.org)

Thank you for applying to the Movement Research at the Judson Church Fall 2013 Season!  
You can review your application below. We will contact you if we have any questions.

Question	Answer
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Website	<a href="http://www.lyndonalec.com/">http://www.lyndonalec.com/</a>
Project Description	<div></div> <p>I propose to Judson because I am a performer of the Hoop Dance, a Native American development in dance modernism. My form is continually left out of current discourses of experimental dance institutions who frame "dance modernism" and its aftermath in America.</p> <p>I am a well-respected Hoop Dancer who has performed all over the world. And though my work has found much support with producers who support the arts of "traditional" and "indigenous" cultures, I am interested in performing my work as a part of Judson because it is a context that frames dance experimentalism and Hoop Dancing is a form of American Dance driven by experimentalism.</p> <p><b>Background Information</b></p> <p>The history of Hoop Dancing since the 1930s challenges habitual notions of the role of dance in Native American cultures. First of all, Hoop Dancing can't be traced back to one source tribe. It is a recent dance tradition shared amongst many tribes. Tony White Cloud, the contestable "father" of modern Hoop Dancing, popularized it by performing in the 1942 movie "valley of the Sun" with Lucille Ball. When the first championship Hoop Dance contest was arranged by the Zotigh family for the New Mexico State Fair Indian Village in 1991, they inadvertently instigated a huge shift in the form. Dancers began to invent whole new ways of dancing as they planned for how to wow the judges at the next competition. And so experimentation in Hoop Dancing was driven by its competition-based public presentation format.</p> <div></div>



How Hoop Dancing Will be Presented at Judson

I propose to act as a host for a mini Hoop Dance contest between three dancers of the form in New York City. Whoever I choose as the winner of the contest will receive the full amount of my Movement Research artist honorarium (assuming there is one).

The reason I propose to present my work in this way is precisely because experimentation in Hoop Dance has always been driven by competition and money. The history of Hoop Dance has laid the foundations for its cultural modes of engagement. Hoop Dance is a model of inventiveness and progressivism across North American tribes precisely because Native American people sought economic and social gain through their dancing of it.

I am also interested in what conversations might arise out of this presentation at Movement Research. Listening and reading interviews with Bill T. Jones, for example, leads me to think that NYC modern dancers equate dance experimentation with economic loss. Bill T Jones brings up this issue of the "ghettoization" of experimental dancers in New York City.

So, as far as I can tell, middle and upper class kids go into experimental modern dance after college and become economically and culturally "ghettoized" (aka marginalized) by so doing. Yet, poor Native American kids go into Hoop Dancing, using experimentation with the form as a way emerge out of their economic/cultural/social ghettos through the financial gains, respect of their communities, and opportunities offered by cultural organizations as a result.

Artist Bio	Lyndon is a member of the Alabama-Coushatta tribe of Texas and is a premier hoop dancer who has performed all over the world, including being featured in the opening of the Goodwill Games in Russia. He's also performed in Australia and England. He is one of the few remaining Alabama Indians.
Work Sample Title	Hoop Dance
Work Sample Venue	The Moundville Native American Festival
Date Performed	October 13th 2012
Duration	5:10
Collaborators	Mike McCracken (videography)
Work Sample Cue Point	0:20
Work Sample URL:	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBhXGPLrFmM">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBhXGPLrFmM</a>
Work Sample Description (150 words or less)	You will see in the video my performance of the Native American Hoop Dance. This dance is performed in many North American Tribes and is considered a modern dance form. It was developed and popularized by Tony White Cloud of the Jemez Pueblo in the 1930s. Hoop dancing became a competitive sport in the 1990s, and has since progressed rapidly as dancers experiment with new and innovative ways to perform it for the competition circuit.

**Hoop Dance – Video Not Available**  
Choreographer: Lyndon Alec  
Performer: Unnamed  
The original proposal for this work stated that I would hold my performance as a contest between hoop dancers (both in the traditional Native American style and other styles) in New York City and give my artist honorarium paid by MR@Judson to the winner. However, the 15-minute time limit has caused me to change my mind, as I could not hold a proper contest in 15 minutes. Therefore, a private (invitation only) contest was held on Sunday, January 5th, and the winner chosen at that contest to perform the work at Judson. Tonight you will not so much see a traditional Native American hoop dance, but the result of a traditional mode of presentation of hoop dance. Tonight you will see the byproduct of the tradition of contest.








# Steven Levon Ounanian

## RIGHT OR WRONG INTERPRETED BY STEVEN OUNANIAN

**From:** Movement Research <[apply@movementresearch.org](mailto:apply@movementresearch.org)>  
**To:** [Ounanian.hands@yahoo.com](mailto:Ounanian.hands@yahoo.com)  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 23, 2013 12:50 PM  
**Subject:** Movement Research at the Judson Church Fall 2013 Application

Thank you for applying to the Movement Research at the Judson Church Fall 2013 Season!  
You can review your application below. We will contact you if we have any questions.

Question	Answer
Full Name	Steven Levon Ounanian
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Website	<a href="http://www.stevenlevon.com">www.stevenlevon.com</a>
Project Description	<div></div> <p>I have begun my investigations for this work with the idea of the disembodied hand becoming an independent and whole body. I am doing this because the most general image of a person involved in everyday technologies is a person whose body is disengaged from a situation, but whose hands are incredibly active in relationship to the technology itself. The ultimate form of this would be to create a human who needed to be nothing more than a pair of hands. This basic idea is already immortalized in modern pop-culture via "The Hand" in the Addams Family.</p> <p>The first phase in my project will be to reverse the basic assumption that the human has hand that operates technology. I am beginning to build technological hands to operate humans. Thus far, I am building pairs of hands connected to poles on stands with wheels. These hands can place themselves on humans and then locate (and relocate) humans in a space. The choreography in this work will therefore be physically conducted by technological hands that move the humans around like objects.</p> <div></div> <p>As I create this work, I am studying choreographers who instruct performers live, as a part of their works. Such choreographers include Jerome Bel, and here in New York City, Yvonne Meier. I am also studying dance workshop methods like "blind leading" to investigate how choreographers tackle the issue of "operating" their dancers in real time.</p> <p>As I develop my technological hand robots, I will begin to further address how the relationship between hands in this performance can be one of hand-to-hand. My question is simply: What happens if a human reaches out with a hand to engage with technology, which is a hand? If both have hands to operate one another, what happens then? If both are equalized in this way, wielding each other with hands, how can the choreography between technology and body become an act of mutuality.</p>

	<p>Finally, because human performers are trained to act both responsively and independently within a performance context, I will program my technological hand robots in the same manner. There will be no external human operator. The hand robots themselves will be programmed to respond to touch, to communicate with each other in space, and to follow their own logarithmically-defined trajectories. Within each robot, this multi-intentional programming will sometimes cause internal conflict within the robot as multiple input-sources present packets of information that cannot be resolved as one course of action in the moment. I am not sure what will happen yet as a result of this. But this problem will further allow me to address another question I have about dance performers who engage in improvisational practices and/or who face momentary glitches and accidents in works that conflict with the operation the dance is supposed to have (ie when somebody trips, when a cue is missed, when the audience applauds before they're supposed to, etc).</p> <p>An initial 1 minute movement experiment with Crispin Jones can be found here: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yx4W2usnkP4">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yx4W2usnkP4</a></p>
<div>  Artist Bio</div> <div></div>	<p>Steven Ounanian is originally from Los Angeles, and received his Masters from the Royal College of Art in Design Interactions. His work consistently explores the neuroses embedded in technology, and the geographic dilemmas which technology is meant to solve. In 2008 he made a robot of himself to be with his mother in America, and has given workshops dealing with performance and technology, including some in San Quentin State Prison in California, and Highbury Grove School in North London. Through interactive media, collaborative experiments, and video, he looks at how, perhaps frighteningly, it is often through technology that we understand how to be human, together.</p> <p>He explores contracts between peoples, and enjoys collaborating, especially with unwitting participants. Through such collaborative experiments, he generates videos, performances, objects, and situations. Technology (from crude phones to synthetic biology) has challenged what it means to be human on a fundamental level. Somehow there is an element of ventriloquism or puppetry that occurs as people associate with this technology. Ounanian enjoys exaggerating this phenomenon, giving external techno-social identities agency and voice, watching what happens when they get out of control.</p> <p>Steven has recently relocated to New York City after he was not able to renew his UK visa. He is developing a new movement-based project here, based on the idea that the human hand is the centerpiece of the connection between people and their most everyday technologies. His goal is to address the choreography of the hand and develop technologies that confound its interaction.</p>
Work Sample Title	Right or Wrong interpreted by Steven Ouanian
Work Sample Venue	Crispin's studio
Date Performed	September 21st, 2007
Duration	13:15
Work Sample URL:	<a href="https://vimeo.com/1464426">https://vimeo.com/1464426</a>
Work Sample Description (150 words or less)	I made a robot of myself to be with my mother in America. According Android Scientist, Karl F. MacDorman, we don't have a working model for human presence yet. I lament this issue through a series of performances with my mother's robot, as we try to establish a working model of a technolo-family. This video is documentation of the whole process. This video played on at the Royal College of Art Degree show.



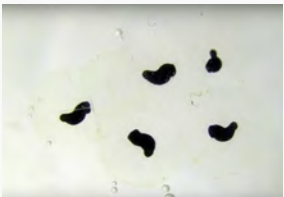
# Fictivia Solar

## TIME LAPSE: FROG SPAWN

**From:** Movement Research <[apply@movementresearch.org](mailto:apply@movementresearch.org)>  
**To:** [solar\\_artist@ymail.com](mailto:solar_artist@ymail.com)  
**Sent:** Monday, April 22, 2013 3:16 PM  
**Subject:** Movement Research at the Judson Church Fall 2013 Application

Thank you for applying to the Movement Research at the Judson Church Fall 2013 Season!  
You can review your application below. We will contact you if we have any questions.

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Project Description	<p>There is no real separation between biography and art in my work, so please read my "Project Description" and my "Artist Bio" as one continuous piece. Thank you.</p> <p>Fiction Inoculation</p> <p>The artist grew up attending dance school in rural Louisiana. The studio was adjacent to a hotel, and the two shared a gravel parking lot. In the gravel parking lot there was this large hole, possibly left over from some unfinished construction project. Ever time heavy rains came, the hole would fill with water and a little cycle of life would begin in there. When the artist was on her way to dance class each day, she would gaze into the hole and see how its biosphere was progressing. For a while it would become more and more complex, with more and more tadpoles, water-skeeters, mosquito larvae, and various water plantlife and algae in colors of green, brown, and orange.</p> <p>The child's first artistic impulses began in dance class while staring out the window and thinking of the hole filled with water, imagining the developing drama out there. And then, at a certain point, the proliferation in the hole would begin to pollute it. This always began as a clouding. The colors of plantlife would dim and darken. The pool would itself begin to emit this dark slime, and then it seemed to strangle itself, finally blackening and hardening as it dried in the sun, leaving mud walls caked in tadpole carcasses and flaky dead algae.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the hotel next door boasted of a concrete swimming pool painted pink and blue. It was a boring object and square, but infinitely more lovely than the rest of the dilapidated propoerty on which it rested. Men and women came and went in and out of rooms, but none seemed too interested in the swimming pool, and so it was merely a clear glassy surface that killed and consumed small creatures upon</p>



	<p>contact. It drowned innumerable dragonflies, saturated and preserved countless frogs, its chorine acting as poison and then as embalming fluid for any tiny being that made the mistake of landing upon its surface.</p> <p>The pool was horrifying and infinitely clean. Clean enough to counterpoint the dingy cars and oiled heads of the patrons, the pool shone bright and flawless under the doting care of the aged groundskeeper who seemed to take his only pleasure in stroking its innards with a net at the end of a long pole, scooping up its victims daily.</p> <p>So- the artist, breezing along in a mimesis of tendus, thought about two ways of dying while in dance class. There is proliferation, which causes violence and strangulation, the death of life-zest in any contained environ. And there is sterility which causes poisoning and starvation, the death of clarity and cleanliness that maintains the purity of form in an environ by first rendering it uninhabitable and ultimately lethal. And so this became the model on which the artist's entire body of work is based.</p>
	<p>The artist tracks processes of how both proliferation/plenty and sterility/lack kill alternate as causes of death because she learned how to dance while her mind was contemplating a swimming pool and a water-filled hole. But what she has discovered is that dancing itself undergoes a similar process through its contextualization in a similar way. Namely, a dance in the clean, organized venue is itself a corpse undergoing embalming in performance. And, a dance presented outside such a formal context, in the start-up world of live/work lofts, impromptu spaces, alternative artist infrastructures etc.—such contexts proliferate art until it strangles itself with its own eager yet impotent virility.</p> <p>The most recent development in this body of work is called "Fiction Inoculation." The artist responds to contextual dichotomy by imagining fictional methods of making dances, ones that will never need to take place, and therefore will never undergo the tyrannical process of creation-in-environ. These pure fiction dances exist only in written form, and manifest only as idea (not as implementation), only as proposal (not as realization). By one means or another, the fiction must, through the clues it provides of its own fictitiousness, deny the proposal's access to the environ.</p> <p>The rejection of the proposal saves the work from its contextual annihilation in venue hole or pool.</p> <p>Every piece in this series must be fiction. Even this one.</p>
Artist Bio	
Work Sample Title	time lapse: frog spawn
Work Sample Venue	petri dish in Austria
Date Performed	unknown
Duration	approx 1 minute
Collaborators	mnolf of Austria
Work Sample URL:	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uiQYWxJLhaQ">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uiQYWxJLhaQ</a>
Work Sample Description (150 words or less)	Choreography is everywhere, there is no need for me to make it. In this Danish video of tadpoles, you can see a timelapse that exemplifies the tadpole development I witnessed as a child going to ballet school. These tadpoles are in an environment of sterility, and in that environment, the clear form of their developmental choreography can be witnessed. Once they are fully hatched, and need outside sources for food, they will die unless supplied.



INTERVIEW

# PRIVATE PARTS MADE PUB(L)IC INTERVIEW WITH DJ JD

BY JAY BARNACLE

*Despite his name DJ JD is not a DJ and in fact hates DJs. He instead makes laptop music that is unlike any other laptop music, but cannot be anything but music made with a laptop. Jay Barnacle from No Collective sat down with DJ JD after a show in Austin to discuss his contradictory approach to computer music and the radical aesthetics-ethics behind it.*

**JAY BARNACLE** *So I just saw your concert and I was impressed by your use of the computer as an instrument. It struck me as being entirely different from, well, everybody else's use that I know of. Could you talk a little bit about the specific piece as well as your general approach to computers?*

**DJ JD** Sure, though I think we should be a bit more specific here and say "laptop computers" because desktops are another beast completely. Of course they both have a screen and a keyboard and a mouse and all that stuff. But desktops are different kind of machine because they're super heavy and need to be connected to the wall.

**JB** *So you only use laptops?*

**DJ JD** No, I've used desktops too, especially when I need something irritating on stage. They're more vulnerable too, you know, because of their weight and the connection which tends to be ridiculously fragile. Man, I mean people trip on them and disconnect the power all the time, man. So they're like these extremely big and unreliable creatures, but sometimes it works to have them roaming around.

**JB** *Going back to your concert, could you describe what you did?*

**DJ JD** It was a solo piece where I sat in front of the laptop completely naked and pretended I was performing the music that was coming

out of the speakers, when actually I was watching internet porn. I did this until I had full erection. And then I watched other stuff to get rid of that erection. It took me about 10 minutes to get the full erection and another 10 minutes to lose it, so the performance went on for about 20 minutes.

**JB** *What did you watch in order to get rid of the erection?*

**DJ JD** I was going to keep this a secret, but I Skyped with my parents.

**JB** *Really?*

**DJ JD** Yeah, I mean I was naked and didn't talk to them so they got pretty weirded out, but it was the most effective thing I could think of, you know, to get rid of my boner. And man did that work magic. The problem was that towards the end I got a bit sentimental and teary, but I hope nobody noticed that!

**JB** *Well I sure didn't. How did you come up with this piece?*

**DJ JD** Well, I've been pissed about how all the people doing "laptop music" only use laptops in one way. The sound that comes out might be different, but it's always the same format in terms of what you see. You know, one or several people—mostly dorky white guys—sitting in front of a machine, staring the monitor like idiots, and doing something mysterious on the keyboard just to play some fucking music.



I mean, give me a break. And I hear all these people discussing whether the computer is a universal instrument or not. Of course it's not universal! It's a very particular machine. For instance, the specific way a laptop is designed keeps the audience from seeing whatever's on the screen that the performer is seeing. This is such a strange feature for a musical instrument if you think about it: that other people can't see the side of the instrument you're looking at. So suddenly you obtain this private view in an otherwise public situation. And you can use this aspect of a laptop in performance to do things you couldn't do with other instruments. So I took that to an extreme in the piece you saw.

**JB** *That was what impressed me, the play of private view within a public space that was enabled by the specific property of the laptop computer. And the audience could not see what you are seeing but they could still see the bodily reaction—of the particular kind that is usually considered private—you are having from what you are seeing. So you also turned the relationship between private and public inside-out: you let people see that there was something private inside what is generally considered the public, but also exposed in public something that is generally considered to be private.*

**DJ JD** Yeah, but it's also just what's always happening in a concert situation, you know. a performer sits in front of the audience facing them, and does something. It's because of this strange setting that the one side can't see what

the other is seeing when it comes to computers. If I'm going to be smart about it, I would say that there's also a link between exposing private parts in a seemingly public situation and exposing what's specific in a seemingly universal instrument. And different things get universalized at different times. A buddy of mine who does some cool research about the history of music technology told me that in the nineteenth century, the piano was the shit, and that's why people like Helmholtz or whoever thought about the human ear using the piano as model. Today, that would be computers, of course. But it's also true that in every model, the specifics of each body fucks with the idea that a machine can be universal. So man, it's doomed. You know what I mean?

**JB** *Sure. Are you familiar with the activities of the Laptop Orchestra?*

**DJ JD** Nah, I don't watch TV.

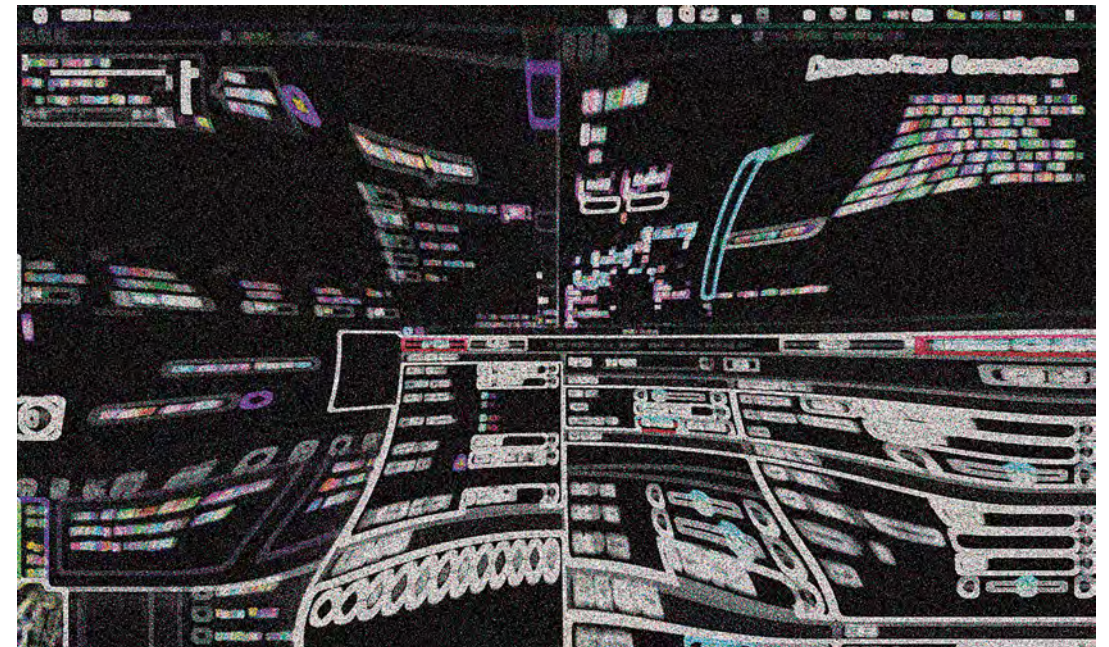
**JB** *What about your other works? Do you explore the media-specificity of laptop computers in other ways?*

**DJ JD** Well another thing about laptops as musical instruments is that the connection between what you do to it, and what comes out as a result is invisible. I did one piece where I combined that with the privacy of the screen. I had several performers each in front of their laptops, and sound coming out from the speakers, but actually only one guy was performing. All the others were just doing other things, like

browsing the internet, writing emails, listening to other music with earphones, and things like that. Maybe even porn. And then the performers left the stage one by one, until there were none. The music kept going because the real performer had one sound file just play by itself for a bit. And then after some time the performers returned to the stage, again one by one, and when everybody was back, they all pressed the stop button at once, so that the audience never got to know who the real performer was.

**JB** *That would actually be a nice laptop orchestra piece! It would be an orchestra, but with only one, or even none, of the performers actually playing. I also know that you are exploring the issue of interface in your works, could you talk a bit about that?*

**DJ JD** Well, everything is an issue of the damn interface if you ask me, and I can give you some examples. I've been developing and using an app that filters your laptop screen, regardless of what you're doing. It's kind of like those photoshop filters, but this one, you can apply it to the whole screen. What this causes, of course, is to make the display difficult or even impossible to read. So even if you're using a boring commercial software like Ableton Live, the performance suddenly becomes thrilling and full of surprises. All these software companies assume that the display is transparent. It's like how everybody doing electronic music assumes that loudspeakers are neutral devices. So we're repeating history pretty much. I wonder if it's because we have some shit in our brains that make us think of interfaces as transparent. It's a mindfuck.





**JB** *I want to see that screen.*

**DJ JD** Here, it looks like this. [see below and previous page]

**JB** *I see. Hmm, I wonder why nobody has thought of this before. Like you say, it's so simple, but changes all the preconceptions that support laptop music. It also connects the laptop with all the previous experimentations other composers have done, of putting some kind of constraint within the system so that performers are forced to re-invent their behaviors in relation to it. It's laptop indeterminacy. By the way, do you know the work of Ellen C. Covito? She's an Argentinian composer who has done many works with traditional staff notation that I think resonate with what you are doing on the laptop.*

**DJ JD** I've heard her name, but don't know much about her works. I told you, I don't watch television.

**JB** *Her works are on YouTube... well, nevermind. What about the keyboard? That's one thing you haven't mentioned so far, I think.*

**DJ JD** Well, in another group piece of mine, I told the performers that they can't touch the laptop themselves, so they had to use long sticks or whatever to control the instrument. Of course, the laptop keys are designed with human fingers in mind, all of them squeezed next to one another, so using a stick naturally caused a lot of typos and mistouch. It was a fucking beautiful mess. The computer suddenly became the most difficult instrument to play.



**JB** *Do you know the piece Distance by the composer Toshi Ichihyanagi? It's basically the same idea, but for traditional instruments. I think it was composed in the 1960s.*

**DJ JD** Damn!

**JB** *So it seems like you are more concerned about instruments rather than how things sound?*

**DJ JD** Nah, I'm deep into sounds too. But it's the same thing there too: I focus on what's specific about them. So in one piece I put the speaker inside a bell jar that was connected to a vacuum pump, and pumped until the air inside the jar was sucked out. Because sound can't travel in a vacuum, this lowered the volume of the sound people could hear. But I wasn't doing anything to the sound itself. I was just fucking with the medium through which sound travelled. Now there's an idea.

**JB** *That's interesting in the sense that it's both highly conceptual and physical.*

**DJ JD** But the conceptual is always based on the physical, and the physical is the most conceptual thing. I mean how do you conceive a thing—I'm talking about a baby—without a body? You can have virtual sex, but not virtual birth.

**JB** *Do you always work with computers?*

**DJ JD** Almost always nowadays, but when I started making music I wasn't using them.

In one of my first pieces, I dropped a bunch of tape recorders from the roof of a building. So they played music as they fell, until they all crushed on the ground making a really big sound.

**JB** *How many did you drop?*

**DJ JD** About a hundred. But some of them were attached to wires and slinkies and other materials so that they didn't hit the ground and bounced back. So that caused a bit of the doppler effect.

**JB** *What kind of music were they playing?*

**DJ JD** Oh, each one of them had a recording of a sine waves in different frequency, so when put together it sounded like a damn waterfall of sound.

**JB** *Why did you use tape recorders?*

**DJ JD** Cause I couldn't afford to drop hundred laptops! And I can't afford to drop hundred people either—that would be insane and difficult to do. I might even get arrested. So I stick to cheap tape recorders.

**JB** *I wonder what you would do if you had tons of money then?*

**DJ JD** I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to buy every single ticket from a stadium concert of the biggest pop star in the world and am going to turn the tables around and perform



for them as my sole audience.

**JB** *And who do you think is the biggest pop star now?*

**DJJD** Elton John?

**JB** *Okay, why do you call yourself a DJ?*

**DJJD** I think the letters of my name look like an elephant. You see: “DJJD.” And I’ve always liked elephants. They’re kind of like the desktops of the animal world.

**JB** *But this elephant would have two trunks?*

**DJJD** Huh?

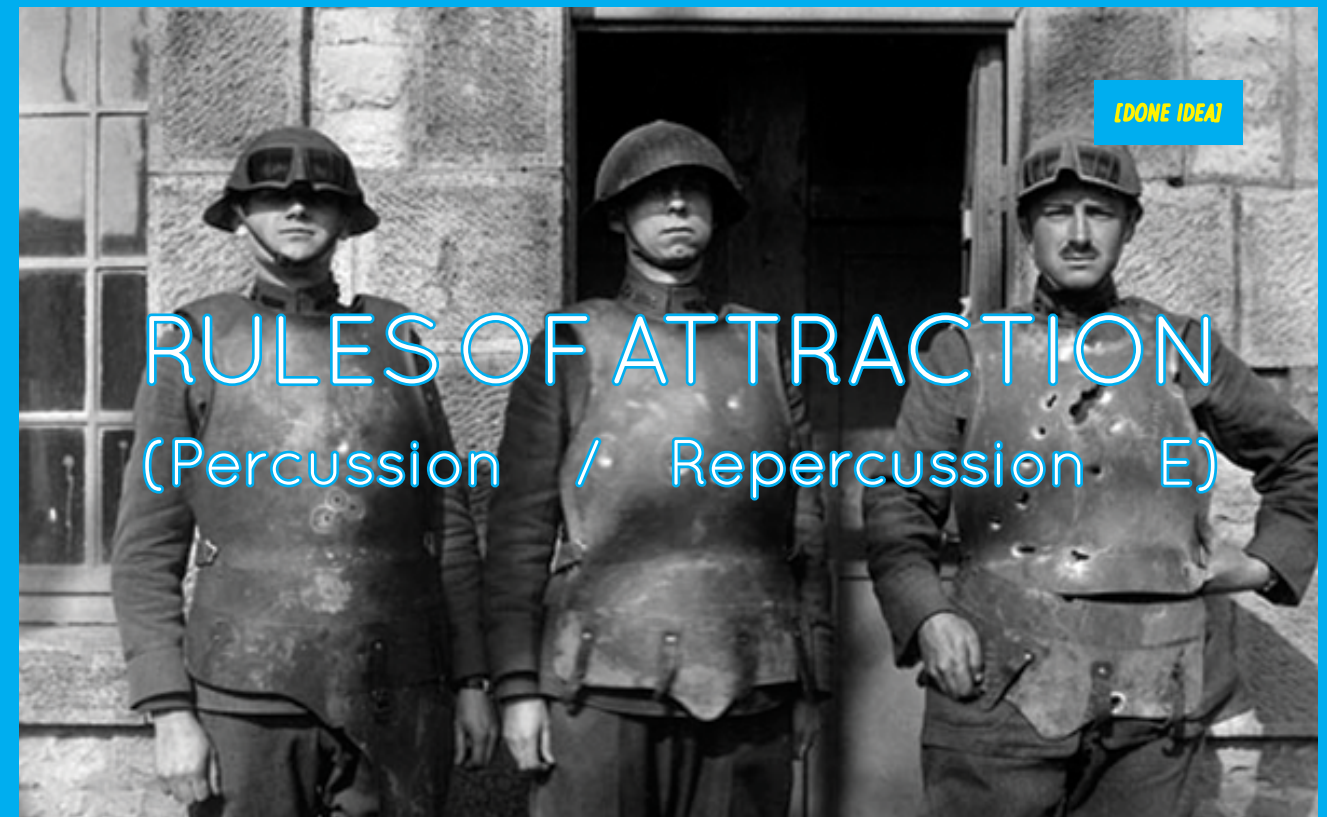
**JB** *Nevermind, tell me about your next project.*

**DJJD** I want to take a fucking grand piano and turn it into an interface for my laptop. A keyboard typing to the letter. It’s pretty easy, actually—just a matter of mapping the keys on the piano to those on the laptop. But in performance it would be fucking unreal. Think of it, I’m going to play the piano to play the laptop! I mean would that still be computer music? I’m gonna start calling myself a pianist.

**JB** *I shall call you Pianist JD then. And so liong for the elephant then. One last thing I wanted to ask was, how do you think about ethics? I mean your work can be perceived as offensive to some people. So what’s your take on that?*

**DJJD** A few years ago I went to see a piece by this dude Florian Hecker about a pink box or whatever the hell it was. What pissed me off was that the guy had written some dumb story where speech that’s intelligible at first gradually became distorted and rendered unintelligible. The problem with that kind of cheap drama is the idiotic assumption that there is intelligible speech on one side and noise on the other. But speech is full of noise and unintelligible to start with! So it was just fucking insulting. For me, *that’s* unethical—I mean, aside from being stupid. Ethics is not about how you position other things—like putting intelligibility in one box and noise in another—but about how you position *yourself* in relation to the other things. The positioning of other things belongs to the community. It’s a public issue. But the positioning of yourself requires a distancing from the community. It is private in that sense, but this privacy that ignores what is shared in the community is what’s really public...or, pubic? Let me just say that public is like pubic and get this shit done with. 🗑️

[Transcribed with assistance from Matthew Gannt]



Version A: Contact Improvisation wearing metal costumes (an armor, for instance) with strong magnets attached.

Version B: A solo dance wearing a metal costume. Place a strong magnet on the wings of the stage and/or parts of the floor.

In both versions, contact microphones may also be attached to the costume to amplify the resulting sounds.

— Ellen C. Covito

[For other works in the Percussion/Repercussion series see:

<http://ellencovito.com/pra.html>

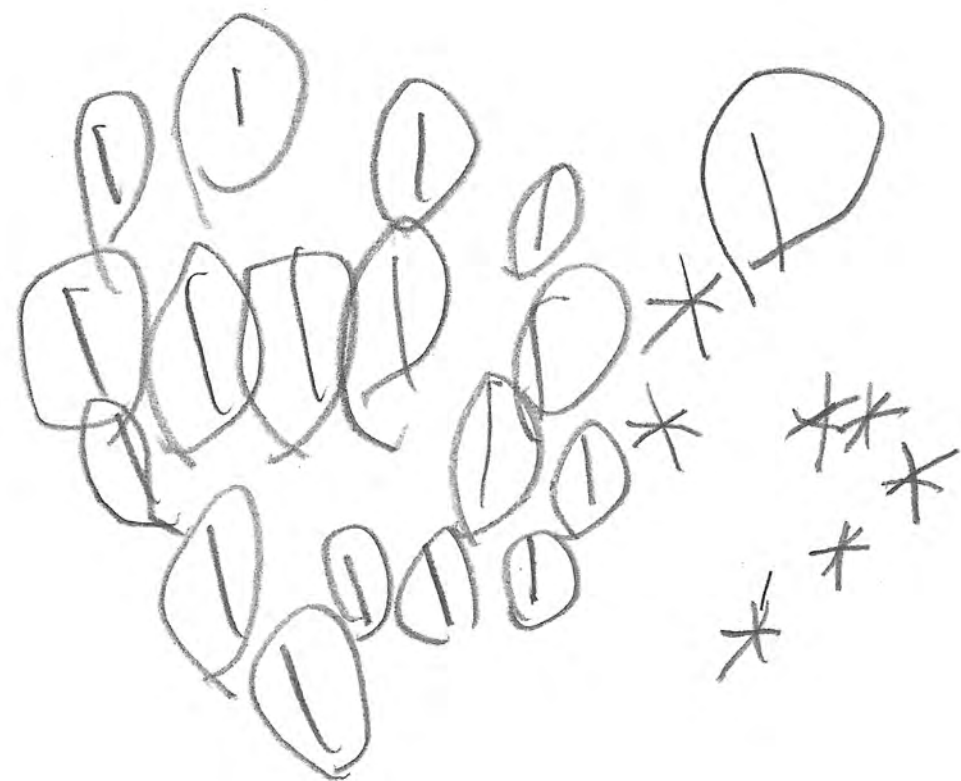
<http://ellencovito.com/prb.html>

<http://ellencovito.com/prc.html>

<http://ellencovito.com/prd.html>]



25 - 7





SONOACE  
X4

AQUA-BIRTHHOUSE  
General

FPS 18D  
C3-7ED

15.0cm  
HGen.

MI 0.8  
TIs 0.2

2010-10-27  
11:42:05 AM

CINE



0-

#255

M

[INTERNAL MEASUREMENT]  
[2D] G47 / P90  
86dB / FA6  
FSI2 / PGC0

HOW PEOPLE GROW  
BY YOU NAKAI

+BPD	8.21cm
G.A.	33w1d $\pm$ 13d
EDD	2010-12-14
EFW	2435g
G.A.	35w1d

+AC	27.85cm
G.A.	34w1d $\pm$ 14d
EDD	2010-12-07
FTA	61.72cm <sup>2</sup>
G.A.	32w6d
EFW	2167g
G.A.	33w4d

+FL	5.99cm
G.A.	33w3d $\pm$ 12d
EDD	2010-12-12



# AGE 0: SOMETHING THAT IS NOT ME

A new baby is born. Shortly after birth, you notice two instances that he reacts to other human beings. The first case: he always stops crying, even if only for a moment, when somebody enters the room (after being left alone). This happens even when the room is totally dark, so you assume it is not based on what he sees (a baby's vision is not well-developed, anyways), but on the sensation of the other person's presence. The second case: he bites and tries to eat anything he could place his tiny hands on, but with a notable exception: his own body parts. These, the child would put in his mouth but never bite for real. Probably because it hurts.

These two cases seem to point towards an acknowledgement of the body that precedes the Lacanian 'mirrorstage' which supposedly occurs somewhere between six and eighteen months after birth. It is that moment when the infant sees the entirety of his body in a mirror and, through that image, grasps the wholeness of the body that pertains to him and only to him. But even at an earlier stage, the body of the child is already delineated (given a contour) in relation to the bodies of others. The body may be disparate, without the image of totality, but the distinction between the child's own body and what is not is defined without resorting to visual channels. In other words, there is a difference between the disparity and indistinguishability of the body. Everything that is not the child constitutes the contours of himself.

The other, or what is not him, is what the child can eat and/or something that breaks his solitude. If the world was composed solely by the child, there would only be pain. The amorphous continuity between the child and the rest of the world allows him to not sense this pain, while the fact that the continuity relies on the bodies of others and can therefore be dissected any time serves to expose it. For the child, that is to say, the body that is not himself is always a source of pain as well as a resource for coping with that pain. Pain, physical or emotional, is what intervenes in the basic principle of expansion/consumption and stops the child from eating the entire world or eating himself. This preventive mechanism would later morph into the conception of the "world" as the general irreducibility of everything to him.





## AGE 1: SOMETHING THAT IS NOT HERE

Language starts as a command to others. It is an extension of the helpless but insistent crying that the child has been doing ever since his birth: a desperate means to make *something* happen. What needs to happen, in most cases, is clear: the child needs to eat. Now there are things that he can eat (i.e. doesn't hurt when he bites), but cannot move (i.e. doesn't follow his commands). And there are other things that he can move, which he can or cannot eat (though in principle he can). The child's mother, for instance, is something he can move as well as eat.

Meanwhile the child learns to point at objects with his fingers in tune with the delineation of one thing from another. He then learns his first word: "mama." Everything he points he calls "mama." "Mama" is the mother of all names. But this does not mean that everything is "mama" for the child; it simply means that "mama" is *the* command that enables him to access whatever the thing he is pointing at. "Mama" in this way is an extension of the child's own body, which (in addition to being edible) complements for the lack of its own mobility. The child would have power over this extension through certain sounds that come out of his mouth. Primordial language is therefore nothing short of magic spell. Word/name that makes things happen: abracadabra!

Gradually "mama" is replaced by other names of other things. This means that the origin of proper names lies not in description or designation of something in the world, but in commands to make things happen. In other words, the primary function of names is not the indication of connection between language and a thing, but rather the indication of connection between the people who share the usage of that name. What matters is accurate correspondence with others who the child can move, and not with things that he cannot. In other words, the accuracy of language is measured by its performativity. Anything that works, works fine.



## AGE 1.5: SOMETHING THAT IS NOT THIS

The second word the child learns is “no.” This is because he can point at things but cannot point at nothing. The word “no” thus serves to express the failure of correspondence, the disobedience of commands.

One day the child starts asking incessantly—“What is this?” You tell him what it is by saying its name and he repeats it. The name is therefore something you give to the child. And when it is given, it closes the suspense of the waiting time, thereby opening up and connecting the child’s solitary time with yours.

After a while the child starts asking the names of things he already knows. You notice that he is doing this mostly to hold your attention. By obtaining the answer he already knows, the child reconfirms the sharing of time and space between you and him, based on the sharing of the name. By affirming a common world, this ritual anchors the child’s reality. Without names, his world and yours could easily drift apart. The amount of time that it takes to transmit and confirm a name delineates the width of present that is shared between the two. The name thus functions as an objective correlative of one’s connection with an other. The correspondence between a thing and its name is secondary in comparison to this correspondence with the other’s present. A quick proof: the same effect can be achieved by saying phrases like “I love you” which has no correspondence with things. In other words, the correlative here is the relationship and not the thing.



## AGE 2: SOMETHING THAT IS NOT NOW

The first step in dealing with pain is to localize it. The same is true with desire. The child often cries for no apparent reason. It seems that he just wants, without knowing what it is that he wants. When this happens you give the child a list of things he may be wanting, so that he gets to pick what he wants. Once this choice is made, a particular contour is given to the child's amorphous and over-all desire. It turns desire into an object of desire (an objective correlative) so that you can then start negotiating with him on that concrete ground.

Negotiation consists mostly in creating an order between the different, possible objects of desire. Despite the child's constant and consistently overflowing wants, it is impossible to fulfill everything all at once. Reducing the overall feeling of lack into a specific object of desire makes it possible to differentiate and thus count desires. Desire always pertains to the present. So its differentiation is the multiplication of presents. But not all those presents can be realized in the present. Now the child faces an internal conflict within his own desires. The incompatibility of multiple desires/presents can then be used to force the child to place an order between them: the child needs to choose what he wants, and leave what he did not choose until a later time. He must learn to wait and endure for the sake of desire. This installs the conception of "before" and "after" (You have to get X now so that you can get Y later. You can get Y now because you got X before). The child acquires all words related to time and temporality through these scenes of negotiation.

And this is also how the idea of causality is installed. That is to say, (the understanding of) causal relationship is not derived from the observation of physical phenomena; it emerges rather through the generalization of artificial conditionals that are fabricated and imposed on the child by you. This arbitrary yet absolute (from the child's perspective) rule that governs the world then becomes a model to discern the workings of nature. You thus play the role of god, the regulator of absolute rules, the engineer of the world: you play being adult. ☺



[DONE IDEA]

AGE

OLD

EXCHANGE

It was Gertrude Stein who said, “we are always the same age inside.” She was only half right. Age is not a quantity that increments every year; it is rather a quality stratifies. A forty year old person is not simply forty. He is, at the same time, thirty-nine, thirty-eight, forty-one, and so on. In the same way, a twelve year old is not simply twelve. She is, at the same time, eight, nine, thirteen, and so on. Seen like this, the common custom of projecting a particular image of how a person should behave (act, think, and talk) according to his or her age is an essentialism which violently effaces all the actual and potential strata of ages embedded inside a person, reifying only what appears on the surface. If racism is the belief that there is a particular trait inherent within each racial group, then agism (or ‘age-realism’) is the belief that there is a particular trait inherent within each age group. In both cases, these are beliefs that trigger and justify discrimination. They are oppressive apparatuses that require creative ways of resistance.

Our family tries to fight this terror of agism with a simple method. When we celebrate birthdays, instead of a yearly linear accumulation of age, we each decide on what age to be next by drawing a lot. The result this year was interesting, since the daughter and the father got each other’s age. So the twelve year old daughter had to act as a forty year old, while the forty year old father behaved as a twelve year old. Note that the father-daughter relationship remained unchanged. Our focus is only in shifting the surface behavior (which again, mostly concerns the manners of acting, thinking and talking). This “age old exchange” was performed continuously under different situations: solely between ourselves (intimate and intense), with the rest of the family (hilarious and disturbing), and in public (weird and embarrassing).

This description was written by the twelve-year old performing as the forty.

—Melanie/Camden Fisher (age 12/40)





[ACCOMPLISHED ACT]

# unconditional RESTORATION

2015.10.25-12.19 | Milkyeast, Tokyo, Japan

Co-curated by Naoki Matsumoto, Milk-souko + Shinichi Takashima

*In the beginning, there is deficiency.  
By adhering to the image of an original,  
the act of restoration physically intervenes,  
overwrites, and renews what is extant.  
Restoration is thus a wager, an intervention  
into this very thing that is irreplaceable.*

Restored

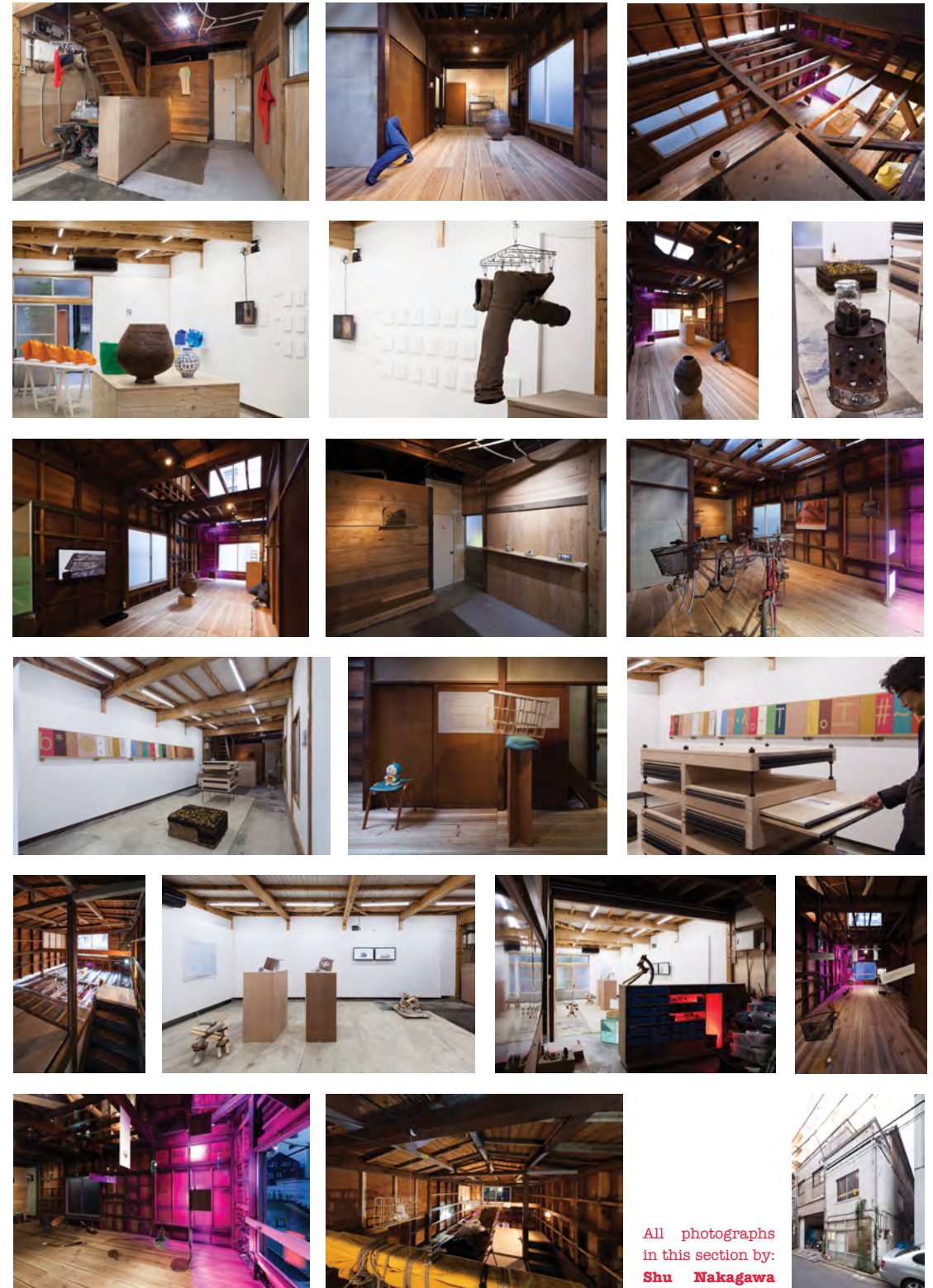




The group exhibition *Unconditional Restoration*, co-curated by the artist group *Miruku-Souko* (Milk Warehouse), Naoki Matsumoto, and Shinichi Takashima took place in Fall 2015 at Milkyeast, a restored former print factory in downtown Tokyo, following a pre-exhibition in Spring of that same year. The concept of the exhibition (first posited at the pre-exhibition, and later restored and expanded for the main exhibition) along with the discussions held during the three public artist talks, presented important ideas surrounding the concept of restoration and questioned established dogmas about the temporality and ontology of art works.

Unfortunately, however, these discussions were not documented in any way, and due to excessive consumption of alcohol during the events, the recollection of the participants also remains fragmentary. Thus there is a lack, which calls for nothing other than restoration. What is presented here, then, quite appropriately following the problematic of the exhibition itself, is an attempt to restore *Unconditional Restoration* from extant resources including online documentation, preparatory notes, and fragmentary memory of the participants.

## Unconditional Restoration



All photographs  
in this section by:  
**Shu Nakagawa**





## Notes for the Pre-Exhibition

by Shinichi Takashima

If we abstract the notion of “restoration,” the following two realizations immediately ensue:

In the beginning, there is deficiency—this is the first premise of restoration. In other words, something appears as a fragment, a part of a whole that is absent in the here and now. We are thereby incited to fix or restore the fragment. Once we pursue this idea of primordial deficiency, everything starts to appear incomplete, calling for some work of repair. For there is no such thing as a complete being. Even the current human beings may need restoration—according to Aristophanes (as described in Plato’s Symposium), all humans were originally androgynes in the form of a sphere, with two heads, four eyes, four hands, and four legs, who could move in all directions.

By thus adhering to the image of an “original,” the act of restoration physically intervenes, overwrites, and renews what is extant. And the positing of this extant thing as being “irreplaceable” forms the second premise of restoration. Restoration is a wager, an intervention into this very thing that is irreplaceable. It is an act that involves the risk, if it should fail, of destroying once and for all an irreplaceable thing.

The notion of restoration can be contrasted with that of reproduction. The latter

takes as its premise the standpoint that there is no such thing as an original, that everything exists as multiples from the start. This is why an interesting effect of restoration emerges in the manipulation of reproduced objects. For instance, reproducing money is illegal but restoring money releases it from being a mere transparent medium, endowing it an aura of singularity. What results, therefore, is a curious effect of giving an original status to something that never had an origin.

Restoration may seem to resemble imitation, reconstruction, or translation, in the sense that the status of an “original” is at stake in one way or another. But the truth is that restoration is more similar to medical operation or treatment. For it is through a necessarily tentative repairing process, such as medical treatment, that even entities that do not have a body are endowed with one. The desire to treat and repair actually brackets out the explicit details of what the original was. It merely posits that there was an original unity by refusing the state of tabula rasa. A restorer perceives the entire world as a sort of debt that cannot be canceled.

No matter how objective it claims itself to be the act of restoration is inevitably conditioned by sentiment. However, contrary to general belief, the primary aim of restoration is not to cover up and erase the traces of deterioration. As Cesare Brandi noted, restoration must be an intervention that is always easily recognizable. What will be examined in our exhibition is the very idea of “irreplaceability” which cannot be reduced to the process of deterioration; something like a medical treatment that nonetheless detaches itself from the notion of death or sickness.



# Notes for the Main Exhibition

by Shinichi Takashima

## 1

“Creation” and “destruction” are not objective notions but value concepts, which is to say that the relationship with the user of the term is necessarily embedded in their semantics. By contrast, “restoration” is usually considered a rather inactive term, even a secondary notion derived from the dichotomy of creation-destruction. For restoration cannot exist without something having already been created, and without that something having already suffered some kind of destruction. However, despite this seemingly belated and derivative nature, the idea of restoration may hold interesting possibilities that cannot be reduced to the binary from which it seems to stem. For instance, if seeing something as creation or destruction is a value judgment, restoration can be thought as being a judgment (or critique) of that judgment. This meta-judgment contributes not to the justification or authentication of what has been created but rather to the fabrication of its singularity. For instance, judging something to be restorable works in the opposite direction from the judgment of disposability, which is another form of meta-judgment. If labeling something as disposable is like giving it a death sentence, the process of restoration can be likened to rehabilitation, or perhaps a probation period of something that has been declared disposable.

## 2

Restoration can be classified into two categories:

- A: The act of deducing and reviving the original from a surviving fragment (repair).
- B: The act of imagining and reviving the original that is completely lost from a secondary source (reconstruction).

The creative aspect of restoration is based in the process of interpretation that reposit the “original” as a unified whole. In particular, the act of reconstruction (category B), which lacks any material continuity with the “original,” must rely entirely on such interpretation, and may thus achieve the same degree of creativity as translation or reenactment.

We could further increase the degree of freedom in the process of interpretation to imagine a third category, which is rather banal in art:

- C: The act of customizing or renovating an “original” by assigning a different usage to it (revision).

This exhibition will nevertheless focus solely on restoration as repair (category A). This stands in contrast to reconstruction in that the physical continuity with the “original” conditions the intervention into the surviving fragment. Ironically, this also points to the destructive aspect of restoration—the risk accompanying all attempts to return things to its original state.

## 3

There is an evident paradox concerning restoration as repair: the more one tries to restore something, the more damage one causes. For instance, the cleansing of varnish is always a problem in the restoration of paintings. The varnish on the surface that has discolored over the years transforms the tone of the entire canvas and can even erase details of the work. The cleansing and removal of varnish is therefore a mandatory procedure in restoration. At the same time, however, too much cleansing results in changing the very image of the painting. When we encounter artworks (or any other object, for that matter), we

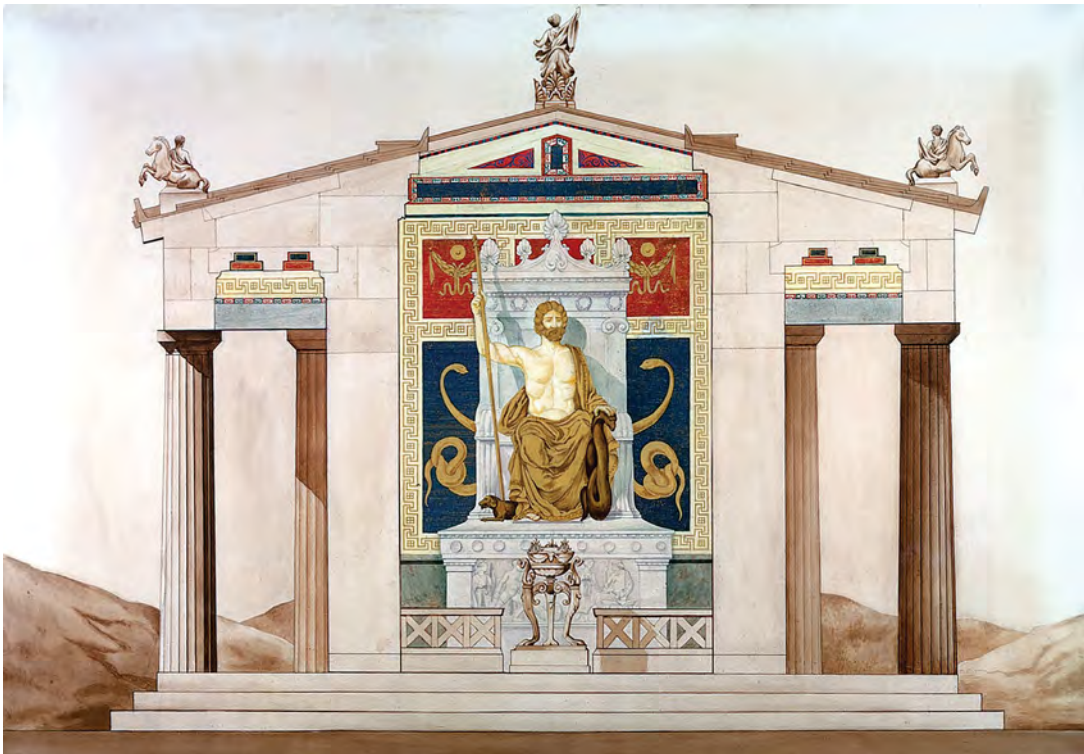


Feathered Tyrannosarurus Rex (imagined drawing)





Anthony van Dyck  
"Portrait of Olive Boteler Porter" (1637)  
before and after conservation



Reconstruction of the interior, altar and statue of temple of Aesculapius at Epidauros

perceive them with their physical deterioration (sometimes these are called “patina” and even thought as adding richness to the work). But the act of restoration involves detaching these objects from the passing of time that they have accustomed and seeped themselves into.

One pertinent example here is the strange sensation we get when we are told that the now-white ancient Greek marble sculptures were originally painted in brilliant colors; an uncanny feeling similar to the one effected by the recent theory claiming Tyrannosaurus Rex was covered in feathers. Restoration therefore may sustain or collapse a myth. The destructiveness of restoration is akin to the danger of time paradox in which the act of changing the past by traveling back in time erases the very motive for time travel in the first place. But what if this tendency for destruction was not a mere side-effect to be evaded but an inherent function of restoration?



4

The terra-forming of Mars, for instance, does not appear to be an act of restoration—it is simply an act of creating a “reproduction” of the Earth using different resources. But contrary to the attempt of converting another planet into ours, the terra-forming of the Earth itself could be considered as restoration. This seemingly self-contradictory task can be conceivable under some circumstances. For example, in the face of a total nuclear contamination of the planet, restoring Earth’s atmosphere would become necessary. One merely needs to posit the state of the planet at a certain point in history as being the “original” to enable and justify the restoration of the present one. If the “original” Earth was posited as being 4.6 billion years in the past when the planet was still in its infancy, restoration would consist in getting rid of the ozone layer or the magnetic field surrounding the planet which now serves to block radiation from space.

Everything is changing constantly. Which means that the act of restoring something to its “original” state is always based on a particular interpretation projecting a partic-

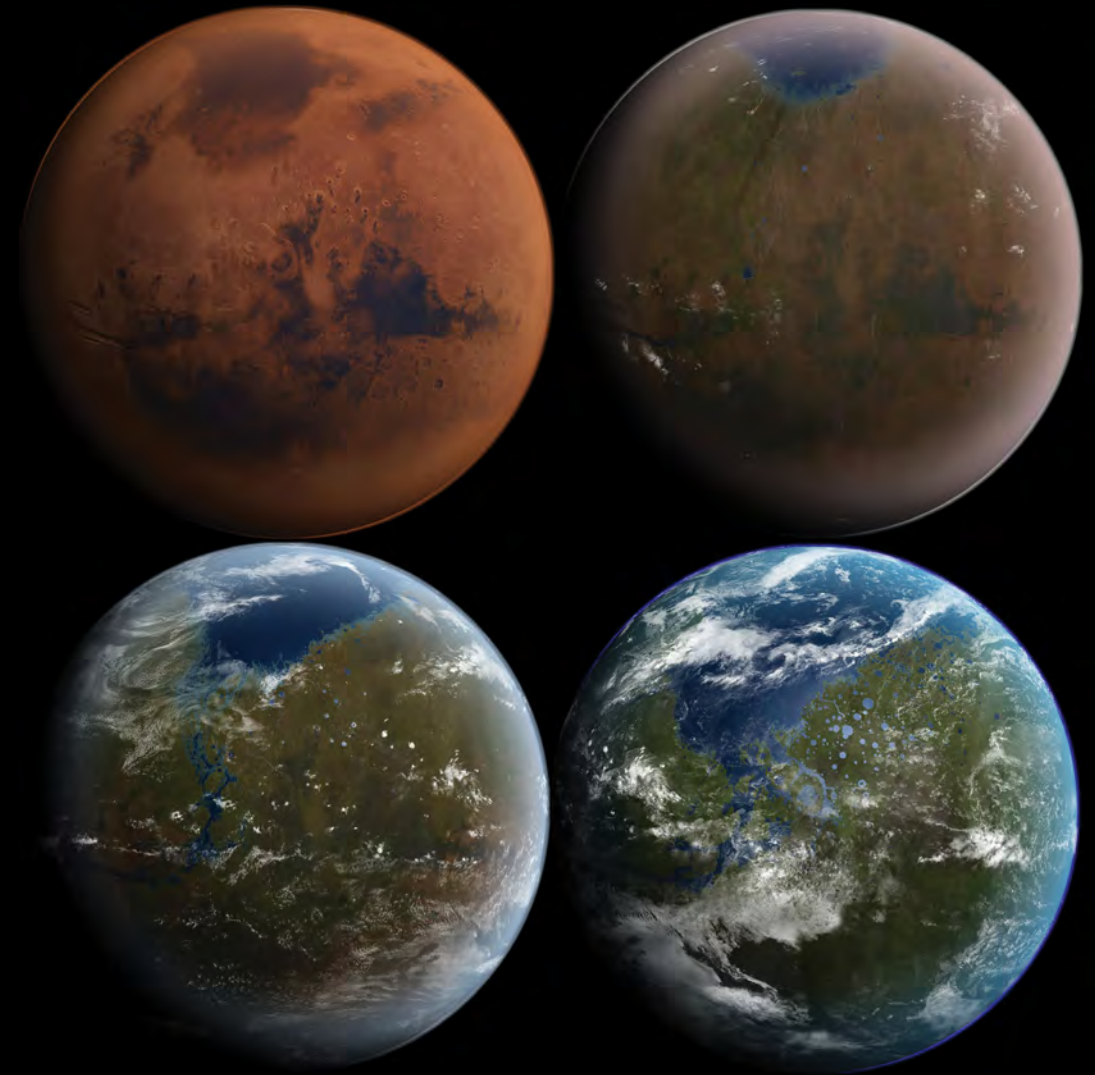


ular time scale that is necessarily entangled with the specifics of our current interest. In other words, restoration without conditionals is an impossibility. Even the same act can mean opposite things depending on what is considered as “original.” But the more serious issue is the following: is there a fundamental difference between the projection of terrestrial environment onto Mars and the projection of terrestrial environment from a certain point in time onto the current Earth? If both are acts of transformation based on projection of specific interests, wouldn’t the two be ultimately the same?

## 5

We chose the paradoxical term “Unconditional Restoration” as the name for our outrageous proposal to regard every single thing as a deficiency awaiting to be restored and to attempt the fabrication of their origin. The passivity of restoration that only hopes to fill-in what is missing counters both the desire of creation ex nihilo and the tabula rasa impetus longing for complete destruction of all things in order to begin anew.<sup>(\*)</sup> Through the unconditional expansion—and restoration—of the concept of “restoration” we aim to ask one fundamental question: could the restrained hope for not adding anything new to the world nevertheless serve as a lever for transforming the world?

(\*) Restoration, which discovers the “original” through what is lacking, is a method of fabricating the past from the present. When this mechanism is shifted in the opposite direction it leads to the negativity of prevention (or immunization) that seeks to not make things happen (as opposed to the positivity of trying to make something happen). The following episode offers an example of a pure “preventive” measure that is at once active as well as passive: “A man claps his hands every ten seconds. Asked why he does that, he answers: ‘to drive away the elephants...’ ‘But why, there are no elephants here.’ The man replies: ‘Precisely.’” (“The Situation is Hopeless But Not Serious,” Paul Watzlawick)



Terraformation of Mars (imagined process), Daein Ballard



# Restoring Discussions

by No Collective and Shinichi Takashima

## Pre-Discussion

**No Collective** So you're telling us that there is no documentation of the three discussions held during the exhibition, nor do you remember much about what you talked since you were drunk every time. None of us saw the main exhibition nor the pre-exhibition. But I [You Nakai] did discuss the basic concepts of the exhibition with you when you were trying to write the two "Notes" and made some suggestions, so I'm vaguely familiar with what you were up to. Since in the "Notes" you examine the different types of restoration, which are essentially different ways to respond to the loss of a given original, we decided we should "restore" the lost discussion by applying your own model to the situation. The resources available to us were very limited: images presented during the discussion, photographs and brief reports found on Twitter, commentaries left on Milk-Souko and other people's websites or blogs, and preparatory notes taken during meetings leading up to the actual event.

**Shinichi Takashima** The main exhibition was in three terms, so we held the discussions three times. Each time we started off with an "Artist Talk" where the participating artists for that term talked about their works, and after that we would continue the conversation to address more abstract problems and topics. The discussions were always around three hours: an hour for the Artist Talk, and two hours for the discussion. And although "discussion" was how we called it the first time, since no one spoke except me, it sort of became a "lecture" from the second time. The nature of these "discussion/lectures" was more about laying out various examples rather than constructing a fully-formed argument. I also think we held discussions during the pre-exhibition. Since the Milk-Souko website (<http://milkystorage.tumblr.com/>) refers to the only discussion that is documented there as "Talk No.1," I suspect there was at least a "No. 2." I don't remember what we discussed at all, but I probably talked about some of the underlying concerns of the "Notes" I wrote.

## Unconditional Restoration

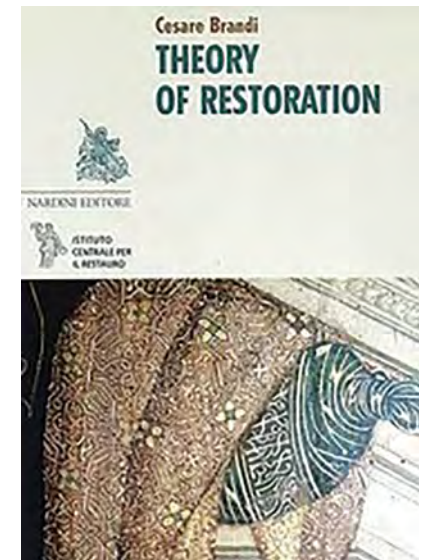
### First Discussion

**NC** In the two "Notes" for the exhibition, as well as in the three discussions presumably, you picked up various examples to consider the multiple facets of restoration. However, the fundamental issue that you were examining could perhaps be paraphrased quite simply as the contradictory status of entities—whether that be an organism or an object—which are the "same but different." And all the examples presented can in fact be read as case studies revolving around two questions that are logically derived from that core problem: "What causes the difference regardless of the sameness?" and "What remains the same despite the difference?"

**ST** "Same but different" is an attribute of transformation in general. And for any transformation one can either stress the difference or the sameness. Since restoration is an attempt to preserve identity or continuity, what is usually foregrounded in relation to it is the sameness. But the realization at the basis of Unconditional Restoration was that the very process of sustaining identity inevitably generates fissures and discontinuities. Also, the attempt to expand the notion of restoration bifurcated into the direction of innovation—"creating something anew"—and the reactionary path—"to regain what was lost." And we wanted to see what would happen if we deliberately mixed up those two directions with the concern for self-preservation—"to continue what already exists." In this sense, it was also a

problematic that connected to the issue of historical revisionism.

**NC** In the first discussion, you cited Cesare Brandi's *Theory of Restoration*, drawing a line between "restored objects" and "relics," trying to articulate the former in comparison to the latter which are always defined in relation to external historical context. Your wanted to regard restoration as a process pertaining to objects themselves that does not rely on external observation. At the same time, however, in your "Notes" you refer to the uncanny feeling you get after knowing that Greek sculptures were colored, for instance. This feeling belongs not to the object itself but to the external observer. Or, you also comment on how the present interest of the observer always drives and regulates the act of restoration. So how do you



Cesare Brandi  
"Theory of Restoration"  
Istituto centrale per il restauro, 2006



connect the role that the observer plays in restoration to the model of self-restoring objects which does away with external observation?

**ST** In the “Notes for the Main Exhibition” I categorized the notion of restoration into three types: A = repair, B = reconstruction, C = revision. The first type is when a fragment of original remains and a continuous process of restoration evolves around it. So this could be paraphrased as “maintenance.” In the second type, the original is completely gone but

its reactivation is aimed for, so this is equal to “revival.” And the third type thinks of other uses of the original or implements new additional values, so it could be linked to “customization,” “renovation,” or “remake.” In terms of temporality, this third type is neither constant like the first nor intermittent like the second, but transient. In the “Note,” I wrote that the first category, type A, which seems to be most lacking the creative freedom of manipulation, is nonetheless the one that most displays the characteristics unique to restoration. However,



“The Building of Noah’s Ark” Nuremberg Chronicle (1493)

in the meetings for the exhibition with Naoki Matsumoto—who came up with the topic of restoration in the first place—and the members of Milk-Souko, what actually interested us most was a fourth kind of restoration that did not fit into the threefold classification. Restoration is conditioned by its relation to the desire or interest of the restoring agent and the passing of time, but we wondered if there could be any cases where that very desire and temporality caused a truly radical break from the original. Without knowing whether such a thing existed or not, in the meeting we called this fourth category, type D, or “transmutational restoration.”

In the end, we failed to define this fourth possibility in a clear way, but what we attempted to do was to take various examples from different

genres and forcefully categorize them as the four types of restoration. For instance, with architecture, it could be easily said that type A is repair, B is refurbishing, and C is house renovation. So what would type D be? Or, if type A was prosthetic limbs, B would be an android, C would be a cyborg, and D might be Frankenstein. In agriculture and forestry, type A would correspond to thinning, B to soil amelioration

and nurse log, C to grafting and pinching, and D to reversion—perhaps? In terms of measurement of time, type A would be stopwatch or biological clock, B would be sundial and calendars, C would be timers, sandglass, or water clock. Otherwise, type A could be cleaning up, B could be laundry, spring cleaning, or estate liquidation, C could be moving of houses or

disappearance of people—you see, we were trying to rethink the classification system via differences of time span or the degree of irreversibility. But the more we did this the messier the definitions became, and it quickly got out of hand. (laughs)

As we were discussing what this fourth category could be, it occurred to me that the problem of restoration can also be thought as the problem of metamorphosis.

By “metamorphosis,” I

wasn’t imagining any drastic change of state, but rather something occurs through the very attempt to preserve identity, unbeknownst to the entity itself—metamorphosis as a side effect, so to speak. Now there is a certain ambiguity in the word “metamorphosis”: it is unclear if it is something that one makes happen, or something that happens to one. And by resorting to that term, I thought it might be possible



“Emma, Relique” (ca. 1900)  
Collection Jean-Jacques Lebel



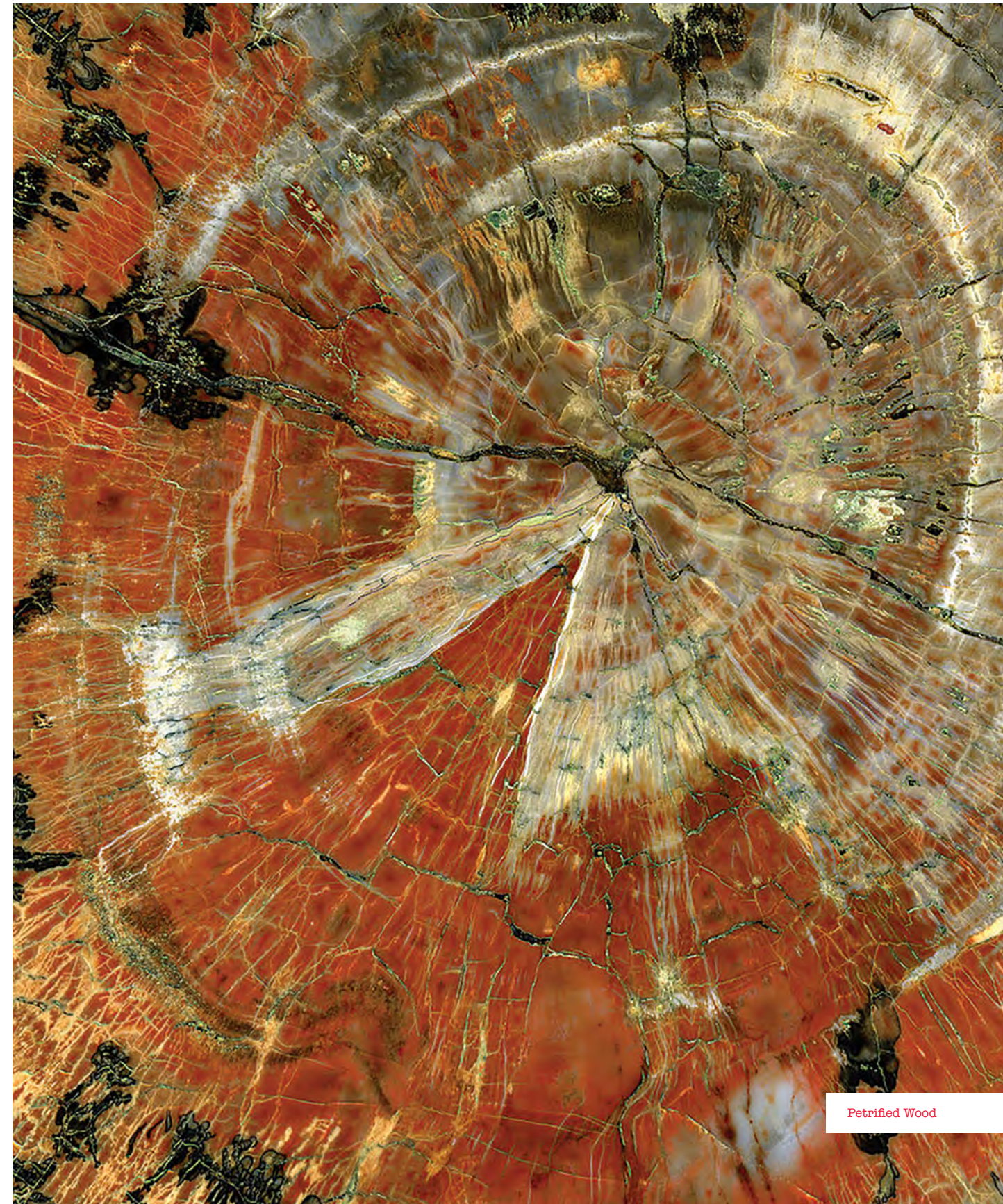
to address a certain form of restoration where the agent of restoration was indeterminate. Or, instead of the usual assumption of objects being the passive receivers of the act of restoration, to think of events that can be considered as an active self-restoration of objects. The reason we referred to “relics” in the discussion, albeit in a critical manner, was because that model served to expose the limits of setting a clear distinction between manipulating and being manipulated in regards to restoration. A “relic” is established through the framing of objects by a context that lies beyond any possibility for perceptual verification. In this sense, the condition of relics approximates the methodology of conceptual art. It does not depend on how the thing looks or its physical state, but relies instead on external context, and can only be retained as narrative. In other words, if you pursued the mandates of the observer or the restorer to an extreme, you end up with the tyranny of narrative. At the same time, however, contrary to “restored objects,” “relics” have the radical potential of eradicating the distinction between natural and artificial objects, as can be seen in examples such as “the dried oak tree that gave shade to Tasso,” or “the stone that David used to kill Goliath.” So what happens when that nature of relics is taken as a model and cross-applied to restoration? Would it be possible to find a form of restoration that similarly nullifies the dichotomy between natural and man-made objects? The example that I came up with was petrified wood, the fossil of trees that are said to have “failed to become coal.” A petrified wood retains its former tree

shape despite the complete transformation of its interior chemical compound. So does it still preserve its identity, or has it become something entirely different? When you place the petrified wood within the problematics of restoration, I thought it could serve as a nice example of a self-restoring object.

Furthermore, the concern for focusing on processes that are inherent to objects was also motivated by the two theories of art that I referred to, or rather wanted to oppose, in the lectures. One was the logic of the “*Formless (informe)*” presented by Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois. I thought the operation of restoration was antithetical to that of the Formless, but let me talk more about this later. The other theory I had in mind was the ironical argument that Boris Groys presents in his book *On the New*, where he claims that it was the strategy

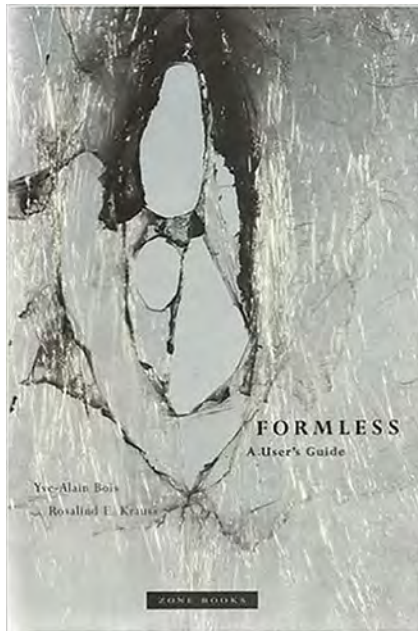


Caravaggio, “David and Goliath” (1599)

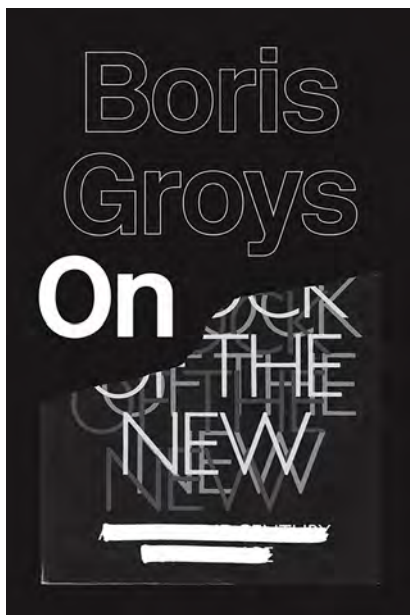


Petrified Wood





Yve-Alain Bois & Rosalind Krauss  
 “Formless: A User’s Guide”  
 Zone Books, 1997



Boris Groys  
 “On The New”  
 Verso, 2014

of the avant-garde aiming for the nullification of distinction between artworks and regular objects that ultimately summoned the institutional apparatus of art museums. In other words, contemporary art demanded an external regulation of objects through the frame of art museums. Even if Groys’ analysis is true, it entirely ignores the existence of any intrinsic order *between the objects themselves*. And for me, an argument that can only be established by singling out the difference between artworks and everything else, while bracketing out all other differences between the various objects, seemed entirely pointless.

So there was the consideration of these other theories in parallel with the discussion about the fourth type of restoration. But in addition to that, the methodological choice of doing away with exterior observation also became important in the analysis of actual works that were exhibited. We all wanted to get away from the usual way of looking at art works as a product of an artist’s manipulation of pre-existing materials. So instead of talking about why and how the material was processed, we tried to focus on how the material transformed or restored *itself*. On the other hand, the claim that objects or things reveal themselves as such only when they are released from the functional network subdued to human use and attain a unnameable status, is also a stereotypical argument that extends all the way from Heidegger to Giorgio Agamben or Graham Harman. It posits objects as an excess that cannot be reduced to any external framing, emphasizing their constant withdrawal, and so on. But I

think that going to that extreme is going too far. Instead, I was interested in how some of the exhibited works in Unconditional Restoration presented a transformed object which nonetheless retained its functional or structural identity. So the function of objects was deliberately held onto, without turning them into an unidentifiable fragment. These works therefore lingered at the edge of the functional network. The function would remain, but the method to sustain the function would be altered. When thinking about “restoration,” this approach was informative, since function must always be preserved in one form or another when you restore something.

**NC** In your initial argument, you posited via Brandi that “relics” necessitate context but “self-restoring objects” do not. However, if function is preserved, as you are now saying, it would be more accurate to say that context is embedded in the object itself, rather than being totally absent. Of course, it is not a situational, historical context, but the object itself preserves and affords the context of its own use. This means that in restoration, it is not only the object itself but also its function, in other words the relationship between the object and other objects, including its user, that needs to be reactivated. In this sense, even when you assume the objects to self-restore themselves, the connection with a certain exteriority—other objects and users—cannot be entirely excluded. Moreover, whereas the context required by “relics” is historical, the functional context connected to restoration

seems to be ahistorical, since if the function is embedded in the object itself there should be no difference in what it affords whether the time is now or 500 years ago. Nevertheless, restoration is obviously a problematic embedded in history. This means that there is a historical process in which the ahistorical function of objects deteriorates materialistically over time. So that adds yet another layer of exteriority—a secondary exterior situated further beyond the primary exteriority of functionality. It is not that the ahistorical function/context of objects is preserved in eternal heaven.

**ST** For example, Naotaka Miyazaki’s piece *Quadricycle from Four Bicycles* (2015), exhibited in the second term, consisted in collecting a number of broken bicycles and creating a single whole bicycle out of them. The broken bicycles are each broken in different ways—one would lack the front wheel, while the other would have loose brakes. Usually you would replace a broken part with a part that still works and dispose the useless remainders. But Miyazaki instead preserved the four bicycles as he found them and constructed a single bike that one can actually ride on using all the parts. His maneuver does complement the lack of one bicycle with another, so it is a work of repair for sure. I mean, it’s neither a constructive deformation common in plastic arts nor the creation of a new form. But in this case, it is all the non-broken parts that remain as extraneous parts. So it is not that a mistake in the restoration process gives birth to something different than the original.





Naotaka Miyazaki  
Quadricycle from Four Bicycles (2015)

**NC** In the process of restoration, new materiality is inevitably added to the object in order to complement what is lacking, but this materiality is an excess that changes the very conditions of the object itself. It's like that story of Oscar Pistorius, the Paralympic sprinter whose prosthetic legs made him faster than the Olympic athletes.

**ST** Yes, the materiality that is added in the process of restoration. In the discussion we also talked about the horror manga *Negai* by Kazuo Umezu—which I referred to in the footnotes of the “Notes for the Main Exhibition”—which tells a story of a “wish” that once externalized, strikes back as a material object at the person. In terms of Miyazaki's piece, the

crucial question is: for how many people is his quadricycle designed? According to the artist it is meant for just one person—who must be a virtuosic driver! And in terms of relation to other objects, this bike would surely demand the width of roads to be changed.

**NC** In regards to the process of materialization and objectification, it is important to note that there are at least two types of objectivity. On the one hand, objectivity refers to what goes beyond particular differences and can be applied to many things. It is something general that is shared across individual objects. On the other hand, however, in the discourse of feminism, most notably that of Donna Haraway, objectivity was redefined as being the attri-



Kazuo Umezu  
“Negai [Wish]” (1975)

butes of an object. In this case, the image of objectivity is reversed: it is the specific attribute of a particular object which is biased and limited, but also rigid and immovable. And when you trace for instance the history of psychology from this perspective, scientists in the 19th century were always haunted by the problem of how to “objectively” deal with the human mind which no one can really observe. In the early 20th century, behaviorism claimed that what cannot be treated in an objective manner is not science, so psychology should stick onto the behaviors that can be observed from outside. Yet, while psychologists were arguing about the objectivity of the human psyche, mathematicians and engineers were trying to create machines that imitate the thinking process of humans. And once computers externalized the human mind as a mechanical object, it

then becomes detached from the question of how accurate it represents the human mind, and starts functioning as an autonomous model. This model is then fed back into psychology, giving rise to cognitive science which studies humans using the computer as model. So that's one example of the effects caused by externalization and objectification of mechanisms. The model is “objective” precisely because it is particular and cannot be generalized.

**ST** Well, this might deviate a bit but I feel I am always looking for “examples” that I could use as material. Not an example of any specific thing, but searching for some example that I'm not sure what it exemplifies. An “example,” by nature, points toward something other than itself. But what is interesting is that a narrative of something that actually happened—a seemingly straightforward documentation of an accomplished fact—can be treated as addressing something else in its entirety. In other words, something that was not meant to be an example can become one. I'm curious about what conditions that kind of transformation. A book I read long time ago said that in the developmental stages of cognition, there is a transitional phase called the “proverb-logic level” in between the “naive-empirical level” and the “conceptual-scientific level.” I am interested in things like proverbs that have abstract form while still retaining a sensual concreteness.

**NC** An example is a paradigm—it is a single thing, but you can look at multiple other things through it. So the objectivity of a model is not



in its generality, but in the specific relationship between that model and its particular instance. And when you say you don't know what the example you are looking for is an example of, this connectivity with particular instances is hanging in mid-air. It's that feeling that is generated and conveyed in certain microfictions, like Kafka's short stories or Takuma Ishikawa's fables.<sup>(1)</sup> In the discussions, you didn't really have to present "examples" since the theoretical principle had already been articulated. But by presenting them, you were not only clarifying the principle, but also producing a multiplicity of differences that could not be reduced to that same principle.

**ST** The works exhibited in Unconditional Restoration lacked the convincing power of objects that is usually appreciated in works of art. I would hate for what we did to be grouped together with *arte povera*, but someone did suggest that since restoration is also an attempt to preserve something without throwing it away, it connects with the issue of "poverty," and that is indeed true. Even beyond the works presented in this exhibition, what is interesting about Milk-Souko in general is that their works deal with the problematics of sculpture but do away with the feeling of material presence that sculptures tend to resort to. Especially Naotaka Miyazaki's *Public Internal Organs* series (2007-), composed of feedback networks of balloons inserted inside glass bottles and activated with pumped air, deals with the basic issues of sculpture—that of making of forms from the inside out—but is never-

theless presented as pseudo-experimental devices. A lot of works in Unconditional Restoration, in terms of their style and appearance, triggered people to narrate them as instances of the method of alienation: the displacement of pre-existing objects. But I don't think that's correct. Regardless of the work being good or bad as art, the logic embedded in them made you think interesting thoughts.

**NC** In other words, they operated as examples, as models.

**ST** Exactly! I suppose we were not really concerned with pursuing objects *per se*, but more with the maneuvers of objectification, the process of turning particular parts into objects.

**NC** For instance, when a person commits a crime, that human being is regarded as not being responsible if he or she is considered insane. In other words, the culpable was not the person but the mind. Extending this, we could imagine a society where responsibility is detached from the person as a whole and distributed to the various bodily parts: it was the hand, or the mouth, and not the person. Each body part becomes an agent of responsibility.

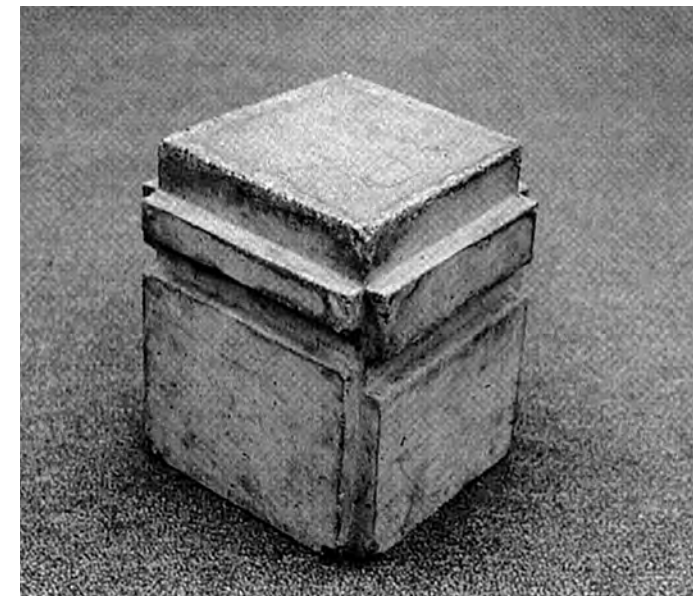
**ST** Let me try to connect that with another example. Naoki Matsumoto's *Jar of Kitchomu* (2015), exhibited during the first term, was based on a short Japanese witty story about

(1) See, Takuma Ishikawa, "If We Ask Questions to Others, Our Knowledge Will Increase" in this issue.

a silly man named Kitchomu-san, who sees a jar turned upside down at a store and complains that it's useless since its mouth is shut and its bottom is open. Matsumoto created just that: he opened a "mouth" for the jar, closed its "bottom," and thereby "fixed" it. In other words, he turned a jar upside down, cut the base part now at the top, and used it as the cover for the opening which was now at the bottom. So the whole jar is reversed vertically but the consequence of that reversal is eradicated—the top is still open and the bottom still closed. Like the spheric work of Walter de Maria at the contemporary museum of art in Naoshima, there is a puzzling aspect regarding how it was made because the base part that is cut does not seem to fit into the opening which is obviously narrower. In any case, the jar can still be used as a jar—it's function is restored. The manipulation here consists in the mutilation and suturation of two vertical partitions: that of the space and that of the object. Rosalind Kraus praised Bruce Nauman's casting of the space under a chair (*A Cast of the Space Under My Chair* (1965-68)) as a method that differs from that of the *Formless*, which was more about the dismantling of objects and scattering of their rubbles. She called Nauman's approach "implosion." Matsumoto's jar can be seen as extending that lineage, but since he doesn't even resort to negative space it is even more of an "implosion" than Nauman's casting. It is not a positive creation of form but neither is it an absence or the destruction of form. Nevertheless, something was broken and then fixed. The piece accurately follows the inherent artic-



Naoki Matsumoto, "Jar of Kitchomu" (2015)



Bruce Nauman, "A Cast of the Space Under My Chair" (1965-68)



ulation of the object, but by doing so, exposes a hole in that same articulation and makes the object implode. There is nothing particular that is added or subtracted, but one can clearly see that some form of manipulation has been implemented. It's kind of like reviving myself using only my own body parts.

**NC** Or like skin grafting a part of your buttocks to fix a burnt face. Although in this case nothing was broken in the first place, so the maneuver of the artist consists in burning your own skin and fixing it yourself with another skin part. However, if the same procedure is seen from the perspective of the object, this would be akin to a human experiment by a mad scientist.

**ST** Yeah, like a pervert surgeon going crazy with the body of the jar: “Look how much I have done to you little jar! And still, you remain the same!” The poor jar would be all messed up: “You say you have restored me but nothing is the same anymore!” (*laughs*)

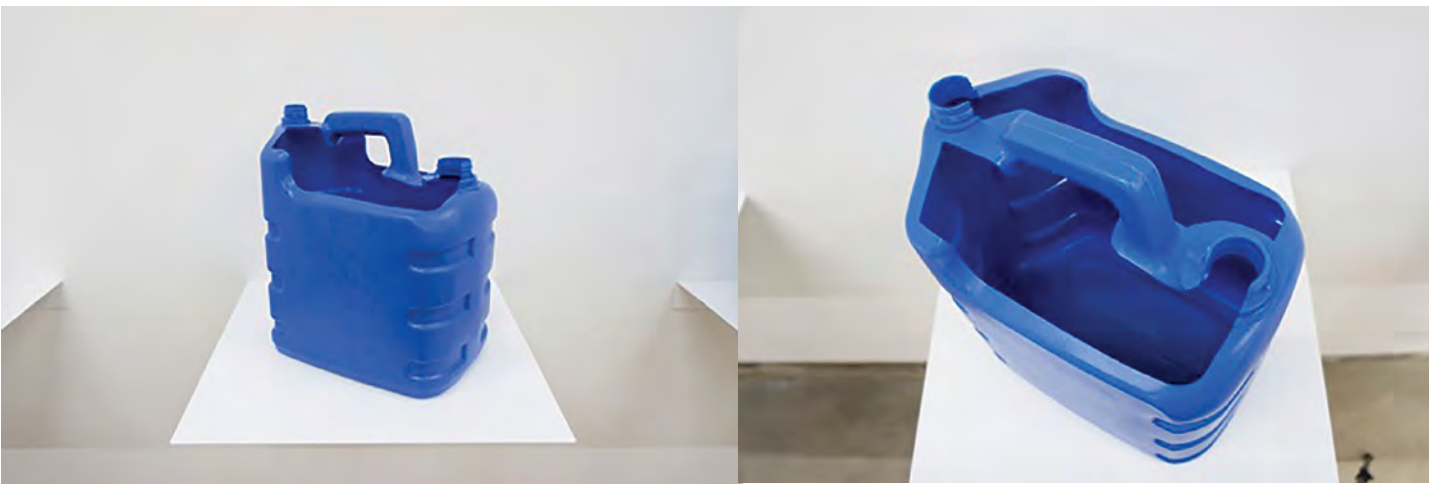
**NC** Well, there's the recent trend of Object Oriented Ontology, with books such as *Democracy of Objects* being published and people discussing the society of things. So in another 100 years or so, when they finally start admitting basic “human” rights to objects, all these artistic endeavors will probably be reflected back as the dark history of object abuse by humans. The narrative of self-restoration of objects may then serve as a discourse of historical revisionism. Revision in the name of restora-

tion... hmm, would that be type C?

**ST** But again, what I wonder is whether we can think of this seemingly nonsensical manipulation—of fixating the whole and switching only the mouth and the bottom, instead of simply turning the jar upside down—as a doing of the *jar itself*, without bringing in the pervert surgeon. Because it's not a random chopping up of the object. There is an element of precise control that is comparable to the effort of taking your underwear off while still wearing your pants. It's a transformation that would occur if the jar was forced to stay in the same place with the same posture, while it had to switch its upper and lower parts—though I have no idea what kind of situation that is! You can see that the transformation was the result of a conflict between a certain constraint and a certain demand that were mutually contradictory.



Levi Bryant  
“The Democracy of Objects”  
Open Humanities Press, 2013



Yuki Matsumura  
On the Blue Bucket Made in 1957 #2 (2015)

Second Discussion

**ST** In the first term of the exhibition there was a work by Yuki Matsumura called *On the Blue Bucket Made in 1957 #2 (2015)*, which restored a plastic tank as a plastic bucket. It was a work seemingly devoid of any artistic contrivance but I was taken by that nonchalant nature and kept thinking, “what in the world is this?” So we started the second discussion with that piece. It shared its main attributes with the works of Miyazaki or Matsumoto: neither addition nor collapse of functions; neither creative nor destructive. But compared to Matsumoto's jar, for instance, which upon a closed observation did reveal a sophisticated manipulation, Matsumura's piece was thoroughly plain and lacked any idiosyncrasy. The tank and bucket are almost identical in terms of material, form, or topology; their only difference is the size of the opening hole, and the presence

or absence of a lid. So Matsumura transformed the plastic tank into a bucket solely by enlarging the opening—she left its handle intact. A plastic tank and bucket resemble one another to begin with, so the maneuver of bringing them closer is almost imperceptible and nonsensical—a conversion where nothing is really converted. Instead, what results is a redundancy of functions. Not a medium specificity but a swelling or glut of specificity, so to speak. But precisely because of this, there is a feeling that something has been secretly transformed even though there is actually nothing hidden. I thought this could be seen as an example of “metamorphic restoration,” the fourth type of restoration we were talking about. In other words, instead of a synthesis of A and B that are opposed to one another, we have a fusion of A and A' which are adjacent and substitutable with one another—belonging to the same category—and this is what produces the



subtle uncanny sensation. During the discussion, I showed the painting by Rene Magritte which depicts a feet transforming into shoes as a visual reference. Also, searching for another model, I stumbled across a style of language called “*Jyu-Gen* [overlapping words],” which is similar but slightly different from the rhetorical method of redundancy which uses same or similar words for the purpose of emphasis. In the case of *Jyu-Gen*, instead of repeating exactly the same words, a paraphrase of a word is juxtaposed right after it. For instance, phrases such as “my headache hurts,” that are usually considered as speech errors. But not all of them are errors and we do use expressions like “the current state of this moment.” So there’s a grey zone between what is considered an error and what is not. Just like the preservation of function in the work of Miyazaki or others, *Jyu-Gens* are not entirely senseless. And they seem to operate according to a different mechanism than the redundant use of words to emphasize something. Also, self-reflexivity usually falls into infinite regression but *Jyu-Gen* manages to stop. In the discussion, we compared these linguistic examples with Jasper Johns’ *Flag* paintings—in particular the *Three Flags* (1958), where the canvas itself proliferates—which are often referred to as the exemplary works of modernist reflection.

**NC** One quick observation is that the repetition of words in *Jyu-Gen* occurs on the level of letters—Chinese characters—but since the function of the reiterated words differs in terms of syntax, it’s not simply the repetition

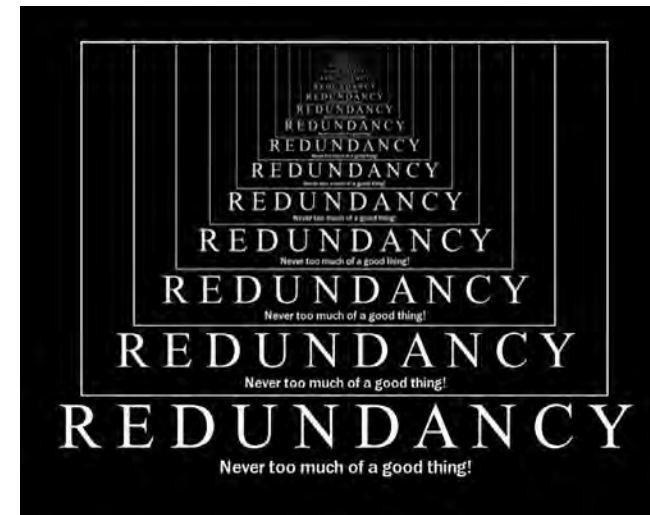


Rene Magritte  
“The Red Model” (1934)

of the “same” thing. It’s probably this structural regulation on the level of syntax, like the difference between noun and adjective, that prevents *Jyu-Gen* from entering into an infinite regression. But that’s also the same with Jasper Johns’ paintings. They are regulated by the size of a human being which in turn defines the size of the canvas, so actually they are not endless.

**ST** Hmm, you might be right. That seems to explain the mechanism. By the way, is there a similar expression in other languages? How about English?

**NC** Well there’s a term “pleonasm” that addresses redundant expressions such as “peo-



Effect of redundancy and infinite regression



Jasper Johns  
Three Flags (1958)



“Zutsu ga itai,” an example of Jyu-Gen

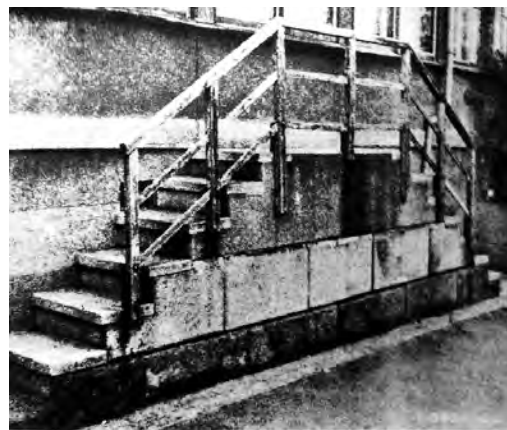


ple's democracy," "black darkness," or "end result."

**ST** But the feeling seems to be a bit different in English, right?

**NC** Well, the reason why there's a unique sensation that *Jyu-Gen* evokes in Japanese is probably due to the use of Chinese characters. In English, the doubling of meaning is not exposed on the surface of the words. For instance, the "demos" of "democracy" means "people," so "people's democracy" is in fact redundant, but you don't see that just by looking at the words. With Chinese characters, on the contrary, what repeats is not only meaning (the signified) but also the letters (the signifiers), so the repetition is exposed on the surface of the text. And all the examples of *Jyu-Gen* you mentioned actually revolve around the different ways to read the same Chinese characters in Japanese: *onyomi* and *kunyomi*. For instance, "頭痛が痛い" (*zutsuu ga itai*) [headache hurts] repeats the same character "痛" which is first used as the second letter of the word "頭痛 (*zutsuu*)" [headache], read in *onyomi*, and then used as the letter of the verb "痛い (*itai*)" [hurt], this time read in *kunyomi*. This mechanism of *Jyu-Gen* becomes apparent when you compare it with, or translate it into, English. In any case, the uncanny effect in *Jyu-Gen* seems to be generated from syntactical operation, whereas the model of overlap between adjacent things belonging to the same category is more about paradigmatic substitution.

**ST** If it's really about the structural regulation on the level of syntax maybe *Jyu-Gen* is not that different from redundancy in terms of function, after all... Though the feeling they evoke still seems different. What interests me in terms of redundancy is, for example, the line "Votre coeur/en forme de coeur/C'est bien rare! [Your heart/shaped like a heart/it's rare indeed!]" from the poem *Locutions* [Sayings] (1923) by Jean Cocteau. "A heart shaped like a heart"—an object described by its own metaphor. Or, the last phrase from the line in Wallace Stevens' *Description Without Place* (1945), "Be alive with its own seemings, seeming to be/Like rubies reddened by rubies reddening," which describes a red in present tense regulated by a red in past perfect tense. This phrasing by Stevens is actually similar to *Jyu-Gen*. Or, more simply, we can think of the expression "red like red"—instead of, for instance, "red like fire." "A red red" would be mere emphasis, but "red like red" is a metaphor that is used in



Genpei Akasegawa  
"Staircase in Yotsuya (Hyperart: Thomasson)," 1970s

a redundant manner. Another example would be "a skin-colored skin."

**NC** Or if we were to connect it to the issue of disguise that we would be talking about later in the third discussion, expressions like, "a spider

like a spider" or "an ant like an ant." Once you say "like," the object is converted into a metaphor—an example or a model—and a gap is generated in between the two, a space where negation—such as "a spider that is not like a spider"—can be inserted. If one regards the



Guy Debord  
"Psychogeographic Guide of Paris" (1957)



model and the object as belonging to different levels, this can be explained by the same principle as *Jyu-Gen*: the precedence of a certain structural regulation stops infinite regression. Again, if the logical types are different, they can be structurally differentiated regardless of the sameness on the level of words. But even if we explained it like this, it doesn't erase the repetition on the level of words, and since what actually creates the feeling is the gap between the repetition of words and the structural differentiation, the uncanny feeling remains. Actually, "Description Without Place" is itself—both the title as well as the poem—a very good description for "examples that you don't know what it is an example of" that you mentioned in the first discussion. A metaphor hanging in mid-air. Except that in phrases like "red like red," it's precisely the double, conflicting nature of the relationship between the word and its own metaphor—sameness on the level of signifier and difference on the level of the signified—that creates the uncanny feeling.

**ST** I don't know if this connects to what you just said, but to run off with that line of thought—in utterances that express a contradictory state or feeling, such as "not dead after dying" or "to die without dying," one of the repeated words seems to become the metaphor for the other. And it is this doubling that seems to lie at the basis of divisions between "death" in material terms and "death" in conceptual-metaphorical terms. Even in statements like "neither alive nor dead," among the

two negative forms involved—"not alive" and "not dead"—the former is being understood as a metaphor. That is, "not alive" is considered to be a state of "not being able to die"—of clinging at the edge of life. "Not alive" is therefore a metaphor for a certain form of life. However, the same statement "neither alive nor dead," on the contrary, will not be understood as a metaphor for a certain form of death. Even if you reverse the order of the statement and say, "neither dead nor alive," things don't change much—it is still regarded as addressing a certain form of life and not death. Life is persistent in this way. Perhaps this is because the definition of the term "life" is so extensively open, irrelevant of its limit that is "death." Death does not have this expanse.

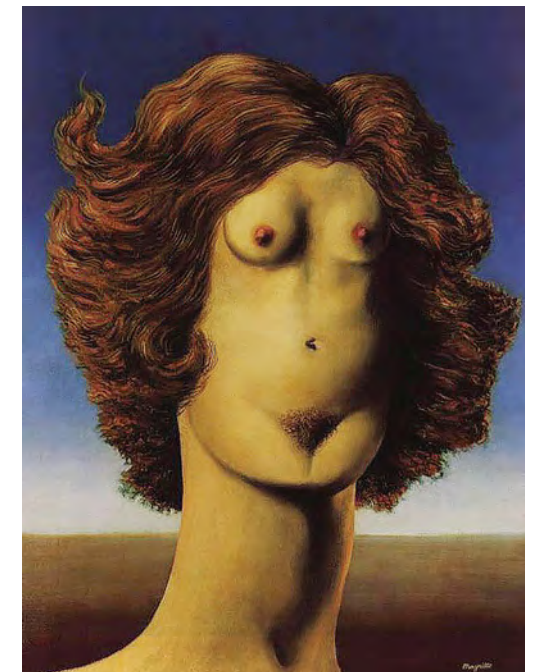
**NC** Perhaps that's because "death" tends to be regarded as a negativity—lacking a positive contour—in the first place. In short, death is the absence of life, but life is not, or not simply, the absence of death. So the attachment of negation works as double negation for death, immediately pointing to life, whereas the same is not true for life. But that of course depends on how one defines the relationship between life and death, and there are obviously more than one way to do that. We'd like to stick to a more formal argument for now. There is actually a way to make a metaphor out of "not dead." For instance, Slavoj Žižek explains the difference

(2) Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 113.

between "not dead" and "undead" by mapping them onto the Kantian distinction between two forms of negation: negative judgment and infinite judgment.<sup>(2)</sup> In the former, one negates a positive statement (judgement) such as "x is dead" by denying a predicate to the subject—"he is not dead"—but in the latter, one negates by affirming a non-predicate—"he is undead." According to Žižek, the latter form of negation, the infinite judgment, undermines the distinction between "alive" and "dead," giving a figure to something that is neither alive nor dead. But what is more important here, in relation to Unconditional Restoration, is that the making of a non-predicate involved in the move from negative to infinite judgment is an act of *objectification*. It turns the *state* of being not dead, or being neither dead nor alive, into a particular *figure*. It turns a process into an object—so if we were to stick to the linguistic model, it shifts "being something" to "some being," a verb to a noun. There is thus a jumping of logical types here. And it is crucial to note that this packaging of process into an object is an operation, or a faculty, of language. Language, in other words, has the power to transform the description of states into that of objects. In that sense, it is interesting to note that the word "infinite" that Kant uses to address this form of judgment is itself an example of such linguistic objectification of process—in this case, of the constant state of "not ending." And obviously, even before "undead," "death" itself can be considered as the objectification of the state of not being alive. But of course, the important thing for the exhibition was not to

persist on the delineation between the object and a state but to pursue the consequences of their inevitable confluence, or the transformation of one thing to another. It is not the logical types embedded in language but the overlaps between them—precisely *Jyu-Gen*, as "overlapping words"—that provide a good working model for the inherent connection between time and object that was at the basis of your exhibition.

**ST** In terms of the connection between the performance of language and the topic of restoration, I remember that in the third term of the exhibition, Takayuki Toshima presented a text piece that included phrases like "the finger is sticking out from the hand," "the



Rene Magritte "Le Viol" (1945)





Rene Magritte, "Entr'acte" (1928)

thumb is sticking out from the fingers." In relation to that, I referred to Rene Magritte's *Le Viol* [Rape] (1945) in which a faceless body becomes a face, and *Entr'acte* [Intermission] (1928) which shows body parts—limbs—becoming an entire body. In both Toshima's texts and Magritte's paintings, what interested me was the process of reversal from a state of lack ("having too little") which calls for restoration, to that of excess ("having too much"). And these models seemed to suggest that the excess of a thing is revealed, not via comparison or recourse to other things, but through an abuse, a maddening, so to speak, of the transformation processes of its own attributes.

**NC** At the same time, there is a point where the analogy between linguistic—grammatical—models and that of objects collapses, for the simple reason that the former does not physically deteriorate over time like the latter. For instance, in the case of *Jyu-Gen*, the reiteration of a word is not a transformation *per se*—the individual words remain unchanged—nor an entropic process that slowly crumbles what is written; if anything, redundancy serves to counter entropy as far as information theory is concerned. It would be interesting, however, if there was any way to connect that issue of language you are talking about to the *material* dimension of words and letters—the actual pro-

cess of inscription or the attempt at restoring lost languages, for example. But anyway, speaking of entropy, how does your criticism against the logic of the Formless connect to what we have been talking about?

**ST** Well, I think it's nice that Bois and Krauss emphasized that "Formless" is not a concept but an operation. But because of their focus in the heterogeneity that distorts the system of classification, and despite their efforts to differentiate the Formless from Julia Kristeva's notion of "abjection," they end up quite stereotypically resorting the effect of shock that arises from the juxtaposition of radically different entities. And even if they say that the argument of the Formless is something that distresses dichotomies instead of being reduced to them, the "horizontal" they emphasize is clearly opposed to "verticality," "entropy" to "negentropy," and "dissolution of the subject" to "the modernist formation of the subject (reflexivity)." Again, instead of going to that extreme, we were interested in the middle ground, so to speak, where tools and/or organs coalesce into arrangement of sorts. Not an absolutely different Other but the potential of objects that can be "sometimes different." The basis of Unconditional Restoration was to consider all things as not being complete, but lacking and therefore restorable. The difference between that operation and that of the Formless is that we did not aim to collapse classification systems. So if the argument of the Formless is like a *coup d'état* of matter, Unconditional Restoration is more like an imitative deception that objects

engage in, by not paying much heed to the fact that they are arbitrarily named and classified by people.

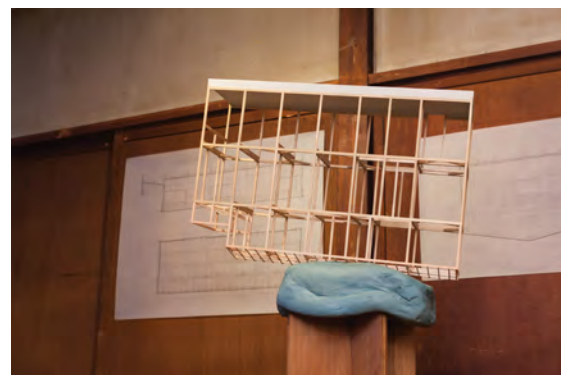
**NC** The difference between regarding things as being complete or always lacking is precisely the difference between the level of objects created via infinite judgment and the state that negative judgment belongs to. And the mechanism of infinite judgment is also operative in the very term of "Formless"—it is an objectification of the state of there being no definite form. So the contrast between Unconditional Restoration and Formless can be articulated using the model of language as well.

**ST** Well, maybe the discussion has become too centered on words so let us revert back to the works. Throughout the three terms there was an on-going renovation project by Kota Sakagawa, Hiroaki Takiguchi, and Takefumi Yamagishi called *Detaching the Third Floor For a Ship*. This project used the entire exhibition space, Milkyeast, which is a three-stories-high building. As the title describes, their plan was to detach the entire third floor from the rest of the building and flip it upside down to turn it into a ship. The idea was based on the fact that the building was first built as a two-stories house and the third floor was added later. So in their mind, the top floor appeared to be something that wanted to drift apart on its own. Now, this project is clearly an attempt to convert a house into a ship and it doesn't have the sense of enigma that Matsumura's equation of the tank and bucket had. In regards to





Kota Sakagawa, Hiroaki Takiguchi,  
and Takefumi Yamagishi  
“Detaching the Third Floor For a Ship” (2015)



the four categories of restoration this would be the third type: customization. But at the same time, a house and a ship are similar in the sense that they are both containers of some sort so it also has a certain *Jyu-Gen* character to it. Moving a house is extraordinary but moving a ship is a matter of course. It also has a dual temporality, since on the one hand it is a return to a previous state of the house in the past, while on the other it was conceived as a preparatory measure for a future time when the area becomes flooded. What they actually managed to do for the exhibition was to tear down the walls of the third floor exposing the posts and beams, and make a horizontal slit between the second and third floor. Its appearance evokes Gordon Matta-Clark’s famous *Splitting* (1974) which vertically split a house in two. But even though their work is much more unspectacular, they claimed that their *horizontal* splitting was much more of a feat compared to Matta-Clark’s *vertical* splitting which heavily depended on the workings of gravity. (laughs) And contrary to Matta-Clark’s act of destruction, theirs was focused on restoration so the operation faithfully followed the original articulation of the building.

**NC** What we found interesting about that work in particular from what we read is that because of its massive scale and impossibility of realization, they also exhibited sketches and models of their plan to convert the third floor into a ship. This points towards another issue involved in models and examples that we haven’t discussed yet, which is the matter

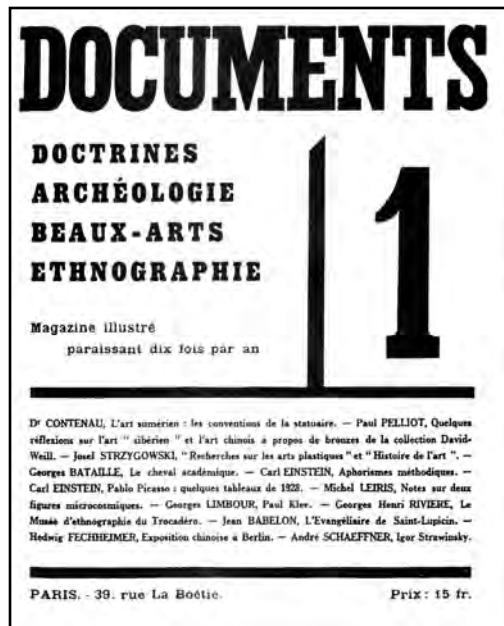


Gordon Matta-Clark  
“Splitting” (1974)

of *scale*. The gap between models and their instances are not simply that of logical types but also, or more so, of scales, even when it’s 1:1. This issue of scale concerning models is also something that is difficult to see in the language model—though by no means impossible—since the formalities of language are largely scale-free, retained across various scales. But it cannot be dismissed when dealing with physical objects.

**ST** I don’t know if this connects to the issue of scale but there’s a thing I’ve been thinking that perhaps might serve as a model of some sort. In terms of manipulation, there is a difference between “matter” and “material.” For example, in the entry of “Man” in the “Critical Dictionary” section of *Documents* (1929), Bataille quotes an English chemist who decomposed humans





George Bataille  
“Documents” (1919)

into chemical values and analyzed what kind and how much matter can be extracted from one body: “The bodily fat of a normally constituted man would suffice to manufacture seven cakes of toilet-soap. Enough iron is found in the organism to make a medium-sized nail, and sugar to sweeten a cup of coffee. The phosphorus would provide 2,200 matches. The magnesium would furnish the light needed to take a photograph.”<sup>(3)</sup> It obviously evokes the mindset of Nazis at the concentration camps or that pervert surgeon we were talking about. But this materialistic conversion is a reduction to “matter” compared to, for instance, the act of decomposing things at a demolition site which seems more to be a reduction to “materials.” They are similar in that both do away

with whatever label that is attached to a given individual and flatten their qualities to mere quantity according to microscopic categories. But there is also a difference; there are things that can only be dealt at the level of “materials.” Normally, the reduction to matter seems more thorough and richer than reduction to materials since it reveals potentials that are not constrained by use. Materials, in comparison, seem to be always regulated by a focus to specific use. It is always halfway to becoming a specific object. From this perspective, the use of the top floor of a house as a ship or that an erect penis as a towel rack is based on the level of material and not of matter. On this level, unlike the utter heterogeneity of the Formless, there remains a certain graspable articulation. For instance, Robert Rauschenberg’s “Combine Paintings” have an articulation akin to hermit crabs: the part of the canvas is the crab and the various tools—wheels, ladders, door knobs—attached to it are the shell. Well, it also has other parts that are painted in the style of abstract expressionism or composed as collage so it might be more similar to the behavior of a hoarder creature who attaches various bits and pieces of things laying around it to its own body. It’s not so much that the painting “internalizes” things outside it but more that it “wears” them. A primitive mimicry, if you will. But by doing so, new options for interacting with the work are afforded—the wheels allow

(3) Dr. Charles Henry May quoted in: George Battaille et al., *Encyclopaedia Acephalica: Comprising the Critical Dictionary & Related Texts* (London: Atlas Press, 1995), 56-7.



Robert Rauschenberg  
“Gift for Apollo” (1959)

the painting itself to move or the ladder allows you to climb and see the work from a different angle. I think the pseudo-equation between a tank and a bucket, or a house and a boat, occurs when such enhancement of accessibility and manipulatability via analogy works in a self-referential manner, as in *Jyu-Gen* or redundancy. Instead of there being a room inside a house, there is a house inside a house which distorts the wholeness of the house.

**NC** So there’s the factor of scale coupled with logical types again. Actually, the difference between “matter” and “material” can also be articulated as an issue of scale. Whereas matter is more or less defined on a specific scalar level material is found across different scales

depending on the intent and interest of the observer. The function of materials you talked about can be rephrased as their relationship to teleology—which is simply to say that building blocks are defined by what is built. In that sense, matter and material are not necessarily incompatible. Even Bataille’s account in the *Critical Dictionary* you referred to can be read as a mixture of matter and material since it not only decomposes the human body into chemical values—“matter”—but also calculates what and how many things you can make with them—“material.” But this also raises a problem since materials on different scales can introduce a multiplicity of *teloi* and therefore a multiplicity of objects. In other words, the restoration an object on one scale might conflict with the restoration of an object inside or surrounding that object on another scale. So when you think about the self-restoration of an object, you don’t really know how many objects—how many wholenesses—and therefore how many restoration processes you are talking about.

**ST** There is also a confusion caused by the fact that the user and the object used are composed of the same matter/materials. For instance, using a soap to wash your body is to some extent using a soap to wash soap. And you’re right, teleology can be mutually exclusive across scales. Especially so regarding temporal scales, as I referred to in my “Notes for the Main Exhibition” using the case of terraforming the Earth.



Third Discussion

**NC** We thought that the reference to Roger Caillois in this third discussion was important because it's here that the problem of the "body" is foregrounded. It seems to us that what served as the basis of Unconditional Restoration was a biological model of objects. That is to say, what all the examples point towards is not so much the nature of objects *per se* but that of objects conceived *as bodies*. Self-restoration, for instance, is a matter of fact if we are talking about bodies: all organisms must constantly restore their physical self in order to live.

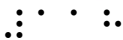
**ST** Well I did mention medical treatment in relation to restoration in the "Notes for the Pre-Exhibition." But I didn't pursue it any further since I thought the connection was somewhat too obvious. I had brought up the issue of bodies there to consider the problem of singularity. Since objects when left to their own devices simply exist without any care to external system of values, they are usually not regarded as being irreplaceable. However, the desire for restoration is based on the feeling that there is no replacement for the particu-

lar object in question. So by resorting to the model of the body, I attempted to bestow the notion of singularity to objects without referring to external contexts.

**NC** Regarding the body as an object is a common method in dance or performance art. Seeing an object as having a body and thinking about forms of its survival reverses and thus complements that approach. Moreover, the self-development of systems that do not refer to exterior context or observation connects directly to the problematic of Autopoiesis. But we also wondered how far the analogy between objects and bodies can actually go. Bodies constantly sustain themselves via self-restoration and transformation. That is the basis of growth, often theorized as self-organization or homeostasis. But objects, on the other hand, are usually exposed to the laws of entropy and inevitably crumble apart in the course of time. So in order to pursue the analogy between objects and bodies, these differences between them must somehow be deconstructed. Here again it seems important to think about the connection between the autopoietic processes

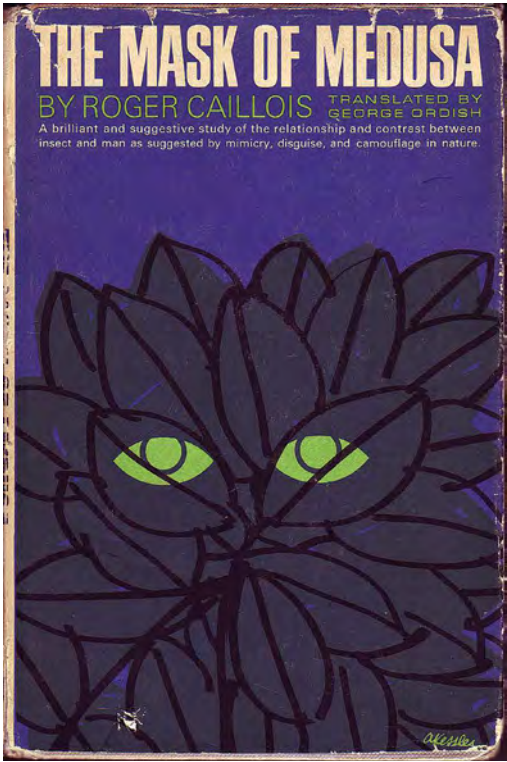


Mulberry Borer Beetle (*Xylotrechus chinensis*)  
that mimics bees



of self-restoration and the world *outside* the object-body. How a seemingly closed system relates to other (similarly closed) systems in the world in order to maintain itself has always been a fundamental problem for theories of closed systems—all the way from Leibniz' monadology to Autopoiesis. Now you guys seem to have employed a curious strategy to deal with this conflicting duality of objects endowed with bodies: you started off the first discussion by contemplating the status of objects, but in this third discussion, instead of reverting all the way back to humans, you move to the middle ground, so to speak, and investigate examples that lie somewhere in between objects and humans—non-human, extreme type of bodies that seem to approximate the nature of objects: insects, machines, aliens, and so on.

**ST** In *The Mask of Medusa*, Caillois classifies mimicry into three categories: *disguise*, *intimidation*, and *camouflage*. I thought these three categories could be used to think about restoration. The last one, *camouflage*, is the dissolution of bodies into the environment and therefore connects to the issue of entropy, the erasure of individuality, and the Freudian death drive. It's also the issue that Robert Smithson was concerned with, you know. As a body type, it is that of chameleons or the aliens in the movie *Predator* (1987) who become invisible by perfectly mimicking their surroundings. And of course, it matches the model of the Formless: the dissolution of figures into the ground. Indeed, Rosalind Krauss focuses



Roger Caillois "The Mask of Medusa"  
C.N. Potter, 1964



Stillshot from "Predator 2" (1990)





on the topic of *camouflage* in her entry on “entropy” in the book *Formless*. But my interest was in finding a model for objects that was not entropic and did not base itself on an absolute ground of time to which all things are reduced. In order to do this, I thought of dismantling *camouflage* using the two other types of mimicry: *disguise* and *intimidation*. It is true, however, that among the three types *camouflage* is the one that feels the most critical. Caillois himself discusses *camouflage* in detail, connecting it to the problem of agoraphobia in schizophrenics. Let me quote a bit from “Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia,” which was written after *The Mask of Medusa*: “I know where I am, but I do not feel as though I’m at the spot where I find myself. To these dispossessed souls, space seems to be a devouring force. Space pursues them, encircles them, digests them in a gigantic phagocytosis. It ends by replacing them. Then the body separates itself from thought, the individual breaks the boundary of his skin and occupies the other side of his senses. He tries to look at himself from any point whatever in space. He feels himself becoming space, dark space where things cannot be put. He is similar, not similar to something, but just similar. And he invents spaces of which he is ‘the convulsive possession.’”<sup>(4)</sup> But there is something that this model of *camouflage* misses. Organisms resort to mimicry in order to solve the problem of how to hide when there is nowhere to hide or nothing to hide them. With *camouflage*, the surrounding space itself becomes a giant cover to hide oneself. But the stability of this cover is never questioned. It is simply

considered as something that precedes, surrounds, and contains the body. I thought it was necessary to criticize this conception of absolute space. So in the discussion, I focused on the model of *disguise*, where the body itself is transformed into another kind of body, such as spiders that mimic ants, or beetles that mimic bees. It is a form of metamorphosis, though the body structure remains the same. In other words, *disguise* is a form of mimicry which does not depend on the precedence of a ground or space. Instead, the body is itself treated as “ground” or regarded as a “space” for hiding. Therefore, contrary to *camouflage* which dissolves everything into a singular ground, the premise for *disguise* is that there are only figures. By seeing it this way, you can free *disguise* from its association with the Romantic desire for transformation—the allure of becoming something other—and grasp it instead as a twisted extension of the *camouflage*.

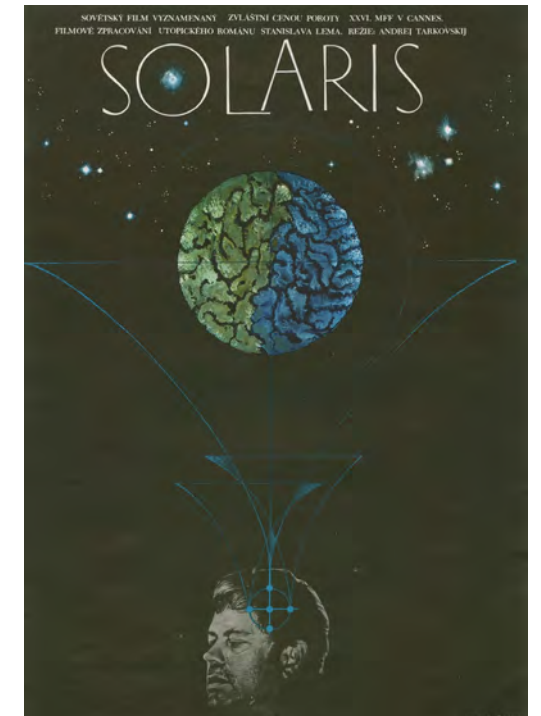
**NC** At the same time, however, Caillois’ description of the schizophrenic *camouflage* already depicts the “space” as an agent capable of devouring, pursuing, encircling, digesting, and possessing the person—in other words, as having a body. So the space is given a body here even before *disguise* turns bodies into spaces. The process of entropy increase, or the question of just what serves as “ground,” has to do with the state of things, but the very *language* that describes the mechanism of

(4) *October* 31 (1984): 30.

*camouflage* objectifies this state and renders it a body—following the nature of language, as we talked about. If you consider this endless formation of “bodies” on many levels, the distorted continuity between *disguise* and *camouflage* you just pointed out can be paraphrased yet again as an issue of scale. For example, if the entire jungle is a body, or if the entire planet is a body—like in *Solaris*—then *camouflage* is always already a form of *disguise*. The application range of the notion of body is, like that of material or language, not regulated by scale. It’s only that when the scale of a certain body is so different from that of the human being (or any other organism that may serve as criteria), it is regarded as space or environment and the format of assimilation becomes *camouflage* instead of *disguise*. The body of one can be an environment for the other.

**ST** That process can also be traced in the opposite direction—instead of larger bodies, we can think of smaller ones. When the body becomes space/environment, organs and limbs that were parts of the whole turn into bodies. And as depicted in Magritte’s *Entr’acte*, when body parts become bodies of their own, the wholeness that was until then called the “body” disappears.

**NC** It’s the relativization of a given scale that had been considered as a standard for establishing the figure-ground opposition in the first place. The body turns into environment while body parts turn into a body. But the question here then becomes whether this transforma-



Andrei Tarkovsky  
“Solaris” (1972)

tion is merely an effect of language that objectifies and gives bodies to everything, or whether there is a specific difference between bodies that appear on different scales. In other words, is there any halting mechanism for the infinite relativization of scales, just as the structural regulation on the level of syntax put an end to infinite regression in the case of *Jyu-Gen*?

**ST** Well, for instance, there is a difference between the wholeness of the body and the wholeness of the face. The face can be framed as a whole without resorting to the rest of the body. This means that there is a difference concerning levels of objectification between the face and the body. For example, this is analo-



gous to the difference between the unit of “a room,” which can be perceived at once, and that of “the house,” which cannot be grasped instantaneously and can only be unified as a whole in the imagination. Furthermore, if these two levels can indeed be differentiated, then we could think of cases where one perceives the body but fails to discern the face. As Humpty Dumpty tells Alice: “Your face is the same as everybody has—the two eyes, so—’ (marking their places in the air with this thumb) ‘nose in the middle, mouth under. It’s always the same. Now if you had the two eyes on the same side of the nose, for instance — or the mouth at the top — that would be some help.’”(5) But the funny thing is that Humpty Dumpty himself has a body which is also a face. (laughs)



Thomas the Tank Engine & Friends

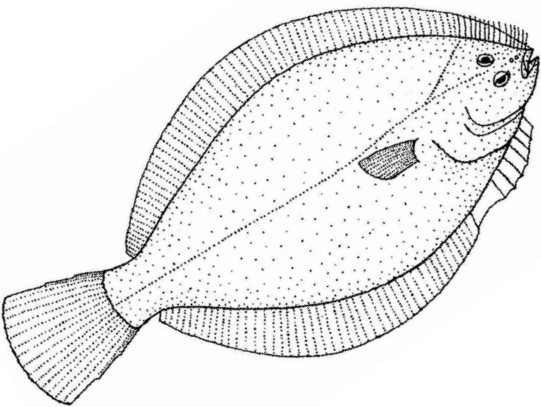
NC So in regards to the physical condition of perception/observation, there seems to be a difference between the objectification of face and the body, while the case of Humpty Dumpty also points to a grey zone where this distinction is mixed up. Perhaps this differentiation between the face and the body is based on the fact that most of the perceptive organs, starting from the eyes, concentrate on the face—as Humpty Dumpty points out. In other words, perception differentiates between a body part that can itself perceive, and other body parts that cannot. So it’s not simply a matter of scale but also of a certain logical typing inherent in the operation of our perceptual mechanism. For example, there are things in the world in which people discover “faces” quite easily, like a car or a train. They are usually objects that have a pair of circular parts—like headlights—that resemble the eyes. And in children’s picture books and animations, faces are given to basically any kind of thing. But the differentiation between one thing and another—that the kettle is one thing and the

tea cup another—is already in place before faces are, and can be, attached to them. This primordial articulation of the world that individualizes objects by delineating their contours and assigning a wholeness to each of them is therefore conducted not on the level of faces, but rather on the level of bodies. It seems to us that what operates there is a projection of the body. Of course there is a feedback mechanism at work, for the act of perceiving an object as “one” thing correlates with, and conditions, the act of perceiving your own body as “one” thing. The wholeness of the objects serves as an external model for the wholeness of your own body, and vice versa. So by giving objects bodies you give yourself one. And precisely because of this mechanism, the articulation of objects on the level of bodies naturally develops into the imaginary projection of the face and its perceptual organs to the objects which allows them to perceive you as you perceive them. So the often discussed sensation of objects staring back at you is really a “caricature,” so to speak, of the inherent reciprocity between your body and that of the things that are not you. The Lacanian mirror stage, from this standpoint, is simply an easy-to-understand—and certainly *easy-on-the-eyes*—fable of this much broader and general process of reciprocal articulation of the self and the world. A caricature of a caricature, if you will. Even in the absence of mirrors, objects serve as a mirroring devices. In other words, the differentiation as well as the mixing up of the two levels of objectification—the body and the face—occurs throughout the various scales, and perception



Roman mosaic of gargoyles as theatrical masks (2 CE)  
Capitoline Museum, Rome [Carole Raddato/Speravir]

constantly wavers between the two levels. By the way, the body of fishes has always seemed to me [You Nakai] like all face. And it’s a face that you can usually only see the profile, from one side.



Yellowbelly flounder (*Rhombosolea leporina*)



(5) Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass* (London: Macmillan, 1871), 50.



**ST** That's funny. It also connects with the works of Giacometti. The flatness of the head of his sculptures is pretty fishy. The issue of profiles in painting has been often discussed, but we are talking about sculpture here which cannot ignore the frontside of the face either.

**NC** Then what about flounder or halibut? It would be interesting to think about the face-body problem by taking the flatfish as a model.

**ST** If we refer back to Caillois' threefold division of mimicry, the confluence of face and body is precisely the problematic of *intimidation*. Caillois spends much time on examples of this kind, analyzing the eye-spot on the back of butterflies and moths in connection to medusa's head or the nature of masks. He writes that the important thing is not the accuracy of resemblance to the eye, but the triggering of sensation and fear that something is watching you via the big shiny immobile features of two circular patterns. But more than the aggressiveness of such forms of *intimidation*, I was interested in the fact that there is a face on the back of an organism. Usually a face only covers the sides and the front of the head but having another one on the back seems utterly strange.

**NC** There is that spooky line from the Japanese children's rhyme *Kagome Kagome*: "Who is the face on the back?" Of course, this can be interpreted as addressing the face of a stranger standing behind you, but it can also be understood as depicting the otherness of the face that is attached to your back.



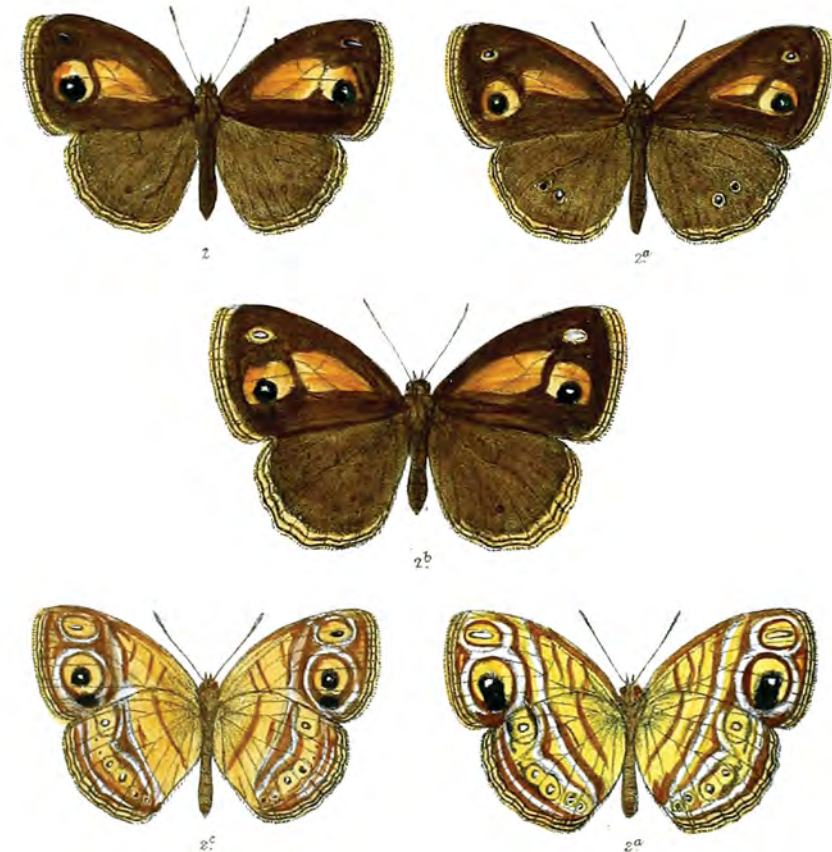
Alberto Giacometti's sculptures exhibited during the 31st Venice Biennale (1962)

**ST** Let's say that I have a face on my back. Since it is on my back, I obviously can't see it. But is this truism the same as that of not being able to see one's own face since the organ of seeing is embedded there?

**NC** Well a face, even if it was the one on the front of the head, is always discovered and recognized as such via the other—perception that has been externalized and consigned to objects, including the mirror. So in that sense, there is no inherent difference between the face on front and that on the back. For us, the strangeness of *intimidation* stems not so much from the opposition between the front and the back but more from the confluence of body and face that we have been talking about. The

entire body seems to become something that was only a part of it. And this distresses the assumed scale of the body—as if the entire house suddenly turned into a room. To resort to a linguistic analogy, this would be akin to the mechanism of synecdoche. For example, there are also flowers that create eye-like patterns to attract insects. These flowers do not have a "front," so to speak, but because it similarly fissures the difference of scale delineating the body and face, it generates an uncanny

sensation that is not so distinct from the eyespot of insects. On the other hand, a tattooed face on the back of a *yakuza* is not so uncanny. This is probably because the back is still recognized as a body part so the degree of confluence between the whole and part is lessened. In any case, if we consider the uncanniness of *intimidation* as being produced from the mix up of different scales/logical types, then it can be connected to the issue of enlargement and shrinking of body scales that connected *cam-*



Mycalesis patnia with eye-spots  
Frederic Moore, "Lepidoptera Indica, vol.1" (1890)





Image generated by Google Deep Dream

*ouflage to disguise.* The form of bodies depicted in Magritte's *Entr'acte* would again be an excellent example here. Although, since the face is differentiated from other body parts for the concentration of perceptual organs, the synecdoche of face might have a stronger effect for distressing the stability of the operative feedback mechanism of the perceptual system.

**ST** Yes, calling it a “synecdoche” really clarifies things. In fact, in most cases of *intimidation*, what the pattern invokes is not even the face but just the eyes—or simply the function of seeing, which evokes a certain presence. But I also think that there is a certain type of *intimidation* that comes from beings that do not have eyes or faces—something you cannot see, but can only sense its presence.

**NC** But let's get back to what you guys talked about in the discussion. The example of masks presents the uncanniness of something that exists only as face and it thus connects to the uncanniness of *intimidation*. But in the note we found, it says that you also talked about Paul Klee's drawings of angels and William Blake's drawing that he made during a seance. How do these examples connect?

**ST** Hmmm. I really have no idea. I don't recall a thing. *(laughs)*

**NC** Okay, so it's un-restorable! But perhaps they are all examples of “faces” that are discovered only from the outside or only in retrospect. That would at least explain how Caillois' *intimidation* led to a discussion of the mecha-

nism of Klee's works in which the artist discovers a “face” only at the end of the drawing process. And the images generated by Deep Dream also relates to *intimidation* through the uncanniness of ubiquitous face-beings: the environment turns into a multitude of faces. Of course, there is also a correspondence with the issue of restoration on the level of Deep Dream's generative mechanism since the repetitive input of patterns via feedback in neural networks is yet another example of the transformation of the self through repetition.

**ST** Exactly. The image generated by Deep Dream is *camouflage*-like in the dissolution of figures into ground, *intimidation*-like in the ubiquity of faces on different scales, but also *disguise*-like in the mechanism of image generation which feedbacks any output that contains a familiar pattern into the system itself, ending up in a certain indiscernibility or mutual immersion of attributes between the model and the instance—it's quite similar to “spiders that are like ants” or “ants that are like spiders.”

**NC** So Deep Dream provides a nice model for the continuity between the three types of mimicry. But as a model it also makes us realize something new: namely, that *camouflage* and *intimidation* are categories related to the *appearance* of mimicry, whereas *disguise* is more at work on the level of *generative principle* or *mode of operation*.

**ST** In terms of *disguise*, the examples that I

was fascinated with were of organisms that disguised themselves as something very similar to themselves. The resemblance of two items within a chain of iteration—the original and the copy, in this case—also brings to mind the model of *Jyu-Gen*. One funny case is that of a spider that disguises itself as an ant. I mean, what on earth is the benefit here? *(laughs)* I can understand why an ant would want to look like a spider, but why on earth would a spider want to look like an ant? I was amused by the seeming inexplicability of such examples of disguise.

**NC** If we referred back to the schema of the Formless—which is one that Krauss resorts to in general—on the one side there is a modern subject who is formed and sustained via the feedback of reflexivity, and on the other, the process of entropy which dismantles such subjects and their feedback systems. But here you are positing the case of spiders who for



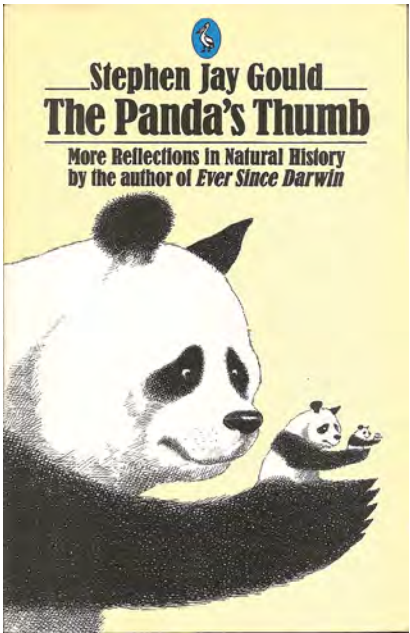
Myrmarachne (Ant Mimic Jumping Spider)



some unknown reason has transformed into an ant. In other words, it's an example of a feedback system with a glitch, a bug that is brought in from its exposure to the outside world. A system which has not completely collapsed and eaten by entropy but is simply distorted.

**ST** Well I wanted to create an anti-entropic model that was nevertheless not just about the re-establishment of order. One would usually think that restoration is on the side of negative entropy, the reviving of order that has been destroyed. But our point was that this attempt at resurrecting what has been lost always introduces some deviation, producing something nonsensical that cannot be reduced to either the autopoietic regeneration of the self, nor the entropic abandonment thereof. I wanted to get away from the simple dichotomy of “disorder/death versus order/life.”

**NC** But it must also be stressed that this “nonsense” is only a description of how matters appear to the external observer. It's something that is only be framed as “distortion” or “noise” at a given present pertaining to a specific observer. And yet again, this framing is precisely the objectification of a state where not everything can be fully incorporated within the present. For instance, Stephen Jay Gould considered such distortions as the basis of history and called it the “Panda Principle” from the observation he made about the “false” thumb of the panda



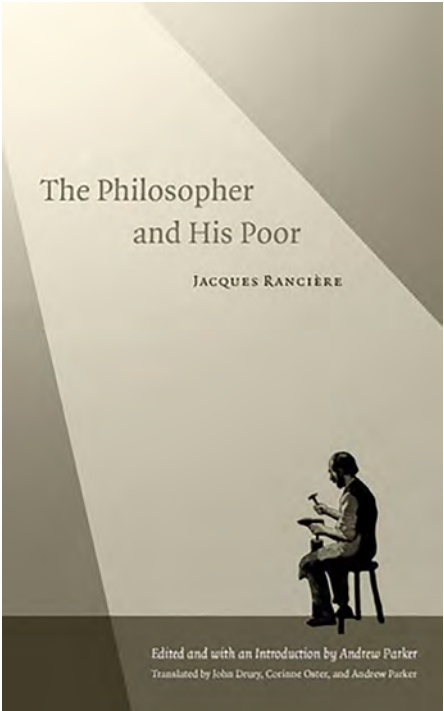
Stephen Jay Gould,  
“The Panda’s Thumb”  
Penguin, 1980

bear. Pandas would hold bamboo trees when they eat, but upon close inspection the thumb that they are using to hold the tree is revealed to actually be not a thumb but a sixth finger. This extraneous finger was just a bump on their hands that developed randomly at first—a bug in the system, so to speak—but now it has become an indispensable tool for pandas to eat. And what are “bugs,” if not insects? In any case, the point here is that these bugs in the system are actually the results of the system's exposure to the outside which generates uncanny distortions.

**ST** In terms of the middle ground between objects and bodies, or seeing objects as bodies, there is that argument that human beings are neotenous and thus their potential is plastic



Plato  
“Republic”  
P. Oxy. 3679, manuscript from the 3rd century AD



Jacques Rancière  
“The Philosopher and His Poor”  
Duke University Press, 2004 (Original French, 1983)

and indeterminate. This nature is supposed to make us a special kind of organism. Humans are strong because they are weak. From that perspective, we can say that the proximity between insects and machines or objects, on the other hand, probably lies in the seeming singularity of their function. In the discussion we addressed this monistic nature as “the narcissism of objects themselves.” I think this appearance of an autonomous mechanism is what attracts kids to things like insects, vehicles, and machines. I always thought there was a similarity between those things and super-heroes: they are all entities whose function has evolved in one specific direction in an extreme manner. They have one special thing that they excel in, while lacking in flexibility and functional diversity. For instance, crab's craws are an amazing weapon but they will serve the creature no good in paper-rock-scissors. (*laughs*)

**NC** Plato argued that one should focus on a single profession and complained about mimesis—which is to say, mimicry—in poetry or theatre because it distorted the purity of that one work per person model. And Jacques Rancière criticized Plato, saying that the variety and multiplicity of things that one could do is precisely what allows revolutions happen—workers, who are not supposed to do anything but work, actually stay up late reading and discussing what they have read. In this regard, task-based performances tend to be insect/machine-like: performers are made to follow some simple rules or conditionals and prohibited to exercise the full range of possi-



bilities for their behavior. But these works are effective only because of the gap between that imposed constraint and the diversity of possible actions outside the work, in so-called daily life. In this sense, tasks in performance rely on the fact that they are framed as “performance-art.” If the boundary between life and art is actually nullified, all task-based works would simply become slave or household labor. At the same time, however, the lesson of mimicry is that despite such appearance of a singular, closed system, the connection to the outside world and other beings was embedded from the start. In other words, there was always already an attempt of restoration. The original is always externalized as a model and beneath the appearance of engaging in a single activity is a multiplicity, the gap between the system and another system which is objectified as “bugs.” The important point is that the biological-body model is a “model”—it therefore drags the problem of how that model and the actual object overlap or oppose one another. The act of restoration is in this way a constant process of negotiation between the model and the object and therefore always mimicry-like.

**ST** In *Unconditional Restoration*, there were many works that dealt with the (re)organization of how things breakdown. These works were based on maneuvers such as reverting the process of breaking down into a play-back device, or converting one form of breakdown to another—for example, transforming something that becomes loose when stretched, to something that shutters apart, or reviving

some broken object through the workings of the video camera, and so on. Matsumoto’s jar piece could also be seen as an attempt to regard something that is not broken as being broken, and the work Yuichiro Nakayama and Miyazaki made for the Pre-exhibition attempted to unify the process of snapping lumber and that of creating patterns. These were attempts to discover some sort of pattern or rule within the very process of collapse rather than trying to set up a new order against the workings of entropy. In other words, they aimed to bring an object that appears to be complete, back into the state of process.

**NC** That’s interesting. You could also say that it was a re-modeling of the very process of a specific object’s deviation from its model. So it connects to the problematics of history and restoration that we briefly touched upon in the first discussion. For example, remember the example of petrified wood? Within the present value system, the petrified wood is considered something that failed to turn into coal. But at the same time, it is also sold as a peculiar fossil so it does have a certain value in the present. This means that “bugs” and “noise” that seem like intruding alien substances in the present system can easily be dealt within the same system through aestheticization and fetishization. But as a “model,” the same thing can also be used as a tool to access other times and places that cannot be contained in the present—in other words, it summons *history*. Melanie Fisher’s review of *Museum of Unheard (of) Things*, a book I [You Nakai] co-translated

and published from *Already Not Yet*, included a nice exegesis on Stephen Jay Gould’s attitude towards history.<sup>(6)</sup> Adaptationism reduces everything to the result of evolution as seen in the present. But Gould’s argument was that the perspective which sees everything that exists now as being functionally optimal actually erases history since it disregards the fundamental contingency that led to the formation of what we consider as our present. The essence of history lies in things that could have happened but didn’t or happened but is not registered as such in the present. It is because there is a past that is not yet regarded as a past that people survey and write history. In this sense, history is always connected to fiction.

(6) Melanie Fisher, “Review of *Museum of Unheard (of) Things*,” <http://www.compulsivereader.com/2016/07/10/museumofunheardofthings/>

But Fisher’s essay did not end there. It also touched upon the debate between Hayden White and Carlo Ginzburg, in which the latter criticized the former’s claim that history can be reduced to narrative. Ginzburg’s point was that the resistance of material evidence and objects prevents history from being subsumed into fiction. In other words, the objects that cannot be encompassed in the narrative/fiction of the present is what calls for history. Now this is different from the history of objects, but it is one way of connecting objects and history.



Charles Le Brun  
“A System of Physiognomy” (1671)



**ST** I have always harbored a negative feeling towards history. It is the feeling towards the existence of something that is completely indifferent to myself, to which I am nonetheless exposed to and consequently alienated from. I suppose, however, that I'm interested in a history which detaches itself from the concern of encompassing multiple events in the past within a coherent logic or narrative. Or, perhaps to be more accurate, I should say that I am interested in the emergence of time, rather than history—not so much in the relationship between events but in the primordial mechanism that gives birth to the very notion of temporality. I think this is what fundamentally sustains my interest in insects or objects. So what is required for time to flow? I feel that existentially speaking, I myself am atemporal. Consciousness itself does not have time—in order for time, or the sense of time, to arise, an accumulation of feedback processes between me and the world has to happen. For instance, the neighborhood in Tokyo I live now is the same neighborhood where I was born so I sometimes stumble across people I know from my elementary school days. But I remain a kid for them and it's the same about them for me. Otherwise, what I feel is the gap between now and then. And those are the moments when I feel the passing of time. Not that these are rare moments; they have become extremely frequent happenstances in this age of social media.

**NC** Well, it's probably more accurate to say that consciousness only has a present than that it lacks time altogether. And again, there is al-

ways something that cannot be encompassed in that present. This could be yourself from the elementary school days or a person who sees you as such. These things that lie beyond the scope of your present—which is what the term “World” generally refers to—is what conditions history. History, in this sense, is the other of present/consciousness. To paraphrase from a different angle, this is the issue of how to deal with the history and context that *others* frame you with when they see your works or read your writings. This problem exists on a different level from how *you* think about history and context. And history and context usually come from the outside—they are what others project onto you. No matter how free and atemporal you think and feel you are, you will always be historicized and contextualized by those who cannot be contained in your present. The problem of the “Other” that Derrida and others have spilled so much ink over really comes down to the simple issue of how to deal with this nuisance that not only is impossible to control, but also regulates you according to its interests and biases. Like your friend from elementary school, a past that you had forgotten suddenly intervenes in your present, distorting and relativizing its closure. They *bug* you, in other words. And when it does, that exterior factor indeed appears to you as a bug, as an object-like creature, and you are in turn treated as such. For instance, I [Ai Chinen] stopped living with my parents when I was 15. So for them, I have been turned into a timeless object from that age. But while I despise this, that is precisely the attitude we permanently

hold against objects: we regard them as timeless—which is really to say bodyless—since their present lies outside ours. The objects are constantly transforming but we do not perceive that and simply regard them as being atemporal.

**ST** For example, being disconnected from the sewer pipes and signed “R.Mutt” must be annoying for the porcelain urinal itself. Objects that have been deprived of their function and reduced to “anything” or “no particular thing” now fill up art museums as an ideal—which is to say harmless—interior decoration. Even if one learned the technique of display from Minimalism or whatnot and exhibited a variety of readymade objects and fragments in a modular fashion, it might help to make the installation appear as art, but does nothing to disguise the fundamental lack of ideas. Instead, I like the model that You [Nakai] once wrote in an article on John Cage, of seeing every object in the world as serving as a clock for something else.<sup>(7)</sup> If the oscillation and vibration of another object appears to me as a clock, then it would be natural to reverse that and think of myself as acting as a clock for some other object. Everyone hastily criticizes and denies anthropocentrism, but the desire and ability of humans to revert the subject-object relationship—to objectify the subject and subjectify the object—seems very important to me. Anti-anthropocentrism always makes a leap to extreme questions of how the position of humans can be relativized, or how the ineffable and non-representable can be thought (or



Rene Magritte, “The Titanic Days” (1928)

not), but there are many things one can do before reaching those ultimatums. Without delving straight into the essence of things, humans can methodologically reverse the subject-object relationship. It could even be said that the peculiarity of humans lies in our capacity to see humans in non-humans. But this reversal is not simply a relativization. It is a more critical and risky act in which the predator suddenly becomes the prey. It's like when a bird that went for a small fish gets eaten by a bigger fish at the exact moment it swallowed the small one.

(7) You Nakai, “So to Speak: John Cage and The Problem of Improvisation,” *Eureka: Journal of Poetry and Criticism*, 44 (2012): 151-158.



**NC** In other words, the subject-object reversal involves a shift of scales, just like the body becoming the environment and body parts becoming the body. At the same time, however, the basic approach in Unconditional Restoration was to take this ability for reversal and see what happens if *it* were reversed and endowed to the side of insects or objects. And as a result, you found out that this feedback with a reversal—a negative feedback, if you will—always involved uncanny distortions generated by the specific nature and history of the particular objects.

**ST** The reason we got interested in the model of biology is because we thought that the extraordinary difference of bodily structures and forms must result in utterly different forms of cognition and thought. For example, some frogs can pull out their belly inside-out from their mouth to extract an alien substance that entered their body. It's an amazing form of vomiting! The exposure of internal organs to the exterior world must obviously be dangerous and this seems far from being an optimal behavior. But for me, it is more interesting to think of what humans can do when they employ this ability of the frog as a model, rather than being satisfied with the standard form of, let's say, making an airplane by studying how birds to fly. That's why I agree with Tatsumi Hijikata when he claimed that dancers should have eyes that can observe the *inconvenience* of a flying dragonfly. This "inconvenience" is always present as long as things and organisms are endowed with a specific form. And as Tol-

stoy famously remarked: "All happy families are alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."<sup>(8)</sup> The image of freedom deprived of inconveniences tends to converge into a more or less same monotonous picture, whereas the particular inconveniences that every organism and object carries within itself are truly diverse and different from one another.

**NC** That distinction between freedom and inconvenience is analogous to the two forms of objectivity we talked about in the first discussion: the generalized objectivity that transcends the particularities of individual objects and the specific objectivity that is derived from the situatedness of each object. At the same time, the process of turning an object into a model does involve a certain loss of its initial particularity, which is to say, inconvenience. In that sense, the two kinds of objectivity are always in a flux, shifting from one to the other and back again.

**ST** So we can say that idiosyncrasy lies in the particular ways of sensing particular inconveniences or unhappiness—I suppose that's one observation we failed to pursue throughout these three discussions, precisely because we let analogies and models take the lead. 🌀

(8) Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina* (London: Alma Classics. 2008), 3.



Painters rely on as much blindness as on vision. As portrayed in a famous woodcut by Albrecht Dürer, the development of perspective was tied to various viewing apparatuses that paralyzed the painter's eyes. The era of perspective may be long gone, but after a generation of painters who radicalized the erasure of depth, the methodological impairment of sight in order to see better remains ever more an issue today. What you don't see conditions what you see.

In this era of post-perspectivism, we present **MAGIC CIRCLE®**, a 360-degrees blinder for painters. This contraption effectively cancels out all the unnecessary regions of the vision field, allowing heightened focus and intensified control. Especially fit for murals painted from afar and drawings that expand above the eye level, this long-kept secret among the geniuses of modern art is available for purchase at last. Order your own **MAGIC CIRCLE®** today and observe that there are things you can only see by becoming blind.





(DONE IDEA)

# P L A Y B A C K T H E A T E R

Ever since Greek tragedy, the fundamental engine of Western theater, both in terms of content and form, has been the notion of irreversibility. Drama occurs because events happen in a specific order, and once they do, there is no way to efface their effects. Consequences, is the word. Without the initial attempt to prevent the fulfillment of the prophecy, the specific chain of events that led to the tragedy of Oedipus would never have been triggered.

Playback Theatre intends to upset this axiomatic causality in theatre by enacting the scripts of classical plays in reverse, line by line. Thus, whereas Oedipus Rex begins by showing King Oedipus standing before the people of Thebes and listening to their complaint about the plague, “Xer Supideo” starts from the following fantastic dialogue:

OEDIPUS: Rob me not of these my children!  
CREON: Come, but let thy children go.  
OEDIPUS: Lead me hence, then, I am willing.

CREON: Then they soon will grant thy plea.  
OEDIPUS: But I am the gods’ abhorrence.  
CREON: Ask this of the gods, not me.  
OEDIPUS: Send me from the land an exile.  
CREON: What thy terms for going, say.  
OEDIPUS: Well I go, but on conditions.  
CREON: Weep not, everything must have its day.  
OEDIPUS: I must obey, though ‘tis grievous.  
CREON: Thou hast had enough of weeping; pass within.

So far we have reverse-enacted Oedipus Rex as “Xer Supideo” and Antigone as “Enogitna”. Our plan is to move on to modern plays, starting perhaps with Ibsen’s A Doll House, which when reversed gives a strangely Scandinavian sounding title: “Esuoh Llod A.”

-Retaeh T. Zhang





[CON-NOTATION]

# SANDANSCORES

BY Una Nancy Owen

BAJA CALIFORNIA  
(December 2014)

+

DEATH VALLEY  
(October 2016)

+ Some Beach Birds  
+ A Local Dog

+ Sidewinders  
+ Desert Pocket Mouse



Una Nancy Owen



Sandanscores





## NOTES ON NOTATION: SANDANScores

Kay Festa

At the heart of the problem of notation lies the issue of degree of abstraction. A score cannot document every single aspect of a given work, so one must choose what to notate and what to leave out. What is left out will either be (A) complemented by convention and/or oral instruction, or (B) consigned to the creativity of the performer(s). In any case, what is not notated contributes to the final form of the work as much as what is notated.

In dance as well as in music, the most common focus of notation are the points of change, the pivots of movement (bodily or sonic) that define the contours of what is to be seen and/or heard. To paraphrase using the terms of graphic design, notation tends to be a system of vector paths (whereas recording tends to be that of pixels).

Una Nancy Owen's SANDANScores play along with this nature of notation by documenting solely the points at which the bodies of movers came in contact with the ground, and the force with which the contact was made (through the depth of each mark). The rest, if these marks are to be used as notation, is up for the re-enactor to imagine or invent anew. The overall duration and speed of movement must also be deduced from the marks.

Because of the necessity to interact directly with the materiality of the score, each reenactment inevitably distorts and alters the previous documentation, consequently increasing the overall complexity of the dance, and leading to the ultimate destruction (erasure) of the score itself.



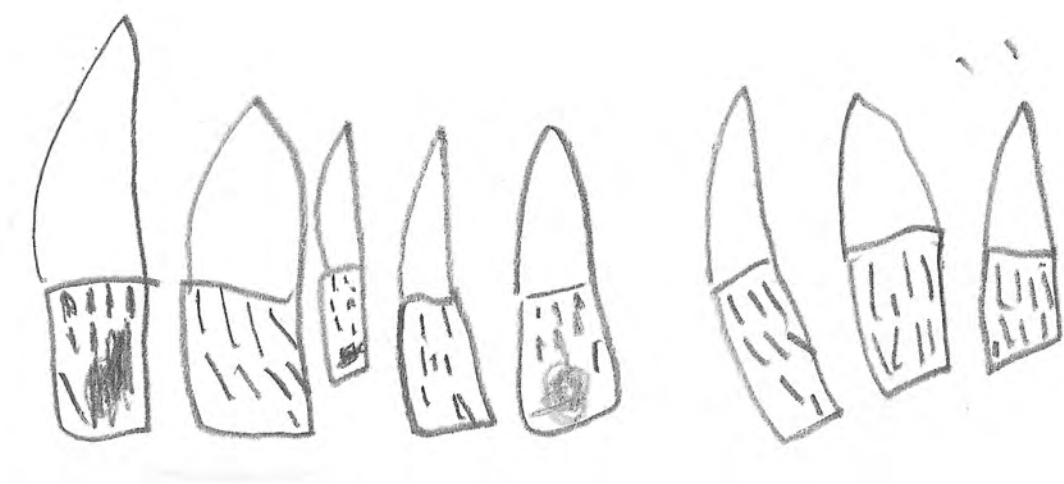


An aerial photograph of a sandy beach. The sand is light-colored and shows numerous tracks and footprints, likely from people walking along the shore. The tracks are arranged in a somewhat parallel fashion, suggesting a group of people moving in the same direction. The lighting creates soft shadows, highlighting the texture of the sand and the depth of the impressions.





8 x 8

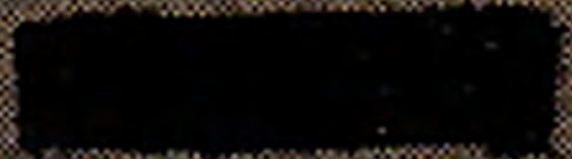




[MICROFICTION]

If We Often  
Ask Questions  
to Others, Our  
Knowledge  
Will Increase

by **Takuma Ishikawa**





## As It Turns Out

A: Like a haphazard happy-ending, nightmarish reality passes by without any warning. There was no end in sight in the midst of it, and it felt as if it would go on forever. But the world changed abruptly, just like that. And the chance to start again is given.

B: What is lost will not come back. The fear swells up before the change. But if the change is accepted, it becomes ordinary (the coldness of the pool water is soon forgotten). And a new task is discovered from the new scenery.

C: A state in which every single thing is being dragged around. It is not that something will happen immediately; everything proceeds in a tentative manner leaving the possibility for a reversal at any moment.

D: An unexpected event happens at an unexpected place, and people are swayed by its contingency. They stray into a parallel world.

## Excerpts from Lecture Notes

1: It is always unclear as to where fables come from. And despite things being added, trimmed, or changed, a fable always demonstrates a complete form; it reveals a density of time. A fable does not make its readers aware of the writing style, which means that style is not an issue for the process of literary compression. There is no transcendental author to whom the fable can be traced back. The entrance is always already closed, but there is always also a crack and more than one way to sneak in.

2: When the underlying fissure of a community became exposed through a catastrophe, it generated a strong demand for reactivating an image that is shared by everybody. Even if the fissure was caused by structural reasons and not imaginary ones, what was sought as resolution was always something imaginary. At this point the mixing of problems became a lubricant for all.



## Information (1939)



## The Creed of a Poet

—Rest assured, our conversation will never leave this room. You clearly have critical opinions about the present government in addition to detailed knowledge about the relationship between politics and art, yet you stopped presenting your works or engaging in any kind of social activity.

Poet: Under the present situation, it has become impossible for me to engage in such activities. Nevertheless, I am making works ever more vigorously, and I am always pressed for time.

—Is that based on an indifference to politics?

Poet: No. I am aiming for a political change by solving artistic problems. I am still an artist with a very high political conscience. Thinking freely or renewing my problems are more important than presenting my works. If I managed to solve an artistic problem, the world cannot erase that fact, even if it was not made public. If one created the cause, the effect will appear in one form or another. It will inevitably affect the world.



## Hands and Eyes and Space

Painter: The preceding generation turned painting into something tactile in order to radicalize the erasure of depth and the emphasis of flatness. Consequently, the kind of depth that even the painter himself could not reach was lost from the space of painting. That is why I came up with the idea of painting from afar, without touching the canvas.

## Even If You Are Not Impatient, This Is...

The issue of “sooner or later” arouses the feeling of wanting to have things happen sooner rather than later even if that worked against your own advantage. When the effect of choice is weakened, action demands speed.



Promises of Children

Children make reckless promises. It is impossible for them to accurately sense the length of time in life. Unable to endure the situation of postponement caused by being irresponsible about time, they make promises. However, even if children’s promises are reckless, they are not always impossible, and some are even kept.

Obedience

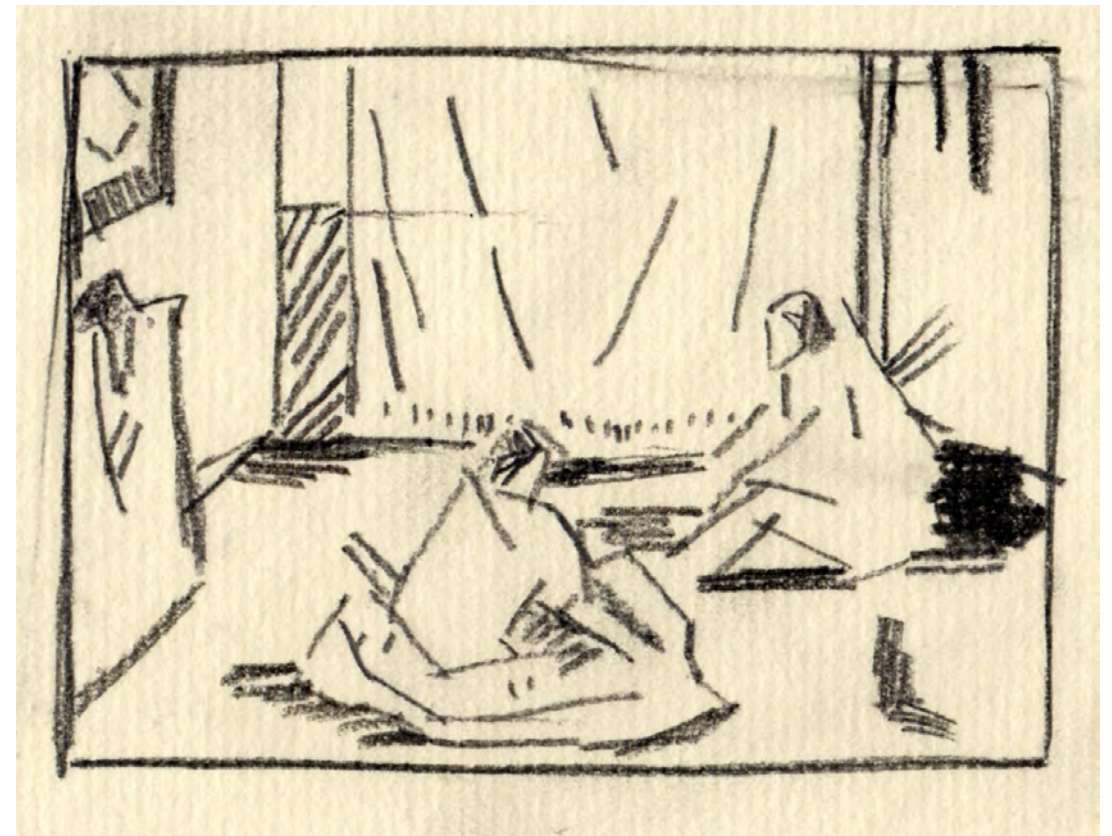
So they do not sit because they are tired, but are made to sit because there is a chair, and made to sleep because there is a bed. They are made to go out because there is a door, and are locked out because there is an entrance. They are made to climb because there are stairs, and made to circulate because there is a sculpture.



## Truth and Time

(What felt like) truth becomes stripped away right in front of me—a change in the color of my eyes.

## Illegal Occupants (1919)





## Rehearsing Satire

Hold on to a pillar and do not let go / Bury your mind in concrete / Pull out the bathtub cover and boil water / Hold metal until it melts / Hang the globe upside down / Stand between two tables / Block each other's noses with each other's noses / The broom dances and stirs up dust / Chase a burglar into a safe / Catch the raven on your head / Find a key in a key hole / Sitting down on coal

## The Swelling of the World

All designs attempted to do away as much as possible with asperity and base themselves in smooth streamlines. As a result, the shape of many things started to appear swollen. Since the time they started continuously feeding me somebody else's choice that resembles mine, I began to appear swollen to my own eyes.



## Lecture - The Circular Flow of Vampires and Zombies

A vampire has an evident weakness. The reason they have survived is due to their intellect and technology—they escape all kinds of traps and entrap the humans in return. The basic profile of a vampire is that of an elite class with feudalistic ideas, who are endowed with various special abilities including immortality. Since vampires have lived sequestered from society, they do not confront the government or the army but only prey discretely on individuals without turning their activities into a public threat. The communal and ethnic characteristics of vampire are relativized and cannot be flatly negated, anthropologically speaking. The viewers appreciate the convenient adoration and pathos towards vampires' character in the form of fantasy.

On the other hand, zombies do not have the capacity to think and they also lack physical capabilities. The origin of zombies is always depicted in movies and their number increase exponentially within a very short time. As a result, the power of zombies lies, without a doubt, in their number and ability to act without reservation. Their threat extends beyond the individual citizens to the entire nation. And the tendency is for the main characters to take on the role of de facto governors in a state of emergency or after the collapse of the government. The viewers can empathize with the catastrophe of human society caused by zombies but cannot empathize with the zombies themselves. Therefore, the viewer's fantasy is projected upon the communality of humans (who are the elite class constituting society) who have been released from the usual restraint of exercising violence. No matter how violent they themselves become, the resurrection of world order is impossible without their actions.

## Getting Rid of Humanism

“It is always the case that once humans enter the picture it becomes impossible to think in an articulate manner, so let's start thinking by detaching humans from the problem.” (The creation of distance weakens the sense of resistance)



## On Still Lives

If I say that I don't believe in chance who might believe me? / It was a malfunction due to a glitch in the security device / What you must be careful about when grafting is the relation between affinity and non-affinity of tree types / Similar things tend to gather in similar places / You cannot extract a ripple from a puddle / How can you say you understand when you haven't seen everything / The relationship between the denominator and the numerator influences the sense of distance / I always end up skipping the gaps since it is impossible to always be conscious

## Still Life (Secret Pleasures of Anthrophobia)





## Still Life (Devout Activity Protected by Partitions)



## Still Life (Neurotic Attitude Derived from Allergic Reaction)





Two Things the Mind's Voice Always Whispers

Voice 1: If you look forward you won't bump into things  
Voice 2: If you look down you won't trip over things

Extreme Supply Does Not Necessarily Mean Sufficiency

Not so much that absence is absent, but rather a situation where one doesn't realize that absence is right in front of you.



# Automatism

A dead body is speaking. Not from memory, but whatever comes to mind.

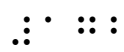
# Bed-making

Some thoughts arose while he was making the bed. How much presence of the person who used this bed still lingers in this room? For instance, an animal with an acute sense of smell might still be able to perceive the person. If the police collected finger prints, they would probably find one pertaining to that person. Furthermore, how much of my own presence would remain in the room after I finish cleaning and leave? Of course, if I drop a hair or something, there will immediately be a complaint. The new customer knows that previous customers or cleaners like me have been in the room until very recently, but refuses to think about it. If somebody’s presence remains in the room, the customer will feel uncomfortable and restless. Then, would the room be filled with someone’s presence between the time I finish cleaning and leave, and the time the next customer comes in?



Endlessness

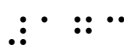
There is no one who can endure the utter absence of endings. Affirmation is always transformed into negation and then into trauma.



Movies That Require Alertness

A: The characters in the movie disappear without any reason, as if they were just stepping out for a moment. A sense of absence pertaining to someone who can reappear at any time.

B: A movie with the feeling that at any moment the story can end and the end-rolls start, without reaching a satisfying conclusion.





## Bonfire (1923)



## THE SCARIEST MOVIE IN THE WHOLE WORLD

Among all genres of cinematography it is porn and horror that stand out as being (or needing to be) thoroughly conceptual. For both of these genres must struggle with making the audience forget that they are watching a film; they are the genres that most require the collapse of the fourth wall in order to function. Many intricate methods and interesting techniques have been developed in both genres for this purpose.

Imagine a horror movie that starts with a static shot of people sitting in a movie theatre. For the audience, therefore, the screen appears as a mirror image of themselves. In the movie, there is a killer among the audience who gets up and starts killing the other movie goers one by one. This goes on for about 30 minutes. Then the screen abruptly blackens out. The rest of the movie happens in total silence and darkness, letting the audience members desperately wonder about what is happening and when they should suspend their suspension of disbelief.

—Earle Lipski



[INTERVIEW]

# A TREE IS NOT STILL, STILL NOT A TREE

INTERVIEW WITH HILDE WALDEN-PEQUOD

BY DEE ALI

*Hilde Walden-Pequod has been making Invisible Choreographies—expressive movement which becomes so embedded in an environment so as to blend imperceptibly into it—in collaboration with plants. Due to this camouflagic nature, Walden-Pequod's works remain elusive and difficult to pin down. Tipped off by a friend who recently stumbled upon the choreographer in the wilderness, Dee Ali from No Collective traveled to Arizona to talk with Walden-Pequod about her peculiar approach to dance.*



**DEE ALI** So how did you get to your original idea for Forest Dances?

**HILDE WALDEN-PEQUOD** I grew up in a place called Lummi Island in Washington, and my father was a fisherman there, both by trade, and for sport. I grew up fly fishing the rivers with him, and I learned about tricking the fish. There are so many amazing strategies for fly fishing, but one of the primary things necessary to the sport is invisible fishing line. And I always thought that was interesting—fishing line makes a connection between the fish, the fly, and the person, but that connection is not supposed to be seen by the fish (i.e., the audience). Fishing line connects the gesture of my arm to the movement of the fly—it relocates my movement into another thing, which because it is different than I am, behaves differently. It's a bit like puppeteering, I think. But anyway, when I started doing *Forest Dances*, it was because I didn't have any dancers to work with. I'm not that friendly, I'm quiet, and I like trees, quite a lot. In other words, I'm a party animal. Anyway, I was on a walk through the woods one day, and it just kind of occurred to me. So I tried it. I found a field with trees on all sides, I tied the strongest fishing line I could find to various branches, and strung the lines back to the center of the field. Then, I basically tied myself into all the loose ends of the fishing line, stood in the middle of the field, and orchestrated the trees into dancing.

**DA** When I first saw your Forest Dances, I was pretty interested in how the fishing line allowed

you to directly conduct the movement of the 'tree performers.' Other choreographers, who work with human bodies, they seem to only be able to instruct dancers, rather than physically cause them to move. Was that on your mind at all in creating the piece?

**HW-P** Yes, well, I've also always been really interested in that problem with dance. In most cases, choreographers and rehearsal directors work with dancers to help them learn the piece, through demonstration, videos, verbal descriptions, cues—all ways of working that require the dancers to behave themselves, and do what they're told. And improvisation, it seems to exist as a way of pushing back against that kind of instruction. Dancers are given more freedom to interpret when they improvise, or at least, that's the idea. But trees—their bodies are so different than our own, they just respond with movement to the influence of physical factors: wind, soil conditions, the proximity of other trees. My own body can't choreograph them in very interesting ways, but through the medium of a fishing line, my body basically expands in scale—it becomes big enough to move the branches of a bunch of different trees at once. And that creates reciprocal dances—my dance, in relationship to that of the trees. They move because I move; and because branches are heavy, I move because they move. They pull back.

**DA** What other ways were you thinking about the issues of scale?

**HW-P** Well, scale is one aspect of a bigger question that I think is actually a lot more important. Typically, when humans have looked at landscapes and forests, they've looked at such things as vast expanses. The bigger, the grander, the better. I'm guilty of the same thing—I have looked down from a lot of cliffs in my life, to see the view. And looking out at the 'size of nature,' I've always noticed, at that scale, I can see choreography. In other words, the wind makes choreography when a bunch of trees move together. Birds make choreography when a bunch of birds flock together. Grass makes choreography when it ripples in the breeze, all those blades, moving together. Single trees, single animals, they're not so choreographic because the system of their movement isn't the most apparent aspect about them. In groups, across expanses, that's where choreography arises. And I think there's a lot to say about how human dance falls in line with that, at least, historically. The *grande cour de ballet*, the balls, the festival dances. Dances were historically for groups. So, I think that the issue of scale, in *Forest Dances*, has to do with the issue of orchestration. Trees have to move together in groups to be dancing. But no matter how many of them are moving, there's just one of me—the sole choreographer, the manipulator.

**DA** That sounds a little ominous...

**HW-P** And it should! I think the notion of the 'choreographer' is precisely what kills the magic of dance! It's so obvious in the *Forest*

*Dances*! A forest moving in unison would be much more magical without the visible choreographer in the middle of the field, pulling strings. The choreographer is a buzz-kill. The choreographer is the problem. And that's why I made *Forest Dances*, and then moved on. I wanted to do other things. I went to work instead with cacti.

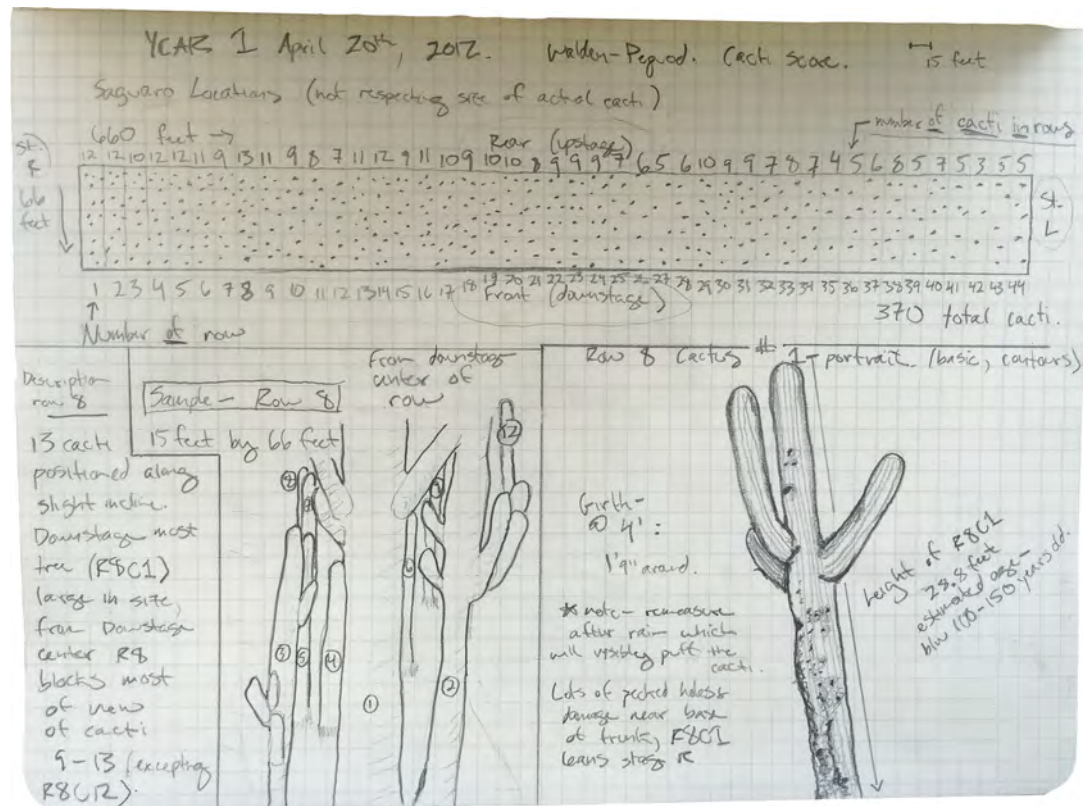
**DA** Your works with cacti are much less known. Why is that?

**HW-P** Well, because I don't try to make my presence known. It's the funny thing about the art world: It's no big news if there's no artist to pin it to. Or, it's not even art if there's no artist to recognize. My work with cacti is incognito. You can't see the dance with the naked eye. You can just read about it, so I guess it's a literary project.

**DA** Can you at least describe what you did?

**HW-P** Well, cacti don't move the way that trees do. They just kind of stand there. That's the reason I was drawn to them, especially to the Saguaro, or the Organ Pipe Cacti of Arizona. So I traveled there. Arizona was anything but Washington, a totally different landscape, and I had to think about movement in a totally different way in order to work with the Saguaros. They even grow really slow—monumentally slow. That's why they're having so many problems keeping them going in Arizona. I couldn't really get the Saguaro to visibly move, so I had to think about choreography in a dif-





Cacti Score (2012)

ferent way. How could I orchestrate the movement of the Saguaros in a meaningful way, as a dance, when they barely grow perceptibly in a year?

**DA** So basically the desire to choreograph Saguaros was a big problem for you?

**HW-P** The thing I like about working with plants, choreographing plants, instead of humans, is that you have to think really differently about movement, what it means, and what it does, how it's done. I really like things to move together, that's just my preference, I know a lot

of choreographers don't share it. But Saguaros are both so deeply together, and so profoundly distinct, even without moving. Because each one is so different, you notice their togetherness. It seems, for example, that they're in configurations, spaced apart from each other in such a bizarrely regular fashion, standing there, posed. It's as if they all planned out the design of their space, "you go here, I go here, that guy goes there," it's so organized. And then, they just stand there, with their arms in the air, in stillness. They're very comedic. I mean—in a way, they're already really choreographic, they set their scene, and they pose. There's just

nothing to show after the initial set-up. It's like somebody raised the curtain on them in that pose and they just froze there.

**DA** It sounds like you really anthropomorphized the Saguaro as performers.

**HW-P** Yeah, I started noticing my anthropomorphism of the Saguaro, which is unavoidable, I think anybody who works with plants or animals does it. So, I decided the Saguaro deserved a score. A choreographic score. And that's where I started—I made them a score that they could follow.

**DA** And they're following it?

**HW-P** Well, it depends again on how you see it. I chose an acre of Saguaro to work with. It just seemed like the right amount of space, since an acre is a measurement of human labor in relationship to land. As a measurement of land, it was calculated in the middle ages as the amount that could be ploughed in a day. So, that was my first imposition on them—I made a bunch of Saguaro into my performers in a human-scale space, a staged-space within their larger one.

**DA** So you ignore all the Saguaro not in your "staged area?"

**HW-P** Yeah, only the ones within my "staged-space" are *my* Saguaro. I suppose I have a sense of ownership over them because I mapped all the Saguaro within that space, I measured

and documented their heights and the widths of their trunks at each foot from the ground up until they split off into their various arms. And counted the number of arms. I drew each of them, rendering them as closely as possible with my poor drawing skills, noting their distinct characteristics. Then, I chose a 'front' and a 'back' of the stage space. I chronicled their poses, as particular events, to conceive of the larger dance. And then I waited a year. When I came back, I have to say, they hadn't grown much. Instead, some of them had holes left behind by animals, things like that. The biggest changes, they were subjected to; they're really passive beings. So, the dance thus far—it's simply a score, it's passive too—it involves all kinds of work simply to document the changes that happen to an acre of them in a year's time. It's a score responding to a dance, but I have chosen to understand it as a score that conducts a dance. Once you've written something down, you can't tell if it's responding to facts, or creating them. I treat the score as an instructor of the cacti, rather than the other way around.

**DA** So what's the big deal about that, I mean it's like hyper-vigilant forest management with a twist of fiction?

**HW-P** Well I think sometimes a choreographer can make a dance, but sometimes a choreographer just has to go looking for a dance. When you go looking for a dance, like I already have by turning away from human dancers, you find it wherever you look. In fact, that aspect of dance has always been central to how



it is understood—dancing is so metaphorical, people are always writing in books, “the dance of this, the dance of that,” to be poetic. I simply took that seriously. But there’s something I’m learning about working with Saguaros, which are strange trees in that their individuality is so easy to see because their forms are simple. At any given moment in time, the differences between their similar poses is what makes it interesting to look at them as a forest. Other trees aren’t so much like that. Even Bob Ross painted his trees with a certain generalizing technique: “Once you can do one, you can paint them all.” Saguaros stand against that. So they disrupt my thoughts about togetherness as the best thing about choreography. They are together, as I said before, but there’s nothing more interesting about looking at Saguaros than seeing their various differences. I’m now trying to give that ‘individuality’ of Saguaros movement, by tracking it over long periods of time, by scoring it.

**DA** So your current choreography could also just be considered dance notation?

**HW-P** Yeah, I guess I’m quite a convoluting force, because I see the various roles played in dance as interchangeable: choreographer can be dance notator can be dancer.

**DA** Except you’re still not a tree?

**HW-P** Right, I’ve made a problem for myself in that I can only convolute the roles that aren’t dancer, because I’ve decided for now that my

dancers are large plant life. But I think its only a matter of time before I devise a way to be choreographed by a tree. And, as I said before, I already began to touch on the issue with the *Forest Dances*, because the weight of branches would also pull on me, in response to being pulled. Their weight moved me around a lot, sometimes I would fall down when a branch would snap back after I pulled on it. It’s surprisingly forceful. 🌀



All lines have a certain materiality though we tend to forget or dismiss this simple fact, as if physical borders could be reduced to mathematical abstraction. But what if a national border is itself an active matter? What if all national borders were composed of animals? The border would be constantly moving and migrating according to the season and other reasons. And instead of border police, the government will send people with bird calls and dog whistles to control the living border. Border control will become musical. Animal Border will also contribute to solving environmental issues, since border control must now deal with the state of natural resources that accommodate and invite animals to one place and not the other. If a country desired territorial expansion (which countries often do) the best strategy would be to make the environment of its neighboring country as attractive as possible so that animals would be allured to move in that direction. One could also smuggle a piece of the border into another country.

— Ai Chinen





[REVIEW]

GROUP EXHIBITION  
**FAR FROM**  
BY SATOSHI HASHIMOTO

*In June 2012, Satoshi Hashimoto participated in the group exhibition FAR FROM, presented simultaneously in Liverpool and Hong Kong with a complementary structure and accompanying rules. Shortly after his return to Tokyo, Hashimoto organized an event at the art school blanClass entitled YOU BURY XXX (TENTATIVELY), where he talked about his experience at the parallel exhibition and sold works he exhibited. Assembled here are stillshots from YOU BURY XXX. (TENTATIVELY) and two reviews of Hashimoto's works by two curators.*







## GENERAL RULES OF FAR FROM

- The curators are all based in Hong Kong and have never visited the UK in the past. During the exhibition, they stay in the UK.
- The participants are artists who have visited neither the UK nor Hong Kong in the past. During the exhibition they stay in Hong Kong, but never visit the UK.
- The curators and participants never meet in person or talk over the phone. They only communicate via email.

## A - EXHIBITION AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART IN LIVERPOOL

- The participants may never visit the UK for the preparation, set-up, or installation of the exhibition. They are also not allowed to enter the UK until the end of the exhibition.
- Under this condition, the artists plan a work that specifically deals with Liverpool, give instructions to the curators and have them realize the exhibition. Everything besides the instruction must be arranged by the curators in the UK. Mailing things is not allowed.

## B - EXHIBITION TAKING PLACE ALL OVER HONG KONG

- The participants visit Hong Kong individually during the exhibition period, conduct research by themselves, and realize a project that relates to the city. Since all the curators will be setting up the exhibition in Liverpool, none of them can be in Hong Kong.
- Each participant must write an article on what he or she did, and publish it in the local newspaper. The readers of this article may access what is announced or visit the site where the participant has done something. This whole process is regarded as an exhibition.
- The collection of newspaper articles, including reviews and reactions, is regarded as the exhibition catalogue.



# ART BY TELEPHONE / FAMILIAR NUMBERS, UNKNOWN TELEPHONE

During the brief period of the exhibition, Hashimoto realized many works in both Liverpool and Hong Kong. I would like to discuss two of them that involved telephones.

## *Art by Telephone* (Liverpool):

A telephone is installed in the exhibition place, along with the caption that “when the artist calls this phone you may pick it up.” Until one of the visitors asked me, “didn’t Yoko Ono do this already?” I was not aware of the other Japanese artist’s piece using a telephone. Walter Weiss, the curator for Hashimoto, told me to just wait and see what happens. But even after a week no one had witnessed the phone ring. I e-mailed Hashimoto and told him, “you should really call sometimes.” However,



*Art by Telephone, 2012*

he replied “I always do, every afternoon.” This made me realize what was happening: there is a nine-hour time difference between Liverpool and Japan (eight-hours with Hong Kong), and the phone was ringing every night after everybody had gone home.

My first thought was that Hashimoto wanted to mess with the rule of the exhibition, namely that “the artists never visit the UK, and never contacts the curators except by email.”

But I noted that as long as nobody stays inside the exhibition space over night to pick up the phone, the rule still applied. By adhering to the same format of work as the one created by the most famous widow in Liverpool, Hashimoto’s piece also responded in a complex manner to the assigned task of “dealing with Liverpool.” Furthermore, his project in Hong Kong also consisted in calling unknown people!

But is he really calling every day? Since he knows that there will be no one in the space, he doesn’t have to actually make the call. Perhaps I should sleep-in at the museum to confirm this.

## *Familiar Numbers, Unknown Telephone* (Hong Kong):

After arriving to Hong Kong, Hashimoto found a bus stop served by four bus routes, 91, 91M, 92, and 96R, and thought this combination of numbers is very similar to a mobile telephone number. When he dialed those numbers, someone picked up, and Hashimoto told him he saw his telephone number on the bust stop. He couldn’t believe it. He asked, “Is it part of an advertisement?” Hashimoto said, “No, it’s like a silkscreen print on the bus stop.” Although Hashimoto’s English is not so good, they continued this kind of silly dialogue for several minutes and he recorded everything. Afterwards, he published the transcript of the conversation in a local newspaper. Hashimoto learned that some people actually tried dialing the number themselves, so he called the man back to apologize.



*Familiar Numbers, Unknown Telephone, 2012*

The calls to the telephone installed in Liverpool, destined to be picked up by no one, comes full circle with *Familiar Numbers* in Hong Kong. Hashimoto says he got on and off buses aimlessly. The aimlessness of his trajectory resulted in converting common numbers into telephone numbers. The bus network led him to the owner of that number: the sole person Hashimoto “encountered” during his stay in Hong Kong—he met neither the curators nor other participants, nor even spectators. Moreover, Hashimoto did not meet the readers of his article, but caused the owner of the number to encounter several strangers.

Now, perhaps the term *Unknown Telephone* refers not only to that guy’s telephone, but also to the fact that we know nothing about Hashimoto’s phone (or the number of the Liverpool phone). His actions enticed the desire of the readers of his newspaper article to confirm whether such a thing really occurred, leading them to call the same number. But I can’t help but think that Hashimoto had assumed the good nature of the man he called and intentionally prompted his readers to make the call. Or could it be that he had already obtained permission from the man in advance? Now I’m feeling the urge to make a phone call.

Maria Sheung Chuen, June 2012



# SUN, MOON AND STARS

In *Sun, Moon and Stars*, Hashimoto collected various advertisements on magazines in the UK and displayed reproductions of them at the exhibition space in Liverpool.

When you go to a kiosk there are all sorts of magazines, and inside them are all kinds of advertisements. The newsstand is essentially an encyclopedia of the present: mobile phones, coffee, food, fly-fishing, weapons, vases, birds, cats... you name it, they have it. Something like 90 percent of magazine income or more comes from ad revenue, not from sales at the kiosk. It is not uncommon to fill up more than half of a magazine with ads. In other words, their primary customer is not the readers but the advertisers, and what they really sell is not the ad but the readers—a strange reversal. So what if one extracts only ads from these magazines?

Usually the readers of a magazine do not pay much attention to the ads, focusing instead on the articles. This is comparable to the fact that in their daily lives people spend most of their time focusing

on what is happening on the ground and not the sky. Perhaps this was what led Hashimoto to choose a title that implied a reversal of perspectives: *Sun, Moon and Stars*.

Now, Hashimoto created two works involving telephones in Hong Kong and Liverpool. I had initially thought this third work had nothing to do with



*Sun, Moon and Stars*, 2012

telephone. But upon close observation I noticed a curious connection: all ads contain a telephone number (or some kind of address)! In contrast, there are no other works in the museum—paintings, drawings, photographs—with telephone numbers written on them. I had been thinking about the difference between ads and artworks on the level of their images, but it turns out that the major difference between them is the presence or absence of telephone numbers (and/or addresses). An ad is like a business card that allows its readers to make contact. All of them contain a name (of the product and/or the company). Suddenly the ads changed from being a mass of images to a mass of business cards (the uniformity of size is also effective to this perceptual transition).

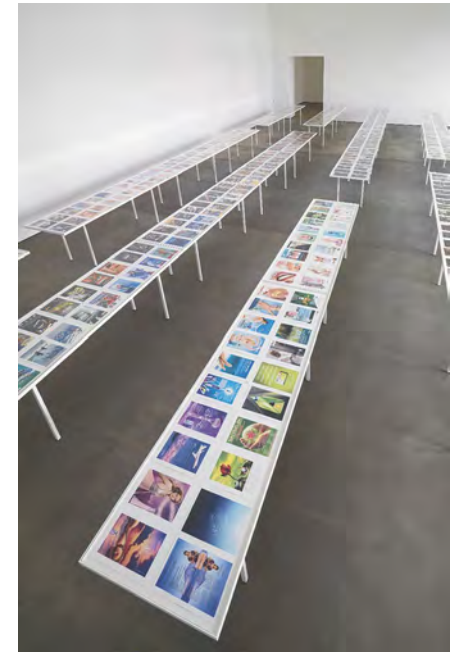
Seen from this perspective, I could not help but think that the telephone installed in the next room as *Art by Telephone* is actually not waiting for a call, but for audience members to call the massive number of addresses that lay before them. No matter how long you wait, the call from the artist never happens (he actually calls in the middle of the night when there is nobody to pick the phone up), but you can instead call the number on the ads! Upon this realization, I decided to call a number I saw. “Yes, this is x” “I’m calling because I found your number.” “What?” “What kind of thing do you do?” “We make and sell things like x. May I ask where you found our number?” “At a museum.” “A museum?” The other people and the guards were looking at me suspiciously.

And now, I am filled with both anxiety and expectation that maybe someone who reads this review will make a call from that telephone in the museum, just like Hashimoto’s article that he published in a Hong Kong newspaper about a telephone number of a stranger prompted its readers to start calling the same number.

In any case, I am struck by how these three very simple works by Hashimoto actually form a complex relationship with one another. Maybe this connection is expressed by the three words in the title *Sun, Moon and Stars*. “Sun”: a single telephone number discovered at a bus stop in Hong Kong; “Moon”: the number of the telephone installed at the Liverpool museum; “Stars”: the numbers on the various shiny ads exhibited at the same museum. When the sun is out, the stars are not; when one is in Hong Kong, one cannot be in Liverpool. The time difference between the two locations flips night and day, and the telephone call made in the Hong Kong afternoon ringing in the Liverpool midnight seems to symbolize moonlight as a reflection of sunlight.

Satoshi, you told me I should “remain dubious,” but—have I solved the puzzle? Or am I completely off the track?

Park Fischli, June 2012



*Sun, Moon and Stars*, 2012



9 ÷ 3





# THE RHETORICS OF DETECTIVE M.

by Rice Pekinpah (14 Years Old)

Quentin Meillassoux

*The Number and the Siren:*

*A Decipherment of*

*Mallarmé's Coup De Dés*

Translated by Robin Mackay

Sequence/Urbanomic, 2012

My mom gave me a book called “The Number and the Siren,” written by a French philosopher named Quentin Meillassoux for my eleventh birthday present. She thought it might be interesting since the publisher described his work as “a detective story à la Edgar Allan Poe,” and I love detective stories. I thought the book was exciting and I liked it very much. But when I finished reading it, I was left with a lot of questions. When I talked with my mom about them she told me it was very important that I write my thoughts down. So that is what I am going to do here.

In this book, the author tries to decipher a famous poem that a French poet called Stéphane Mallarmé wrote in 1897. The title of the poem is ‘Un Coup de Dés jamais n’abolira le Hasard,’ which means ‘A Throw of Dice Will Never Abolish Chance’ in English. It is a very strange poem with words and sentences placed in different parts of the page instead of being aligned neatly like other poetries I know of. I had never seen anything like this but I thought it looked quite pretty. Mallarmé’s work is very famous, but it was also known to be a mystery for a long time because nobody really understood what he wanted to do by writing like that. Meillassoux says that he is the first person who has succeeded in solving the secret of the poem, and that is what he writes about in this book.

From what I understood, I think Meillassoux’s detective work tried to solve two mysteries at once. One was the question of “what did Mallarmé try to do in his poem?” and the other was the question of “why was Meillassoux able to decipher the secret of what Mallarmé tried to do in his poem?” Meillassoux says that both of these questions have the same answer, which is the ‘absolutization of chance.’ ‘Chance’ is a word that describes the possibility of how things could have been, and can be, completely different from what it is now. ‘Absolutization’ means that that possibility of being different is true for everything, and that this is the only thing that is true for everything (my mom told me this problem of ‘absolute chance’ was something that Meillassoux also wrote about in his previous book called *After*

*Finitude*). So Meillassoux says that both mysteries have the same answer, but because they have the same answer, he also thinks that they are actually the same question. According to Meillassoux, the answer to the second question of why he was able to decipher Mallarmé’s secret is that it was by sheer chance. But this answer was already written inside the first mystery of what Mallarmé did in his poem, since this poem is all about chance.

Meillassoux’s detective work is very exciting to read. His big discovery is that he finds the number ‘707’ working like a secret key in Mallarmé’s poem. He counts all the words in the poem and there are 707 of them. He also says that the placement of letters and the order of the poem are also decided by using the number 707. That is why number 707 is very meaningful. But because Meillassoux wants to say that chance is also important in Mallarmé’s poem, he adds two other things to his answer. First, he says that if he counted slightly differently the number would have been other numbers close to 707, like 705 or 706. Second, he says that in that case, the numbers would have been completely meaningless. According to him, this is how Mallarmé put chance, which is the possibility for things to have been completely different, into the core of his poem.

But here is where some questions came up to me: If ‘absolute chance’ is really the secret key here, wouldn’t that be a big problem for Meillassoux’s own detective work? I think that if everything could really have been different, the secret number could have been any other one, and be as meaningful as 707. The same



thing can be said about Meillassoux’s discovery of Mallarmé’s secret. If everything could have been completely different, the possibility would have not only been that Meillassoux might have never discovered Mallarmé’s secret. A stronger ‘chance’ would be the possibility that Meillassoux might have discovered any another work, and found a secret that was as meaningful as Mallarmé’s.

Now this is a bit funny because for me the title of Mallarmé’s poem already explains this stronger ‘chance,’ especially when it is abbreviated to ‘Un Coup de Dés’ or ‘A Throw of Dice,’ like Meillassoux does many times in his book: “‘A Throw of the Dice’ (written by Mallarmé, and decoded by Meillassoux) will Never Abolish Chance.” I agree with Mallarmé, if this was indeed what he wanted to say. This is because I believe that the “wager system” Meillassoux says the poet put into his poem, the system of betting on the possibility that the secret of an artwork might be decoded long after the author dies, is not at all unique to “A Throw of the Dice.” I think that is true for all artworks. So if things can be totally different, not only the secret code of Mallarmé’s work might not have been ‘707,’ but Meillassoux’s book might not have been on Mallarmé’s secret to begin with. Not thinking about this possibility is to use “absolutization by chance,” rather than “absolute chance.” That is also why I think the answers to the two mysteries do not fit well with each other. Meillassoux can’t really say that Mallarmé’s secret and his discovery of the secret are *both* about absolute chance. If Mallarmé’s chance is absolute, Meillassoux’s

discovery is not, and if the chance in Meillassoux’s discovery is absolute, then Mallarmé’s secret is not. It’s one or the other.

But Meillassoux doesn’t explain why he places an odd limitation to how much he absolutizes ‘chance.’ He does say that the strange logic of what he calls ‘retro-action’ might explain things: that the result of his discovery itself explains the arbitrariness of Mallarmé’s work backwards front. But for me this sounds like a boring science fiction, and it feels like he is cheating. I think the reason Meillassoux does not write about this is more simple than that. It is because he does not write at all about how he writes. The only reason Meillassoux never thinks about other numbers being as meaningful as ‘707’ is because he believes that ‘707’ can be discovered in Mallarmé’s work by pure detective work. But what is a pure detective work? From what I understand, pure detective work is a very difficult thing to do because it involves two claims that do not go well with each other (just like Meillassoux!). One, you have to say that whatever the detective finds was always there waiting to be found. The secret can be cracked by doing very very simple things that anyone can do, like counting words, or paying attention to one part of a painting, or something like that. But at the same time, you have to also say that the detective had to explain the secret, so that people can actually see what they had not been able to see. I have read many detective novels but none explains this second claim in a clear way. It is often just hidden to make only the first claim seem more important.

I think that the problem of the second claim has to do with ‘rhetoric’ that I learned in school the other day. Rhetoric is the way words are used to describe and convince the reader of what is written. If the work of rhetoric is usually hidden in detective novels, I think it is because they make full use of it. Rhetoric is like the secret engine of detective novels and that is why they can’t talk about it. Another very interesting book that I read called “The Cryptographic Imagination: Secret Writing from Edgar Poe to the Internet,” written by Shawn James Rosenheim, explained how Edgar Allan Poe, my favorite author who invented detective novels, had a hard time dealing with the ‘transparency’ of language. According to Rosenheim, Poe had to use language to make his detective ‘read’ physical clues on crime scenes as signs, and then convince the others about the ‘truth’ of the crime, but he also had to make this language invisible. So detective novels have been deeply connected to rhetoric from the beginning, but also disturbed by it.

Going back to Meillassoux, I think when the reader starts thinking about rhetoric of his writing, it becomes difficult to ignore the possibility that there can be other rhetorics connected to other secrets being told in a convincing way. The absolutization of chance makes other rhetorics as meaningful as the one Meillassoux chooses to absolutize. I think the strange distinction Meillassoux makes between the “real-” and “fictive (ideal)-” Mallarmé comes from him not really considering his own rhetoric. Because when you think about rhetoric the difference between real and



Shawn James Rosenheim  
“The Cryptographic Imagination”  
Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996

fictive becomes blurry: any writing is fictive. What interests me is that from what I learned in my literature class, it was the French poets of nineteenth century, including Mallarmé, who did many interesting things with this possibility. For example, Charles Baudelaire was a poet who influenced Mallarmé, and also the person who translated Poe into French. When I read his essay called “The Painter of Modern Life” written in 1863, it seemed to me that what Baudelaire wanted to do was to make the painter Constantin Guys and his works exist through his writings. I thought this was a very interesting experiment, especially because I haven’t seen any of Guys’ paintings in real life. So the distinction between real and fictive is much more complicated here than in the simple one made by Meillassoux.



I think that even though Meillassoux talks about the performance of Mallarmé’s writing, he never really thinks about the performance of his own writing. That leaves him in a weak place, because when you see what Meillassoux is doing as a performance, you could say that it is only another French philosopher talking about another French poet as the greatest thing that happened in the nineteenth century culture. Oh, the French! But I think the most important thing about Mallarmé’s work, and what I learned from Meillassoux’s decoding of Mallarmé’s work, was that it didn’t really matter if Mallarmé was French or not. The “wager system” of Mallarmé, his act of throwing himself into the ocean of posteriority, cannot be fixed inside one country or culture. Hell, it could have been some alien that wrote, found, and decoded his poem.

What I am trying to say is that Meillassoux’s detective work is very thorough, but it has a hole *precisely because* it is thorough. The answer to the mystery that he finds can be put like this: 1) there is a definite answer that I discovered, and 2) there is no definite answer. But from what I understood, the absolute result of absolute chance is neither in absolute determinacy (of 707 or Meillassoux’s discovery of Mallarmé’s secret), nor absolute indeterminacy (of the complete meaningless of 706 or 705, or the possibility of Meillassoux not discovering Mallarmé’s secret). The answer is not split between an absolutely meaningful answer and an absolutely meaningless one. Instead, the answer is that there are, and can be, *several* meaningful answers and *several* determinacies.



Charles Baudelaire  
“The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays”  
Phaidon, 1995

Maybe 7 is much more meaningful than 707, or maybe the magic number is 700007, and maybe Meillassoux or any other person can find likely meaningful secrets in other artist’s work in other times and other countries. And if this is the true answer, then it opens up a new question: how to choose one determinacy over the other, and how to convey that choice in a convincing way to the readers. In this way we are back into the world of rhetoric, which is also a return to the world of “detective stories à la Edgar Allan Poe.” So maybe it’s all good, in the end. 🌀



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[DONE IDEA]

# HOW TO DO THINGS

# WITH

# WORDS

Discussions about “audience participation” are usually boring since they only focus on the level where participation is an acknowledged and intentional act. The particular outcomes of what an audience intends to do, and actually does, inside a performance, tend to be inconsequential, as these are already buffered by so many preceding layers. Participation thus becomes a superficial event, entertaining perhaps, but not critical to the work in any sense. And many people are more than willing to participate on this level.

But an audience is always already participating, forming a crucial part of the performance, through the mere act of being there—why else would it be customary for performances to wait until at least one audience has arrived? This is the primordial level of (un)intentional action: people intend to come, and they do so. And once they have arrived, they and their bodies cannot help but to influence and be influenced by their surroundings, each in a distinct manner (through appearance, mood, scent, desires, etc).

These observations point towards a form of audience participation that examines and exploits involuntary/unconscious forms of engagement that is always already at work in a performance setting.

“How To Do Things With Words” is a performance for selected audience members in a private location by two performers who are preferably in a romantic/sexual relationship. One of the performers is entirely naked. The other performer starts telling the naked partner about his/her sexual fantasies with an audience member. S/he can spend any length of time on a given person, but must look directly into the eyes of the person s/he is fantasizing about. The performance ends when all the audience members have been fantasized. The naked performer may physically react or not.

—Kay Festa + You Nakai







**NO TEXT(ING)  
IN THEATERS  
PLEASE!**

**BY NO COLLECTIVE**



1. Theater frames an event in order to detach a time-space from the given pre-established time-space that surrounds the spectator. It thereby attempts to create that utopic freedom pertaining to 'fictions' in general, of being uninvolved (or involved differently) in an already conglomerated situation, often addressed in comparison as 'reality.'

2. This aim of theater can, and fundamentally speaking must, be pursued without adhering to the physical conditions of a given space. Therefore, against the conglomerate of theater-as-genre and theater-as-building-type (whose 'reality' is inscribed in the metonymic sharing of a common name), the problematics of genre can and should be detached from that of building-type.

3. In the same way, theater can and should be detached from naive conceptions of 'tomorrow,' if what is addressed by that term is merely an extension of the given realities of a conglomerated 'today.' Theater resists the present in the present.

4. For instance: the prevalence of cell phones that every theater-goer today brings into the venue suggests an alternative to the primacy of architecture. By connecting its user to another space and time, cell phones disrupt and relativize the framing ability of theatre. In other words, this portable media smuggles another theater, cellular and mobile, into the physical-psychological unity of conventional theater, relativizing the latter's singular reality. That is why they must be ostracized at all costs: "PLEASE SILENCE YOUR CELL PHONES ONCE IN THE THEATER."

5. To generalize: any physical-psychological unity of a given space-time (i.e. 'reality') is constructed theatrically and is precisely therefore vulnerable to the intrusion of other theaters.

6. Detachment from a seemingly conglomerated unity/reality has precisely been the subject matter of theater since antiquity. Drama is always triggered and conditioned by the localized nature of each character (partial knowledge and mutual ignorance) that cannot be unified into a common reality. It is as if oedipus was on the phone all the time.

7. The localized ignorances on stage, however, are overviewed by spectators who thus play, unknowingly, the role of gods. But their divine perspective is supported by two meta-media that enwrap the divergence of local realities: the stage and the text. The imagined unity of theater-as-building-type and that of theater-as-literary-form provides an objective correlative (spatial as well as temporal—since buildings have walls and texts always reach an end) to a unified 'reality' to which the spectator/reader can safely return.

8. The very conception of 'spectators in general' is fictional. For each audience member, like each *dramatis persona* on stage, is always localized and partially ignorant.

9. Theatrical realism lies in the 'fictional' framing of the dismantlement of a given conglomerated 'reality.' So what is necessary is to dismantle the very split between the unity of spectators and the partiality of *dramatis personae*. For what is fictional is the division between fiction and reality and what is real is the possibility of rearranging this division. We thus fight one theater with another.

10. Consider the theatrical realities of an exhibition which attempts to frame various localized objects and information into a conglomerate space-time unity.

11. The act of reading serves to detach the reader from a given space-time, as well as to conglomerate physically disparate spaces and times. Long before cell phones, books had already enabled a cellular and mobile theater. That is why theater must be darkened; since if enough light is provided, any spectator may be absorbed into the frame of the text and be detached from his or her theatrical surroundings—as you have been doing for some time now. ☹

(Originally displayed at the exhibition "Theatres en Utopie: un parcours d'architectures visionnaires [Theatres in Utopia: A Journey of Visionary Architecture]" in Nantes, France, from June 22, 2013 to March 30, 2014)



# Dramatis Personae

**Art User Conference** is an organization formed in 2014. Instead of participating in the grand narrative of Art, AUC “uses” art in order to decompose reified artworks, dismantle the myth of creation into the temporality of ready-mades, and debilitate the illusion of publicness. The ultimate aim for this “use” is to *exhaust* Art—to economize it and lead it to its death.

**Aevi** is a runner, counter, and a jumper born on December 15, 2010. He likes vehicles and going up in the air. He can ride a bike with two wheels. He can see better than anybody else (except for babies) because he is so little. Aevi has lived in Tokyo, Osaka, Kashiba, Bali, Lisbon, and New York. Now he lives in San Diego. He is the author of “Are We Here Yet?” (Already Not Yet, 2016), and other books.

**Dee Ali (No Collective)** is a choreographer/dance theorist currently based in Berlin who works primarily on dance films and social choreography. As No Collective, she focuses on choreographies that are woven into the fabric of situations until they become imperceptible, or disappear into the expressivity of other art forms. These “infra-choreographies,” given the right compositional conditions, can then be dragged back to the surface of a work. Dee’s approach in No Collective is described in: Ellen C. Covito, “The End of Choreography as We Know It” (*PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, MIT Press, 2016)

**Jay Barnacle (No Collective)** is a weekday sound engineer and weekend botanist based in Margate, UK. Aside from his work with No Collective, he does research on plants and pollinators and other curiosities and writes about his findings.

**Ai Chinen (No Collective)** is a native of Okinawa Island, singer, and a translator. Aside from her work with No Collective, she organizes the acapella

group “Unplugged Synths,” which covers masterpieces of experimental electronic music simulated with voice.

**Ellen C. Covito** is a composer/choreographer known for her *Composed Improvisation/Improvised Composition* series. Her works have been performed all over the world, including New York, Tokyo, Berlin, and London. She is also known as a theorist of Music and Dance. Her recent writings include “The End of Choreography As We Know It” (*PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, MIT Press, 2016). A compendium of her works has been published by No Collective as: *Ellen C. Covito: Works After Weather* (Already Not Yet, 2014). <http://ellencovito.com>

**Lindsey Drury** is an artist and academic, who creates systems in which bodies and their function are conceived, deceived, received and perceived anew. As an academic, she delves into the study of historical conditions and processes concerning ideas of body and its attributes, while in her dances, she composes an assemblage of elements which becomes triggered by the inclusion of human performers to unfold in an unforeseeable manner.

**Kay Festa (No Collective)** is a theoretical dramaturg, independent scholar, and ambitious poet, whose recent published writings include “A Closing Remark: On Several Technologies Inside the *Concertos Series*” (*Leonardo Music Journal*, MIT Press, 2014), and “More Than Meets the Ears: An Account of the Shared (Ac)counts of Cage and Stravinsky” (*TDR*, MIT Press, 2015).

**Melanie Fisher** is a novelist and creator of “Fictional Speculation.” Her writing and speculative skills were honed by her father, Camden, an obscure performance artist who spent his life fighting against “the tyranny of age specificity.” Melanie is cur-

rently preparing her first and only novel *The Ages of Melanie Fisher*, a pseudo-auto-biography whose chapters are each narrated by a Melanie of different age. Now that the written chapters of the book have caught up with her present life, she intends to work on one chapter every year until her death. Melanie lives in Pittsburgh with her five-year-old son Camden, who is a very critical reader of Marcel Proust.

**Matthew Gantt** is a composer and conceptualist based in Brooklyn by way of Durham, North Carolina. His creative practice focuses primarily on (dis)embodiment in electronic music, media in virtual space, and the procedural aggregation of cultural content. Gantt holds an M.M. in composition from CUNY Brooklyn College and currently works as a studio assistant to Morton Subotnick.

**Miruku-Souko [Milk Storage]** is a collective of six artists formed in 2009 under the leadership of Naotaka Miyazaki. Their works are inspired by the network of tools and human bodies, and focus on discovering potential functions of objects, and re-arranging the infrastructures of existing buildings. They run two spaces in Tokyo: a studio in Kodaira, and the event-space/studio *milkyeast* in Haccho-bori. Solo Exhibitions include, “Inventory management is a running hot chariot” (3331 GALLERY, 2016); Group exhibitions include “Art Program Oume” (2012), and “Tokorozawa Biennale 2011.”

**Naoki Matsumoto** uses found materials and daily objects to decompose traditional techniques of painting and plastic arts, and refabricate their functions. Solo exhibitions include, “Sorcerer and Witch” (Nagano, 2014), “Strategy Twenty: Fishing in Troubled Waters” (Gallery Objective Correlative, 2007); group exhibitions include, “Self-Reference Reflexology” (*milkyeast*, 2016), “Matsushiro Contemporary Art Festival” (Nagano, 2014). In 2015, Matsumoto formed the artist duo *Coconuts* with musician Takuma Nishihama.

**Satoshi Hashimoto** is an artist based in Tokyo. His exhibitions include, “Can’t Go, Please Come” (2010, ARCUS, Ibaraki), “‘Sell Me Your Concept’ in India” (2011, India), “Arbitrary Decisions and

Prejudices: I Divide the Audience” (2012, The National Art Center, Tokyo), “False name” (“14 EVENINGS,” The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo), “I was Leonardo da Vinci. I sell my soul. I sell heaven” (2013, AOYAMA | MEGURO, Tokyo), “Photographer (Art Market, Photographer): Bodybuilder” (2014, Art Fair Tokyo), “Fw: Foreign country (Japan - Malaysia)” (2016, International Airport, Airplane, Malaysia, etc).

**Takuma Ishikawa** is an artist and art critic. His recent exhibitions include, “Lessons and Conveyance” (Talion Gallery, Tokyo, 2016), “Takuma Ishikawa x Yoshihiro Yamamoto: responsive/responsible” (Teko Gallery, Aomori, 2016), and “The Camera Knows Everything” (Yumiko Chiba Associates, Tokyo, 2015).

**DJ JD [Diji Judd]** is a composer based in Austin by way of Charleston, South Carolina. His creative practice focuses primarily on embodiment in electronic music, media in real space, and the procedural aggregation of historic form. DJ JD holds an M.M. in composition from University of Texas, Austin.

**Earle Lipski (No Collective)** is an engineer, programmer, and system architect. He is primarily interested in the historical intersection between performance art and systems theory, and devises systems that are informed by this nexus.

**You Nakai (No Collective)** makes music(ians), dance(rs), and other kind of entities as part of No Collective, or conducts research on wide range of curiosities and writes about his findings. He is now working on a book on the music of David Tudor (in contract with Oxford University Press), while teaching math, logic, chess, cycling, and common sense to his five-year-old son Aevi. His research is currently supported by the Society for the Promotion of Sciences.

**Una Nancy Owen** is an archaeologist and experimental dancer from Devon, UK. Her dance works focus on the relationship between body movement and ground, paying extreme attention to the effects



of body mass and weight on the surface and interior of earth, and the workings of gravity onto the physicality of dancers. Una often collaborates with her husband Ulik Norman Owen who is a photographer.

**Rice Pekinpah** likes to read and ponder about what he has read. His favorite author is Jorge Luis Borges, and his favorite book, *The Chronicles of Bustos Domecq*. He is currently reading Jean Piaget's *The Child's Conception of the World*. His favorite subject is engineering. His is worried about his declining sight.

**Shinichi Takashima** is an artist who has been creating performance and video works since 2003. His motivation derives from the sensation of floating in zero-gravity, which is gained by distorting his own body materially and functionally. He is also active as a critic and curator. Recent performances include *Before or After* (as the group *Zen-Go* with Megumi Kamimura, blanClass, Yokohama, 2015), and recent exhibitions include "Self-Reference Reflexology" (collaboration with Shu Nakagawa, mik-yeast, Tokyo, 2016).

**Hilde Walden-Pequod** is a native of Lummi Island, a fisherman, and choreographer. Her works address dance as a means for exploring the differentiation between bodies and species by systematically traversing forms of embodiment via media that both instigates and responds to movement. She currently lives in Arizona, but travels extensively within the US as a freelance field researcher for environmental organizations.

**Retaeh T. Zhang** is the director of Playback Theater formed in 2005. PT aims to *exhaust* the engine of Western theater in order to decompose reified dramaturgy, dismantle the narratorial basis of forward-driving temporality, and debilitate the illusion of *deus ex machina*. She also works as a hired dramaturg in Europe, and has collaborated with the Hard of Hearing Orchestra, led by the deaf composer Noel Celtovic.

**No Collective** fabricates musical performances which explore and problematize both the conceptual and material infrastructures of music and performance. Some relatively unusual formats employed over the years include playscripts, picture books, and haunted houses. No Collective was featured in *Leonardo Music Journal* (MIT Press) as one of the artists under 40 who are doing interesting things with technology. Works which have been most arduous to make, include *Vesna's Fall* (Judson Church/Black Mountain College, 2014), a decidedly Modernist dance piece made in collaboration with Lindsey Drury, in which each dancer wears a 13-foot movable, curtained stage and counts the necessary counts for other dancers who they cannot see (<http://nocollective.com/v.html>), and *Concertos No.4* (National Museum of Modern Art Tokyo, 2012), performed with ball-shaped speakers kicked around by professional blind athletes in a completely darkened 16,000 square feet performance space. Recent works that went rather well include *House Music (C): Two Stories* (Kulturraum, Berlin/University of the Arts, Helsinki, 2014-15), another collaboration with Drury (<http://nocollective.com/hc.html>). Publications include *Concertos* (Ugly Duckling Presse, 2011), a book which describes and prescribes the process of preparation, execution, and documentation of a music concert in the form of a playscript, and *Sonnet for 'Concertos No.4'* (National Museum of Modern Art Tokyo, 2013), a score of a nursery rhyme whose lyrics are the entire instructions for making another 'serious' music concert. A brief and biased portrayal of No Collective's activities forms a part of an interview with You Nakai (*Perspectives of New Music* (Winter, 2013)). Extensive essays on No Collective's works have been published in *Performing Arts Journal* (MIT Press) and *TDR* (MIT Press). <http://nocollective.com>



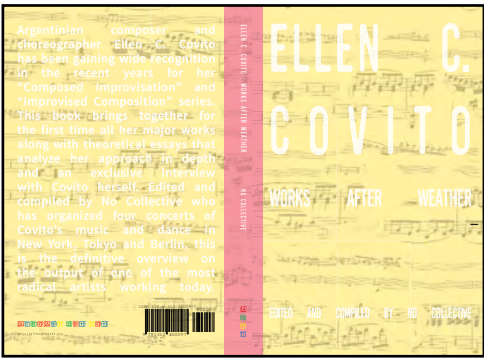
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ANY 01 | May 2014 | 180 PP (Full Color) | OPEN ACCESS

**Ellen C. Covito: Works After Weather** | Edited and compiled by No Collective

Argentinian composer/choreographer Ellen C. Covito has been gaining wide recognition in the recent years for her *Composed Improvisation* and *Improvised Composition* series. This book brings together for the first time all her major works, along with theoretical essays that analyze her approach in depth and an exclusive interview with Covito herself. Edited and compiled by No Collective, the group that has organized four concerts of Covito's music and dance in New York, Tokyo, and Berlin, this is the definitive overview of one of the most radical artists working today.

"As a rising star in the radical musical traditions [...] Covito continues the necessary investigation of the conditions of art" (*TDR*)



ANY 02 | November 2015 | 278 PP

**Museum of Unheard (of) Things** | by Roland Albrecht | Translated by Alexander Booth and You Nakai

The catalogue raisonné of the world-famous "literary cabinet of curiosities" in Berlin, which holds the record of being the most visited museum in the German capital (if one offsets the number of visitors to the square meters of the exhibition space). The museum collects unique objects to which curator Roland Albrecht has patiently lent his ear in order to hear the unheard (of) story each of them has to tell. This book is the first publication to assemble all the 78 stories in the current collection, all categorized according to weight, translated into English for the first time.

"Now for the first time, English-speakers have the chance to appreciate the idiosyncrasy of Museum of Unheard (of) Things in its entirety. The unheard (of) is finally rendered audible." (*Compulsive Reader*)



ANY 03 | December 2016 | 112 PP

**Are We Here Yet?** | Questions and Answers and Drawings by Aevi (age 4 1/2)

*Are We Here Yet?* is a picture book like no other: 26 sets of profoundly simple questions and answers formulated and beautifully illustrated by a very inquisitive four-and-a-half-year-old boy. Included are age-old conundrums such as: What is the last number? Why do crayons have color? Why do doors open? Who made god? Why do I like things? What happens when you die? Why do you have books? This is a philosophical and pedagogical inquiry based on earnest observation and fantastic leap of imagination only possible for a relatively newcomer to our world that will by all means delight and fascinate thinkers of all ages. [*Works on Progress* series: Book 1]



"Nothing less than a once-in-a-lifetime book..." (Rice Peckinpah)





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