

DARREN BADER
THE TYPIST



Casimir Books

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2020—2002

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Known for a variety of sculptural practices (sometimes thought to be jokes or pranks), Darren Bader's interest in sculpture comes of a persistent inquiry into thingness *vis-a-vis* notions such as: “the (im)possible, the non-doctrinaire, the nominal, and the ideal.” Even though invested in such language, Bader would like to be understood as, “Pop artist more than devoted Conceptualist.” Although there is some evidence suggesting otherwise, “My non-Arte-Povera 60s fuse-fests would be a Martin-Mitchell-Morris triple scoop covered in Robert Barrys—stick it in a Richard Serra cone for needed lead poisoning. Please no Baldessari (berries) though. Oh, I like how Warhol's B&W movies just sit and watch. Barnett Noumena can watch back at them and talk to me from time to time. In truth, I'm just like any dope born after 1960, but I hope to be at least as good as a third-rate Magritte.”

For *Character Study*, Bader scratches a surrealist itch. “The eponymous character is anonymous in order to speak for itself.” It's the latest denizen of *Mendes Mundi*, Bader's AR “bestiary-cum-consumersphere-cornucopia” project first developed for last year's Venice Biennale. Using state of the art technology, ACRUSH will render the AR character in painted aluminum. Bader is “fearful of the carbon footprint, but can't help [him]self.” The AR character will also be made available for the first time.

Interview with Mitchell Anderson for ACRUSH Zurich

Mitchell Anderson: *Your work with augmented reality really begins for the Venice Biennale last year, what happened there? And what's changed in the past year?*

Darren Bader: Too often unchecked ambition was met with technological limitations, as well as bureaucratic

shortcomings. But that's an imprecise, though not untrue, summary.

You ended up showing these poster advertisements and a kind of kiosk. Similar posters are here in Zurich. Did the technical limits, or maybe the lengthening of the process, create a new work? These projects now become launches, kind of like Steve Jobs' Keynote announcements for the NEW pieces. So maybe what I'm wondering is if this is its own work, part of the project or a happystance where you've made omelettes out of a basket of broken eggs?

It's definitely an evolution. But there are still a bunch of eggshell bits in the omelet(s). The omniscient voice/brand of *Mendes Mundi* certainly seems less essential than it once did. But I like to hunt for glue and umbrellas, so right now I'm feeling a bit exposed. But I'm also not super interested in hiring the king's horses and men to bring Humpty Dumpty back to past pastures.

In other works over the past decade or so you've kind of dismantled, or made it seem like you were dismantling, the art object in its post Dutch Golden Age collectible form. I'm thinking specifically about those kinds of cancerous quotidian objects that a collector may endlessly replicate before disposing of the original. Bottle caps, segments of wood... Is the ideal end form of this project with AR an app? An app for everybody?

To be considered alongside the Dutch Golden Age (although I can appreciate the analogical aptness) smacks of vanity on my part, but thank you for the (fanciful?) throughline! "Cancerous" is funny, i.e. funny that you perceived those objects to be "cancerous". Re app, the more the merrier yes, but there are approaches to sales that may retard/prevent this. The app will need to end up being a number

of proprietary apps, each authored/owned by the work's owner (with my tacit assistance). AR (and AR follies) proved exceptionally costly and there's no good way to make an app for everybody without putting myself (a resident American, remember) at serious financial risk. I would like to make a bit of the money back in order to help very modestly finance my 40s. But in theory, yes, the more the merrier, yes yes yes!

Even when you deal with the capital format of art, there is a red line of generosity inherent in a lot of your work. Here, the possibility of multiple people "owning" an AR character, sculpture? Of yours. I see echoes between this project and your proposed sculptures, where if someone were to produce it you would provide the certificate for the piece. In one way it's an outsourcing of the production of your dreams, but in reality how do you see these ideas operating?

"Generosity" is the word that feels right to me. I adore the endless heaps and bouquets of STUFF in the world: gewgaws, talismans, venerable goods, etc. They do have a certain magical "post-animistic" quality to me, and without the (hearty) surfeit inherent to (our understanding of) [C]apital. Collaboration, even if it courts/abides-by the absurd, semi-comic, etc, is a very important aspect of my work. It's my way of Polaroiding the work into semi-perpetuity and realizing my language/thought may prove incongruous to/in the mind of another person. Language cascades imperfectly and I simply want to communicate. Sometimes visuals underwrite themselves visually, but sometimes the verbal is the only way to truly share, approximate a (hilariously) imperfect togetherness. I DON'T KNOW IF I'VE ANSWERED YOUR QUESTION

Answered! I think it's interesting that you lump in these non-existent, or rather physically not here, characters with all the other stuff in the world. So many people forget that

these ones and zeros cost resources to keep around, and I always appreciate when artists are at least honest about their connection to creating things that take up space in the world. How do you maintain a thingness in AR? Is it the same as IRL?

What a scrumptious question! For me, thingness is generally tethered to (im)palpability, where touch is desired but allowed only occasionally. What's the occasion? What's the rite? What's the "might [I]"? Etc. Does one want to touch a moving digital form? I find I prefer to watch, much as I don't (usually?) feel like touching actors or trees in a show I'm watching on the screen. Re lump[ing], the world (you know, "the world!") is many things. Sometimes one finds one has lumped, and then has to live with that discovery. Humans are pretty decent at reconciling/assimilating in this way. Living with the lump becomes natural, until the world makes sure it confuses a human further. Re resources, every time a new art-work is made, someone dies (isn't that the law of the contemporary social cosmos?).

An aspect of your work has been an update of the Combine as pioneered by Rauschenberg. I'm thinking about the standing eggplant with straw (Sculpture #1) or French horn with/and guacamole (or other 'sauce'). This is continued with the AR characters and amplified in the model you'll present in Zurich. On one hand when I look at this work I think about that installations of Ann Hamilton from the 1990s where an institutional space would have a ton of coins on the floor, a live peacock, a woman endlessly making balls of dough and pressing her teeth into them, red curtains, piles of horsehair and, or and, and... Of course the human mind is impressed with so much contrary information and searches for meaning within it. So, maybe what I'm interested in knowing is how you situate these forms personally and artistically?

“Combine” [noun] is still an exciting word for me. Rauschenberg is the (false) idol indeed. He, i.e. both the (performative) man and his oeuvre, is “contemporary art” par excellence. I was very taken with Hamilton’s work when I was a lad, thanks for mentioning her. Again, language is key for me. I infrequently arrive at (combinatory) “objecthood” without language leading the chase. Yet works you “cite” above are very disparate in genesis, process, production. So it might be best (and honest) to say that this is my guiding light and creative “imperative” in a nutshell: “Of course the human mind is impressed with so much contrary information”.

It has to be noted that your characters have a very attractive quality I find hard to describe, but your work can operate as a form of institutional critique so perhaps as an art world viewer I’m afraid to read into these forms. To be tricked. And, that being said, the Hamilton installations still stun through pictures and everyone I know who saw one in person has said they were astonishing. Can cynicism and wonder exist in your work concurrently?

I don’t mean to trick in that way. I just have different aspects to my work, different roles, performances, if you will. It frustrates me that there’s no inherent unity to what I do, short of all these interests/ideas coming from a single human being (not much art(ifice) in that). But attractiveness is important. Like you I wish I’d been able to see the Hamilton halcyon in person. Installation art was not only de rigueur when I “came of age,” it was also what spoke to me most as a film student who wanted to leave the frame behind. My eye is very much that of an image (and framing) fetishist, so I’ve tended to question the immediate purpose of that “drive,” to find ways to speak about things attractive without letting them rule the day. Cynicism was never supposed to pilot anything. I’m not a cynic, I just look for wonder however I can. Sometimes the absurd is wonderful,

and perhaps that's why people have a hard time trusting me (I don't blame them).

The world is absurd, and so I think your work forces situations which are inherently awkward towards something even further. I wonder how you keep all these pots boiling at one time in your head. When I consider you as an artist I imagine a strict line of thought, but when we go into each series or project they have their own personality, their own rules. Does it boil over in the studio, in exhibitions? Do you feel a pressure to contain yourself from the outside?

“Force” is a word I wouldn't use and don't really aspire to, but thanks for your thoughts (they're most welcome). In my head there are too often too many pots for mental relief, but there's often a thrill to tending the range. Boil-overs are not uncommon. A lot of my tendencies toward visual and verbal overload come about from a bizarre(?) pas-de-deux of paranoia and enthusiasm. Enough is never enough until it's more than enough—you know the routine I'm sure (even if we might not live with the same cookware).

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1. What do you hope an online audience will take away from “cow with/and tambourine; cow and/with flute”?

Whatever they do. That's ideal.

2. Where did the idea for “cow with/and tambourine; cow and/with flute” originate? Could you elaborate on your process?

Nothing too interesting. A notebook and habitual nature of thought. Or so I remember.

3. How do you think about cows', flutes', tambourines', and animals' places in our cultural lexicon?

As one person among many who shares much with many (though not many more).

4. What role does music play in this work?

I think you solved a riddle I didn't realize I'd posed.

5. What roles have animals played in your work across your practice?

Arguably too many. I thought their physical presence could be justifiably sculptural. I've since grown to find that conceit dubious, and perhaps reckless. Animals as lexical and visual (as distinct from sculptural (and perhaps even material(???) objects are inexhaustibly meaningful.

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What I've meant to say about sculpture as media (and media as sculpture in some cases) over the past 15 or so years—I don't know if I've said it well. I tried and tried again. There's just so much stuff in the world and such limited means. I'm ever prey of what I didn't manage to think up/through better—the author's laughable lament.

People often ask me what my medium is. I usually fumble for words. I suppose the most honest thing to say would be: I pursue [A]rt sans/trans medium. Or frequently I'm looking to the material of the everyday (the so-called real world (which happens to include other people's authored things (including authored art not (yet) my own)) for epiphany and "theophany"—the only divinity I recognize is art, however

uncertain that term is. Or when I've experienced such, I'm abandoned to the endless complexities of language and time—the prosaic, as it's called. Aura hunter and reproduction (itself an aura hunter) fanatic—I could just be a consumerist stooge/dupe. Or maybe my aptitudes for the bizarre and nonsensical provide *just* enough to tend my psyche's flame. Also there's that too-seldom named divinity one might call Fun.

People much less frequently ask me if I think my work will age well. I doubt it will[, I say]. I repeatedly feel I'm a contemporary artist in quite the literal sense of that couplet—nothing impressive in that. In my very own post-medium/post-studio (neither term very appealing) case: anxious and self-harried monomaniac, (pathetic) purist, feckless Romantic. I'm drawn between various values too antique to truly be my own and the constant allures of information too vast and specious to be anything more than fads (which may well be [bourgeois] art's proper successor). I fear oblivion as much as many must. I partake in formalities—formalism they could be called. How to package thought? Many times poorly. Endless ways to unwittingly omit. Endless ways to find/force false sufficiency [*sic*].

“Value” (in fair part apart from its common plural) is a very generous, even tender, word. “Art” is no less pliant, though dutifully more abstruse (sometimes more fluently spoken in “art materials”). Warp and weft; whole and cleft; part-cathetic dialectic, appositely unapodictic. Authentic or not, truth be told, all supposed need relieves.

Some of the works in this exhibition were once conceived as comedy; they've perhaps taken on other qualities. And those which weren't meant to inspire humor—maybe they now do. I'm endlessly fascinated by this tireless shift; to be as earnest as I find myself must require something all too hilarious. Comic coda for what I('ve) know(n) to have been, what may now become a once was, what yet may speak for a now, and for a what may (be)come.

*Up from the ground and down from the cloud.
The human mind plans great vacations.
One of them is the end.*

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value

noun

1. relative worth, merit, or importance: *the value of a college education; the value of a queen in chess.*

2. monetary or material worth, as in commerce or trade: *This piece of land has greatly increased in value.*

As Solon famously said: “We live in value with hope it keeps.” For two decades now, I’ve obsessive-compulsively asked myself what the word “art” means in this day and age—where and how it resides in thought, emotion, form, time, and commerce. I’ve come to no reliable conclusions—meaning is too porous and accommodating (meaning and value can be synonyms of course).

As my galleries would be swift to attest, the existence of inventory has irked me for some time (I think “vacuum” where others think “wine cellar”). *Inventory* was first conceived as an auction project designed to be in sync with last November’s New York auctions. There was to be a physical “showroom” in tandem with a web presence, both featuring the same 100-ish inventory works (nearly all of some vintage), which I’d combine into groups of 2 3 4 or 5 to create new discrete works with a *very* low starting bid. The auction never materialized, and I moved on to pitching a gambling show, involving familiar tools of chance: various-sided dice, a coin, a lottery ball system—I’d leave combinatory inventory constructions

and suicidal (i.e. career-jeopardizing) pricing to impartial contingencies.

Then came COVID-19, to tease out a cultural audit of sorts, shining a light on what yet remains too obscure to discern. A lot of people are financially hurting and/or painfully bored (and heck, institutional critique barely has a floor to stand on), hence the INVENTORY site you're currently on. I hope you find some genuine value in it. Art is ever in the air; it only asks for percipients.

Wishing you safety, sanity, solvency, and sanguinity,
Darren Bader

Dear Darren Bader

On September the 21st, I visited your exhibition Interlude at galleria Franco Noero in Torino. Just before we entered the space, I had been in the souvenir shop in the Egyptian museum close to the gallery. Here I bought a post card that I really liked; it depicted a black cat on a white background, and it had that analogue 3D-effect which made the cat look like it was running when you flipped it.

When I saw your piece called "109 things to begin a new civilization" in the big room with the grid on the floor and the beautiful trompe l'oeil ceiling, I instantly recognized your postcard in the grid as being identical to the one I had just bought.

I walked on through the different rooms and saw the rest of the exhibition: mainly a lot of readymades from various sources. I thought hard about the situation, cause I couldn't help feeling a quite demanding urge to exchange the two postcards. This feeling grew stronger. I had the postcard in my handbag.

As I walked past a small office, I could see that nobody was currently looking at the surveillance transmission on the computer screen. I decided to do the swap. I went back into the big room and replaced the cat on the floor with the cat from my bag. I then went out of the gallery with your postcard hidden in the floor plan and my heart beating notoriously faster than before.

That night I had trouble falling asleep. I thought to myself; who am I to take it for granted, that in an installation consisting of readymades, a given readymade can be replaced with a similar object or product, because somehow that must be inherent in the notion of the readymade as concept? Isn't it very old-fashioned of me to think like that? Maybe all of the objects in your exhibition had an affection value to you? A value which I wouldn't know of or have access to, and therefore no right to interfere with. Maybe your postcard, which on the backside had a pricetag from MoMa and not the Egyptian museum in Torino, HAD to be that specific card according to the piece?

Right now I'm on a train from Torino to Frankfurt. I've got the cat in my bag, and I'am still very puzzled about the case.

I would like to hear what you think of the swap. In relation to the piece, or in relation to yourself, or in relation to something else.

I also want you to know that I am taking good care of the postcard, and if you feel like it, we can swap back again.

Hope to hear from you
Sally

I first became fascinated with the word “art” around the age of 18. I knew I loved movies—I'd just begun my official studies

of the “form”—but I never considered them vis-a-vis the word “art” until that time. I’d become enamored of Italian Renaissance painting and sculpture and the notion that there was a “grand concept” that could unite the visual and the philosophical, i.e. quasi-religious. Indeed Italian Renaissance art would likely be little to nothing without its religious content and contexts, regardless of the remarkable advent of Humanism. Indeed I would be nothing without some faith in something—since that wondrous and impressionable time, my faith has been that of art. “Art” is a word that means a variety of things and I’m not going to get into that right now. To try to keep things short here (not a forte of mine), I want to simply preface my extemporized-responses-in-this-lovingly-conceived-and-beautifully-produced-volume-about-the-art-of-the-filmic-image by saying that in remaining faithful to the notion of art, I remain ever-perplexed by its instability, especially in this day and age. What I took away from the conversation I had with Jonah, Chris, Steve, and Jesse was that we were all trying to find meaning in our world, largely through aesthetic ends. Aesthetics is a sanctuary one can find to find oneself and others, and it can never be contained. And yet the beauty of the frame is that it’s dedicated to such containment, all the while affording limitless perspective into human spaces. Sometimes I want to cry because I feel so lucky to enjoy/feel art as I do (far more so as a percipient/recipient than as a maker). And that’s pretty much what I want to share most by writing these few-ish words I’ve written here. If you will, let me end by saying, “Don’t cheat art folks. It takes love and devotion.”

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Substitutions: a maiden text (; a peculiar utopia?)

The impossibility of creating a database/compendium of every type of THING in the world—however ludicrous the

notion—often frustrates me. Without this database I'm(/we're*) left to depend on my(/our) mere brain(s)/mind(s) to approximate the perfect randomness I(/we) desire: that of being able to pair and group things in immediate and unexpected ways, perceived as serendipitous, and perhaps uncanny, by others. I think it fair to assume that a mind/brain is rather unlikely to regularly produce these results; habits, biases, and biology presumably persist and dominate.

A brain/mind could pair e.g., hair dye and aircraft carrier, crimson and clover, *Baba O'Reilly* and lupus, 1.203.274€ and a brand new white tennis ball cut perfectly in half. It could also approximate, however inchoately, these eight things commingling/proximate in some “mind's eye”. Yet additional possibilities are virtually endless, and permutations boundless. There are seemingly infinite, i.e. too many, things to bring together if we consider the accretive and substitutional nature of language; words and things are nearly always interdependent, and can procreate/mutate at absurd rates.

A perhaps useful digression... A thing is generally something that can be assigned a name. A name being a noun, it may be attended by an adjective that furthers/achieves the noun, e.g. *red-winged blackbird***, *swollen gland*, *silent movie*. Other types of words [articles implicit] can be required to make a name, e.g., *tuning fork*, *Doni Tondo*, *mop leaning against wall*, *30m²-30%-transparent-pale-blue-holographic-cube-falling-at-1.35-km/hr-into-limitless-body-of-what-appears-to-be-water*. And of course there is representation to take into account: cat as living/dead three-dimensional object; cat as seen in a photo; cat on ancient Egyptian frieze; etc—we will quickly say/think “cat” upon seeing all of these.*** All this may be basic linguistics and/or epistemology, but I've written all I've written thus far in order to be descriptive, not discursive.

To continue... there are a bunch of things in this room with qualities available to the classical senses (most immediately

sight and recollected touch). Some you may be able to verbally communicate to another person with a single word, but most you cannot—certainly not to a person who isn't in the room with you. They are indeed *things* and it's unstable verbal ground when one is confronted with the generic and/or specific of thing-ness. What qualities each thing has in-and-of-itself (apart from any unprovable claims of/to haecceity) is determined by human relations—hopelessly inhuman if not implicitly verbal—even if you, human, know each thing as (perhaps) only you do, perceive the proximity/interaction/"interstasis"/etc. of things as (perhaps) only you do.

That so many things may be known can be fascinating to contemplate. It can be many other states of "mind" as well. *Substitutions* is a way I've sought to cope with and honor the inexhaustibility of thing(nes)s. What you will encounter in this room are things presented in patterns, patterns with some degree of familiarity (and definability) that may help you understand one way my dreamt-of database could work: using/implementing a specific, material thing as a substitute for another. E.g. that thing there is Mo Salah**, that one is Mickey Hart**, that one is the number 48.6, this one Praseodymium (in one of its forms), etc. The conceit, however absurd, is that a thing can be exchanged for another thing and these things can somehow achieve-cum-retain their past and present "footprints" both. What do you think?

Essences abound much as quantity has no number; the human apparatus can sense innumerable things. I'm not quite sure if the temporary local-material qualities of *Substitutions* [you encounter here] could be considered an artwork (perhaps in conjunction with this text?). It is certainly for you, thing-in-itself that you may be, to decide.

* let's be honest, it's a desire of mine; I doubt it's one most people share.

** are living beings things? I'd aver yes, but can provide no proof.

*** although many illustrated cats heavily rely on their names to announce their felinity.

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I don't know

What would a thing be without itself.

It's got nothing to do with it [sic] if one can grasp it

If an idol is an idol, if a god is a god, a thing, in its own right/rite, is a thing, i.e. that which we make (of) it—its appearances/(re)presentations, its imperative(s)/clauses. We each perceive things and (with)in (a) given perception there's an ineradicable singularity. In/with this (art) exhibition, I aim neither to champion nor fervidly worship such (occult) singularity, but I do hope to honor/admire it and make appeals/offerings as I feel appropriate. By giving things a (revised(?)) context, I assume they can take on form-content that is distinct/unique to/for their perceiver. This being said, thing \neq art*, except in logically stating that [a locus of] art** can't but be a thing. [And I've yet to speak of the image “itself” (I)and of faces(I).]

(The vacuum created by the arrival of freedom) and the possibilities it seems to offer

What I want to say (never mind the above if you want to—totally fine) is: if we have belief, we then find form-content/content-form; the more we consider fact[of matter and matter of fact]s, the more we may find them consummately difficult to prove; if we are to belong among/with (some) others, a certain amount of form-content/content-form must be agreed upon; if we ask to be known, we must accept our actions (even if in regret); as we perceive, we have no absolute proof, but are accorded possibility of agreement yet.

Let me crash here for a moment—I don't need to own it—no lie

I think this is what the show is about, but I know myself no more than you. Or as some astute younger contemporaries might discern: idk***.

All times mischoose the objects of their adulation and reward

* Art is commonly thought [not defined as] a suspension and a presence. Synonyms could include: art; human-manufacture-that-is-valued-for-reasons-other-than-its-technological-usefulness [imperfect of course]; [M/m]odern spiritual surrogate/replacement for previously dominant religious belief; an experience of an object of human manufacture generally encountered within a specified location/context and predicated on a certain remove/distance of the percipient that “summons” percipient in such a way that there may be no word for it other than “art”; a type of experience vis-a-vis certain human creations that philosophy tries to capture with words/categories/concepts such as “aesthetics.”

** Art is nothing but itself, but unlike an object or an image art can't be but a “thing” that eludes physical presence****, unless we commit to material specifics, e.g. frescopaintingsincertainenvironments, bronzecastrepresentationsof____, thingsencounteredin/on- aplace/spacethatleasttwopeopleagreeishostingart, etc.

*** (ID, K?/ eye decay/ I decay/ I'd eke, eh?) [(Pe(e)r()mutation(s)/Mere() putation(s)]

**** Obviously whatever the neurological mechanisms behind perception are, they can't but be physical, but we cannot perceive our own perceptions, so to speak, so it's a matter of a necessary, if at times arbitrary, distinction between mind and brain.*****

***** It would presumably be difficult to prove the brain commands thought without integral support from other body systems.

By becoming what it is, art cannot be what it wants to become

Artists names include: Anca Munteanu Rimnic Bill Hayden
Bunny Rogers Carlos Reyes Chiara Siravo Chris Brown
Cosima von Bonin Darren Bader Gina Fischli Harley Weir
Israel Kamakawiwo'ole Issy Wood Jason Dodge Jeanette
Mundt Lil Dicky Marius Wilms Michael E. Smith Michele
Davidoff Ned Vena Nina Beier Nina Canell Prisca Franchetti
Rodrigo Pires Sara Rabin Sean Raspet Silvia Zampetti Souns
Saci Tony Yacenda Trisha Baga

Names of the art "itself":

[(+) / (-)] (cleaner)

Amazon sculpture(s)

A Skyline of Present Day Manhattan

Bat Girl

black tile, white tile

Brief Syllable (Yellow)

Common Equation: Farm

Doubling Down

53.5 x 53.5 x 10.5 cm / 21 1/8 x 21 1/8 x 4 1/8 in

48 printed images

4.2 x 4.2 x 85 cm [piece of poplar]

framed printed images

Freaky Friday

Function

HAI AM TISCH

Highest Maintenance

I thought to make the most of it

I Will Destroy You

9 printed images

180 x 100 x 20 cm / 39 3/8 x 31 1/2 x 7 7/8 in

114 x 16 x 16 cm / 44 7/8 x 6 1/4 x 6 1/4 in

One Leiber Lady

Plug

printed image

Reject chair (purple) and Olszewki brothers mop (Krzysztof)

Sculpture #2

Sculpture #3.5

77 x 40 x 40 cm / 30 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ in

6 framed printed images

69.5 x 40 x 8 cm / 27 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{8}$ in

61 x 42.5 x 3.5 cm / 24 x 16 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ in

Sliced Bread

Somewhere Over the Rainbow

substitutions study (or #1)

TBT mise-en-abyme (Mies On a Beam?)

34 x dimensions variable x 28 cm / 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ x dimensions

variable x 11 in

To Have and To Hold—Object D2

To Have and To Hold—Object G2

To Have and To Hold—Object V

to participate

26 x 48 x 37 cm / 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 18 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 14 $\frac{5}{8}$ in

two fingers

Untitled

Untitled (Eagle)

Upside-down triangle

video file

video file (BTD)

video file (XPLEX)

West Side Club

OPTION 1

There are countless Americas. There are geographical Americas. There are ideological Americas. There are legal Americas. There are imagined and/or actual Americas too manifold, singular, inseparable to know. America is a terse word, a pregnant word, a pliant, complex, luminous,

What speaks to you now may never speak to you again, but the instant you are touched, you volunteer something akin to forever (eternity as it could be called). It isn't memory enough, but evidence of the unimaginable made human (which could be thought of as living itself).

— Gene Wolfe, *Nightside of the Long Sun*

- Feeling is both greater and lesser than its alternatives
- Biography arrives to lend pain false quarter
- Voices nearly everywhere
- Words are implacable and inconstant but must remain well-intended
- (*Give/alert* when possible
- Decide/desire if/when measurable/convenient
- Tarry with(in)/without design
- Venture refusal of belief / Dispose of unforeseen consequences
- Elucidate in (fallow) faith
- Never find forgiveness until)

This show is most often about the kindness, frankness, and aptness of words. It also wouldn't be without the persistence of words, their inanities, obstinacies, redundancies. It's about the way (much more than the where) words may appear — the seer, the reader, the hearer, the listener, the speaker, and certainly the self that meets words in the mind (as distinct from the thinker). The show is also about object(nes)s, because it has to be. But perhaps words should speak for themselves.

Below are words naming what (c)aim to be [art]works:

- Lawrence Weiner study/encomium
- *Publishing study*
- hagiography study
- my father's piano
- printed image*
- printed image
- *Yoga Mats 1***

- Answers may prove pleasant
- Natalia Goncharova, *If Indeed a Figure* (Wilner)
*all punctuation and two words courtesy Darren Bader
- fred
- 12 marketing execs meet with 12 legislators (from at least 7 different nations) to hatch a plan. The plan is then sold to an individual from the private sector who must see it through.
- a tidy abyss
- audio file
- Book (soap)
- toenail implant(s)
- vifth chrysanthemum
- printed image*
- untitled (*Toys Talking*)
- isn't still (enough); still isn't (enough)

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*dimensions variable
**a work with Jesse Willenbring

42: 6 and/with 7 dimensions variable unique

The work is 42 objects chosen by the owner of the work. It's recommended each of the objects be on the larger side, although smaller objects numbering no less than 33 would also be recommended.

Each object should be placed at an equal distance* from adjacent objects. It's recommended no objects touch one another. Once the objects are placed, they can be discerned/distinguished/perceived as groups of 6 and/or 7. Each of these groups should be considered unitary. It's unclear whether 42 is equal to such considerations.

*Using your eye. No metric precision is necessary.

As you may or may not be familiar with, I, the artist Darren Bader, frequently use found objects as a (im?)material basis in my work. I often find working with them very enjoyable and I (try to) discover meaning through them. There remain an infinite number of objects I can still find. Although this is a comfort, an assurance, it strikes me as somewhat irresponsible, greedy, unfair, easy, etc. to continue to use them as my art. I'd like to quit the habit. Before I do, I'd like to do one last show about/of found objects. (Perhaps I'd title the show *things*.) Unfortunately, at present and for the foreseeable future, I don't have the financial resources needed to distinguish it from other shows of found objects that I, or other artists, have made. So I'm asking you if you might be able and willing to provide the \$1.6 million production budget I feel I would need for this show. \$1.44 million of that budget would go to the purchase, shipment, and crating (or other transport/

storage solution) of the found objects. The other \$160,000 I would use for living expenses and/or consider a sales commission. If you were to sponsor the final-found(-)objects-show, it would imply that [all] the works in the final-found(-)objects-show would be considered sold to you; Darren Bader would send you signed certificates of authenticity for each of the object-cum-artwork-s. As the owner of these objects Darren Bader purchased on your behalf, you could do whatever you wanted with them, including declining ownership of (any of) the works prior to the show—at which point the work(s) could be sold to another party*.

*If this is the case, I will return the \$160,000 (or any appropriate fraction thereof) to you upon receipt of my payment for the sale. If works are sold to another party during (and/or after the show, i.e. after certificates of authenticity have been sent to you, I will not be able to return any part of the \$160,000.

cavernous word, a word given, taken, and shared, perhaps a foolish word for some. America is too big to see—that's what proves so difficult, dismaying and disappointing for so many: America cannot be universal. What is a home that won't feel like one's own?

Reflecting upon this conundrum, I arrived at a couple of words that I feel to be universal: meaning and difference. From/ of them, I thought of two exhibitions: Meaning and Difference.

They are what you see here at The Power Station. They are made of the voices (each perhaps countless in and of itself) of forty-two people who live in the United States, who consider it home. Each of these people have contributed the following:

- 1. an object of (aesthetic) meaning**
- 2. a song lyric comprised of one to ten words.*
- 3. a single image from their smartphone photo library.*
- 4. words written on/of/about the words "meaning" and "difference."***

The forty-two people were invited by a limited few. Therefore and therein, there are limitations to both meaning and difference, as much as there are countless possibilities. Meaning and Difference are meant to co-exist, perhaps co-substantiate. They are the produce of a mood, a notion, a consideration. They are nothing more nor less than what they are. They are reproducible in any way at any time.

Time. Time is a strange shade. We perceive it, and yet we never will. With each suggestion or surge of purpose, there may come some obstacle and/or perturbation. Who we are is never fully clear. Of course we wish for this clarity, and because of this a word like "America" can perhaps fail us. As we continue living, we are confronted with an ineluctable and intangible word, "right"; we are thus left to meaning and difference.

Life is fullness. Liberty is both felt and found. Pursuit of happiness is figment+function. What is false and what is true are left to/with us.

* an object that can sit on the standard-sized plinths you see here; an object not "made" by the person who chose it.

** These words are gathered in a book that will be made more widely available as the exhibitions come to a close.

OPTION 2

The joint exhibitions *Meaning* and *Difference* came about as an idea the mo(u)rning after the election. Lying in bed, consumed by dread and confusion, I thought about our country and how each of us plays a role in its existence: socially, philosophically, and biologically; how each of us *is* its existence (as the national ethos suggests).

I almost always vote left, but that may belie my intentions with this exhibition. We seem to be a country contrarily united and summarily divided. The past year has been an unprecedented circus, and even the most principled and disciplined of us have at times taken the bait of *panem et circenses*.

The mediasphere won. Whether our new president is a timely visionary, a workaday madman, a radical shepherd, or a weird thug remains to be seen. All the while, *we remain*: to be seen, to be known, and, we should hope, respected. What is the nature of the national ethos if it fails to protect each of its citizens?

To realize *Meaning* and *Difference*, The Power Station and I invited people (some of whom invited additional people) to represent meaning and difference as only each person could.

In keeping with my interests (and habits) as an artist, I created the template you see and hear here. Each invitee has elected each of the following four:

1. an object of (aesthetic) meaning*
2. a song lyric comprised of one to ten words.
3. a single image from their smartphone photo library.

4. words written on/of/about the words "meaning" and "difference."**

We always have much to learn. We are bound to each other in common commitment to our humanity. We can all divine the perils of assuming one is right/good/reasoned, no matter who we are or what we feel. If we grant emotion free reign [*sic*], if we make it our reason, we risk forfeiting our (imaginary) right to mutual governance.

Life we all have. Liberty we are asked to share, and so the pursuit of happiness is always/never a luxury.

Meaning and *Difference* were conceived within limits and cannot speak on behalf of everyone. If someone reading this finds value in reproducing (and perhaps amending) their concept(s), I would encourage you to do so.

* an object that can sit on the standard-sized plinths you see here; an object not "made" by the person who chose it.

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OPTION 3

What is meaning? Foundation and fount, vessel and tone, idiom and canopy, elusive and omniscient metaphor. What is difference? Fleeting indelibility, mathematical augury, desire and grief, silent empathy when not empathy silenced. Or so I write right now, in this clutch or dispersion of meaning, in this diffusion or condensation of difference. There are words that can be sustained poetry and constancy: meaning and difference both feel like these words to me, timeless words that both require and decide our time.

Feeling. It's an inevitable thing. And although art may preen itself on this or that acrobatic, purport, or prevarication, we engage with it, honor it, defer to it on strength or focus of feeling.

Art is sensation and language inextricably mixed, irreducible to either intellectual lodestar or magnificent aphasia. Within it, feeling remains an issue, a standard, a crux, and a latent desire. Art as latent desire: meaning-and-difference.

In any case, that's a preamble to an invitation. I wrote the first paragraph because the two words had been asking a lot of me—angelic conversations perhaps, certainly spiritual contention. I think they've been asking a lot of a lot of us. I wrote the second paragraph because the invitation asked the invitee to apply the two words (their meaning and difference both) to an art exhibition, two exhibitions in fact, *Meaning* and *Difference*, visually indiscernible from one another.

1. an object of (aesthetic) meaning*
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OPTION 4

In coping with the future, we find limited, if not adequate, recourse to the present. Life asks us to accept that things terminate; when they do, we sometimes find ourselves struggling with acceptance. Perhaps we are consumed by

ardor or foreboding, and other emotions that can only be known in the present. What will prove foolish and what will prove wise?

The present is our place to participate in what may become history. Do we have a moral duty to participate? History is not moral in and of itself, but we may very well have a moral duty to be good among one another, i.e. our fellow humans. Social beings we innately are, there's no clear divide between an intellectual rubric like morality and a natural tendency like mutual care. (Few of us harbor too great an illusion about the limits of mutual care, but all of us recognize the value of being together.) In our present, we owe others something. What that something is will be the stuff of memory—perhaps history—or oblivion.

"Time heals" is axiom and/or maxim. Let's say that we, as biological creatures, entities, quotients perceive certain tapestries/confluences/compounds of change as something we can call "healing." Words themselves generally tending toward metaphor, healing may be no different than dismantling-cum-rearranging, destruction-cum-construction, charitable quantum spring cleaning. Time is us as are we are it, and its nearly impossible to know what in us is degeneration and what is regeneration—the brain hosts us and we host it, *ad infinitum*. Oblivion and remembrance are two of kind.

One day's horror is a later day's commonplace. Wisdom warns of collective amnesia or pernicious complacency, and so we reflect on the past as if it might mirror a future. Caught in the cords/chords of time, we try our best to be honest and considerate (though there are those who find continued thrill/necessity in perverting these behaviors); we try to safeguard a world's goodness for the children we rear and the children we remain.

Meaning and Difference are two exhibitions that take stock of what a present can suggest. (I'd use the word "mean" instead of "suggest" if I didn't commonly intuit that present

is somehow constitutionally void of meaning.) We're all aware of the human condition, its meaning constantly shifting across myriad spectra of pain and poetry, tedium, pleasure, and reverie. In looking out to the future, and the past as well, we are asked to ask ourselves what it means to be human. The answer is one we shouldn't expect to find, but one we nevertheless need to ask after and look for. Quixotic as our dreams may be, they remain our marrow. To the future we must give ourselves; to the future we are given.

.....

In which ways do you think your work extends on/intersect with Calder's work/legacy?

In questioning what the limits/definition of sculpture could be.

Describe what your work/practice is about, and what informs your work.

About the relationship between the sensory and the nominal. Add to the mix several other tendencies, both formal and "inform"al.

Could you describe the works that will be shown during the Calder Prize Exhibition? How do these works fit within your overall practice?

Best to defer to the answers above.

When you were awarded the Calder Prize, what was the impact on your career, both due to the exposure and the monetary prize?

Tough to say; I can't think of anything distinct. But it felt pretty good.

What are your plans for the close [or distant] future?

Stay alive for a while. Keep addressing beauty and meaning.

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Following my message you find a list of words instead of questions. You feel free to react, to link, to click, to make a think you like on them. Your answers can be more words, brief sentences or lines of writing that in the end, through your listing describing explaining meditating questioning sketching facts etc will get the readers to be more familiar with your art.

Please get back to me as soon as possible. We would like to have your article published in L'Uomo Vogue January issue.

Best,
Mariuccia

1) WORDS, SOUNDS, NUMBERS, SONGS, PICTURES

It's who we are. (Songs more than sounds?)

2) FUN, LAUGH, LAUGH AT

Enjoyment! Some people think I'm being a comedian (which I'm usually not).

3) READYMADE, APPROPRIATING, REPOSITIONING

Words that don't quite fit. Something with fewer syllables seems/feels more apropos. "Things" perhaps?

4) THROUGH THE ALREADY DONE, YOUR ART AND ART
OF OTHERS

Takes a village to raise a child. The medium is always the
message.

5) PUTTING TOGETHER

(TENDER CRUEL, ALIVE LIFELESS, ANIMAL BREEDING ART
DEALING, ANIMAL VEGETAL MINERAL COMMERCIAL)

Things are things.

Animal faces fascinate (cruelty is not consciously intended).

We have appetites and our eyes.

Mineral is an intellectual category.

Commercial may be a way of being.

Tenderness brings meaning as does cruelty.

Everything has to be alive?

6) SIGNATURE-AUTHORIAL-FRAMING-UNFRAMING-
REFRAMING

I always find the same person thing when I wake up.

Frames are schools of seeing or deposits of sight.

7) INSTALLING, STAGING, SHOWING

(A SHOW ON THE WALLS. A SHOW ON THE FLOOR, A
SHOW ON A PIECE OF PAPER AT THE FRONT DESK)

Spaces/places are things too

8) IDEAL IDEOLOGICAL

One and then somehow the other

9) LOGICAL/ILLOGICAL, MAKING/UNMAKING SENSE

Illogic and nonsense are only known through their
opposites

10) ULTIMATELY...

Something awaits—perhaps an end.

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Artistic Aims

Well, I'm most interested in making sense of the world I/we live in through asking myself what makes something *something*. To be a little less ambiguous, I want to know why something I encounter has the capability to render someone attracted/indifferent/repelled. From there, questions of utility and fantasy come into play, with no clear answers. Trying to summarize this "futility" is something I'm in the habit of attempting, and failing at (which is possibly an apt summary).

Style

Well, my style has developed from obsession to chance to reconciliation. To be less vague, what is desired can't quite be had, so then it became a matter of seeing what might happen if desire was subjected to a bunch of empirical tests, followed by an (admittedly limited) understanding that these tests, however "ethical," resulted in an aesthetics that is ultimately inconclusive. This inconclusiveness has been the germ of some sort of personal revolt towards absolutist chance, less patience towards the vagaries of everything, while still fully embracing them. Yes, that is vague.

Career

Well, I'm pretty sure I committed myself to being an artist (in the art world context) in 2003.

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What We Found

I chose this title well in advance of coming to Tulette. It's expedient, desire, assumption, thesis, hypothesis, red

herring, proviso, and credo condensed to three neat words. Whether poetic or generic, if committed to the unknown, one must chart/choose a course.

The days were days-y and the nights nocturnal. The vegetation rough, tame, serried, profuse, and benign. The architecture commodious and kind. Arthropods were dependably present. An owl, of a species unknown to us, sent out its nightly noise, dull and dying, and undying too.

The Mistral greeted the earliest of us, but was soon blown out by cruel heat. Languidness and indecision were resident. Yet there were instruments to be used, and a quorum quietly constructed instruction, mostly unsaid. Appetite is always on the heels of satedness, but we couldn't quite measure its paces. Minerals, vegetables, and animals were consulted as curious altars in place of the wind. As an altar arrives, it is quick to turn around.

We turned somewhere and that is what we found. What can be found between the layers accrued and shed? What can a set of eyes come upon and animate towards animation? (Sometimes why?) In serene monotony and torpid autonomy come the pleasures of the suddenly acquired—monuments come in all forms, much as they disappear. If finding implies disappearing—which I'm nearly certain it does—in disappearance we came to make time stop. The clock waited, while we watched each other watching it.

The pact was made to be broken, and so an assembly set forth.

On some afternoon everything was decided, and became the past.

.....

Considering face and image as much the same, the eyes (even if instantly averted) will cleave to something. How

to touch it? This is the issue I can't get past. To touch the image, the structure crumbles (you must know the one I'm speaking of), and rather than force some faith in facial immutability, there are alternatives, feints, campaigns, resorts. For instance, take a new name, even if it's the same name as always. Also, hold on as long as you care to—this may become a new image, seen well outside yourself. Another option is to desecrate your cherished as you pact yourself a penitence pack. Yet another would be to throw all caution to the wind, perhaps imagining your flesh torn to pieces by people/gods.

I was asked to write about impersonation. I impersonate many, though I'd usually doubt them persons. If I find great comfort or excitement in what I see, I try to make a heartfelt alliance. What binds me to what binds me is the sense that the surface of the seen can be touched, and through that, the impossible becomes possible, i.e. what you see is what you get—always an error.

The mirror is divine, wretched, pregnant, guileless and vain. The most I can participate in the theater of sight is in seeing how I often don't belong. The fury and the affection that come about are ways of imparting a practice of touch to the untouchable.

If I could only taste enough of what it means to be sated (touch enough of what it "means" to have touched enough), that would be a pact between decency, climate, constancy, and humility. Sometimes the eyes see all they wish to and sometimes they wish for more.

If mind is a matter of appetites, there are many uncommon possibilities, all left to be sorted: sorted by consideration as an appearance; sorted in force as inevitability; sorted by chance as possibility (itself). In taking a look at oneself, there's the unwatchable wending of order and chaos. A smile or a scowl may underscore a moment, giving face to what never was. Honesty is our concord, and where might it reside?

Ok, I don't have what it takes to tweet. WARNING: If you're not in the art world, the below is likely going to be a drag (if you are, well, no guarantees).

Today I went to the new version of the Whitney Museum. I noticed some selfies being taken. I thought a bit about selfies and how I'm not really one to take one (although I do like looking at pictures of me). I saw how all the artworks on the museum wall could be selfies. The art mandarins have made some revisions to the canon and battened/fattened it with some new names. I was happy to tell my mother (who I was with) that the Whitney had a piece of mine in the collection.

A couple hours later, I stopped by Reena Spaulings to see the current show. This artist also has a name: Ed Lehan. The show is impressive, not as art, but as mirror (or another recent failure to distinguish the two). The show says quite a lot about how to represent art within specific social scenarios. The show's title is "return to problem." I walked out, again asking myself: why might someone want to be an artist (or a curator)? There are two answers I usually come up with: a person who can't imagine living without (semi-)consistent engagement with her/his medium; a person who wants to be important and happens to think art the most flattering means of achieving that. Sometimes the two dovetail nicely. Lehan made some disparaging remarks about "relational aesthetics." I don't blame him. I too will dabble in the medium of "I am full of shit." I think the object of his show was: having followers can be enough, and that might be too depressing to speak of with exceptional sincerity. Lemmings now come with invisible parachutes; such is our era of patronage.

Yesterday I went to the Met to discuss why certain art means certain things—why the canon is the canon. I asked the woman I was with why she liked this or that and why she thought she should like this or that. She wanted to understand why certain things baffled her. I blamed most of it on the

avant-garde. I thought to mention to her that at a certain point in time—if a certain narrative can be believed—art became art-about-art, i.e. representation/fable lost faith in itself, and a new religious sect was born, one which tended to indulge in what could be considered "negative" gestures (caution without caution; moralism without morals; piety without devotion; devotion without piety)—innovation a pronounced tendency of this religion. What's interesting about this religion nowadays is that it believes (despairs to believe?) itself inherently innovative (holy), ignoring considerable empirical evidence.

Keats died of TB and Shelley drowned—both in their 20s. I seem to have made it to 37; this has been sobering (and perhaps this is why I drink). There was a Rembrandt portrait that was very very good. There was some 20th Century design that was better sculpture than "sculpture" contemporaneous to it. There was Velazquez's brushwork, Van Dyck's variation. There were things assigned/consigned to the "decorative arts" wing. Pierre Huyghe again skinned his knees trying to write poetry. Who am I, and who is the selfie for? Who will be looking? Nobody has so many kind faces!

.....

Enthusiasm would be life's dearest friend
—Fernando Pessoa

Promise has its two faces: birth and allegiance.
—Ursula K. Leguin

I.

Being there is life's perfect paradox. "To be" implies a centeredness in place and time. "There" leapfrogs the

present, projecting being elsewhere. Life is indelibly being here; all the while, being there records time.

The innumerable, refractory dashes of past and future—the innumerable (im)possibilities of being there. Being there is a poetic, a pronouncement (even to the quiet of oneself). Being there is the outgrowth of patience, an occasion, the moment discerned. Being there is sight's endeavors seen.

Being there is also idiomatic: being there *for someone*. Can we be there for things not human, not sentient? There are people who think we might be able to (and I'm unlikely one of them). Out in the world is the world itself: all things before us, ready to have been there alongside us.

The world has two large roles. The first, most immediate, is that of human perception in full, the truth that is selfsame as human life. The second is space, usually physical, beyond the immediate familiar—the field of vision, of movement.

Peter Regli sends himself out into the world over and over again, gathering time in lending life. Would he agree? Is his vision, his point of being there, a petition of truth? Truth seekers often seek truth elsewhere. What can be lived by being there?

II.

The story goes that a young man took leave of an isolated alpine village and took himself out into the world. He followed many flight routes, highways, currents, and chances. His was-is a life that wanted/asked to see more. Wanting is what makes us; asking is what can define the rest.

Is to see to be? Being there tells a story... the photograph the proxy eye, the emissary to the world back home (the comfort and the social lung). Peter Regli made his way around the globe—that storied world. He found a way to mark this world his own.

In part only; always only in part. The world will ruin anyone who quests for wholes, even if life is often unfit to concede this. What do the parts say? They are the pulse of time itself; being there is their very name. They send word to the room of life.

Owned by no one; dreamed on by many.

III.

The artist was born from the mists of the mountain, from the hub of the Earth. The artist throws himself into the bed of the world, looking for signs, jewels of light and life. This is how one story goes.

The artist is nothing more than the disbelief in appearances. The artist is engaged with doubt. The artist is the sponsor of the uncommon moment. This is another tale, imbued with cosmic humility, social pain.

The artist is the misfit, the intractable soul. The artist cannot be trusted, but is a valuable research assistant in the code of the people. The artist brings back startling data from the fringes of life itself. This is a third tale.

(A fourth and beyond is no frontier I wish to breach. The morning light will do.)

IV.

Several years ago, I watched a 7kg marble snowman forklifted into a gutted warehouse space. It had come there to sit/stand/rest on the floor. I was impressed by its mass; I was dubious of its value. I thought it was ugly. I encountered it, often daily, for several years. I never grew fond of it.

The snowman came from the life of Peter Regli. To him it is a part of art. Other art has and will come from this Peter Regli and I have come to like and admire much of it. I've grown fond of this art. The world is still a magical place for

me, and Peter Regli is no dummy. Where will he have been as art moves along?

He's made marks. He's left traces. Such is the hand; such is being human. The hand of the artist is expected to do extraordinary things. The debris of the monument is the monument itself. The mark of the task is the task of the mark. Everything else is all we can make of it. We are here in order to have been there.

In traversing the world, in speaking of sight, in touching a thing, in tilting back and bringing forward, allied to the journey, submitting to dimension, breathing to the forgotten pulse unceasing, inwardly kept, with compassion. This is the ballad of Peter Regli.

V.

The world is ours... this is no minor dictum. Everyday we live. Everyday we are caught in the networks of time. What memories we graft to the present are the array of the eternal (no romantic notion). When we see ourselves in the vast mirrors of the world, we can be lucky to take heart. A heart in a hand as the eye takes us everywhere; a heart in sight as our hand reaches out.

What will we see next? What might we touch again?

Is sensing choosing? Is sensing knowing?

We look into the future defying mortality with the light of our unsinkable vision. Death is a metaphor for the shades. Art can be a metaphor for the light. As time comes by, time goes by.

-
- What is Sherrie Levine?
 - When you started off, what did you have in mind? And/or what did you imagine?

- Do you enjoy drawing?
- Why wood?
- Why bronze?
- I was enamored of your 2007 show at Nyehaus. I couldn't make good sense of your 2011 show at the Whitney. Is there something you'd like to say about this?
- Why art and/or which art?
- What is iconic? Do you have any feeling for iconoclasm, per se?
- If I were to ask you to make an image, what would you make?
- Do you feel warmth for/around history?
- What do you see in (y)our present? Are you comfortable with that sight/knowledge?
- If you could ask the world to know you, what would you most want the world to know?
- If I were to take a Sherrie Levine work on a cruise ship with me (for my cabin), which work should I take? (The cruise would last between 14 and 33 days.)
- Rembrandt or Velazquez? Louise Bourgeois or Joseph Beuys? Howard Hawks or Leonard Cohen? John Waters or Hillary Clinton? Or mix and match as you please...
- What's the name of an artist that once made you care very much, and makes you care very much right now too?
- Comedy or tragedy?
- Chewing gum or coffee?
- What about infinity?
- What is more frightening than looking someone in the eye?
- How can we live well?

**Questions to Darren Bader for *Numero Magazine*
by Nicolas Trembley**

What's your background? Where did you study and what did you study?

I studied film and I studied art history, both at New York University. The two dovetailed, somehow, perhaps awkwardly(?), and here I am doing the stuff I do.

How did this background, family and the culture you were raised in shape your identity and taste?

That's a big question! The more you see and the more you ask about what you see, the more this informs your taste. And then, the more you forget to ask about what you see and accept the inherited wisdom, this colors your taste too. And then there's the family: my dad had a penchant for the absurd; my grandfather had a knack for factoid retention; my mom had a knack for encouraging curiosity; one quarter of the family might have the gift of functional insanity.

Who inspired you? What were your references in art?

Another big question. A lot of dead writers, many French (Proust and Bataille come to mind). I also have affinities with writers like Queneau and Barthelme (but I read them too late for them to be inspirations). Movie-makers: Tarkovsky was a big one; some Godard and Fellini and Brakhage feel very homey but weren't quite inspirations. And then in art "proper," the entire canon of Western painting informed how I approach what I do (however unapparent that may be). Also, Christo, Robert Barry, N.E. Thing Co., Superstudio, Yoko Ono, and Gabriel Orozco all made impressions on me in my early twenties.

You just won the Calder prize which is honoring "contemporary artists who have completed exemplary work early in their careers and whose work can be interpreted as a continuation of Alexander Calder's legacy." How do you feel in the relation with Calder and the sentence?

Another big question. Calder's work was about pushing the idea of what sculpture could be. Not as representation, per se, but as form, and more importantly form *as* representation. Abstraction mixed with motion. Maybe I'm engaging in abstraction mixed with motion too(?). I'm fascinated by the obstinate presence of thingness and the mercurial talents of words. Thingnesses being form and language being motion? I'm not sure. I come from a place different than Calder's epochs, but I imagine we both care(d) a lot about what makes art art and how to share this in time and space. That's enough—more than enough—for me.

Do you consider yourself a sculptor? How would you describe your practice? What is sculpture today for you? How do you elaborate your pieces? are they contextual?

I'd call myself a sculptor, since I'm obsessed with things in space. I could describe my practice as object identification and word review. Sculpture today, for me, is everything we know. My pieces come about by either considering words that are commonly known (usually nouns), or encountering something in space (physical, mental) that I think resonates as something of aesthetic value (whether minor or major, or semi-minor-major). Context is something I try to make sense of regularly: my name is also brand; the world is mine and yours and ours; art is a religion; art is a dream; space has specific and generic qualities; language only flirts with universality.

You often work with food, that you pervert with drugs (lasagna, pizza, heroin) why the food? Why the drugs? Is it related to the FDA?

I've worked with food for a long time. I like it because of its chromatic and tactile immediacy; it elicits superior sculptural qualities. I only dabbled in drugs once. Drugs are nouns/words/things like any other noun(s)/word(s)/thing(s).

You also work with animals or humans, how can you control that? How is it sold?, how is your work challenging the classical art market?

Control is tremendously difficult. The more I work with animals and humans, the more I recognize the limits of control. Control is ultimately represented through written language, the wording of the certificates I issue for my works. The certificates are the things sold (sometimes the uniqueness of an object(s) requires that it be sold along with the certificate). The collector/exhibitor follows the language and determines the parameters of the work according to her/his understanding of the language. My work is challenging the classical art market as many other artists' work has done before.

Is Humor important in art? Is it part of your strategy?

Humor is important in most places. I infrequently employ it as strategy (however dubious that claim may seem).

Do you work in series? How do you articulate and display your work in exhibition?

Series: oftentimes yes. There's my not uncommon impulse to say more than one thing about a thing, so a serial approach has its charms. Articulation of work in an exhibition is case by case, but it always comes down to a careful balance between verbal exposition (sometimes hidden) and spatial composition.

Do you feel being part of a certain new generation of artists? How could you describe it?

I don't know. I certainly feel certain affinities with several of the people within my ten-year range, but I don't think it's a very *new* thing. I think very little is new in contemporary art. What might be new is the blithe agnosticism in which

we try to believe we are intuiting something new—or if not new, then authentic.

Who are you talking too? Who is your public? Audience? Is there anything you would like to change, or make people conscious of through your art ?

I try to talk to as many people as possible. I don't necessarily know who they are. I'd like to change a lot of things, but my art is not about that. My art is often about asking why certain art pieties remain pieties, material or ideological, although I (too) often find myself captive of many of these ideologies.

What is your next project? Do you already have an idea of what to do in Saché during your residence?

I've got a few next projects. Some are static and some move. Saché will be a place for me to play and remember things I've probably forgotten. I'm really looking forward to remembering them.

.....

I've never watched painters painting*, and I've never watched *Painters Painting*. I watched *Gerhard Richter Painting*, which was way less interesting than standing in front of many of his paintings. The thing about painting is that a lot of people want to mystify it as process. I don't see the point in that; paint has its powers/allures, but the human act is a universal thing.

Jesse Willenbring, like any committed painter-cum-painting[noun]lover, understands the powers and the allures of paint. But he also understands that mark and movement, however empowering, are specific to a moment. We live in an ocean of so many moments, and the painted gesture

is equal to every one of them. What does a painting mean amidst all these valid/viable/vital(?) moments?

Let's hit rewind, or whatever << is called now, on the art history track and go back to 1913 (something like an *annus mirabilis* for Modern Art). In 1913, paint is taken for granted as the premier medium of communicating things called art (paint is still a medium then, not a material as it often is now). The point of paint is to make a picture, and in the case of many a Modernist, a picture of an idea.

The picture of an idea: that's a useful way to discuss Modernist painting. If you want to loosely talk about figurative painting prior to the break from naturalism, you might invert things to: the idea of a picture. Although in no conspicuous way conversing with the pre-Moderns, Willenbring, like many "abstract" painters nowadays, is most interested in the idea of a picture.

Abstraction used to be the outermost limits of figuration. In its more recent incarnations, it has chosen to become a portrait of itself, made to represent the already understood, i.e. abstraction is abstraction, and to discuss it any further de-abstracts things. What's interesting about this portraiture is how one could also see it as history painting: *The Rape of the Sabine Women* becomes *K(lein)leusamaellyandinsky*; *The Surrender of Breda* becomes *Martin and Marden's Mostly Monochrome Matta-Clark*; G-B. Tiepolo changes his name to Guyton/Walker. To paint the history of paint. Where might this take us? Perhaps to a more honest place, where painting, like contemporary poetry, is unencumbered by a need for prophecy. It can assume a vernacular quality that in no way clogs its arteries to beauty. It can, in short, be loosed of its radical (avant-gardist) duties.

This has likely been going on since our culture was first diagnosed with pomo, if not before. The thing is that the privilege of painting has never been challenged. Why do today's painters paint (and why do we romanticize it)? Is it because painting is Romantic? Is it because painting requires thought and technique that endows something with attributes digital code can't (yet copy)? Is it because

someone enjoys the sensations of working with paint? Is it because painting brings in big bucks?

It's case by case I'm sure, and it's unfair, and perhaps at times belligerent, to question a creator's motives. What has been created/produced is what is to be considered. When standing in front of a painting, we've been trained to invoke the notion of the timeless; we look into the vast sea of cultural heritage, hoping to find some wave of transcendence (an eddy will often do too). I hope Jesse's paintings evoke these qualities; that would make me feel at home. How to consider the paintings in this show? I've been coming in and out of Jesse's studio for nine years now. I have my opinions, my assumptions, my imperfect facts and my imperfect fictions. But this is less important than the following, which has been Jesse's compass since I met him:

We stand before our images and they are meant to tell us something. The creator encodes meaning and the viewer extrapolates meaning. Painting is an archaism in many a way, but if one dedicates oneself to it, a vital language matrix is born. A painting can create an icon, the same as a print advertisement can. Simplicity and complexity must be collapsed as much as possible. The icon becomes richest when the apparent complexity is indistinguishable from the apparent simplicity.

There's nothing particularly radical here. So makes a good painting (so makes an effective image) in many a tongue. Iconicity for iconicity's sake? That's pretty much how the medium of painting speaks across time, how it comes to speak as timelessness. Perhaps this can be an avant-garde afterlife, a semi-permanent way station, where painting isn't "*a priori*" art, but speaks among itself, with no requisite verbiage to qualify its existence. Painters painting. Time goes by.

What's the difference between a door and a window? That's my last about-painting question for now.

—Darren Bader

*Not totally true, I once worked for a painter (but he mostly painted at night).

Matt Keegan Interviews DP and DB

You are both engaged with complex processes of naming. Please discuss the steps that you each take to begin projects. David, is there a set of initial steps that you take to name a new product? Darren, what are the steps that you take in proposing the various parts of an artwork?

DP: We do have very clear steps before we begin creative development. It is important for us to understand the environment that the name will live in. What is the role that the name can play to help communicate the product's difference? Successful products all make a promise; we need to understand the potential promise of this new brand, how it might make life better—even if it is a very small “better” for the customer. We also talk about beauty and simplicity, and how we might create a name that achieves these two goals—BlackBerry and Swiffer are two excellent examples.

DB: Beauty and simplicity are the reason I decided to try to make art in the first place (very uncommon, I know!). But words, i.e., names, always get in the way. I wish I didn't have to “word” as much as I do. In beginning a project, I see something, then find a way to ascribe a(ny) name(s) to it, or I think of a word and start to remember what the word refers to. Then things get difficult, because simplicity on the page/screen is usually not simplicity in three-dimensions. Beauty is left on standby as names are deployed/employed to try to communicate “art.” Would a rose by any other name smell as sweet?

How have text messages, Twitter, and other shortened forms of contemporary communication changed your work?

DB: This is a particularly sensitive question for me. I feel threatened by the Twitter character limit. It certainly can provide/accomplish linguistic innovation, but it strips language of the weight and volubility that provide much of its greater richness. I'm not much at home in the aesthetics of spoken conversation, so I need the flexibility of writing, of where writing may take me—I'm not sure how long the river basin may be, so I need to feel I have the option to navigate it mile by mile. I do love shorthand and the increase of textual permutations that have come about via texting and chat, etc. I like the play of it all, and partake in it frequently (I entertained myself similarly when I was a kid). But in my experience few people are playful with it; it's a rather rote and para-verbal regurgitation of shorthand for expediency's sake. My fear—and I'm proud to be conservative here—is that the richness of the English language, in all its glorious silliness, will be rapidly lost. In written communication's increased emphasis on economy, I don't know how language will "digest," as I prefer it to. But I also have some faith that Twitter will beget its own backlash; there will always be someone mining/misappropriating past paradigms as a vital present to be promulgated. I haven't even answered your question yet... Language packaged convincingly has always been an element of my work, whether I can achieve the convincing package or not. So the length of "packaging" is beside the point. Were I to spend more time reading Tweets than copying lines from the annals of literature, I might find packages I found exceptional. But it's all beside the point. The point for me is to find language that earns its keep. This is, of course, impossible to identify, short of (dubious) consensus.

DP: This is an easy question. Lexicon Branding works in a world much smaller than Twitter characters and lines: We need to create the title of a story—the brand name—in less than ten letters.

In different languages, certain items, such as a fork, change gender. Do you think of your products and artworks as having particular genders?

DB: I would be very curious to know what David has to say here. I rarely think of works being gendered, even when they happen to be marked by things most identifiable as male or female. However much my putative gender(s) may define me, so they might define the work I make—it's the only information I have.

DP: Actually, we never think in terms of masculine or feminine. We think in terms of hard versus soft, fast versus slow, smooth versus hard, mild versus harsh.

The work that both of you do requires being grounded in the contemporary moment—to be able to clearly and directly speak with your audience. How do you use language to do this? If applicable, how does the past—along with old models, words, phrasings, and assembly—inform what you do?

DB: I have great fears around clarity. I'm not verbally suited to it. Semi-poetry is something like a native tongue. But with my work, I look for words, usually nouns, that approach a static meaning in hopes that I might better communicate/share something. I stick to English words, unless it's impossible. But then there's a word like *cantaloupe*, which isn't as meaningful to many English speakers as it is to me... The contemporary always has its vertiginous qualities, so when choosing words, it's a constant battle within myself to either push the novel or the neologistic, or stick to the presumed basics, i.e., the quasi-universal. But in soliciting basics, one runs higher risk of folly, since one has fewer places to hide, fewer linguistic sleights of hand to awe, bemuse, or tickle with. At the same time, writing in obsolescing styles always runs the very positive risk of

renewing interest in them. Either way, what's great about the intractable proliferation of language and its apparent exponentiality in our current culture is that language is going to win out. I can pet my proverbial *OED* all I want, but there are (per)mutations that will have their vivid days to come, however vulgar they might seem to me on a day like today or tomorrow. My friend recently pointed out to me how the word *egregious* has really done a remarkable 180.

DP: When you think about what Lexicon does—it is all about language. We invest thousands of dollars every year to better understand how language is shifting, changing. We have 85 linguists around the world who help to keep us “tuned.” But in the end, we are solving a client’s communications opportunity. In just a few letters we have to create a name that will first get attention, then hold that attention, and then connect with new associations or ideas—particularly that notion of “this product might have something for me.” Or a name could be one that just makes people feel good! Our challenge is both the trademark clutter that is out there and the global reach that is required—two major hurdles for us. This is what separates our work from the work of a writer or artist. While we all want to communicate, we are much more constrained—which, in the end, requires more thought, more discipline, and more strategy.

David, what makes a good name for a product?

DP: A good name, like any work of art—classic or contemporary—surprises you. It can be easy sometimes—we can do that by being clever, or using shock, or by implementing a surprising mix of color and objects. But I think the real difference—what separates a good brand name from a not-so-good name—is that the surprise leads the reader or viewer to doing something; it changes

something. With art, maybe this is about changing my perspective about an artist, a type of art, or a place that the art is housed in. I think that a good name—which makes the reader/listener think that something new has been created—is different than just being clever or descriptive. A good name supports the story. For an artist creating a picture, he might simply be capturing a moment in time, an occasion, a historical event. With contemporary or modern art (thanks to Darren I now know the difference), in many cases the goal is to break from the past, tell a story in more passionate or vivid or even shocking ways—or simply to get the viewer to look at the world differently. For Swiffer, we wanted to support a story of easy and efficient cleaning... and to put some fun in a very mundane and unpleasant task: mopping. For Pentium, it was introducing magic and science inside a computer—making a component (the processor) more important than the box.

DB: *Art*, *fun*, and *magic* are very resonant words for me. I suppose one of the, if not *the*, main reasons I became enthralled with the notion of art, i.e. art history, was its provisions of magic. There are certainly the great technical achievements of rendering two dimensions voluminous or hewing a near-facsimile out of refractory elements like stone and wood, and this could be qualified as some variant of magic. But my primary pleasure in experiencing the thing we specifically (and at times problematically) call art is one in which the magic takes hold through the devotion to the possibility that art is supra-specific, transcendental. It can be fun, too, of course, as Bosch, Tiepolo, Goya, and Matisse can show me (even if their intentions may have been sober). Art history is full of names and magic, and magical names. I suppose what remains key in understanding the meaning behind any name is its ability to, as Vincent Gallo taught us, “span time”—that a name has a meaning over a given duration. Swiffer, for instance, retains/sustains its magic

for many finite periods of time. A name means something specific to any given person at any given moment (and there are never any proofs of symmetry). For me, the word *art* is a fulcrum for magic. I think humans are very interested in magic—no imperious law book has ever been able to expunge it from us. I think what branding and art share is a fundamental understanding of the metamorphic and how some sort of (semi-)permanent brand is required for that to be apprehended. Religious art needs a nominative, art-historical marker, like Reims or Caravaggio, otherwise it isn't art, per se; it's just faith or other (inscrutable) phenomena. Modern art knows this all too well. Likewise, with a brand name: If this thing, Pentium, wasn't presumed to have magical powers, only the rarest consumer would care to remember its existence.

Darren, a closing question for David?

DB: No further questions—just great admiration for someone who can think about language in such a lucid way. I could ask David to explain himself, but he already has, even if it feels like a third language to me.

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About eight weeks ago, I was having lunch at one of my usual spots and I saw an open FedEx envelope on the floor next to me. I asked one of the waitresses if she knew who it belonged to. She said no and went away to take care of another customer, so I opened the envelope folder and had a peek inside. It was a bunch of 8 1/2 x 11" paper that had probably come out of a laser printer. I looked up to see if anyone was looking at me. Nobody seemed to be, so I took out the pages and started looking at the pages.

At first glance, they looked like short stories or essays. I mostly skimmed through them, taking some time with a paragraph here and there. They were in fact short stories, twenty-one in total, each titled after an object that appeared in it. I read a little more of it as I ate and tried to ignore my phone.

They were twenty-one short stories, probably written by someone in my demographic, each one titled the name of something that appears in it, e.g. camouflage, ping-pong table, mascara brush.

I wondered what bringing all these somethings—these objects—together would look like. Would the it they'd become look formally elegant? Would it look like a bunch of unruly junk? If this was a meter by which to gauge the formal-elegance: unruly-junk ratio where, would the needle fall?

When I left the restaurant, I asked the waitress if she could hold the envelope in case the author (or whoever it might belong to) came back for it. She said sure. When I came back a couple days later, I asked if anyone had come by come by to retrieve it. Nobody had. So I asked the manager if I could have it. She didn't seem to care one way or the other.

Here it is on the floor, the twenty-one short stories inside it. Also on the floor, the objects in the titles (one of titles includes two objects):

mailbox key
finger
boat
childproofing
documentary film
desiccant
knights [chess pieces in the story]
cotton
crucifix
carbon monoxide detector
dandruff
boat

childproofing
salad
oil drum
mailbox key
finger
pole
pack of gum
nightstick
performance artist
frame
ping-pong table
mascara brush
camouflage
liquid nitrogen

(A lot of “c”s in there, I’m now noticing. “P”s and “d”s too.)

Can this gang of 22 stand on its own? Does it need textual corroboration?

I suppose there could be two works here. One is a work where title and medium would be the same, *twenty-two/22*. The other work would be titled, *The FedEx envelope*. Actually there could be a third work as well: *22 and/with FedEx envelope*.

.....

My exhibition at Andrew Kreps is made up of three shows that don't have a whole lot to do with each other: There's a show on the wall, a show on the floor, and a show on a piece of paper. The first show has to do with current image circulation seen through an art historical lens. The second has to do with objects and what they can and might not be. The third has to do with nouns, I think. They're up simultaneously, but any “conversation” between them is fortuitous, with a couple exceptions.

I wanted this exhibition to be a way to address three ideas I'd been otherwise unable to resolve in a way I found meaningful enough. I don't know if they're fitting resolutions. I didn't make much of anything for the shows. I often don't make things and if I do it's likely a fabricator's hand at play. I usually just think about language and immediate optical experience and where piquant impressions and illusions can take you. A lot of this rests on objects and images. I embrace any thing that seems to make sense in a given situation—this is happily just an embrace of an embrace sometimes. The world is enormous and I'm looking for some convention, however necessarily temporary, to address that in some conscientious and generous way.

I'm often puzzled by what the art world wants of its content, and I try to find a means of questioning this without compromising the above-mentioned impressions and illusions. There can be an exceptional visual, conceptual, and aesthetic merit to so many things in the world, whether in products of non-rarefied production and distribution, or through the lens of happenstance. TV programming, advertising, gaming, software design, interactive design, social media, industrial design, packaging design, etc—all these are possibilities of what and how art might be, and they continue to be carefully ghettoized by art institutions, if registered at all. A worse curse than being called “folk art” is being called “entertainment.” Things that often appear or sound or feel formally resonant are kept apart by categories. However potent, playful or poignant a product of human creation might be, it's unlikely to be let into the museum *as art*.

I continually find this troublesome. Not so much because there's a limited amount of room for the “magic” of art to work, which there inevitably is, rather that unresolved and meretricious shit gains outsized currency as art. For instance, do stretcher bars, in and of themselves, improve content?

Does Professor Ehks have the mutant ability to turn all of his students into gifted artists? Is the exhumation of this or that neglected oeuvre an act of faith or an act of fashion? Should the doorman be fired for letting me into the club?

How will art history continue to have meaning short of blithe redundancy? It often seems like any bit of amnesiac, opportunistic, homage will do. I don't trust that the art world and its (infra)structures, however enthusiastic and inclusive they might at times be, are qualified to discern what today's art might be. I might be a pathological romantic, but beauty still means something to me. I too rarely see powerful beauty in the products churned out for the art world. I know mediocrity is normal, but complacency is something else.

Let me spin it this way... art is commonly intuited as a home for the poetic. There is enough evidence of technical-cum-aesthetic skill in a wide variety of fields to safely say that there are some good "poets" out there. Mediocrity is normal, but good poetry is what matters.

The shows at Kreps aren't specifically about this. But I think about this stuff all the time and it certainly informs how I try to make art.

Photographs I Like

Photos are pictures are images. Graphics and paintings are pictures and images too. Distinctions between pictures and images seem to be nil. Images might be less narrative? Yes, but no. Pictures might be more contained? Sure, but frequently not. (Faces are likely images, but not pictures.)

Images are fascinating of course. The image is something fundamentally ourselves, an immediacy that can be difficult to manage; sensations will be sensations and mirrors will be

mirrors. A concept like art is a means of image management. It employs the strategies of: look, but do not touch; think about what an image is doing rather than what it is. Art, part and parcel of art history, assumes spiritual guidance: there is no divinity represented in or by the image; the image itself becomes the divine.

Art [history] chooses images to represent this divinity, images largely culled from the graphic and plastic arts, disciplines in which manual skill is implicit—an artist literally *making* images. Recently, this image-making has become less about image and more about material surfaces: canvas is fetishized as canvas, paint as paint, veneer as veneer, debris as debris, figment as figment, etc. as etc. Meanwhile, images remain images.

The photographic image is the closest to “pure image” we have short of our in-built optics. Perhaps that’s why the photograph scared the shit out of art when it first showed up. Perhaps that’s why it still scares the shit out of iconoclastic image-makers. The photograph has neither surface nor volume; it is both. A photograph can graphically remind us of a painting or illustration, but is inexorably a photograph.

Of late, a photograph is an image often indistinct from other images. We can see all types of images online, each one brought together under rubrics of “like” and “share”. When I “like” a photo, I know it’s a photo, but the medium is less photo than “like.” An image of a painting or a drawing I find online may be something I “like” because I like the idea or the memory of that painting; I might just like the reproduction itself (72 dpi can often work some magic).

Can one “like” art? “Like”ing is prosthetic touch, and art is fairly defined by proscribed touch. If art was a way to manage the spirituality of images in an increasingly secular world, it now prioritizes safeguarding the materials of the graphic and plastic arts over tending to images and their immutable power. Might “like”ing manage the spirituality of images? Is this spirituality now part and parcel of the

multiple means of viewing and culling at our “immediate” fingertips? Me-dium specificity; I “like” to “like”...

I came to like art because it made me believe in something greater than myself (even if in my cloister). I don't know if the art I see in its contemporary quarters makes me believe in that something-greater. Much like with the images I see online, it's quite easy to “like.” And yet, the infinity of images online does give me faith, just as the spiritual infinity of art keeps me company.

I trust a past I never lived and I doubt a present(-future) I can't see.

Dear Vito Acconci,

Frieze Projects has invited me to make a work for Randall's Island in conjunction with this spring's Frieze Fair. I've been coming up pretty short on ideas. But I had one idea I like: inviting you to restage *Seedbed* at the fair. I think an ideal place for it would be the pier where fair-goers embark and disembark. The pier platform would neatly obscure your presence in the water below.

Did you happen to visit the fair either/both of the past two years? Basically, there's a big tent on a big field. In the environs of the tent is a smattering of commissioned sculptures by youngish artists (I've been asked to be of those this year). The pier is very nearby these designated sculpture areas.

Scheduling should, of course, be discussed at some length. There are four fair days plus a preview day. I think having *Seedbed* in place all five days is optimal. Your continuous presence in the water seems unnecessary;

perhaps having you there 70-75% of the time would be good—and only during fair hours of course. I hope you are in fine health and would be up for this (no pun intended!).

Looking very much forward to discussing further,

Kind regards,
Darren Bader

Dear Online,

It's (always been) impossible for me to soberly/sagely/"objectively" parse my inner meteorology vis-a-vis the greater social needs provided by the practice-cum-profession of being an artist within the structures and laws of the art world. And so, I write as follows...

At some, increasingly remote, point in my life I decided I wanted to pursue being an artist. By "being an artist," I mean participating in the ostensible dialog/language that art history has beginning in the early Renaissance—artist as "seer" (not as possessed/inspired oracle, but as person of protracted thought and vision). There is always a novitiate.

A novitiate has to end at some point (and due wisdom would have that terminus coinciding with biological death). Some seventeen years later, I see a world, a sustained content that I imagined as real, in delighted shambles. I don't feel the delight exactly. I feel myself benighted but somehow free from a spell. The discipline of art as religious order of the bourgeois age is falling to pieces and I am very much in mourning.

The art system in place appears to blithely, often obviously, follow a bourgeois model of reception and circulation (as everything petit-bourgeois does). But the

content is changed for me. Why should that matter to you? (I don't know; I'm just hoping that I'm not alone.)

Today's art is tomorrow's kitsch and tomorrow's art is today's kitsch, so to speak. The cycle, the metabolism accelerates. No doomsday machine for most, but certainly an increasing loss of pause. Contemplation is no longer a fashionable virtue; it is just one of any number of mental processes that inform competitive content creation (which is one in the same as competitive content reception).

Art, as it has been reliably defined, is edifying. Two definitions of "edify:"

- instruct or improve (someone) morally or intellectually.
- to instruct or benefit, especially morally or spiritually; uplift

Art, if it can be defined as anything, is in place to be defined afresh. "Contemporary Art," as the term circulates, can be called rapacious, hedonistic, inclusive, insatiate, glib, gaudy, not-particularly-heterodox, self-satisfied. "Contemporary art" as the term literally could/would mean should be occurring beyond the purview of the Contemporary Art mentioned above (there's inevitably stuff within the established purview that is part of the "beyond" as well). (And in no way am I ascribing an inherent morality to this "other" contemporary(s), even as I might wish to.)

Again, I'm in mourning. I'm not sure if my thoughts are moored to any adequate semblance of reasoning. I've been perennially incensed, indignant and critical around art practices I feel/felt didn't conform to the aesthetic and/or technical tenets I considered the hallmarks of successful art. I'm tempering my indignation here through some quasi-productive spin.

Yes, what is this art that the world holds for us? In feeding ourselves on the legend of being an "artist" are we making art? I'm not sure. Or is the legend obsolescent, even moribund? Is art school again a trade school like any other?

Either way, it's off to the races or back to the cloister. That's it for now. See you again in a couple years... (or not)

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Owen Kaen speaks with Darren Bader

Darren: I think I need you to find the place to begin, otherwise I'll just bait you and you'll take the bait and we'll get where we were last week.

Owen: Maybe there's still something from last week's back-and-forth that we could mine for a topic. Like when you asked, "What is the truest word?" But that's an "if a tree falls in a forest ..." kind of question, where it's more productive to investigate the question itself than the answers we give. There must be something less pretentious we can discuss.

Darren: I agree. You responded in the way I expected you would. I was hoping you'd respond less circumspectly, but my hopes shouldn't be confused with your thoughts.

Owen: Aside from investigating the question itself, or being explicit that it's an invitation to a kind of imagination game, I don't see any way to address that sort of question head-on.

Darren: I understand.

Owen: I do, however, think that your work plays (and the playfulness is explicit) with words and forms and images that do not so much answer, or even ask, questions of this sort, but which may invite someone to ask and fail to answer them. I would hope, confronted with this playfulness, she might then realize that to ask these questions is a sort of

game, and funnily enough, only a trivial one if she takes it too seriously.

Darren: I like that take.

Owen: Which is why I think it's funny to hear about people who try to corral you into things like speculative realism (whatever that is), or the remains of relational aesthetics. As if you're engaging with noumena or utopia mongering by way of a pizza in a dishwasher.

Darren: I am engaging with noumena. Just realizing the limitations of engagement with such things/notions.

Owen: Are you engaging with noumena? Or are you addressing our insistence on asking, over and over again, whether we can or cannot engage with something called noumena? Put another way, it seems that you engage our temptation to a kind of idolatry by producing a collection of idols and then seeing if people talk philosophical gibberish about them, make a sacrifice (buy the work?), or just take a magical mystery tour. I think the playfulness and theory-lessness of your work intimates this—that a lot of this kind of talk is filled with, at best, playful or poetic conceits that have been irresponsibly scientized and philosophized over, but which we're stuck with for the moment, especially in the art world.

Darren: I think you're right in many regards. But irresponsible word use is no pointed concern of mine. Words are unstable of course. I prefer the romance of forgetting this for drawn-out interludes, believing that words have immutable qualities, i.e., meanings, i.e., quiddity. Responsibility for me lies in believing in something fantastical. I always wish upon a star, but know I don't have the rocket fuel (or fusion reactors, or whatever) to get there.

Owen: I don't know what you mean when you say "words are unstable of course," and then go on to say you believe in their "quiddity" and "immutable qualities" anyhow. If I grant you unlimited rocket fuel, you're still never going to get somewhere that's neither here nor there, that's no place at all. What could possibly count as having got to your star? As having failed to get there? If no thing could count either which way, what, after all, is it that you believe? What would it be for "meanings are immutable qualities of words" to be the case? What would it be for it not to be the case? It's telling that you want to forward both those claims, which, at first blush, are irreconcilable, and also, I think, on investigation, incoherent. Like opposing sides of a bad penny. Language changes for sure. Words and meanings aren't fixed to objects or metaphysical entities or names across all possible words or anything like that. But that doesn't mean they're necessarily unstable, and it doesn't follow that "like, nothing *really* means anything," or that we can mean when we say, and that meanings of words are open to spontaneous, individual revision. This is the wrong discussion. It ignores how we use words and language everyday to do and say meaningful things. At best it's a circus act; at worst it's bankrupt (and still cooking the books). I do wonder though, if investigating the motive to continue to have this discussion is an interesting topic, and I want to suggest that that's one of the things your work gets at while reminding us of the comedy and dangers of it all.

Darren: Dangers, really?

Owen: Of idolatry. The failure of communication, of communities. But if the stability of words and meaning is in some special danger today, I don't think it's on account of theory or "disenchantment" or philosophical skepticism; it's because we're less apt to learn through and use a shared set of proof texts/myths which we take as authoritative (or at least

authoritative enough to renounce). As a result, we're more susceptible to mysticism and magic—to worshipping iPhones one day, TED Talks the next, and the latest quantum particle for Christmas. We're changing the terms of each conversation, our norms of representation, too fast and too prodigally to keep up and maintain a robust moral life... I'm doing a shit job, but I do my best not to talk about philosophy. You say you prefer romance. I might prefer romance too. But I no more want to be romantic about philosophical matters than I do about bookkeeping. That just leads up the garden path. And don't come back to me and say, "That's where I want to go, up the garden path." If deceit that smells like roses is what you're after (what exactly happens up the garden path anyhow?), leave me out of that one.

Darren: I'm not interested in deceit in the least. I mean, I am, but using very specific terms. So I do understand what your concerns are about language. I feel I can often be more precise through elision, but of course this depends on previously conspicuous language. I would say that however much I'd like to believe in a thing's/word's "very ownness," I know the absurdity of this. Perhaps that's why I've always been fascinated with the absurd: I know I can't permanently reside there. It's a home away from home.

Owen: I'm not sure what you mean. And I don't mean you're talking nonsense; I mean there are more questions to ask about what you could mean, and I'm not sure they're worth our asking. Even if I sound a little like a parrot who spends his weekends caged up beside a table of linguistic philosophers, neither of us has any serious business with this stuff. You do art. And I avoid asking myself what it is I do. But at least we utterly failed at not being pretentious. I'll stand by this: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=METb_M5s4W8

Darren: Old friends!

Darren Bader, b. 1978, Bridgeport, Connecticut, lives and works in New York.

Owen Kaen is Darren Bader's friend. He also lives in New York.

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Proposal I.

Gather one copy of every published book that contains the word "pizza".

Bring all those books on an appropriately sized aircraft.

Fly the aircraft [you don't have to be the pilot] over a densely populated area of your choice, indiscriminately dropping the books one by one until they're all cleared. [It's likely that the falling books will injure and perhaps kill people below.]

Once you've finished, fly wherever you'd like and land when you want.

Proposal II.

Gather one and a half copies of every published book that contains the word "pizza".

Bring all those books on an appropriately sized aircraft.

Fly the aircraft [you don't have to be the pilot] over a densely populated area of your choice, indiscriminately dropping the books one and a half by one and a half until they're all cleared. [It's likely that the falling books will injure and perhaps kill people below.]

Once you've finished, fly wherever you'd like and land when you want.

Intro:

The power of staring: the more you stare, the more you (can) stare. Images: things to stare at. With images there's some implied injunction against touching. *Noli me tangere* says the image, says some resurrected Lord, says the butterfly (well, maybe not the butterfly as much). Imago is Latin for imitate. Staring is imitation—the image is our body outside of ourselves. Intimation: don't touch, lest you vanish. Being intimate with one's eyes only. That being said, here's my Hollywood (fickleness):

Gustave Courbet

When I first studied Courbet he made me uncomfortable, and he still does. Courbet is the great harbinger-preserve. The one who still feels like the one, embodying a tradition that only he could represent. Mr. Modern. His ideas about what to see and what to tell (and of course what to paint, however quaint that exigency seems nowadays—at least to me) are to me the most exalted, difficult, wry, hungered, biting, blissful, intelligent, bestial, humorous, angry-modest. And if modern is timeless, Courbet is the great visual(ingu)ist of what it still means to be alive: romantic and skeptic, dutiful steward of all that might not be true. For me, art has always had a great affinity/consonance with wisdom. Wisdom is the person who refuses to accept s/he can ever stop doubting while ever loving/needing life anew. That's (my) Courbet.

Botticelli

That not being his real name of course, but the gauze and gloss and glow of the moniker work wonders on me. Perhaps it's me fetishizing illustrational qualities akin to books and cartoons of my childhood. Perhaps it's the glow of the skin that this purported person painted [PPP]. Basking in its golden pallor, glow is the go word. Botticelli's a great visual storyteller too, a draughtsman of an age, drawing with paints. A confluence of nobility, levity, piety. And of course beauty in youth is eternal.

Roe Ethridge

In search of living imagicians...Roe Ethridge. History of photography, blah blah blah. Rather the images we live with and what they do and can mean with no desperate text to corroborate their journey and their intent. Where "art photography" feels an antiquated term, there is the life of the image: Roe has a facility in making both poles of this paradox present—the pain of the present-contrathe-past—how do we pivot ourselves? (There is also the power of the framed-photograph; the object itself; the frame designed by the artist that masks the weakness of photographic prints in an era of 72 dpi majesty.) Images are intelligent and that's how we know ourselves. The maker of intelligent images: it's ever difficult to say if it comes down to a who. But inasmuch as he is "bipolar" (as mentioned above), Roe's name stays with me.

John Finneran

A person in the flesh: John Finneran, a person whose hand I often shake. A person who cares about things that I care about: painting (i.e., the historicizing act thereof), literature, pictures, devotion, emotion, austerity, clarity. Much like the best pictures of the high Avant-garde,

from mid-Manet to late-Mondrian, John's work is about a world of color, about a world of line, about a world of paint-as-trueground; there is the magic of the picture, the appearance of the Other Side on the face of the painting. We have learned to look at a painting; we have learned to love that looking-at; we come to love certain things about painting(s); the love runs very deep. I could mention Laura Owens's recent work, but John's work has a cool [like a breeze, not like a person] melancholy that makes me more at home. I like home. The history of painting is my home. John's a good host.

Clarice Lispector

Have you ever felt like you were reading something you wrote and yet all hard evidence points to your not having written it? Reading Lispector's prose (or at least the later prose, which is what I've read), I actually feel like I'm reading something I wrote. She died 4 months before I was born and a few times I've wondered if I'm her. I'm pretty sure I'm not. But I really truly marvel at the way we metaphysicize in kindred ways. Rare. I read her in translation of course. So who knows anything? Apropos images, words will do.

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Heaven and Earth

Preamble:

2 is the indomitable parallax of union and division. Therein lies its horror and divinity, its comedy and stupidity.

It takes two to make a thing go right; it takes two to make it out of sight (like literally, I can't see a thing).

Which number is the number of faith, 2 or 1 (infinity doesn't count)? Ethically speaking, 2, since 1 is fantasy—fantasy and faith seemingly isomorphic, much like 2 and itself.

Try to separate them—it's an illusion. (Pope Innocent III)

Amble:

The impulse is one of knowing: How to know? (Why to know and what to know are both tautological in their own ways. Who cares about where, and where knows no care of who. When is the point that is beside the point.)

Everything is everything as of course it can't be.

Ask the local gentry, and they will say it's elementary. (Voltaire)

Dissemble:

You always wanted a lover; I only wanted a job. (Kanye West)

Words cleave; thoughts struggle to equalize.

Every time one wants to be valedictory, one is assailed by remains. Every time one wants to be present, one is assailed by doubts.

What have I done to deserve this? (Edward Snowden)

There's the noble notion that the abstract can eschew the anthropomorphic, and so it can. But it can't do anything else at all.

How am I gonna get through? (Fredric March, *Death Takes a Holiday*)

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#I AM JUST LIVING TO BE DYING BY YOUR SIDE

Clarice Lispector* says:

Anyone who lives, knows, even without knowing, that he or she knows

I know words; I know the world. That's pretty much all I know as far as I know (well, I also know me (which is different than I of course)).

I know (that I know) that other people seem to know too and this usually helps out a lot. But as we idiomize in English, "you never know".

"People" was my first title for this exhibition. It seemed to have a good tenor to it, but then I realized it had other tenors as well. Hmmm: the world in so many words: perhaps a journey, because journey[s] have a certain tenor too. And then how to name the less known. Why? I don't know (you know what I mean).

There's a song named "Don't Know What You Got ('Till It's Gone)" by a band named Cinderella with words that always speak to me:

All things [sic] come and go; all that's left are the words

The singer, Tom Kiefer, then lets out a touching/touched whimper-plea:

I can't let go

In other words, the Grateful Dead begin:

If my words did glow, with the cold [sic] of sunshine

Their plaintive-cum-exultant minstrelsy ending in:

If I knew the way, I would take you home

Followed by words that are not quite words

*Well, Giovanni Pontiero says that she says

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What to discuss when there's maybe nothing left to speak about? We talk about flowers, superpowers, electronics qua utopia, aluminum foil qua nucleotide, and Lil Kim qua premier of North Korea.

A long time ago there was a thought about sharing something, an analog to the putatively demonstrable situation in which caring wasn't quite sharing. It said: in that all should come to be present then all that is present needn't be considered. Well, that didn't work so well. Now that sharing is not quite caring, there's a wish to care: caressing and quasi-empathizing and cognizing that everything indeed has its place (even if you might not really want it to be that ok). The best place to feel free is the immediacy of feeling. Cat videos, so to speak, is the latest iteration of a place we can all feel comfortable as our anxieties fail to be abated, as our beliefs teem-and-stagnate.

Numbed by self-service we have communal oblivion. But with the colors and shapes to guide us. The colors

and shapes to guide us, and any number of folios that fit the personal bill. The personal bill is oh so exigent; oh the emotions show-up even when on vacation. It feels so onthebrinkof Being—feeling—real.

How to feel real? Turn to the world at large. The world at large is too large to turn to. Hence keep turning to it. And jettison any thought of thinking about why. “Why?” is the religion of everything we still think we need. The position remains the position (perhaps it ever does), but the “why?” is just a swimmer, doing laps in the sunglazed lake, doing everything it can to feel free.

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A human being with a name we know is different than a human being who’s anonymous. There seems to be a much more natural “bond” between three people whose names we don’t know than between three people whose names we do know. Even good friends seem like stranger combinations when you add their surnames into the mix.

People who have names that many people know are well known people, and the more well known you are the more you might be considered famous, and the more famous you’re considered the more your name comes to mean something entirely different than what it would have meant before. It’s kind of like knowing an Eames chair is called an Eames chair.

Awhile back I came up with a sculpture: Barack Obama with a bowl of pasta. It sounded good for a couple days, but then I realized a better sculpture would be: Barack Obama and Mickey Rourke, or Barack Obama and Lily Allen, or Elle Fanning and Roy Halladay. Add a third wheel and you get: Joan Didion, Carmelo Anthony, and Michael J. Fox. Add a fourth: David Baldacci, Leonard Nimoy, Lionel Messi, and Lionel Richie.

How many people would pick out Roy Halladay in a room? How many people would pick out Elle Fanning? Is there something immediately interesting about Elle Fanning and Roy Halladay being the only two people in a room apart from their very different height and girth? Probably not, unless you recognize each of them as being famous.

I'm trying to make that room here, in this room. I've been inviting famous people to come here and help make celebrity sculptures—each famous person just doing his/her own thing for a half-hour or so. Each celebrity sculpture is documented by a photo (pinned on this wall) and signatures (signed on this wall). If you see photos and signatures, then it's proven something of a success. If you don't, then it's been a little :/

If you consider yourself a famous person and want to be part of one of these sculptures, please write me here: celebritysculpture@gmail.com.

If you know somebody you'd consider famous who might want to be a part of these sculptures, please have him/her/ them write me here: celebritysculpture@gmail.com.

Celebrity sculptures aim to raise lots and lots of money for environmental charities.

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- cat made out of crab meat
- cat made out of human flesh
- cat filled with (dirty) laundry
- cat as cat
- another cat as cat
- cat made out of donkey flesh
- cat made out of chicken
- cat that comes with a \$675,000 mortgage
- cat from a long time ago
- cat made out of orangutan flesh and Vitamin Water®

cat with a fish stick for a penis
cat that will never die
cat with a hive of bees inside it
cat who used to date Don Henley

The above is a list of sculptures/artworks available for adoption.
Each sculpture/artwork is unique. It's very easy to get one!!!!...

1st

give a cat a home and love and care till death do you part...
adopt from a shelter, from a new litter, from the street.

2nd

choose a title for your cat from the above list (first come
first served).

2nd-and-a-half

send me proof of adoption and a picture of your newly
adopted cat.

3rd

I can then send you a certificate with-which-to-certify your
cat as a unique artwork.

4th5th6th87th1634th14000th

You'll have a sculpture/artwork for the duration of your
sculpture's/artwork's (biological) life.

..If you'd like to provide a home for one of the above-mentioned
cats that would be amazing!!! Just let the wonderful Arts &
Leisure-ers know and they'll give you my contact info. If you
don't like the names of these cats but want to adopt a cat
anyway, that's even more amazing—I love you!!!

Sincerely,
Darren Bader



GEORGE CLOONEY

Warhol is transparency. Absolute transparency. Warhol is opacity. Infinite opacity.

Rirkrit Tiravanija asked himself one day, “How the hell am I going to be an artist when all paths remain open?” He wasn’t thinking about the pseudo-legislation of Duchamp when he asked himself this; he was thinking about Warhol, the gatekeeper, the lord of the innumerable scales, the silver emperor of nought, the prophet ever rescinded, he who divines the absolute limit of all evenings. Warhol, the wizard who died to become one, while the gatekeeper played cards and read cards and confiscated cards of card carriers—blithely we think, but maliciously too, or greedily. The wizard floats through the air and leaves droppings on the ground, many droppings.

Rirkrit asks himself about the world he lives in. He asks himself how to speak about what he feels he might believe in. He encounters a vessel and attempts to naturalize himself to it. But the vessel only allows him the rites of false transparency, or phantoms and a parade of faces he hates not remembering. He asks himself, “Where do we come from? Who am I? Where are we going?”

In the future everything will be chrome. The last thought on the last day before the day that haunts—that day of awakenings, indefinitely postponed, eluded, kept away. Together we celebrate and our celebrations mummify and become things we don’t have anymore— intractable phantoms, thoughts whose candor has no tread, no place. In the future everything will be chrome so that we can sleep and be unable to sleep. The torture chamber on a sea of niceties and the zephyrs that can’t cool the bed of coals.

The gatekeeper has requested an apprentice. Rirkrit pauses and wants to say yes. But he can’t. The chrome is too grand, too easy. (The tides compound their own and make them all clap their hands until the signs are dim and no more, or murderous, ubiquitous.) Fear eats the soul.

Appearances reside in the tissue of secrets and secrets rest on the tissue of appearance. That is what art has always meant, and most artists seek to find the perfect communion between secret and appearance. Ara Dymond frankly, deliberately, insouciantly, and exactly chooses a boulevard of very vibrant acquisition: he takes the places of art and makes them act out the places they have come to occupy, aspires for them to reseat themselves in new and non-dissonant honesties. Quite incommensurate with any nod, homage, or pastiche, Dymond's play deftly orchestrates the array of languages that art has come to find as commonplaces, in which common places are the precise site of epiphany, not epigone.

He acutely knows that a time forgets times all the time. And therein lies the trained secret of the genepool and thus the artpool: art isn't ours unless it's ours—that's the riddle and gift we face and embrace. In a land without genres, the genre ever restands and reasserts, even with its ghastly or winsome mutations: the moment that arrests or seduces or confirms or distresses is still the moment that does just that. And so we revisit things ever (a)new.

In our world felt as that of information—and specifically its bounty/plethora of objects—there are signs and sentiments that not only mimic, but also assure, and also essay. They perform. The genre of performance finds its home everywhere—as does our art. Throughout the itinerant but resident visual idioms of Dymond's staid, ebullient theater lies both inherent and performed performance. A performance of art that is not like the epic/epoch of Picasso. In its stead, the understanding, the vivid and agile understanding, of our place in time, our place in this world that seems too variegated to be condensed, contained, or convinced. Truth speaks/performs in a million tongues, and Dymond's tongue harvest is a sight/site for tongues to convene upon.

A couple years ago, Ara had a piece that said and read, 'Ok Ok'. There's something cosmic in the word 'ok': it's a soft-and-firm friend, one of our best and most thoughtful messengers: a blithely resigned knowledge that all things aspire to change but ultimately never quite can. Therein lies the beauty of art regardless of epoch. Therein Ara Dymond's work acknowledges the great heights of what made great heights great. It aims not to copy or revisit them, but to know their stature in the imagination—the way we aren't but always almost kinda are. Truth *can* speak a million tongues and if we're lucky sometimes many of these tongues meet.

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I'm not a painter. I don't paint. I don't want to paint. I love looking at paintings (more than almost anything else). Paintings are known to make people swoon; I swoon. I like seeing John Finneran's paintings (and his sculptures which speak like paintings). He is the painter of my generation whose work I feel closest to—his is the painting that most often initiates my swoon.

I know myriad people have tackled the sensorium vis-a-vis painting in venerable tomes that I've never wanted to read. I know that [P]ainting's 'tactility' aims to take on a flesh and genius of its own later in its (inherited) history. So I just want to briefly reconfirm/reaffirm that beyond its graphic ingenuity and its embassy of color, painting becomes painting through the uncanny material seduction of its medium: painting crawls through your eyes and up and down your haptic receptors. It's touch-by-proxy.

I've been privy to 3D encounters with John Finneran's work many times over the past 4 years. I always find myself feeling it and thinking of it as a beaming, shadowy marriage to all things of painting-past (or if in the mood

for something more finite/local: a sublime synthesis of Gottlieb, Guston, and Rothko). JF's colors resonate and float and resonate and float. His use of what could be thought of as hieroglyphs borders on the saccharine at every glance, but ultimately bores into the belly of the mind: whatever Freudian or Lacanian or Jungian or LadyGagaian categories apply. John's work deals with very basic announcements of the human condition through very (un)canny messengers.

Sentimentality has its pejorative sense and against all detractors of the acute, limpid powers of sentimentality, John paints the signs that are elemental and/or fundamental to personhood. The forms and characters he uses speak of the things we learned first in life: the early nouns, the early objects, the most ductile metaphors. Garbage cans become the stuff that myth is made of. And of course elephants continue to emit their indelible tractor beam. Sentiment knows its home: the hand reaching out into space looking for friends, for the stuff that we will always reach for and look for. The eyes are prosthetic hands after all.

Don't touch, but look; or rather, touch by looking. Looking at John Finneran's paintings, I always want to touch. But I don't want to because I know that the touching-through-looking that is looking (and looking-at-paintings) is different than (and thus better than) touch. Art is a way to know the world through not touching? Is this true? John Finneran makes art: I like this most about his work.

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Darren Bader
by Jenny Borland

An encounter with the work of Darren Bader—whether in a virtual, textual, or physical space—leaves one open

for both ambivalence and connections. From his writing to his curatorial ventures and conceptual installations, Bader is never resistant to creating levels of association and possibility, as he devises a unique participatory environment which at first, the viewer (or reader) may not even register being a part of, only to discover that his observation is essential. As would seem most appropriate to Bader's *modus operandi*, the following text is the result of our collaborative musings. Prompts are courtesy the Gaokao 2010—China's national college entry examination, the grueling equivalent to our SAT. – J.B.

Beijing: Looking at the stars with your feet on the ground (仰望星空与脚踏>实地)—commenters see this one as asking for an evaluation of idealism versus practicality.

I can't help but look at the stars. Idealism may be a pathology ultimately, but it's one of the few boons I readily recognize. Compassionate/empathic and jocular situations are the only other edifiers that come mind. Pragmatism is of course a life-saver for the idealist: it's the irrepressible parent, if not the superego. "With your feet in the air, and your head on the ground..." that's a way to semi-ideally confound the ever-confounding *pas-de-deux* of idealism & practicality. Spiritually you die without one, and spiritually you put yourself at great risk without the other. It just depends on who you are and how you came to best "order" your world. In the end, the proverbial "meaning of life" is about order and control. Nevermind the intractability of idealism, it is every bit as managerial as is pragmatism; pragmatism is every bit as fanciful as idealism. But they bend time and space differently—so speaks the inveterate, incurable idealist.

National (I): "Why chase mice when there are fish to eat? (有鱼吃还捉老鼠?)"—A cartoon showing one cat chasing a mouse while others eat fish has this as a caption.

The answer is: because. I don't know if your elementary school teachers frowned upon the use of "because" as an autonomous answer... (I've never harbored any active resentment towards that interdiction.) But since it's a fundamentally impertinent answer (as teachers well know), it occasionally comes to mind automatically, knee-jerky. Impertinence is the best-essary sometimes, and perhaps that's somehow built into the realm of the cat chasing the mouse (a crest/siege/seed/nest/siesta of power). But "because" really is a profound word when left to its solitary devices. The cats are not after the mice due to any specific laws of causality. They are after the mouse/mice: "because." Or if I understand my Lacan correctly (and it's dubious I do): *objet petit a* (not *jouissance* so much).

Tianjin: The world I live in (我生活的世界)—“The world is like a painter’s dazzling array of colors, the world is a melody dancing about on an instrument; the world advances through innovation and finds warmth through harmony; the world can exist in a marvelous virtual network, and the world is expressed in the real lives of ordinary people; the world may seem large, but it is really very small....everyone has their own world, but everyone lives in the world. Sum up your experiences and understanding of “The world I live in.”

The world I live in is a world of days and chance hours and inexorable minutes. (Yeah, that's novel, isn't it.) The world is always joy, as the search is perpetually for joy (distinct from enjoyment—because joy has an autobiographical/teleological quality). Any dialectic may honor that to a point. And it's funny to choose the word "point" because a point is always the locus of the imagined joy. Even if it's joy in malaise, deprivation, or agitation, the point always points to joy—and so the world goes round according to a calendar to manage these points, or direct towards them. The world

is also two words that feel entirely empathic. If you say “the world” and mean it as an all encompassing body of similar human beings and other living beings, the world is indeed an incredible dancing melody—warmth radiates from its ubiquitous presence/context. Perhaps that is more apt than the-pursuit-of-joy. But a “dancing melody” seems to necessitate the world with some degree of hindsight; joy is the seeker, the royal “because.”

Shandong: Light and shadow—“All the variety, all the charm, all the beauty of life is made up of light and shadow.”
—Leo Tolstoy.”

Good call, Tolstoy. The classic binary—i.e. a classic binary. The only binaries—the fundamentally indecipherable ones—that I can think of that eclipse light and shadow: here and there; me/us and you/them (this and that as its derivative). Now and then is curious, and almost witty—almost non-temporal. Life and death: that’s impossible sort of. I like light and shadow because they do a good job at highlighting things ;) That makes life nice®.

Jiangxi: Recovering childhood (找回童年)—“Why do we want to recover childhood? Because society is too utilitarian, children have too much pressure, and childhood ends too early. Society needs innocence and requires a return to childhood.”

I don’t know if society, per se, has anything to do with this—at least as far as utilitarian aspects come into play. If we’re pack/herd animals, then society and biology are very likely do-si-do. Childhood is after all a biological, neurological, physiological, endocrinological, etc. state of being. As far as the prelapsarian, return-to-innocence drive: I feel this is very much human biology and human biology alone (contra general mammalian or animal

qualities). It's the fat-brain, self-consciousness element of our biology; the being conscious of the life-cycle element of things (the ideas that Bataille and his sex-and-death dyad tried to encompass to some avail). Society ineluctably needs innocence, or better yet purity. Innocence is simply a fantasy about youth, since knowledge is the rite of adulthood(s). Purity is our consciousness of our mortality and our reproductive drives: it's about breeding. What repels is impure and thus, since children by-and-large don't repel physically, they become the avatars, paragons, and 'society' of purity-as-innocence, as pre-decay. Puberty is nothing short of monstrous as children's bodies go through violent alterations. Maybe therein lies the language of innocence: what came before the violence of the life-cycle.

Hubei: Fantasy (>幻想)—“Sun Wukong somersault cloud and Nezha's Wind Fire Wheels are products of fantasy bearing humanity's dream to fly through the air. Who would have thought that the Fair of 10,000 Nations in Shanghai's Lujiazui district, described in the late-Qing fantasy novel *New China*, and the journey “From the Earth to the Moon” dreamt up by French science fiction novelist Jules Verne would become reality today? Fantasy arises from the human instinct to seek out knowledge and is an expression of humanity's uncommon imagination. Fantasy motivates reality, fantasy illuminates life, fantasy is the source of happiness...”

Fantasy is like light and shadow: a poison and an elixir both. I can't live without it; good shit. The goodest, the dangerousest. Fantasy is led/governed by mimetic functions: it engages in notions of “the same,” even if it feels itself against “the same.” But fantasy always trips into reality when one recognizes the presence of one's own human body as *dissimilar* from everything else—i.e.

ineluctably you as thing that is rumored to suffer, to wish, and to die. Fantasy and wish are different because wish acknowledges futility; fantasy equips survival until it [fantasy] becomes pathological—then it equips “itself?” (Maybe survival is pathological then too?)

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“it is where my body begins to differ from what surrounds it that everything first seems to go wrong” –Ben Marcus

This is inaccurate to a point, but it hints at a point. Sculpture is about human perception within/as space, which is pretty much the same as human life (outward biology, perhaps). It's about organization of sensory data. What can be perceived is always what can be inferred and/or reduced (induced and/or deduced); pattern and number are assigned by will/belief/knowledge: everything that matters is assigned a place for a time/time for a place. The spatio-temporal quotient/factor is nothing but the human experience approximating itself. Human experience says perception needs to be. Human experience also says exigency needs to resolve-and-repeat itself. Sculpture arises from all these matters.

Human cognition functions through unit. Sculpture is anything human cognition carves/acquires. Sculpture is collection (and then/thus loss). The way I look at art is how to make sense of perception and feeling. Whether sculpture is about feeling or not remains something I don't attempt to directly examine; I have yet to not address it though. Organization of sensory data is enough to continue to experience. The (habit towards) unit will continue to beguile and annoy.

1. – 4.

I looked at a painting. It told me everything. I was told about it in advance. It moved/moves me. About it.

All feelings stop when time breaks. Rather, all time persists when feelings are lost. I do believe in that painting.

There are frames. There is the world; there are people; there are lenses. There are knowledge. There are feelings. The problem with frames is I know them. The problem with the world, with people, and with lenses is I hate you. The problem with frames is I hate you. The problem with the world, with people, and with lenses is I know you.

The definition of image is: “something to know.” “Something (un)known” occludes/precludes image and includes motion. The image is a way to know. The way is (un)known. Moved.

I didn't want to look at a painting. I decided to reject its window and its language, its comfort and its place. I hated the painting so I could end the looking. I hated the photograph. I hated the image. I hated the way to the feeling. I tried-wanting to birth (an [a-])otherwise/otherways, talking, knowing. I hate myself (I start looking).

1. – 4.

What am I looking at? Why do you want me to look? Why would I want to look? How do I look? I look like this.

I've been waiting for my hands for a long time. Look but do not touch. Look and be touched.

Waiting = Looking. Waiting also = Waiting.

1. – 4.

Information (Identification). I see everything except that which I don't see.

About Appropriation Art

There's obviously no such thing as "appropriation art"

(Marcel Duchamp as Romantic Hero); (Marcel Duchamp as Sex Bomb)

Marcel Duchamp says he never suffered from depression. That makes the readymade specific.

Feelings

If the Duchampian window is: "tenuous *qua* tenable," feelings have a new name: "item space."
—Thierry de Duve

The Artist as Sociopath

"... All action predicates reaction and vice versa. Every act of authorship makes/takes its own (terms). What is maken/taken is given—and, logically, what is given is taken/maken. As such, any artist's resolutely beneficent intentions are identical to another artist's violent apathy or quaint antipathy. The vastly thrilling notion of making (having) has many faces, one of which is taking (having). (T/M)aking as (m/t)aking. In order to make/take, one must make/take from something. Every thing maken/taken is pre-existed by what (it) was prior to its being maken/taken (this time), naturally leading to loss of unipolarity... Since we happen to be a mortal, reproductive species, dependent on sustenance, we always know what the notion of making/taking means in the largest sense, and so the act of violence is indeed the act of violence..."

Copyright is thus a friend of friends... The artist wants 'fair use' ... What needs to be protected and why? (Why needs to be protected and what?)... There is no such thing as 'appropriation art.'”

–Walead Beshty, “The Artist as Sociopath,” *Artforum*, 5/06

“Tyler Perry’s ‘A General Pussy’” An HBO Original Series

Julia Roberts as Ida Lupino. Brad Pitt as Marcel Duchamp. Bill Murray as Roger Daltrey. Catherine Deneuve as Magic Johnson. Cormac McCarthy as Emma Watson. Typhoid Mary as Blaise Pascal. And Robert Rauschenberg in the role of Vladimir Putin. Created by Tyler Perry

Philade|phia

Andy Warhol + John F. Kennedy

LHOOQ

PC: What is the personal definition of eroticism you would give?

MD:... Basically, it's really a way to try and bring out in the daylight things that are constantly hidden... To be able to reveal them, and to place them at everyone's disposal—I think this is important because it's the basis of everything, and no one talks about it!

In Advance of the Broken Arm: Feelings

In the future, everyone will be an artist

1. – 4.
I am saved.

1.
Hands bring people together

2.
There are other people (who I don't want to know)

3.
We like to share

4.
Here it is

.....

There remains an unofficial proscription on touch. No, don't touch: touch has no acuity, helps discern the optima of the other senses by its own failure, touch leads nowhere. Touch reproduces itself behind the mind, just as sight finds its unique mirror in the cerebral court. Touch nullifies, and births on the other side. Touch is sexuality. Touch is pre-sociality, or sociality itself. Touch is evidentially not-sexual, because sexual seems to have its own category. Touch remains the undefined, the ultraimmediate that immediacy can never qualify since it is also a temporal notion. Touch erases all that, or razes it, or other holy verbs. Touch is Shiva the destroyer, and inversely is combated as Shiva the annoyer, the gadfly of what the world would/could really want. High light is just as visible as due obscurities.

As the light will whirl continuing whirl, Anca Munteanu will touch at all costs. The violence of the motion of light and object must come to something, since it is the quintessentially

unreliable map, the window onto the world omnifreckled in odd, onerous, and intractable designs. Hence a weird, coruscating, and nervous task comes. Divine anxiety: "the world is mine but it is not". In the Munteanan case, one allays anxiety by use of touch. Curiosity in regard can only be secured through sudden touch. With the touch of the inveterate, compulsive healer (er, toucher), the innate salve, even the smotherer (which in the Munteanan case somehow hopes to lead to laughter, even if plaintive).

Smother and laughter alight upon the workshop. Waiting for that thoughtful cataclysm where the hand divines its needs in advance of its needing to, and well after its wanting to. Anca Munteanu places her hands at the pit of every piece, and then places the piece. She does not use her hands to form anything. She uses her hands to decide, never to make. It is quite common for eyes to have hands, but I believe it less common for hands to have eyes. If Anca Munteanu were to work in clay, nothing would ever happen! Maybe a brain in each hand too, like that Steve Martin movie "The Man With Two Brains In His Hands".

I think that Heidegger makes it a point to link thinking, thanking and memory together etymologically, so that he can make any outrageous injustice that befalls the Idea just again, and forever again. Like most, Anca Munteanu says thanks with her art, for she thinks with it. That memory should continue through the display of an artwork is completely coincidental. There is always the path of the hand through the world: the hand that helps the world by taking back the world; it is only through facets of touch that we are not artists, and we suddenly vacate our place as homo faber. As the artwork sails to remote shores of some edifice, the lilt and huff of touch remains unmoved and no one remembers it. Anca Munteanu tries to remember touch. In the fear, joy and fury of an artist, the world is refused its drift. What is impassible is taken in hand and held unto release (er, death).

Perhaps it's because I held her hand in my own that I can't but address the profundity of touch in Anca's work. I've held enough

hands to know that hands are different. And so I scream (grin, or some other holy verb) that touch itself chooses to define and not-know the world of order, even if it is the progenitor of all games. Healing with no remorse: consummate tenderness, not clemency.

But maybe it is clemency in the end, because we do have art work. We have a circumspect eye even behind the touch-behind-the-mind. In the cool heats of love and inspiration design can arise as legible. And that fugitive legibility and its romantic vise on art (er, aesthetics?) are utterly, fantastically, simultaneously (not immediately!) present and manipulable. Manipulable: the Latin 'hand' makes this word: Anca Munteanu helps inaugurate its resuscitation in the creative act that outwits educated poetry.

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Proposal for Performa 09

There are innumerable objects, i.e. 'object-ifiable' presences/ experiences, i.e. whatever the cognitive faculties cognize, i.e. objects. New York City and environs is home to lots of them.

I intend to make a map of a selection of these objects (somewhere bet. 60 and 110-ish): e.g. certain store awning graphics, items in various retail stores or street stands, facets of public monuments/landmarks, pages in magazines, bathroom graffiti, piles of garbage (which admittedly aren't reliable for longer-term static display), artworks in private or public collections, people(!), etc, etc.

This selection of objects will be charted out on a map of the greater NYC area. There will be groupings of these objects visible on the map that are supposed to be experienced in tandem, even if such a tandem-experience is physically impossible. These groupings will be color-coded, color-coated, or captured in basic geometry delineation/ demarcation zones, etc.

The map of the greater NYC area will be a keystone map. The exact schema of the objects that appear on this map will then be transposed to another 8 to 10 maps based on [these are some preliminary ideas]:

1. time travel to a different geographical locus (e.g. The Philippines cir. 1634)
2. serial numbers to be usurped by non-serial non-numbers –thus a number chart
3. a map of a galaxy
4. a map of a foreign metropolis
5. a moving image (potentially porn) that elapses over several minutes and in which space obeys the whims of the camera (which would be a DVD attached to the publication, or just a simple timecode-based timeline.)
6. an icon
7. a map of an imaginary place (like Middle Earth)
8. a tattoo on an enormous being
9. a Mark Lombardi diagram
10. a theme park, a national park
11. etc.

What I propose for Performa 2009 is to print a book/pamphlet of this collection of maps with a legend identifying the 60-110ish objects. It will be a tour through the city, but also through the impossible. Lots of fun and consternating potential encounters, in hopes of uncovering an improbable (absurdist?) cognito-aesthetic continuum.

.....

Ours is the age of computers and frogs – Oprah Winfrey

In an immersive environment*, and in compulsive marriage to an interface*, we are, per the human usual, given to the

tactile need/continuum. The tactile can be as glib as it can be gleeful.

And it, more than any other sensory faculty, inheres within the most bizarre and intricate seat of moods. (It is the bride who wed herself: zeal and velleity getting it on en masse: all geologic strata confounded with neurological enigmas: smorgasbord as fed upon by 1,971 species of birds.) Now, dupe the tactile with the glee and/or glibness of color, the arrogance of sight, and a commonplace (exalted), if not entirely stable, synergy takes place. The synergy of the somehow-true [of enjoyment] and (t)hence the synergy that knows/portends [all] ends. So, the tactile-visual is prodigal and bound to turn prosaic.

This is why I'm (stuck) here(!) making paintings, says Michael Zahn of *as Michael Zahn*. Unimpressed with the supersensory physics involved in dataprocessors, but still enamored of all dataprocessed gifts to the sensory, Michael Zahn has entered the "parts" industry knowing that even the King of Color was captive to the family business (and sometimes couldn't quite discern the difference between drudgery and infanticide). In the War in-Favor-of Ontological Discontinuity (Happenstance), painting becomes a clear-cut revelation toward the profanity, and hence the eudaemonic gift, of what color+texture+volume assures. Painting as assurance of nothing but the plenty that both proceeds and ends plenty. Hello, painting. (Painting somehow responds, "Hello, people.")

Remember, there were not paintings prior to painting! Does that mean that there is not painting prior to paintings? or paintings prior to paintings? Michael Zahn as Michael Zahn is vaguely aware of all answers and will succumb to them at the end of "Grand Theft Auto IV." "Grand Theft Auto V" will arrive against all failures of the tactile-visual.

*remembering that these words are in no way restricted
to computer-culture vernacular

the marquee of the artist's rise into visibility

a. From the creaky palm or seat of the studio out into the lamp of the art-riding public. This is always a heralded event, oft nurtured by the sympathies of those who are intimate with this sympathy. But the herald is rarely efficient enough to accommodate the vantage so needed by the artist to continue her own craft as she had dreamed it. Here are heralds to bare the artists' 'banners', hoping that the art regales all who would care enough, and that those who care plenty would remember the art dear to them.

b. Geography is often invoked to lend identity to ever-more-proliferating artworks. For example, everything in this gallery is from the geopolitical entity known most widely as the U.S.A. This is an understandable expedient, and sometimes a necessary one. But does it do a service to the art itself?

c. The human comedy, the human dance. Here are some peers. Who made and hope to make again. Providing, as always: mystic polyyps; adumbrations of false-but-kind prophecy; concretions of famous magic; decay+birth of lines+lines; marks of faith, of loss, of increase, of gaiety; brilliance in the shade, sun in the blankets; allegiances and dissonances; a resolve to breathe when it's over.

d. A resolve to share. How little we've remembered to remember that art –this thing which has assumed many dubious heads that seem to belittle its inextinguishable qualities of comfort in the face of loss– that art is there to be remembered. Like a good friend. May this show be about friendship. A real hello between people and the world they experience. "No exhibition an island!", they say. Yes, and what of it? Hopefully this show can provide whoever's

reading this some companionship and some resistance to the oblivion of "what comes next".

–Darren Bader and Mirabelle Marden

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Apropos the gallery rear quarters

This is

Why and What happens when i wish to reconcile the literary, the cinematic, and the tactile.
(mis)aligned feast.

E.g. bite an image out of Soviet Montage, roll it around your palate, match your palate to your palm. Evenly, word a view out of a texture; or tickle with palatable clauses from written space, or palatable clauses from verbal space; or a genital sheen from a color.

Whatever definitions of synaesthesia might aspire to science, this ain't –and it isn't synaesthetic. Whatever libidinal theory might baste/abet it, this is merely a ballet of nomenclature. Whatever nomenclature might be apprehended is taken/pulled by fluids (mnemonic, alimentary, otherwise). Otherwise being other and wise, each one being each.

*Rather, I choose to wish my senses complete. A politic of senses (and is aesthetic apolitic?)

Is it ante-some-new-technologicallyfacilitated-environment? I kind of hope yes, and kind of hope no.

Apropos the middle gallery section

“What used to be a credulous and unadulterated passion and device is now Laodicean economy of ostensible wisdom”
–Yevgeny Delacroix, August 16, 1993, @Madonna’s 35th birthday bash

The autonomous, aspirant to a universal: i.e. all discrete things that are inherited. That these discrete things are inherited, and why-how. The claim of the existence of the [/a] work of art within the musculature of the (edict of) history vis-à-vis ‘history offers postures for the future’...
Re history: it is futures that choose art, rather than art choosing futures. But somehow ‘rather than futures’ does not mean ‘rather than history.’ Thereby history is agreed upon as insuperable, and thus ineluctably condoned. Still, even if presence is future, what the fuck business does it have arrogating discreteness.

As an artist who wishes to voice and share, yet as a person who has ethical qualms with the nature of legacy, I’m gallery-placing ‘art’ things meant to be the first part of an eventual closure (that could occur past the end date of the exhibition). What comes in between is a perpetual dialogue between me and whoever wants to participate: whether by adding to the art work, or speaking of it: all physical and/or verbal augmentations are welcome. (Any collectors who are reading this, I would particularly like you to participate.) I’ll be in the gallery every Saturday, but feel free to add-on/converse/engage whenever.... If art, per se, can actually bypass the future. Let’s find out?

Apropos the face (looking out the window)

“The triptych is imbalanced. The Spanish retable is too prodigious. What lenses duly pertain?” –Leopold Henri, *Heraclitum Novum and Other Predominances* (1653)

“5 equaling 1 (and other menageries) ” –Thomas and Ellen Pynchon, *Pall Break City* (1968)

.....

So, these four pieces/groups-of-pieces in the main gallery space are meant to be engaged with://

1st piece: *for*: that Art Basel Miami pile

2nd piece: *and sculptures*: the container with the tahini paste and buttons + the blue textile thingy with the 2 dvd packs

3rd piece: *omniscient taxes*: the wallpaper swaths/swatches

4th piece: *pubi(c/s)*: the gathering of stuff that began with the baboon oven

The pieces are incomplete. There's a fair chance they'll never be complete. But that determination will happen at an as-yet-undetermined point in the hopefully-near(er) future. Between now and then, they can be adjusted/augmented/modified/+. Basically, I'm presenting something, and if you feel like talking about it; or physically embellishing/expanding it, or even editing it; or both; or some; or adjhfkla: great! Here's how one goes about doing that...

If you feel more inclined to talk about stuff, and having our dialogue be part of the piece's structurals/physiology/history/etc., I'm in the gallery every Saturday from opening to closing (12-6). Or, you can write me: juanath@gmail.com whenever you want (please be patient though –it might take a few days for me to respond). You can also just talk about dialogue/talk-stuff with other people; and, if you want, let me know about that.

If you feel like adjusting/augmenting/modifying/+. the pieces thru: graphic elements, sculptural objects, non-

sculptural objects, idols, written words, etc., please run it by me first. For these pieces to be best realized, we have to be in some sort of agreement about how each component could add to the piece's '*je ne sais quoi*/presence/completion/quiddity/gluasm-asdkie.' I'm in the gallery every Saturday, all gallery day (12-6); or, again, you can write me: juanath@gmail.com

The closure of 4 pieces/groups-of-pieces might not coincide with the end of the exhibition. Empirical this, empirical that. Till some sense of (in)completion evinces itself.

./././

What's going on with this project? I've got some notions, but you might not agree –and vice versa; so let's see what we can all find out.

.....

“enchanted objects”, how will they be plural@singular and singular@plural. plural@singular is meant to denote the aesthetic(?) process in which a subject/person experiences many aestheticized quanta/objects and considers the experience to be unified and hence religious(?). singular@plural is meant to denote the religious(?) process(es) in which a subject/person aesthetically/religiously experiences one object discretely and then continues to experience other objects discretely. Someone approaches (an) aestheticizable quantity/ies and will experience {plural@singular}s and {singular@plural}s. if either one is a religious experience –meaning one built upon suspension of the prosaic and, arguably, the onto-chronic– it inherently claims a universal quality. Hence the inherited status of the ‘art’ object as something of religious significance. ‘Art’ is what is usually appended with the notion of aesthetics:

how to qualify what is 'art' and what remains foreign, if not an anathema, to that category. But aesthetic judgement's insuperable relativity attests to the ineradicable inaccuracy of any attempt for 'art' to name itself 'art'. Art is a candid enough category if considered from the vantage of intractable relativity, it provides any one person a sense of how his/her life could look from an uncanny angle. As such, it provides the same quarter as does/might religious encounter. (And the fact that art and religion have explicitly corroborated one another throughout the greater course of human civilizations would go to affirm this.) That art, under the reign of atheistic/pantheistic democratics cum ecumenical-scienticity, has somehow come to be profaned by any religious allegiance obscures its inextricability from metaphysical-religious onto-mechanics...

As archaic and 'primitive' artifacts from the gamut of history that come to be deemed art by the Enlightenment project of democratics cum ecumenical-scienticity, these same artifacts' enigma as an inaccessible religious experience overwhelms any attempt to experience them as art. Once wrested from their proper 'historical' environs, they certainly become infinitely aestheticizable, but by introducing them into an (art-)historical dialectic, they remain inaccessible enigmas (replete with religious latency). Poetic artifaction's [i.e. 'creative' production] *raison d'être* seems to have always been to simultaneously unveil and reconstitute religious enigma (the uncanny, the sublime, what have you). And it continues the same propensities today. Yet rather than acknowledging the fundamentally religious climate of any thought process that reflects upon itself, purveyors and aficionados of 'arts' in all its epistemologically bourgeois vestments continue to espouse a universal law of aesthetic value that is unmaintainable: if the contemporary religious system is one of atheistic/pantheistic democratics cum ecumenical-scienticity, then its followers (ostensibly) believe in unfettered variety and uniqueness of experience,

hence universal variety and uniqueness stretches universally towards non-commonality: the mania for unadulterated aesthetic experience is limitlessly antisocial. Whereas art of a markedly secular nature of previous historical periods managed to be shared through any number of social unions due to a relatively small amount of artworks produced, the championing of the creative individual in contemporary Western democracies (Flickr and YouTube; Garage Band and I-Movie; money hungry universities and trade schools trumpeting careerism for all creative paths) works towards the elimination of the social currency that is the congregation of beholders, the audience (the church, if you will). And so flows the atheistic/pantheistic democratics cum ecumenical-scientificity. If you have a populace of Zarathustras then there remains no veritable socius at all; if everyone is off playing Orpheus, then there is no community left to enjoy whatever poetics may come. Without shared metaphor, any notion of poetics [art proper] is demolished. Even in the most exclusive cadres of artistry, any sense of aesthetic unity will be more and more undermined everyday, the more aestheticizable information becomes boundlessly circulated and accessed, unless hermitage is enforced....

So the wealthy may be able to wreak patronage in order to house and hallow their annexation of the word 'art', but won't fewer and fewer self-proclaimed 'artists' give a rat's ass? This is because art is fundamentally a religious quotient. Whether it is politicized, eremitic, popular (I have to mention here the 20th century genius of Hollywood, and its media-mogul offspring of now, prelates/hierophants extraordinaire), religion needs a platform. This platform is a community. Whatever moments of private rapture may come, they must orbit around a fundamental metaphor-butressed mythology. A work of art does not exist without shared mythologies. If the mythology is none other than the idea of atheistic/pantheistic democratics cum ecumenical-scientificity, the scourge of contemporary

aesthetics is itself: whatever blissful moments alight upon a moment of sensitivity, they are eradicated by the twitter of hundreds of millions of opinions given equal value as quantities supportable of bliss. Once again, this behavior exponentialized turns radically antisocial. Any poetic artifactor who purports herself/himself as an artist, as a human spirit/mind/being worthy of meticulous regard, must be willing to remove herself/himself from atheistic/pantheistic democratics cum ecumenical-scienticity. There will be a breaking point when a wholly democratic approach to aesthetics-as-that-which-defines-art will not longer work. How then might poetics create new temples (so that these will fall too)? If one were to follow the logic of infinite information to its democratic end, one would arrive at the Matrix-like cyborgian anesthesia for a race of supernumerary humanity. Such a fate seems unlikely, unless complacency is forced with such an overwhelming policing violence, that technology magnates are afforded the free reign to co-opt the human race for their own fascination. If, somehow, aesthetics were to become the post-theistic religion, as in fact they have, art would have to dissociate itself from aesthetics and from its own name. It should do this now. It already has been doing this for some years (detournement comes immediately to mind, as does certain approaches to street art). Poetics has to rigorously dissociate itself from the word art, while being sure to give itself no name at all. The word poetic must go underground and become nearly archaic, as has the word “religious” in some cultures.

“enchanted objects”, how will they be plural@singular and singular@plural

To blather to myself that I am impartial; or that any responsible critic is in fact responsible due to a circumspect deference to her/is own crucial(?) failures: that would be the tenet of a magisterial art criticism. And such magisterial art criticism is espoused by many a tumid

pen in order to corroborate the smashing brawn that is the hegemon –right? To get to the point, here’s some of my vitriol+Apollonianism in the face of the art world and what it has come to be: the halcyon sheen of a marketplace and mean hangover that follows and sells 25 year olds for \$20,000 a painting. Here’s a keen from someone who’s still wont to buttress iconographies for the dead. “Yeah, Mallarmé—an art is dead dude, don’t you get it?” “The de rigueur scholars seem to recognize it!” Yeah, but they so often opine with little Chelsea experience, dig? My insatiable need for the object-of-contemplation brings me back every time. Fucking museum epistemics are cooing my ass.

A walk through the wonders of New York in early autumn. This is when Chelsea radiates its most endearing smile, because it feels like this art season will be a renewal. A step towards socially restorative hedonism. Everybody bites into that fruit: motherfucker’s gonna be yummy, right? Well, it kind of depends on whether you think that artmall is good for the inherited notion of art, or not. But either way, yummy could totally work. (Go to Artforum.com for the latest weather reports, or you might just want to smell them emanating from the pulp of *ArtReview* magazine.) ...

At this point in the screed I began to go all *Twilight of the Idols*-like and excoriate the shit out of what I thought was artworld mediocrity and pandering, by singling out artists with shows up –whose work I (dis)liked for various reasons, but who I lumped together impetuously. The words sophomoric, deplorable, and incontinent were gleefully, maliciously deployed. A brief litany of (quasi-)pejoratives

- flunked divination school, but still likes to skin cats.
- artworld revisited Type 3 (“The Gay Science of 5th generationism”)
- artworld revisited Type 2 (“A Better Tomorrow”)
- artworld revisited Type 5 (“Games to Dismiss Me”)
- covering bases towards covetous and base(less) apotheosis

I was delivered a due remonstrance from my peers who felt that I was talking shit just like everyone else –harping and carping ad infinitum: and that’s a snooze. One of them proffered this Adorno bit about ‘anger as an artifact of desire’: *To be angry you have to expect/want something different than that what you see/get*. Now that’s nothing shocking, but it made me realize that my affinities to Adorno are pretty manifest: laments or jeremiads about the loss of some putative human quotient. Elided from my original harangue are (hobbyist’s) references to Hölderlin (all Romantic neo-Hellenist urge), and Rimbaud (invoked as preferred, and high-grade, delusional posturing); and these dead guys are somehow meant to be palliative to the aforementioned ‘rot’. Which makes me wonder, am I just a dead-man fetishist, living under a rearguard sign? Is the so-called artworld really such a detestable institution? And does it even exist?

I haven’t the chops to adduce a slam-bang historiography of how modern and/or contemporary art came to be [check out Giorgio Agamben’s *The Man Without Content*, as rollicking primer on that shit]. What I do have is my gut and its concomitant illusions, and they counsel me that something is indeed arot. Nothing new here: MFA-cadres, collectors randy for their museum bequests, museums that are too frightened of the increasing anachronicity of their precepts, graphic designers who like to use canvases to make more cash (or perhaps they believe in the Freudian delights of the ‘tortured genius’). It is indeed artmall. Maybe churlish anchorite-conceptualists like myself simply can’t handle the rabble incumbent in any enterprise, but walking through any contemporary art museum, or Chelsea and its many analogs, really amounts to the effacement of any veritable ‘art’ experience. We are once again in a time of hired craftspeople, which can actually be a healthy way to approach this word ‘art’. Unfortunately for the secularized world, and any verifiable program of ‘aesthetics,’ these craftspeople fancy themselves

geniuses. I can't deny them their self-esteem (I too am a genius, you see), but if all of us artists can't fess up to the fact that we're churning out product not of any 'higher' order than the Vitamin Water bottle or the heaps of particle board at Home Depot, we really are not doing our job—which is the syncretic/alchemical/poetical process of coming to terms with the human condition in a non-economic fashion. Once again, perhaps I am a rearguard dude, and the imminent arrival of art museums as the visual art equivalent of Barnes & Noble (hiding hefty tomes amid rampant escapism) is in fact an Epicurean's delight, one fit for the lauded marriage of aesthetics and tactility which defines our 'information society.'

But I am of proper gut-cum-illusion that art is in a sorry state. For those chasing the heights of the avant-gardes of the first half of the twentieth century, it's best to pursue visions beyond this artworld that those bourgeois-cum-indigent movements fostered. The visual arts are our society's bread and butter, for sure (I don't care if you're talking about Duccio or Jennifer Aniston). But inherently 'art' proper cannot be reduced to a category of appearance, but a category of mode. (I've been tempted to appropriate the word "poetics" as a more veracious metaphor for the enterprise referred to as 'art' since the rise of the so-called Modern state of mind; but I don't want to cheapen that word too.) That being said, we who esteem art historicized forebears for all their leaps of wisdom and imagination should make it a point to properly emulate them: that is try to change the world through our own (fucked-up) perception, however fatuous a revolutionaristic program feels. Maybe the artmall is a grand revolution I am too dorky to see, but I assure myself that artmall is not that enigmatic quantity most familiarly named 'art.' The Romantic in me seethes up through my redoubtable cynicism and says 'take heart.' Which germanely brings me to my originally typed denouement...

In the Lower East Side neck of the woods, Orchard Street Gallery hands out a wonderful pamphlet called "The Middle

Class Goes to Heaven” and shows a rad Dan Graham video (about malls coincidentally). Across the street, Miguel Abreu just opened a tiled space that has a casual library filled with Alain Badiou, and he smokes in his gallery too: I hope such aplomb pays off (even if I have beef with Badiou), because stupid assholes are buying Jasper Johns works for 80 million bucks -and talking about Jasper Johns really makes me ill – isn’t it arguable that he and his pal Bob Rauschenberg are the canny advent of the “artstar” market that governs artmall?

There are people who like to write about the nuances of art, to write about the oeuvres of certain creators as if they were philosopher’s stones. I am not one of these writers. I am an angry artist who dreams up post-utopian utopias daily. That said, art critics and self-deemed artists alike, you’re going to have to clear a lot of brush before you find your way out of this one. It’s naked outside the mall and the research barracks, but at least you can sense a far off hint of ‘art’ in the air.

PS. Franz Ackermann makes Old Navy displays.

.....

(some chromatic scheme/reticulum:)

And the/this Indian elephant. Oh yeah: right:/; it's present, rather, here. Compact; any sentiments it arouses; how many tactilities will meet it, and how many others will address for it. Often moving with some specific bus route on and below the 14th St. latitude, sometimes abiding by its own "runes"/ needs of geometry. (I think) it will be recognized: rather, purpose-needs* legible: yeah, its immanence is present!! ... providing pedagogy at its most lubricated (how arid its hide we wont). [presumably] Five senses, verbal confounded with vegetation qua lexemes.

You know, I'm loath to believe in a "what will be shared" directive, but that's all about it, I guess.

This elephant is lived/resided(?) in sometimes by Lewis Morris, Morris Louis, Rakim, and more occasionally by somebody that happened to come to one's mind recently. The elephant not a vessel, but a porch, like each of these guys. Communication can be had

The elephant comes in and out seasonally for a bit. [and what a joy to watch it bathe and swim in the rivers and seaport.] And then leaves/disappears/absconds/goes/-----
---/yo

AFTERTHOUGHT:

Coop Himmelb(l)au hosts and Centre Street Coop Board present

THE WEDDING HAMMOCK OF PINOT-GALLIZIO AND
PINOT GRIGIO.

i.e. THE (g)LOVE PARADE
LOWER MANHATTAN,

--/--/200



GRUPE:

curated by Darren Bader and Jesse Willenbring

12-22 artists. Precluding autonomous works. A show that demands the group show.

A buncha artists will be given digital photos and a layout of the gallery space 2-3 months in advance of the show. They will then work among themselves (and with the curators) via correspondence in order to realize a way for each of their works to efficaciously fill the gallery space... No work can claim autonomy. Each work must remain in contact with (an)other work(s) at at least 2 points: a canvas could touch another framed work, or piece of paper, or video projection, or actually hang from a sculpture. A spinal column of sorts, or a (tranquil) tangle, or a sarahsze thing, or...

The circulation of works within a given experience; any autonomy indubitably dubious. Perhaps an approach to installation art that denies the author in favor of the experience itself—which is not uncommon of course, but quite uncommon within art galleries and institutions. So you could call this an institutional critique, which it is. But even so, it is much more an approach to sculpture and to approaching notions of ‘community’ and ‘installation’ holistically.

Walking into a group show is usually a fucking bore. Each artist is conspicuously commodified whether s/he intends to be or not. This marketing corrupts the ability to de-mystify the author, and the ability to re-mystify the work—which should be the hallmark of any contemporary aesthetics. We are not credulous enough to think that we can eliminate this problem. But refusing the paradigm

opens ways to re-perceive what the work could signify/
allow; we want to re-establish a primacy of the work.
Curators and artists will be blurred. A polyonomous
collaboratrix, together toward something we all sorely miss,
even if it is a formidable challenge to our habits. A process
not to be estimated, simply to be approached; an experience
not to be estimated, but to be approached.

The avant-garde seems to have no time for itself. We want
to feed it that time. Promulgating imperatives, you see: what
else to do with a lifetime.

Preliminary list of artists (to be expanded):

Carter Mull

Ian Rosen

Anca Munteanu

Lansing Dreiden

Mateo Tannatt

Peter Johansen

Erin Krause

Kathryn Garcia

Jake Keeler

Lars Fisk

Scott Olsen

Agathe Snow

Mr. Dibbs

Jesse Willenbring

Macrae Semans

John Finneran

Jennifer West

Michael Zahn

Gurindre Vedlock first adopted the nom de guerre, Darren Bader, while studying anti-commodity theory at Manticore Univ. He lovingly researches electronic music and sounds. He lives in Vilna, Los Angeles, and (sometimes) Hong Kong.

The book that is [acronymically] titled, *coai (t) a-g: (hd-di (4058)): gtcte, "bis, ", acil, cpl*, is a project that Gurindre undertook in 2003, to deal with the difficulties of aura-maintenance. Gurindre has mentioned (in an interview with famous perfect tits): "we've got a problem with the problematics of artifice. What should be kept reticent, is now a bit too busy. I'm trying to deal with it; it's hard... People have admonished me, in some utilitarian/egalitarian vein, that I keep forgetting myself. 'Right,' I accede. Still, I get pissed of. Redoubts are supposed to be redoubtable, right[?]"

Gurindre hopes that words will somehow rematerialize into materials. Also, "I am a bit historical materialism addicted." He co-edits the magazine *Fundy* with friends and family.

For a year or so, my obese ideas grew the tiny appendages of empirical reminders and remainders. This foray into less-cinematic sculpture was a pleasant time in my life. Strictly non-iconoclastic (rather, Catholic), the resulting, [nearly] imageless book is what came of thoughts about how to make a personal aesthetics shareable. —Darren

.....

"Think of string theory as string cheese."

—Calann Jakes

'staring at the purple car wasn't enough'

—unknown Provençal poet

'...and with that lucid vagueness (or vivid laminate) of supple will, married and perhaps a truth happened a time.'

—Octavio Paz, *the lecher*

darren's first 'mature' artistic fascination came with the cinema. after recognizing no way of accomplishing a tactile cinema, he decided video/film installation might work –but it didn't. next came the idea of sculpture, which meant: relationships too complex to be reducibly observational. this tendency wended from three-dimensional constructions to co-option of screenplay ossature to food and words (so that my hands might fall off -which has little-to-nothing to do with the theme of the tactile); he's still doing food and words now-ish. he'd like to probe more into what science has in mind with its expansions of VR technologies. but having little aptitude for the fundamentals of neuroscience, he likes written poetry instead. words like “asymptotic” probably would speak to general ontology/metaphysics. darren has an art show.

.....

Not more than a week ago, a gallerist admonished me, saying that I should have more self-esteem. I took a quick defensive to that denuding remark, and let it wound me for the remainder of the evening. With the next morning came residual ire, and a clumsy contumaciousness that I can never seem to evade. Then I took his word as proactive gospel. Six days later, I recant this latter stance. Self-esteem is a dangerous term. It is political, and has no place in the realm of colloquial speech.

The value of creative self-esteem is untenable. It is an implicit charade. What might I be able to prove, provide, or present with that which my imagination mashes with my reasoning? Who am I to be so bold to permit the indulgences of trusting myself and denying deviances therefrom? A commonplace question to be sure. And what of this commonplace, and all the other commonplaces? Why

am I such an egregious cliché? They all lead to the same grand inquiry: what more?

I wish to pursue a Master's degree in Fine Arts. The reasons are not unfamiliar: I believe that my greatest talents lie in my ability to create potent, imaginative things; further immersion in the analogues and dialogues of creating can only augment the plethora of ideas and their manifestations; the prospect of contact with new peers, kindred spirits is; [missing word(s)(?)] I crave the hyperbole and ego of the colloquium. I am fed up with devoting myself to the tomes of the Western canon and having no one to discuss them with (I am easily persuaded and gullible, making me the disciple of every writer inveterate to the flashy footnote). I have worked hard for the two years since I last graduated to descry what is artfully true for me. I have been slapped around and romanced by essays of relative truths and truth-in-actions. I've written four books of poetry and a screenplay. I have taught myself histories, canons, counter-movements, credos: Nietzsche, Proust, Freud, Anti-Oedipussy, Benjamin, Baudelaire, blah, blah, blah. And yet what good can this Continental tradition provide me: more than street art; more than the hell of drug addiction; more than 40-year-old men and women with inexpressible mental handicaps? I don't know. I live in books, and films, and museums, and the arms of my friends, and the loneliness of that which I'll never have.

Perhaps it would be ill-advised to covet art school. Art is purportedly the last-stage cancer of the last-gasp intelligentsia: art is the vultures feeding on Heidegger's mortal corpse; art is the beau monde for those who are really against one. But my path is already endeared to/tainted by the mores of this suspect legacy and its romantic promises of the avant-garde; not to mention doe-eyed to the hypotrophic hipness of postmodern vanguardness (where Antigone and Nathalie Portman eat nouveau romaine lettuce and smoke crack under Parmigianinos). I went to school, and learned

how to be efficaciously obstreperous. I learned that I loved film and art too much to let them stagnate. I knew I needed to do something more. I recognized a passion. To attempt to explicate it would sound even more glib and meretricious than everything I've prefaced it with. But to emphasize that which is putative to the territory (and ambiguous as hell): I'd like to make a difference; I'd like to uncover something new (God save my pompous soul) and productive.

I would like the opportunity to devote myself to the progression of creative syntheses and syncretisms of my mind, and their alterations by the social bodies that lend to the revisions of my personage. I am most faithful to the primacy of the creative act as that which redefines, distorts, defaces...and rebirths as something uncompromising. The real achievement of these acts are open to debate. I wish to engage in this debate with myself and others. I wish to obey and deny the mimetic faculty in hopes of honing a craft that is polymorphous, transient, and ludicrous. It seems that the very best place to pursue these ill-defined, yet far from capricious, ambitions would be within the Interdisciplinary Studio. I have no want to define my art as of now. But as I was drifting off to the land of z's last night, I thought of it in not inaccurate terms: my art is an uncanny agglomerate of the formal, the a-formal, the semantic, the iconographical, the reproduced image, the mythic, and the epiphany of the candid moment. ...

It is my intention to continue to love the world I live in; to not discount the power of aesthetics and of love; to try to beat my cynicism vis-à-vis social change; to believe that the imagination is an indelible blessing; to persevere, with irreproachable monomania, the truth that I shall never find. To be free, to be humane, to be most fully me. To die with as little self-esteem as it would seem necessary. To die a great while after my next three years. I want to go to art school.

TEXTS: (reprinted somewhat hastily w/o asking for permission)

- (pp. 3-8) *Character Study*, ACRUSH, Zürich, 2020
- (pp. 8-9) *Animal Kingdom*, Alexander Berggruen, online, 2020
- (pp. 9-11) *I plantain platitudes...*, Andrew Kreps Gallery, online, 2020
- (pp. 13-14) *Concerning Cinematography + Mid90s*, Bleach Books, Los Angeles, 2019
- (pp. 14-16) *Interlude*, Galleria Franco Noero, Turin, 2019
- (pp. 17-20) *I don't know*, Société, Berlin, 2018
- (pp. 20, 25-26) *Meaning/Difference*, The Power Station, Dallas, 2017
- (pp. 21-22) *E/either e/Either n/Neither N/neither*, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York, 2018
- (pp. 23-24) *more or less*, Sadie Coles HQ, London, 2018
- (pp. 30-31) *The Calder Prize: 2005-2015*, Pace, London, 2016
- (pp. 31-32) *L'Uomo Vogue*, February 2016
- (pp. 33-34) *Non-Objectif Sud*, Tulette, France, 2015
- (pp. 34-35) *Mousse 49*, 2015
- (pp. 37-40) *Peter Regli, Ephemeral Works: Journeys, Markers & Displacements, 1981-2015*, Kiito-san, Brooklyn, 2015
- (pp. 41-45) *Numéro*, March 2015
- (pp. 45-47) Jesse Willenbring, *Observation Location*, Thomas Duncan Gallery, Los Angeles, 2014
- (pp. 48-53) *= = #2*, Matt Keegan, Su Barber, & contributors, Capricious, New York, 2015
- (pp. 55-57) "500 words... as told to Allese Thomson," *Artforum*, online, 2014
- (pp. 57-59) [3 shows], Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York, 2014
- (pp. 59-60) *Frieze Projects*, New York, 2014
- (pp. 60-66) *Whitney Biennial 2014*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2014
- (pp. 66-67) *PIZZA TIME!*, Marlborough Broome St, New York, 2013
- (pp. 67-69) *Spike Art Quarterly*, Spring 2013
- (pp. 69-71) *Heaven and Earth*, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles, 2013
- (pp. 71-72) *#I am just living to be dying by your side*, Galleria Franco Noero, Turin, 2013
- (pp. 72-73) *Inside the Banana*, Albus Greenspon, New York, 2012
- (pp. 73-74) *Images*, MoMA PS1, Queens, 2012
- (pp. 74-75) *Arts&Leisure*, Los Angeles, 2011
- (pg. 76) *'Zina Cava II*, 2011
- (pp. 77-78) Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Fear Eats the Soul*, Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York, 2011
- (pp. 78-79) Ara Dymond, Taxter & Spengemann, New York, 2011
- (pp. 79-80) John Finneran, *If I Had My Way in This Wicked World*, Marvelli Gallery, New York, 2011
- (pp. 80-85) *BOMB Magazine*, online, 2010
- (pp. 86, 89) *Matisse*, 2010
- (pp. 87-88) *She Has a Hot Ass*, 2nd Cannons Publications, Los Angeles, 2009
- (pp. 89-91) *Anca Munteanu Rimnic: Drawings*, Fahnemann Projects, Berlin, 2008
- (pp. 92-93) Michael Zahn, *as Michael Zahn*, 11 Rivington, New York, 2008
- (pg. 94) *Overbite/Underbite*, Ritter/Zamet, London, 2007
- (pp. 95-98) *as = poaching...*, Rivington Arms, New York, 2007
- (pp. 105-106) *More Songs About Buildings and Food: A Recipe For Downtown*, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, 2006
- (pp. 109-110) *cat*, Rivington Arms, New York, 2004

*The Typist:
Impressions, Obsessions, Perambulations, and Sophistries*

Sometimes when I read these texts over years (and years (and years)) later, I'm impressed that I actually had something (cogent) to say. Other times, I want to slap my past present and future self. A text is a text is a text much as a reader is a reader is a reader. Meaning has so little to stand on, and yet sometimes: there it is.

Every writer needs an editor, so you can be mine. I never mark up books, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't. Be cruel if you'd like. In truth, you've already been spared a bit of your role (Sarah Resnick was quite helpful). I assure you misused words have mostly been retained and cringes kept (except for a few), although typos have been fixed (or have they?).

As is his wont, the typist can't but thank a surfeit of people. Being confined to most of the remains of this page, the typist will have to leave the people anonymous, grouping them like so: all the friends who have fed my heart and mind and kept faith in me; the artist-friends who afforded me the great opportunity to write texts about their work; the gallerists I've had the great fortune of working with over the years, all of whom have had faith in my (endearing?) lunacy; the curators, interviewing- journalists, publishers and French residency honchos who believed I wasn't a waste of resources; Mom and Dad for letting me be me.

Writings included have been published in periodicals and books, as gallery press releases, and in other ways (p.114 fills in some details). Other writings included haven't been published at all. Further redundancy can be found @ aaronbader.com

Darren Bader

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