

Vermlandsgade 61, Copenhagen

Tørreloft / AGA Works

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Magnus Frederik Clausen

Sónia Almeida

(SE) Standard Error

The Prodigal Beholder:
Dialogues, Reflections, Parables
Barry Schwabsky

“I’ve built a house whose
roof has tiny holes in it,
each revealing a single star
in the night sky. Just think!
A house whose ceiling is the
celestial darkness ablaze!”
“But don’t you get wet
when it rains?”
“No, on rainy nights there
are no stars to be seen, so
there are also no holes.”

*

She sat with her back to
him, writing a love letter.
He couldn’t see what she
wrote. The sounds of the

Once, people used to
say, “In the next life...”
Apparently, this is it.

*

without this donation of self.”

pen scratching along the
paper were the message
he heard. Once he’d heard
the message she’d written,
she burned the letter.

*

“The colors you paint with
brighten the room!”
“Really? But the ink you write
with darkens thought.”

*

“He said, ‘I’ve finally made a
painting I can stand behind.’
Yes, really. Literally. It wants
no wall. He holds it upright
while standing behind it, and
the best part is, wherever
you stand to look at it, he

“What, they want to *participate*
in the work of art? As if the
work would not exist without
their little action or gesture?”
“No — as if *they* would not exist

*

Some poems follow you
along as you go, like the
moon. Paintings tend to stay
in place; they wait for you to
come back to them — the
prodigal beholder.

*

mirrors, his cures, as if
he really expected you to be
able to respond, which his
attentions make impossible!”
“.....”

can hold it in front of you.
You never see the artist, but
he’s always there behind it.”
“Yes, but behind the artist,
there’s something unseen
holding him up too.”

*

Painter to poet: “I’ve
memorized your poem.
I know it by heart.”
Poet to painter: “Thank you!
I remember your painting.
It’s on the tip of my tongue.”

*

The painting of the painting
doesn’t stop when the
painter stops painting:
perpetual motion.

“Isn’t the critic rather like a
dentist? Always full of words,
words, incessant words, as
he pokes his instruments
around, his probes and little

*

The immobility of an artwork
outruns time. Its volatility in
perception unsettles space.

*

It is understood.”
“Not by me.”
“In language, that is, is, of yours is
an instrumentality for making
metaphors, but it doesn’t
function metaphorically
itself. Painting shows what ‘is’
should be a metaphor for.”

*

“Are all questions
trick questions?”
“Who’s asking?”

*

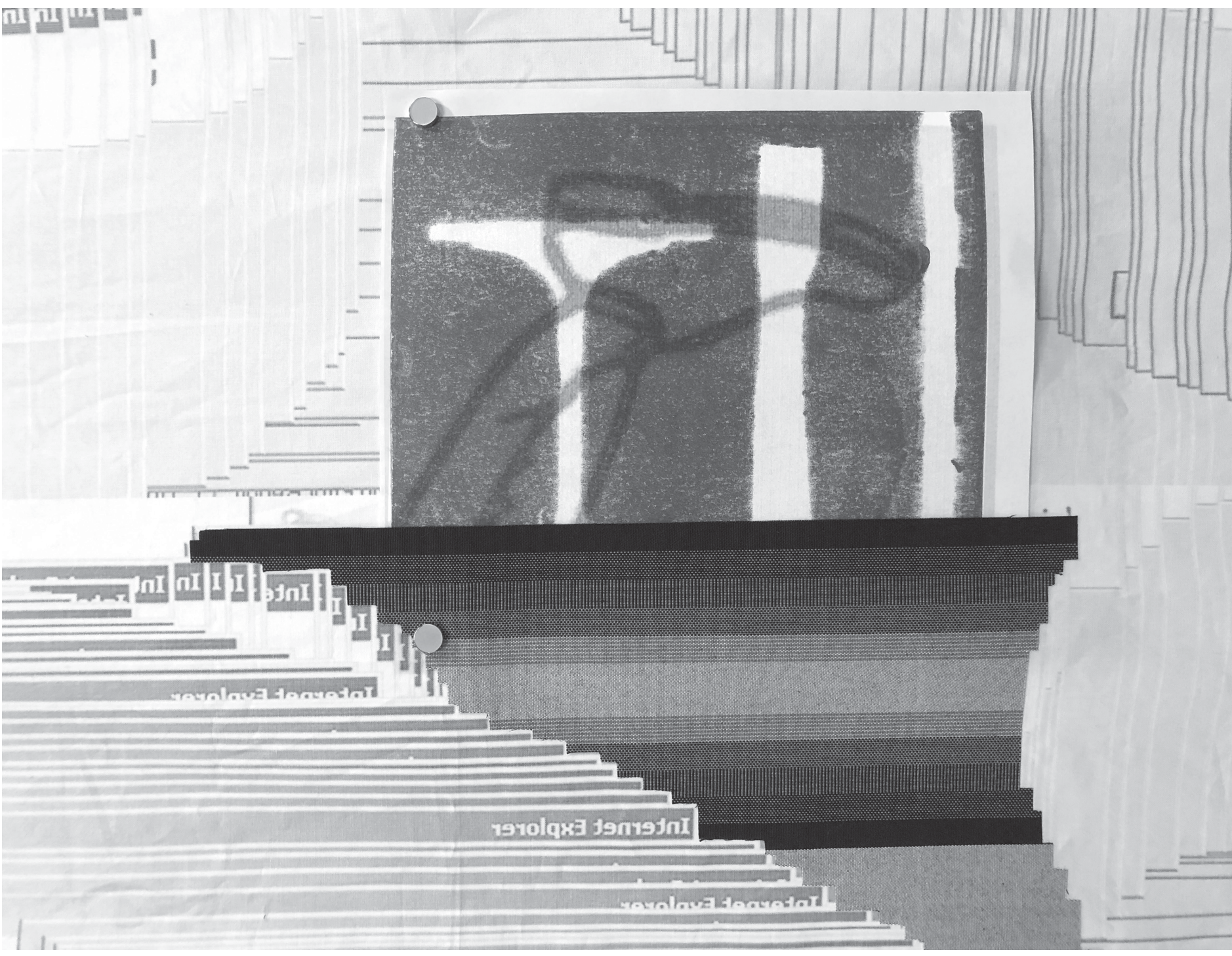
Like walking around
with a sharp, tiny pebble
in your shoe—just so,
there are irritating little
thoughts that get under
the sole of your brain.

*

“With this one little word ‘is’
I can make all the metaphors
in the world. But painting
lacks the word ‘is.’”
“No. It’s there but tacitly.



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