

**Mark Leckey
Frances Stark
“possibly but not certainly Frances Stark and Mark Leckey”**

March 20 – April 25, 2009

Opening reception on Friday, March 20, 2009
7:00 – 9:00 pm

*POSSIBLY
but not certainly
FRANCES STARK & MARK LECKEY
a commentary
and a Torment of Follies
by Frances Stark
(with text by Witold Gombrowicz, circa 1937)**

*What will you say, finally,
when you have seen the whole of all the parts
as well as the parts of all the parts?
Do you not agree that the reader
is able to assimilate
only one part at a time?
Sometimes he reads two or three passages
and never returns
and not, mark you,
because he is not interested,
but because of some totally extraneous circumstance
and, even if he reads the whole thing,
do you suppose for one moment
that he has a view of it as a whole,
appreciates the constructive harmony of the parts,
if no specialist gives him the hint?
Is it for this that authors spend years
cutting, revising, and rearranging,
sweating, straining and suffering?
Let us carry the matter further.
May not a telephone call, or a fly,
distract the reader's attention
just at the moment
when all the parts, themes, threads,
are on the point of converging
into a supreme unity?
Consider, moreover, that
that unique and exceptional work of yours
on which you have expended
so much effort and sweat
is just one of the thirty thousand
equally unique and exceptional works
which will appear during the year.
Oh! Terrible and accursed parts!
So it is for this that we laboriously construct;
so that part of a part of a reader*

may partially assimilate part of a part of a book.
What in reality is a person aiming at nowadays
who feels a vocation for the pen,
the paint-brush, or the clarinet?
Above all, he wants to be an artist
to offer himself whole to others,
to burn on the altar of the sublime
in providing humanity with this so desirable manna.
What noble aims! What magnificent intentions!
Are they not identical with those of Shakespeare,
Goethe,
Beethoven
or Chopin?
But here you run into trouble.
The awkward fact is that
you are neither Chopin nor Shakespeare
but at most a half-Shakespeare,
or a quarter-Chopin
(oh! Cursed parts!),
and consequently the sole result of your attitude
is to draw attention
to your sad inadequacy and inferiority
and it is as if
in the course of your clumsy efforts
to leap onto the pedestal
you were breaking the most precious parts of your body.

Those are borrowed words
from a book
about a mature adult
who finds himself to be cruelly metamorphosed
into a blemished and ill-proportioned youth,
an adolescent
a person that is, of course,
immature by definition.
You don't need to know that
to appreciate the portion I have adapted here.
That is, I think, because
its author has brazenly emerged
from the farce of his metamorphosis
to contemplate,
with venomous self-reflexive flair,
the conception and reception of his own form.

This brings to mind lines
from an animated Beatles film
delivered with adorable pretentiousness
by a figure whom
-- if I recall correctly --
was referred to as 'Boob',
but,
you may know him as Nowhere Man.
Pen in foot he scrawls in a notebook
after which he starts tapping away at a typewriter.
These are the footnotes to my nineteenth book!
And this is my standard procedure for doing it!
And while I compose it
I'm also reviewing it!

Now, where was I?
Probably about to explain myself away.
Or tediously detail how
a part of a part of someone else's book
came to be considered a "libretto"
for a parade of flat, static dancers
and why any of that has anything to do with
my being side by side with Mark.
The simple fact is that
on several occasions over the past few years
we have expressed an interest in collaborating.
Living on opposite sides of the world, however
has prevented us from
the amount of casual conversation
necessary for getting anything going.
A laughable obstacle for some, perhaps.
We were offered encouragement and even a live venue
the underlying assumption being
we would somehow perform together.
But you know how it is,
you get busy,
people are really busy.
Nevertheless, I for one,
became enamored of the idea
imagining it offered a reprieve
from the well-worn parameters
of my own familiar form,
knowing all the while that
the vitality of the idea
lay primarily in its lack of shape.
And so together we have formed nothing.
And instead here we are
juxtaposed, in a word
at a kind of facilitated meeting point
between some walls
endorsed as a possibility.
(sigh)
Funny,
last time I was here in Berlin
was for a show called
Frances Stark meets Morgan Fisher.
I showed drawings in a gallery
and Morgan showed his films in a cinema.
Directly before the screening
Morgan read a short paper
he had carefully and dare I say, dutifully,
composed for the occasion.
He glued himself to the gallery's computer
while I hung drawings on the gallery walls.
Attempting to address the question
"Why on earth this pairing?"
He spoke of the cinematic device
called a "meet-cute"
that brings two unlikely characters
into an awkward or embarrassing circumstance,
the set-up for a comedic romance.
Morgan gave this example:

*a woman in a store looking to buy only a pajama top
encounters the man who just wants bottoms.*

*The very form of this event, and giving it this name,
wrote Morgan,
moves a simple social fact
-- that two people met each other in Los Angeles --
toward a construction, a narrative.
Focusing on the simplest element of narrative,
and even the mention of boy meets girl
In that context
had a certain deadpan humor to it.
So the question is, he concluded dryly,
now that Frances and Morgan have met,
What is going to happen? How will the story end?
This is as much faux-suspense
as it is earnest bewilderment.
Or maybe I'm projecting.
But the very form of this event
and its name
you know,
Frances Stark, Mark Leckey, And perhaps Mark Leckey
and vice versa
(also the title of this here endlessness)
What is all that
if not formalized doubt?
With symmetry and repetition for good measure.
Perhaps, perhaps.
(cue the dancers)
Another preface
without a preface I cannot possibly go on.
I must explain, specify, rationalize, classify,
bring out the root idea underlying all other ideas in the work,
demonstrate and make plain the essential griefs
and hierarchy of ideas which are here isolated and exposed
thus enabling you to find the work's head,
legs, nose, fingers
and to prevent you from coming and telling me
that I don't know what I'm driving at,
and that instead of marching forward
straight and erect
like the great artists and writers of all ages,
I am merely revolving ridiculously on my own heels.
What then shall the fundamental overall anguish be?
The deeper I dig, the more I explore and analyze,
the more clearly do I see that in reality
the primary, fundamental grief is
purely and simply, in my opinion,
the agony of bad outward form,
defective appearance,
yes, this is the origin, the source, the fount
from which there flow harmoniously all the other torments,
follies, and afflictions without any exceptions whatever
Or perhaps it would be as well to emphasize
that the primary and fundamental agony
is that born of the constraint of man by man
from the fact that we suffocate and stifle
in the narrow and rigid idea of ourselves*

*that others have of us.
Or the torment of undeveloped development.
Or, perhaps, the pain of unformed form.
Or
the symmetrical torture of analogy
and the analogical torture of symmetry,
the analytic torment of synthesis
and the synthetic torment of analysis
or, again, the suffering of the parts of the body,
and dismay about the hierarchy of its various parts.
Or perhaps,
the torment of aspiration,
of interminable apprenticeship.
Or perhaps, the torment of trying to suppress oneself,
exceeding one's own strength,
and the resulting torment of general and particular impotence.
Or
the dull torment of a psychological cul-de-sac.
Or maybe just
the pain of stupidity
wisdom
ugliness.
Or
the desolation of acting a part
the desperation of imitation
the brutalizing torment of brutalization
and of saying the same thing over and over again.
Probably, however,
the work was to a certain extent
born as a result of co-existence with real persons.
Or, who knows?
It might have been written in imitation of masterpieces.
Or out of an inability to write an ordinary book.
Or perhaps it was the result of a fear psychosis.
Or some other psychosis.
Or just a blunder?
Or a pinch?
Or a part?
Or a particle?
Or a finger?
But the sum-total of all these possibilities,
torments, descriptions and parts
is so vast, so incommensurable,
so inconceivable and, what is more,
so inexhaustible,
that, with the most profound respect for the Word,
and after the most scrupulous analysis,
it must be admitted that
we are no wiser than when we began,
cluck! cluck! cluck! as the chicken said.
the end
(This will restart again in a minute.)*

* Transcript of : Frances Stark
"possibly but not certainly Mark Leckey and Frances Stark", 2009
power point, 15'