



**ANTÓNIO AREAL, CHRISTOPH BRUCKNER, HUGO CANOILAS, ANNE-MIE VAN KERCKHOVEN,
FRANCISCO SOUSA LOBO, CLUB MORAL, UTE MÜLLER, ASTRID NOBEL, ATLAS PROJECTOS,
PEDRO DINIZ REIS, BENJAMIN VALENZA and VIOLA YESILTAÇ.**

Invited by Rosa at Galerie Kamm | Berlin, DE.
2nd November to 7th December 2013.

Invited by Rosa



OPENING FRIDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2013, 6PM

2 NOVEMBER – 7 DECEMBER 2013

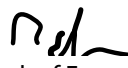
ORGANIZED BY HUGO CANOILAS



António Areal, "The dramatic history of an egg", 1967.

Courtesy of CAM - Modern Art Center of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon PT.

A show built with a group of artists that have been using language in their work: ANTÓNIO AREAL, CHRISTOPH BRUCKNER, HUGO CANOILAS, ANNE-MIE VAN KERCKHOVEN, FRANCISCO SOUSA LOBO, CLUB MORAL, UTE MÜLLER, ASTRID NOBEL, ATLAS PROJECTOS, PEDRO DINIZ REIS, BENJAMIN VALENZA, VIOLA YESILTAÇ .

The show is called  . It is a sound, although it's hard to link to a precise word or group of letters. I connect this drawn line to the work of Fernand Deligny, whom I discovered recently and wish to understand better. I wonder how this world is without language. And I imagine if we disconnect language from the authority or will to introduce meaning, the absolute meaning, it would allow us to consider the spaces in between words, their form and other open doors, that are active forces which can provide a shade over the idea, keeping it alive. Drawing is that light over an idea; it's an event-idea that maintains its secrecy and inner life.

The title that UTE MÜLLER gives to the show provides the space to understand language as a thing in itself, its presence and contingency. Her display is an idea, overlapping the need of any sort of visual occurrence or display construction to place art as image for the space of convergence of all differences that come with a show built with a loose idea. One can say that the elasticity of poetry flies over the exhibition within the display and interconnects the heterogeneous group of works.

The image that you see above is The dramatic history of an egg made in 1967 by ANTÓNIO AREAL (1934-78) and it only exists in this exhibition as digital reproduction of the original work, used here for communication of the show. The original work is a rather opaque matter. The enamel on wood implies a materiality from which one can state that the series of paintings - even with the empty speech balloons, are not waiting for our projections towards it but calling for an emancipated human, capable to be with an other - an absolute other outside of him.

Another work that correlates the title and image of the invitation is a video inside a small room that is the recording of the concert The second coming of Joachim Stiller by CLUB MORAL. Although the title of the concert is already evoking literature*, it's the absence of singing or any sort of lyrics - the singer presses the microphone against several parts of his body, that is here at play. The titles of the three parts of the concert: "The Sound of One Mouth Clapping", "Her Arm was His Elbow" and "Do the Joachim Stiller (Head kick)" create an arch in tension with the music that works in through our stomachs.

The drawings of ANNE-MIE VAN KERCKHOVEN enlase this counter cultural force. AMVK's works have this existential charge that results from the interface between the interior body, with its infinitive affirmative force, and its reaction to an oppressive exterior. Text comes and territorializes the image and the image affects the text.

One can follow the thread of existentialism in The Dying Draughtsman, FRANCISCO SOUSA LOBO's comic book. A failed architect, wandering the streets of London from gallery to gallery, visits bad exhibitions that are projections of his own works. Projections that run the whole pathos of the main character from love to art, the church and the family. The fall is a consequence, a stone thrown in the super speedy and slick surface of contemporary life. In the verge of falling.

We walk with our eyes on VIOLA YESILTAÇ's drawings as if walking on a sharp double blade knife. We are placed in the verge of an abyss with this apparently weak voice, which is a courageous one, that states its feelings, doubts and wonders.

With different modes of expressing and a different time in the making, ASTRID NOBEL works can resume a thought over a whole book or an author. There is an expressionist quality in the way literature is evoked through image; image that is more a receptacle to receive our projections.

On another wall, there's a magenta monochrome stretched on a canvas by CHRISTOPH BRUCKNER, an artist who has been working with language by making self-referential (to art) visual poetry and mostly writing about artists or subjects he is interested in, contributing for catalogues and various publications. His paintings are made in mechanical processes like using the washing machine with a colored piece of cloth mixed with a raw canvas at 60 degrees. The economy of it is similar to the process of writing his visual poetry works. Here we present his painting and his text about his own work.

We hear once the word Beckett as if someone called. Maybe it was an accident. On the floor there's a monitor playing a video with informal color forces that move against each other. The voice of a medium completes the synesthetic experience, that is, for the stomach. The video of PEDRO DINIZ REIS plows our stomach, but in a second moment one thinks of the relation of a body that takes or transports the voice of the other in relation to quotation, the new conceptual art and writing.

Visitors will join us! And drink the same schnapps from the big fish bottle. BENJAMIN VALENZA, who made the container for the liquid - that will be libidiously inside everyone's body, will read poetry during the opening.

The inclusion of my work happens because unfortunately Vlado Martek, had to withdraw from the show last week. Martek is a poet who suspended his activity and a "true intellectual" that inserted his works (texts and images) in direct relation with the people in the streets of Zagreb during Tito's soft dictatorship in ex Yugoslavia - without any frame or call to the object as art but establishing an horizontal relation between the object and the passer by. Feeling that his absence from the show leaves a hole in a harmoniously built exhibition, I'll try to echo his work in the streets of Berlin.

ATLAS PROJECTOS will make an invisible performance to the audience. On the night of the 6th of December they will stay inside the gallery and work all night on a fanzine that takes the exhibition as their source material. The Fanzine will be launched on the last day of the exhibition, the 7th of December.

A family of books and publications will be available to consult (i.e. the facsimile versions of two artist books by ANNE-MIE VAN KERCKHOVEN and original Provo publications) Several other publications, connected to the show, will be available at the Rosa Public Library so visitors can requisite and take home.

HUGO CANOILAS

philosophy. The first thought about this precise group of artists - and Areal was the older, is that art is to be used: painting stepped over the academism and good taste of painting and painting came out as a violent statement with a precision and accuracy in terms of form and content that seemed that painting was used for a higher purpose.

Names like Michaux and Pollock, Motherwell, Céline and Lowry were part of the universe of Bravo and Lapa, would this mean that there was a political hint in their work? Or the same ethos carried both art and life together? How was with Areal?

I would also like to develop some ideas around the value of this work in relation to the content of the show. Does the use of language in painting come from that higher purpose that allows you to use painting or language to express that idea? Does the use of language in painting reflect a search for otherness?

The last consideration I would like to share with you is directly attached to the painting mentioned above. Knowing that the artist was an intellectual, with texts published and recognized as such, what can we say about this painting?

At first it seems that the dialogue between the cube and the egg is a place for the projection of the viewer since the speech balloons are empty. At the same time, and since it feels that these panels are precedent of the empty boxes that he made afterwards, nothing that can happen inside of that space (projected from us) is meant to be part of the work. Are we dealing with an absence of language, a concrete language or poetry were the spaces in between state something that can't be said by words?

There's also this strange mixture of Dada and Pop that opens a blast in me... the painting keeps its status of a lancinating blade, it keeps working and demanding more and more as if it moves away in the same measure I approach it.

The last consideration has to do with his statements like "Each work speaks for itself - and the public should notice that the work is watching you." This together with the "Dramatic history of an egg" seems to bridge with Ad Reinhardt and his cartoons published at the PM newspaper in late forties. Was it important or was there an affinity between him and Reinhardt?

Warm regards,
Hugo

Dear Hugo,

I hope everything is well with you.

I'll try to answer your questions as best as I can, but let me first line up some brief remarks on your present project.

In the message you wrote to me the other day you mentioned "a certain plurality which is part of the exhibition" you have organized. If I understood well, such a plurality is extremely wide: you spoke of works in which written language - text, or even scattered letters (?) - is to be seen, of works in which there is only a visual residual hint of a sound (a linguistic sound, I suppose), of works in which the voice of a singer is no longer to be heard because the singer just rubs the micro against his body, of works which "remain in a negative plane" of language playing the part of a "receptacle" for the viewer's "projections", of works which evoke a writer like Franz Kafka or a whole novel like *Moby Dick*, of poems that will be read aloud, and you even mentioned "the world without language", referring to Fernand Deligny... (I don't mention here the special case of Areal only because I'll deal with it further on.)

You are well aware of how much the idea of plurality, multiplicity, dissemination (as Derrida put it) or even deterritorialization (in the expression of Deleuze and Guattari) interests me, and how I find it important to oppose all kinds of monolithic, reductive and unified thinking (and praxis) by means of such conceptual (and practical) means. So, you can imagine my satisfaction when I read the notes that you sent me the other day on the exhibition. It's a great project!

Nevertheless, let me also add two reflections of my own on the subject. The first one has to do with what I call the "singularity of aesthetic experience". You might remember that this is one of my favorite topics. Singularity is not to be confused with particularity, and there is also an opposition between singularity and generality, as there is another type of opposition between singularity and universality. The singularity of aesthetic experience has to do with the fact that an artwork - or a set of works - can provide an obstacle which sooner or later deflects your previous train of thought or perception and allows for a kind of special illuminating effect. Such an illuminating effect is completely different from any simple act of generalization and, on the other hand, it can give rise, by means of what I call a leap, to an effect of universality, according to which the effect of the singular spreads to a much larger group of experiences. What I mean is that - in spite of the fact that I have not seen the exhi-

bition - it seems to me that the group of works that you have chosen does in fact have the illuminating effect of a singularity of experience, in the sense that it suddenly opens up for the viewer the possibility of seeing and thinking much more than what the ordinary concept of language (and of the presence of language in art) conveys. The exhibition, I think, starts by posing a problem or an obstacle, since it is not obvious how language is present in most of the works, but sooner or later the viewer has to abandon that previous train of thought and accept the fact that the very works compel her/him to adopt a different point of view, according to which language is in fact present by means of metaphorical or metonymic processes or even through its unexpected absence where it would be expected to be (like it is the case in Areal's speech balloons).

This brings me to my second reflection. You used the expression "the world without language" and it seemed to me that it has a central importance for your thoughts on the exhibition. I must confess that I'm not absolutely sure of what you mean when you use or quote that expression. In some circumstances (namely when talking about some of the works you selected) I would prefer to use Roland Barthes's expression in his book on Japan: "le recul des signes" ("the withdrawal of the signs"). Because when we talk about a withdrawal of the signs we are simultaneously saying that somehow language has been there before, previously to that withdrawal. Plainly said, my point is that there is never a "world without language". The word "world" has also a long history: in fact it means the whole of our experience. And only a very strict part of this "world" is without language, or pre-linguistic (or even a-linguistic) as some scholars like to put it. That strict part is exactly the opposite of what I called above the experience of singularity: it is the experience of particularity, i.e. the experience of everything that is private and that does not communicate with anything else. The interesting thing about particulars is precisely that now and then they cease to be particulars and somehow begin to give place to some sort of language. Language then organizes those previous particularities of experience and can even bring them to a complete different level, the one of singularity.

But this does not mean that the "withdrawal of signs" cannot be an important concept for the appropriation of some artworks. It is! And it is, precisely because it helps us to understand that much of what is produced as art starts at a level which is simultaneously conceptual and linguistic and then, by means of processes which of course can be ex-

Dear José Miranda Justo,

I hope this message finds you well.

I'm working with a constellation of artists, which are close to me, on a show that deals with the use of language as raw material.

One of the artists present in the show is António Areal. I'm using a digital reproduction of "The dramatic history of an egg" from 1967, as image for the invitation and communication of the show. In the past I have invited the artist Andrea Büttner to make the invitation of the show "The poetics of life" as her contribution. I found that the invitation - although it's a very different experience if it reaches you by mail or e-mail, is a private moment you have with the work. It's you and the work and this is quite closer to a certain quality of reading, or being alone in a gallery in front of a painting allowing living the time of the work. I also like the second life given to Areal's work and the use of it as a sort of cultural *kapital* and I wonder how he would understand it...

When I mentioned above that there's a relationship with all the artists I would say that the relation I have with António Areal is in second degree, since it was through you that I discover his oeuvre. It's actually through you that come to my work Joaquim Bravo, Álvaro Lapa and António Areal, that together with you close a cycle, in the Portuguese art scene, of artists who came from literature and

tremely different, reduces that presence of concepts and language to a minimum, thus creating an effect of absolute presence of the object.

This is why I find the “withdrawal of signs”, which – in a narrower sense – can be detected in the exhibition you organized, so important. With all those instances of a presence of signs, which is still a presence but only because signs have withdrawn and are only present through a metaphor or a metonymy, you have produced a strong statement not only about art and language (exceeding from far the old conceptual propositions on that topic from the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies of the last century), but also about something else, a wider range of problems: how can it happen that linguistic signs are needed in order to come to the conception and production of an artwork and that at the same time these linguistic signs completely (or almost completely) disappear giving place to a non-linguistic presentation of the works which will, on the other hand, trigger the discursive practices of the viewer, without which the efficacy of the works will never be really put in movement? This question – so it seems to me – finds a thoroughly satisfactory answer with your exhibition seen as a whole.

And, of course, António Areal’s “The Dramatic Story of an Egg” is a crucial moment within the choice you have made. Those empty speech balloons remind me of what Deleuze said and wrote about the blank page and the white canvas. They are in no way empty. On the contrary, they are full. Full of “clichés” (Deleuze’s expression), full of everything that you already know, be it language or painting or sculpture or even music, filled with everything that you bring with you, in your mind, in your memory, in your body, in your dreams and nightmares, in your wishes and in your fears. The page is blank, the canvas is white, but there are signs all over. The first step, says Deleuze, will not be to start writing or painting, but instead it will be to erase. And this type of erasure will give place to what he calls a diagram. So, in order to arrive to the diagram and start doing something that you can stand for, first you have to erase your own projections on the blank or on the white. So it happens with those speech balloons in the “Story of an Egg”. In fact they start by being a white surface where – I would say – you are compelled to make all sorts of projections. You will see there all sorts of statements that you already know, a kind of worn up language, leaving you exactly where you were before, perhaps with a yellow smile on your lips. It is then that you feel invited to start erasing or blurring all that stuff that adds nothing to your experience of the work. Language

then begins to retreat, to withdraw. Until you find some subtle points on that blurred white surface that will constitute the diagram, i.e. the possibility of a very different kind of projection, a projection of the imagination – the capacity of dealing with images – which will lead you to what I called above an experience of singularity. And then everything can make sense. A very different sense, when compared to your previous train of thought and perception. But in order to arrive to this moment it was absolutely necessary to force that withdrawal of the linguistic signs which – and this is the amazing part – at first sight were not even there. This is what is extraordinary in Areal.

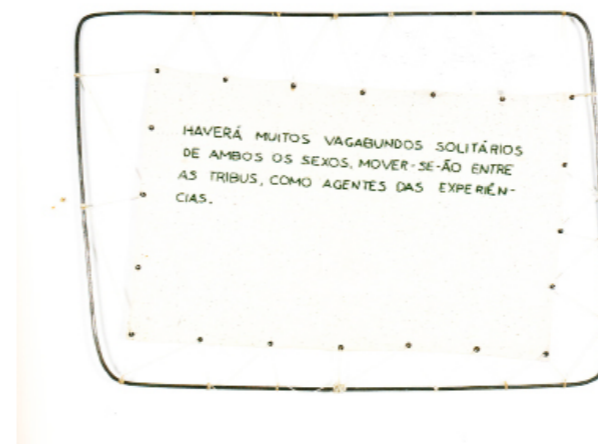
Now I come to the questions that you addressed me:

1. Areal, Lapa and Bravo have never separated their activity as artists from a clear political position which had two sides: on one side their vigorous opposition against the dictatorship and all forms of conservative thought, on the other side the extension of this attitude to the art-scene. From this last point of view, they understood their work as a form of opposing – I use your own words on purpose – “academicism and good taste”, which they saw as extreme examples of conservatism. And, from their leftist point of view, it was clear that of course “art is there to be used”, which meant to be used by the people, instead of being there to be used by the bourgeois. This was manifest in many discussions I had with Bravo, and also in the few talks I had with Lapa.

Coming now to the relationship between art and life that you have mentioned, I would say that – at least for Bravo – it was clear that life is contingency, something that goes on happening and that you can never control; whereas art is the total opposite of such a contingency. Art, in a certain sense, is absolute necessity: this means that what goes on inside the artistic work has to be understood as absolutely “rigorous”, as some poets like Herberto Helder have put it. In this sense I think you are totally right when you mention that “painting came out as a violent statement with [such] a precision and accuracy in terms of form and content that [it] seemed that painting was used for a higher purpose”. This applies thoroughly to Areal, Lapa and Bravo.

2. As for what you call “a search for otherness” in the “use of language in painting”, I believe you are completely right. Areal and Bravo never wrote much on the surface of their paintings or objects. But they developed for a time a kind of calligraphic painting or drawing which is also important when you think about signs in art. Another thing that they both did – and Lapa also – was to give titles

to the works, titles which in some way were part of their art. Some of these titles were very poetic, others were reminiscences of what I would call thought-experiences, others were literary recollections. But in fact many of these titles – because of their literary allusions or because of the unexpected point of view that they adopt – completely shift our perception of the artwork, erasing the author and implementing the presence of another (creative) subject, whom we are forced to reconstruct only with the help of the work and the title. Lapa has used letters, sentences and whole texts in his artworks quite frequently. I will mention just one example, the series named “Prophecies of Abdul Varetti”, from 1972. These are not exactly paintings; the canvas is stretched on an iron framework by means of a string, and the different texts (one in each canvas) are not painted, but instead they are embroidered. In this series the “otherness” can be thought of at least at two levels. First, the painter puts on the mask of this Abdul Varetti to write down texts which are completely left to the responsibility of the prophet. Second, Lapa even put on a woman’s dress when he was making the embroideries, thus assuming a total otherness of the very execution of the works.



Ref. Image: Álvaro Lapa’s “The Profecies of Abdul Varetti”, 1972 | 22 sentences stitched on canvas and stretched on metal frames. This one above with the sentence “There will be many lonely vagabonds of both sexes. They will move among the tribes as agents of the experiments”.

The first part of your second question is more difficult to answer. You ask: “Does the use of language in painting come from that higher purpose that allows you to use painting or language to express that idea?” First, I would say that what you call “that higher purpose” in fact allows for anything you want, i.e. for anything that can lead you to what I

mentioned above as an internal absolute necessity of the work of art. Second, I don’t really believe that – in principle – artworks or even language “express” any “ideas” or anything for that matter. Primarily, artworks and language give form and some kind of organization to our thoughts, perceptions and feelings. Artworks and language come first; they don’t express, they give rise to. The “higher purpose” you mentioned is something brought about by the very works of art. This is to say that first we have artworks which use signs, texts, calligraphies, etc., and then someone discovers – through them and because they exist – that we can retrace some kind of “higher purpose” for those works.

3. I believe that everything that can happen inside any space that is part of an artwork is, in a certain sense, part of that artwork. The artwork cannot be conceived as a closed whole (Umberto Eco wrote a book named *The Open Work*; in fact he was writing on written texts, but his thoughts apply also to painting, sculpture, installations, etc.). The projections that we make as viewers are in fact our projections. But the fact is that they would not happen if the work were not there to be seen, to be appropriated by us. Moreover, the artwork does not function (and you know that this idea that a work, instead of being still, is a “machine” which functions is very dear to me) if its viewers do not execute that activity of projection. That is precisely why I said above, referring to the speech balloons in Areal’s series, that we ourselves have to erase all the language (clichés) that is inside those balloons in order to create the diagram that will allow us to make a second type of projection, the one of imagination. And when you mention “what can’t be said by words”, I think you are absolutely right in the sense that the work of the imagination I’m referring to is never exhausted by language (as Kant writes in his third Critique).

4. As to your last question, I really do not know if Areal felt any affinity with Ad Reinhardt. What I can tell you is that Lapa knew well Reinhardt’s work and even had a kind of booklet with quotes from him; he passed that booklet on to Bravo and I had the opportunity of reading it. On the other hand, as you know, Areal came from Surrealism – abstract or semi-abstract Surrealism – and that was also the background of several of the abstractionists of the so-called New York school. In this sense, there might be a connection, but we should make some research on that matter.

josé miranda justo
(CFUL)



Hugo Canoilas | Detour, 2014 | 35 mm slide and slide projector | Variable dimensions.



Astrid Nobel
The best kept secrets are hidden in plain sight, 2009 | Ink on paper; text | 210 x 145 cm.

With Astrid Nobel

HC

The show as a quick start: artists who use language or text as their tool or raw material. This makes it possible to have an elastic platform and invite a heterogeneous family of artists, in the sense that art can be a space to receive difference. This conversation is part of the development of the show... I need to get closer to all of you and have a sense of what would make more sense to show and how to show it... So I want to ask you to tell me more about your early works and how text started to appear... Did you study painting?

AN

Yes, I studied painting. During the time in the Academy I mainly made paintings of distorted faces and figures, in which I occasionally incorporated text; fragments from my diary, notes and dreams I had written down.

HC

So was the text something that added an interior or psychological quality to the image...

AN

Yes, they were always pieces of text that I felt belonged to the image.

HC

Is it possible to see it as detachment of yourself, like looking at you again from a distance? I mean I was writing about the show and one thing that I came up with was the idea that text in painting comes from a will to otherness, a certain detachment of yourself - because it becomes an object (outside the subject) and also because painting a text is somehow a suspended act of painting (you don't think of painting while writing or depicting text..)

AN

I'm not sure... In these early paintings I did everything based on intuition. It didn't feel like a detachment, more like bringing themes together in different means of expression to actually get more close to myself.

HC

Yes you're right. Did it happen later? Did text also become a force in itself?

AN

In my later work text functions completely differently. It became a starting point more often. Most of the time I collect and write texts around an abstract theme and from there it becomes a force of itself because it starts and supports the process that ends up with a work.

HC

I was looking and looking again to your website... Do you have more work and you edit/made a selection or you are a priori selective?

AN

You mean for the website? I did more works in those years, but not many more, destroyed a few, rejected a few.

HC

It seems that you choose one of many but we could also believe that you are selective, that you don't let things happen or that you reduce the possibilities to those who have something new.

AN

In the beginning there are many, but in the end there's always one. The ideas are developed in different phases, so in the phase of defining the idea there are different sketch versions of one work. I adapt and combine these until I feel like I've figured it all out and know how to fit everything in one shape or image. Then, still, things are adapted while making it.

HC

It's the case of the *That one wee drop*... or were there any other attempts?

AN

No, many sketches, but no other versions. It was only that one and actually I wasn't satisfied with it at first. It was hanging in my studio and I got slowly attached to it.

HC

That work was sort of a magic moment for me...

AN

I probably got attached to it while I got detached from the creating and was able to look at it from a distance.



Ref. Image: Astrid Nobel's "That one wee drop", 2010.
Gesso and oil on wood | 52,5 x 42,5 x 4,5 cm.

HC

It had such a great impression when I saw it on the wall opposite the tin of ashes of works from Pieter Laurens Mol... I liked its imminence, radiating new meaning over the other works, the whole room, the whole show¹. Later when I was preparing this show I thought of it, and mostly since I was dealing with text this work came as a special place, a work that has no written or depicted text and still contains the whole book (Moby Dick). In my perspective, this seem more productive than other works which use text and present text, since there's a sort of expressionist factor within the work: the book lay inside of you and it was processed (through the work or was the work a crystal clear idea?)

AN

Basically it came forth from one sentence from the book (it was also written on the back of the painting, but you couldn't see that), it was about something really small being of importance in something immensely big (a tear in the ocean). Very positive in that way. Getting the image together went quite easy and natural. I found a piece of wood that was shaped by the sea into a drop, I knew I wanted to do something with the sentence "That one wee drop..."; from there it was crystal clear.

HC

Oh that's nice - the event of finding the piece of wood shaped by the sea. Another work of yours relates to Franz Kafka. You are somehow attached to a certain sort of writers. Did you read Lowry's *Under the volcano*? I ask this to know if there's a possible triangle between the 3 of them (Melville - Kafka - Lowry) I found *Under the volcano* very close to Melville's but above all to Camus and Kafka...

AN

No I haven't read Lowry... Kafka was a huge influence on me when I was in high school. Other authors that are important to me are Blanchot, Slauerhoff and Majakovsky.

HC

... could you explain me more about the work on Kafka? There's a picture (ink on paper?) and the first thing I get is this F K on the tree. Later I discovered the erased two people (painted in black)...

AN

Oh yes, well it all started with a photo.

HC

A found photo?

AN

Of Kafka's mother and sister in a forest.

HC

Did it have the FK there or you made it?

AN

Yes, I found it printed, really small in an extensive photo book on a page, I don't know, somewhere in the middle. And it's also in one biography (Hayman). It had the FK, which in itself is beautiful, but next to the FK there's another mark, just the letter K, which is the name of the protagonist in several of his stories.

HC

I found it amazing how a small vestige grants a sort of wholeness to the picture. We don't need the mother and the sister, we don't need people there. Is the image solved in you or it keeps a sort of quality to be alive, able to receive more and more projections?



Detail from the image of the previous page.

AN

I think it's beautiful that these two, the writer and his work are equally represented in a very modest and simple way. That's why I made the drawing, to show what I saw there, the simple beauty of these carvings. In that way I've tried to keep it alive, so it can be seen for the first time over and over. It should be able to receive more projections. Here it's not about the portrayed people or Kafka himself even. The letters are important as background information, they contain all that is known about these carvings and they are also about the difference between symbolic and scientific value.

HC

And from that is it possible to trigger some kind influence in the way one sees "Almost there" (the fake wood in B&W pushes me to those trees again...) is it more me, or this work also opens to the Decomposition? It seems formal at first but the works seem to maintain formal qualities that bring some content of the past works.

AN

I don't know about this. To me their content is very different, but they have a repetition in details and treatment of material in common. Structures are important in all works. The trees have patterns on the outside, like the wood has on the inside. Drawing over the wood structures for 'Almost There', made me understand the layers and directions of a piece of wood. There are knots where lines come together. In reverse I did this in 'Decomposition'. I cut the story letter by letter, and ordered it by alphabet and punctuation. Until the structure, the story, anything it told, was dissolved.

1- Porta Nigra, curated by Mark Kremer at Hidde Van Seggelen Gallery, London, UK. 2012

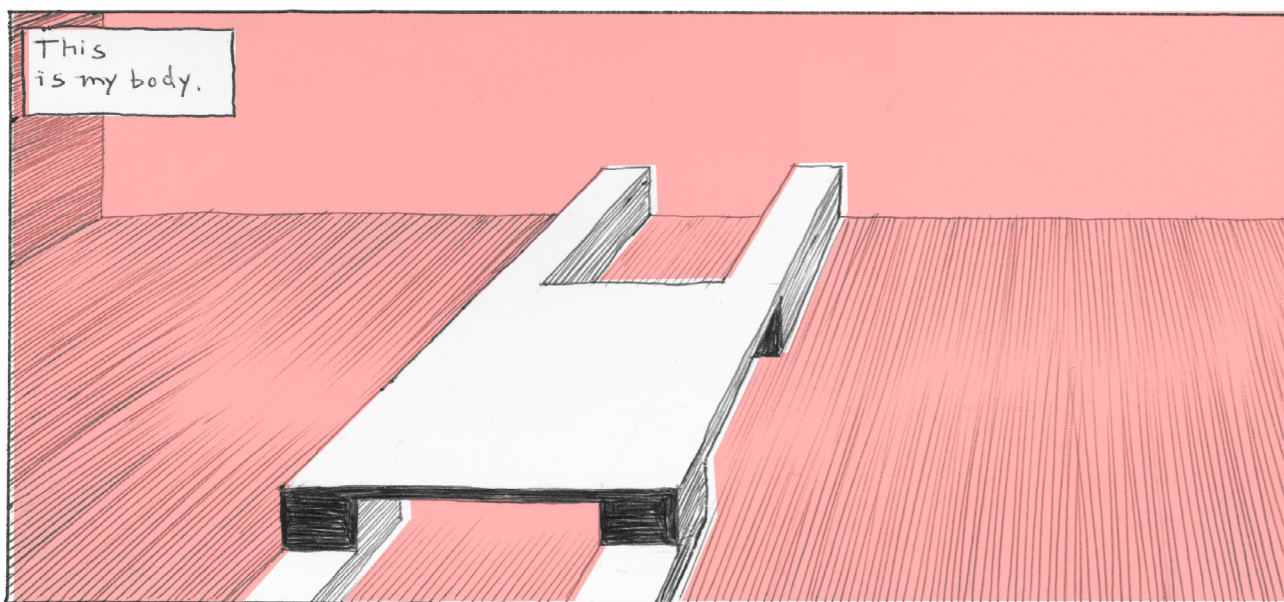
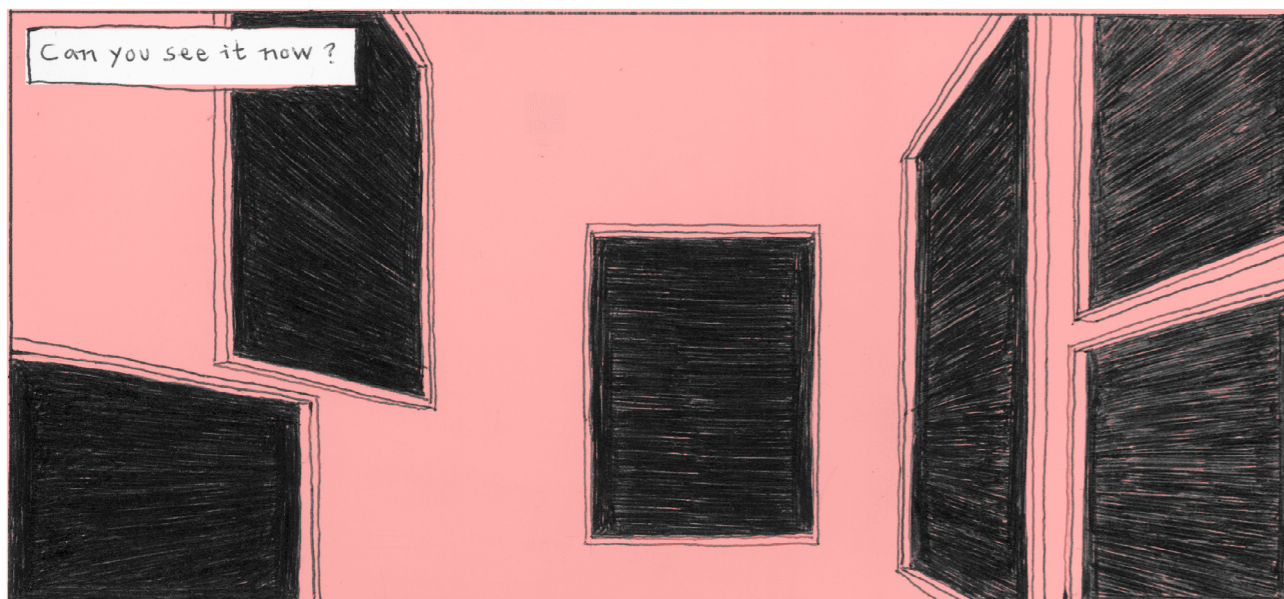
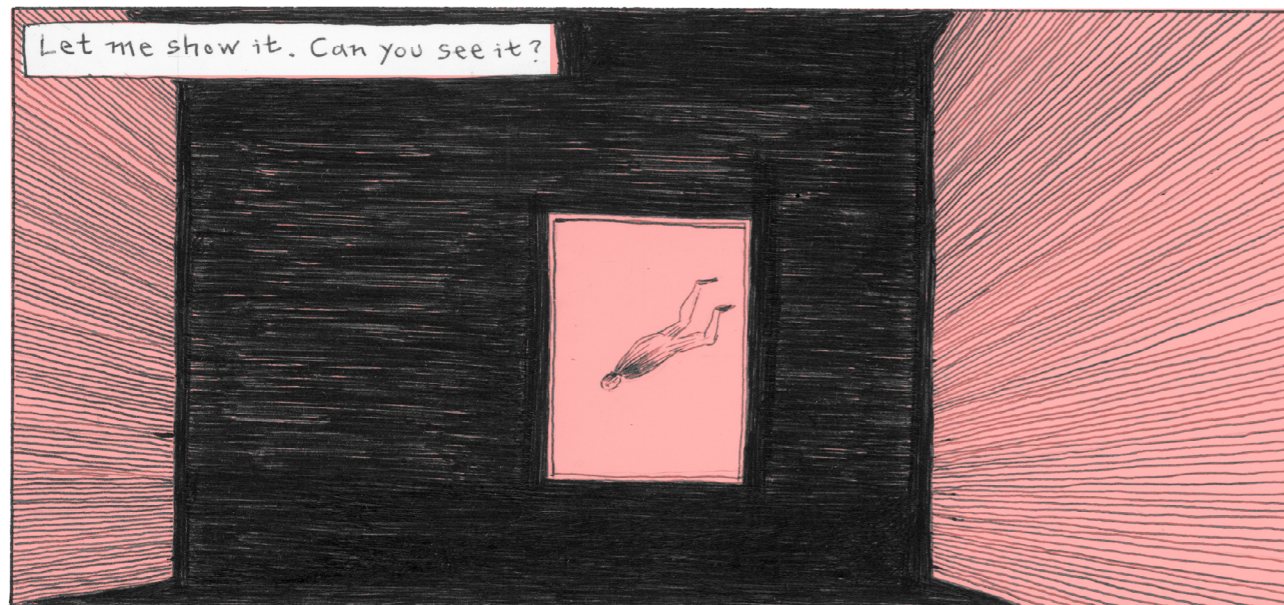


Pedro Diniz Reis

Waiting for... , 2009 | iPod, speakers | Variable dimensions | 1/3 +1 AP



Francisco Sousa Lobo
The Dying Draughtsman 2013 | Newsprint | 29 x 38 cm.



Dear Francisco,
 I'm writing to you concerning the object you've showed me in London while I was staying at your place. I immediately found the importance of it considering your work but also your life. The works you have made before this one, especially those you've made in Algarve in that summer, were already connected to the idea of Fall, but this step seems far more acute. Does this accuracy or objectivity come from the fact that you are doing a PhD on this matter?
 Also is the fact that you use the technique of comics to address these questions, existential in my perspective, critical to the art world, by placing the work in a limbo between fine art and comics?

Dear Hugo,
 I guess the accuracy that you talk about is double-edged, and comes from reflection and from life. It comes from writing a great deal on crisis of meaning and fall (my PhD is called 'Crisis of Meaning, Crisis of Form'), but it also comes from a certain distance I gained to an event of personal crisis that happened to me three and a half years ago. I looked at a lot at Bas Jan Ader, and how he portrayed suffering, with a kind of double bluff, as I call it. I wanted the comic to be absolutely true and an absolute lie as well.
 I don't feel like I chose comics, but that comics, as a resource I already had, were the only language available to talk about the relation of this character to the art world, and the world at large, a relation that becomes warped through psychosis. It was super important to have your support at that initial stage, and to know that this would be shown in a gallery, it gave me strength and it gave the comic resonance. The character's visits to art galleries suddenly gained a potential that they wouldn't have otherwise. The comic is in a limbo between fine art and comics because that's where I am right now - I don't believe in those distinctions anymore, a work can function in two or three worlds at the same time, and the nature of the image is promiscuous, an image can make you stop while you are reading a comic, and can have you walk away in serial consumption when you are looking at art.

I also wanted to have a character, that haunts galleries, who is also a stranger to the art world. He is going down with depression, he is looking for a way out of it, so he visits this authority which is the art world. The result is a kind of warped view of the art world, or at least of the commercial gallery scene in London. In this authority, like in all authority, he sees the wrath of God, an unwelcoming ground, and very little when it comes to answers. But, like he says, he also sees himself everywhere, in the humbleness of a sculptured piece, in a boat that is crossing the Atlantic... His identity gets punctured as he is entering psychosis, so he is becoming the perfect spectator.

Dear Francisco,
 One thing I project from myself into it, is that somehow we are looking at a small portfolio of yours. The works depicted in that galleries are yours or similar to things you made in the past. This seems interesting to me because you are not presenting but representing them, with a perspective - this places the work in sort of ground zero because you are critical to it in the comic. I mean ground zero because I have always wanted to do or find someone who could do a comic strip that would joke with my paintings placing the viewer on ground zero, without rhetoric

or frame or something to hold and believe this is good because it's here in this institution or gallery - demanding full autonomy from the viewer to think by himself. The other quality I've found in the work is the relation between image and text, I'm sorry for that, I also project from my experience, the text functions as the meaning of the rational, and you keep looking at those works in a passive way - as you look without looking to the advertisements in the metro. I mean passive because it is a relation that is free from the rational, it's more like the way one should look at a Pollock or a Newman.

Dear Hugo,
 It is nice to hear you talk about the artworks inside the comic, about these exhibitions that the main character visits. It is indeed my work, to the exception of a show in a gallery called AK, which stand for the initials of the artist with who I shared a studio for a long time. So the work is doubly introspective - it is so even in the most public of things, which is the exhibition. The comic came at a time when I didn't have shows coming up, and also at a time when I was getting absolutely tired of not having a space for drawing, relevant drawing, in my art practice. So the artworks inside the comic are spatial constructions that point to a kind of dissolution of spectatorship, if that makes any sense. They are not representations of art historical artefacts, I didn't want to go into critique, artist's book, art history or catalogue. They are perhaps me playing the scenographer to this hapless character which is also an extension of myself, he is my K. I hope this juxtaposition doesn't make the work dreamy, that was not my intention at all. It is more like the little boxes or suitcases Duchamp did. He considered himself to be a puppeteer of his own past. I wanted to do the same about my current concerns, not only about the past but the future. The little exhibitions are little tests, but they are not open, they do not present but represent, like you say, so it feels a bit like a puppeteer's job. But I believe that comics have this great potential, of totality, it's a whole world that is set in motion with minimal means, unlike in other professions where you have team work and delegation. It's direct in many ways, that I can go into later...

You also mention the juxtaposition between text and image in the comic, when the main character visits those suspicious art shows. I intended to have a character that is detached from what he is seeing, in the same way that a person might become distracted from a priest or a teacher, a figure of authority who is speaking. I didn't intend at all to offer clues to the work's interpretation, nor provide captions. When I do intend to do so, I kind of stop the flow of the narrative - like in the opening pages, when the whole show becomes a show of black monochromes, and the character asks 'can you see it?' (I guess there really are art historical snippets in it - that's from the brilliant end of Nostalgia...). But I guess I want to explore more of that passive-active quality of presenting and representing art in comics. That is one of the things that have been left open in this book, you have found it, it's one of the things I want to go back to - how to really stop you and give you an image, and a text, and interrupt the passivity that is part of reading stories at the same time. And how to link this event with a discourse that connects with art or aesthetics.

With Viola Yesiltaç

HC

I would start by remembering a few ideas I shared with you about your work in Brazil... we were walking in the city stopping in anonymous bars during the day . We shared a beer or two, after visiting some weird offspaces and got a lift from a young couple... the city was gigantic, and noisy, and that reinforce the feeling of fragility, of being with oneself...

I relate to your work by the vertigo of something absolutely fragile; that comes out as a work in permanent measuring; in permanent crisis - doubt like. And still, the work flows like an intimate diary, something interior that needs to become exterior. And now that you present works written in German language, I have this feeling that something more was added to the work, since English is your second language... it seems like a painter who shifts from big scale formats to small formats... can you tell me something about this circumstances.

VY

I thought about your question regarding the use of Language in my work. It started with my arrival in London at the RCA that I incorporated written language. Later I started reading text out loud in my performances.

I've made my first piece with language at the same gallery where we first met - you and Theresa were throwing tennis balls, after dunking them in paint, if I remember right, onto the walls.

I wrote the following with pencil on the wall: "I say nothing now and see how close it comes, five flights up on the last floor".

In the Photography department I drew two mountaintops traced from a slide projection, with pencil on the walls. The piece was called the Echo. Back then I was approaching my interest from a point of view,

I was always concerned about, the performative aspect in my work and on a wider scale in photography "generally speaking." However in retrospect I do think, I was exploring some things besides that as well, at that time just not being aware of it. I do like the notion when you write something interior that needs to become exterior... by the use of German my mother tongue and English. As in the work I sent you I switched between the two and I do this in my other drawings as well.

Let me try to find the words for this.

Last night I went to a Restaurant with my friends all Americans and I thought about your question and besides talked about you, well this morning I woke up thinking of course they could not understand what I was trying to say as none of them speaks a second language.

Well, I do not only geographically divide my country of origin Germany and the place I choose to live NYC, it also happens on many other levels.

First of course the language in which I communicate, Second on an emotional level, as Germany is not only the place I grew up, but where most of my family lives. NYC on the other hand is the place I made my own through a long process and at first without knowing anybody, emotionally disconnected but always with the goal in mind to make this my place to live and my work sustainable. I learned to speak English at the RCA, my use of English from the beginning was always work related. I switch to German when I need to be very precise in order to express something I am maybe moved by, something that is grounded on a more emotional level. Basically there is a different "structure" to my use of the two languages. It is divided but of course not entirely and after all this time I have been living abroad I do have well developed emotional bonds. English no longer defines a precise rational organized work related place for me. I feel sometimes I can say more in German as I can structure my sentences in a way that they have many layers and one sentence incorporates five or more, meaning can expand and you can ponder

I don't feel capable doing so in English. I make use of it in order to announce. Fragmented very often and more playful I guess. As my vocabulary is limited I even use words that I have an idea of what they mean but I am not 100 % certain so there are the chances of letting serendipity happen.

These texts and fragments might often grammatically be wrong but at the same time become crude stumbling poetic gestures.

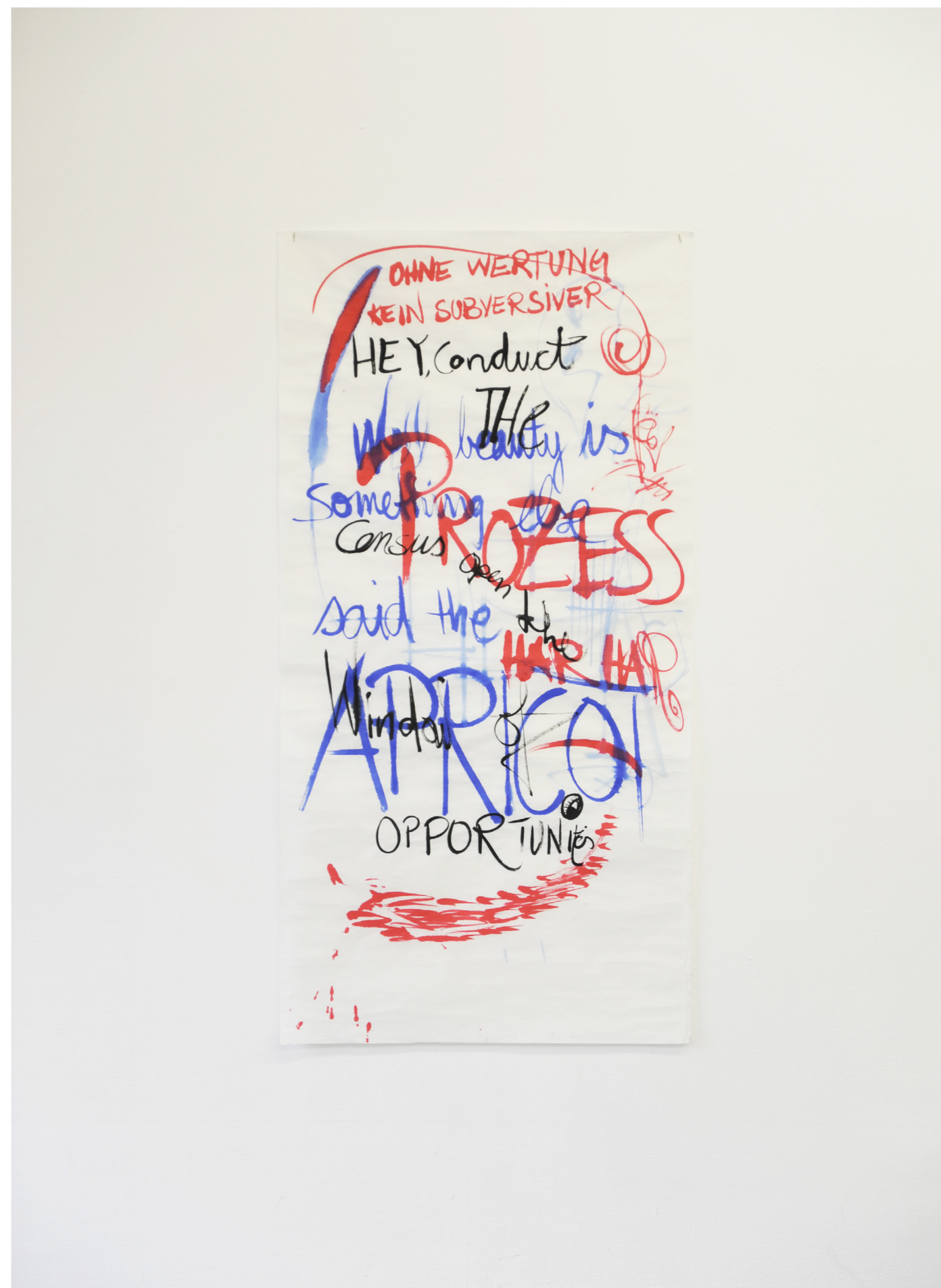
....and maybe in that moment of imprecision an odd desire can be expressed and become exterior. In my use of German I feel the content is more introvert, not announcing, circling around, describing around and about, often in doubt or unsure what and how to actually address.

So yes there are moments of something interior uncomfortably squeezing itself through a needle and made exterior by inscribing it on a surface addressing or evoking introversion in a pendulum motion. Introversion does that work is accurate?

HC

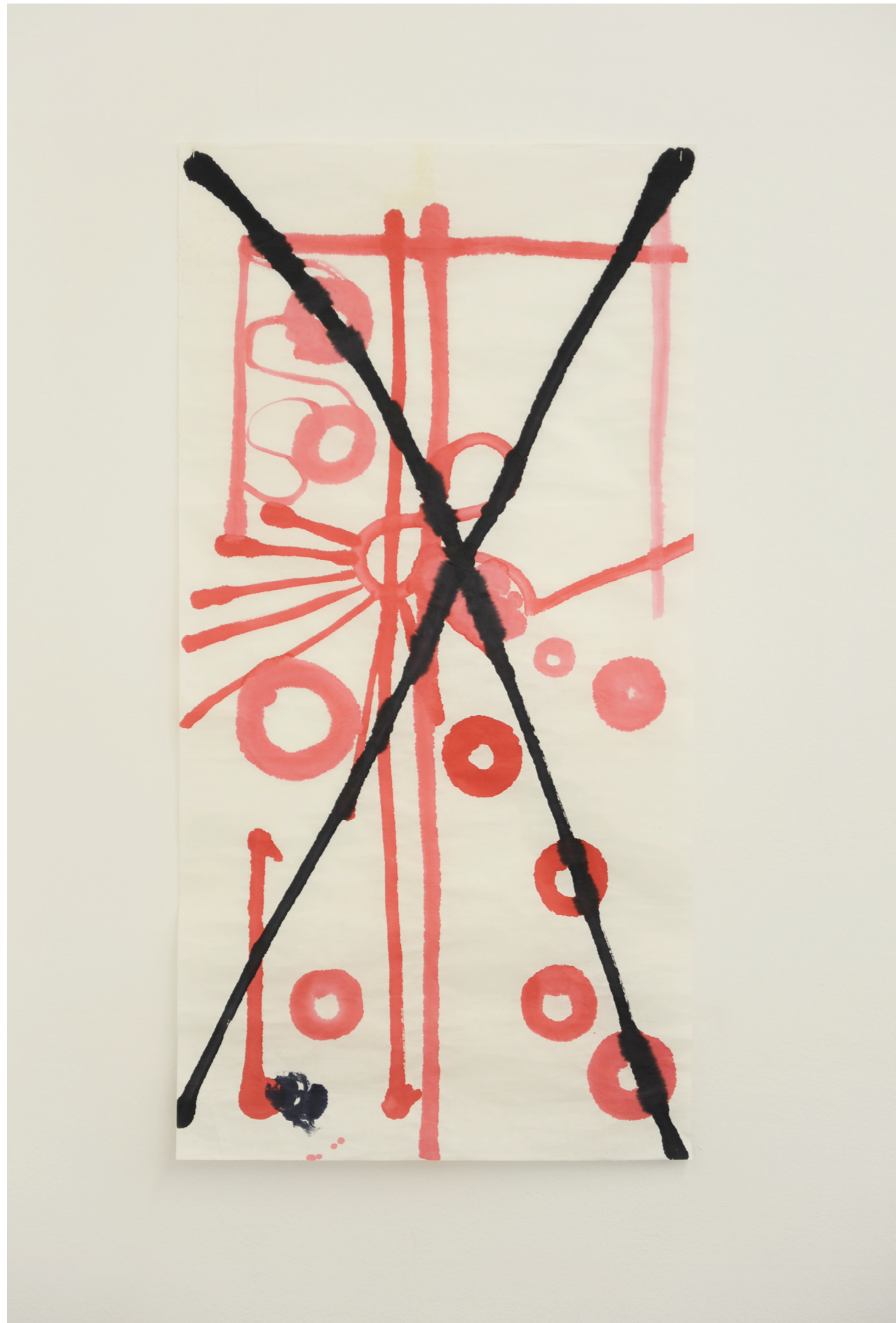
This drives me to Malevich's writings in Russian and some others he wrote in German... Although I have read both in translations to English, it seemed that the German texts were far better, because they were sharper, without getting lost in the ornament of language, in style or whatever; it was completely pragmatic and assertive.

There's a chance that in fact the use of language can work as a rough tool, like a broken knife - as Beuys stated - the only thing an art student needs. The other thing I would like to hear from you is the fact that these works were made in China, and you express that something else, something new is happening in relation to prior works, could you develop that idea? My sense is that calligraphy and drawing become one thing, the same temperature or balance....

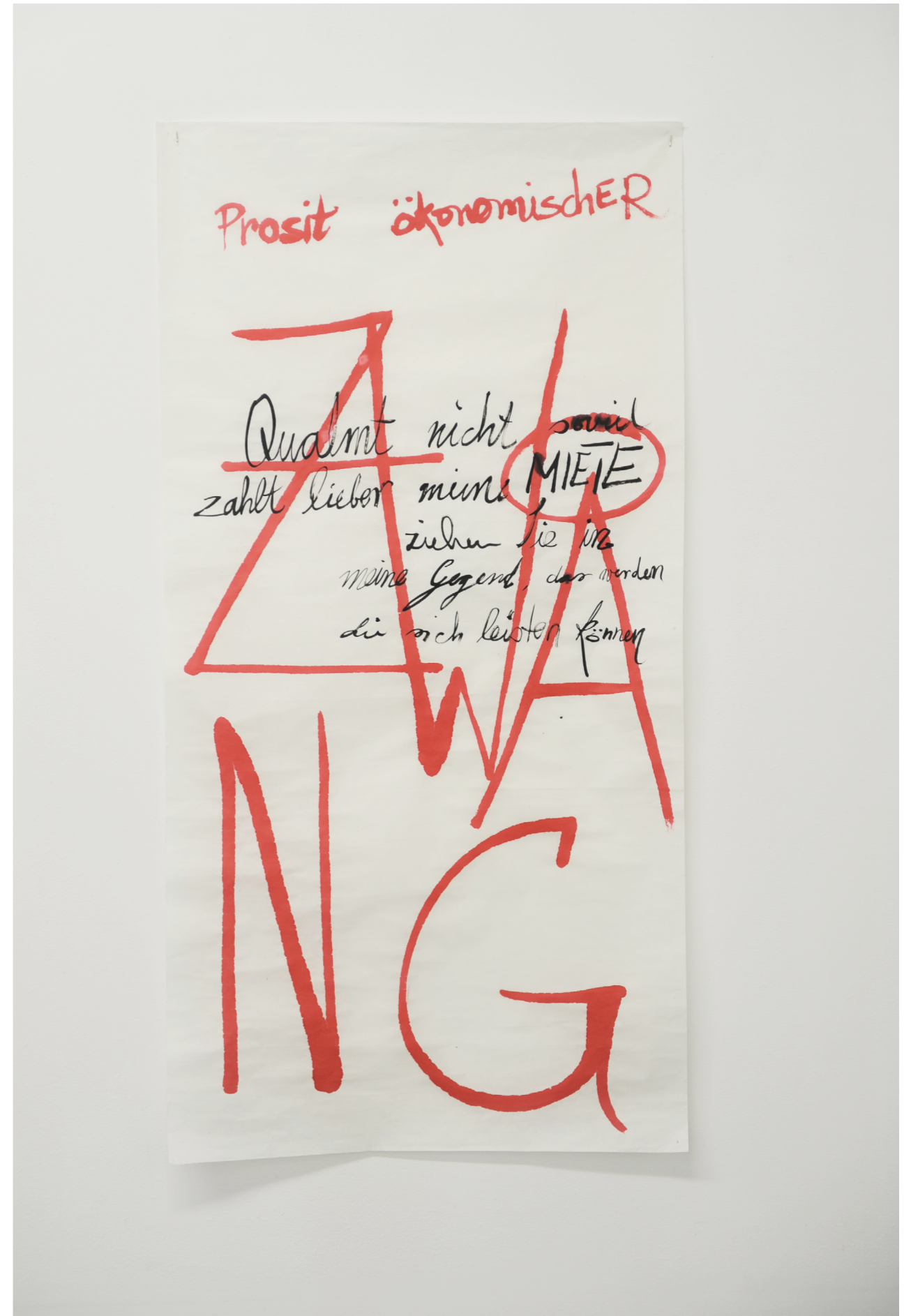


Viola Yesiltaç

Ohne wertung, kein subversiver prozess (Well, Beauty is something else said the appricot), 2012
Fountain pen with calligraphy ink on rice paper | 137,2 x 70 cm



Viola Yesiltaş
Ohne wertung, kein subversiver prozess (Well, Beauty is something else said the apricot), 2012
Fountain pen with calligraphy ink on rice paper | 137,2 x 70 cm



Viola Yesiltaş
Ohne wertung, kein subversiver prozess (Well, Beauty is something else said the apricot), 2012
Fountain pen with calligraphy ink on rice paper | 137,2 x 70 cm

VY

These works were actually not made in China but shortly after my arrival. However I do actually refer to some of my drawings I made in China. The rice paper is from China I brought it with me to NYC.

After my arrival of being completely on my own for 6 weeks I felt I did not understand common Art practitioners in my immediate surrounding in NYC, hence the reoccurring addressing of the uncomfortable state of the subject itself.

A series of works later all titled in German wenn das Sujet sich unwohl fuehlt, zieht sich seine Persoenlichkeit zurueck.

(When the Sujet feels uncomfortable its personality retreats)

First I have to say I know that my Calligraphy lessons even though these were of very basic nature, influenced my practice.

A couple of days ago I made an ink drawing on vinyl, I'll attach it to this mail, which reminds me uncannily a lot of the Chinese landscape drawings I saw in many Museums and Chinese gardens I visited. (see Image 1)

Not intentionally I became very influenced by it of course.

However there is a notion, described by Chuen Yin a Buddhist monk of the Yuan period that I came along during my stay in China:

“When the emotions are strong and one feels pent up, one should paint bamboo;

In a light mood should paint the orchid, for the leaves of the orchid grow as though they were flying or fluttering, the buds open joyfully, and the mood is indeed a happy one.”

It's primary concern was neither the perception of images nor a plausible narrative but something which is perhaps least incurably described as “poetic evocation”

I am citing from my notebook now, notes I made while being in Shanghai and Suzhou

It is fragmented indeed and my handwriting is at times hard to decipher but I try...

2.01.2012

... emotional state, in calligraphy plays an important part.

In a way it is as if it is advised, not only to be emphatic but also relate with the world by trying to identify with the character of the subject, which is to be represented.

Then a long circling around photography wondering about the subjective matter in

Photography. Discussing an image of Thomas Struth which I then drew / copied in order to investigate on Paper to provoke a specific mode, a visualization or a subjective individual consciousness?

(See Image 2 & 3)

As if consciousness casts a shadow and leaks onto the photograph.

The consciousness therefore is no longer advised simply to stand back.

We look at the painter's hand admire his touch and the magic of his brush which then conjures up an image.

What we enjoy is not so much seeing these works from a distance as the very act of stepping back, and watching our own imagination come into play, transforming the medley of colour on a finished image.

My use of language in such a hesitant/ fragmented way grew out of this interest to provoke an arena and to evoke some sort of playfulness a medley of words chopped up by a broken knife falling in one place.

I agree with you, calligraphy and drawing are become one thing, the same temperature or balance.

I first made drawings in addition and to compliment my photographs, set them in balance.

The ink I use for my drawings is on purpose either calligraphy - or fountain pen ink as a reminder and always with a direct reference to writing, language of course.

Henry Fox Talbot the pencil of nature the first published photographic book

says it already. Photography is drawing with light and I use the imagery the ink blots on the paper and my imposing of non-fluent setting of words, sometimes just putting them in a line, without implying any hierarchy.

To simply inscribe onto a surface.

Image 1

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Image 2 (Thomas Struth)



Image 3

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Henry Fox Talbot the pencil of nature the first published photographic book

says it already. Photography is drawing with light and I use the imagery the ink blots on the paper and my imposing of non-fluent setting of words, sometimes just putting them in a line, without implying any hierarchy.

To simply inscribe onto a surface.

When mentioning the “poetic evocation” I somehow found a link which would connect my drawings, the use of language and my photographic practice. I drew a possible plausible circle.

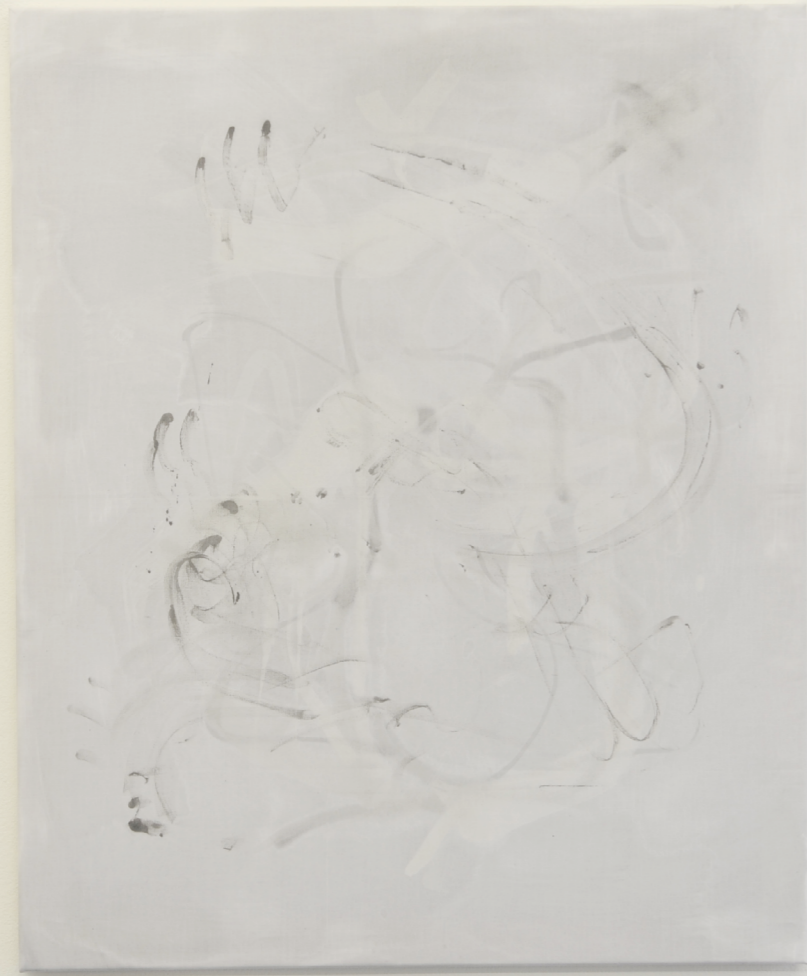
A somewhat try to evoke a subjective perception of the work. I had to think of Avicenna's flying man thought experiment.

What if god creates a fully grown Human being in air and out of thin air. No memory of previous existence and in addition no memory of sensory perception; and his body is not touching the ground.

He is basically not in contact with his own body and all his live senses are completely disabled.

A radical case of sensory deprivation.

Avicenna claims that the flying man would be aware, if of anything, then of his own existence.



Dear Hugo,
A draft to an answer to one of your e-mails.
“There is a strange thing: this time I knew the answer would take longer. It would not be completed in one pour. First words were flowing and accumulating, it all made sense, almost perfect in its conclusion. Today it seems overrated and nothing easier than to delete it all. I start from scratch.”
If there is time, lets meet when you are back.
Ute

Ute Müller
Untitled, 2013 | Egg-tempera on cotton | 85 x 70 cm.



With Pedro Diniz Reis

HC:

The first work I've seen from you (in 2000?) was this work based on Gerhard Richter's painting of a candle, that somehow was a sort replacement of the work into a time based experience, a sort of update to a new body shaped by a new media. Your work developed a lot from a more self reflexive relation to painting, second to the eroticism of the experience of it, which gave some autonomy to these works that seem more rational - although your work was always very rational-constructed. Do these works based on the dictionary and alphabets still carry this quality of updating to today- and I don't mean only technically, works from the past? Or would we see it only as immanence; a work that forces us to project both towards the past and future of the work presented?

PDR:

The work that you refer is Kerze (1983-), 1997, it was my first video, I was working on the awareness of perception and time more along with other painting related questions. I never thought of it as an update to GR's painting, I saw it as a different postulate build upon an image that I really like.

When I look at my works from a distance, at first glance they look like they are from different families some even may feel that they could have been made by different persons, but the truth is that they are all connected. Somehow each one builds into the next, even if the relation only appears some years later, and when it does its kind of "funny".

I started to work in two directions at that time, one was about linguistic / conceptual art and the other was more intimate / pictorial (?).

The linguistic branch, at a certain time, began to have audio, very minimalistic and very repetitive sounds, usually human voices that I record. It grew denser and denser and the dictionary, alphabet and sound pieces appeared. Similarly the "pictorial" branch became noisy, really noisy. The letters became pure colors and the sounds clearer... musical notes... piano chords. And GR-352-2, 2007 appeared building upon another Gerhard Richter's painting "256 Farben" ten years after Kerze - one of those nice moments that I was telling you about.

Getting back to your question, I feel that those works are still building and that some times, as I get new inputs, they move into new directions. I wouldn't call it an update, but I still pick stuff that I like and work with it, art, literature, cinema, etc... I take it as raw material that I use in my processes. The starting point is always very experimental, only after a huge amount of experimentation it becomes rational-constructed. It's kind of a need to get rid of chaos through a set of rules.

When it's done, the result in some cases perceives as chaotic again. The humanized machine or mechanized human (?) hypnotic mantras (?) that take you into different planes of conscience (?)

HC: I like the spiral movement of it. I mean we never touch the same place in our work but sometimes we find similar places as if we are having a short memory, but under new circumstances.

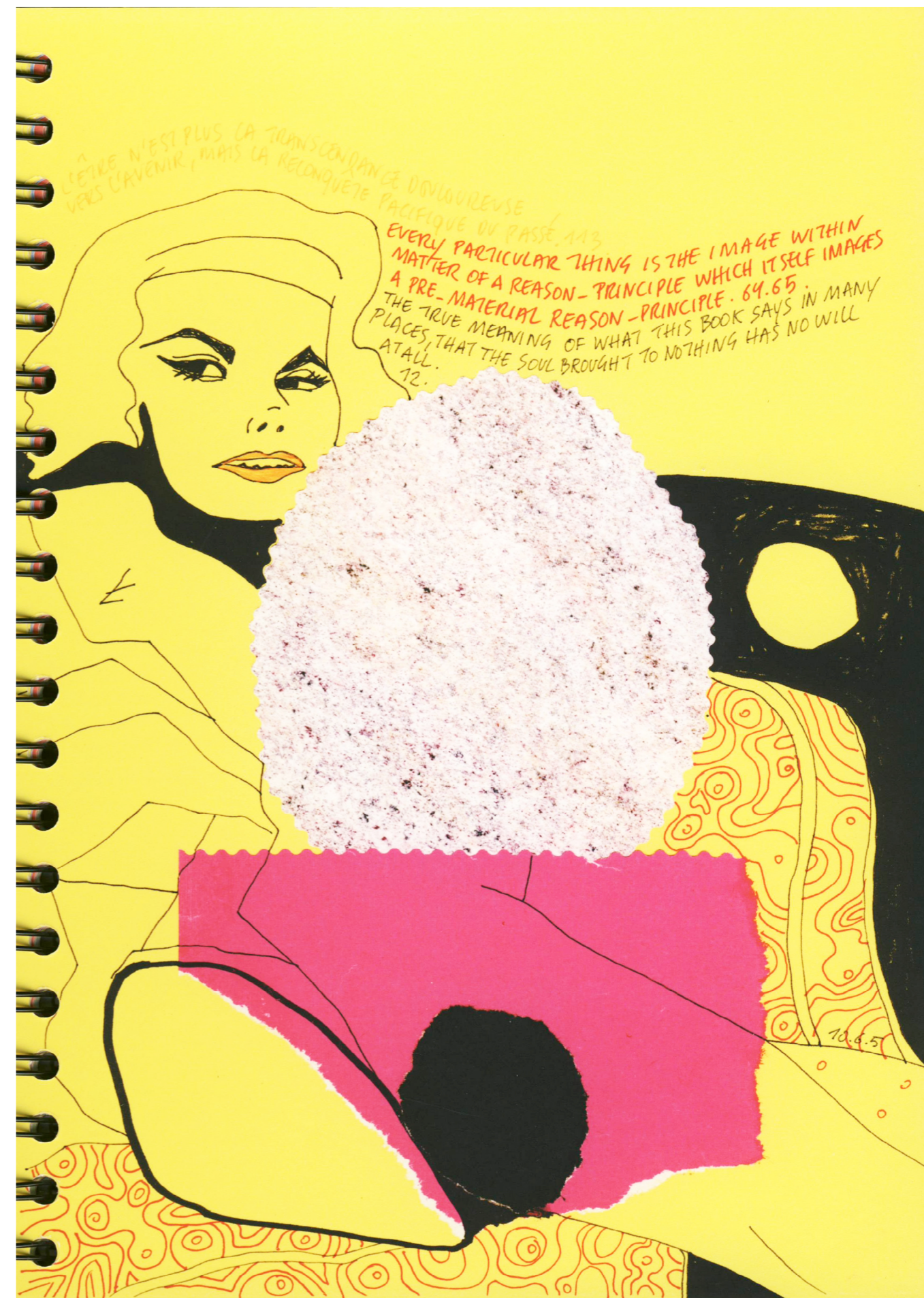
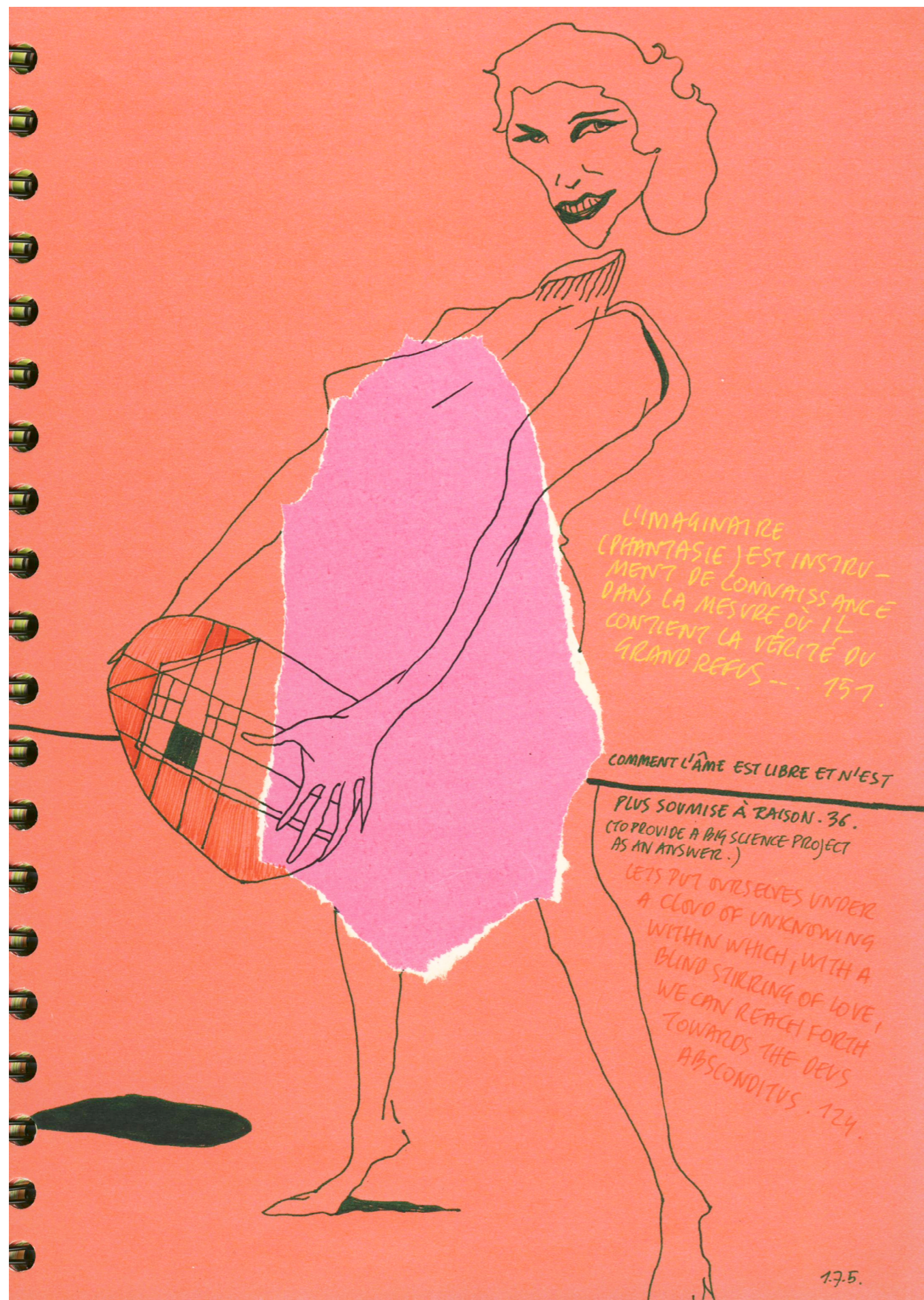
I don't know if this makes sense to you... it seems that apparently you have two worlds in your work, mostly because of the use of pure form, pure sound, pure symbol or character. Everything is given in a pure way as if we were talking about a precise physics law that just exist in precise conditions like vacuum, which are artificial to our experience in life. On the other hand all the works that you are preparing in relation to death, the place or force that *shibari* gain in the other side of your work or even your last words referring to hypnotic mantras, different planes of conscience, raises a duality in the reading of your work. One is pure the other is dirty, one is possible to talk about, the other must be acquired by the body and developed through the time, processed. Can we map these two sides of the world or can we match these two bodies in one?



Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven
Maar liefde , waar bevindt zich uwziel? (But love, where resides your soul?), 2013
Collage, oil stick, marker on drawing paper | 40.5 x 29.5 cm.

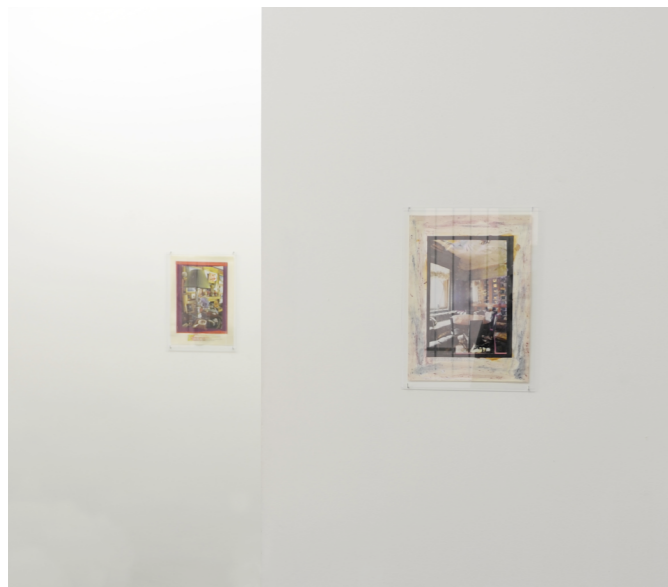


Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven
Livrer des plaisirs (To deliver pleasures), 2013
Collage, acrylic, plastic foam and flower petals on drawing paper | 40.5 x 29.5 cm.



Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven
Pages from facsimile version of the I'll Rob you (2005) | 39 printed pages, retouched by hand, carton cover, ringed | 21,5 x 29,7 cm.

With Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven



View of the works from previous pages at the exhibition.

HC

The first time I saw your work was at a show called - *une note visuelle**. The autonomous - non pamphleteering, non reactive but rather affirmative force of your works was striking. Your work was like a cry stating I am! I am a human; I am a specific human with precise wishes and will. And politics we'll be made in the future with the voice of these means, without suppressing the singular qualities of each human being.

At your studio in Antwerp I've found a surprising block of work that are your drawings. Your work on paper reflects a deep need of something interior that had to be organized and becomes exterior - an object outside of the subject. For me your drawings come from both affirmative and reactive forces: dealing with what might be impossible to name and at the same time trying to organize a series of reactions towards the exterior with an existential quality. This quality brings me to *The plague* by Camus where the outside is not understandable and aggressive towards us. So one tries to make the time pass by, by counting beans from one dish to another or trying to write the first sentence of a book, repeating it ad eternum - This is my projection over your statement "Some people think, I draw" - which is a way of thinking, a way to make visible that event-thought.

On top of all these assumptions - that I hope you can comment on, and please forgive if I'm wrong, there's the use of language and the use of other language. What is the force in it? I mean how does language operate in your work? Does it territorialize the meaning of the image and vice versa?

AMVK

The statement that I wrote a long time ago and that you are referring to is: "I don't think, I draw". This is different from what you read, I guess. It means that there are periods, coming back in cycles, in which I draw instead of think. Everything that suppresses me as a human blocks "regular" thoughts, the only way to stay sane and go on with life is to draw. This started the moment when I stopped being a student, when I entered "real" life. It frees my mind from debris. At least, that is what I think it does.

I know now that I draw to distantiate myself from my immediate surroundings, when emotional and intellectual pressure is real. It is a way to guard my inner territory. Having now a studio that works as a tangible head-quarter, the urge to draw transformed itself in a more relaxed way to make other kinds of works as well. Now I only draw in trains, or planes. Or in a residency. It is my inner refuge. The drawings I talk about here are the ones that I draw spontaneously, without any preposition, almost out of a certain state of annoyance, emptiness, uneasiness. I never know what will come out, it is not important. I stop when I get enough of it, no satisfaction involved.

Afterwards, when I look at them, sometimes years later, I can see a meaning. I understand they deal with undigested "negativity".

When I started making these drawings in the mid-seventies I was in close contact with student linguists, soon specialising in artificial intelligence. They provided words and tactics to translate aspects of my inner life in text. Simultaneously a certain choice and way of dealing with language was also influenced by close reading of Sade and Wittgenstein. It was a young germanist, with whom I shared a vivid interest in knowledge representation, who stressed the fact that I had to give titles to my drawings, to connect my abstractions with the onlooker. I was obedient although, still, not convinced that this was/is necessary. These drawings are not "works", they are not made to connect. They are mandala's, mindmaps, points of concentration. People immediately became interested, gave me opportunities to show them in public. I soon found out, I was 23, that you have to talk about what you show. Because I knew that I would lose the innocence of my creativity by trying to explain these spontaneous outbursts of it, I started to describe my work as a third person. The working of my brain, the emanations of it, became an issue where I took distance of. In an organic way I became my own case-study. At the time it felt arbitrary and self-evident. This act of differentiation became a body of work in itself: texts, installations, animation movies.

* Group show with Anne-Mie van Kerckhoven, Marianne Wex, Ilene Segalove and Travelling Féministe with the Centre audiovisuel Simone de Beauvoir. Curated by Tobi Maier at La Galerie, Contemporary Art Centre - Noisy-le-Sec, FR.



On the first plan the newspaper version of Francisco Sousa Lobo's *The dying Draughtsman*; on the back wall Christoph Brukner's *Untitled*.



Club Moral
The second coming of Joachim Stiller. Live in Darmstadt, 2013 | mp4-video | 54'52", Loop.

With Danny Devos

HC

The band started at the place you had with AMVK called Club Moral? Can you tell me a bit how were things back than?

DDV

Everything we produce together is under the name of Club Moral. We organized concerts, performances, exhibitions, lectures, film shows,.. published 15 issues of our magazine 'Force Mental' and played concerts/performances ourselves. I was already doing music performances as DDV when we first met. When AMVK joined in we were Club Moral. The main difference between then and now is that we literally did everything ourselves with the bare minimum. There were no computers, no internet, no email. Everything had to be done by hand, typewriter, letraset, photocopy or (expensive) printing. Sound was recorded on tape with analog equipment. Organizing events included making flyers, sending out invitations by mail, distributing in bars, hanging posters in town, buying drinks in the shop (we didn't have a car so we did several trips with a shopping cart), building whatever was needed for the event, having the artists staying at our house and then doing everything on the night itself, door, bar, technics, crowd control (haha), and so on. And that was sometimes every two or three weeks, just the two of us. And, the money from the door and drinks had to cover all the costs because we had no grants or sponsorship or financial support or whatever.

HC

And the whole attitude, the fanzines, the lyrics of the music, the tyof music, seemed to work as counter cultural. There's a feeling of anti-bourgeoisie, anti static, anti the will of having power even, against the institution. But in my perception, when I travel from Vienna to Antwerp I feel a sense of openness, all the different communities although there all these diamond traders there with their black & white photos in their offices where they are surrounded by children digging the ground...

DDV

I wouldn't say we were anti, we were an alternative for whatever that was around yet. You could call it an addition, where we autonomously decided on whatever we wanted to do, on whatever we thought was necessary to do. Basically showing things we liked ourselves to an interested audience. And to do that, we would use all available means and channels. Everything we published, audio cassettes and Force Mental magazines, is available for free on the internet. The Club Moral spirit hasn't changed in over 30 years.

The Second Coming of Joachim Stiller, as performed by Club Moral at the ZugZwang III Festival in Darmstadt, Germany on 3 November 2012.

Club Moral were: Danny Devos - performance, Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven - electronics, Mauro Pawlowski - drums, Eva Van Deuren - harps.

Club Moral's "The Second Coming of Joachim Stiller" refers to the book (De Komst van Joachim Stiller) by the Belgian author Hubert Lampo. There is no direct interpretation of any events in the book except the possibility of a one second magical event turning into a portent that proves the possible existence of previous, present and coming lives. A preliminary version of "The Second Coming of Joachim Stiller" exists as a sound installation:

<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aq6d7FCgry0>> for the Antwerp Pavillion of the Shanghai Biennale <<http://www.shanghaibiennale.org/en/antwerppavilion/>>, curated by Philippe Pirotte. It consists of a 'bunker' made of mattresses where you can step inside to hear the first audio version of "The Second Coming of Joachim Stiller".

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5y964YQLY0>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aq6d7FCgry0#t=49>

With Christoph Bruckner

HC

I want to start to say that, although you might not have a feeling for this, I see a common energy or ethos in the way you have produced the visual-texts for your Black Pages issue and the way you make your process based paintings. It's more a temperature and an energy that you give to things rather their implications in terms of presence and meaning.

Also energy, the energy spent, is a key role in your ethos as a maker. You don't give much, you hold a lot in you. Like you don't let your subject get in your work, there's a sense of distanciation, an absence of expression that seems to go for objectivity.

CB

The connection you made between my textual works and my paintings is totally correct. Both fields are in fact connected to each other in more than one aspect. The first aspect is - as you mentioned - the aspect of energy. If you want to be a visual artist, an art theorist and a writer of literature you have to develop a very economical approach, otherwise the whole thing wouldn't be possible as far as time and energy are concerned. I don't hold in a lot of energy, I just don't have more. And my artistic mode of working of course has to take that into account. My working methods are not very elaborate not as a result of a strategic choice I've made, I just have to work that way, because my batteries are empty very quickly. Beside the fact that both fields of work, the literature and the art, are exclusively based on ideas (which of course has a lot to do with energy and time) the economical aspect connects the two. This has of course also to do with my personal energy level, but it not only comes from the person, but also from the situation and this is a situation in which most young artists are in. to work economically is sort of a compulsion. The theoretical problem I have with this is, that this economical approach doesn't show the economical but quite contrary it renders the artist as an economical person insignificant. So I not only adopted an economical working method, which is something I would have to do anyway, since I don't have a financial background or support, I also want to show the economical aspect in my work, not just write about it. The position of the subject is something that also connects my writing and my painting. The use of ideas and concepts in both fields weakens the position of the subject, because the idea tends to get more important than the subject. In my painterly practice I try to react and connect to a canon, a referential frame, to the thing that Adorno in his "Philosophy of new music" called the "material". Speaking in strict structuralist terms: the position in the structure is the important thing, and not the person that is at this very position. My whole artistic theory is also about this aspect: to get away from the image, the habitus, in short all the performative aspects of the communication and legitimation of a work, to the material. And this is something very impersonal, because I think that every artist working nowadays as to react to the vast semantic field, the historical material in one way or the other

HC

This is clear, and I remember talking with you at your place about a criticism to post fordist society, or labor, which pushed me to the Manifesto against Labor by Group Krisis. What you state is good because it brings a mimesis between a political and artistic ethos. Recently in Stockholm, I met a lot of artists like more critical to the foundations of the art system; the range is enormous and complex and it affects some possibilities of production (the hierarchies between curator and artist, how artists give time to everything, the non organization of the art world which doesn't allow to understand when we are working or not which affects more people who have children, etc., etc.

On the other hand, all this, what you state, which highly valuable would always come to the final question that is how is this going to work? Are you aiming to reach the people as an example? Is art also an image for something else?

The other question is that a work like yours is a sort of deception, like it doesn't go after the masses so I imagine that my question is easily answered.

The other question is it really possible that the subject is out? Can we do some sort of futurology and guess that through the development of processes in painting one might find threads of a subject matter?

CB

To answer the last question first: I don't think that the subject will ever be totally outside the whole thing. The author, which is in a certain respect synonymous for the subject, is like a zombie, it's neither dead (like the structuralists thought) nor fully alive and well (like the modernists thought), it's rather undead - like a zombie. (This is a bit off topic, but I think that the current pop cultural interest in the figure of the zombie has also to do with a contemporary notion of authorship) so I don't think that any form of artistic practice without a subject will ever be possible, even the incorporation of anonymous art forms into the art world, would on the other hand also require some sort of artistic subject to do this. But neither do I think that the subject of the artist is the point, to which everything leads and at which everything ends. Which leads to the question if and how this concept can work. Of course it has to work for me on a practical and theoretical level, and it does (otherwise I would be doing something else.) but I also think that this conception of an artistic practice and an artistic subject is not limited to me (which would be a mere contradiction). it is something that comes not so much from me, but from the time I am working in and although I can't possibly tell if other people can relate to this I think that this conception of artistic subjectness is something that is also valid for other people, who are also working in post-fordist fields.



With Benjamin Valenza

HC

Recalling my visit to Benjamin Valenza in Brussels to get an idea of what might happen in this show: We walked around the quartier and stopped in a bar. We got two beers and smoked.

We talked first about Jimmy Durham, the absence of his work in this show, the qualities I could see in your works in Milan that are also present in some of his works: the text placed over an object, the time it requires, the passivity or indifference or capacity to disrespect the object that holds the text (as full respect).

Then you mentioned the fact that everyone in the bar was drinking the same beer. That in fact there was something libidinal about it and that you wanted to make this bar at the opening serving schnapps that comes in ceramic bottles (both made by you and both using the fish as form and material). The will is more or less to produce a sort of cabaret, or a feast- preparing everyone to a certain state of mind and then introduce poetry (your poetry or others or both?)

I want to ask you also if you find a relation or a possible thread in all these assumptions I'm making here... For me there is something going on with the fish.

In Hungary for example one cannot eat fish on New Years Eve because fish swims away and money will run away from you. I understand it that fish has this quality, in Portugal we call eel to those people who are slimy. Away from these silly considerations the fish seems in motion (like bridges in paintings bring the will for motion). And in relation with this I see poetry as permanent movement (the poet aims to disappear). This I have already seen in your paintings where you place acid over them. Is poetry this path, this running away from us as if it would be possible to do so?

BV

Maybe for me there is something libidinal in this relation of language on top of an object, and sometimes even through an object... "La lingua" as an object, with its physicality like a giant tongue monster sliming on every works of arts in every exhibition. A massive 160 pounds of pink gelly flesh in motion. They are millions of monster tongues, and I'm like those lonesome characters in the twilight zone: I'm the only one that can see them, they are covering and mashing all artworks. I'm just trying to do that before them without the mash, to cover the objects in order that this monstrosity will be scared and stay away from the objects. It is a very high form of respect for me. So "la taverna" metaphor is a soft version of this gore context, much more civilized and human. The idea can be even sexy for the most perverse of us.

In the frame of the gallery I thought it was more interesting to have this brewage coming from one jar or bottle, I've made two big ceramics that are inspired by the ancient amphorae, but very simple, actually they look more like big bollocks... As old amphorae they are made and designed for transport use, they're vehicular objects. Their shapes always remind me something very organic like a fish or a dick. Oil or vine... Fat and alcohol.... Mine will be filled with a schnapps made out of fish, and they will be covered of course with poems and drawings of fish.

Pessoa once wrote that "the poet is a faker" so, yes I'm trying to escape from myself but at the end I'm just hiding myself behind the bush or under the mask.

Of course the fish is a symbol of this vehicular way of life and

Always in motion, always focus on what is appearing in between, during the translation, the transit.

You refer to a very old work of mine, those acid paintings made on hard panels where initially thought as background for installation I wanted them really in motion by the effect produced by the acid on the painting, a kind of slow motion or a very slow apparition of an abstract image (cf photography) at the back of a sculpture... It never worked out, I always thought nobody understood that, except you apparently, always had the feeling that people were reading them as paintings/objects, I'm not a painter and it's not a sculpture... I haven't seen those things since I left Switzerland.

But recently I've seen Jimmy Durham, and you know what we had the same food!

HC

At the same time this movement is not really hiding and not really a mask... there's a feeling that you are more and more with yourself (like a good friend of mine said once to be with the weapons or the bombs next to your body). This has to do with the fact that you are more and more self-sufficient, making yourself everything, driving your car to this or that place and install the shows... it's not so much hippie or punk - do it yourself but more of an awareness of the time we are living that of course plays a change in the work you are doing. Maybe the movement is there in the sense that you try to approach your center of production and your work will always keep a distance since it comes object. It happens and it is now in front of you... the work is a mask you have to place in front of your face, it protects you but it also creates a new distance to yourself... if this is true one might say that the work will drive you in to an abyss, to fight with the demon (Like Stephan Zweig shows in his book the Struggle with the demon - the relation between life and work in Höderlin, Kleist and Nietzsche put it).

BV

Yes I have more autonomy now, I'm more experienced as well... But I don't think I'm self-sufficient, I need the others so much that I will never be able to stay alone. On the other hand I'm afraid of community... I have developed a kind of economy and a way to do things in a very brief delay, also easy to move from one place to another. I like to work on any kind of material like if it was a text. Sometimes I involved people on the way, I like to translate ideas, and see how words changed when you exchange them. It's more like a Troop. Regarding the mask, I always remember that word from Pessoa: "A poet is a faker". I may add, the performer and the visual artist is too. They double, and even multiply. And sometimes, in extreme synthesis, they overlap and are the same person. Maybe I'm looking for all these three roles in one, like a "fixed center that moves around, if it can be considered a real center, remaining the same and becoming more central, more uncertain and domineering".



Benjamin Valenza's performance "Circa, Circa, Polution" at the opening night.



Benjamin Valenza
Circa, circa, pollution, 2013 | Ceramic, paint, marker, 2 parts | 40 x 22 x 22 cm | 48 x 29 x 29 cm.



Atlas Projectos
Keep your dreams burning, 2013 | Printed in xerox, folded and stitched | 28x20cm | Edition of 50 copies.

"Supah!
Gordon's London Dry Gin
makes a
smashingly
brilliant
martini.
eh what?"



Gord
It's how the Englis

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opaque things / walls frustrating
erotic impulses / things we think
and do not say / things that
remain interior / or just hidden
behind walls / things works-of-art
intend to say / but do not say at
all / or maybe they do / some even
speak! / imagine the outrage! /
a slap in the face / textures and
wall avoid words / or at least the
meaning they insist on hiding /
keeping may be a better-suited
word – says the drunken man /
even though he has nothing to do
with this! / we already left the end
behind and are moving towards the
beginning / and there are random-
sounding-words coming from a
speaker / what is a monochrome
suppose to say? / we can extract
meaning from it / but that has
more to do with mining than it
does with speaking / speak up! /
a wall or a painting / to tell as all
about war / or love / or economy
/ someone that speaks to us in
a language we don't understand
/ but this does not make him
less of a speaker / or does it? /
what do you represent?—says the
drunken man / or the the drunken
painting! / I cannot remember /
and created an add / or at least
response / one does not need
much / this pen and this paper
were just laying around the gallery
/ quiet in their sleep / and now
they may be talking / not saying
much! – says the drunken man /

With Ivan Berislav Vodopija

HC

I want to recall the whole story. I was doing a show in Zagreb* last November - walking on the streets and displaying some of my work involving poetry when I saw a poster or a painting stating "Read Mallarmé", in a high ground floor window. I walked in and rung the bell and entered your high-end second-hand bookstore. I found many interesting books and it was a while before I asked you about Martek's work. You said that you had more works and I explained that I was preparing a show featuring artists who worked with language and poetry. We made an appointment on Friday at 17:30 after Martek got off from his work at the library. I had an amazing talk with the two of you, all the more inspiring because much of your experience and Martek's work belonged to my own cultural domain without knowing it. It was a sort of a mixed adventure of seeing something I knew without knowing it. I wonder if you could help me understand the impact of Martek's first self-edited books. He did not want to embrace the whole book editing structure. He wanted to avoid the time and distance inherent to the system of the publishing houses. Was it easier to go out into the streets, get in touch with people and get feedback in the 1970s? Nowadays if we give something to people to read, even if it is just friends, there is so much more input (Facebook above all) that one rarely gets the right feedback. I usually say that - in terms of economy, people come to the studio, see the work that is already a gift or a statement, and hear us talk on top of that. We give a lot and get very little in return. Artists are usually giving and this giving is also like jumping into the void. It is a lot and it can be intimidating to the other. How were things back then?



I.B.V.

You reminded me that a year has passed since your show in Zagreb and our meeting at the second-hand bookstore. You remember all the details. All I can do is confirm that yes, indeed, that was how it happened. Our conversation had been focused on Martek, but I marveled at your power of observation and the skill with which you picked out books and other materials. After a year I can tell you, if the Group of Six that Martek was a part of was looking for new members and if you were looking for some company, you would find a great setting for you there. But I would like to return to your question about the seventies, the streets, the actions and the samizdat's. In the context of this time, and it is communism we are talking about, which your generation might be seeing with no political connotations today in the work of artists like Martek, I would say that the subversive nature of the actions of the artists of the time was overshadowed by the message which you look for with equal interest today, and you approach these works in this way. If there were not for this message, the artists' actions would have been as forgotten as the speeches that the politicians used to feed to us at Communist Party congresses. This was all happening at a time when the future of communism was uncertain and it was happening in a Yugoslavia where artist liberties reached a level at the end of the 1970s and 1980s that artists can only dream about today in countries that were born from the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Some of the street actions performed at the time in Zagreb would never have been allowed in London or New York. Regrettably, they would not be allowed in Zagreb today either. Every street action includes an element of risk. There has to be confrontation. If you want feedback that will feed the artist's hunger, you must not be greedy. Some fruits ripen in a

certain season and others are turned into preserves for the winter and wait for years. Artists who are prepared to make compromises always ruin their winter preserves. Artists' samizdats are another parallel track of a railway line that goes in the opposite direction. I worked at a bookstore at the time and people would sometimes come to me and ask me who put up the small posters around town that urged people to read poets. A year ago I bought a photograph by Roman Cieslewicz. Famous artist and photographer Cieslewicz saw and photographed the poster "Read Malevich" made by artist Vlado Martek, who had been unknown to Cieslewicz at the time. The public settings that the artists used in their actions unavoidably gave them access to a numerous audience and made them noted.

The actions had included curiosity. I could illustrate all this with the example of your activity in Zagreb if that will not make my reply too long. At the time, in November last year, two days before the show that you were a part of, you told me that if I saw something unusual in Zagreb, it would be one of your works. When the show opened, I went to see it. Photographs of your installations in Zagreb were displayed at the entrance. One day when your show was about to close I took a detour into a neighboring street on my way to the post office and I saw your installation "The Poet Is Such a Tiny Creature". This tiny poet leaning on a drainpipe of a house seemed as hallowed, even though he was standing on a pavement, as the poetry that enjoys a Parnassus kind of protection in the ordinary world. I then changed the route that I normally take to work: instead of passing by the park, I took the ugliest part of the Petrinjska Street where your Poet was. I wanted to see how long he would survive. You left him in a part of town where armies of resigned passers-by destroy everything they can get hold of. At one point your Poet was lying on the pavement, but I never saw him there because someone put him back up. The nylon that used to fasten him to the drainpipe no longer held, but he was still leaning against the wall, spreading his simple message of universality and dedication. The Poet survived on the street until the heavy rain season was announced. You will be surprised to find out that he still lives until this day at my bookstore. I brought him in, wet from the first rains. Vlado Martek stopped by one afternoon and noticed your work right away. He inquired whose it was and I told him it was yours. Martek then proceeded to tell me what happened to your other piece. My guess is that it happened in December. Martek received a call from the Croatian conceptual artist Goran Tribuljak, who wanted to inform him that he had picked up one of his pieces from the street because he liked it. Martek told him it was not his. He never knew whose work Tribuljak picked up before he saw your Poet at my bookstore. Goran Tribuljak and I would not be enough of a reason for me to tell you that things have not gotten any easier or harder in the artists' contacts with people in the street in comparison with the 1970s. I would like to offer you two email messages I received after Helmut

received after Helmut Fenzl and Janka Vukmir saw your Poet at my bookstore after having previously seen him in the street as an illustration of my claims. How many other unknown persons have seen it? A hundred? Two hundred? We can only guess. I trust it is enough to feed your hunger. I am sorry that you only heard out about it now. Let me sum up, including your question about Facebook. There is no nothingness in art unless it had been the author's intent to jump into nothingness.

H.C.

I gathered from your book that you spent some time away from Croatia (then Yugoslavia) in the Netherlands. I also found some documents from Provo at your place. I wonder when you went there, what is the origin of your interest, and have I guessed correctly that the two things are related?



I.B.V.

In early 1960s, when I was in college, Yugoslavia was opening its borders and giving out passports to its citizens. True, you always had to have some sort of an explanation to get one. It was then that I was given my first passport to go to a trip to Great Britain. I was given instructions to report to the police upon my return and tell them everything I saw, heard of read about the Yugoslavian political emigration there. After my first trip I reported to the police. They realized that I was going to be of no use to them and they never asked me to report to them again. I spent three months working at an Evesham factory that needed seasonal workers for two consecutive years, thus earning enough to finance my continued stay in England and my trip around Europe. For the first time in my life I met the poor from the capitalism that we from the Eastern Block dreamed about. I saw how unequal women and men were in terms of compensation for their work. For the first time in my life I lived in a multiethnic community composed of students from the entire continent, even from as far as Australia, who had come to Evesham to earn some money. I met students at hostels who attacked the system I was living in, comparing the League of Communists and Tito to western monarchies. It seemed as if 1968 had already started to

take form. At the end of the 1960s I took my first trip to the Netherlands, a country that offers so many liberties that you can get drunk on them if you do not keep a cool head. At the time the citizens carried no documents with them. They also demanded a higher degree of participation and acknowledgement of their needs. During one of my stays in Amsterdam I participated in an action organized by an anarchist organization to rescue a town district. They were inviting passers-by to join them. After handymen cut the high iron fence with strong pliers, a great mass of people burst into the lawn and the abandoned buildings. It all started with a speech and then people sang and sold drinks and souvenirs to help finance such actions. I kept a matchbox with the action's label for years. If it had been successful, the building that was dubbed the ugliest building in Amsterdam right after it was built would not have been built in immediate vicinity. Provo, which you asked me about, was sold at small second-hand bookstores, almost a hundred of them. This movement was covered in monographs for the past 20 years. Provo stopped coming out in 1967, but it was replaced by Aloha, which criticized the bourgeoisie and affirmed the pop culture. You had too little time to look around or you would have noticed it at my place. An issue or two can still be found at second-hand bookstores. Each time I bought one the owner asked me if I knew what I was buying. One time I was having a drink in Zagreb with the Dutch-Croatian author Lela Zeckovic. She was with Ms. Marjorlein, whom I later visited in Amsterdam. There was one occasion when I was supposed to help move things from one of her downstairs rooms somewhere else because she was having some construction work done there, but I arrived too late. When I told Lela about Aloha, she told me that its office had been located in the room I was supposed to help clear out at Marjorlein's home and that Marjorlein had been a member of its editorial board, which I confirmed by checking the imprint. There is continuity. Or one occasion Marjorlein gave me a rare revolutionary book from the Spanish Civil War. I rarely come to Amsterdam without visiting the anarchist bookstore with an intentional line-up. My defect is an enthusiasm for a utopia of equality. Amsterdam is the town where I spent most of my life, not counting Zagreb, although not continuously. Dependent on my mother tongue, I had to stay here and share the fate of my fellow citizens, sometimes feeling like a stranger at my own home.

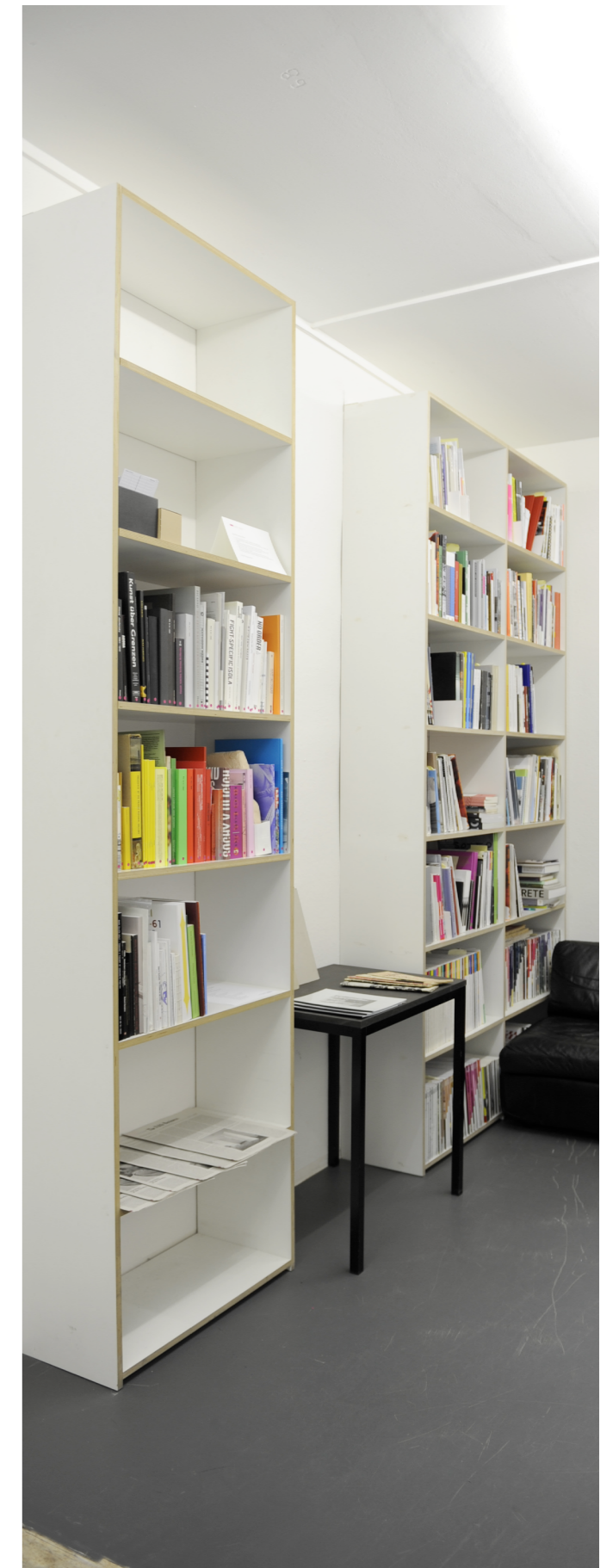
H.C.

I am currently reading your book and I get the feeling that being a booklover and a person who deals with literature as a sort of a junction box puts you in a special place as a writer. If my guess is right, I wonder if the characters in the book are real or are the people you are writing to imaginary.

B.V.

A person can be a booklover even if books are not their profession. My very education included reading. Even though I read two to three books a week until recently, I feel that I have missed things and that one life is too short for me. Regardless of all your compliments, I feel that there are gaps in my knowledge that can be avoided if one specializes for a period, a topic, or a person. I am powerless when it comes to this because I would colloquially say I am not a bookworm. My book is my truth, including one dream, which is also true. The persons I write about are real, but their names have been changed. I felt the need to speak to some people who are no longer with us too. I started writing the letters by hand at a time when my place had been broken into and my computer was stolen. I received the replies by telephone. Write. I am waiting for your letters. The same replies arrived from Amsterdam and from Trieste. I considered the book as a joint venture, but there were no written replies to my letters. On one occasion a friend of mine, a painter whom I sent some of the letters to Amsterdam, showed me a bundle that had the words – HANDLE WITH CARE – IMPORTANT written on it. It was a bundle of my letters.

The editor of my book, Ms. Jelena Hekman, did much of the work. The letters as Jelena Hekman classified them are categorized by libraries as an epistolary novel. They were written to persons who are close to me in terms of profession: a painter, writers, and a university literature teacher.



View of Rosa's Public Library. Publications and art books from the artists of the show, Provo's Journals (generously sent by Ivan Berislav Vodopija) and OEI publications available during the period of the exhibition.

i would like to thank all the artists of the show, José Miranda Justo, Ivan Berislav Vodopija, Tobi Maier , Mark Kremer, Maria, Isabel Simões, Isabel Carlos, CAM - Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation PT, Christoph Meier and Gallery Kamm (Joanna, Tien, Aude and Maria).