

Kasia,

Remember when we talked about arrogance, and you said that the virtues of arrogance could be achieved and exercised without actually being arrogant?

I can't remember how we went from there to the topic of Moyra Davey, but I think I tried (polemically) to make the point that Moyra enacted virtuosity in a way similar to what you talked about regarding arrogance, somehow utilizing its capacity without producing its effect.

I'm at a point in my research where I'm basically comparing Moyra's way of (anti)inhabiting the artist's role, to how, in the first *Alien* movie, Sigourney Weaver as Ripley inhabits the (up till that point very male-dominated) role of the Space-Joe/protagonist. Ripley is a manifestation of Freudian male trauma (male fear of penetration, misunderstanding of pregnancy, blah blah) subverted into this domesticized maternal figure/architecture/plot. (Critic Barbara Creed even talks about the movie as a series of shape-shifting representations of what she refers to as "The monstrous-feminine as archaic mother" ...!)

In Moyra's *Fifty Minutes*, when she is in the bedroom, entangled in the family: interrupted by the husband, by the son, the dog walks into the shot. To me, this is the iconic scene in *Alien*: Ripley, casual in her cotton panties in the belly of the spaceship entangled in wires and armature. Unceremoniously working the mechanism, running the ship, but resisting the bad trip of "Captianness", the formal bullshit of the uniform. On this ship Moyra/Ripley runs business from her bedroom cockpit, resisting that the interpolative mechanisms of the genre run her, so to speak. This "in-bed" casualness, as strategy, is the evolution of the artistic process at its climax: right before the sad point where it is churned into the artwork. Serra right before he turns into steel (really bad comparison, but you know what I mean).

I keep thinking of "the artwork" as the representation of absence: absence of the artist, and the role of the artist as one who always works towards replacing her/himself with a virtuoso-type gesture which is to make a sublime account for the artist's intentions and (lost) presence.

Moyra resists this virtuoso ritual; she subverts the virtuoso maneuver and is (in the etymological origin of virtuoso as connoting manliness) exactly anti-manliness. Moyra resists the execution of virtuoso representation. Rather, Moyra is presence: she is an infrastructure of simultaneous affection and investigation. Symbiotically both surrounded by and surrounding her subject matter, now finding deep, intimate, diaristic confidentiality in it, yet nesting it, contextualizing it. She makes no

effort though to export this into the artistic gesture => to accumulate these functions in order to turn them into /towards a virtuous (potent) gesture. Moyra keeps it domestic, never sends anything off, never sets anything forth, rather we appear to “find her” in her (seemingly) civilian state in the domestic midst of her own chronology.

*Fifty Minutes*, just as one example, is (formally) a piece just like any other piece, yet it exist and achieves its function/meaning/status, without submitting to the virtuoso means. All this is terribly problematic, especially comparing Moyra Davey to a maternal monstrosity, and I really have no interest in employing this kind of gendered rhetorics, but until I get it calibrated, it is really meant as a very big compliment as she has modeled an exact alternative to the conventions around virtuosity, which I still think is hugely influential/problematic to artistic processing.

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An economic conception of the natural image founds the artificial image, and the economic conception of the artificial image in turn founds temporal power.

Marie Jose Mondzain

The three works that comprise "A.U.T.O. E.N.U.C.L.E.A.T.I.O.N." have each never been presented publicly yet they span almost ten years, marking two points: one at the beginning and one at the current moment in Rasmus Røhling's artistic production. *Male goes down on phantom* (2006) and [untitled] (2015) (the two video works) as well as an untitled sculpture produced on-site at Sismógrafo belie a longstanding preoccupation with conventions of presentation, reception, and interpretation of contemporary art and images, during which the artist has and continues to confront the modernist tropes which still haunt each respective activity.

Given the discursive and almost essayistic quality of the works in this exhibition and Rasmus' work in general—inclusive of the press release, a letter he wrote to a fellow emerging artist and mutual interlocutor, Kasia Fudakowski, reprinted here, as part of the present constellation—I am reluctant to go further than this, which would risk adding yet another layer of interpretative material into what few would dispute is an already complex and difficult set of ideas and speculative, “autofictive” arguments.

But one thing I wanted to expand upon, is that within each video loop of [untitled] (2015), Rasmus elevates the quotation above to mantra-status by repeating it five times. This phrase from Mondzain is excerpted from her book *Image, Icon, Economy* (2005). In it, she dedicates an entire chapter to “A

Semantic Study of the Term Economy” as she assigns the word a specific meaning in order to set various, dichotomous ideas within a larger plane of relative negotiation. Following this, Rasmus refers to “economy” as “the membrane” that holds various, irreconcilable ideas together; Mondzain would say that economy is the operator of functional reconciliation (vs. ratification) between, for instance, truth and reality.

During our discussions leading up to this exhibition, on more than one occasion Rasmus referred me back to the origin of the title of what is arguably Auguste Rodin’s most infamous work. As Rasmus recounted, during the initial stages of *The Gates of Hell*, a set of bronze doors began in 1880 and continued until his death, Rodin agreed to an interview with a British reporter. When the reporter arrives in his studio, the artist is in the midst of work on a figure to be placed in the center of the relief directly above the doors; it is a male sitting on a rock with his chin resting on one hand. Rodin conducts the interview in English as the reporter cannot speak French. This is an important detail as at some point, the interviewer asks Rodin a general question about Rodin’s perspective on sculpture’s role within these times of modern art. Rodin, apparently still working on his slouching male figure, supposedly looks up only to answer enigmatically, “sculpture is the image of the finger” (referring obliquely to finger prints he left visible in his final cast works).

The reporter, however, mishears Rodin’s heavy French accent and the following day, the British newspaper prints a considerable Rodin feature article with the headline: French Sculptor Auguste Rodin Working on New Masterpiece: The Thinker. Likely due to the volume of attention that the article attracted, Rodin gets wind of the headline and decides not only to embrace the accidental titling of his work-in-progress, he also separates the sculpture from the intricate composition of the *Gates of Hell*, enlarging it to just beyond human scale.

The two points Rasmus tries to make with this story, is that this minor misinterpretation and Rodin’s subsequent “fairly trivial marketing decisions around formatting” has had immense ripple effects in our understanding of Rodin as one of the great modernist sculptors. The sculpture, named by chance, has become an allegory of thinking yet it was never intended to depict such an ambitious and abstract phenomenon! In Rasmus’ own words, “this signification landed, so to speak, quite accidentally onto his crouching lump of muscles.” And secondly, according to Rasmus, although his act of leaving trace evidence of the sculptures’ process in the finished products is canonized as one of the “passages into modern sculpture,” this was a happenstance result of the fact that Rodin’s *fingers*, when working on the original, just weren’t able to sculpt in such great detail when working a relatively small scale for his *Gates of Hell*.

One symptom of working with an artist prone to autofiction, is that even when you recognize you're being "taken" while it's happening, in retrospect, the facts and fiction mingle and stick to each other in unsegregated parts of the brain. So when Rasmus later asks casually if I remember how "*The Thinker*"

got its title, my immediate reaction is to think that I have the answer. But like anything with Rasmus, it's never a simple dichotomy within his economy of art objects, discourse, and gestures. As Marcel Broodthaers would say (with a slight echo in Mondzain), "a fiction allows us to grasp reality and at the same time what it hides."

Amy Zion

Rasmus Røhling (b. Denmark, 1982) is an artist whose work challenges art's status as being epistemologically unnameable and how this potentially affects artistic methodology. Recent exhibitions include: *Speaking Backwards*, SixtyEight Gallery, Cph. (2015), *Macho Man*, *Tell It To My Heart*, Artist Space, NY (2013), *Rage and Patience*, HumanResources, LA (2013), *Elephants*, YEARS, Cph. (2013), *Tell It To My Heart*, *Collected by Julie Ault*, Museum Für Gegenwartskunst, Basel (2013), *The Congress* DOCUMENTA (13). Kassel (2012). Røhling holds an MFA from California Institute of the Arts (2010) and a BFA from Jutland Art Academy, DK.

Amy Zion is Assistant Curator of the Danish Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale as well as "Slip of the Tongue", a group exhibition curated by Danh Vo at Punta della dogana, Venice, Italy. She is co-founder and director of 1747812 Alberta Ltd., a collecting institution in Edmonton, Canada. Since 2007, she has worked as an Editor at Phillip, a bi-annual art magazine published out of Vancouver, Canada.

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