

CENTER for EXPERIMENTAL LECTURES

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<http://experimentallecures.org>

I want to lick this animal skin that falls, well cut, from your round shoulder

by Anthony Elms

I've got to apologize to everybody first. I tried to get out of giving this talk because I knew I didn't really have time to prepare a super prepared talk, but I got somehow wrapped into this. And so what you're going to get—I usually rehearse my lectures, and I don't know how long this is going to take—but basically it's a notebook dump of all the notes to—I've been recently hired by the ICA, Institute of Contemporary Art Philadelphia, and I have to work on my first show, and this is my collection of images and quotes that I am trying to figure out what it's going to be. Chances are none of the images you see will actually be in the show, but they're the things that I've been putting in folders and keeping around just to try to figure out where it's going. So, it's an ongoing thing.

Roland Barthes: Gossip reduces the other to *he/she*, and this reduction is intolerable to me. For me the other is neither *he* nor *she*; the other has only a name of his own, and her own name. The third-person pronoun is a wicked pronoun: it is the pronoun of the non-person, it absents, it annuls.

This slide is dedicated to Nick Wylie:



I'll start with the first paragraph, which is a long paragraph from Hilton Als' The Women:

Until the end my mother never discussed her way of being. She avoided explaining the impetus behind her emigration from Barbados to Manhattan. She avoided explaining that she had not been motivated by the same desire for personal gain and opportunity that drove most female immigrants. She avoided recounting the fact that she had emigrated to America to follow the man who eventually became my father, and whom she had known in his previous incarnation as her first and only husband's closest friend. She avoided explaining how she had left her husband—by whom she had two daughters—after he returned to Barbados from England and the Second World War addicted to morphine. She was silent about the fact that, having married once, she refused to marry again. She avoided explaining that my father, who had grown up relatively rich in Barbados and whom she had known as a child, remained a child and emigrated to America with his mother and his two sisters—women whose home he had never left. She never mentioned that she had been attracted to my father's beauty and wealth partially because those were two things she would never know. She never discussed how she had visited my father in his room at night, and afterward crept down the stairs stealthily to return to her own home and her six children, four of them produced by her union with my father, who remained a child. She never explained that my father never went to her; she went to him. She avoided explaining that my father, like most children, and like most men, resented his children—four girls, two boys—for not growing up quickly enough so that they would leave home and take his responsibility away with them. She avoided recounting how my father—because he was a child—tried to distance himself from his children and his resentment of them with derisive humor, teasing them to the point of

cruelty; she also avoided recounting how her children, in order to shield themselves against the spittle of his derisive humor, absented themselves in his presence and, eventually, in the presence of any form of entertainment deliberately aimed at provoking laughter. She avoided explaining that in response to this resentment, my father also vaunted his beauty and wealth over his children, as qualities they could never share. She was silent about the mysterious bond she and my father shared, a bond so deep and volatile that their children felt forever diminished by their love, and compelled to disrupt, disapprove, avoid, or try to become a part of the love shared between any couple (specifically men and women) since part of our birthright has been to remain children, not unlike our father. She avoided mentioning the fact that my father had other women, other families, in cities such as Miami and Boston, cities my father roamed like a bewildered child. She was silent about the fact that my father's mother and sisters told her about the other women and children my father had, probably as a test to see how much my mother could stand to hear about my father, whom his mother and sisters felt only they could understand and love, which is one reason my mother remained a child. My mother avoided mentioning the fact that her mother, in Barbados, had had a child with a man other than my mother's father, and that man had been beautiful and relatively rich. She avoided explaining how her mother had thought her association with that relatively rich and beautiful man would make her beautiful and rich also. She avoided explaining how, after that had not happened for her mother, her mother became bitter about this and other things for the rest of her very long life. She avoided contradicting her mother when she said things like "Don't play in the sun. You are black enough," which is what my grandmother said to me once. She avoided explaining that she had wanted to be different from her mother. She avoided explaining that she created a position of power for herself in this common world by being a mother to children, and childlike men alike, as she attempted to separate from her parents and siblings by being "nice," an attitude they could never understand, since they weren't. She avoided recounting her memories of her family's cruelty, one instance of their cruelty being: my mother's family sitting in a chartered bus as it rained outside on a family picnic; my mother, alone, in the rain, cleaning up the family picnic as my mother's aunt said, in her thick Bajun accent: "Marie is one of God's own," and the bus rocking with derisive laughter as my heart broke, in silence. She avoided mentioning that she saw and understood where my fascination with certain aspects of her narrative—her emigration, her love, her kindness—would take me, a boy of seven, or eight, or ten: to the dark crawl space behind her closet, where I put on her hosiery one leg at a time, my heart racing, and, over those hose, my jeans and sneakers, so that I could have her—what I so admired and coveted, near me, always.

How does it feel when one of his texts is going round in my head? How do I live with that text? Just now I spoke of a suspicious, even dirty relationship. And there is, after all, something clean in conceptual thinking: a certain vigor, rigor, coherence, and totality. Even if conceptual thought trembles, it still aims at a withdrawal of the body. Generally speaking, such thought carries out an act of abstraction so that the whole thing forms a straightforward object, nice, clean, outside my body. If, on the other hand, my body and his body enter into it, then I'm dealing with an object that leaks away on every side, that falls to pieces. From the viewpoint of scientific rigor (since I'm also, in certain aspects of my education and character, a scientist), this object will seem deplorable. In one sense, indeed, I almost miss this lost world of concepts, cleanliness, virtue. And perhaps this transition, which I made at the age of thirty or thirty-five, from the scientific to the literary worlds, was precisely a final loss of confidence in the virtue and in the possibility of creating a work that would be straightforward, closed, clean and tidy.

That's a quote from Alain Robbe-Grillet, Why I Love Roland Barthes.

Diedrich Diederichsen

“Radicalism as Ego Ideal: Oedipus and Narcissus”

While repression was previously structured patriarchally, along the lines of the Oedipal complex, it is organized today around the complex of narcissism. In both of these cases, the people affected did not have any choice. But how is one to interact with the social parameters of one’s own psychology—identify with, ignore, or thematize them? Is radicalism actually nothing but a nostalgic and anachronistic gesture from Oedipal times?

First thought: Inefficiency

Narcissus can never look like his reflection. There is always a gap. The gap keeps the attention of Narcissus’ reflection and forces Narcissus to be in the moment staring at his reflection, if never quite certain if he is actually of that moment.



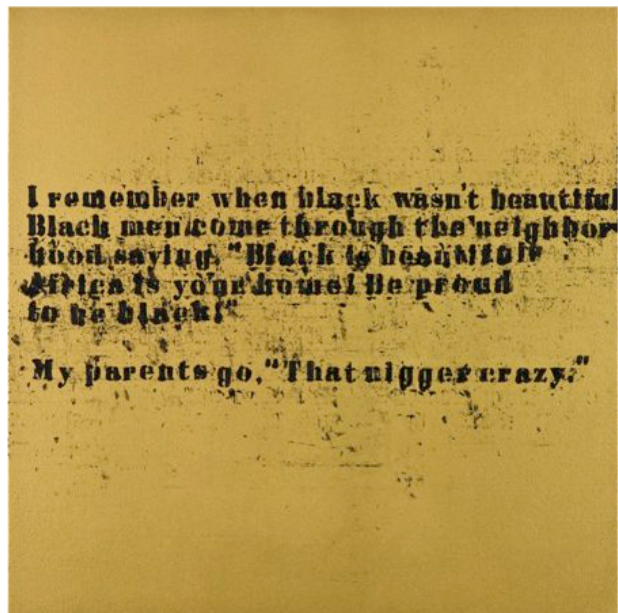
All of my thoughts on this topic basically started from the following quote I read sometime in high school from J.G. Ballard from a text called Project for a Glossary of the Twentieth Century:

Fashion: A recognition that nature has endowed us with one skin too few, and that a fully sentient being should wear its nervous system externally.



Paulina Olowska

Surface = I engage with unawares.
 Reaction. Engagement. Stimulus.
 Jeans, torn t-shirts, sweaters, skirt length, etc.

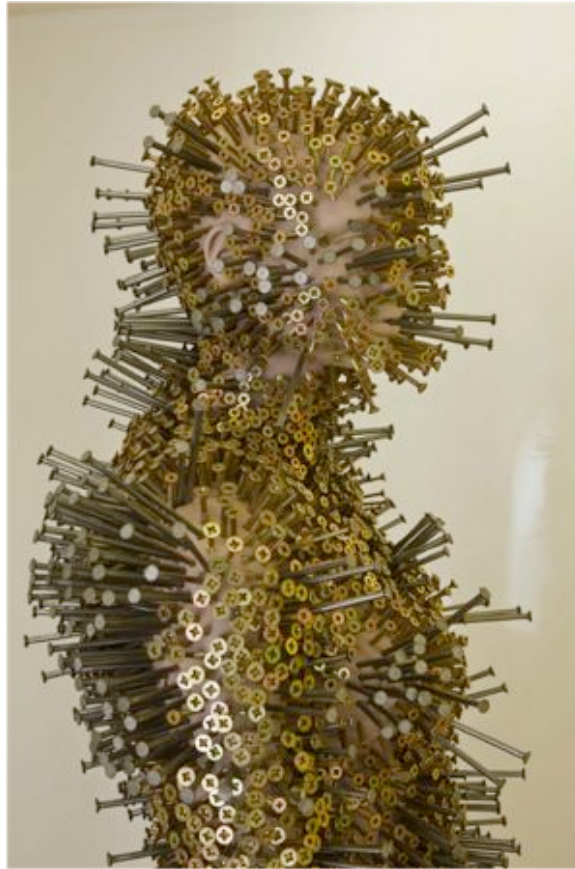


Glenn Ligon

Wayne Koestenbaum in his forward to A Lovers Discourse by Roland Barthes:

Banish the message. Preserve the exaltation that surrounds it. Investigate the perfume that the message leaves behind.

And understand this behind is actually sort of a form of in-advance, if you think of a perfume and the way that the ambiance approaches you before you actually get to it, so that behind is actually a forward, a sort of ascendancy.



Thomas Hirschorn

Further on in the essay:

Barthes divided visuality's kingdom into the obvious meaning and the obtuse meaning: the former tyrannized, while the latter tantalized. The obtuse meaning, soliciting the viewer's passionate attention, seemed, on the surface, trivial—a mere crease, a speck, a trace of lipstick traveling too far outside the outline of the lip. The obtuse meaning—“obtuse” is a term of praise for Barthes—gratified Barthes because it carried no allegory, no symbolism, no ideology. It unprogrammatically titillated.

Not to be confused with saying that the obvious meaning does not exist or trouble, nor that the obvious meaning does not lean heavily and exert upon the potential and reach of an obtuse meaning. But need to remember that sentient, if we think that a fully sentient being carries its nervous system on the outside, a sentient being is capable of responding emotionally rather than intellectually.



Michael Pitt for Yve Saint Laurent, Fall 2009, viewable at <http://vimeo.com/36671718>

I've watched that a few times and I'm fascinated that the language seems to go from the person to the clothing, from the clothing to the person, from the clothing to clothing, and then from person to person, so it's not a clear one to one direct address, but, that said, it's still an ad that would never appear on American TV...Only French, it's a French thing...



Rudi Gernreich

Artist and curator Peter Weibel from an interview:

Whereas we reproach today's art as a mere academic discipline, back then in the sixties it was about breaking up social conditions and codes. Someone like Rudi Gernreich was working completely along these lines.

He broke with certain conventions—how one acts fashionably, how one constructs gender through clothing. Our archenemy of all of us was the construction of reality by the state. Everything that contributed to destroying this division of reality—be it through language or be it through the state—was agreeable to us.

And he made a lot of unisex clothing like these mono-kinis, that were meant for men and for women. And then, he designed all the costumes for *Space 1999*.



Rudi Gernreich



Rudi Gernreich

So, think of that—might exclusion, of one from the other, not be bad?



John Miller

Second thought:

Liam Gillick:

It is important to find another way of looking at the question of site-specificity, which is a bogus construction in a contemporary context. If you start thinking in terms of applied art you might actually be able to redefine space.



Jutta Koether

Such as window shopping, or cruising, or maybe gazing at someone that you have an attraction to.



Matthew Brannon

Maybe you could locate spatial encounters as starting points for recognizing class, ornamental distraction, material fact, consensual joint, or a pressure point. Wear your nervous system on the outside. This creates obviously a statement against a nature/culture divide. So what you need, if you think about wearing your nervous system on the outside through clothing, is to rehabilitate a notion of surface and image with maybe only a hint of Baudrillard and sans any specious and tired spectacle critique. Why get rid of the spectacle here?



Matthew Brannon

Well, Jean-Luc Nancy:

The Situationist critique continued to refer essentially to something like an internal truth (designated, for example, by the name “desire” or “imagination”), the whole concept of which is that of a subjective appropriation of “true life,” itself thought of as origin proper, as a self-deployment and a self-satisfaction. In this, Situationism demonstrates the nearly constant characteristic of the modern critique of exteriority, appearance, and social alienation.



Karen Kilimnik

Victor Burgin in an essay “Perverse Space” writes:

In the human animal, what might once have been instinct now lives only in a shifting networks of symbolic forms, from social laws to image systems: those we inhabit in our increasingly “media-intensive” environment, and those that inhabit us—in our memories, fantasies, or unconscious formations.



Or, by a sort of example, Klaus Jünschke, who was a member of the first generation Baader-Meinhof group in Germany, when interviewed in prison about his time in the Baader-Meinhof terrorist organization wrote:

Well, you join the urban guerrilla and then you find yourself hopping from city to city spending a month fixing up an apartment, and there’s always shopping to be done, new furniture, new clothes, food, things are needed. Shopping’s ninety-nine per cent of what goes on.



Bernadette Corporation

J.G. Ballard from The Atrocity Exhibition:

How do we make sense of this ceaseless flow of advertising and publicity, news and entertainment, where presidential campaigns and moon voyages are presented in terms indistinguishable from the launch of a new candy bar or deodorant? What actually happens on the level of our unconscious minds when, within minutes on the same TV screen, a prime minister is assassinated, an actress makes love, an injured child is carried from a car crash? Faced with these charged events, prepackaged emotions already in place, we can only stitch together a set of emergency scenarios, just as our sleeping minds extemporize a narrative from the unrelated memories that veer through the cortical night. In the waking dream that now constitutes everyday reality, images of a blood-spattered widow, the chromium trim of a limousine windshield, the stylized glamour of a motorcade, fuse together to provide a secondary narrative with different meanings.

In other words, a space which is not real vs. fantasy, because one is always draped by the other.



Have people heard of TV Party??

Alright—TV Party was started by Glenn O'Brien, who had been the first editor of Andy Warhol's *Interview* in the early seventies, and it premiered in December, 1978, it was a cable access TV show that featured downtown music artists from New York, visual artists such as Jean Basquiat right here—that's Glenn O'Brien, and it was sort of a variety based on a loose talk show with host, but they would also allow people to call in and request songs or request comments, and so there's a back and forth that happened that was always an unscripted affair between lots of people.



Glenn O'Brien wrote a TV Party manifesto:

TV PARTY runs and RE-RUNS on a platform that begins with personal relationships, personalities conspiring for fun. We take it from there. THE PARTY serves as an accelerator and co-ordinator of interpersonal relationships, and as a model for larger social and political networks based on positive social interaction, i.e. FUN.



SOCIALISM begins with GOING OUT EVERY NIGHT.

And going out is a space that is not real versus fantasy.



Wardwell Milan

Again, a paragraph from Hilton Als' *The Women*:

She was beautiful. She had long legs and a long neck and a keen intelligence. She had black shoulder-length hair that she wore in a chignon. She always wore straight skirts and cardigans and flats. She was adored by many men; she was not ambivalent about their adoration. About them she said 'Who says people don't love objects?' She had many lovers, which prompted one sister to say about her later, 'She's nasty...Like a dog.' Her physicality and sartorial sense was a style—my first brush with that powerful conundrum, style.

Victor Burgin, again from "Perverse Space":

There can be no objectification without identification.



Bernadette Corporation



Erin Leland

For example, Marcel Proust from The Guermantes Way:

Ahead of me there was simply a gentleman in evening dress walking away from me; but around him, as if I were playing with a clumsy reflector which I was unable to focus accurately upon him, I projected the idea that he was the Prince de Saxe on his way to join the Duchesse de Guermantes. And although he was alone, this idea, external to him, impalpable, immense, and as unsteady as a searchlight, seemed to go before him as a guide, like the deity who stands before the Greek warriors in battle but is invisible to others.



Silvia Kolbowski

Illusion = image = surface = Semblance = phantom.

Phantom implies something beyond the surface. Or maybe, a surface that projects an image or a presence beyond what can be held or touched or manufactured in its substance. Because of this I'm sort of I'm obsessed with hauntings.



Wardell Milan

Knock-offs, floor models. Can't walk away from products or capital to become a free loving natural self. We're stuck in these cut-outs. Those who rail against the spectacle, I think, are the only ones whose desire is actually deluded by the spectacle. But in this question how not to place the spectacle either in light and also not treat the spectacle in a reactionary negative manner. How to find an ambivalence, and how do we say this.

Thought Number 3:



Helmut Newton

A bind. A photographer. A blonde. A camera. A co-conspirator. A magazine. A sexuality. A mirror. A stage. A door. A body. A body. A body. A body. Another moment in the media's love for a genetically supreme flesh. For all the above any space will do. It's just behavior. Because it is the encounter that will change any space that it happens in.

Jean-Luc Nancy:

Someone enters a room; before being the eventual subject of a representation of this room, he disposes himself in it and to it. In crossing through it, living in it, visiting it, and so forth, he thereby exposes the disposition—the correlation, combination, contact, distance, relation—of all that is (in) the room and, therefore, of the room itself. When he enters the room he exposes the simultaneity in which he himself participates at the instant, the simultaneity in which he exposes himself just as much as he exposes the room and as much as he exposes everything that happens in the room.

So revisiting this photograph—it's one of the first things that started my mind thinking about fashion. Because, it is a fashion image, the title of this image from Helmut Newton is called "Self Portrait with wife June and model, Vogue office, Paris, 1981." Shot for *Vogue*, published in *Vogue*, there's no clothes, nothing's for sale, but it's considered a fashion image. So thinking about that, what can fashion be?

Victor Burgin, once again, from "Perverse Space":

Nowhere in particular. In the space of events in which this vignette is situated nothing is fixed, everything is mobile, there is no particular aim; it is a perverse space.

This is the photograph that Burgin's complete essay is about. And in this image, on one level it's simple, except that there's a model that we never really see, actually we can't see her reflection but we only see her legs, they're reflected in the mirror which is actually reflecting everything which means we are only seeing her reflection. There's the backdrop, he's actually standing on the photo backdrop where the model's standing but he's behind it and the mirror's placed in front. His wife sits here and then we've got the open door into the Paris street behind them, which is captured in the background, and the whole focus seems to be on the hips.

Makes me think of the quote from the video: *Get cinched with a button. / You pleat and you pinch.*

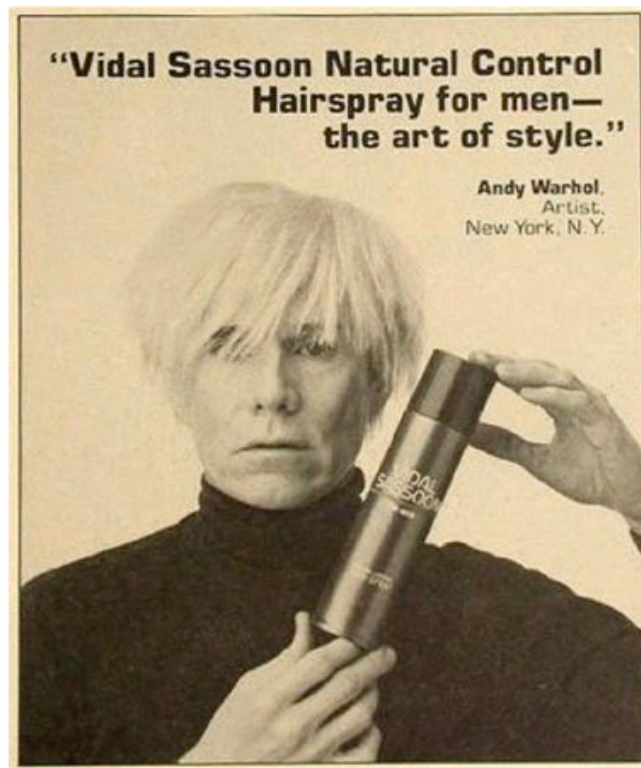
Thought number 4:

(which is kind of related to Thought Number 2)

**There's a brand new dance
but I don't know its name
That people from bad homes
do again and again
It's big and it's bland
full of tension and fear
They do it over there but we don't do it here**

It comes back to the title, *I want to lick this animal skin that falls, well cut, from your well rounded shoulder.*

We need to always speak relative to another surface, and to keep together in the action, keep together as a duration.



When you go out for the night you want to get together, you get dressed, you get ready.



Miguel Gutierrez

Oscar Wilde:

What people call insincerity is simply a method by which we multiply our personalities.



General Idea

Diedrich Diederichsen:

Secondariness, the non-authentic, is the actual destination we want. Rather than rejecting through parody or appropriation, the horizon of this strategy, the secondary, is to arrive at a new condition—one that is derived neither from an apparent Nature nor from the norms and systems of laws associated with a nature.

A Secondariness. Like a garment draped over your desire. The surface that reflects also accurately.

**There's a brand new talk,
but it's not very clear
That people from good homes
are talking this year
It's loud and tasteless
and I've heard it before
You shout it while you're dancing
on the whole dance floor**

Glenn O'Brien, writing on Guy Fawkes Day from this year, November 5, 2011:

I would argue that the masks of Occupy Wall Street, whether Venetian, Yoruba, Time Warner or gas-proof, constitute a legitimate masquerade party and actual theater. Masquerade is a party, and Occupy Wall Street is a party.



John Miller

Masquerade is the intersection of life and theater, and that is where effective political action can arise—where the terms of discussion are not limited by the usual restraining formats and castrated means of reality, but where it can take on the revelatory power of theater and the magic of ritual.



Zoe Leonard

Thought 5:

Do not confuse window dressings with theories. And do not confuse the need for pleats and folds as a need for a new theory. Just think about what time it is.



Lygia Clark

Jean-Luc Nancy:

“Together” means simultaneity, “at the same time.” Being together is being at the same time (and in the same place, which is itself the determination of “time” and the creation of what we understand as “contemporary time.”)

Time for Waste. Time for nonsense.

Time to move beyond Permission.

Time to move beyond social definitions, and time to go out into the cold with the nervous system buckled, tied, zipped.



John Miller

Sociologist Avery F. Gordon, channeling Walter Benjamin, writes that

Sensuous knowledge is commanding: it spirals you out of your bounds, it can hollow out, with an x-ray vision, the seemingly innocuous artifacts of the master (when you encounter them.)

So repurpose the labels when you're hollowed. However, some labels always belie a lack of imagination.



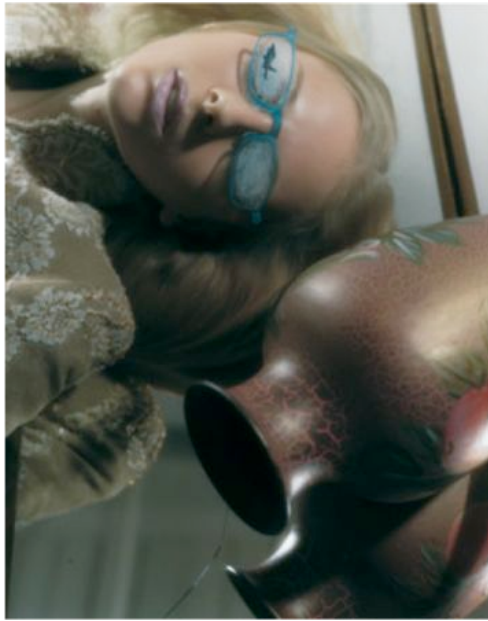
Certainly ask why the money, but filth doesn't bankrupt touch.



Zoe Leonard

Without suspicion. Possibly with a little unease. The importance of a connection that is fragile, and that is like a string of saliva trailing from leather to tongue. Or from ear to bodily movement if that's more your fix. Something that cannot be designed but only felt between two or more surfaces given proximity in design and choice, which isn't the same as being designed. Distances that need encroachment, because we are not always an us.

I foil your length, / I line your silk crepe, / I balance your rigid, / And I gather your tint.



Bernadette Corporation

Jean-Luc Nancy:

From one singular to another, there is contiguity but not continuity. There is proximity, but only to the extent that extreme closeness emphasizes the distancing it opens up. All of being is being in touch with all of being, but the law of touching is always separation; moreover, the law of touching is the heterogeneity of surfaces that need to touch each other.



Michael Borremans

When I know I want, but not how to undertake, or what I know I want but could leave it behind or advance, similar to a perfume.

Knowing that feeling disrupts, and attempting to know is a location of duration and that it gathers at the seams.

Thought 6:

All this resistance to what exactly?



Winter whites.

In other words, morals, gravel underfoot. The conventional. What you're told you should wear and can't wear. How the situation is imagined and how it's expected by the rules. The fact of putting anything out of mind.

So against winter whites, except in absurdity, or as a desire to do what you project.



Terence Koh



John McCracken

To think in terms of a surface that is not shallow and does not obscure depth. A surface that looks exactly what it looks like on its surface, but minus a notion of truth to materials, because the material can't be felt in terms of what it does. A material that broadcasts instead. Maybe even a material that has a secondary broadcast because it only reflects.



Think of it again:

Ahead of me there was simply a gentleman in evening dress walking away from me; but around him, as if I were playing with a clumsy reflector which I was unable to focus accurately upon him, I projected the idea that he was the Prince de Saxe on his way to join the Duchesse de Guermantes." This phantom image.



Melina Ausikaitis

Or even again, Victor Burgin, from “Perverse Space,” yet again:

There is no objectification without identification.



Karen Kilimnik

To want it, repel it, to do not see it, rip it, lick it, deface it. This always happens at a surface. But without a change of surface projection from the person who enacts it. It might be a change in material state but it's not a change in the surface and the surface attraction.



My Barbarian

Nancy again:

Insofar as the relation is imagined, and because the relation as such is nothing other than its representation as a relation and as an image, the symbolic is real in such a relation. But by no means, however, is it a relation to the representation of something that is real (in the secondary, mimetic sense of representation—of representing something else), but the relation is, and nothing other than, what is actually real at that moment—in its effectiveness and its efficacy. (The paradigm for this thought is the phrase “I love you” or, perhaps, the originary, “I am addressing myself to you.”)

Both actions that don't happen in fact in representation but only happen between.



Helio Oiticica

So, Politics and the social. Words without meanings unless they're listed in specific locations. So for example, 1968 Brazil. They don't have realities. They can have nothing beyond their own representation. They can't exist until they're represented. They are only formed by a person who feels them, or between two people who can share them. They're not materialized in a material, they're only reflected and become geometries by stitching together of those surfaces between the two people to become either the political or the social.



Or we could just think, as painter Merlin Carpenter said while speaking about the Yves Saint Laurent designs by Stefano Pilati:

For a moment, it looks beautiful, artificial, abstract and conceptual, all at the same time, but it's actually it's not, it's only built up through layers.





Academy Records

These layers might seem limited, but it's actually quite interesting. Because you can still trace back in it the ideas and the references of the clothing, that means you can't get rid of them again. It's not a flash in the pan ... It's not one second and famous for six months, as an action. It kind of sticks around, because the abstraction achieved in that action is a real one, in the cloth.



Miguel Gutierrez

So here. Thinking of the abstraction as a real one, as a lived one.

It's rooted in real implications, desire and desirability, exclusion and identification. It's receiving something as if inside out, as if encountering a nervous system between two skins.



Ryan Gander

Oscar Wilde:

I find it harder and harder everyday to live up to my blue china.

Maybe it's because he's a writer?



Kenneth Anger

Zachary Lazar from his novel Sway:

Style has an aura that words only diminish. The words follow, trying to explain, but the glamour fades in the glare of opinions and ideas. There is no more Lucifer now, there's no more Prince of Darkness, there's no more Angel of Light. There is a return to what was always there before, the silence.



Kenneth Anger

Or maybe invite both the Angel of Light and the Prince of Darkness to a dinner. Steal their coats.



Kenneth Anger

Silently refuse to let be. Cloth follows flesh, it mimics mind, it covers and hides, it stalks attraction and it's collaborative in how I hope my skin behaves.



Heimo Zobernig

Trying to figure out, standing in a room at a surface level, and with a surface reflection, and figuring out what happens in when I try to find the people to share this surface interaction with.



Lygia Clark

At the moment a surface pulls, the pulling tugs at another surface. It's a coexistence, not as a representation of any real, but maybe let's say there's some fear, it's haunted a little bit in anticipation, and it's got an image in the doorway.



Thomas Hirschhorn

Thought 7:

Because of this, representation always makes desired space an uneasy surface.



Rodarte

John Kelsey (for those who don't know, he runs Reena Spauldings, he's also a member of Bernadette Corporation, and then also a solo author on his own, so he's a little mixed up and messy):

Not art, fashion prefers to haunt art. It's more mobile and exposed, and in certain ways fashion remains the more effective means of processing the chaos of the present, probably because, as a socio-cultural mediator, fashion is itself already highly mediated and because, while sticking close to the body, it is ever so responsive to how quickly the ground shifts under its acid-treated zombie-vein heels.



General Idea

Diedrich Diederichsen, from his essay, earlier, about Narcissus:

Posing or posturing has a bad reputation; from the vantage point of action, it seems cowardly and inauthentic. But neither does it qualify as pure passivity. In truth, the pose stands for a way of participating in the world that includes both action and passivity, or stands precisely halfway between the two. Art historian Craig Owens has compared posing with the middle voice that occurs in ancient Greek: ancient Greek verbs not only have active and passive forms; they also have a third voice that is translated reflexively, between “make” and “be made”—translates kind of as “make oneself.”



John Miller

The pose stands for potentiality, active and passive, but it also stands for making oneself available, for an openness to an experience. And it stands for a situation in which one takes it as one's own internal affair to decide how one appears on the outside. In other words, Narcissus socializes himself in the pose; in the pose he intervenes in his own way, just as Oedipus does with protest and patricide; in the pose Narcissus completes himself; in the pose he might even become radical.



Or to put it in yet another way: if we wish to imagine Narcissus taking a step into the reality, and taking a political step, the equivalent of an act, that step will have to involve just striking a pose.



Now I'll just finish with another paragraph from Hilton Als:

My sister's style became more complicated as she grew older and began to admire other aspects of American culture. She was in her early twenties, her makeup and dress became the physical realization of the music she loved most: jazz. She applied large amounts of rouge to her cheeks and forehead; she wore white lipstick. She had one hairdo that always looked like an open book standing on its spine. The more my sister became interested in certain facets of American culture, the more her body resembled a sound without a scale. My mother made perfunctory objections to my sister's extreme makeup, but silently she admired her because you couldn't not admire her if you were in the least visual. My sister played the trumpet and wore my father's mother's old clothes and kept her hair up in one interesting design or another, but she never moved past the parameters of her bedroom wall into the world with any of this invention. Through her, I learned what the moral impulse behind making art was: doing it for yourself because it expressed bits of this, bits of that, all which make up a person. She had a fascinating inability to separate her mind from her body and either from music. She was a great writer who could only perform it.