



LOT

NOTES ON THE ARTISTS

:

ANE GRAFF
JAN KIEFER
MAX RUF
MARIANNE SPURR
PEDRO WIRZ

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written by

Michael Birchall, Claire Craig,
Elise Lammer, Esperanza Rosales,
Fabian Schöneich

Extract of
THREE FACES OF EVE, 2011
by Esperanza Rosales



... That pigmented impact of moving away, stepping away, pulling away, fabric that tears, like a dream: a moment real and really there, the next moment gone. You are older, it is older, everything is changed and older. Time, passes. The book fills up and memory weathers and feels gone; nothing feels the same again, soon you won't feel anything, but the pull of indelicate threading coming apart, and cropping up, slowly, like weeds.

And vain, glorious time, where have you sunken to?
Who and what can make you rise? To settle into the crease
of your folds. Plainly, and without any color.

I found a story once on the pages of a book that someone had discarded. Its pages told of a widow that kept a garment belonging to her husband long after his death. It was a silk dressing gown of the oriental kind, and in the author's words, it was dark and paisley. Every now and then, over the years, this woman would wrap herself in it, very tightly, and as a consequence of that — and time — it was falling apart. One day, a thought was borne in the mind that so lamented his loss: this is trash. This piece of fabric, still soft under my touch, belongs in the trash. She had wanted, in the time since his passing, to recover some hope, and every time she wrapped her naked body in this fabric, to make a body where a body once was. Instead, there were tired threads in her hand, and so little of hope in the place where her love had been. She was tired, it was tired. All of this languor and longing to bring something back, was tired.

She wanted the fire of his love to live so brutally, beside her, that as a consequence, the battery of wrapping his dressing gown so tightly around her only screamed through faded and fraying silk, that it would never be so.

Turning out, as it turns out, turns out to be a complicated thing. One way to face your abuser in the years as you mature, is to turn cold: but at a certain point, most especially when physical limitations are tested, abuse gets absorbed, trauma stains and afflicts even the stout hearted, and remains like tears in reverse.

You may try to copy it, but you may also fail, and the more you try, the less close you come, to walking in father's shoes.

And then, putting on a feather-light nightcreme in bed, before the rooms of the house go dark, the warm breath of a man escapes along your décolleté, pearls that will grace your skin come morning. It is nighttime and above your own breath, you can hear the infant breathing.





ON SOMEONE WHO LEARNED TO
DISTINGUISH RUMOURS FROM LEGENDS*by Fabian Schöneich*

He stood in front of this artwork for hours and didn't know what to make of it. Friends suggested he should go to see it and kept reiterating how profoundly moving the experience would be. He's usually not the type of guy who's easily unsettled and also he doesn't really know what to make of art. He rarely goes to the museum or even to the theatre, and if he does go, then it's really hard for him to identify with these forms of art and culture that his friends appreciate so much. And now he was standing here, was annoyed and suddenly felt a bit uncertain. He was such a practical and pragmatic person and he didn't know how to react. He already turned around twice to go, but both times he swung around again after taking a few steps, and clearly confused, stood in front of the work again. There was a bench slightly behind him. He'd seen it before on trips to the museum. Even if the exhibitions changed, the benches were always there, he recalled. But he still preferred to stand. He was a bit afraid of engaging with the work. He was much too unsettled to sit down, and since there were other people in this room lit by a skylight, he preferred standing and didn't let anything show on his face, which was already hard enough for him to do, since he caught himself quietly saying what he thought, commenting on what he saw. That wasn't the first time he had thought out loud. Whenever he worked on something that was giving him problems, he is just starting talking. He tried confronting his thoughts, examining them and clarifying his position through dialogue with himself – which was easier for him to do if he spoke out loud, if he conferred with himself. He solved the problem or confirmed his thoughts through speech.

He recently read something in the newspaper. It was on a Sunday and on Sunday, there are always articles in the paper about people and their experiences – what they have gone through. There was this person who had returned to his homeland after many years abroad. He had left or, more precisely, suddenly decided to alter the course of his life. He left everything behind, friends, family. He travelled around the world, met all kinds of people, learned about different cultures, listened to stories, told stories, learned to distinguish rumours from legends, and learned to use his imagination. All at once he started seeing things that were only important to him, and he got to know people with whom he could share his fascinations and with whom he could grow. A wonderful story, a fantastic notion of reality. And this work of art, that is completely unrelated to the description, that sparkles next to it in pedantic perfection, is now something that brings to mind this adventurous newspaper article. He doesn't know what to make of this artwork, but definitely wants to address it. He's a simple person after all, a craftsman, someone inspired by materials, he thought to himself. When he works, he uses his hands and always comes up with solutions that are based on the interplay between touch and thoughts on what has been touched. He often felt the need to feel materials to understand them. But what is he supposed to do right now? Understand and analyse the artwork, assess the quality of the workmanship? He'd ultimately like to relinquish this need to control a bit – at least that's what his friends suggest.

It's getting dark; he notices that the light is changing. The fluorescent tube lighting slowly starts to prevail and the skylight is transformed into an artificial sky. He gives some thought as to whether he'd like to come back. But, for now, he has decided to leave. To return to the museum's entrance and unleash his dog – his friend with whom he can share his feelings – and to go.

ALL THAT REMAINS ARE
MOMENTS AND INCIDENTS¹

by Elise Lammer



I. A MEDITERRANEAN DOG

Some scientific theories on evolution claim that if all dogs from all breeds were allowed to interbreed free from the human selection routine, they would evolve into a model of the strongest common denominator in terms of size, shape and colour. Following an easy to imagine Darwinist hypothesis, the weak specificities of this new dog would slowly disappear, while simultaneously being imprinted, though invisibly. The ghostly baggage of heterogeneity.

Let's call this archetypal dog the Mediterranean dog²

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¹ Max Ruf: *A Crooked Trunk is placed over the River leaning to its left Side and having the Function of a Bridge as its loose-looking wooden Handrail defines its Task*, 2012
² see: *W. R.*, 2009, 2012, toner pigment transfer on linen, empty picture book on plinth.
www.maxruf.com

II. GENERATIVE ART

According to Wikipedia, Generative Art “refers to art that in whole or in part has been created with the use of an autonomous system. An autonomous system in this context is generally one that is non-human and can independently determine features of an artwork that would otherwise require decisions made directly by the artist. In some cases the human creator may claim that the generative system represents their own artistic idea, and in others that the system takes on the role of the creator.

Generative Art is often used to refer to computer-generated artwork that is algorithmically determined. But generative art can also be made using systems of chemistry, biology, mechanics and robotics, smart materials, manual randomization, mathematics, data mapping, symmetry, tiling, and more.”³

III. PEACE OF MIND

Notes on the flâneur and the experience of modernity
Notes on the physiologies⁴

Walter Benjamin’s definition of the flâneur draws on Charles Baudelaire’s notion of the artist-wanderer in the Paris of the mid 19th century. First described in *The painter of modern life*⁵, an article Baudelaire wrote in 1863 about Constantin Guys, an illustrator for *The Illustrated London News*, the figure of the wanderer was then introduced as a conceptual social figure for the first time.

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³ see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generative_art

⁴ Walter Benjamin: *Paris - the Capital of the Nineteenth Century*. in Charles Baudelaire: *A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*. NLB, 1977

⁵ Charles Baudelaire: *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, Phaidon Press, 1995. Orig. published in *Le Figaro*, in 1863

Although a long term literary figure, the flâneur only became a critical and philosophic character in the middle of the 19th century, as a response to the overwhelming feeling induced by growing urban landscapes and stammering early capitalism in cities like London, Berlin and Paris.

The wanderer, this half lingering, yet restless street observer, looks, sees, drafts and then using his memory, concludes his observation later in a painting or a piece of poetry. He uses the city crowd as the shelter for his anonymity and primal source of inspiration, nostalgic of an irretrievable innocent nature. The enveloping army of nameless cosmopolites is his studio.

The physiologies, although a not less interesting concept, appeared around the same time, but didn’t encounter the same critical success as the figure of the wanderer. A physiology is a petty bourgeois genre consisting of caricatures describing mostly social practices, private rituals and architecture development in Paris. Such subjective encyclopedic enterprise was very fashionable in the 1850s and followed a similar strategy of resistance to a distressing environment as the wanderer; it’s incarnated homologue. A physiology is a positive stereotypical description of society (harmless and friendly) aiming at informing the naive new citizen on the ‘other’, a sort of a life manual to soothe an unconscious crowd of soon to be agoraphobiacs from a threatening urban life.

Beyond the social comment, both the flâneur and physiologies deal with non-entities and serve the function of maintaining peace of mind.

IV. *Extract of*

A CROOKED TRUNK IS PLACED OVER THE RIVER
LEANING TO ITS LEFT SIDE AND HAVING THE
FUNCTION OF A BRIDGE AS ITS LOOSE-LOOKING
WOODEN HANDRAIL DEFINES ITS TASK⁶

*'White pebble stone surrounds this free standing rock that is placed upright in the center of a plane tarred area. The stones have partially left their allocated position but the viewer can still guess where they were initially placed. White spots on a grey fading surface. Debris of water darkens the otherwise dusty surface. Broken-off branches of conifers seem to have accidentally found their way into the centre of this composition which seems decorated by some yellow shining fairy lights that the darkness has already cut off their constant connection.'*⁷

V. ON PLACEHOLDERS

You are an artist. You are a painter. You've always been painting. No revelation, just the natural course of things. During your trips, you take snapshots, sometimes with your 'good' digital camera, sometimes with a simple analogue one. It depends. Honestly, you nourish a genuine desire to live in the woods.⁸ Nature is where you aim to travel. Germany (where you come from), Switzerland, Austria and, more recently Scotland (yes beautiful). You built a device: a light wooden case that allows you to transport a few canvases and oil paint everywhere you walk (or wander). Your eyes take a snapshot (forget about the camera) and your hand paints a landscape.

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6 Max Ruf, 2012

7 Max Ruf: Notes on the archive. Based on extracts of a collection of images from a stay in Hochfügen, a village that came to birth in order to expand tourism within the Austrian mountains in 1960. Height: 1480m.

Folder 1: Hochfügen/ Pitztal: R0050828.JPG - R0050997.JPG

8 *The Desire to live in the Woods*, solo exhibition at Hockney Gallery, RCA, London, UK

You place the painting in your wooden backpack, and set off again. You drive, you fly, you run. You paint a few landscapes over the course of your trips. You place them all in the box before they have time to dry off completely. The canvases rub against each other at the rhythm of your journey.

As luck would have it, you recently drove to Dunkerque. First the ferry, populated by lorry drivers. Real men. Fake tv sets. Second, the harbour. You were fascinated by the bizarreness of this archetypal non-place. Black and white, sad. And this strange smell. In the van, *Duck Season* by Wu Tang is playing. "This perfect moment" you think, delightful oddity. You film it, while driving.⁹

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9 Free transcription of various conversations and anecdotes gathered during skype and pub conversations held between October and November 2012.

AN INVOLUNTARY REPETITION

by Claire Craig

An involuntary repetition, like a stutter or stammer, hesitation or disruption. Marianne Spurr's work is fixed on moments, coincidental meetings and unexpected conversations between objects. Contained by hurried dialogues, refrained blocks and prolongations occur as objects become informed mechanisms which are occupied with their own history and new surroundings.

Each object speaks its entire biography, from its conveyor belt beginnings and physical materials through to its transformation into a useful thing. Throughout its biography, the object incorporates a number of stories and factual introductions to its social surroundings and people. However, in its quest for facts, numerous half-facts, portions and pieces are discovered and retold throughout its inconsistent existence. It is these fragmented pieces that Spurr spots and utilises; pairing unpredictable objects and materials together.

Of course, this stammering is not reflective of the objects' intelligence; in its life cycle each component has a clear purpose and use value. A stammer is also not an impediment when it comes to the total physical production of an object – from its initial commodity, worth, consumption and then renewal. Spurr focuses on the renewal; she appropriates her immediate surroundings, resourcefully pulling together objects that are perhaps redundant; or stand out by their misshaped materiality. When brought together into a new conversation the original object and its material is reused, reconfigured and reclaimed and is never allowed to disintegrate wastefully.

Instead, the material and objects acquire a new character when placed in a new environment.

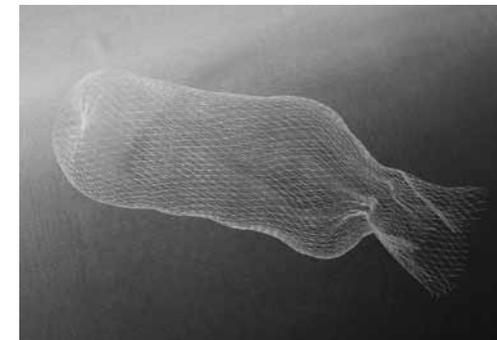
An involuntary repetition is uncontained, yet Spurr, as an observer of the everyday, captures and reconstructs her material within a contained environment. There is a curiosity and playfulness with every new found object - this can be found in its placement in relation to other objects, its new markings or its pull and stretched manipulations. The materials are leftovers from the studio or other surroundings and out of context they can appear vulnerable, yet as a viewer we are allowed to examine them. We are able to question what these objects' ontological purpose is after they have been manipulated and their original concept is lost. They may appear as something from which another originates, creating an uneven chain of relationships, removed from their production line.

In a new context, objects emerge fragmented, they appear used like recycled waste. Just as commodities are omnipresent so is their waste, for rubbish is the direct product of the consumed. Therefore, when its use value, or at least the appearance of its use value, is thrown away or exhausted the leftovers can once more become a material thing. This time the materials are picked up and renewed by Spurr; still containing their biography they unassumingly tell the truth of their consumption.

However, if an object only becomes a product after it has been consumed, what happens in its afterlife when it has lost its wholeness and distinction from others? The useless and neglected residue of the now worthless commodity escapes the hierarchies of value and instead exhibits an honesty. Its

original intent was vain and now the leftover materiality gains new humble qualities such as this honesty, understanding its limitations and recognising its own faults. With these new traits it is now open to new dialogues.

An involuntary repetition, Spurr's conversations create their own vernacular, their own materials and localised needs. Studio-based objects are resurrected into something new, through various strategies of making, photographing, collaging, and physical dematerialisation. Often breaking down fluencies, including awkward juxtapositions or blocked mediums, each conversation is trying to form and understand the relationship between its materials and surroundings.



ART PRODUCTION:
“UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT”

by Michael Birchall



The production of art is no longer defined or limited to the individual skill or technical ability of one artist; it can be shared, outsourced or coauthored with other collaborators to produce complete artworks. Pedro Wirz appropriates a variety of concepts, skills, labour and intellectual processes in his practice to create intricate and compelling sculptural forms. He uses the practice of curating to assemble his ideas into new totalities of meaning. Wirz's ability to produce artworks are reliant on his ability to work as a conceptual manager, using this framework he is able to coordinate artists, curators, groups of collaborators to formulate his artistic concepts. “Conceptual managing” differs from regular management styles due to the multidisciplinary approach that must be adopted in order for the processes or work to be completed. The conceptual manager must have an overall sense of what is going on, as well as being a central source of information for their workers or collaborators. In Joseph Kosuth's *Second Investigation* (1963), the artist used the labour of his employees by requesting that they purchase advertising space in international newspapers. The global success of this was only made possible due to the expansive location of his assistants. These “art workers” purchased advertising space, and were instructed by the artist as part of their contractual labour, yet without any real discussion or consultation process¹.

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¹ For more information on this topic refer to: Green, Charles. (2001)
The Third Hand: Collaboration in Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism.
Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Kosuth's preoccupation was centred around how his "singularity as an artist might be pursued without recourse to the first personal language of the artistic self"². Kosuth's Second Investigation was reliant on the workers doing the task they were employed to do; much in the same way the collaborators operate in Wirz's practice. Both Kosuth and Wirz are concerned with maintaining the "singularity"³ in the work they produce. There is only one author, yet their work is reliant on the labour of others to make it possible.

In western societies, economies have mostly shifted from production-based models to post-fordist processes; whereby the ability to provide services – notably financial and legal – are exported in place of physical manufactured goods. This transformation has impacted on art production, and particularly how artists work under the new terms of labour. Their ability to produce work has become reliant on their communicative ability, linguistic virtuosity and the performance of their ideas⁴. As Hito Steyerl comments, "fine art has been most closely linked to post-fordist speculation, with bling, boom and bust."⁵

Under these new parameters the labour of the artists is largely considered to be immaterial, with the artists working for little financial gains. The labour of the artist is now more than ever linked to the labour of the curator, who is no longer a lonely scholar, but rather a networked, resourceful cultural

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2 Roberts, John. (2007) *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade*. London: Verso, pg. 169.

3 Ibid.

4 Gielen, Pascal. (2010) *The Murmuring of the Artistic Multitude: Global Art, Memory and Post-Fordism*. Amsterdam: Valiz, pg. 24–25.

5 Steyerl, H. (2011) "Politics of Art: Contemporary Art and the Transition to Post-Democracy" in *Are You Working Too Much? Post Fordism, Precarity, and the Labor of Art*. Berlin: Sternberg Press.

producer – who considers their own career to be equally as important as the artist's they work alongside.

If we assume the curator and the artists are equal, then the artist increasingly produces work using the labour and skills of other artists and assistants. Their work can be large in scale, or consist of a long-term "project"⁶ – requiring a distinct managerial ability. As John Roberts asserts, contemporary artists have become producers when they shifted their position from that of an independent creator reliant on traditional artistic apparatus – to that of an operative, in which the skills and competences of the artists are transformed to the advanced technical content of the new reproductive technologies and their collective use within the labour process.⁷

Wirz's collaborative sculptural project "Kits" (2012) uses the collective labour of nine collaborators: Sarah Elioth, David Goodman, Wojciech Kosma, Thomas Jeppe, Tina Kämpe, Bradley Alexander, Laura Maclardy, Florine Leoni and Anatoly Belov. This project is based around the concept of "kits" – a collection of objects that can be fixed together to create new sculptural forms. These kits take their inspiration from self-assembly furniture that can be purchased at furniture retailers such as Ikea. The collaborators effectively have a curated selection of materials that can be used. Thus, Wirz is able to maintain his authorial control on the project. The finalised works were indeed produced with a group of

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6 I define the "project" as a long term endeavour, as Claire Bishop describes in *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso (2012)

7 Roberts, J. (2009) "The Curator as Producer: Aesthetic Reason, Non-aesthetic Reason, and Infinite Ideation" in *The Curator as Producer*, Manifesta Journal No.10 Amsterdam: Manifesta Foundation, 2009/2010

contributors, however Wirz maintains his artistic control in the production of the work. By limiting the selection of objects that are available and using a framework which the collaborators work within. Throughout the process the artist is able to manage the task in hand and to ensure a finalised quality product.

Increasingly artists are making artworks using a variety of skills and techniques that are beyond their technical abilities; and to do this they borrow the skills of other artists – operating across a continuum of shared skills.⁸ Wirz makes use of the skills of other artists and collaborators to produce his work; without their involvement it would not be attainable. In this re-functioned space of the artist, skills are rerouted away from forms of expressive interiority, and what the artist does and what the curator does have become increasingly blurred.⁹

In conclusion, Wirz is able to maintain his artistic “freedom” by operating under the title of the “artist”. At the same time Wirz appropriates managerial techniques associated with post-fordism and the labour of the contemporary curator. This allows him to maintain his association with other artists, or collaborators – at the same level – without it being overshadowed by the established and fixed position of the curator.

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⁸ Roberts, J. (2009) “*The Curator as Producer: Aesthetic Reason, Nonaesthetic Reason, and Infinite Ideation*” in *The Curator as Producer*, Manifesta Journal No. 10 Amsterdam: Manifesta Foundation, 2009/2010

⁹ Ibid.



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