

The ~~Absence~~ of Work

Elena Bajo

A conversational piece
for six voices based
on an artist-in-residence
at PLATFORM3

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We thank you for your message of greetings, and on our part whole heartedly greet the Soviet Republic of Bavaria. We ask you insistently to give us more frequent, definite information on the following. What measures have you taken to fight the bourgeois executioners, the Schedermanns and Co., have councils of workers and servants been formed in the different sections of the city, have the workers been armed, have the bourgeoisie been disarmed, has use been made of the stocks of clothing and other items for immediate and extensive aid to the workers, and especially to the farm labourers and small peasants, have the capitalist factories and wealth in Munich and the capitalist farms in its environs been confiscated, have mortgage and rent payments by small peasants been cancelled, have the wages of farm labourers and unskilled workers been doubled or trebled, have all paper stocks and all printing presses been confiscated so as to enable popular leaflets and newspapers to be printed for the masses, has the six-hour working day with two or three-hour instruction in state administration been introduced, have the bourgeoisie in Munich been made to give up surplus housing so that workers may be immediately moved into comfortable flats, have you taken over all the banks, have you taken hostages from the ranks of the bourgeoisie, have you introduced higher rations for the workers than for the bourgeoisie, have all the workers been mobilised for defence and for ideological propaganda in the neighbouring villages? The most urgent and most extensive implementation of these and similar measures, coupled with the initiative of workers', farm labourers' and—acting apart from them—small peasants' councils, should strengthen your position. An emergency tax must be levied on the bourgeoisie, and an actual improvement effected in the condition of the workers, farm labourers and small peasants at once and at all costs.

With sincere greetings and wishes of success.

Lenin

Message Of Greetings To The Bavarian Soviet Republic, delivered on April 27th, 1919.
Source: Lenin's Collected Works, 4th English Edition, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1972, Volume 23, pages 325-326.

"We don't need government
We need utilities,
Air, water, energy
Travel and communication means
Food and shelter.
We have no need for imaginary mountain ranges
Between separate nations.
We can make tunnels through the real ones.
Nor do we have any need for the continuing division of people
Into those who have what they need
And those who don't.
Both Fuller and Marshall McLuhan
Knew, furthermore
That work is now obsolete.
We have invented machines to do it for us
Now that we have no need to do anything
What shall we do?
Looking at Fuller's geodesic world map
We see that the Earth is a single island, Oahu.
We must give all the people all they need to live
In any way they wish.
Our present laws protect the rich from the poor.
If there are to be laws, we need ones that
Begin with the acceptance of poverty as a way of life.
We must make the world safe for poverty Without dependence on government."

John Cage

Anarchist poem by John Cage
Source: <http://theanarchistlibrary.org>





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THE ABSENCE OF WORK

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ELENA BAJO

THE ABSENCE OF WORK

— OVERTURE

THE ABSENCE OF WORK

Einleitung von Carina Essl

Als einzigartiger, experimenteller Kunstort in München entwickelt PLATFORM3 - Räume für zeitgenössische Kunst Ausstellungs- und Diskursprojekte, ist Produktionsort für Künstler, Experimentierfeld für angehende Kulturmanager sowie Qualifizierungsstätte für Mehraufwandsbeschäftigte. Finanziert wird PLATFORM3 vom Referat für Arbeit und Wirtschaft der Landeshauptstadt München, in Trägerschaft der Wohnforum GmbH.

Im Rahmen eines internationalen Artist-in-Residence-Programmes lud PLATFORM3 die Künstlerin Elena Bajo nach München ein. Von 15. September bis 11. Oktober 2012 beschäftigte sich Elena Bajo vor Ort mit den Bedingungen intellektueller Arbeit: Arbeit, die weder evaluiert noch gemessen werden kann und sich daher den neoliberalen Kriterien der Wirtschaftlichkeit und des Profits verschließt. In insgesamt fünf neuen Werken vermittelt sie konzeptuelle Ansätze mit visuellen, raumgreifenden Strukturen. PLATFORM3 präsentierte diese unter dem - durchaus polemisch gemeinten - Titel THE ABSENCE OF WORK von 10. Oktober bis 21. November.

Das vorliegende Druckwerk «THE ABSENCE OF WORK. A conversational piece for 6 voices based on an Artist-in-Residence at PLATFORM3 Munich» nimmt die Ausstellung zum Ausgangspunkt für eine perspektivische Erweiterung: Zur Stimme Elena Bajos treten andere künstlerische und theoretische Tonarten hinzu, die das Projekt in unterschiedliche Richtungen ergänzen, weiterspinnen sowie in eigene, mediale Formen transponieren.

Die Ausstellung THE ABSENCE OF WORK entstand in enger Zusammenarbeit und stetigem Austausch zwischen der Künstlerin und PLATFORM3. Basierend auf Dialog und Diskussion ermöglichte Elena Bajos offene Arbeitsstruktur dem Team von PLATFORM3, an der künstlerischen Praxis teilzuhaben: Die Volontärinnen unterstützten die Auseinandersetzung der Künstlerin mit der anarchistischen Vergangenheit Münchens durch Recherchen zur Münchner Räterepublik und dem Anachronismus des physischen Archivs. In der Ausstellung verdichtete Elena Bajo (kunst-)geschichtliche und politische Referenzen zu einer Komposition aus wiederverwendeten Materialien und Objekten sowie Textzitat. In Verbindung mit einem Motiv aus der Musik lösen Reformulierung und Neukontextualisierung der einzelnen Gesten Dissonanzen aus.

Der intensive persönliche Dialog, der den Ausgangspunkt für die Ausstellung darstellte, setzt sich in gedruck-

ter Form fort: Die Publikation umfasst Einzelbeiträge sowie Gesprächssituationen zwischen der Künstlerin und Personen aus der Kunsttheorie und -praxis. Um den individuellen Sprachgebrauch der Autoren zu wahren, behält PLATFORM3 in der Publikation die Projektsprache Englisch als gemeinsame Kommunikationsbasis bei. Auf die zusätzliche Mediation einer Übersetzung ins Deutsche möchten wir in diesem Rahmen absichtlich verzichten, um die unmittelbare Wiedergabe der Texte sicherzustellen.

Die Projektleiterin von PLATFORM3, Marlene Rigler, befasst sich in ihrem Aufsatz «A certain idea of ...» anhand der Werke von THE ABSENCE OF WORK mit den vielstimmigen Referenzen, die in Elena Bajos künstlerische Praxis einfließen. Ausgehend von sehr persönlichen, beinahe literarisch geformten «notes» entsteht Elena Bajos Beitrag «Anarcho-Chronism (or anarco-chronologies) of a Society of Changes». In Bezugnahme auf den Projekttitel THE ABSENCE OF WORK reflektiert der Autor und Kurator Bastien Rousseau ästhetische Erfahrung mittels sinnlich erfassbarer Verbindungen. Fragen, die sich bei der Betrachtung der Ausstellung aus Sichtweise des Besuchers ergeben, untersuchen die Volontärinnen von PLATFORM3 in einem E-Mailinterview mit Elena Bajo. Den regen Austausch mit Münchner Kunst- und Kulturschaffenden, der während des Aufenthaltes von Elena Bajo entstand, dokumentiert ein E-Mailgespräch zwischen Gürsoy Dogtas und der Künstlerin. Ebenfalls auf elektronischem Weg

tauschen sich Elena Bajo, Bastien Rousseau und der Philosoph Dieter Hammer über einen möglichen Paradigmenwechsel in der künstlerischen Fotografie aus. Aus der Kommunikation «Triangular Relations» entwickelt sich die Idee eines gemeinsamen künstlerisch-kuratorischen Vorhabens. Der Abschluss der Publikation bildet somit zugleich den Anfangspunkt eines künftigen Projektes.

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Elena Bajo (*1976, Madrid) studierte Architektur in Barcelona sowie Malerei und Skulptur an der Central Saint Martins School of Art, London. Vor kurzem zeigte sie ihre Werke in der Einzelausstellung «The Factory of Forms» bei MANIFESTA 9 Parallel Events in Genk (BE) sowie an der Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht (NL). Bei D+T Project Gallery präsentierte die Künstlerin in Brüssel «Reconstructing of the Common», zudem war sie 2011 bei Frieze Frame Art Fair in London vertreten. Im gleichen Jahr nahm Elena Bajo an der PERFORMA 11 Biennial New York teil und stellte Arbeiten bei der David Roberts Art Foundation in London, im MUHKA in Antwerpen und bei LAXART in Los Angeles aus. Soeben erschien das Künstlerbuch «The Factory of Forms» bei Onomatopée, Eindhoven (NL). Elena Bajo lebt und arbeitet in Los Angeles und Berlin.

THE ABSENCE OF WORK

Prelude

THE ABSENCE OF WORK is the result of Elena Bajo's artist-in-residence at PLATFORM3 – Spaces for Contemporary Art in Munich, Germany from September to October, 2012. For this exhibition, five new works have been created in situ, with materials available on site.

THE ABSENCE OF WORK was made possible due to the support of the city of Munich's Department of Arts and Culture. We would like to express special thanks to: KunstWohnWerke München, Diana Ebster, Heike Skok, Warren Neidich, Bastien Rousseau, Dieter Hammer as well as the PLATFORM3 team and all others involved in this project.

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Elena Bajo (*1976, Madrid) holds Masters Degrees in Architecture from ESARQ and in Fine Arts from Central Saint Martins School of Art, London. Recent solo exhibitions include «THE FACTORY OF FORMS», MANIFESTA 9 Parallel Events, Genk, BE (2012), and Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht, NL (2012). At D+T Project Gallery, Brussels she presented «Reconstructing of the Common»(2012) and was invited to Frieze Frame Art Fair London (2011). She participated in PERFORMA 11 Biennial, New York (2011), and in group shows at The David Roberts Art Foundation, London; MUHKA, Ant-

werp; LAXART, Los Angeles. Her publication, «The Factory of Forms», was recently released by Onomatopée, Eindhoven, NL (2012). She lives and works in Berlin and Los Angeles.

ELENA BAJO

THE ABSENCE OF WORK

—SOLOS PERFORMED

A CERTAIN IDEA OF ...

Marlene Rigler

Director, PLATFORM3-Spaces for Contemporary Art Munich

... MUSIC (JOHN CAGE)

Elena Bajo's artistic work, as we have had the chance to witness and experience it during almost four weeks here in Munich, operates through processes of (spatial) composition and modulation of given (and often used) objects and material. It is almost musical in its essence: Bajo choreographs/orchestrates her exhibition into a compository whole – a score, one might say. The very first work she created at PLATFORM3, a floor piece entitled *We do not need to destroy the past. It is gone*, literally set the tone for all other pieces to come. Everything else had to be in tune with it. Positioned right at the entrance of the exhibition, the piece's red color and geometric shape give a pitch so dominant that it almost makes for a solo.

Throughout the exhibition, the harmony is a complex, rather polyphonic one. Its score is open to chance, as other, unexpected sounds tune in: a light breeze from an open window making the plastic foil of *You have the right to remain silent* rustle slightly; the echoes of heels on the floor in the faraway part of the aisle leading to the artist studios of PLATFORM3; a conversation perceptible through open office doors; here, the

visitor turns into a listener who takes part in the exhibition's distinct music that has yet to be written.

To John Cage, music is a series of chance-encounters, and much more open to contingency as any other artistic format. Any sound has a musical potential. This is particular true for silence, of course. A binary mode of perception creates the maximum of effect. The difference between hearing whatever sound, and silence – i.e. the absence of sensible sound (and not: not hearing anything at all) – is the most impressive acoustic sensation. Composers have known this for a long time already, especially in Opera where a solo line (an aria) usually sets in after a moment of pause for the instruments. Those silences are only loosely defined in the original scores, which allows for contemporary interpretation. Cage knows this. The feature that makes his compositions so appealing to contemporary artistic practice consists of making the silence, not the music, the main element of the score.

Using a series of quotations by Cage as titles for her new pieces, Elena Bajo calls in the musical element. These titles are almost craving to be read out aloud. For this would be a liberating gesture: not only does it break the sacred silence of the white cube (so stubbornly maintained even in the most contemporary of displays), but it also brings in the human voice which is by far the most versatile of all musical «instruments». The titles' attribution to each work is intentionally arbitrary. Everything can be altered at any time – the labels can be switched around or replaced by other quotations. Of

course, this affects the potential reading of each of the works. At the same time, it emphasizes their interdependence.

... THOUGHT (GILLES DELEUZE / FELIX GUATTARI)

All five artworks featured in *THE ABSENCE OF WORK* depend and rely on each other. Together, they form an <assemblage>. This term, loosely defined by Deleuze and Guattari, describes any number of things gathered into one single context. Originally, <assemblage> is used in the context of literature. For Guattari and Deleuze, a book is a jumbling together of discrete parts or pieces that is capable of producing any number of effects, rather than a tightly organized and coherent whole producing one dominant reading. This definition may as well apply to exhibitions and particularly to *THE ABSENCE OF WORK*, for Elena Bajo explicitly emphasizes the openness and infinity of her artistic process. (cf. the artist's interview with *PLATFORM3* printed in this very publication). The beauty of the assemblage is that it can draw into its body any number of disparate elements. The book/exhibition itself can be an assemblage, but this does not prevent it from entering into new assemblages with visitors, critics, other artists or exhibitions. Considering Elena Bajo's previous shows and interventions at galleries and museums or during art fairs, Biennials, workshops and residencies, one quickly comes to embrace the idea that *THE ABSENCE OF WORK* is part of yet another,

infinitely grander assemblage: Bajo's artistic *oeuvre* as a whole. Understood as such, her work is constantly «in becoming», for «one piece of the assemblage is drawn into the territory of another piece, changing its value as an element and bringing about a new unity.»(Deleuze/Guattari)

Elena Bajo's position is that of an artist in the 21st century who has witnessed the prefix «post-post» being attached to almost anything – from modern to conceptual to minimalist art etc. Ours is an era that has seen the end of history proclaimed at least twice, (Marx turning towards Hegel for reference, as well as, more recently, Francis Fukujama) but at the same time we are obsessed with archives, recordings, and visual archeology.

Elena Bajo draws her inspiration not from visual, but from textual resources. She masters a broad range of contemporary theory which she rigorously applies in the exhibition, creating a dense net of references spanning from Lenin's letter to the Bavarian Soviet Republicans in 1919, to an anarchist poem by John Cage: two contemporary reproductions of each of these texts are displayed on a wall, as if they were themselves part of the exhibition. Or are they commenting on it? Lenin's schoolmasterly, yet wary enquiry about things going on in the Bavarian *Räterepublik* on the one hand, and John Cage's exactly opposed comment on the futility of every political endeavor on the other. True anarchy is the moment when all premeditated projects are abandoned, be they political, social or even artistic, and chance comes in as a determining factor. Oscillating between chance and change, this exhibition opens a vast

field of possible meaning, or, in the words of John Cage: «As far as consistency of thought goes, I prefer inconsistency».

... ART (MARCEL DUCHAMP)

In 1915, Marcel Duchamp took a shovel and called it «In advance of the Broken Arm». This led to an irrevocable paradigm shift in the production, perception and theorization of art. After Duchamp, nothing was the same anymore. And yet, art history has moved on and new gestures by other artists followed. Some, like Malevitch's «Black Square», were even contemporary to Duchamp's shovel. Weren't they as radical as any of his readymades? Why is it Duchamp we refer to, retrospectively, as having introduced a new paradigm in art and not, say, Malevitch? Or even Picasso?

A legitimate, yet difficult question; but where will it lead us with regards to THE ABSENCE OF WORK, Elena Bajo's exhibition?

Wait and see.

First, let's briefly recall the theorist's point of view: with the readymade, Duchamp turned the art world upside-down precisely because his gesture was nothing more than that, a gesture, that is, the purely nominal act of conferring to an object the status of a work of art. In other words, Duchamp performed an *enunciative function* (Foucault) comprised of saying «The readymade exists as an artwork». Hence it is part

of art and possesses artistic value. But why, since it's a snow shovel, a bottle dryer etc.? Foucault, in *The Archeology of Knowledge*, coined the term «enunciative function», initially for language-related issues. For the first time, Duchamp introduced language as a determining factor in the field of visual arts. He, the artist, can declare something – a mass produced object – to be art.

Duchamp aptly calls his readymades *art à propos de l'art* (art on the topic of art). This proves that he clearly sees the readymades as a paradigm of their own. They have the (subversive) power to unveil the mechanisms that confer to any given artifact or, in the case of Duchamp, any existing object the status of art. Paradoxically, the new paradigm he formulates for his readymades is nothing exceptional – it's the rule, the minimal consensus of a process at work within any piece of art that Duchamp is the first to make explicit; or, expressed in a more Duchampian manner, the readymade contains the minimal formula, «stripped bare, of the artistic enunciation, even». (Thierry de Duve)

This is the conclusion from which we can start almost a century later:

When Elena Bajo installs three sculptures, each consisting of several large, square concrete blocks piled-up and topped by an empty, white wooden pedestal, she (re)performs Duchamp's gesture. This time, however, nobody will be shocked. No questions will be asked. The work's status as such is achieved without much ado. Is this a sign of indiffer-

ence? Don't we grasp the subversive force at work in these three sculptures entitled *I am trying to be unfamiliar with what I'm doing*:

First of all, are they sculptures? Or installations? In their undecidedness, they are reminiscent of what Michael Fried, in 1965, calls «literalist art»: a position close to Duchamp's, based on the declaration of something being a work of art, but severely criticized by Fried for its heterogeneous status, somewhere between sculpture and painting. Literalist art, according to Fried, can be characterized mainly by the singleness of its shape – for the shape is the object – as well as by a certain presence that derives from it. By presence, Fried understands a usually human (or larger) sized work that «confronts the beholder» by «literally standing in its way». Fried's – and also Clement Greenberg's – apparent hostility to what is more widely referred to as minimal art (Judd, Morris, etc) can be understood as a belated reaction to the initial shock induced by Duchamp. Nothing other than this could explain an idiosyncratic judgment like: «Minimal works are readable as art, as almost anything is today – including a door, a table, or a blank sheet of paper ... Yet it would seem that a kind of art nearer to the condition of non-art could not be envisaged or ideated at this moment.» (Greenberg quoted by Fried)

As we can see, in Munich, in 2012, nothing is achieved – as in New York, in 1965, nothing was achieved either. Duchamp, though, would have liked (the idea of) absence of work in art.

... PAINTING (KAZIMIR MALEVITCH)

THE ABSENCE OF WORK comprises three installations, three sculptures and a series of four «paintings». Yet, it is extremely unlikely that the paintings are referred to as such at first sight: they come in the form of blank, rectangular canvasses of various sizes, some with irregular cutouts. Loosely pinned onto a wall, they are subjected to their own (textile) materiality – progressively crumbling under their own weight, their edges curling up with time. It is clear that these canvasses have been used. Each of them bears visible marks of the stretcher it was once attached to. Other than conceptual monochromes, they are the product of chance (recuperation) and, almost palimpsest-like, refer to a painter's initial project, the artist having since changed his/her mind. Recuperating them and displaying them in THE ABSENCE OF WORK precisely in the state they were found in, amounts to prolonging and emphasizing the archetypal artistic gesture of *creating a painting*.

Surprisingly, their status of somehow unfulfilled paintings makes these canvasses appear less autoreferential than a regular monochrome – like Malevitch's – would suggest. Hence these canvasses can be read as a multidirectional vector, one end pointing towards the history of (abstract) painting, the other towards contemporary or future installation practice that freely combines pictorial and context-specific, three-dimensional qualities. How closely entangled painting and sculpture are has already been remarked – and at that time

violently criticized – by Michael Fried in his seminal paper «art and objecthood» as early as 1965.

... WORK (ABSENCE)

The artist's gestures are subtle, non-imposing transformations that question the very idea of «work» in its primary, intensely physical sense: labor is always only the result of thought, and concepts last far longer than their practical implementation in a given space-time context. For concepts can be applied at different moments, and places. THE ABSENCE OF WORK thus suggests an immanent «presence of concept». Elena Bajo ascribes to art the quality of being a philosophical, intellectual, and, most importantly, not economically measurable human activity, i.e. that of the mind.

ANARCO-CHRONISM
(OR ANARCO-CHRONOLOGIES)
OF A SOCIETY OF CHANGES

Elena Bajo

FOREWORD

This text was initiated, or better it started to materialize (since its conception cannot be specified), as notes taken from conversations and lectures within the program *Studio Time: Work of the Living Watch* led by Geoffrey Farmer and *The Retreat: A Position of dOCUMENTA* (13) Bifo – Franco Berardi, Bruno Bosteels, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Pierre Huyghe, Catherine Malabou, and Claire Pentecost at The Banff Arts Center, Alberta, Canada, during the summer of 2012.

This is a work that never made it into a «fix and narrow format» of an art journal due to its «too abstract» and not suitable nature, it was said, to the cognitive abilities of the common reader. Then these notes triggered new reflections and thoughts and then new material triggered more ideas and more text and then the notes became something else... *Anarco-chronism of a Society of Changes* – it presents time events and time movements of the everyday, again by using abstract narrative or poetic prose, a style that allows the medium of text to become objectified and open to collage in and out ideas, as if it was a photograph, a sculpture, or a film.

The original title of the proposed project for Banff was THE ABSENCE OF WORK, AN INFINITE CONVERSATION and THE ABSENCE OF WORK had also been the title of the performance that took place in June 2012 at Liste, Basel.

Now this text is being contextualized for the publication and exhibition at PLATFORM3, curated by Marlene Rigler: *Anarco-chronism of a Society of Changes* and it has changed even more after going through three different allocations, contexts and circumstances and three different titles to investigate and engage with the work at different levels of discussion. The new title refers to John Cage's *Music of Changes*, and his title referred to the *Book of Changes, I Ching*, in reference to the fact that he used the book to create his music. What it was supposed to be, namely a proposal for a script for a film, is not quite there yet; it is more like the ideas behind a possible script... and although it reads like a monologue, it is in reality reflecting on a multiplicity of voices. Jean-Luc Godard once said: «It is not necessary to create a world, but the possibility of a world.» Well, here we are, still a possibility and still changing ...

ANARCO-CHRONISM
(OR ANARCO-CHRONOLOGIES)
OF A SOCIETY OF CHANGES

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THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ANCIENTS WAS PERFECT

The Knowledge of the ancients was perfect. How so? At first, they did not yet know there were things. That is the most perfect knowledge; nothing can be added. Next, they knew there were things, but they did not yet make distinctions between them. Next, they made distinctions, but they did not pass judgments on them. But when the judgments were passed, the Whole was destroyed. With the destruction of the Whole, individual bias arose. (*Chuang Tzu*)

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I CAN SEE THE DOG YOU ARE HIDING IN YOUR BAG

«Bring a leave to class,» the voice said.

«I used to write messages on small papers, leaving them at places where strangers could find them: I think you will understand this: Spanish Oranges.

Presence and absence and existence and non-existence ... The bell is my body, the bell is a shock, the bell is a ring, the bell is the leave.»

«Why don't you f*** me up the ass?»

—he said to his father after he hit him on the head in front of all his friends.

For the first time in his life somebody asked him at his own opening:

«Are you the artist? I like your work ...»

«I am not a conceptual artist, I work with materials and through that process the meaning arises. Images are instruments.» (*Mixed and elaborated notes from Geoffrey Farmer's lecture*)

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THE EVENT HORIZON EFFECT

In general relativity, an event horizon is a boundary in spacetime beyond which events cannot affect an outside observer. In layman's terms, it is defined as «the point of no return», i.e. the point at which the gravitational pull becomes so great as to make escape impossible. The most common case of an event horizon is that surrounding a black hole. Light emitted from beyond the horizon can never reach the observer. Likewise, any object approaching the horizon from the observer's side appears to slow down and never quite pass through the horizon, with its image becoming more and more redshifted as time elapses. The travelling object, however, experiences no strange effects and does, in fact, pass through the horizon in a finite amount of proper time.

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THE MOUNTAIN THE HIKE THE VIEW

*Thought by thought
it became invisible again ...
As seen in the end
we don't become ghosts,
what we become must be something else
my friend Geoffrey Farmer says:
Photographs have the tendency
to transform things into sculptures*

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SIMULTANEOUS SYNCHRONICITY

Presence and absence, the present absence is more powerful than the present presence. Don't we all prefer a skype meeting to a face-to-face meeting? A virtual meeting feels more real. Here is a recording, please pay attention. On a retreat, one should be absent from the activities that reclaim one's presence. What does it mean to be in one place and not in another place? Simultaneous synchronicity. What is a fiction? The enslavement of people ... Enforcing work at a specific place and specific time. What is the concept? There is no concept, there is a plurality of concepts and ideas. What are the Positions? The position of having and not having a Position,

the position of the Stage, the position of the Retreat, the position of Hope, the position of Potentiality, the position of being Under Siege, in a State of Dreaming and Sleeping ...

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CONTAINED REALITY

What kind of action is required? There is a danger of identifying with one's position. One cannot be in the center, ever. On a retreat, one removes oneself from the productivity of labor. One remains in a position of potentiality. One removes oneself from the «vita activa». One sits and develops new kinds of strategies, new lines of thoughts. «Move away from the dominions of theory! The starting point is the brain. The brain is a space to connect things. The brain is a composition of anachronisms. New forms of thought are developed confronting rational thought, thoughts that are intuition, thoughts that are poetry, thoughts that are the body, the body and the movement of that body, thoughts that are «contained reality». Abstract thoughts and non-abstract thoughts, thoughts that are contained in materials, a terracotta thought is a material that is transformed into time and space, it is a fragile temporality. On a retreat, one is open to observe different directions and one is open to accidents. What is an accident in terms of a planet? Pay attention to what is above you and below your feet. Look for detours and not designated areas. Immerse yourself in

desolated places. On a retreat, one can retreat alone or one can retreat with others. Being together and sharing the same place on a level that is not the level of communication. Time and living time is not synchronous.» (*Mixed and elaborated notes from Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev's lecture*)

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WHAT DO PICTURES WANT? THEY WANT TO BE KISSED

What do pictures want? Pictures want to be kissed. But then the question is: What is a kiss? A kiss is a gesture of affection, but it is also something which is beyond affection: the desire to incorporate. How would you define a picture? Is it a sign? I would rather explain the relation between the image and the picture. My thinking of the image is that it could be situated at the border of linguistics. The question I would rather want to answer is the relation between the image and the picture. You can hang the picture on the wall but you cannot hang an image on the wall. An image is what comes off the picture. Is it a mental phenomenon? It is a percept with the illusion. It is what appears in the picture. I think it is very helpful for lots of thinking about the strange relation between images and their materiality to make this fundamental section. The picture is an image in a medium, or an image that is mixed into some picture of an object. Even if the object is shaped as an image or the object has reflected on an image. I think, this is an extremely

useful distinction. (*Das Interview mit W.T.J. Mitchell führte Anne-gret Gerleit im Rahmen der Iconic Turn Veranstaltung am 3.12.2004 in München.*)

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A SUSPENSION OF JUDGEMENT

THE GAME OF DISTINCTIONS

What is Atarexia? A Suspension of Judgment

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IN PRAISE OF DISCREPANCY THE END OF IDEOLOGY

Art's Revolutionary Practice? The artist and the artwork and the politics. The artwork and the political unconscious embedded in it. The artwork and the discussion and nature of political discourse. The dislocation of the artwork. What art makes us see, and therefore gives us in the form of «seeing», perceiving and feeling, which is not the form of knowing, is the ideology from which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art ... Honoré de Balzac and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn give us a «view» of the ideology to which their work alludes and with which it is constantly fed, a view which presupposes a «retreat», an internal distance from the very ideology from which their novels emerged. Discrepancy with other kinds of

art. Discrepancy with internal aspects of art itself. Systems. Political Systems. Literary tropes. History. Consciousness. Marxism. The history of Class Consciousness. The totality of Subject-Object. The Subject of Action is «We». Who is «We»? Is «We» the proletariat? (*Mixed and elaborated notes from Bruno Bosteel's lecture*)

220

THE THEATER OF ABSENCE

Let us admit that the nature of the world is hallucinatory. Let us agree to the doctrine that claims the world is a fabrication of the will. Let us contemplate the theatre of the world. In the theater of Absence, Time is the Form of the Object, and movement is Time, but what is the Object of a Movement? Think about Xenon's Paradoxes. Avatars of the Turtle, Achilles and the turtle. Is art in the realm of the visible unrealities? (...) Until we reach the point where ideology is no longer a weapon but an end in itself. Through these bits of unrealities, madness, etc. the world is unveiled as false. The Whole is the False. What if we just needed the titles of books? Just the cover and the title? The title is the content: «The Impossibility of Society, Reflections on the Revolutions of our Time, The Society of The Spectacle, Everyday Revolutionary Practice, Action of the Structure, The New Spirit of Capitalism» ... In the Theater of Absence, the structures are destroyed, the structures have

been the object of the Action, and the Irrational in the domain of reality exposes itself by inserting itself into it, in the place of the lack, in the place of the Void. What is the place of Objects? Capitalism lives in the Theater of Absence. Capitalism is producing the illusion of Voids, Capitalism is producing the illusion of Gaps, its Power is hiding behind these Voids... Is the ideology of difference making us prisoners to the illusion? Art can create models of Discrepancy, strategies of *mise en abime*, structures that dream themselves eternally, in a loop, dream within a dream, within a dream,.. The Absence of Work, the presence of un-making, the refusal of work, the refusal of ideology, the production of paradox, the production of contradiction. Is the Neutral the new position?

221

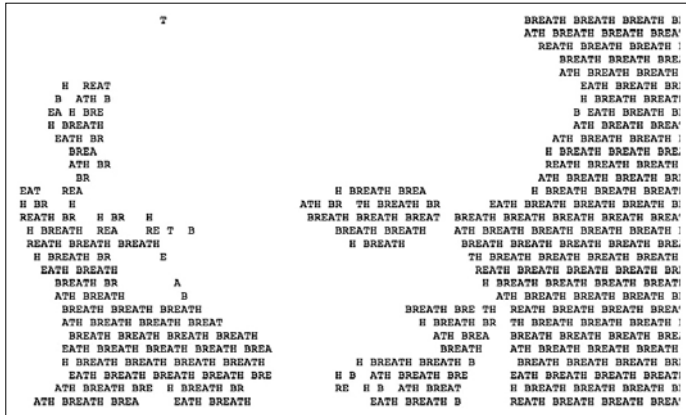
THE ABSENT BEAR

*We know there are still bears in Canada
We have been warned about bears being on campus:
«Try to walk in groups, make noise, don't move if you face one»
We have heard a group of girls were attacked by a bear a few
months ago
they were on bikes near campus
when one of them saw the bear, she ran and climbed a tree
the bear followed her and climbed after her
the bear killed the girl*

My friend still wants to see a bear
 We thought we saw one from a distance on a hike
 we were very excited ... it was a grizzly bear far from us
 wait ... ! He was not moving ... was he dead?
 we realized it was not a bear but a rock
 we have also been told mirages sometimes happen in the mountains

222

BIFO: BREATH..., BREATH WITH ME



223

THE WEEDS OF PERCEPTION
 (EFFECTS ON CONSCIOUSNESS)

My friend is obsessed with Time. She tells me that every time she smokes weed, she goes into a deep trance, she only thinks and talks about time, she breathes in time, she lives inside time, she builds sculptures as a device to measure time, more to be able to keep track of the passing of time ... Time perception changes when we are under the effect of drugs ... this perception might be truer ... maybe? ... we don't know ... These sculptures are a kind of clock. I had the opportunity to experience them. She gave me one as, she said, «a gift of time»; she gave me 21 minutes 50 secs and 6 milliseconds, all for me ... Actually, it was the first time in my life I could taste time ... She calls them chrono-sculptures. But you know, time is different for different people; she gave exactly the same chrono-sculpture to another friend and it was 19 minutes 37 secs and 00 milliseconds. What is the sculpture made of? It is made of sugar!!! She gave me a candy ... ! Try for yourself ... you take a candy, unwrap it, put it inside your mouth and measure the time it takes to completely melt it in your mouth. Enjoy!

224

GONE HUNTING ...!

Hello X,

What was the name in English of the animal killed for the film exhibited at the gallery which they then froze and then made into a BBQ for the last day of the retreat...?

Was that at the end for real...? or was it just a joke...?

I hope you are well and that you are enjoying the summer ... anything new...?

best

Y

Hello Y,

—Moose. They fed us moose.

Hahahah ahhh!! You you're awesome ... yeah it was for real. It makes sense to be skeptical, hard to believe, there are still dudes out killing some animals ... I heard, they are given «the right to kill animals» by the government in order to preserve their culture ...

Well, I can't even imagine that «human hunting» activity would have been part of their culture, would they have been given that right also ...? Thank god we have assumed that the world is of a hallucinatory nature ...

225

CHAOSMOSIS

Among the fogs and miasmas which obscure our *fin de millénaire*, the question of subjectivity is now returning as a leitmotiv. It is not a natural given any more than air or water. How do we produce it, capture it, enrich it, and permanently reinvent it in a way that renders it compatible with universes of mutant value? How do we work for its liberation, that is, for its re-singularization? Psychoanalysis, institutional analysis, film, literature, poetry, innovative pedagogies, town planning and architecture—all these disciplines will have to combine their creativity to ward off the ordeals of barbarism, the mental implosion and chaosmic spasms looming on the horizon, and transform them into riches and unforeseen pleasures, the promises of which, for all that, are all too tangible. (*Guattari*)

226

THE FUTURE OF CHANGES

CAST HEXAGRAM: 22

The *I Ching Book of Changes* advice: This hexagram shows a fire that breaks out of the secret depths of the earth and, blazing up, illuminates and beautifies the mountain, the heavenly heights. Grace—beauty of form—is necessary in any union, if it is to be well ordered and pleasing rather than disordered and

chaotic. GRACE has success. In small matters. It is favorable to undertake something. GRACE brings success. However, it is not the essential or fundamental thing; it is only the ornament and must therefore be used sparingly and only in little things. In the lower trigram of fire, a yielding line comes between two strong lines and makes them beautiful, but the strong lines are the essential content and the weak line is the beautifying form. In the upper trigram of the mountain, the strong line takes the lead, so that here again the strong element must be regarded as the decisive factor. In nature we see in the sky the strong light of the sun; the life of the world depends on it. But this strong, essential thing is changed and given pleasing variety by the moon and the stars. In human affairs, aesthetic form comes into being when traditions exist that, strong and abiding like mountains, are made pleasing by a lucid beauty. By contemplating the forms existing in the heavens, we come to understand time and its changing demands. Through contemplation of the forms existing in human society it becomes possible to shape the world. This hexagram shows tranquil beauty—clarity within, quiet without. This is the tranquility of pure contemplation. When desire is silenced and the will comes to rest, the world—as an idea—becomes manifest. In this aspect, the world is beautiful and removed from the struggle for existence. This is the world of art. However, contemplation alone will not put the will to rest absolutely. It will awaken again, and then all the beauty of form will appear to have been only a brief moment of exaltation. Hence this is still not the true way

of redemption. For this reason, Confucius felt very uncomfortable when once, on consulting the oracle, he obtained the hexagram of [GRACE].

SINCERE RELATIONS

OR THE ABSENCE OF ABSENCE

Bastien Rousseau

The following essay by Bastien Rousseau is in three parts:

ARTAUD'S PRESENCE TO THE WORLD/

THE SYNTHESIS/

smooth

PRINCIPLE OF MIMETIC DIFFERENCE + QR CODE/

THE SUBSTANCE/

dense

OTHER ECOLOGIES OF ABSENCE/

THE DIS-ARTICULATION/

reflective and fragmentary

Sincere Relations

or the absence of Absence

You might have heard Jacques Derrida's impression about Antonin Artaud's letters to Jacques Rivière – "Artaud's scene of the subjectile" as "the violent site of the self's projected representation onto paper."

Clark Lunberry says in 2012 that Artaud's "(...) poesy [is] linked to the impossibility of thinking which is thought, this is the truth that cannot disclose itself, because it always turns away, requiring that he experiences it beneath the point at which he would really experience it." In fact, Antonin feeling himself losing control of his capacity to think through and rationally articulate his thought has supported this move towards the experience of a loss of himself; he seems to have deliberately accompanied his whole body to a less conscious state of mind though exponentially aware of his experience of madness. Here, the increasing "absence of his mind" as a supposedly loss is in fact a literally productive move towards another presence to the World. Furthermore, this other mode of presence is an act of survival and, as such, an act of sanity. Likewise we may say that the acceptance of different modes of existence and thus of presence to the world – this is to say, at different levels of consideration of what is existing and therefore to what extent we like to consider existing forms of presence – can lead as much to sane trajectories of self-creation and self-development. Although

Sincere Relations

or the absence of Absence

Antonin claimed that he was disappearing as a sapient form of life, Artaud ended to be extremely present in all his scriptural forms of expression, and especially in his handwriting which embodied his self-stated madness as an exaction and an extinction. Here it is not a question of catharsis at all but rather of an inscription of motion in an agitated scriptural form which authenticate his mental erosion. The productivity – which the absence has led him to – in all its occurrences states an end; because realising is finishing, producing is therefore extinguishing and thus slowly exhausts its originative instance and leads it to a greater end.

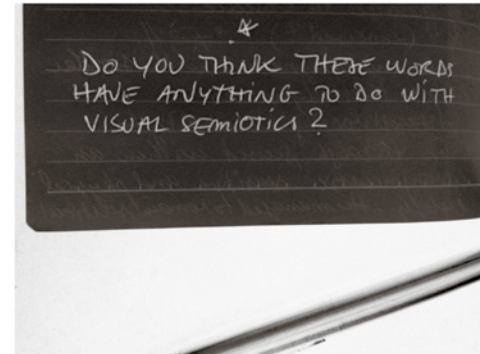
Then, when those letters come to us in the instance of a typescript, the whirlpools, the decay and the collapse of his writing suddenly disappears. The latter suppresses the identical dimension from the reading experience and annihilate thus the subject and its embodied subjectivity. The writing, the text, the words no longer talk to Derrida; even though Antonin left a while ago, Artaud, as a drifting body, no longer anchored in his existential "site of self-projection", has eventually been forced to follow his sapient fellow – wherever it may be. His presence to the World, manifested in his presence such as a "corporeal" object, rendered absent through a flattening technological process of mere semantic reproduction – or shall we say translation –, does not reproduce the mechanism of transposition that Antonin had deployed himself, and therefore generates absence. Yet, since lights have been shed on the mechanism of transposition of "essence of life" from one state to another – within a processual paradigm potentially

Sincere Relations

or the absence of Absence

comparable to an immanent principle of Difference, and therefore more as the navigation of an infinite range of infinitesimal nuances of sanity and madness (as One) –, this mere absence must then necessarily be considered in a "negative", i.e. inverted, creative way.

Indeed, what is left to us is another form of presence, absolute. Antonin vs. Artaud as well as consciousness vs. madness, or even sapience vs. sole-sentence, all have been transcended into an absolute form of knowledge substituted to an idiosyncratic form of experience. Text is given a new substance and thus a new presence to the World; it is not the poet nor the artist here but the text itself that is.



In thinking photography through this principle, in the line of a speculative realism, leads outwards photography – as an act of capturing light and thus of imitating the organisation of particules at the core of atoms and molecules which are themselves constituting macro forms and slapes and textures and colours and so on. Our willing to snake through and beyond the artistic 'white noise', the Principle of Mimetic Difference (PoMD) accelerates our way out for the simple reason that photography cannot be transcended in and with photography itself. The PoMD necessarily requires to think photography as a 'science of capture', and leads therefore to focus on a 'photographic posture'. In other words, rethinking photography requires to consider the premises of its genesis, and here we think of philosophy as a meta-photography. So to escape the white noise which a photographic mind has led to, we need to re-develop our vision of the world and the universe freed from its onto-photo-logy.



SoCs

Bastien Rousseau appaaspi@gmail.com

5 nov. (Il y a 2 jours) ☆

Dear Elena

I wanted to give emphasis to the section 213, 216, 219 and 220, as well as 226 – and of course 225, though to certain extent. I quite like them a lot :-)

I was thinking of the sensual object analogy to a black hole, first. Then, certainly the absence of money as a thing but rather as a set of socio-economic and political relations between individuals – i.e. what makes the difference between the understanding of capitalism as such with the one of a semio-capitalism. In the context of Andreas' showroom, I was thinking about the latter as a black hole kind of heterotopia, whose societal function – as I already underlined in a previous email – may be to operate the transition from one paradigm to another; an onto-photological paradigm transmuted into a chasmoic one. The chasmoic would be a constant dynamic of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of different ethico-political realities; perhaps, in adopting a fractal structure of development. Therefore two dynamics: one structural and the other paradigmatic; one fractal and the other at once matter of focus and density. These two dynamics are neither divided nor united but happen to be sometimes the two same dynamic intrinsically one and sometimes two completely different ones with no sympathy for any potential, present or future, unification or even fusion. In this way, these two dynamics are not real entities but rather possibilities of what a situation can require and consequently generate. A lecture of these possibilities, as such, represent the potential for the artificial development (i.e. by the artist) of a self-organised chaos manifested in a work of art. Those artworks embody themselves en se this chasmoic, as autonomous subjectivities, i.e. potentially autopoietic.

MATHESIS AND THE OCEAN'S (SOUND) WAVES

That is to say that universality, the community of life, denies itself, gives itself to each living being as a simple outside, an exteriority that remains foreign to it, an Other: there is a plurality of men yet, precisely, each one must in the same way assume his life for himself, without common measure with others, on his own account; the universal is immediately recuperated. —p. 144

Thus we see that unity comes about at the level of concrete man; very far from transcending the human condition, it is its exact description. [...] And the key notion of mathesis—not at all mystical—is that individuality never separates itself from the universal [...]. —p. 146

[Quotes from:] Deleuze, G., «Mathesis, Science and Philosophy», in: *Collapse III*, ed. R. Mackay Falmouth: Urbanomic, November, 2007

The question of the nature of continuous transitions intersects with the question of the individuation of masses: why are certain clusters of frequencies registered as <a> sound, and at what point does it change in nature, becoming many? —p. 112

[Quote from:] Mackay, R., «Blackest Ever Black», in: *Collapse III*, ed. R. Mackay Falmouth: Urbanomic, November, 2007

The molecular has the capacity to make the elementary communicate with the cosmic: precisely, because it effects a dissolution of form that connects the most diverse longitudes and latitudes, the most varied speeds and [slow-motions], which guarantees a continuum by stretching variation far beyond its formal limits. —p. 308

[Quote from:] Deleuze, G. Guattari, F., «A Thousand Plateaus», Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987

The Scales of Perception

— This would mean that aesthetics would no longer be a field study of the visual experience of *things*, and thus of artworks – i.e. of macro-sensible objects and other forms of existence to the World –, but rather of a deeply sensible experience of 'sensual objects' such as they constitute potential constituents of artworks; yet, not that a tree or a smartphone cannot become an aesthetic experience if not part of an artwork, but that those objects must be considered as dismantled artworks, or as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari would put it: 'becoming-artworks'.

The synesthesia here is not only of the senses but of the entire *sensible world*. Aesthetics therefore tends to span the entire complex of nuances of access to the World and the Universe.

The intuition of an onto-photo-logy of the human mind seems to require us to move towards the complication of its 'instant-structure', in order to emerge from the semiotic white noise in which we are drawn for quite a decade now, considering the emergence of a so-called semio-capitalism whose structure is less visible and therefore more surreptitious.

« La place du mort »

Dave Hickey: *It's a social discourse. There ain't no Frank Stellas at Montana State. But you've got to be there, and you've got to be interested in other people so you can talk about them. Gossip is the currency of the discourse, so you should shut up about yourself. Never*

confess, never explain, never apologize, and never complain. But you got to be there. The missing are presumed dead.

— There is an other saying in French which is: 'The missing are always wrong.'

Despite the common place it may represent, let us draw upon the fact that absence is not necessarily the macro-physical issue of someone or something (an object) not being present. Indeed, I would rather consider the perceptible absence of such an object on a more surreptitious level, for its invisible presence.

Sincere Relations

or the absence of Absence

— The sincerity of our relation to 'sensible objects', as they are irreducible in their immanence as *absolute*, 'ideal objects', leads us to fuse a conception of this sensibility in the form of a concept (Gilles Deleuze) which we perceive as a 'real object' (Graham Harman). This is this 'sincere relation' that creates a so-called *image* out of the photograph, or any *picture*, which remains this 'sensible object'. I see this relation based upon a 'nanological' reality which finds itself more and more grounded in the realms of hard-sciences such as astrophysics and bio-technologies. Quantum Theory and its mechanics seems to have been of a great help to the foundation of a Speculative Realism very keen on an metaphysical ecology of all objects – according to an object-oriented ontology –, assuring the evidence of

an autonomous 'non-correlational' world, i.e. a possible intentional and autonomous (i.e. autopoietic) 'nanocosm'.

Beyond the white noise

— In a semio-capitalistic era, the issue with photography – and with pictures – in general seems to lie in both a speculated onto-photo-logy and their immanent Principle of Mimetic Difference.

Each picture is seen through an onto-photo-logical prism which gives it its veracity as 'real object' – whose corporeality is limited to its nature as a *concept*.

Though, taking for account the apparatus (eyes) through which we perceive it, even photographs are ideal objects; eyes themselves have their sensibility. The subjectivity they constitute is then a factor of perception of the photograph, as both 'sensible object' and 'real object'; i.e. the concept we constitute from and of the sensible instigated by our sincerity towards it. This concept is usually the entanglement of different qualities and dimensions (iconology, or merely semiotics, political or social subject matter, formal as well as material qualities, etc.) on different modes relating to texture, density and multiplicity. Photographs or any other flat medium do not have the monopoly of such an onto-photo-logy since it relies on our system of conceptualisation. Indeed, no matter whether they are trees or sound-waves, any object is subjected to such a perceptive process. Like this, the ecology of an artwork – and not only of a 'picture' – not only lies in the visible macro articulation of physical objects,

articulation of the content they carry, but also in their even less tangible metaphysical dimension.

Furthermore, I want to speculate on the idea that the sensible object one fuses in an *image*, and which one considers as its veracious reality, is indeed real yet for the reason it has thus been *detrterritorialised* in the explosion of its quantum integrity; although it fuses in one melting object, it does actually become infinitesimal and therefore *multitude*. This invisible reality thus exists as nanophysical forces, energies, colours, masses, trajectories, which constitute therefore the quantum ecology of the artwork.

— We may *in fine* trust this reality for its overwhelming corporeal presence, whose ability to self-sustain itself in an ongoing multiple process of *chaosmosis* – i.e. to operate a re-creation of its modes of existence yet, here, according to a dynamic of dilatation/crystallisation – is usually considered on a macro-scale under the name of 'natural selection'.

ELENA BAJO

THE ABSENCE OF WORK

—IN CONNVERSATION

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT
ELENA BAJO IN CONVERSATION WITH PLATFORM3

From: PLATFORM3

To: Elena Bajo

Subject: You have the right to remain silent

In preparation for your residency at PLATFORM3 – Spaces for Contemporary Art, we researched the Bavarian Soviet Republic, in particular the position of women, and the historical memory of cultural spaces.

To what extent can we conclude that “The Absence of Work” is a historical exhibition?

From: Elena Bajo

To: PLATFORM3

Subject: Re: You have the right to remain silent

Hopefully, the exhibition doesn't lead to any conclusion, historical or otherwise, but creates an open space for speculative thought and a multiplicity of interpretations. I am interested in history because it allows me to fabricate a fiction by focusing on elements of a fragmented truth, it allows me to expose

past events and re-read and re-interpret them. The artworks have been placed in line with political history. There are no historical artifacts per se either ... The “re-created” historical artifacts (since they are not the real historical artifacts but objects that elicit or evoke the historical facts) are displayed as artworks ...

I would say the exhibition – in its collection of objects – reflects more on philosophical and political thinking. I consider not only that this exhibition is not historical but that it elicits the presence of the absence of history by using the present tense to refer to the future. It evokes maybe Hegel's notion of the “end of history”, and with it the end of the past tense as a linear narrative. If we compare it to a text, it would be the kind of incoherent speech that comes from a “Parrhesiac” person. Although we don't hear a voice, we experience the objects; these objects – if we think about them as “animated” – they all say their own truth, as Foucault would remark.

These “objects” or “forms” are kind of non-existent; they inhabit a future space/time that hasn't happened yet. They are in the process of becoming and reinitiating a new narrative, in which their potentialities will be manifested and become action. Until then, they only exist in their post-historical condition, in which they fulfill the role of a witness. These objects will re-articulate their presence in the world; in the meantime, they question their critical capacity for change in the present, the possibility for autonomy, and the initiation of a new history of the world. They are part of what I call “The Society of Changes”. They manifest different aspects within different contexts.

The research for the exhibition was on the one hand focused on moments of transition in the political history of Bavaria with special regard to anarchist and feminist approaches. Discovering the historical fact of the Bavarian Soviet Republic's existence in Munich for 3½-weeks in 1919 triggered and directed the specific making of the artwork and its manifestation in the exhibition. The historical fact as such was just the starting point since the artwork delineates and connects this historical and political event to other issues, such as the history of art and artists such as Marcel Duchamp and John Cage.

Obviously, the fact that the starting point of the project is historical research doesn't make it into a "historical" exhibition in that sense. It remains an art exhibition. Otherwise, the exhibition certainly is "historical" in the sense that this exhibition will be part of the history of exhibitions of PLATFORM3 as an art space, of the curator and of the artist and the local community. It might even become part of the history of the exhibitions in Munich, Germany or Europe.

From: PLATFORM3

To: Elena Bajo

Subject: Re: You have the right to remain silent

The visitor of the exhibition finds an anarchist poem by John Cage next to Lenin's letter to the Bavarian Soviet Republicans from 1919 – both printed on plain paper and displayed on the wall. Throughout

the whole exhibition the spectator comes across quotations by John Cage: You use them as titles for your works. What importance do you attach to John Cage within this specific exhibition, "The Absence of Work", and within your artistic practice in general?

From: Elena Bajo

To: PLATFORM3

Subject: Re: You have the right to remain silent

John Cage is a very important reference for my praxis/practice. I feel that his philosophies and approach to life and art are present and in a constant dialogue with issues that are central to my praxis/practice, too. It is also a reference from the past that is immensely present for me. Bringing him in produces a clash of different temporalities. By opening this dialogue, the artwork expands into the realm of art history.

Anarchy and its absence, time and timelessness, space and non-space, chance and structure, performativity and non-action, movement and contemplation, sense and non-sense, music and noise, philosophy and metaphysics, affect and effects as well as objects and abjects, non-hierarchies and presence, process and progress, and changes and questions and more questions.

In "The Absence of Work", as you have mentioned before, the titles of the works are quotations by Cage. In this sense, he is providing the "sound" for the artworks, since the titles are meant to be read and spoken up; they become "the music of the exhibition":

- "We need not destroy the past. It is gone"
- "Every something is an echo of nothing"
- "I am trying to be unfamiliar with what I am doing"

The titles reflect on subjectivities and singularities. They are a murmur. They are the sound of potentialities. They become a collective murmur. They are a way to contemplate sculpture in time and music in space. They add another layer to the work that establishes new and different kinds of relationships. The first layer of the exhibition might be the presence of the political in terms of symbolic ecologies of colors and shapes and textures. In one half of the space, red and black are dominant. One part of the space reflects on the political absence, the amnesia of history. The other half of the space reflects on the absence of the work of the artist, the physical work or labor and also the work itself, since we are confronted with its minimal abstraction.

The untitled "white pieces" come from a similar place as the famous "silent piece" by John Cage, 4min. 33sec. that was inspired by the "white paintings" of Rauschenberg. In the same way it is impossible to be completely silent, with no sounds, there is an impossibility of having a completely

"empty canvas". So the absence of the marks of painting on the canvas allows the viewer to pay attention to these objects, to participate in the creation of the work and to open a space to think about objects and time as well as space and time and activity, since in this piece the visitor is invited to change the display and configuration of the four pieces on the wall, clearly influenced by John Cage's strategies of non-hierarchical composition. Chance as a compositional technique, causing the interruption of the work and the work to interrupt us, is also used in the sense that all the materials in the exhibition have been found within PLATFORM3 and collected in an unplanned fashion. A similar approach is taken with the three sculptures in which the white pedestals are left empty.

The anarchist poem by John Cage is placed on the wall in dialogue with Lenin's letter of greetings to the newly formed Bavarian Soviet Republic. This is also a gesture that makes the letter "resonate" within the space of the exhibition as a musical tone.

CONVERSATION STORIES
AN EXCHANGE BETWEEN GÜRSOY DOĞTAS AND ELENA BAJO

From: Gürsoy Doğtas
To: Elena Bajo
Date: Saturday, Oct. 27, 2012 – 3:07 PM

Dear Elena,

When I arrived at the preview of your exhibition at PLATFORM3, the titles of your works were not yet in place. So in an almost illicit manner, I was able to view your works first without their titles and then with their labels attached.

One of your installations consists of two matt black rectangles, about six feet high, covered with a thin, slightly milky plastic film that moves with the breeze. Its title reads “You have the right to remain silent”, referring to the Miranda Warning.

Due to its title, this art object (that I would somehow describe as ‘postpost-minimal’), conveys the idea of disobedience. Across from this work, leaning against the wall, you have installed a black “flag” attached to a wooden stick.

Its color reminds of the iconography of the anarchy movement, which once more refers to the topic of “disobedience”. At the International Anarchy-Congress in 1881 in London, the black flag was invented. Many

years later, in 1915, Kazimir Malevich exhibits his painting “Black Square” for the first time. Quickly, this painting turns into one of the icons of the 20th century. Malevich and the Anarchy Movement are evoked in some of your works at PLATFORM3.

In case you agree, do you think that Malevich, by painting “Black Square”, was explicitly referring to the anarchy movement?

Take care and get well soon,

Gürsoy

From: Elena Bajo
To: Gürsoy Doğtas
Date: Sunday, Nov. 4, 2012 – 11:26 PM

Gürsoy dear,

I didn't know your question was going to make me read an awful lot before I was actually able to reply to you in a substantial way ... so this is what I have researched so far ...

“Black Square” [1913] 1923-29; Oil on canvas, 106.2x106.5 cm (41.8x41.9 in); State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg

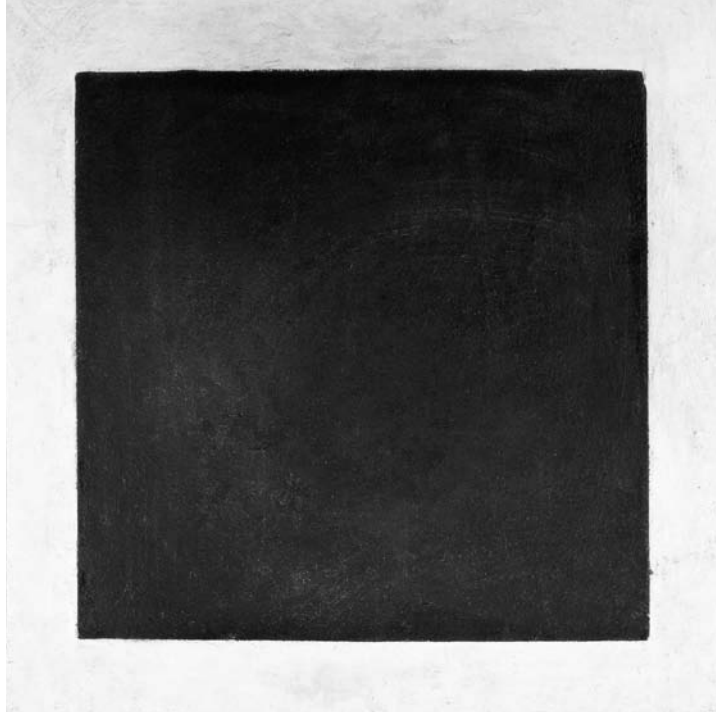
What is “Black Square” about?

This is a question that has been formulated a number of times throughout history ... and after almost a century it still remains a question with a multiplicity of possible answers. It was created as an

artwork within the realm of art but has since invaded the field of politics and history. Because of its abstract nature, "Black Square" has resisted one single reading; instead, it allows for repeated interpretation. In Suprematism, a movement Malevich invented and wrote a Manifesto for, he summarizes and reflects on the main points he was interested in at the time he made the work. The black phase marked the beginnings of the Suprematist movement, and the 'zero degree' of painting, as exemplified by "Black Square".

But what is the painting about? Which intentions did Malevich have for the work and what were the circumstances surrounding it?

Like other modernist pioneers, Malevich believed in the possibility of an artistic *tabula rasa*. He did not want life to lead art, but art to lead life; to do so, it had to be transcendent and new. He engaged in the search for a new reality. He lived at a time when artists believed that revolutions in thought could be made through form. "There is a beginning, a renovation of life through artistic form", he wrote in 1928. Form could send a message to economics. It could be the prophetic sermon that would convince the human congregation to follow painting into the Promised Land. If it was going to change others, it had to change him first. "I have transformed myself into the zero degree of form", Malevich said in 1915. He tried to turn the self into a non-issue. His force of personality and will can be felt at all times, but the identity of the man behind the iconic, mystical Suprematist mask is elusive - as elusive as his artwork.



Malevich_Black_Square.jpg



Last_Futurist_Exhibition_1915.jpg

REREAD AND RETHOUGHT

From: Gürsoy Dogtas

To: Elena Bajo

Date: Thursday, Nov. 15, 2012 – 10:39 AM

||||| “He lived at a time when artists believed that revolutions in thought could be made through form.”
||||| – How do you think revolutions are made today – still through form?
|||||

From: Elena Bajo

To: Gürsoy Dogtas

Date: Friday, Nov. 16, 2012 – 11:42 PM

||||| In revolutionary times, such as during the Soviet Revolution, Malevich was part of the Avant-
||||| guard artists who believed in the power of art over politics, religion, etc. Therefore he called
||||| his movement ‘Suprematism’ and wanted art to rule over politics, philosophy, religion, etc.
||||| Because those times were revolutionary times, politics permeated everyday life. The exaltation
||||| produced by politics was also produced by art, and the new artistic forms that were being born
||||| in these revolutionary times were considered revolutionary because they were rooted in revolu-
||||| tionary ideas and thoughts. Art was a way to materialize revolutions in thought and new forms
||||| could trigger new ideas, something like “Thought follows Form”.

||||| By reading Malevich’s biography, one can assume that his social and political ideology were
||||| in alignment with Anarchist ideas, the individualist kind. He was even contributing to a news-
||||| paper called ‘ANARKHIIA’, but he would write about art, not politics. Probably this is the best
||||| example of being in the real anarchist spirit ...
||||| Indeed, the desire to create a transcendental art is present in the ideas of Kandinsky and Piet
||||| Mondrian. Kandinsky takes us back to Bavaria and the exhibition at PLATFORM3.

REREAD AND RETHOUGHT

From: Gürsoy Dogtas

To: Elena Bajo

Date: Thursday, Nov. 15, 2012 – 10:39 AM

||| Elena, at this point I would like to know more about the processes that allow you to create a
||| work of art.
|||

From: Elena Bajo

To: Gürsoy Dogtas

Date: Friday, Nov. 16, 2012 – 11:42 PM

||| Intuitively I believe that new ideas live hidden inside objects, all the ideas of the world –
||| past present and future – are contained inside materials. By performing these materials, we
||| generate processes of image re-building, of unlocking the power and energy of association that
||| lies within them. Materials can be anything from an object to a sound, from color to atmospheric
||| conditions, etc. New ideas don't display themselves at once as a whole but like little pebbles
||| on the beach or by a river. Little by little, one hint here another hint there ... sometimes they
||| come as colors, sometimes as sounds ... it depends: art is a process of putting together, of con-
||| necting and thinking of one material in relationship to another material.
|||

||| Also worth mentioning is that opposed to what one would think – the color of the first flags
||| used for anarchist activities were RED and not BLACK in the 1830's. There is a very curious
||| story of Louise Michel in France, when she took her petty coat and cut it apart and sewed the
||| parts together into a black flag which she attached to a broom's wooden stick and carried on the
||| street. The black color was decided upon when the anarchists had to differentiate themselves
||| from communists. This brings us to women and their role in political uprisings in general and
||| the history of political revolution and anarchism. Did Malevich have the intention of creating
||| “Black Square” as an anarchist work?

||| I doubt it was a conscious intention, but even if it was it couldn't have been declared or pro-
||| claimed openly. I think that the piece constitutes an anarchist gesture in itself and it reminds
||| me of another artist from New York during the Seventies:
||| Christopher D’Arcangelo. He would accompany each of his artistic gestures by a written statement
||| stenciled on its back:

||| “When I state that I am an anarchist I must also state that I am not an anarchist to keep in
||| line with the [...] definition of anarchism. Long live anarchism.”

||| +e

From: Gürsoy Dogtas
To: Elena Bajo
Date: Sunday, Nov. 4, 2012 – 03:54 PM

Elena,

[...] I did not know that the communists and anarchists were in distinction fights about the color of their flag. Malevich must have realized very quickly that the anarchist ideals of self-government without a guiding central authority are quite far from what the communists established in Russia. In 1921, he criticizes the communists' work (working became like a religion to the communists) ethic in his manifesto "Laziness as the real Truth of Mankind" referring to Paul Lafargue's (who was not an anarchist) famous essay "The Right to be Lazy".

I was leafing through your beautiful publication "The Factory of Forms". Some images of your "Public Domain Archive Images" depict protests, riots as well as a burning car. I see this as a link to the first car bombing in our history: in 1920 on Wall Street in New York. It was carried out by the Italian anarchist Mario Buda. Mike Davis interprets this explosion as the paroxysm of half a century of anarchist fantasy. This cruel action is frozen into an image, which can develop into a source for a gesture or practice. One of your artistic procedures, I think, consists in transferring images into actions in order to activate and spread them – just like the catchy lyrics of a song. Am I right?

All the best,

Gürsoy

From: Elena Bajo
To: Gürsoy Dogtas
Date: Thursday, Nov. 8, 2012 – 11:18 PM

Gursoy dear,

I am very interested in these "historical political stories". Parts of the exhibition at PLATFORM3 are just traces of these stories. Their meaning is located somewhere in between what happened then and an imminent future that is embodied by the visitor. Having history as a reference articulates one of the layers of the meaning of my work.

Yes, Malevich realized soon that anarchism was very different from communism, almost antithetical. The criticism you have mentioned concerning "work" and "labor" I believe, is related to Malevich's search for abstraction that would reduce the load of work in his painting to minimal, reductionist, essential elements as an expression of how he considered "work/labor in society". In this sense, his art positioned itself against the communist regime; at the same time it had been triggered by the anti-capitalist revolution of 1917 and by Paul Lafargue's essay "The Right to be Lazy".

I want to point to the fact that most political revolutions in the industrial world originated in the "factory" instigated by "workers" who triggered and ignited the fighting for their rights to a decent salary, more human working conditions, etc. Before I go on to answer the second part of your question, I would like to ask you a question: How do you think "work" and "labour" and "revolution" can be re-articulated in a contemporary semio-capitalist society and what would be

art's relationship to it, if any ... ?
Very much looking forward
Elena

From: Gürsoy Dogtas
To: Elena Bajo
Date: Sunday, Nov. 11, 2012 – 09:34 PM

Elena,

I have been thinking about your question:

It would be interesting to know what you define as a “revolution” and which revolutions you consider successful. The narrative of the revolution has a great suggestive power; instead of plainly succumbing to it, I'd rather try to deconstruct this type of narration. We could then perhaps break it down into smaller parts and start from there to “analyze the specificity of mechanisms of power, to locate the connections and extensions, to build little by little a strategic knowledge” (Foucault). But what to do with this knowledge? Acting or performing it? Following a distinction made by Sven Lütticken, to move is acting beyond one's previous identity and position, whereas “performing is to go along with the program”, i.e. to be part of the event, to readjust and recalibrate. Does this match with your experience in performance?

Very best, G

REREAD AND RETHOUGHT

From: Gürsoy Dogtas
To: Elena Bajo
Date: Thursday, Nov. 15, 2012 – 10:39 AM

I spent the weekend in Hamburg attending a workshop. There, we read a text together by Susan Melrose. She argues that performance is a non-discursive, post-alphabetical research tool.
I started to wonder how you use performance? What about the research moment?

From: Elena Bajo
To: Gürsoy Dogtas
Date: Friday, Nov. 16, 2012 – 11:42 PM

The way the art process starts is through researching the political and social history of the space chosen a priori. What kind of place is this? Who was living here? When? Parts of that history are related to ideas – interesting ideas that were forgotten, abandoned or rejected – where are they now? Can we relate to something else that is still present? How can these ideas resonate now? Are they coming from the future? Any interesting women's actions? Throughout the process of the research, the going back and forth from the materials to the thinking, and from the thinking to the materials is exhaustive, one nourishes the other:

First is the space, then the ideas found in this space, then the materials found around the space, or materials found in other spaces that communicate or connect with the ideas of the research, or have the potential to relate to the research; What was the meaning of these materials before and what is happening to them now? What happens to them? And how does this happen?

The materials have to be contemplated for a while; they need time to make sense in this new context, they need time to start disclosing the potential meaning we have sensed in them, let them be ... I come back and I know I have to perform the materials, I live with them, I change them constantly, I move around, I move and I move, and I perform the thoughts, sometimes, together, sometimes separately ... I write, I write during the whole process, I read, I read them aloud, I scream at them, I scream hard at them... I draw also, I draw with my eyes closed, I sleep I sleep a lot ... I dream them ... then ... I go back to them, they are moving me, they are now writing to me, they are reading me, screaming at me. then they are drawing me ... sleeping with me, then, they are dreaming me ...

I sense a structure of thought-art, I should expose the structure of the process, I should proclaim that the structure of the process is also the artwork, I should proclaim that the nature of the world is not determined yet, so is the nature of the art-work. The artist is the worker, the performer, the art-work is a form. But art is not one thing or another, it is how you relate one thing to another. This relationship is the image.

From: Elena Bajo

To: Gürsoy Dogtas

Date: Thursday, Nov. 15, 2012 – 01:01 AM

Gürsoy,

Most importantly, “you should not try to find whether an idea is just or correct. You should look for a completely different idea, elsewhere in another area, so that something passes between the two, which is neither in one nor the other.” (Deleuze, Dialogues, p.10)

Is there a way that all humans could live happily together as a group on earth ... ? Is there a way for society to be self-organized without structures of power, authority, government/state and hierarchies? Is there a way to preserve our subjectivities, autonomy and emancipation? Is there a way for a heterogeneous society to exist in which “difference” is considered an asset? What would be the contemporary form of Revolution? Can “affects” be used as weapons?

The absence of desire
the potential for change lives in us
the revolt is still to come.
a dream to be fulfilled

Each revolution throughout history has changed certain elements of these oppressive artificial structures built upon people's everyday life. What we have experimented with so far is a succession of temporary revolutions that were partially successful for a limited time

- and then ...
- and then they failed, ...
- and then discontent was generated from the powerless majority
- and then ...
- they give way to ...
- revolution,
- and then failure and then another revolution ... and then failure ...
- too much blood shed to produce the same
- and then people stopped believing in revolutions ...
- and then people adapted to the repressive conditions
- and melted into the system
- and then they stopped revolting ...
- and then they stopped thinking because somebody else was thinking for them ...
- and then they stopped living because somebody else was controlling their lives ...

Revolutions have always been fights for power and government, always within the same power structures ... The successful revolutions have changed a specific political system into a different one,

but always within the same power structures. Violent or non violent, revolutions would inscribe themselves within a common circular pattern of power:

There would always be somebody controlling somebody else, an authority, a hierarchy, somebody in charge the class in power would govern over the powerless class ...

There would always be somebody governing somebody else ...

There would always be decisions taken without people's consent ...

There would always be somebody abusing and exploiting somebody else ...

There would always be victims that would scream and fight and die ...

then the time for revolution would come again ...

Revolution means change. At this point not a change of political system, not a change of economic system but a change of paradigm, a paradigm shift. What to do when not only people are dying, but society is collapsing and the earth is dying?

How to think of a social structure in the absence of authority, in the absence of hierarchies?

How to think of a political system that revindicates a non hierarchical distribution of power, the autonomy and emancipation of individuals?

How to think anarchism? How to activate anarchism?

How to think ecosophy? How to activate ecosophy?

Guattari's concept of ecosophy, together with anarchism, could introduce certain new elements in the equation. Ecosophy is a theoretical system that I would like to subscribe to. At least, if not more than that, it is an interesting proposal: ecosophy "proposes to the proponents of social liberation, whose struggles in the 20th century were dominated by the paradigm of social revolution and Marxism, to embed their arguments within an ecological framework which understands the inter-connections of social and environmental spheres". We cannot have an environmental revolution without a collective revolution first and we cannot have a collective revolution without an individual revolution first. We have to transform our mind first to generate social and environmental change. I understand this as a new field of practice, "socio-environ-mental politics" within the framework of three ecologies: social, environmental and mental. These three ecologies function on three levels of resonance: the macro level of the biosphere, the intermediate level of social relations, and the micro or molecular level of human subjectivity.

Why did revolutions fail in the past and keep failing today? Deleuze and Guattari believe that subjectivities can resist and reterritorialize against repression, that they produce lines of flight ... lines of scape ... They think that social production is engineered, in concert with psychic repression, to produce scarcity. The subconscious for them is a factory. The brain keeps producing desire, and desire is socially encouraged and at the same time repressed. There are ways of re-territorializing areas that have been taken from us even when the collective encourages the production of their own repression. The repression is performed eternally in the capitalistic cycle; therefore the disrupting of structures of power;

Now, in the time of "semio-capitalism", we can articulate the idea of the subconscious as being a theater instead of a factory since the worker nowadays is a "performer" whose labor time is not measured easily, since he or she is constantly working. In the Sixties, performance was a form of subverting commercial value and commodification of art. Performance is back being a subversive activity if it becomes an action or act. By revendicating subjectivity, we recover the sense of time and we can use time on our own terms, for leisure and not for work or labor. "Affects", such as the need to touch each other (Bifo), are a means to resist the alienation produced by the constantly performed repression generated by capitalism. It might happen that by activating affects, structures of power can be rearticulated.

et--

TRIANGULAR RELATIONS

A «TRIALOGUE» BETWEEN AN ARTIST (ELENA BAJO),
A RESEARCHER (BASTIEN ROUSSEAU)
AND AN ARTIST AND PHILOSOPHER (DIETER HAMMER)

PROLOGUE

Dieter Hammer (visual artist and photographer, based in Freising, Bavaria) has never met Elena Bajo in person. But he knows somebody who knows her: the link between Dieter and Elena is Bastien Rousseau (writer, theorist and curator living in London, currently a researcher at Goldsmiths College, University of London). Bastien met Dieter through the introduction of their mutual friend Andreas Siegfried (Siegfried Contemporary) in London. And Bastien had met Elena previously, also in London, on the occasion of «The Pervasive Element», a site-specific project for Frieze Frame 2011.

Nowadays, communication is virtual – detached from time and space and not depending on personal encounter only. This is a privilege. And at the same time, a challenge: How to engage in a conversation with somebody one has never shared time (and coffee) with in real life?

A possible answer to this question is the following «trialogue», started via e-mail and stretching over several weeks with a frenetic rate of email exchanges on either side.

Dieter Hammer, an artist himself and interested in the potential abstraction and context-specific quality of Elena's work, has visited THE ABSENCE OF WORK at PLATFORM 3. And so the encounter – at least in an intellectual sense – finally took place. Not in London, but in Munich. This is when Dieter Hammer produced a series of photographs of the exhibition. The resulting images are all but mere documents. They are in themselves an artistic endeavor that is entirely Dieter's own: a synthesis of representational and non-representational photography that he qualifies as «transmimetic»; Bastien and Dieter are developing the «mimetic/non-mimetic» paradigm further, for its impact on theory within the fields of photography is important. Finally, the three of them – Elena, Bastien and Dieter – have decided to engage in a common project, based on Dieter's intuition on the dual nature of photography as a medium and its *object*-independent options.

The following edited extract of an e-mail exchange that lasted from October 9th to November 15th, 2012, gives access to this collaborative research and witnesses the coming-into-being of a new research and exhibition project:

From: Bastien Rousseau

To: Dieter Hammer

Subject: Re: Photography as transitional medium: 16 Bassett Road as transitional

Date: Friday, Oct. 12, 2012 – 06:34 PM

Shall we keep exchanging more to refine the curatorial concept: Photography as a transitional medium from the paradigm of mimetic/non-mimetic art forms (artworks) to autonomous subjectivities?

I have been thinking about art's agency in terms of social change ... and I can't help getting back to the supposedly sole domain where this is possible: i.e. to constantly dodge and mutate paradigms to sabotage the global Western enterprise of categorization (as the sole way to comprehend the world and the universe ...). In these terms, what would be the next step for photography - Yup! Transcendence of its mimetic/non-mimetic paradigm considered as One: from which we get a driving force (a dynamic flux of contraries) that makes us move forward, suspending thus our will to seize, to possess ...

Art's endeavor (or aim?) would be to co-opt paradigms to either annihilate or emulate them, or simply to seclude them into the maze of the uncanny's valley. Three strands of action: let's get started! ;-)

From: Dieter Hammer
To: Bastien Rousseau
Subject: Re: Heterotopia: sanctuary of transition
Date: Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2012 – 03:28 PM

I am actually pondering roughly the very same questions. As for what I have written so far, one conclusion is: The introduction of the mimetic and non-mimetic (transcendent) poles of a universal framework for photography will trigger the necessity for an artist to decide what mimetic degree to feature in a photograph or his/her particular working style and for what aesthetic reason. This question will pave the way for discussion and the necessity of aesthetic justification and positioning – the dynamics of con-

traries, as you correctly remark :). Something like: I did this, because I believe in realism (with all political implications) or I did this because I believe that the realm of art lies within a negative, absolute aesthetic (non-mimetic) position next to the natural world (Adorno) or I did this because I do not care about either.

So, the change will be that a normative aesthetic position can be based and challenged alike in terms of mimetic degree. I do not know yet where this all leads us: a renaissance of (new or old) normative aesthetic values or a continuation of a free floating anything goes? Considering the current “globalization of the arts” discussion, the development can be very interesting because the promoters of the “global art thing” believe in aesthetic compatibility (maybe because of the small degree of aesthetic depths of the content)! However aesthetics have normative content: either conservative or progressive! So, an aesthetic discussion on values will have social implications!

Bastien asked Dieter to visit Elena's exhibition at PLATFORM3.

From: Dieter Hammer
To: Bastien Rousseau **Cc:** Elena Bajo
Subject: Re: Heterotopia: sanctuary of transition
Date: Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2012 – 07:11 PM

Just to update you, Elena, since last Monday Bastien and I have been going on about the concept of mimetic and non-mimetic photography. The non-mimetic, or absolute, has played an important role in the history of philosophy since Plato, Aristotle until Adorno and others. Within the arts the non-mimetic stands for the absolute: absolute music, painting, sculpture, literature.

Today I had a chance to visit your exhibition in Munich. I do quite like your catalytic way of dealing with spaces and their history! The tribute to Cage's work with the plastic vellum I like most. Cool! I took the chance to expose some film (cannot say simply that I took pictures because of the partially non-mimetic nature of the content :)) Shame, that I did not have a chance to meet you during your stay in Munich.

From: Elena Bajo
To: Dieter Hammer
Subject: Platform3
Date: Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2012 – 11:00 PM

Dear Dieter,

Thank you for this – and yes, it is a pity that I'm not in Munich anymore ...
I would love to see your exposed film ...

From: Dieter Hammer
To: Elena Bajo
Subject: Great!
Date: Wednesday, Oct. 17, 2012 – 07:36 PM

I am also curious about the outcome of the film. In non-mimetic photography there is always an element of chance that occurs.

I guess what we are doing here together with Bastien requires some collaborative performance for instance. Transmimetic photography can be location-related, so we could work on a topic from opposite sides, I could also pick up something, then you transform it or vice versa. What do you think of such an approach in general?

From: Elena Bajo
To: Dieter Hammer
Subject: Re: Great!
Date: Thursday, Oct. 18, 2012 – 06:00 PM

I am always eager to experience work this way anyway by removing ourselves as much as we can from aesthetic decisions, but I must admit I've never done it with photography and since we're following a non-mimetic process, we might end up with something else ...

From: Dieter Hammer
To: Elena Bajo
Subject: Re: Great!
Date: Thursday, Oct. 17, 2012 – 06:16 PM

... let's see where it leads us!

From: Bastien Rousseau
To: Dieter Hammer **Cc:** Elena Bajo
Subject: Re: Heterotopia: sanctuary of transition
Date: Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2012 – 09:44 PM

I am not quite sure whether I got your point but it seems to me that you forgot to consider that the transcendent paradigm of mimetic/non-mimetic (be it photography or art) as One, as united within the very same entity which is the paradigm itself, and thus existing within its contradictory forces ... Hence the inner immanent but transcendent (not transcendental, yet transcending) dynamic as power-to-be, projected in its Difference as divided. And certainly, this state of the paradigm's immanence intimates a 'non-choice' within itself, i.e. a withdrawal from it to instantly transcend its immanent, uncertain nature; which transcends its immanent conflict within itself. Meta-physically,

Difference-as-one ... so to speak, Neutral (Barthes) ... so aporia, therefore: no possible construction but only deconstruction to re-entangle and create deep and complex autonomous subjectivities as artworks - as well as exhibitions.
You see what I mean?

From: Dieter Hammer
To: Bastien Rousseau **Cc:** Elena Bajo
Subject: Re: Heterotopia: sanctuary of transition
Date: Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2012 – 11:11 PM

I was actually picking up on the aspect of the social impact you refer to in your last email on the topic of the holistic nature of the discussion about mimetic and non-mimetic alongside its transcendental implications relative to the medium.

Photography has been a stronghold for the mimetic as the mimetic art form per se. There have been exceptions, however. These exceptions are not perceived as a counter force or pole in absolute terms, so far. Therefore I propose the introduction of mimetic/non-mimetic to describe the degree of the absolute including hybrid forms within the medium. I believe that photography has exhausted the purely mimetic and it is time to confront the protagonists and exponents of the medium with a counter position. The non-mimetic and its hybrid forms!

Now back to your last point, Bastien:

Mimetic/non-mimetic: holistic entity? Yes! However, I don't see the dilemma. The deconstructive approach towards the ab-solute (or whatever degree of non-mimetic) within photography as a medium remains a construction and aesthetically valid within the paradigm, does it not? ;) Another ontological position would characterize change or being as identity-in-difference.

...

From: Elena Bajo
To: Bastien Rousseau
Subject: the image and its double
Date: Wednesday, Oct. 17, 2012 – 11:24 PM

Bastien, dear,

sorry about the sudden loss of connection but I ran out of power (...).

We were talking about infinitesimal and “the image and its double” which references “The Theatre and its Double” where performance (or “space”) is connected to Jungian elements and to the thinking of Antonin Artaud, his madness and Taoist theories – very close to theories of Zen and ecosophy; back to madness and absence, Foucault, and how the degrees of madness make the work absent or invisible (quantum or

infinitesimal), closely connected to the “Theatre of Absence” (one of the chapters in the text I sent you about the Anarchochronologies of the Society of Changes).
I can't wait to know more about non-mimetic photography.

Another conversation about the gap between objects:

From: Elena Bajo
To: Bastien Rousseau **Cc:** Dieter Hammer
Subject: Re: Transmimetic sequences on “The Absence of Work”
Date: Saturday, Oct. 27, 2012 – 11:25 PM

Hi dears, I am excited about all the aspects of this conversation ...
Quite intuitively, I feel that meta-photography is closer to the thing than non-photography ... ?

– the element of performance, “The Theatre of Absence” is essential, although I can't support it yet,

I am into finding ways to work with this that are related to the script, to film stills and to sculpture ... “sometimes photography becomes very easily sculpture ...” what does it mean ... ? same with performance ... what would a Theatre of Absence look like? ... as opposed to a “Theatre of Cruelty” and what is the relationship to “The Theatre and its Double” ... ?

- the element of the “image” is essential
 - the concept of “the image and its double” is essential since it references the photographic condition (image) and the performance element (its “framing” by the author for its manifestation in space and time. Is there an intention to “play something” ...? on the part of the artist ...?)
- How does all of this relate to phenomenology? Abstraction? What is the difference - or similarity between abstract photography, non-photography and meta-photography? How do we talk about one of each in relationship to the “other”?
- object, image and in-between?
 - ways of materializing this kind of photography, with camera, without camera?
 - what are the conditions for the artwork to be called photography?

What are we really talking about?

- Is it scan photography if I print it? What about if I don't print it and it is presented as a projection instead? Would that be photography?
- Is it a “hologram photography”?
- What is the photographic condition ...? Maybe photography has something to do with the suspension of an image, whatever that is, and the play in different scales with a series of parameters,

substrates, and elements of space and time?

- Is photography more than an image frozen in space and time? Why is it photography then and not something else ...?

By the way, Dieter did you get the exposed film yet ...?

From: Dieter Hammer
To: Elena Bajo
Subject: Transmimetic sequences on “The Absence of Work”
Date: Wednesday, Oct. 24, 2012 – 09:45 PM

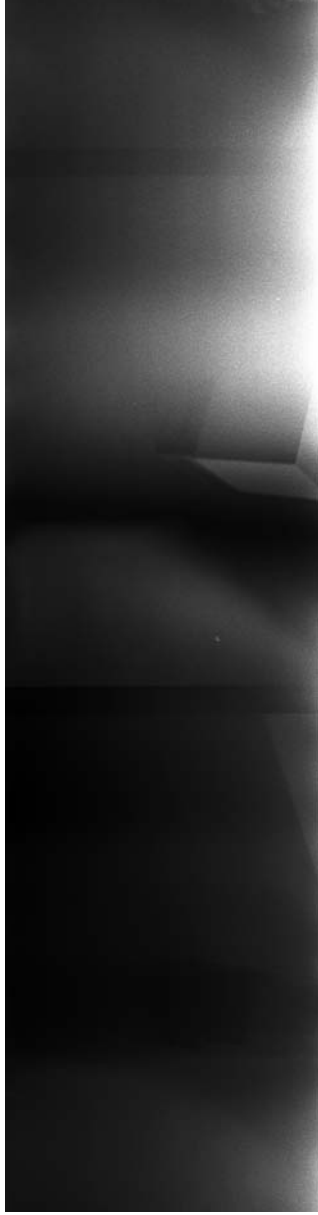
Elena,

Here are “transmimetic” samples of the film that I exposed at your exhibition.





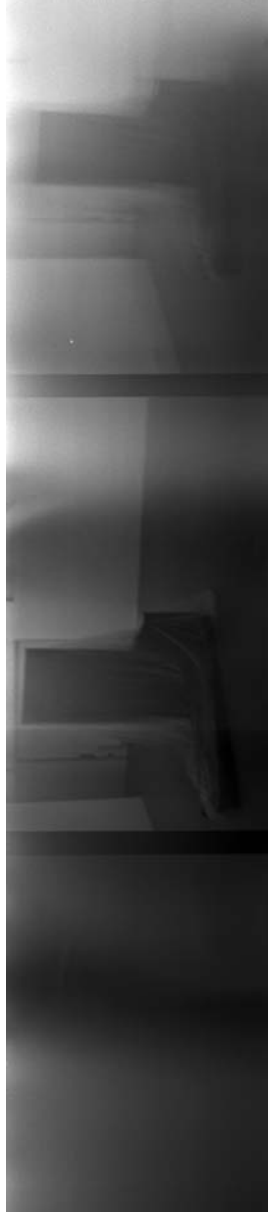
Transmimetics, N°5



Transmimetics, N°7



Transmimetics, N°8



Transmimetics, N°12



Transmimetics, N°17



Transmimetics, N°16

From: Elena Bajo
To: Dieter Hammer
Subject: Re: Transmimetic sequences on "The Absence of Work"
Date: Wednesday, Oct. 24, 2012 – 09:54 PM

| Wow ... really phantastic!

From: Bastien Rousseau
To: Dieter Hammer **Cc:** Elena Bajo
Subject: Re: Transmimetic sequences on "The Absence of Work"
Date: Saturday, Oct. 27, 2012 – 03:29 PM

Well, since we agreed on the non-paradigmatic essence of any photograph, these are both – in some respect – mimetic and non-mimetic. What I am thinking is that we cannot solve the terminological issue on a level different to metaphysics ... it seems that photography is transmimetic, though this does not bring us anywhere beyond as such (as transmimetic). If we agree with this, then photography is not featured of any transcendental agency; only the paradigm itself is syntactically self-transcendental. As we have seen, this only proves that photography cannot go further than its mimetic/non-mimetic essence, even if considered as Difference rather than as a paradigm. Indeed, because of the infinitesimal destination of the photographic gaze – its focus from its own idiosyncratic scale, conscious or only aware of a world which encapsulates it –, neither the photographer nor the observer can distinguish the scales it captures (neither on the back surface of his/her ocular cavity nor on his/her photographic device's analogue or digital memory). The transcendence of photography's mimetic essence can only happen before we even think of photography as a gesture, as a technical act of light capture. I think this is what necessarily led me towards an abstraction of the intent, by the absolution of the photographic gesture, in the necessarily mimetic photography of the banal. Only this specific practice can incarnate and realize the transcendence of photography in photography; only this can be called such a transmimetic photography.

From: Dieter Hammer
To: Bastien Rousseau **Cc:** Elena Bajo
Subject: Re: Heterotopia: sanctuary of transition
Date: Saturday, Oct. 27, 2012 – 07:11 PM

||||| It will have to be clarified, whether transcendence shall be seen in a contingent or absolute sense
||||| in relation to the medium.
|||||

From: Bastien Rousseau
To: Dieter Hammer **Cc:** Elena Bajo
Subject: Re: Heterotopia: sanctuary of transition
Date: Saturday, Oct. 27, 2012 – 03:29 PM GMT+1

BTW, all the topics or ideospheres listed in Elena's reaction are just parts of my subjectivity; so no surprise we are led to it – you and I in emulation.
Please Dieter, keep that idea of the negative installation in mind while discussing with Elena.
There is something going on now in terms of artistic practice around photography's next step.
That is to say, rather off the cuff, that transcended photography must self-annihilate or otherwise cannot be transcended – am I right? So then we put aside the semiotics at stake in aesthetics.

And here starts the conversation about the quantum matter between macroobjects (as spacetime, too), which you must inform yourself of as a user, to turn it into a pathosemiotic fabric or whatever relationships – between the objects and their users; between the users themselves as well as between the objects. We then enter a chaosmosis.
Where does this anchor the logics of absence is a good question. The answer must be carefully thought through. For sure, Artaud's Theatre and Zen philosophy of the "One" as a multiple entity helps us to get there, yet only as clues. I bet they are not the answers themselves. Henceforth, I like this articulation:
How the degrees of madness make the work absent or invisible (quantum or infinitesimal) is closely connected to the "Theatre of Absence".
The degrees of absence and of invisibility, as the contradictory driving forces of another paradigm; one with no name ... otherwise what might it be? I wish we found one paradigm of nothing – not even of nothingness! Right?

From: Elena Bajo
To: Dieter Hammer **Cc:** Bastien Rousseau
Subject: Re: triangular relations
Date: Wednesday, Nov. 14, 2012 – 05:18 PM UTC+1

I can't articulate why the idea of the "negative installation" is so important but I think for me it opens a new door in my practice.

It bridges these different mediums and contemplates the idea of thinking of sculpture, performance, politics, history, text and of photography and its specific materialities in terms of "image creation". I have always considered my work a kind of series of fragmented film strips. But to think about them in terms of the negative of the film is much more interesting ... it is totally fascinating ... !!! Like in the example, what do pictures want? They want to be kissed ... or "we can hang a picture on a wall, but can we hang an image"?

... *Triologue ongoing* ...

During the discussion around the representational and non-representational options of photography, Bastien Rousseau came up with emphasizing the «Principle of Mimetic Difference». The implications of this dialogue on photography as an artistic medium and the relation or even interrelation of photography with other art practices seems fundamental. It will be interesting to see how this will affect and, maybe, pave the way for a new photographic avant-garde movement and aesthetic perception of the medium. Many questions are raised and many questions are still left open!

ELENA BAJO

THE ABSENCE OF WORK

— APPENDIX

INFORMATION ON THE CONTRIBUTORS/

INFORMATION ZU DEN AUTOREN

GÜRSOY DOGTAS is a visual artist, art historian and editor of the artzine MATT MAGAZINE. Since 2011 he has been a researcher and fellow of the postgraduate program «Gathering and participation: Urban public spheres and performative arts» at Hafen City University Hamburg.

GÜRSOY DOGTAS ist bildender Künstler, Kunsthistoriker und Herausgeber des Artizines MATT MAGAZINE. Seit 2011 ist er Stipendiat des Graduiertenkolleges «Versammlung und Teilhabe: Urbane Öffentlichkeiten und performative Künste» an der Hafen City Universität in Hamburg.

DIETER HAMMER is a visual artist and philosopher. His artistic practice and theoretical research deal with the question of the mimetic aspects of photography and the next qualitative step of the photographic medium as an art form. He studied at Sotheby's Institute of Art in London and holds a Master's degree from the Munich School of Philosophy. Dieter Hammer lives and works in Freising, Bavaria.

DIETER HAMMER ist Künstler und Philosoph. Seine künstlerische und theoretische Recherche beschäftigt sich mit mimetischen Eigenschaften der Photographie und deren nächstem, qualitativem Entwicklungsschritt. Er studierte am Sotheby's

Institute of Art in London und an der Hochschule für Philosophie in München. Dieter Hammer lebt und arbeitet in Freising, in Bayern.

MARLENE RIGLER is an art theorist, author and international curator. Her professional engagements have drawn her to Paris, New York and most recently to Brussels, where she was in charge of international projects at Argos Arts Centre. She has been the director of PLATFORM3 – Spaces for Contemporary Art Munich from October 2009 to December 2012.

MARLENE RIGLER ist Kunsttheoretikerin, Autorin und international tätige Kuratorin. Nach Aufgaben in Paris, New York sowie zuletzt als Verantwortliche für internationale Projekte beim Brüsseler Kunstzentrum Argos leitete sie von Oktober 2009 bis Dezember 2012 PLATFORM3 – Räume für zeitgenössische Kunst München.

BASTIEN ROUSSEAU is a freelance curator and editor based in London, who is currently in the MFA program «curating» at Goldsmiths College, University of London. His extended travels to Belgium, Turkey and Switzerland are the basis for his research on art ecology: the forces at stake in art and exhibition making and the ethics of production and presentation of artworks from both a socio-economic and a metaphysical approach.

BASTIEN ROUSSEAU lebt als freiberuflicher Kurator und Autor in London. Derzeit absolviert er den Masterstudiengang «Curating» am Goldsmith College, Universität London. Ausgedehnte Reisen nach Belgien, in die Türkei und die Schweiz bieten den Rahmen für seine Recherche zu Kunst-Ökologie. Machtverhältnisse, die Produktion

und Ausstellung von Kunst bestimmen, und sowohl sozioökonomisch als auch metaphysisch definiert werden können.

SARAH BRACONNIER, CARINA ESSL, KAREN KLAUKE und ANABEL ROQUE RODRIGUEZ are young arts managers with a university degree. In the framework of a year-long Traineeship at PLATFORM3, they gained hands-on experience for future professional endeavors in the field of art and culture.

SARAH BRACONNIER, CARINA ESSL, KAREN KLAUKE und ANABEL ROQUE RODRIGUEZ sind angehende Kulturschaffende mit universitärem Hintergrund. Sie waren 2012-13 als Volontärinnen Teil des Teams von PLATFORM3 und wurden in diesem Rahmen im praktischen Kulturmanagement ausgebildet.

IMPRINT/IMPRESSUM

This publication has been edited on the occasion of the artist-in-residence of Elena Bajo (*1976, Spain) at PLATFORM3 – Spaces for Contemporary Art Munich from September, 15th to October 11th, 2012. THE ABSENCE OF WORK is also the title of the resulting solo exhibition at PLATFORM3 from October 10th to November 21st, 2012.

*Diese Publikation erscheint anlässlich des Gastaufenthaltes der Künstlerin Elena Bajo (*1976, Spanien) bei PLATFORM3 – Räume für zeitgenössische Kunst München von 15. September bis einschließlich 11. Oktober 2012. THE ABSENCE OF WORK ist auch Titel der Einzelausstellung, die bei PLATFORM3 von 10. Oktober bis 21. November 2012 zu sehen war.*

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RÄUME FÜR ZEITGENÖSSISCHE KUNST



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I'm trying to be unfamiliar with what I'm doing

Stone, pedestal

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The Absence of Work

Main space , Installation view

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We do not need to destroy the past. It is gone.

Cloth, steel, glass

Page 14/16/17

You have the right to remain silent

Acrylic on discarded wood, plastic

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Found Paintings

Canvas

Page 25

Every Something is an Echo of Nothing

Rug, wood. The Absence of Work

—

Installation views

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Experimental, photographic images of the exhibition (Transmimetics)

©Dieter Hammer 2012

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Malewich_Black_Square.jpg

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