CATCH
AS
CATCH
CAN
CATCH AS CATCH CAN
Fionn Meade

To me the world is steeped in sticky good taste and ignorance.
Multicolored modernism of sand weakened by intellectual declarations.
Terrible evidence for me of deformation I demand the ravishing.

— Francis Picabia, from the poem Half Asses

The exhibition Catch As Catch Can inhabits a gap between parody and seriousness, consorting and mingling with sculpture, film, graphic design, and poetry, but always with a wry yet beholden eye towards painting and its terms and limits. Taken from the nickname for wrestling match entertainments of the early 20th century, Catch As Catch Can embraces a "no-holds-barred" attitude of reinventing genre, medium, and persona via available means.

Inspired by the presence of Francis Picabia’s painting of the same name—Catch As Catch Can, 1913—the exhibition engages a prying apart and emptying out of stylistic investments, critical prompts, and polémical stances in order that these tactics be revitalized with a restless comic gravitas. Painting as a genre and idea of mobility and mimesis—moving readily between graphic optical forms, versioning of the mechanical copy, and mimesis—moving readily between theatricality and viewer expectations. And yet we have been here before.

Made just after the succès de scandale of the Armory Show, which opened in New York February 17th, 1913, Picabia’s Catch As Catch Can is an emblem of such divided desire, existing between the lyrical embrace of Orphism’s colorful abstraction and the diagrammatic noise of the mecanomorphic, disassembled figuration, and embedded commentary that were to ensue. Conflicted the artist’s memory of a dancer’s risk routine aboard a transatlantic voyage with a no-holds-barred wrestling match viewed with his friend Apollinaire and first wife, Gabrielle, Catch As Catch Can insists and interprets simultaneously, offering up a critique of its own seductive advances. Mixing up the French words étoile (star) and danse (dance) in the lower right-hand corner, the painting deflates yet asserts its own rhythmic abstraction, and brings together the filmic collapse of two indelible memories. As such, it is both a pronouncement and misstep, a declaration and revision, lost in time and yet forever carving a nervy, filif presence.

A similar resolute space opens up in the exhibition and in the texts gathered here. Recalling the ethos of the small review from a century past, La Vie Des Lettres, for example, the artist’s voice extends into both poetic and critical form, accompanying the exhibition with unrest and entry in place of a press release. From the Keatonesque pro-falls of Sharyar Nashat’s film Modern Body Comedy, 2006, and Lucy Skear’s filmic portrait of an encounter with the elderly Surrealist painter Leonora Carrington, Leonora (The Joker), 2006, the language of cinema as the least faithful art form recurs in the exhibition via the cinematic ability to frame and repeat heightened moments, inverting dramatic tension and revealing illusion and viewer expectations. And from these pages similar cinematic re-appropriations and specters appear: Nijinsky’s twirls in Le Spectre de La Rose, 1911, Merce Cunningham steps across stage with a chair strapped to his back, and even Holbein’s body of the dead Christ is pendant in “unrisen movement” to quote Lucy Skear’s observant reflection.

As with the two rows of movie seats facing each other in Tom Burr’s An Orange Echo, 2012, the mirror of cinema inverts, fragments, and upends our memory through impossible repetitions, forever altering the imprint of the constructed, painted encounter along the way. Indeed, the scene of painting announces itself only to retreat, resisting stasis repeatedly within the exhibition. As in Tom Burr’s poem Moods, it is “Blue encounter, Blue lost stance, Blue decline, and Blue “I cant.” A similarly uneasy, dismantled approach to portraiture and interiority is animated in the work of Jutta Koether, Nick Mauss, and Will Benedict, as they hold equally to the effects of advanced abstraction and decor while taking apart art historical context and social behavior. And while the line and language of satire embedded in the work of Viola Yesil tac and Nicole Eisenman for their unreso-lved dialog between caricature and lyricism, Kerstin Brätsch’s optical dis-tortion and rotating display tactics resonate with Kianja Strobert’s staccato substitutions and Michaela Eichwald’s writhing and recalcitrant compositions to further rouse the spirit of distribu-tion, mutation, and mischief carried forth within the exhibition and pages of this publication. To the demands of the ravishing, look and hear the resounding space of catch-as-catch-can.

—Fionn Meade

1. Art and Subjecthood: The Return of the Human Figure in Semicapitalism, Eds. Isabella Gray, Daniel Birnbaum, Nikolaus Hirsch (Starnberg Press, 2011), p. 81

Will Benedict

Bouyer Tourist (Pink Michi, Kristina Model I) photograph 26 x 40 cm
Bouyer Tourist (Pink Michi, Kristina Model II) photograph 26 x 40 cm
Will Benedict

Bonjour Tourist (Yellow Josefin, Catharina, Pot Model I)
photograph
26 x 40 cm

Bonjour Tourist (Yellow Josefin, Catharina, Pot Model II)
photograph
26 x 40 cm
MY PSYCHIC ATLAS

Do you sometimes have a cut in your mouth?
Yes.
Do you play with it?
Yes.
Does it hurt?
Yes.
When it hurts do you still play with it?
Yes.

1. Build a provisional truth
2. Be absolutely sure about being unsure
3. The confusion IS the picture
4. Stage the real / there is no backdoor
5. Painting - Vibration / Oscillation / Sabotage
6. Put a spell on yourself
7. Or let someone else do it
8. Embrace the Weight / the Empire / the Paradigm / the Uncanny
9. Painting - Manifestation of Desire
10. Surprise yourself
11. Embrace yourself
12. Become a superhero, a mutant
13. Kill yourself
14. Mimicry as a form of psychosis / there is no centre, be inside and outside of yourself
15. Play dead
16. Be dead and play dead
17. Wait
18. Hibernate
19. Become a mirror
21. A puddle, which reflexes nothing but light and dirt
22. Painting is performative realism (I declare that I doubt)
23. Shock
24. Pattern
25. Humor / Laughter
26. Now be purple Now be green Now be orange
27. Belief / Disbelief
28. Believe and stage the disbelief and stage the belief
29. Painting as performance or as performative backdrops
30. A theatre-requisite room and a V.I.P. Lounge at the same time
31. Melancholia / Hysteria
32. Die Falschen Eltern
33. Painting: Telepathy Horror Anxiety Hypnosis
34. Death
35. Fake
36. Painting: Danger Stuckness Failure
37. The left over
38. The left lover
39. Painting: Ugliness
40. Negation; build a still life with bowls of stones
41. Labor: be a conductor / hire yourself / be a sub-agent for your own system
42. The infinite system
43. Painting: Automatism Skepticism Disgust
44. Tickle
45. Water
46. Cubes / Pyramids / Cuboids
47. The Black Aura
48. A Ritual
49. Fluff balls / Fuzz
50. Adele
51. Play Psychic TV
52. Silver eye shadow
53. The shadow of the milk on the edge of the cereal bowl
54. DAS INSTITUT
55. Mnemosyne Atlas (Aby Warburg)
56. Balzac's fear of photographic determination
57. Balzac's fear of photographic determination
58. Thought Forms / Emma Kunz
59. Picabia
60. Godheads / Powerheads / spaces of power
61. Superbox / the total of nothing box / super position / future boxes
62. Painting as signs / codes /
empirical signs of constant territorial demands
63. Rotation
64. Horizontalization
65. The wall out of air and metal?
66. Question the wall itself
67. Konkrete Beiläufigkeiten
68. K. Ramsays fear of photographic determination
69. Paintings: Force
70. Painting: Vibration / Oscillation / Sabotage
71. Nachträglichkeit - when something is dragged into the prominence
72. Paintings - Castlist
73. DIY expressionism
74. Expressionism and Obsession
75. Paintings - Stage figures, Characters
76. Painting as the cold reading of the psychic
77. Painting as the haptic vision of Rath Koopel (ETA Hoffmann)
78. Paintings - conspirative Society
79. a painting without a shadow
80. Paintings - vampires
81. Zwang und Überschneidung
82. Meta announcement
83. Sphärische Willbung
84. Advertisement
85. Painting: Force
86. Double opportunism
87. The Waning Moon
89. Sender:______Receiver
90. Kristallmensch
91. Simultaneous movement kills chaos
92. Indifferences
93. Paintings - Replicants
94. Rollender Spiegel
95. Clarification Hologram
96. Cancelation Apparatus
97. Dieser Satz in grauen Buchstaben
98. Paintings - Modelle oder Rätseln?
99. Brooklin
100. The stage is a white tongue
101. Patchwork of nothingness
102. Collage
103. PS. I feel like I know her but sometimes my arms bend back
(It’s Our Pleasure To Serve You)
Kerstin Brätsch

I am transgending (from All Ready Maid betwixt and between _KAYAI series, 2012
Stained black and lustre on antique glass
Approximately 23 6/10 x 31 5/10 inches
Photo: Thomas Mueller

Kerstin Brätsch
Maler den Pinsel prüfend, 2012
Photo: the artist

DAS INSTITUT / UNITED BROTHERS
Sunshields for Iwaki Odori, _Sunrise on Fuji Mountain
Fukushima, Japan, 2012
Photo: UB/DI

DAS INSTITUT / UNITED BROTHERS
Sunshields for Iwaki Odori, Tomoos Tanning salon
Fukusima, Japan, 2012
Photo: UB/DI
Dirt 'neath the train.

"Should wear all Time's destruction for a dress."
-Edith Sitwell, The Poet Laments the Coming of Old Age.

A
Artful acts and renderings,
Aesthetic blues and blending in,
Aging brown and aging grin,
And, endless idle chattering,

B
Blue direction, Blue last chance,
Blue response and Blue last dance,
Blue tube light 'cross rude Blue night,
dark Blue anger, deep Blue spite,
Blue encounter, Blue lost stance,
Blue decline and Blue "I can't."

C
Callous, and Cancerous,
Callas
Cantankerous,
Chorus
Calmamitous,
Craving
Carnivorous.

D
Delirium, settles in,
After Downing the gin,

Delirium, settles in,
after downing the Gin,
(Gordons, Beefeater,
Blue Sapphire is sweeter;
With tonic, on ice;
With Cinzano, it's nice…)

E
feeling Faint
from the smell of paint
and feeling subdued,
from a whiff of glue,
and the Featherweight brushes
and my heavy-weight crushes
(that colors and blushed)
my thoughts left of you.

G
delirium, settles in,
after downing the Gin,
(Gordons, Beefeater,
Blue Sapphire is sweeter;
With tonic, on ice;
With Cinzano, it's nice…)

H
Horizontal tendencies,
And horizontal bent wood things,
Hinges and screws and listenings,
And endless minor dents and dings.

Whorish facts of rendering,
And Whorish aesthetic surrendering,
(queasy brown and hazy grin),
And, lingering signs of giving in.

I
I have that 5 o'clock feeling.

J
A dozen Jacks:

Jack Kennedy
Jack Sheppard
Jack London
Jack Nicholson
Jack Pierson
Jack Daniels
Jack the Ripper
Jack's Mannequin
Jack in the Box
Jack Daniels
Jack Pierson
Jack Nicholson
Jack the Ripper
Jack's Mannequin
Jack in the Box
Jack Daniels
Jack the Ripper
Jack's Mannequin
Jack in the Box
Jack Daniels
Jack the Ripper
Jack's Mannequin

K
and Jack Kerouac

L
Helmet jacket, Helmet pants,
Helmet stacks 'neath Helmet racks,
Helmet shrouds I've stained before.
Helmet clothes strewn 'cross the floor.

M
Mauve predilection,
Mauve-like trance,
Mauve over extension, and
Mauve cash advance,

N
(Ned writes in his diary, on the 2nd of October, 1989):
Nobody sings my songs anymore. A generation ago nearly every vocal program listed in the Sunday Times included in its American Group at least one Rorem song, sometimes a whole group or cycle. Season after season now passes with nary a mention. Barber is still sung, but among living composers it's mainly Argento and Bolcom today. Like Yeats's romance, I "loved long and long (And grew to be out of fashion/ Like an old song." I note this wistfully, without bitterness. Times change.

O
Ode to artful acts and renderings,
Ode to aesthetic blues and blending in,
Ode to aging brown and aging grin,
Ode to endless idle chattering.

P
(Pasolini writes): What a night Tommaso spent! The most beautiful, you might say, of his whole life: because, even if he slept, he wasn't really sleeping, but was always a little bit awake, so he could always remember he was there in his house, a nice house, big and wellmade, like rich people have.

Q
Quieted,
Quartered, and,
Quarantined.

R
(Rorum writes in his diary, on the 28th of July, 1997):
Ambien, Melatonin, 2 enteric, 2 tums.

Generally  a hopeless day in a sleepless body. JH, for whatever reason, works twice as much as I. Currently it's the side deck, plus a little platform next to his bed so that Sooney, now thirteen and the apple of Jim's eye, can climb back, more easily after his nocturnal trips around the room. I watch Jim when he's not watching me, knowing how much more important he is than anything else, including music, in my ken. His handsome anxious face, his legs. I am him, he is me, he is I, I am he. Who will die first? Look on your globe, at the wee spit of land that is Nantucket, where we, so insignificant, are breathing during the end of the twentieth century. Do you recall looking at the globe 55 years ago at the tiny space of land that was Berlin, where Hitler, so insignificant, was breathing?

S
feeling Serene,
in front of the Screen,
(Delirious Dave, Dismounted and Displayed,
Derailed and detailed 'cross the Diet 'neath the train.)
Wie gerne würde ich 1:1 abbildens was und vor allem wie Matzuma gestern berichtet hat von seiner Woche auf dem Land, wo er 19 schwere Pflanzensteine, die seine Eltern ihm zum Geburstag geschenkt hatten, die er sich sogar selbst gewirtschaft hatte, dorthin hatte verbringen und verbauen müssen, wo 30 Jahre lang der kleine Wohnwagen gestanden hatte mit dem die Eltern und die Kinder in den 70er Jahren nach Österreich zum Tum, später zu Rhein und Mosel gefahren waren, der dann noch einige Jahre unbenutzt eher Objekt der Scham war und dann ganz abgeschafft wurde. Wie der Vater sich freut, wenn der zu seiner Erinnerung junge und kräftige Sohn kommt, um endlich die wartenden Arbeiten zu verrichten, die er selber nicht mehr kann, dabei ist Matzuma auch eher fertig, bzw. nichts mehr gewohnt. Sein ehemals athletischer kleiner Hauptschüler- und Trockenbauerkörper hat den Körper eines Geneserarbeiter angenommen, ist immer noch athletisch, aber infolge von überhöhtem Alkohol- und Nikotinkonsum höchstens punktuell und nicht auf die Dauer was zu reifen instande. Aus diesen Punkten heraus kann er seinem Vater seine Kraft, seine Weisheit und sein planvolles Vorgehen in der Gartenbaukunst simulieren. Bzv. Ist das ja alles grundwahr.

Der im Nachbarort besuchte Onkel hätte ganz toll wie eine Wasserleiche aufgewacht, als er sich zum Rasenmähen großzügig mit Sunblockern einriechen hatte, Matzuma empfahl außerdem tatsächlich die Wohlgelitten zu lesen, schon wegen der benutzten Quellen, die man selbst kennt und gerne würdenerken und überhaupt wäre das so geschrieben wie man es schon einmal hat lesen wollen.


...
Michaela Eichwald
Gerichtstraße
2011/2012
Acrylic, oil, crayon, and lacquer on nettle
10 9/10 x 47 1/4 inches (180 x 120 cm)

Michaela Eichwald
Gerichtstraße, in the snow
2011/2012
Acrylic, oil, crayon, and lacquer on nettle
180 x 120 cm

— Michaela Eichwald (May, 2008)
Nicole Eisenman
Drummer, 2011
2-color lithograph
Paper: Saunders-Waterford HPM watercolor paper
Paper size: 22 1/4 x 18 inches
Image size: 16 x 12 inches
Edition of 25 plus 5 artist’s proofs
Image courtesy the artist and Leo Koenig Inc., New York

Nicole Eisenman
Man Peeling his Shadow, 2011
2-color lithograph
Paper size: 22 1/4 x 18 inches
Image size: 16 x 12 inches
Edition of 25 plus 5 artist’s proofs
Image courtesy the artist and Leo Koenig Inc., New York

Nicole Eisenman
Tea Party, 2012
2-color lithograph
Paper: Saunders-Waterford HPM watercolor paper
Paper size: 32 x 22 1/2 inches
Image size: 25 x 18 inches
Edition of 25 plus 5 artist’s proofs
Image courtesy the artist and Leo Koenig Inc., New York

Nicole Eisenman
Untitled, 2012
2-color lithograph (from stone)
Paper: Somerset velvet soft white
Paper size: 21 3/4 x 17 3/4 inches
Image size: 16 1/4 x 12 inches
Edition of 25 plus 5 artist’s proofs
Image courtesy the artist and Leo Koenig Inc., New York

Nicole Eisenman
The Thinker, 2012
2-color lithograph (from stone) with 4-color photolithograph
Paper: Somerset velvet soft white
Paper size: 25 x 35 1/4 inches
Image size: 17 1/2 x 24 3/4 inches
Edition of 25 plus 5 artist’s proofs
Image courtesy the artist and Leo Koenig Inc., New York

Nicole Eisenman
Dreamless, 2011
2-color lithograph
Paper size: 22 x 16 3/4 in (55.9 x 42.5 cm)
Image size: 16 x 11 5/8 in (40.6 x 29.5 cm)
Edition of 25 plus 5 artist’s proofs
Image courtesy the artist and Leo Koenig Inc., New York
I HOPE I'M LOUD
WHEN I'M DEAD

I have a
mannequin for
a paperweight
it is difficult to
type with such a
large paperweight
I reach around
lovers late into
night typing
from behind it is
impossible to
tell which
is Virgil
poetry
can be
of use
the field of flying
bullets the hand
reaches through
loving the aftertaste
finding a deeper
third taste
many are
haunted by
human cruelty through
the centuries
I am haunted by
our actions since
breakfast
you said too much poetry
I said too much war
the biggest mistake for
love is straining
there was a
door marked
MISTAKE we
entered
you said too much fooling around
I said fuck off and die

Mad Garland
Jutta Koether

Mad Garland begins with recomposed e-mails sort
of like this:
“Mad Garland! What a title! What do you mean by this title?
Mad as in angry-mad or crazy-mad.”
“Mad Garland: makes me think of Judy queer decor, and bad
x-mas!”
“All of those things, all of those things…”

Particularly, a material problem in relation to painting. My method: literal-
ize, materialize, liquidize: Impermanent configurations. Irrepressible
flux of compositions and reappropriations:
To stage an interchange between excitation and communication. To cut
into the ontological uncertainties of our times, to deal with the states
of changed object-subject relationships, to present the mechanics of the
fabrication of an aesthetic decision. Desire for painting as the medium
to deal with those uncertainties.

Art and subjecthood entangled. We were asked to speculate on the reasons
why there is a certain embrace of anthropomorphism, and, why, well…
there is this desperate desire for art and perhaps painting in particular to
have and possibly embody agency.
Quasi-agency. Quasi-subjecthoods.
My text, my painting, me being, here turning towards this: like a physical
diagram, a corporeal blog.
Incorporated are short and long collapses—possibly into silence panique.
Is this what painting can do?
Poison the gossip, kick some asses, jinx out the jargon, hack into lives.
To send painting off into one of those merciless Dionysian moods.
Coiling; the snake, the garland. Intoxication with theories, networks,
parameter, rising and dying subject-constructs. Coldly glazed.
This is not a performance. This is not a program. This is not a theory.
This is not an opinion. This is reappropriation of all of the above tech-
niques. This is a reappropriation of the means to struggle.
Recasting painting as a line of demarcation between materialism and
idealism.
possibly to establish a new kind of act. To cut into communications and networks. The most important task of the artist in all this is refusal of discursiveness. Non-discursiveness as pose. Here we go: Discursiveness as pose. As just another product. Quasi-theory product. The emphasis shifted. This is a conference, after all. A falling out with it? Antiquaries that were members of these groups, allowed for Poussin's Poussin. Essay on friendship as opposed to possessive desire/distinction. The garland from a painting by Jan Fyt (on view at the GERMÀIDIGAL, Berlin). The garland crawling out of my own "Berlin Schlüssel" trophy-like painting installation. The idealism of garlands is featured everywhere inside and outside older buildings in the city of Berlin. The ideal of the garland has been a feature in those thoughts which made their place temporarily in the biogaphes. They are twirling and transforming art installations, talking about ancient battles. Things ungovernable by theory, while interacting, testing, and contesting and therefore also forming theoretical claims. It's a monstrous memo to dip into the desire to be exposed to the advanced thoughts and ideas of your own time. Such subject must dominate the artist. And this is momentarily dominating the viewer. The garland is an offering. To expose yourself to a situation, a stage to stop on. To redefine the space within a painting (that is a precious object holding itself and being held by metal brackets and cold glaze) and the relationship between figures and their setting. Post destabilization. Recasting functions of audience, object, people, style, color, theory of painting, art history. Recasting artistic research, charity. Recasting intellectual thrust. This demonstration, a presentation of that need for recasting. Goal: intensity and detail of its account of specific works by its ability to extract a painting from the ordinary round of "formal analysis, iconography, contextualization, or sheer product" and put the reader/viewer almost physically in a NEW KIND OF CONTACT.

“The sheer strangeness—the preposterousness—of European painting’s commitment to the real.”

The necessity to participate. Yet absence persists. The absence of performance must persist. Persistence can take on new forms, precisely in relation to objects. I keep inserting myself Wendy with painting. Mad Garland arrives. Ontologically, an subjective realm of becoming, with the subject and thought being only a final, residual product of these primary ontological movements. Rather than circling around the negative implications of technology, the painting constructs a positive ontological vision from the ruins of traditional ontologies.

“...and they are a theory problem. They make you cringe. They are a theory problem.”

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There's really dark light going on in his painting. The garland holding the painting. There is a book/ring in the middle.

Carrying on. The garland from a painting by Jan Fyt (on view at the GERMÀIDIGAL, Berlin). The garland crawling out of my own "Berlin Schlüssel" trophy-like painting installation. The idealism of garlands is featured everywhere inside and outside older buildings in the city of Berlin. The ideal of the garland has been a feature in those thoughts which made their place temporarily in the biogaphes. They are twirling and transforming art installations, talking about ancient battles. Things ungovernable by theory, while interacting, testing, and contesting and therefore also forming theoretical claims. It's a monstrous memo to dip into the desire to be exposed to the advanced thoughts and ideas of your own time. Such subject must dominate the artist. And this is momentarily dominating the viewer. The garland is an offering. To expose yourself to a situation, a stage to stop on. To redefine the space within a painting (that is a precious object holding itself and being held by metal brackets and cold glaze) and the relationship between figures and their setting. Post destabilization. Recasting functions of audience, object, people, style, color, theory of painting, art history. Recasting artistic research, charity. Recasting intellectual thrust. This demonstration, a presentation of that need for recasting. Goal: intensity and detail of its account of specific works by its ability to extract a painting from the ordinary round of "formal analysis, iconography, contextualization, or sheer product" and put the reader/viewer almost physically in a NEW KIND OF CONTACT.

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In such ways the Frankfurt conference on “Art and Subjecthood” was another beginning. Thankxx. Yours
Juxxa

NOTES
2. Ibid.
Whose Sleeves? (cut short)

The tinsel or tinfoil or whatever it was, was brittle with age but persuasively glamorous—or at least I could follow the logic and believe in what it was meant to emulate. I was having a puce moment and it’s not clear what tense I should be writing this in or where to begin or shuffle. Abigail lifted the wire and foil construction from a table—she didn’t wink, but she might as well have as she brought the pagoda-like thing close to me for inspection. Something about the way she handled it assumes that I already understand. “Is it.....?” I venture. “Yes.” she says, but I still have no idea. The moment had the self-deleting quality of a spell.

A kind of gauzy roof, dangling braided tassels made from simple cotton thread at each peaked corner, licked from above by a tab of double rhine-stones held by a wire pistil in cobra pose extending from the supporting frame on which the hazy fabric was stretched, the figure on the ground, the final ornament on the ornament itself. The way she slid anecdotes into the silence was also like a kind of braid: “The black make-up stick is smaller, so we know it was used more than the white and red, the way the length of a candle indicates how long it was burning.” I see all this hovering over the head of a body walking through dramatic space, as if to shield it from rain, or glitter, the tassely braids trembling side to side while the gleaming rhinestones bob more lethargically up and down—the beginning of a procession.

Her white-gloved hands reached for another object from the table piled with “cardbird” boxes, tissue paper, thrift store bracelets, amulets, and labeled zip-loc bags: a concoction of concentric self-supporting veils that would also, if worn, somehow float about the head to imply a succession of auras or personal curtains held by halos, but I mean those early Renaissance halos that look like DVDs.

She took the smudgy stub of face-paint out of the box again, handling it like a pair of eyes from a sarcophagus.

The leotards for “Summerspace” had already been cleaned and laid between sheets of acid-free tissue paper in large pale blue archival boxes. When we opened them up the tops especially looked very demure and funereal, but also festive—and bitter? Arms folded across the torso, making an X. Even through the acidic vibrancy of the oversprayed psychedelic polka-dot patterning, they seemed hardened, a bit bowed, and stains shone through the graphic dots. Hanging in a massive roll on a wire mesh wall in the back of the space was the drop for “Summerspace,” only partly unfurled to reveal the hysterical camouflage patterning achieved by spraying different colors through a perforated screen...I tried to combine these samples of evidence with the memory I thought I had of at least one photograph of the dancers in their costumes in front of the vast expanse of this endless, scintillating field, in memory of Seurat and colorblindness.

The whole structure is encased in double shells of steel and opaque welded glass. The stage, an endless spiral. The various levels are connected with elevators and platforms. Seating, platforms, stage and elevator platforms are suspended and spanned above each other. The structure is an elastic building system of cables and platforms developed from bridge building. The drama can expand and develop freely in space mounted on the spiral. In another storage room, another floor down, where prints, drawings, multiples and artist’s books are kept, rollerskates, and the Thonet Chair Merce danced with, strapped to his back with belts found at an Army-Navy store... a three-or four-armed turtleneck sweater that Merce and some of the dancers knit together... also an umbrella, its interior branches strung with Christmas lights to make it into a self-illuminating apparatus for the walker, the dancer who carried it with a battery.

— Nick Mauss

Nick Mauss
For two days I was unable to do anything, I was so stunned, 2009
Cold rolled steel, magnets, inkjet prints, Xerox, paint chips
Two knights, one kneeling before the seated other and taking his hand, watched by a woman standing behind, arched windows in the background.

After Cipriani
Illustration to The Ruggiero (Act III, Scene IV), ca. 1770–1810

Proof before letters
Shahryar Nashat
Downscaled and Overthrown 1
Marble
26 × 25 × 15.5 cm

Shahryar Nashat
Foot-Height Abridged Hercules, 2008
Lambda print on paper
32 × 25 cm

Shahryar Nashat
Waist-Height Abridged Neptune on Sea, 2008
Lambda print on paper
32 × 25 cm

Shahryar Nashat
Thigh-Height Abridged Dav, 2008
Lambda print on paper
32 × 25 cm

Shahryar Nashat
Calf-Height Abridged Satyre, 2008
Lambda print on paper
32 × 25 cm

Emil Otto Hoppé
Vaslav Nijinski in Le Spectre de la Rose, 1911

Source unknown
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Some works of art seem to inhabit the present time. They play out the same temporal dynamic as catching someone’s eye on the tube and holding it for a little too long. You know that when you look up once more, you might again catch their eye. When this gaze is held by eyes that meet you from a different epoch, assumptions about reality are gently unpicked. The balance tips towards the power of image.

Wandering through the Tate galleries to choose a work to write about, I had two different encounters with a past present, or present past: two small drawings by the Surrealist Leonora Carrington, who still lives and works in Mexico City, and the strangely confrontational seventeenth-century double portrait of The Cholmondeley Ladies c.1600–1610. I became fascinated that I could coexist with Carrington, that our times overlap. So, with a little regret at leaving the eerie Cholmondeleys, I focused on Carrington. In the summer of last year, I set off on a journey to visit her studio.

Her working life has been lived out through the Nazi invasion of Paris, from where she fled to Spain, then to New York in the early 1940s and on to Mexico City, producing a body of work that is more constant, I suspect, than her exterior environment. The ongoing practice of Surrealism seemed suddenly radical to me when thought about as current: a strategy of living by the irrational. However, when I arrived unannounced at Carrington’s shuttered house (the address of which I had been given by a Texan collector), I was questioning the wisdom of my self-funded trip, based on a whim and some late-night internet booking. My romanticised idea of a quest to meet her seemed more than a little rash. I began to think that Carrington probably did not live at the address anymore, and even if she did, why would she see me? It felt like I had a lot at stake when I banged on the door. Which then slowly opened.

At this point, the trip had become more than back-ground research or one offering the possibility of an interview. I had been thinking about making an installation which used Carrington’s presence as a kind of wild card, or rather as a carte blanche to disassemble the rationality of my own work. The short film, shot that afternoon, simply documents our combined present. It is not much more than a prolonged shot of her hands, held out as if about to act, some glances she makes that reveal my presence and some locating shots of the studio. After filming, she showed me her recent paintings. Then we went down to her kitchen for tea and the Chorley cakes that I had brought for her (Carrington: “I hail from Chorley you know”). I asked her if there were any positive aspects to growing old:

LC: You become closer to death, so that really tends to dominate everything else.

LS: Do you find that you become reconciled with that?

LC: No, I don’t. How can one reconcile with the totally unknown? We know nothing whatever about it, even if it happens to everyone, to everybody. Animals, vegetables, minerals, everything dies. How can you reconcile with something you know nothing about?

Glancing up from our conversation, I saw on Leonora’s kitchen cabinet, near a map of Iceland and a postcard of Princess Di, an image of The Cholmondeley Ladies painting itself is a document of a coincidence, if we are to believe the inscription at the bottom left of the panel. The portrait is said to commemorate “Two Ladies of the Cholmondeley Family, Who were born the same day, Married the same day, And brought to Bed the same day” (though some think this description was added later). It was created by
an anonymous painter, thought to be a tomb sculptor. Perhaps it is the rare opportunity to represent living flesh that has led to his rendering of the ladies’ faces in a way that seems particularly present and individual, strangely in contrast to the headresses, ornate sleeves and rudimentary pillows. The ladies themselves seem to transcend time, as if held in the seventeenth century only by being inset into their surroundings. The portrait implies a strange future too, as the swaddled twins innocuously appear like seeds to further parallels and coincidences.

To encounter a mother and baby consecutively would, of course, be more normal than to see it in double. It would be the kind of event through which, by repetition, one would learn the language to describe “woman” and “baby”. Here we seem also to be shown illustrations of the words “headdress”, “collar” and “sleeve”, variations of a repeated type. The coincidence of the ladies is perfectly set up by the articulation of a medieval norm in which they appear. The incredulity that the painter may have felt when faced with such an unlikely coincidence is perfectly expressed through the way the eye moves around the picture. The women and infants are two versions of the same category of things, their position, costume and demeanour varying only in slight detail. It is impossible to see their individuality without forcing the eye to cross the cleft between the pillows that separates the halves of the panel and to encounter each woman in turn, complete in her own surroundings. Indeed, to a contemporary eye, the ladies resemble two frames of a film curiously inhabiting the same, rather than consecutive instants. Again and again, the eye and mind change register from beholding single to implausible graphic double. Content is at perfect odds with composition. Our witness to this seventeenth-century event plays out as a real-time sensation, like a pre-filmic film. In some way, the strangeness of the coincidence of the ladies is subsumed by the strangeness of our real-time encounter with their image. They persist like tools that have outlived their makers. It becomes strange that they have existed at all, and they make strange the passing of time.

I feel a similar sensation when looking at Holbein’s The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb 1521, which hangs in the Kunstmuseum in Basel, where I am now living. Dostoyevsky remarked that the painting “could rob a man of his faith” when he stood before it in 1867. Like the Cholmondeley portrait, the pictorial time runs seamlessly into ours. The stark space it depicts is also similar; the body of Christ appears as if in a two-foot by seven-foot extension to the gallery space, with nothing else save a sheet. The elongated composition allows there to be opposing upwards and downwards pulls, emphasised by the horizontality of the rest of the painting. The finger, outstretched and greying, has wrinkled the cloth in a movement that is not of its own making, but that of a third party placing the corpse. The eye is cast upwards, and if it sees, it does not see in this realm. The chin is at such an angle that it juts upwards in a distorted manner as the hair falls away and over the ledge. This dynamic opposition of forces in the face produces a strange effect whereby the facial features seem to switch identities as you look at them. Nose and ear form a symmetry around the upturned eye that somehow morphs the features into something truly unnatural, ear becomes mouth, mouth becomes hollow eye. The face becomes dismembered, disarticulated. In this scrambling by the eye, the painting seems to take away language, our names for things. As the body of the unrisen Christ, it is impossibly and constantly about to move. As an image of the body of Christ, it is also impossibly and constantly about to move. It exists as a precipitous allegory of the transcendence of the image.

— Lucy Skaer (September, 2008)
The Stage is oval, occasionally quadrangular, thirty yards in length and twenty in width. The story usually begins with two Characters sitting in a boat.

They were on a boat, crossing the Bosphorus, when he had to think about her journey to the overseas room in search of a lobster.

One part of the play is played by the first two actors and includes the dialogue between the two. This part is an independent whole. The other part is the subject of the play.

Now he wonders, was this part the introduction to a play? A play by other means?

She interrupts his thoughts. You tempt to put on this physiognomy of absence, it reminds me of an earlier conversation. As I said, it is pointless to speak of an absence without having a system.

The theatre has no manager the orchestra takes its part. A special motif is played as cue for the appearance of each actor.

He remembers: all four of them entered the stage at the same time and sat down in a circle.

One dressed like a storyteller, one pretended to be absent and two of them were servants.

In the middle of the circle, a pile of photographs showing different kinds of envelopes:

The one pretending to be absent to the storyteller: “I really must congratulate you on your attention to detail,” while the two servants shuffle the Photographs around.

They simultaneously choose one Photograph each. They look at each other to confirm and agree.

In comfort with one another, they said, addressing the storyteller: “These don’t belong here, they represent the envelope face down, address uppermost.”

Right then”, she says: “I couldn’t care less, I had to think of a photograph you once showed me, a photograph of Jeremy Brett in the Master Blackmailer. I remember the famous address, Baker Street 221B.”

The dialogues between one and two comprise an important part of the play, though the course of the action is only dimly related to these two actors.

“And then?” he asks. She tries to focus, and follows: “We discussed the all-too-well-known series of extraordinary hiding places.”

“The next scene” he insists.

It was a rather confusing discussion.

Servant 1: “I would have to prepare myself with a pair of green spectacles or the sequence of events would be noticeably affected.”

Servant 2: “You are right one does not think, one does not act, one makes signs.”

The Absent 1: “From my viewpoint of thought this appears to be entirely stupid. Green spectacles or not, the sequence would not be affected.”

The dialogues between one and two comprise an important part of the play, though the course of the action is only dimly related to these two actors and dialogues.

There are many translations in circulation, people use them but the storyteller obviously does not know how and both characters could tell by the doubt in her voice, that the storyteller could not make any decision.

Each play consists of two principal divisions running parallel, but not joined and Old glue dries out if you leave it alone.

Each part is the subject of the play. Though the course of the action is only dimly related to these two actors and dialogues.

It would have loudly demanded: “We want to see the cheese.” From then on everything would transpire like clockwork.

The story itself consists of several separate scenes united to form a whole; the composition is often poor and the unity weak. Sometimes the only connection between the scenes is the identity of the Storyteller.

Later in the afternoon the four left the circle, but still in the same place. Two sat at a table in the right hand corner, one at a table in the middle of the room, the fourth one also sat at a table and facing two cameras while three rolls film. The two had tea, and one was making some kind of jewelry.

An actor usually plays many roles.

There are other characters describing the scenes:

A Cattle trader
A Drunkard, Traveler
A Shoemaker
A Night watchman and Physician

The middle part of the play usually takes place in a pub.

The absent 1, now a drunkard, holds in one hand a bottle of grey goose. His other hand forms a fist and gestures at the chin of one guest, who obviously was flabbergasted and simply defended himself with a calm posture while enduring the drunkard yelling at him: “Are you made up in irresponsibility of creativity and you, you seem to dress up your desperate needs with a heroic gesture.”

In another corner
Servant one, now a cattle trader puts his hand on a woman’s knee. Both avoid looking at each other.

This scene could be crumbled up in a promotional back pack, the left of the shoulder straps fall way down. Scanned through the x-ray machine in order to be carried along the marble walls.

She says: “This without question, was unnecessary, a ridiculous naïve kind of matter.

This scene should have been the reason to cancel the third and last location of the play.”

He hesitates: “I rather observe the very moment of holding back a judgemental opinion.”

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INTERMEZZO
I wish this would be Newcleus Wikky Wikky Song.
He claimed that a house drew its own Picture and
She suggested to let this metaphor be their obsession.
I say let us locate to regional localities rather than to fixed
entities.
The AND should connect the sentence he demands.
She wonders what it should link to and gave it a shrug.
In the meanwhile I restore the Event and replace the shark with a dolphin.
She wakes up in a charm forest of displacement.
He can still detect his way even if he is missing the clues.
I am not fascinated with the sentimentality of home as it seems
that there is no place to fight for, but when they sing of London
it does actually feel nice.
When he described Moriana as a flat Landscape, with two Figures that can neither be separated or look at each other.
Then She started to dream about Photography.
I preserve old memories to celebrate Nostalgia and would love to sing Aksu’s song about Istanbul for you now.
Two passengers, engaged in a conversation enter.
"It depends of course on the perspective," the one says.
"If you look at the evolutionary history of the Giraffe and ask yourself
what caused her long neck. One explanation of course is: The giraffes with
long necks were fitter as they could reach higher branches of trees."
"Or, you could say they developed long necks because they had long legs,
in order to be able to drink, and long legs because they had to protect
themselves from lions."
"4th floor," the operator announces. The door opens, both walk out.
She travels light to avoid heavy memories.
His house accommodates a collection of little Boxes, Tools, paintings and old black and white movies.
I am not prepared at all but how could one ever be prepared?
She aims to break with paradigm and He is unable to cope with
her peculiar definition of dwelling.
I guess I do not move efficiently so I pause to listen to their
frozen attitude of immobility.
Therefore the song will be missing but the Microphone is yours.
The Operator (continues):

“Look the view from here is very limited. I move in two directions, up or down. My profession is about to become redundant as we speak. I might not be able to decode, read and understand once I step out of here, so I guess we reflect on the nature of our own spectacles. And if my spectacles have a green tint then everything I perceive has a green tint. At least I know how to perceive the world, don’t you think?”

“Ah,” the stranger, becoming impatient, ironically comments, “Well, I had to get in contact with Netflix the other day, who advised me to talk to Macintosh because my computers software is too old to update Silverlight’s latest plug in. So I could not watch any movies. I was waiting for hours on the phone line instead of minutes. In the end, Macintosh advised me that I should buy a new computer and inform Netflix about the problem.”

“So, let’s not get confused, and let’s look at the facts we have. Visualization is something completely different from depiction. Imaginative state of mind.”

“We cannot move until one is prepared to sacrifice their reputation.”

A voice from the radio interrupts.

The Operator turns the volume up!

“Another Question, I would like to ask you,” while coming from the radio: “If photos could take away one thing from your big acceptance speech on Thursday night, what do you fear most that could be? My belief is that we have everything we need to lead the world in prosperity and peace. That to lose…”

“Turn this off,” the stranger demands.

I would interrupt just to defuse the confusion in the room, but decide not to.

I lower my eyes to the floor and remember when I left the house of my friends the other night after a late dinner. I stepped outside into the hallway to put on my shoes, when my left toe, not yet completely inside, hit a soft resistance. My reflexes make me pull out my foot right away. I freeze become preoccupied by an already established incomprehensible surrounded by voluntary offers of possible explanations. A cockroach leaves the shoe.

At home the contact made with the insect echoes on my skin. It persistently pounds, wants to be acknowledged and called an imprint of some kind.

Let me ask you another question, the stranger announces.

A lift operator sees a woman who is holding a Camera run from an elevator and out of the building.

The MOST important thing for the Operator to try to remember right after the incident is

A. The date of the incident
B. The make or brand of the Camera
C. Which elevator car the woman was riding
D. What the woman looked like

The woman told me something rather strange happened to her. One afternoon she woke up and walked to the window to look out into the garden and saw that everything was covered in hoarfrost but a few hours later it had all turned back to normal.