

swarm
2017

Kim Neudorf _ , 2, 4-5, 7 a) b), 9, 11
Liza Eurich 1, 3, 6, 8, 10

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untitled (2017)

_ interlocutors

In a recent text by Sabrina Tarasoff, the conceptual practice of Lutz Bacher is related to physical symptoms which, by circumnavigating a patient's seemingly avoidant (or oblivious) behavior, emerge by other means. These physical symptoms, appearing to have no "manifest cause", must be approached affectively^[1]. In this analogy, Bacher's avoidance of a certain contextual and conceptual clarity is a similar gesture of *refusal*, one which Tarasoff ascribes to "objects of art that defy conventional interpretation", yet which "deflect and act out their place" by other means^[2]. Tarasoff writes that:

"art is inherently affective and emotionally driven. It carries latent disaffections, elations and questions that cannot find proper answer because they are experiential - not rooted in language. Whether by salvaging, rather than crafting objects...Bacher's tactile, affective excess creates a distance from her person...to excavate something on the inside - not an 'inner voice,' but an 'internalized expression of actual social forces.'...Though affect can be a 'brutal, impersonal thing,' Bacher's self slips in and out of this but she keeps a distance¹ to connect us to the world...Bacher outsources 'emotional content' to material effect^[3]."



"Symbolic of a journey to nowhere: a raft gets caught in a whirlpool allowing neither advancement nor retreat." Danny Peary, *Cult Movies* (New York: Delta Books, 1981), 2.

To this logic, in order to focus on the emergent, or that which "operate[s] outside", a certain distance is utilized, particularly distance from what might be attributed to the solely autobiographical^[4].

But what is it for art to "excavate something on the inside" that is not just autobiographical affirmation, but that allows space for the "propositional...to emerge from personal experience^[5]?" Even while the path of this excavation involves the "brutal impersonal thing" of affect, helping to shift the excavation beyond a certain fixed¹ resolution or determination, Tarasoff suggests that the goal isn't a sustainment of the affective state, but what is forced into motion via affect. Affect, according to Brian Massumi, is inhibitive and manipulative, involuntarily experienced before the will to act^[6]. Massumi suggests that alongside affect, which lies outside of and suspends "action-reaction circuits and linear temporality", one can strive to conceptualize how this *outside of*, as a re-orientation, can contain ethical potentialities of emergence and change^[7].

The words excavation and salvage, both which imply the taking stock of what is at hand (or what remains) so as to find new terms for usage, can be useful in thinking about a continual re-orientation of and to Bacher's "shapes, assemblages", and "interlocutors for affect^[8]." That something "on the inside" is excavated, and the "material effect" comes out of an act of salvaging rather than "crafting" points to something that runs parallel to that "something on the inside"; something which affect itself may not be able to fully account for: it may be that what is excavated and salvaged "is not to be understood as matter attaining a form", to use Deleuze's terms, but is perhaps "the glimmer of an impersonal life...the wind that sweeps us past subjects and objects" or that which is "metastable, superposed, simultaneous with itself^[9]."³



Watcher in the Woods (still), 1980, directed by John Hough

[1] Sabrina Tarasoff, "Lutz Bacher: Glitter and Resign," *C Magazine* (Spring 2017), 22.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

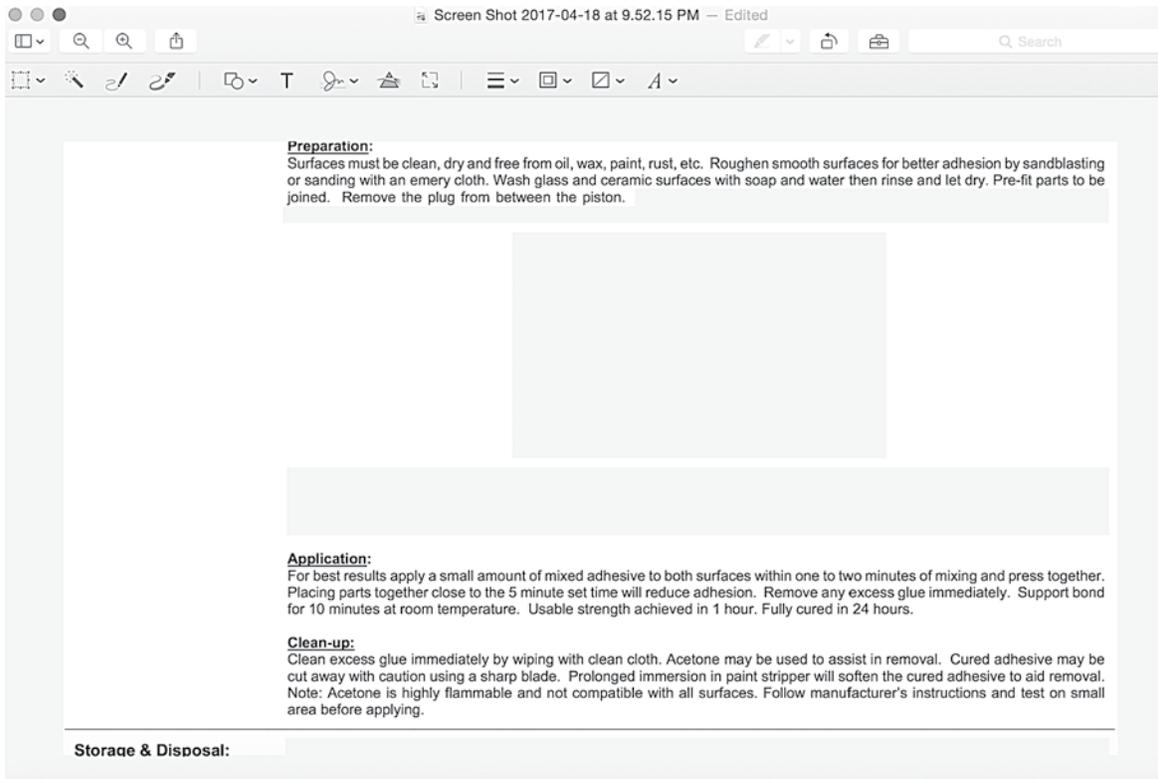
[6] Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," *Parables of the Virtual* (London: Duke University Press, 2002), 24.

[7] Ibid, 28.

[8] Sabrina Tarasoff, 22.

[9] Sarah Posman, "'Becoming' in Jane Eyre: Charlotte Brontë through the Eyes of Gilles Deleuze," *Brontë Studies* (Vol. 39 No. 4, November 2014), 311-312.

1 distance and fixity



1 distance and fixity² is all about periphery

Peripheral vision feels like an extension, a way to see more expansively, more fully. In that understanding there seems to be an implied optimality. Improve the lucidity of this field through cognizance of it, through exercises designed to heighten awareness of intermittent events that happen within it, or through the performance of hand-eye coordinated tasks situated at its edge.

Eyes forward. Raise your hand when the bendy lines appear, the right for the right, the left for the left. Place the toothpick in the straw, etcetera.

I read a study that discussed how peripheral vision is actually an optical illusion, a perceptual mechanism that attempts to fill in the blanks of what falls outside of our central focus or foveal vision. The peripheral then is characterized by less detail—a failing ability to distinguish between colours and shapes. It is prone to degradation. Visuality, or more specifically its acuity, is rendered dull and indistinct.

The standard definition for peripheral vision is simply that which you see at the side. It is categorized by this tangential nature, always a space or image beyond what exists within your direct line of sight. Given this and its illusionary capacity, peripheral vision might also be understood as *perpetually elsewhere* and *always unfixed*. It is something contextual, and that context is constantly forming, unforming, and reforming. Things coalesce in foveal vision and they disperse in peripheral vision. Both coexist simultaneously, but in different registers. The former pushes towards the conscious and present, while the latter pushes towards the unconscious and temporaneous.

Focused sight is often rational; it is used as a divining rod to intuit and construct functional understanding. Legibility is fundamental to this approach. But there are various ways that we see. The undefinable or less apparent—the blur that manifests in the outliers of our peripheral vision—makes depth perception and the performance of spatial movements possible. It is this condition of sight that allows us agency.

To draw a line between physiological modes of seeing, or more specifically peripheral vision and cognition, is to similarly position the act of knowing within spheres of *deferral* and *obfuscation*. It is a kind of porous comprehension that is always arriving, that is always actionable.

1 distance and fixity is all about periphery in the work of RH Quaytman

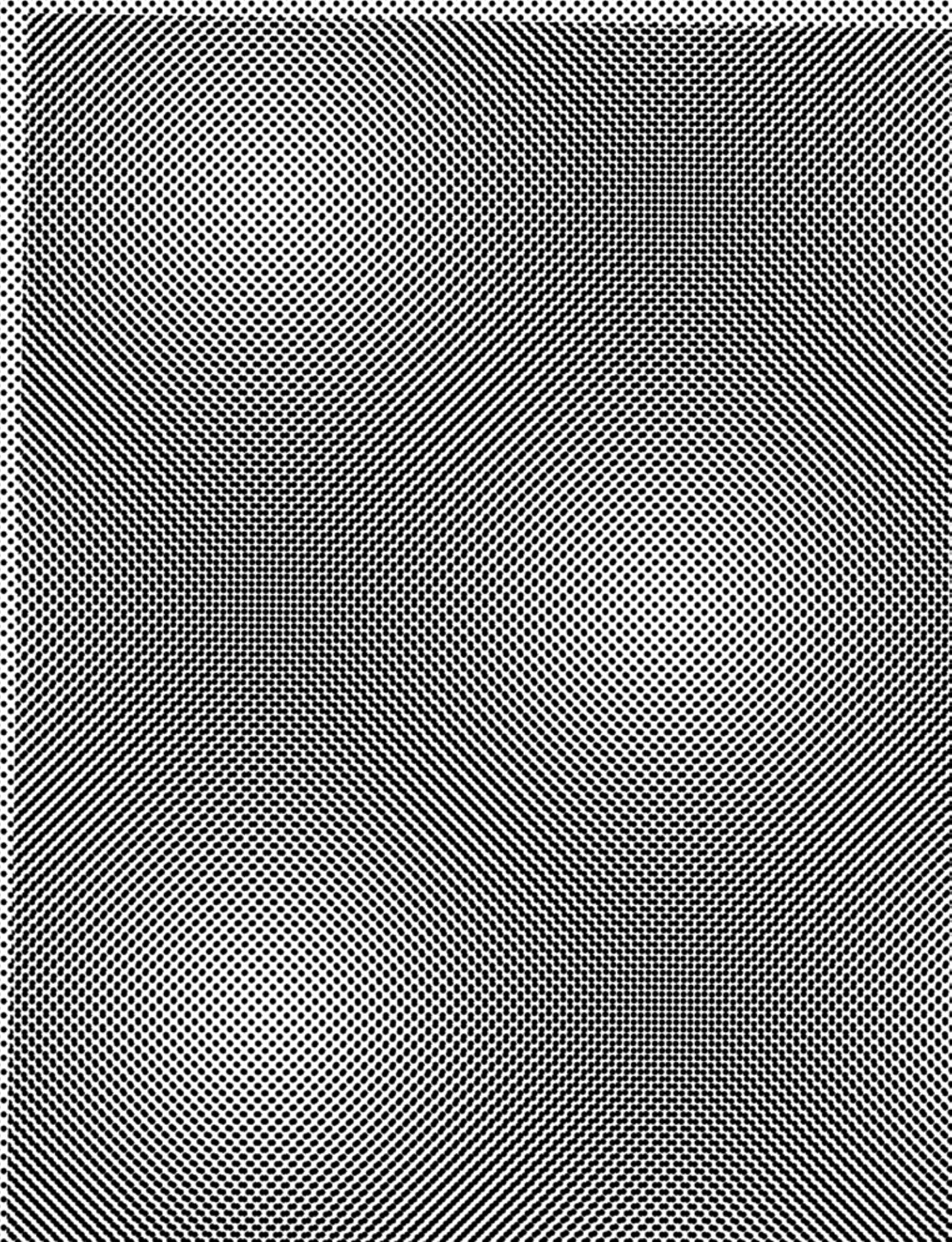
“Rather than invoking a hermetic processional encounter⁹, in which visitors would stop reverentially in front of each work, Quaytman’s paintings are positioned ‘as objects that you passed by — as things that you saw not just head-on and isolated, but from the side, with your peripheral vision, and in the context of other paintings.’”

i) Blythe, Sarah Ganz. “R.H. Quaytman: Archive to Ark, the Subjects of Painting.” *Afterall* (Spring 2015): 79.

2 fixity is all

“In his contribution to the catalogue for Part Object⁵ Part Sculpture David Joselit attempts to account for what he terms a “transit from the commodity to the body” in the development of Duchamp’s work between the years of World War One and the aftermath of World War Two, by identifying “two strategies by which [Duchamp] articulates organic and inorganic matter: inscription and molding.” Joselit describes the trajectory from Fountain (1917) to Female Fig Leaf (1950) as constituting “an effort to circumnavigate language as the means of specifying things,” and suggests that the “flight from language induces a surge of the body: the waning of inscription corresponds to the waxing of the mold.”...he also points to a later “extralinguistic formation” that sprung up in Duchamp’s wake, which complements that of the mold, i.e the *swarm*.³ The swarm, Joselit argues, is both unconscious and patterned and “suggests an emergent order that arises out of imminent flows of matter^[1].”

[1] Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith, “LUTZ BACHER: DISJECTA MEMBRA”, *SNOW* (Zurich: JRP | Ringier, 2014).



3 the swarm as *moiré*

j)

In conversations and texts with Ella Dawn McGeough and Colin Miner for "A kind of graphic unconscious." *Moiré* (Issue 3), 2015.

AND

Shaw, Lytle. *The Moiré Effect*. Zurich, Switzerland: Book Horse / Brooklyn, NY: Cabinet Books, 2012.

Joselit's definition of the swarm, as arising from flows of matter, mirrors some recent thoughts and discussions I have had on *moiré*¹. This interruptive effect manifests from the superimposition of two identical or similar fields, one slightly askew from the other, and results in the production of a new space. This phenomenon presents itself in different states, it might be felt as a transitory experience or it might exist within a fixed image: as something you see momentarily when moving through space, two unrelated patterns overlapping in happenstance; as a problematic of printed matter, pixilated interferences disrupting intended legibility. In both cases orientation is central—the orientation of you, or the orientation of these correlating fields.

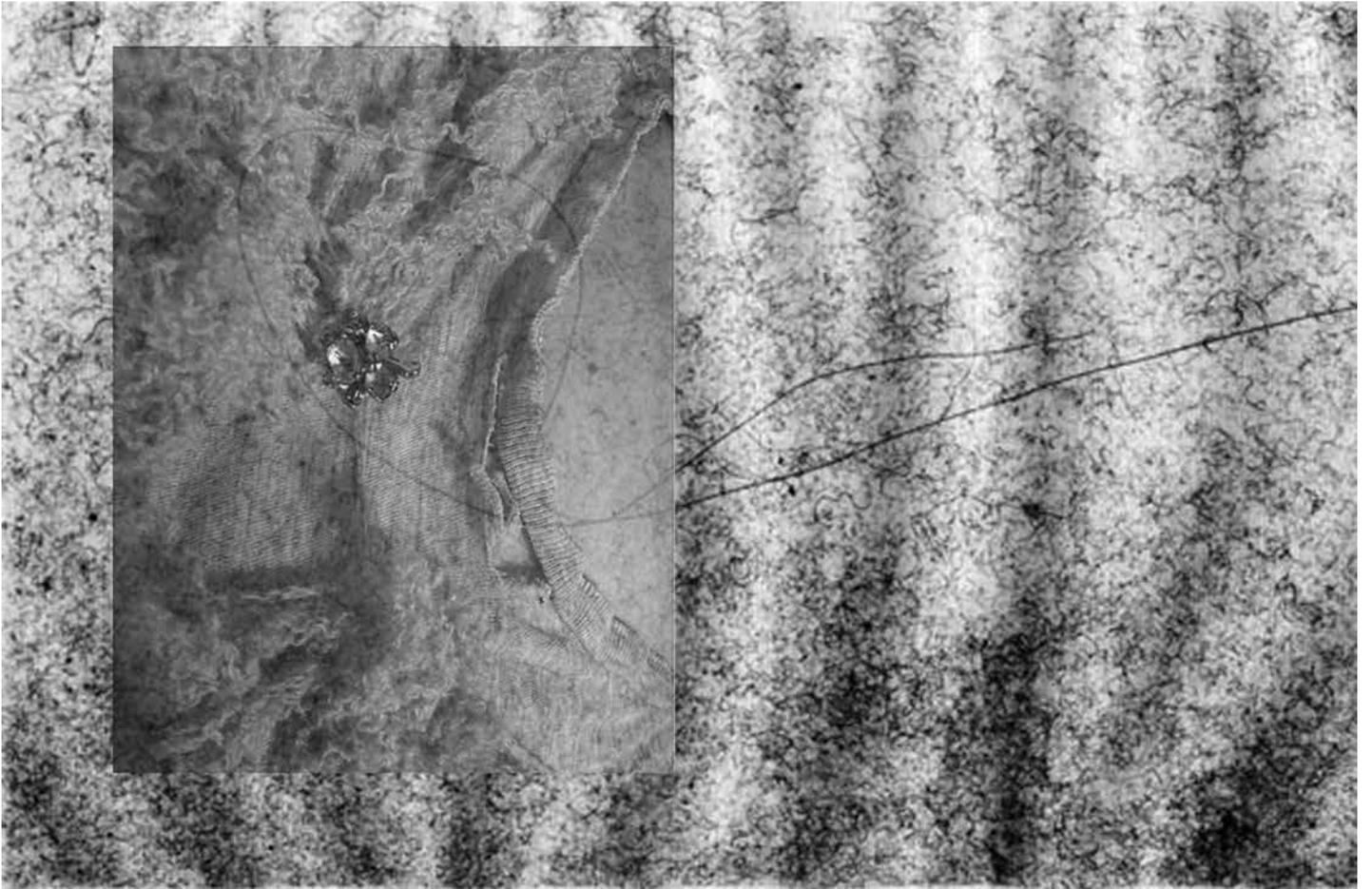
The experience of *moiré* in space is like stumbling. The impression of its imagistic form is vibrational. Whether physical or optical, both instances induce an unexpected affect of movement, resulting in a sudden need to recalibrate⁴. Cognizance emerges from this indistinctness.

Moiré might also become a methodology: a kind of responsive relatability. As a process it holds temporality and the unforeseen at its forefront. In doing so it disrupts linear goal-oriented production, which deals in concrete expectations. Instead, it offers a series of sidesteps. A kind of slow plodding. Two merging fields become points for many, in a kind of rhizomatically structured shifting horizon. New thoughts form in these layers, new layers form with these thoughts. And so on.

4-5 recalibrate

“...the constantly shifting identity of organs, or ‘part objects,’ brought about by the systematic relationship⁶ between movement and permutation as in fact a mechanism to resist meaning, to attack the illustrative or the thematic;” “This is the argument that Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari offered against Melanie Klein even as they gladly adopted her theory of the part object for their own attack, in *Anti-Oedipus*, on the production of meaning. For they thought of these objects in the way Barthes had described Bataille’s chains of significance: as a sequence of connections between the parts of a machine, the goal...is to receive a flow of energy...and to retransmit it, the particular part object changing its very nature in the course of its function: from reception machine at one point of connection to transmission machine at the other. The unconscious... is totally unaware of persons as such – from which it follows that part objects are not representations...they are parts of desiring machines^[1].”

[1] Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois, “Part Objects,” *Formless: a user’s guide* (NY: Zone Books, 1997), 156.



untitled (2016)

6 relationship(s)

DIRECTIONS

- 1/ Make the starter: Stir together flour, yeast, and water with a rubber spatula in a medium bowl. Cover with plastic wrap, and let stand at cool room temperature until it has risen slightly and bubbles cover entire surface, 12 to 15 hours.
- 2/ Make the dough: Whisk together flour and yeast in a large bowl. Add water and starter, and stir with spatula until mixture comes together in a slightly sticky, loosely formed ball of dough. Cover with plastic wrap and let rest for 20 minutes.
- 3/ Gently turn dough onto an unfloured work surface. Sprinkle with salt.
- 4/ To knead: Gather dough, lifting it above work surface. Hold one end of dough close to you while you cast the other end in front of you, onto the surface. Pull the end of dough in your hands toward you, stretching it gently, then fold the dough in half on top of itself. Repeat. Lift, cast, stretch, and fold⁷. Knead the dough until it is smooth, supple, and elastic, 8 to 10 minutes. Use a dough scraper to clean the surface as needed, adding the scraps to the dough. (Dough will be very sticky, but avoid adding more flour until the end, when it may be necessary to add a very small amount. Add the flour to your fingers, not the dough.) Form into a ball.
- 5/ Place dough in a lightly oiled bowl. Cover with oiled plastic wrap. Let rise at cool room temperature for 45 minutes.
- 6/ Gently turn dough onto a lightly floured surface. (Do not punch down.) Fold into thirds, as you would a business letter. Then fold it in half crosswise. Return to bowl, cover, and let rise at cool room temperature until it has almost doubled, at least 75 minutes.
- 7/ Gently turn dough onto a lightly floured surface. Using a dough scraper or a knife, divide dough into equal portions (3 if making baguettes, 2 if making boules or rolls). Cover with oiled plastic wrap, and let rest for 20 minutes.
- 8/ On a lightly floured surface, spread each portion of dough into a rectangle that's roughly 10 by 6 inches. Fold dough into thirds again, as you would a business letter, pressing seams with your fingers. Shape portions into baguettes, rolls, or boules.

a) one into another

“The **subjunctive** is an irrealis mood (one that does not refer directly to what is necessarily real) – it is often contrasted with the indicative, which is a realis mood (used principally to indicate that something is a statement of fact).”

Excerpt from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subjunctive_mood

“Though film functions as a frivolous reference, this could equally relate to high-end conceptualism, wherein Bacher’s cheap tricks carry more propositions (emotions in a subjunctive mood) than, say, Donald Judd’s fetishy boxes^[1].”

[1] Sabrina Tarasoff, “Lutz Bacher: Glitter and Resign,” *C Magazine* (Spring 2017), 25.

b) directions for use

the comet unfolds: “For the continuous extension within which the body’s gesture unfolds its meaning is...a continuity hostile⁸ to the staccato break-up of the spatial medium which is that of speech. The transparent grid where signifiers are formed through the regulated action of spacing is an abstract, purely conceptual medium disjunct from the one through which the perceptual event unrolls or the impress of desire swells^[1].”

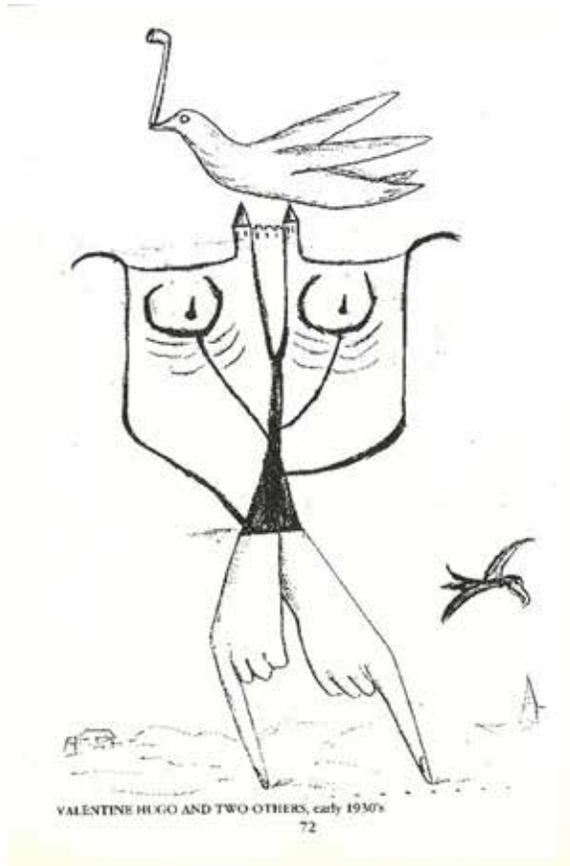
gestalt⁸: “...of a space that unfolds progressively, constantly making room for the bodies that fill it. In this it is a space that is fundamentally visible, whether its organizing principle be seen or not. It is the space in which ‘form’ will come into being; the space of good form, of the gestalt^[2].”

congealed block: “the space of the unconscious...allows two, or three, or five things to be in the same place at the same time. And these things are themselves utterly heteroclitic, not variations on one another but things in total opposition. This ‘space’ is therefore quite literally unimaginable: a congealed block of contradictions. Not a function of the visible, it can only be intuited through the projection of various ‘figures’ that surface from the depths of this ‘space’...To this medium, lying below the level of the visible...its activity...as the production not of the gestalt but of bad form, the activity through which form is in fact transgressed^[3].”

[1] Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge: MIT Press; 1993), 218.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.



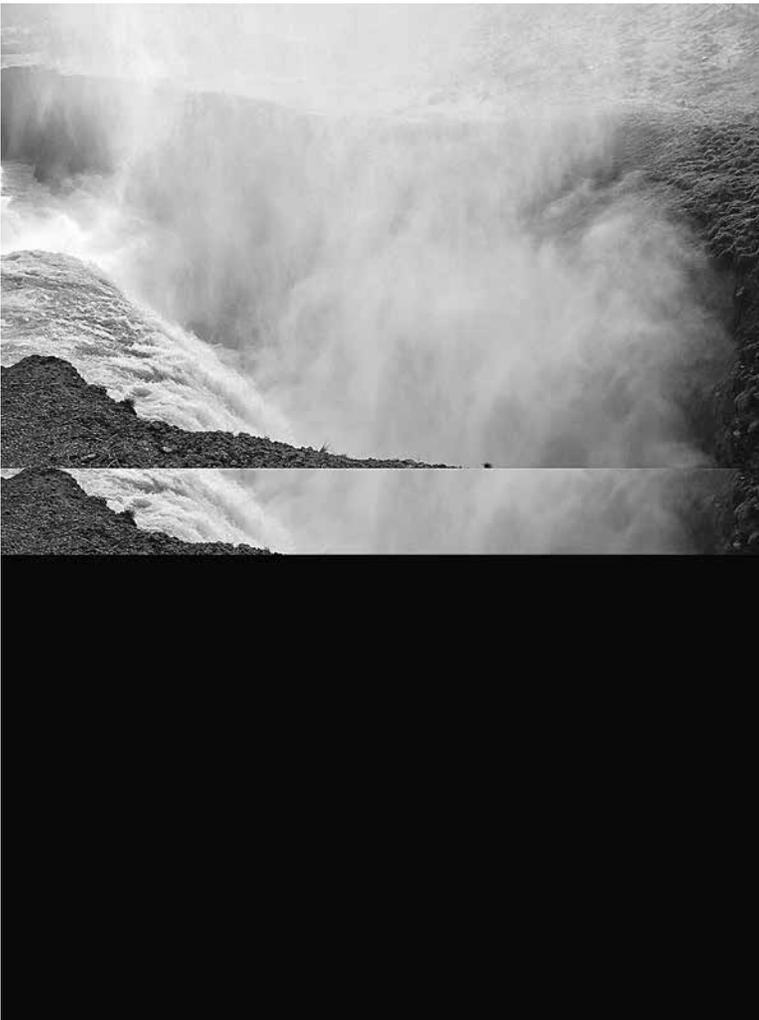
Alastair Brotchie, *A Book of Surrealist Games* (London: Redstone Press; 1995), 72.

8 hostile translations & gestalt

“The original famous phrase of Gestalt psychologist Kurt Koffka, ‘The whole is *other* than the sum of the parts’ is often incorrectly translated as ‘The whole is *greater* than the sum of its parts’, and thus used when explaining gestalt theory, and further incorrectly applied to systems theory. Koffka did not like the translation. He firmly corrected students who replaced *other* with *greater*”.

Excerpt from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gestalt_psychology

8 hostile translations & wifi



8 hostile translations & expectation

I attended an artist talk given by Steina Vasulka in Icelandic last week. What I assumed would be explanatory became small dots of legibility: preconceived ideas, audio mixer, David Bowie, how are you doing, okay, number one, and sorry.

Of a cringe-factor inherent in her work, artist Charline von Heyl spoke of a level of embarrassment within the practice of painting, claiming that “everything about painting actually incorporates all the platitudes you can possibly think about^[1].” How do we also live with these platitudes every day and in the studio? Writer Eva Kenny asks: “what effect does embarrassment have on the visual register or how does it register visually^[2]?”

Jan Verwoert links the moment of embarrassment to an affective exchange which, through its continual transmission, retains a certain potentiality. When Verwoert talks about a “weird material autonomy” in an artwork or a “counter-materialism”, he means materiality which is on the threshold of meaning: “On the threshold to the symbolic (its narratives and economies) defying the sacrifice of our joy and pain, we might gather as creatures¹⁰ in motion and witness each other’s lives^[3].” Giorgio Agamben speaks of this threshold of meaning as the “put[ting] into play” of things which is a “gesture that has both rendered... possible and exceeded...intention^[4].” This gesturing “marks the point at which a life is offered up and played out in the work. Offered up and played out, not... fulfilled^[5].”

*

Alliteration surrounds Jutta Koether’s work: caped crusader cathedral creepy, loose lesions. Racecar riff re: coagulate cat. Puffy perforated passages. Under-skeleton architecture of an acrid, abrasive alphabet. The Beast with a thousand eyes. Koether places a strong emphasis upon what it means to “attempt to see from different positions,” or to take on the perspective or subject position of an idea, gesture, person, or another artwork^[6]. For Koether, this emphasis is not upon her personal subjectivity as an artist, but on what results from the simultaneity of the many internal and external discourses and operations which affect and inform the artist, artwork, and audience:

“No, the objects are not made to be quasi-subjects. Nor are they fully at the mercy of a subject. They can act. Or they can refuse to be actors....They can just be stuff and go to sleep. They can absorb all content, all thought and desire in a material mess. They make you cringe. They are a theory problem. Becoming a borderline subject. To not give into that kind of becoming. To act up discursively, materially. To seek a frame. Frame: a method to change things, to create distance^[7].”

*

It could be argued that both von Heyl and Koether resist a certain reductiveness by way of embarrassment’s excessive presence, which is “always giving too much of what is not presently requested^[8].” Out of step, out of time, naive, off-key, squirm-inducing, a major downer, stubbornly dead-set, irrelevant, tactless, cliché, mobile, in the register of too much (or too little) information. There’s a kind of ethics in embarrassment’s involuntary, mutual wake. Body-to-body and face-to-face, it continually redistributes itself, all the while rerouting any preconceived notions of clarity and logic. There is a risk, inevitably, of dissolution and vulnerability, whether by exposure or invocation. But within this indeterminacy is movement; to be dispersed and disorganized is also to be on the edge of reconstitution. What obstructs simultaneously permits; or what constrains also “gives you the key to an opening^[9].”

[1] Claire Barliant and Christopher Turner, “Painting Paradox,” *Modern Painters* (Summer 2009), 44.

[2] Eva Kenny, “Existential Embarrassment,” *Art & Education* (24 June. 2011: n. pag. Web. 12 January 2012) <http://www.artandeducation.net/paper/existential-embarrassment>. Accessed May 3, 2017.

[3] Jan Verwoert, “The devils in the thing talk to the devils out there,” *Portrait of Space* (Clonlea Studios, Dublin, October 26, 2011) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cI5Ck8U09_s. Accessed May 16, 2017.

[4] Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations* (Brooklyn: New York: Zone Books, 2007), 67.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Martin Prinzhorn, “Transgressing the Rules for Transgression,” *Jutta Koether: Kölnischer Kunstverein, Kunsthalle Bern* (Köln: DuMont Literatur und Kunst Verlag, 2006), 42.

[7] Jutta Koether, “Mad Garland,” *Art and Subjecthood: The Return of the Human Figure in Semiocapitalism* (Sternberg Press, 2011), 87.

[8] Jan Verwoert, “Exhaustion and Exuberance: ways to defy the pressure to perform,” *dot dot dot* (no.15, 2007), 94.

[9] Allison Katz, “The Not. The Eye. The Trick,” *Charline von Heyl: Paintings 1990-2010* (France: les presses du réel, 2010), 35.

10 how the creaturely resonates

A soft encircling. I imagined a microscopic organism, or something living in the sea with an iridescence and transparency of skin. A buoyant creature, shifting segments propelling itself with a kind of mobility that mimics oscillating waves. *Something that was apart from me*¹¹.

Taenia Saginata = tapeworm.

“Wonderful for the length it sometimes reaches; for its faculty of reproducing all its joints over and over again; for its power of throwing off periodically its end joints, which then become capable of free locomotion; and for its tenacity in resisting all kinds of vermifuges usually successful against other parasitic worms!”

Now it becomes something that hides, something that is dormant and latent; something that has a visceral presence without being visually present. *It goes with you everywhere.*

The creaturely signifies an interpretative process: an unknown and a getting to know. As an unknown it is a starting point: a form, a material, a thought, an image. It is a misconception, untethered, or fragmented. Before it did not exist. Though oblique and indiscernible, it is through this initial perception that it becomes manifest. Entering into your world, it is slowly formed through that singular capacity. Shaped at first by a basic understanding and surfaced legibility, through google, through wikipedia, through asking; then shifted towards a personal agenda both intimate and contextual. It becomes about the operation of seeing and the specificity of lens.



Fig. 1 Stanek, V. J. The Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Animal Kingdom. Worthing, UK: Littlehampton Book Services Ltd, 1968.

i) Weinland, David Friedrich. Human Cestoides: An Essay on the Tapeworms of Man. Cambridge, UK: Metcalf, 1858.

11 ____

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