

Dance

By Mårten Spångberg

1. Human Face

There is something about paintings that I don't like. From one perspective I like almost all paintings. They are, after all, paintings, and that's quite nice. There's usually something to pick up and play with or allow to be reformulated, and if there isn't then that's even more interesting and something already.

Somebody might consider that a painting's responsibility is to tell the viewer something, perhaps even something important. I rather think that a painting that tells something also guides and diminishes the scope of what can be interesting, what can be picked up. It's difficult to make paintings that withdraw from having anything to tell, especially those that withdraw from saying something like "confirm me". It's not a painting's responsibility to convince me, neither is it my job to convince it, but instead to let it be – itself and as such – and that's a difficult and demanding undertaking.

Somebody might propose that to engage with a painting is some sort of detective work. So wrong. A painting is not a matter of alibi, evidence, deduction or getting it. Detectives might be able to see the bigger picture. The problem is just that it's *that* bigger picture and already there *tant pis*. Paintings are not puzzles where you are asked to add that last piece. If art was a matter of interpretation it would stay in the realm of knowledge and be a matter of putting clues together.

From another perspective I hardly enjoy a single painting. Almost all of them get lost and end up wanting to something way too much. The more paintings I see, the more of them are a waste of time, and the more of them appear to be painted in order to please the artist's subject, and the easiest way for that is for the artist to aim at pleasing the viewer. It is really disappointing to look at paintings that are playing hard to get.

But there is something particular about paintings that I don't like. In all of them, I think. It's time. Time is the problem that painting has to overcome. There is always time in paintings, in some or other, always time and it's always human time. It seems that paintings persistently look at back at us or me with a human face. It's never the time of painting, it is our time. I don't mean that there is a little face in the painting but that they always look back at us with a sense of confirmation. They tell us we are humans and good subjects. You look at me and I look back. In this way paintings become correlational. They tell us who we are and are at best probabilistic. Evidently a correlationist aspiration to art undoes the possibility for aesthetic experience, and doesn't it even transform art into sociology, where the artwork has been degraded to a token for social behavior and interaction.

Sometimes they (paintings) are just illustrations, too often – and illustration is not bad but not in paintings that think they are not.

I want to look at a painting that looks back with its own gaze or whatever it looks back with. Or perhaps even better I want to look at paintings that don't respond, that are minimally interesting and at the same time suck me in like a black hole. I want paintings without identity but that still are paintings or not not paintings.

Things that look back with a human face (most things) are great because they don't ask any other questions than those to which there is an answer. It might not be a pleasant answer but it is definitely an answer. Those things demand little and what they ask for can be calculated. They ask questions and therefore they stay in the realm of the probable. They make a bit of fuzz, nothing more than a little bit this or that, and nothing is really at stake. We can pretend but as long as something is recognizable it will not change anything, not for real.

I like paintings that don't look back, that don't whisper their name when I come closer. The best moment: it's a painting but what is that painting?

In a lot of paintings, or are they just illustrations, I can't even half avoid time. It's there, full stop. A group of people have a heated conversation over a meal, candle light. Aha – detective work, it's supper or if not it's probably winter and the people in the picture (whose age is always easy to depict) are having a late lunch.

Other paintings, maybe these are even worse, are paintings that abandon time in the sense of motif, what is *in* the painting so to say. These paintings speak time in respect to when a certain style or ideology was present. American modernism was the specialist. Newman's kabbalah or Daniel Buren's 8.7 cm. Please.

It is not a matter of erasing time but the painter's responsibility is to give way to paintings' time, but as that is a time that – at least initially – does not have representation one can never know what that time is and that's why it's urgent.

2. In The Bucket

In an interview, I have forgotten where, the American painter Barnett Newman is asked what he wants with his paintings. This was long time ago and I don't mean to propose that Newman is forever but his answer is still cool, or perhaps more sweet. He responds something in the direction of: "You know I just want the paint on the canvas to be as beautiful as it is in bucket." Personally I didn't know he used buckets, tubes would be favorable, as that would keep the scale more modest. Modernists, OMG.

In parentheses there's, for me, something strange about this quote, something that has nothing to do with the words but rather that it feels really odd to consider a person looking like Newman to say something so cute. Especially the older Newman, with a monocle, moustache and a lit cigarette. In my imagination somebody that looked very differently, somebody far less prominent or proud of him- or herself, formulated that beautiful sentence or is that nonsense? Certainly.

On the canvas whatever is there, whatever traces or not somebody has made on it, it cannot not be recognizable as something. It's like with clouds if you look long enough they start to look like something. They certainly always look like clouds and that's all great but then the shape of a dog appears or the three musketeers or, well, there's always something. What's on the canvas likewise is always something, this or that. It just can't be... because even "I don't know maybe it's..." is already something. Probably this or probably that and when it is, is already a location, a position to which one can formulate a perspective, an articulation. In the bucket however the paint is still untouched by probably this or that, it is all the possibly and not possibly. Even better it is also all that that is beyond what something can or not possibly be. The paint in the bucket is everything, perhaps one could even say that it is infinity. Not really, it's after all paint and in a bucket in the studio of Barnett Newman, but still.

The moment the paint ends up on the canvas it passes from the realm of potentiality to the realm of possibility. To me it's obvious that it is potentiality that Barnett Newman is referring to.

An impossible project certainly but – and it certainly had different implications in post-WWII New York – isn't that exactly what painting or art in general must circulate around. Potentiality.

In recent years the idea of aesthetic experience has re-surfaced. Nothing new and one can wonder what it is? Something tells us that an aesthetic experience is different from other kinds of experience, but what is that difference? If aesthetic experience is the same as any other experience one could compare the experience of watching a Kippenberger and having an ice-cream. Having an ice-cream is also an experience, first or second time. If this was the case it would also not be any fundamental difference to stand in front of a "real" Kippenberger or a reproduction in a book, and each time the Kippenberger would be more or less equally excellent, good or bad, too this or that. Might there be something specific about aesthetic experience after all? Might it even be so that the same Kippenberger only generates aesthetic experience once and only in a certain individual? If so we would have to consider that aesthetic experience is not just individual but that it is singular. It is this experience and only this one, it is singular.

Which is perhaps also why one can, when somebody ask why this Kippenberger and not this or that one, answer: "I don't know, I just love it". Concerning art, it is imperative to not love a painting for a reason – I love it because I love it. And we are back with Newman, the moment when you love something because because you don't love it for this or that, for what it possibly is. You love it, instead for all that it is and not, and for all the that it is that one cannot even imagine imagining.

It is no surprise why this idea of aesthetic experience has been silenced for quite some time and why it still resides in some sort of limbo. When Jacques Derrida proposed that language is the capacity through which we have access to the world it came with a price – along the lines of phenomenology – that only what could be accommodated by language could exist. In that very moment the only thing that could exist had to be probably this or that or, if you like, I don't know, which is still something. From Heidegger we know that nothing is also something and in that moment probability ruled the world. If there was something else that had to be put under a blanket and forgotten, hence aesthetic experience and potentiality had to leave the building. So if post-modernism was good at pronouncing the death of this or that, it certainly killed off art, not this or that art but the very essence of art, the specificity of aesthetic experience, an experience that carries the possibility of an encounter with potentiality.

Of course modernism got it all wrong. Aesthetic experience, the essence of art or potentiality, cannot be captured, put in a bucket if you like and observed. Well, even if one could capture it, the moment when it gains stability and is recognizable it has already entered the realm of the possible. There is no potentiality *in* a painting, none of them, but a painting, as any other art carries with it the possibility for the emergence of that peculiar moment that some call aesthetic experience, others potentiality and Barnett Newman called, “as beautiful as it is in the bucket”.

3. A Little Sol In The End

I like these beginnings.

Not in the “Sentences on Conceptual Art” but somewhere else Sol Lewitt writes something like, the great thing with conceptual art is that you can always cheat a little in the end to make it beautiful.

Sweet words but perhaps not that easy to decipher. It would be a bit too cynical to interpret the sentence as market benevolent or simply sloppy.

It’s intriguing that Lewitt stresses the end. Why the end and not the middle or half way, beginning? It seems like his work is carried by an instance of insight and when he knows, or has been able to navigate the insight, it’s not so important to state it. At that time, in the end, let it be beautiful.

Too often I wonder if that sentence or conceptual in art hasn’t been reversed into roughly; the great thing with art is that you can always cheat in the end by adding a conceptual edge – or even worse, adding some conceptual, thus fencing the work from all kinds of attacks or viruses. You can always say, it’s conceptual and that’s “Oh yes, I understand...”

Conceptual in art is like diplomatic immunity in politics. When conceptual is added in the end, like some icing, it might just be called smartass, and it definitely inscribes itself in dominant, if not downright male discourse. Conceptual in the end is like a father who responds to the teenage child “Because I say so.”

Conceptual in the beginning, as departure – like Sol had it – instead unveils a desire for transparency or a kind of exposure, if not dissolving of subjectivity. Not in the sense of Duchamp or minimalism where the point was to erase the artist’s subject, the traces of the artist – a gesture that often has been read as humble and a kind of glorious stepping down from a romantic male heroic image of the artist, but in fact functions the opposite way around. When Andy Warhol proposes that he wants to be a machine, it’s not cool it’s quite romantic and comes out as a desire to manifest the artist as superhuman or to reveal the human/heroic/genius by denying it.

Sol Lewitt’s conceptual is not a matter of denying or obscuring the artist’s subject but instead of remaining and faithful to something that has been set in motion, a process that might iterate a completely different subjectivity. To something that stays open – which means that it cannot be closed through a solution – but requires the coming into being of something or an experience that has yet to be given or acquire a name, an ambivalence to gain stability.

With a bit of a stretch one could even ponder the possibility that – contrary to the conceptual guys

obsessing with semiotics – Sol Lewitt’s work is queer. Queer not in the end, i.e. representation, but as or through a process that asks for nothing except devotion and that in the end is beautiful.

4. I’m just going painting

When Roland Barthes’ “The Death of the Author” was published in 1967 it started, and quickly, a total deflation of modernist ideals in visual arts. Art in general but most prominently in visual art and in New York. Overnight the idea of an essence to art was made obsolete. An artwork pointing to itself as itself was history and instead, at least in certain circles – and powerful ones at that – art became a matter of language, clusters of references and the artwork a bundle of signs held together by their very lack of originality.

I imagine Jackson Pollock having breakfast in the house in the Hamptons and after rolling a cigarette and about to put on his stained jacket saying to his wife Lee, “Hey, I’m just going painting.” That was in the end of the 40s or early 50s but what about if Pollock would have had breakfast after Barthes’ essay was public domain? There and then I’m just going painting might not have been such a good idea. I picture Lee starting to giggle slightly embarrassedly, one of those laughs that won’t stop. When the attack finally comes to an end trying to explain to the heroic painter that “just” painting implies a preserved understanding of essence, and that “just” simply is out of the question since there is no just in the first place. “Jackson, whatever you paint, however much it pains you, you and painting are always inscribed in a delicate network of references, skills, formats, conventions... you name it? You are not free neither are your paintings.”

Had Pollock stayed alive what had to happen there in the end of the 60s was that artists and art needed to articulate if not invent some new way of justifying artistic production. The time of innocence had come to an abrupt end. Purity sailed away and spontaneity had become a laughing stock.

Come to think about it, one could also say that art in this moment, had it been a human being, that it passed from being a free individual to be an individual that had individual freedom. Art passed from being a domain carried by sovereignty to constitutional freedom which obviously has nothing to do with freedom but at best with choice. From now on art had to earn also the illusion of its freedom.

Roland Barthes’ essay was perhaps not such a great contribution to artistic practice, not at all a welcome injection of who knows what but instead a few pages that opened the door to a huge amount of frustration. What if art couldn’t be *just* any more, what then...?

In New York in the late 60s, what could possibly offer justification to make art? Well, nobody, not even in the art scene, was a communist – “they” had been made extinct ten years earlier - but everybody, at least in the art scene was a Marxist. So where to start looking? What the art scene found in Marx was brilliant: critique. Marx’s first tool and nine years later the first issue of October came out and art’s obsession with critique was consolidated.

Awesome, “Lee, I’m going over to the shed to engage in my critical practice. Fuck, “I am nature” this is critique 24/7.”

But nothing says that art's relation to critique in any way is inherent. Art's job since 50 years, in certain circles has been critique but it is certainly not art's calling. It goes without saying that an art informed by Roland Barthes in any case would deny the possibility for a calling. No, art is something one does and gets paid for, it's reason, cognition and semiotics *c'est tout*, or?

It is this moment, this moment of crisis, from which conceptual art emerges and it is tragically an unconditional surrender to art's departure from sovereignty, which means to provide the very possibility of aesthetic experience.

It is as easy to be a posteriori clever, wise after the event, as it is to be in denial but perhaps it was Pollock who was brave, devoted and faithful. Who dared go into the studio unprepared for the possibility of being carried away by sovereignty and not the conceptual boys? Were they in fact cowards, so afraid of that something unnameable in aesthetic experience that they closed the door and locked it with critique? Was conceptual art guided by a bunch control freaks so paranoid that they anathematized any form or trace of indeterminacy?

5. It Was Possible

In an interview with Nicholas Serota from 2006, Gerhard Richter is asked how it at a certain moment happened that he started to make out-of-focus paintings. The interview is from a documentary and in this particular section Richter is sitting in an oversized totally fancy sofa. One can sense from the tone of Serota's voice that he is looking forward to a juicy response that will touch upon art's historical mysteries or secret conflicts nobody knew about circulating in the Cologne scene of the late 60s. Richter, dressed more like an archetypical Chinese worker than a stinking rich superstar touches his nose and changes position, says after slightly too long pause.

– Well you know, at that time it was... possible, adding a very generous smile. I can't recall what happens afterwards but it doesn't matter, the answer is intriguing enough on its own.

What first comes to mind is that Gerhard Richter is just another asshole that obviously and under no circumstances would reveal anything, especially nothing that in any way could smudge his genius. Gerhard Richter doesn't get inspiration, he is inspiration in its most pure form. If one Mr Richter ever gets inspired from somewhere other than himself it is from God and God only, but that is probably only when he has a headache or is haunted by a vague hangover after yesterday's opening party. Well, it was just some retrospective who cares where, really? Conclusion: Gerhard Richter is a shit.

But what about a different interpretation. Perhaps Richter said something more than about focused or out of focus paintings but instead touched upon something central to aesthetic production in general.

It was possible. Doesn't that mean that there were no reasons, or no no reasons? It was just possible and I, i.e. Richter did it, out of focus. Of course after the fact art historians or critics can make up a thousand feasible narratives. Do their detective work and track it all down to some childhood trauma, a revenge plot, technological development, a Marxist unpacking of a historical moment or why not just blame capitalism – neoliberalism was not invented at the time so capitalism will have to do.

But what if there were no reasons or no no reasons for real. It was possible, proposes that contrary to other kinds of decisions or unfolding aesthetic judgment or decision doesn't necessarily have anything to do with causality. Aesthetic judgement, what green color to choose, is not a matter of probability, at least not in its entirety. You ask a painter or whatever artist why that one there and most probably the answer will come across as rather silly if not stupid. – Cuz, you know... yeah, or something about emotions, feelings, energy or inner necessity. It could be no other way, and there was no negotiation or probability.

What Richter, the old modernist or not, says is that aesthetic judgement is beyond reason or rationality. It can be analyzed but some parts of it move beyond probability and measure. One could also say that aesthetic judgement is self-referential because it refers only to itself as itself and that the experience of taking such a decision, whether that is in the studio in front of the easel or in the exhibition space or museum, is not the experience of taking a decision but instead, since this experience by necessity is empty, means to experience oneself as potentiality. Perhaps that is the underlying feeling that determination that all aesthetic production comes down to, that feeling of generating a decision for no particular reason and to be touched however gently by potentiality.

With a different set of words perhaps what Richter said is that in aesthetic production, just because it is formulated around contingent decisions, hope resides.

6. August 1971

In August 1971 Richard Nixon during some kind of panic attack abolished the gold standard. Congratulations, universal equivalence, i.e. money was from then on free from any attachment, sailing about without being anchored to no nothing. Universal equivalence means money can buy anything, but when not connected to actual gold it also means that value in general is no longer attached to nothing at all. On the 15th August 1971 Richard Nixon abolished truth once and for all.

That same August Jacques Derrida delivered a lecture in Montreal called "Signature, Event, Context" where he for the first time – at least sort of – proposes, along with Austin's thinking around speech acts and performativity, that language can have no origin but is in its entirety performative. If language wasn't imposed on humans by some amazing superpower it can simply have no starting point, no substance, but is in fact through and through conventional and hence value, whatever value, cannot not be relative. In August 1971 Jacques Derrida abolished truth once, no second, and for all.

Remarkable, that was indeed a kick-ass month for humanity, as both money and language totally lost their reliability. From now on everything started to float and truth was just nowhere to be found (as if it had before). It is not far-fetched to claim that that week of 15th August 1971 was the day neoliberalism for real entered the competition and that there were no other contenders left. Shit happens.

From this perspective it's kind of comical to think about how Judith Butler twenty years later added identity. Until then one could at least, with a bit of good will, say things like "true for me" but with "Gender Trouble" not even that. I mean who me if at all in the first place?

August 1971 could also be understood as a performative turn or turn towards a hegemony of language and language, as we know, is conventional. Now, if Derrida argued something in the line of that language is the capacity with which we have access to the world it comes not just with *a* price but several. The first that postmodernism must be understood as altogether anthropocentric and the second (and there are more but not here), which is not exactly new but now better, that only that can exist can be contained, named or located by language. In other words, only that can be that is possible, that is already possible for humanity and language. Damn, but really, from then on only that that could be named had a place in the world, dreams and imagination included. If language is how we have access to the world and language is conventional, dreams, fantasy and imagination are too, however hard one tries. Thinking outside the box, which already felt a bit embarrassing, became in the fall of 1971 simply bogus.

That fall must obviously have been a terrible moment of crisis for any avant-garde attitude as Nixon with his gold also made the idea of explorer deflate and Derrida made sure that there was no such thing as an outside any more. But the men – they were always men – of the avant-garde quickly re-educated themselves and found a new name *institutional critique*. Brilliant and equally male. How many artists and art lovers mustn't have taken down their Yves Klein "Leap into the Void" postcard from the fridge that fall? Oops.

But there is one more thing, a thing that I think hasn't been considered properly, that Nixon and Derrida collapsed, which of course is aesthetic experience. Because if language is the capacity through which we access the world, art and its encounters cannot be otherwise and detached from the conventionality of language, from relativity or from performativity which means that aesthetic experience either simply ceases to exist or is transformed into something that can be dealt with through reason and ethics. Art can no longer be contemplated because there simply is no way out of teleology. At the moment when any kind of transcendence, truth, metaphysics or great outdoors is abolished art becomes synonymous with culture, something that can be measured and calculated, i.e. instrumentalized and smartass. In a way postmodern understanding of art in fact reminds us about pre-Kantian 18th century rationalism. In 1971 art lost its transformative capacity and postmodernism disgraced it by forcing it into the narrow world of possibility, or in other words into the predicable backyard of probability stealing away from art the universe of indetermination and potentiality.

It is paradoxically this moment when neoliberalism kicks in and makes art into policy documents and business proposals that that also is the greenhouse of socially engaged art. Of course if aesthetic experience has been ostracized and art has become brim-full of discourse social engagement makes perfect sense, but it certainly has nothing to do with aesthetic experience and again its judgment is not aesthetic but ethical or moral.

Recently though it seems we have bumped into a problem again. Derrida was totally crucial and so was Butler, but something has gone wrong when both language and then obviously identity has been down to its knickers co-opted by capitalism. Identity is big bucks and dollar signs and according to Franco Bifo, for example, we live in semio-capitalism where language itself has been financialized. So however much we were impressed by postmodernism and its companions might it not be high time to reclaim aesthetic experience and however much it feels weird to insist on aesthetic experience – which obviously is not an artwork but rather a possible experience generated through an encounter with an art work or situation – and that those experiences by necessity bring

with them a, however minute or tiny, encounter with something beyond language, value, history and convention, something that has many names and none of them are good enough. Yet, in the vagueness of those names resides the potentiality of other kinds of life – because if capitalism *owns* language we cannot imagine a way out of where we are now, but need those experiences that bypass the possible more than ever. That is the hope that resides in art, in those experiences that art carries within.

7. Private Art

"Tell me love isn't true/It's just something that we do" sang Madonna in 2000. At that time it sounded cool – cynical enough, smartass enough, apathetic enough. But shit, what a tragedy – if love is just something that we do then it's all a matter of calculation, measurability and economy. In Madonna's 2000 universe love has turned into nothing more or less than a decision, something we put on or off like a coat or maybe a diet. Or if love is something that we do it's turned into negotiation, investment and affordance. In 2000 love ended up being economy one 0 one.

Roland Barthes was a little earlier than Madonna: You fall in love, you fall out of love, you recover from love and you fall in love again. Holy Moses what a horrible thing to say, love is just something that we do and the last part *again* is really, really sad. Again proposes *another one* or *more of the same* and the book closes with the insight that love is comparable, measurable and simply different in degree, business as usual. There is nothing special with this love and there is certainly no singularity to love.

But why, why such a mediocre understanding of love? Well, for anybody who proposes the death of the author and the end of essence and authenticity it's evident that not even love is allowed to transgress language and have anything to do with magic, or feeling blown away or overwhelmed. For Madonna it might be the other way around and that the song rather proposes, if I just convince myself that love is something that we do, it means I can't really have a problem or be heartbroken. It's just reasons anyway.

If postmodernism and its entourage were keen on letting us know that language is the capacity with which we have access to the world nothing must bypass language and hence love must be degraded to something that we do, causality and reason. The other way around, since love is something that we do, that is negotiated, one can also be held accountable for one's actions, for one's love.

What about swapping love for art? "Tell me art isn't true/it's just something that we do". Well, in fact perhaps arts councils and venues, museums and commissioners should consider the sentence, because if art is just something that we do, it goes without saying that making art is something one also gets paid for. But then again if art is just something that we do, how come some of it is just valued so much more highly – monetarily or symbolically – and if art is just something that we do it would be difficult to argue anything about originality. If love is just something that we do wouldn't that mean that if there was a shortage one could also be okay with second best. Like, I really prefer Volvo but what the heck if you only have Volkswagen that's also o'rite. Or, if there's no Ad Reinhardt around I'm okay with that black wall.

As has been mentioned, if postmodernism claims language to be how we access the world it can

simply not allow art to be something else; art can't be magical, overwhelming or transcendental, because then apparently language is not the only, etc. But the price to pay for making art something that we do, or inscribing it into language, it also means that art always is calculable and measurable, in other words that it has become a matter of investment and affordance, simple economy and that the artist at the end of the day is just a manipulative shit, a seducer and that all artists are con artists. Moreover, it also means that the artist can be held accountable for his art and that a person who makes art that is weird or deals with awkward representations is somehow sick. An artwork in short becomes a prosthesis of the artist's fucked up mind. If this was the case quite a bunch of artists would be in trouble and Frances Bacon sent at least to Coventry. Aesthetics exchanged for ethics. Contemplation with policing.

When Judith Butler published "Gender Trouble" in 1990 that was absolutely terrific but an understanding of identity as performative is not all pros, because doesn't identity politics tell us that from now on it's all up to you. When identity becomes politics there is so nobody or else to blame, the only one responsible is you and for every decision or action you do or don't. You equal your actions and how you iterate "yourself" becomes a matter of affordance and investment. With "Gender Trouble" identity became 100% economy, and indeed identity was repackaged into commodity – you become private property and property – since there is only dynamics and relative value – that need to be surveilled and invested.

Two things come out and disturbing. If art is just something that we do and so on it ends up with that all art always is private. Art can of course happen, be, and exhibited in public/space, but it is always private, there is no public art. Not just in the sense of – who owns that paintings – but private in the sense of accountability. An art that is private, that can be owned is by necessity inscribed in the terrain of possibility, which means that it cannot carry with it the occasion of aesthetic experience.

Jacques Rancière, another poststructuralist who cannot extend art's life beyond language, writes that the definition of politics is the maintenance of two worlds in one. It is and has to be an endless negotiation, argument against argument until the sun goes down, which also means that politics is conducted through or within language. For Judith Butler identity is two "worlds" in one, it is always a negotiation. For these folks art is the same and must be – or their arguments crumble – it's two worlds in one, negotiation. It is not political but it's always politics, which at all times will stand in the way for it to be political. For art to carry within it potentiality it must withdraw from politics and from negotiation, only then when two become one can it slip out of reason, causality, accountability and give rise to the unconditional singularity of aesthetic experience.

8. Some Thing, Not Good Or Bad For Something

Across the street two guys are standing around smoking cigarettes and doing what guys do. It's rather unpleasant not least because they are doing what guys are doing, which already occupies space and in a somewhat aggressive way. One of them has had the brilliant idea of bringing his portable Bluetooth-ready loudspeaker to which his smartphone is connected. It's really great with Bluetooth and loudspeakers are one of the more extra-cool innovations. Great, but it is pretty much irritating that loudspeakers lately have turned into something people, i.e. men, carry with them to accompany cigarette smoking and doing what guys do. All of that is quite crappy but

what makes it really irritating is, however just a street corner or pavement, how these loudspeakers rearrange public space. Because a street corner is also public space and not to be underestimated, but with the loudspeaker-dudes these spaces are made private, perhaps just temporarily but even so transformed from environment to territory. From smooth to striated, authorizing only certain kinds of behavior and tagging the space with signs of ownership, not just through loudspeakers but also through other means of communication and code.

Perhaps one could say that my street corner has turned from being just a street corner to becoming a stage. In a way this is cute and something one should appreciate but really isn't this a slight problem in our times that the world to a larger and larger extent has turned into a stage. Not in a Shakespearian way which rather proposes that we are all part of some grand narrative that can't be escaped, it's inevitable and not so far from faith. Today the stage is another one where each and all of us are responsible for performing ourselves successfully. Shakespeare's stage one could say was public whereas today the stage has turned into private space, where destiny and faith have been swapped for affordance and investment. What happened on Shakespeare's stage was happening but was not performative. Today, however, even if something is not happening it is always performative. There is an important differentiation to be made: just because something is performed, in the sense of being carried out, it doesn't by necessity mean that it is performative. And the other way around, the moment something is in the world it cannot not be performative. A human being performs being a human being, she carries out being a human being, but that doesn't mean that being a human being is performative. On the other hand being a human being is always performing something into the world, in the sense of meaning or signification, and that is always performative.

Same thing with a painting. A painting carries out being a painting but isn't not therefore performative, but as a painting always performs something into the world it is always performative, or is carried by some kind of performativity. A painting is not by itself private, as an object it rather withdraws from becoming private as that in ways render it subject, but the moment when viewed from the perspective of performing something into the world it cannot not be private.

As long as something is public it can become anything, the public is open and, although not unconditionally, allows what is public to be, become or not whatever. One could say that in public some thing doesn't need to be something. The moment something becomes private, or leaves the public sphere, it automatically and by necessity becomes this or that and not anything or whatever. In the private sphere something cannot not be something and is never just some thing. Consequently, as long as something is some thing it cannot be held responsible. Only something can be accountable as some thing is that that slips through naming or so-to-say being located. But to the same extent as some thing cannot be accountable it can also not be owned and therefore not used strategically. On the other hand, as long as something is something, private and ownable, it can only and always be used strategically. Put differently, what is public is amazing because it is not good or bad for something which is exactly what is the tragedy of the private; in the private something is always good or bad for something and as long as it is it's not something else or ambiguous.

The public carries with it the promise of not being performative but just performed, carried out, whereas the private is always performative and as long as it is it is always less, less than itself as some thing, less than itself in any respect exactly because it is named.

Performative is nothing good. And it is not something that something can be more or less. For some thing to be something, or to be in the world or reality, it cannot be performative. Performative is not like a color, more or less red or blue. It is a condition that a certain understanding of the world makes inevitable.

As long as we view the world through an urgency of giving things soft or hard, more or less tangible identity this world has no other spaces than the private. Here, in the private, everything is owned and ownable and what carries the world is investment and affordance. That might be irritating like the loudspeaker men in the street corner, but really what is a tragedy is what this way of viewing the world – through the lens of performativity – or if you like a world to which we have access only through language, is doing and has done to imagination. The moment when imagination turns private one can only imagine this or that – what already *can* be imagined and as long as it is something. Public space or the public, might not or is definitely not a safe space, but it is a space where imagination is prominently free, where some thing can still be and remain some thing. An art addicted to performativity is petty – good or bad for something, private and ownable – whereas an art that insists on being public is an art that carries with it the promise of contingency.

In a world where identity is performative it becomes the responsibility of the individual to iterate identity. Every aspect of a person, every action, thought, mode of navigation and so on becomes part of a process to coagulate a seemingly continuous identity; however, we know that every moment implies a slight yet reiteration of how the individual is forming relations to the world. Within a performative regime where language is groundless or has no foundation identity becomes a matter of affording and/or investing in yourself as yourself. Here identity is not just a matter of politics, more importantly it becomes a matter of economy. Your identity is private and can be owned like any other something in the world. Since 1990 your identity has become a commodity like any other, and it is your most important asset. As we all know what you sell is ultimately your identity. Some identities are valuable, others economically uninteresting and hence packaged away or just stored in the lost and found bin. Your identity, if you are not one of those packaged away, doesn't just need maintenance, it also needs protection, both digitally and in the physical world. Your identity needs surveillance.

The price to pay for an identity that is understood as performative is a paranoid world where each and everybody constantly looks after and surveilles the position of their identity. The problem is not so much if your identity is stolen or hacked, but what is a problem is that somebody or everybody can want to appropriate your identity, attack it due some sort of power, capitalize on it for some reason or use information to tailor campaigns, trolling, commercials and that's what we know. Moreover, you always run the risk of losing the precious identity that you have invested in with a single wrong move, any utterance can be used against you and in today's world it is fairly easy to be disqualified and dismissed. And you know, we all know, that it doesn't matter what you did or didn't do there is anyway no grounds to what is right or wrong, only lobby and economy.

When Nixon sold out gold standard and Derrida language in 1971, what happened is that they disqualified any form of prominent stability – one of which and an important one at that, was ideology.

After 1971 there is only one ideology, which was an ideology of lack, lack of conviction and it's nobody's fault. It can be in no other way in a world that is governed by an understanding that all value is performative and has no grounding, no origin, no reasons to not change. But as nothing

in this world is fixed things are even better or worse, because without fixed points how can we know or verify change. It's all floating, Boss.

Ideology can perhaps be defined as “under no circumstances” or “over my dead body”, no fuckin' way, and this is a matter of principles, no matter what. Politics on the other hand is the very absence of permanence and instead we have negotiation, and the only thing that must not happen is that we agree that we reach a point of grounding, of settlement or index. A definition of politics might be “under these circumstances it is necessary to...” or “in this situation it has become important to...”. Ideology is stable, static, long term, grounded and heavy handed whereas politics is the exact opposite: unstable, dynamic, short term, floating and easy-going. Most of all politics is performative and as long as it is it certainly has no substance, it cannot have.

A world formulated around performativity is in many ways great but we should remember that is not only good but comes with a lot of darkness, and one of the darkest ones is called paranoia. Paranoia prompts fear, the building of walls and proprietary views of the world. In a world governed by performativity we will all tiptoe along acting as saturated heirs of Bartleby. I'd rather not since whatever I do can and will be used against me. Temporarily it might be the case but in the long run, performativity disempowers.

Performativity with its relations to phenomenology and postmodern or poststructuralist thought proposes that everything in the world, in reality or within symbolic order if you like, does not *exist* in itself but we can only access its representations. Things soft or hard, physical are not real but exist only as the sum of their relations in the world. This is our lucky day because had it been otherwise, if we could have a direct relation to things in themselves transformation would be impossible, and with that movement, time, dynamics, change. Something cannot not have relations and, however impossible, something without relations simply doesn't exist. Evidently relation doesn't mean to be friendly and engage in water-cooler chats, it simply means that there is the possibility for some or other cohesion, or transfer.

An interesting question is what happens to imagination in a, or our, performative regime. One possibility is that imagination simply vanished because the very idea of imagination is that it is ruled by totally fuzzy logics, impossible impossibilities, by non-relations, indetermination and contingency but such stuff cannot exist in our current regime as that would tear down the entire system insomuch that some thing can exist without relations, at least to some degree at some point or moment. Another option is that we indeed fear imagination because it has this inscription of being unfaithful and contingent and who wants to end up contingently some where else? Scary shit and instead it seems that our current regime's capitalism plus provides us with tools that perform the illusion of imagination but the safe version, from retreat centers to computer games, from an afternoon in the spa or tarot reading, care practices (at least too many), Pilates and nameless forms of escapism, but it is never imagination. Animated Hollywood movies are perhaps a good example for how something that was created to stimulate imagination today has become so extremely saturated that there is no space for imagination left. Everything is delivered so that I don't need to feel haunted but instead consume properly and certainly don't imagine.

What is the place of art in a world that looks and operates like this one? With a bit of pushing and pulling one could say that performativity undid art. In this world there is no place for art, there is no place for contemplation because what art does is to open up for the possibility of losing oneself

– it is a letting go of the subject and identity, and that would be deep torture for a contemporary identity. In this world art has transformed into information, efficiency and participation, when in fact what we need is contemplation, uselessness and the promise of spaces where performativity is disqualified. Art's job is not to make friends but instead to insist on the possibility of autonomy.

9. Gnomes and Trolls

In the beginning of the last century the Swedish artist John Bauer created a large series of illustrations to accompany stories for slightly older children. These books that were published on a yearly basis for quite some time were called "Amongst Gnomes and Trolls" and Bauer illustrated them in a Nordic jugend style full of mystery with stones that come alive, trees that run around, princesses, mousse and moose and lakes amazingly clean. They are fantastic.

It has been told that Edvard Munch from time to time left paintings that didn't come out right in the nature. Who knows, in the forest behind his summer house, deep into the Norwegian wilderness, beyond people and civilization or something. I've heard both that he was convinced that the paintings would ripen and find themselves before he could start working on them again and, alternatively, that he punished the paintings to sit around in the bush for a bunch of weeks, scared shitless leaning against some ancient tree with moss and weird creatures.

One can basically consider two meanings for the word speculation. Either as in the stock market where one speculates on ups and downs, movements within given frameworks. Speculation on the stock market is based on probability. Something moves up, something else goes down, we win if we can predict probability. Difficult but not impossible. Another understanding is, one could perhaps say, philosophical. Speculate here is the opposite of projection, which is all about estimating the future based on what is already possible. Speculation implies the somewhat impossible project, to elaborate, for example, the future without grounding it in what is or can be known. This is a form of speculation that bypasses probability in favor of contingency. Evidently one cannot predict a result but has to suffice with whatever it is concerning speculation.

Speculation on the stock markets is not exactly rational but a matter of having an overview, information and people that creates watertight algorithms. Sharp tools make mucho dollars. Philosophical speculation on the other hand cannot be set out through reason or any tools that – which all tools have in common – knows its job. The first obstacle indeed is to bypass or un-hinge reason, history, probability, desire, hierarchies, patriarchy, fish, gravity, and so on and forth. There is only one tool that has the capacity to do this – and it comes with restrictions. This tool, that Deleuze and Guattari made so popular already in the 1970s (just kidding), is known as a concept.

This difference is important; speculation in regard to probability or speculation vis-à-vis contingency. The point has been made before, it is obvious that speculation on the stock market remains in the realm of the possible. You make more or less money, but never more than that. It all stays within the reasonable and makes total sense. The second kind of speculation which has nothing to do with money (or rarely) moves beyond the logical, causal and reasonable and into contingency which we can also name immanence or potentiality. It is not so tricky to figure out that speculation version one is both epistemological and performative, whereas the second, if not actually so at least close enough, is ontological and non-performative. Add to that one equals relational and

two is non-relational or in other words singular.

One should however keep in mind that just because something crosses paths with potentiality it doesn't mean that what comes out is absolutely crazy, fucked up, amazing, weird or the solution to everything and a bit more. Pas de tout it just means that that is also possible and that that it is already enough of a promise, at least for some. Perhaps for, at least according to Deleuze and Guattari, scientists, philosophers and artists.

In parentheses potentiality is also a word that can have two connotations. On the one hand it has turned into meaning more or less possibility. A football coach or gallerist can say "that kid has great potentiality" which means worth investing in somebody that it already is fully inscribed in probability. On the other hand is the philosophical meaning of potentiality. Here, depending to an extent what philosopher one speaks to, potentiality instead can be described as the realm beyond, not just what is possible but also beyond what is not possible, i.e. to a realm beyond knowledge, signification, language, etc. Or if possibility is imagination, and unimaginable is the impossible, then potentiality is that that we can't even imagine imagining. Yet, only potentiality can change something, the world, universe or the subject in ways that are not already predictable, possible, manageable, measurable or probable. Full *pêle-mêle* so to say, but that that it is already enough of a promise, at least for some. The first version points only to difference in degree whereas the second promises difference in kind.

A concept can be said to be a tool, but perhaps better a machine. There are two kinds of machines. Machines, such as a toaster, which knows its job and does it well. A toaster is good when it produces toast with strong determination. No matter what you put in it should come back up again with a different color. Most machines, or all of them, operate in relation to determination, they are reliable and that, most of the time, is good. But, and obviously a concept is the second kind of machine. It is a machine that produces indetermination, i.e. to which the outcome is contingent. There is a catch though, which is that there must be no determination to the indetermination either; therefore, it's not just the result that is indeterminable but also the machine itself. Toasters are easy to build whereas concepts are motherfuckers to construct and you have no idea if they'll work or not until it's too late, and then what the hell they worked for or against. Concepts are machines you can't know what they are good for.

Unfortunately concepts are often used as a way of defining. The concept of this or that is this or that. The concept of, for example, determination is a compressed explanation or even worse, a formulation such as "in this paper I intend to unpack the concept of", *help me*. But equally often – and that's where concepts, thinking or working with concepts is interesting and vital for, for instance, art – concept refers to a specific kind of machine.

More confusion. Conceptual has a lot to do with the first, unfortunate, version of understanding concept and very little or nothing at all to do with concept as in a machine that generates the possibility of indetermination. Conceptual in art, especially first generation, has rather to do with displaying concepts (first unfortunate version), or one could say translating concepts from text to some kind of visual representation. Joseph Kosuth's work is a prime example, but also more recent artists, but we perhaps recognize them more as smartass than conceptual. Never mind in today's art world it appears that conceptual is an art that appeals to cognition rather than emotions or energy. In fact conceptual is just something one adds in the end to seem a bit more deep but in a superficial way.

What about an art that forgets the conceptual and instead is a concept? No to conceptual art and yes to concept art. An art to which there is no good or bad interpretation, no answers or smartassness, no cynicism or institutional critique but where the engagement with the work is the engagement with a machine that so to say incorporates the viewer in favor of an indeterminate production, of contingency and the possibility of potentiality.

Now the question is, who do you want to be, John Bauer or Edvard Munch? Obviously neither of them but it seems obvious that Bauer just used his imagination and fantasized a bit whereas Munch in some or other way placed a kind of agency in the paintings themselves. In the most elementary and naïve way Munch didn't pass the paintings on to themselves, he introduced them to the indetermination of nature.

It's kind of cute to think about how when Bauer made paintings with gnomes and trolls in them, that Munch instead placed his paintings in the forest to spend some time with those gnomes and trolls. Sometimes gnomes and trolls are all you need for a brilliant concept.

10. What Is In It, Is Not What It Is

There is, as we know, an intricate, fascinating and fundamental difference between what is in an image and what an image is. What is in an image is always something and that's good because then we can talk about it and smile, but behind, which is of course not behind, there is also the image itself. It is not behind or a background neither foreground nor margins but necessarily traversing all layers of the image. It is, after all, what the image is and it is no matter what dimension of the image is scrutinized. One could say that what is in the image always strives to hide, conceal or obscure what the image is, but at the same time the moment one tries to reveal, expose or show what the image is, it withdraws, dissolves or becomes something else. What is in the image is always carried by what the image is, but when there is nothing to be carried or supported what the image is calls in sick.

What is in an image implies a form of violence. The more there is in the image the more of what could have been is not. What the image is also a form of violence, or better what the image is presents itself as fear or anxiety, precisely because it doesn't offer any form of orientation. It is plain and simple, and that is to an equal extent bliss or fear.

Not that we are much into psychologizing art or paintings but just for fun, what is in the image refers to paranoia whereas what an image is instead has a liaison with schizophrenia, which is to say that for what is in the image meaning is directed to one single location, point or origin – everything means the same – and for what the image is instead everything means everything all the time – there is no destination or orientation to meaning whatsoever. However, the reversal is equally important, what is in the image holds on to meaning in order not to dissolve but is always contested and what is in the image always ends up meaning more than it wants. For what an image is the situation is almost identical, since it always means everything it so to say backfires and means only itself as itself. The paranoid image is trying to be pure but ends up being dirty and noisy. The schizophrenic image on the contrary is dirty and noisy but as it in no way is excluding it ends up conveying some thing pure.

We can conclude that what is in an image is always relational and the more it tries the more it removes itself from autonomy. What the image is instead is an ongoing production of autonomy, or rather what the image is is an engagement in processes of autonomization. Just for the fun of it we could also point out that what is in the image is always performative whereas what the image is is not, instead it has or carries autonomy and the price to pay is that it is non-relational and more over temporary or event based.

This is kind of comical because it proposes a causality that says that an image that emphasizes performativity at the same time is benevolent to restriction (narrowing) and gives up autonomy. Performativity and autonomy just don't sleep together, full stop. Following the thought through however proposes that what an image is is not performative but instead has or is carried by autonomy and is expanding ad infinitum. What is in the image is a perspective, what the image is is horizon.

Now, autonomy has nothing to do with being against nothing at all. It is neither something hard nor selfish, and it is definitely not a resistance group. To have autonomy (which also can be said to be impossible within reality) simply implies (and it isn't nice) to withdraw from or disown any kind of relation. Autonomy is lonely as shit not because it is empty, on the contrary because autonomy is so goddamn full. Autonomy is a full void, or prominent autonomy is immanence or potentiality.

It goes without saying that there is a relation between information and autonomy. What is in the image is always hooked to information, autonomy is the very absence of information. In politics or something autonomy tends to mean something closer to proud or non-aligned, or in art, without support from the government. This is all great but prominent autonomy has nothing to do with either but comes with a price, the moment when something "gains" autonomy it also loses the possibility to convey and opinion. Autonomy doesn't vote and does certainly not criticize, as that would dissolve exactly autonomy. Autonomy is goddamn costly and mind you has nothing to do with shared authorship or collectivity.

However, we have to turn this around one more time. The price for autonomy is high, but insofar as autonomy is non-relational – which is something very different than to disappear or dissolve – autonomy is an imminent threat to anything that doesn't have autonomy. Autonomy – when faithful – is a threat to governance, politics, identity, context, signification you name it – and "those" will do everything they can to stab autonomy in the back. But autonomy strikes back carried as it is by both sovereignty and singularity.

What is in the image offers solace, it is something with which you can identify with and talk to your friend about. Autonomy, on the other hand, offers nothing and gives nothing, it *is*, but as much as it doesn't offer or give it also doesn't claim anything – contrary to any performative regime autonomy lets you be yourself. Remember autonomy obviously cannot be captured, put in a jar and inspected, but in claiming nothing it opens up to the production of everything, infinity and truth.

"I don't need no taken care of!", exclaims a perhaps nine-year-old boy and waves a gun absentmindedly. In that television series Amy Adams is mysterious and a journalist back in her small-town trauma. Never mind.

I always thought autonomy is hard, aggressive and armed. Autonomy knows how to defend itself. Autonomy is fenced like private property, and autonomy brings a shotgun when under attack.

Autonomy is somebody alone in his car, who refuses to car pool. But no, that's not how it works.

It can be exciting to differentiate between strategy and structure. De Certeau thought about it and others, Levi Bryant for example. Simply spoken, a football field plus the rules is a structure, how to play the game is done through strategies. Structures are static and long term, whereas strategies are resilient and short term. A structure is the organization that enables strategies to unfold or play out. Meanwhile strategies animate structures that otherwise are dormant. Structures are stable, common or shared and therefore open. A structure can be navigated or used in a multiplicity of ways and doesn't instruct you how. Strategies on the contrary are dynamic, individual and proprietary or owned and therefore closed. A strategy often has strong teleology, it's directional and has a goal. If the strategy deviates it shifts to be some other strategy.

Remember those Ocean's movies? Con-artists analyze a structure and invent strategies that so to say play the structure. They use the openness of a structure and collapse it against the closed formation of a strategy.

Over the last 150 years or so the Western world has experienced a shift from a society built around strong structures to a cluster of societies that accentuate strategies and actively downplay structures. Foucault with Deleuze talked about a shift from discipline to control societies, same same. When Richard Nixon abolished the gold standard in 1971 he also dumped structure and proposed that from now on value is purely strategic. Nothing was actual anymore, just fluctuating and liquid. Jacques Derrida did the same the week after when he passed language into performativity. Tutti is floating, everything is relative and the structural reliance language once carried was never to be found again. Language became strategic.

Ideology depends on structures, on something fixed, otherwise there is no opportunity to state something like "under no circumstances" or "whatever the cost we will never..." Ideologies are stable but open. A society without structures – or a society where structures are hidden away – is obviously a society without ideology. What remains is politics, i.e. endless negotiations based on "under these circumstances" or "the economic situation doesn't allow for..." This is politics without a spine, without foundation, where what rules is investment and affordance.

Now, if we turn the argument around. If everything is floating and there is no grounding it means that the world becomes performative and hence also identity, well in fact the lot. The world we inhabit is geared by a politics without the possibility of ideology, it's essentially strategic, dynamic and closed and as long as it is it is the one with the largest resources that is on top, and will remain on top.

I've tended to consider that performativity confirmed something open and shared but of course not. Identity under the flag of performativity was free, dynamic and transformative – and to a certain extent it is – but with a bit of scrutiny we can see that identity that is process based, always masqueraded and practiced – not only fits brilliantly into contemporary political and economic interests – strong compatibility with neoliberal policy – but is proprietary and owned. Identity is mine and I'm ready to struggle either to keep it or to obtain what I don't have. Identity as being advocated today is perfectly liberal and submits to individualization and with that to personal and not in any respect to shared responsibility. Perhaps – and this sounds like Žižek – today the Left in order to step out of the shadows needs first of all to reject performativity. No revolutions were built on performativity and politics but instead on conviction and ideology.

Performativity is like a nine-year-old kid waltzing around with a gun, the total obverse of autonomy.

It's curious to think about what kind of art a society that lives, acts and thinks through performativity produces. Isn't it implicit that art is always strategic, closed and privatized, and if it is it's always owned, paranoid and it cannot with certainty be carried by autonomy but instead surveillance, self-interest and information (which is not the same as knowledge). In the world of performativity art at, the end of the day, both as things and experience become useful.

I was wrong about autonomy. Must it not be the other way around, for something to have or estimate any form of more prominent autonomy it can under no circumstances fence itself, in any case it can't because autonomy is structural, even considered as a one. Autonomy cannot have any interests, is non-hierarchical and non-gendered (if certain strategies are executed vis a certain structure it might occur or seem the structure is gendered but that doesn't say it *is*), it is unconditionally open and generous to the extent of self-eradication. Autonomy needs no fencing and doesn't arm itself. In fact autonomy isn't even a guy that rides alone, but can also be a car-pooling; however, it mustn't know where it's heading and in whose car.

Autonomy is not something that can be captured and put in a cage, and however autonomy operates on the very outskirts of language, if not in the great outdoors, aesthetic practices – if we consider aesthetic to be the "opposite" to ethic and hence not subject to any address of use or utility – that estimate autonomy, that strive toward – of great importance exactly because they are invitations to an unreserved imagination and a totally free experience. And this is the bonus, because autonomy doesn't guide or inform the viewer about anything, because the only thing autonomy offer is unconditionality, it is you who makes, who creates, the experience. But remember just because you made it, it's not yours, it is autonomous and belongs to infinity, to everything and itself as itself. Why would we otherwise make or view art if not exactly for that promise, the promise of a little bit of infinity itself?

11. Art Is Not Information

There is this story about a painting in some museum in St. Petersburg. The painting portrays the master saloon of Lenin's summer house whatever it's called, dacha, but there is also Lenin's wife together with a handful of bigshots from the revolutionary government all engaged in group sex. Nothing graphic but still without doubt an orgy. An American tourist looks at the paintings. Reads the wall text "Lenin in Moscow" and steps back again, now inspecting and inspecting again. Sherlock-expression but still confused. The tourist, a guy from Boston perhaps, now walks up to the guard – bored as usual – makes an attempt to communicate and when the guard has, asks: "But eh, where is Lenin?" and the guard responds with a smile "In Moscow".

Maybe now they have taken down the painting. Although this one is rather sad it's always slightly comical with these kinds of semiotic glitches, but what both the American and the guard are missing out is how they both transform the painting into a set of information. Or that they together transform the painting from art to culture. In a way they close the painting which now becomes subject to an entirely new regime of judgements. Did the painting communicate what it intended in a positive, clear and efficient way? Moreover is this information that we consider valuable and positive for the community that visit the museum or should the painting be taken

away because what it communicates is inappropriate?

Art is not information and it must not be. Think about it. An art that informs? Why on Earth would I go to a museum to look at mostly square flat things hanging on the walls if their purpose was to inform or enlighten me? Moreover if that was the purpose what would the difference between an actual Daniel Buren and a reproduction be? Or, wouldn't that make Isa Genzken total shit. Barbara Kruger too, not to mention, well all the good ones.

If art was a matter of information nine out of ten artists should probably just get a haircut and another job.

If art was a matter of information how would we consider contemporary chamber music or the work by, for example, Steve Reich.

Information is always directional, it tells us something and should be doing it well. Information is not seldom a matter of prohibition, from gendered toilets to no trespassing or worse. Information makes the world smaller. A toilet door without a sign is, so to say richer than one with one. An empty space on the ground floor is an opportunity until there's a sign informing the world that KFC is moving in.

Art has another job. Instead of diminishing what something can be, isn't its job to argue what is possible, what something can become. Information in this sense coagulates whereas art is more like turpentine – its job is to make something thinner and even better unclear, vague, dynamic and unpredictable. One thing is for sure information was never meant to make you dream away and trip. I mean who reads the New York Times in Berghain, when you can take MDMA and look at something nice Wolfgang Tillmans.

Next chapter. Information is there to make sense and be useful. Art's job cannot be to either or. Sometimes art mesmerizes me and I fall for it head over heels. I tell you information nah, I never found myself contemplating a piece of information. Sorry. It goes without saying that art should keep away from anything useful. And again, simple differences, information is good for what it makes clear not in itself – there is no intrinsic value to speak of, with art the situation is reversed, art is not good due what use it conveys but due itself. At least me, I look at art because what it is, not what it does.

Now, there is a complex differentiation to make, which in a way is what is in the, for instance, painting and an artwork's context and surrounding, actual and symbolic. Here Roland Barthes' essay "The Death of the Author" proposed something prominent as the author's death also meant that we should check out the art not the author's biography, identity and background – for art critique this was central – but one can also read Barthes from the other end as considering that when the "genius" dies then there is only context, identity and background. And it's of course great, okay and wonderful to be informed about something through art but that's not the art.

Aren't the worst in the world exhibitions that try to educate their audience about something urgent? If it's a matter of learning something about the art and the artist almost fine but art's historical rigor is a very different thing than a group show that wishes to enlighten the viewer about the social situation so and so. And who is the artist, who inscribed in the art world always capitalizes

on suffering, no matter what? I want to learn a lot about social situations and so much more but if it's about learning is the museum, concert hall or theatre stage the place to learn? Wouldn't it be better if we sat down and talked about it and skipped the art part or the aesthetic all the way? Because this is the worst right, art that wants to inform but package information a little bit poetic. Djzouz, oh yes I can totally support that information and knowledge often is strongly inscribed in Western determination but we don't overcome that through packing western knowledge with colorful poetics.

Art's job is not the same as the job of an institution.

Nor is art's job the same as the artist's and they shouldn't be mixed up. The person, the artist, is obviously responsible for the world like any other person. But their art cannot be accountable for saving or not the world. Art's job is to be good art not a service for somebody/thing else's struggle. How an artist is accountable for his or her work is a hard nut and ambiguous but it is definitely of importance to step away from a causality between the artist and the work. If so, artists could possibly only make nice and good art with friendly people and sympathy. But none of this isn't to say that the artist is not also the person making decisions and deciding if or not something should be shown for an audience.

It's heartbreaking to over and over again experience how art is made into culture, how art is made into information and service, and how art, exhibitions and even the experience of art and an exhibition should be useful. Consider that you exit the Venice Biennale and some fonctionnaire pushes a questionnaire in your face: In what ways was the exhibition useful for you? In what ways has it increased your knowledge about... exactly what is supposed to happen then, about what.

Even more, if art is a matter of information who is to decide what is good or bad information? Maybe the artist will have to call the government or an oracle or so to find out? If art hooks up with information it becomes a service. In other words it's the artist's goddamn obligation to refuse to inform and insist on art, only then can art reclaim an autonomy, an autonomy that carries with it the potentiality to change the world completely.

12. A Time Passed

Somebody proposes, and means it, that an artwork that cannot be understood and grasped under three seconds is rubbish. Somebody said that recently.

A car that doesn't start in three seconds is also not very good. There is a difference however. After the three seconds it takes to start the car you go somewhere, maybe on an adventure. When it comes to artworks after three seconds you slide your gaze to the next piece, and go nowhere. One of the best movie scenes ever when the three protagonists in "Bande à part" run through the Louvre in less than nine minutes. Smashing.

Only a socio-cultural context propelled by a performative regime can come to the conclusion that an artwork's relevance decreases second by second after three. And only a context that mistakes art for information can come up with something so clumsy and counterproductive in respect of the specificity and intrinsic value of art.

Although the deflation of indexical value, the exorcism of truth and the introduction of postmodern perspectives were all hunky dory and in many ways necessary it came with a price. When language took center stage, supported by some vague kind of phenomenology everything's attention turned to relations. And from attention the focus on relations has turned into obsession, first through identity politics but more recently boosted by both Latour and in the US by thinkers such as Haraway and Barad. Relations are everything and the more dynamic the better and all things and objects are bad or dismissed as commodities. Although Nicolas Bourriaud made an attempt in his 1998 "Relational Aesthetics" it is obvious that the harsh attacks the books gained were shadowing an interest in commodifying relations, making them matters of affordance and investment.

Never mind since the late 60s we have experienced a deep asymmetry between what something is and what its effects are, which is to say a shift from being to knowledge, but since when was art a matter of knowledge in the first place. Never!

In any case this passage from being to knowledge, from things to relations, further implies two things, first that aesthetics was replaced by spectacle, we could also say contemplation was swapped for admiration (not rarely monetary), and second that something laid out was exchanged for layout, or one thing after the other was replaced by coherence, or even worse dramaturgy.

Isn't it embarrassing to hear visual artists claim their work to be time-based? Really, and btw are you proud of it, dumbass. To define your art as time based is to pronounce that it has no value in itself but is the sum of its relations and on top to that spectacle. It's not brave to announce one's work as performative or time based, it's to chicken out and escape both the possible consequences of announcing something actual – relational has no grounding but is always negotiated - something undeniable, but it is also to give up on the possibility of aesthetic experience as something relational simply cannot be contemplated (in the first place) and certainly not, which since Kant has been imperative – contemplated without interest.

Zooming out a little it's easy to detect how this shift correlates with the shift from a discipline- to control-society. Which is neither good nor bad but as the name proposes control-society will by all means destroy any attempt to aesthetic appreciation or experience as these are phenomena that require a moment of sliding at least through if not out of control. Discipline is laid out whereas control always has layout. Something that has layout is relational and hierarchical, whereas discipline consists of strong entities that are not necessarily connected or in any way comprehensive at all. As semiotics would have it, discipline has strong entities and weak relations whereas control has weak entities and strong relations.

Dramaturgy is more or less a matter of managing intensity over time, it is a matter of controlling some kind of dynamic and making it efficient. One could say that dramaturgy is like a guide that through a play with dynamics, speed, placement, etc. manages attention. Good dramaturgy is good at manipulating the viewers' attention, and we know that this is again a matter of investment and affordance. Another way of announcing this would be to say, and this is a bit low res, that dramaturgy is controls soft versions of totalitarianism. It's just a totalitarianism that you can't really feel and more over that you can't revolt against.

Sometimes it is proposed that theater is totalitarian and exhibition spaces where people can wonder freely around is not, which is to say they are liberal. Ouch. It's nice to think about how

one converses and looks at art, spending time in front of something and making one's own choices. Bullshit of course but at least it's the illusion of personal choice.

But when visual art starts to talk about dramaturgy and conceives of exhibitions in respect to dramaturgy – at least considering a slightly more elaborate idea about dramaturgy. Because what dramaturgy does is indeed to confiscate the openness and chanceness that the museum room carries, carries in so matter that encounters and ways of navigating are minimally monitored and controlled.

And to us museum visitors please let's not ask for relations, correlations or guidance. Instead let's be brave enough to submit to a discipline of things and objects between which it is up to us to create relations or not, because we can also just lean back and let time pass, unmanaged.