

Only revolutions

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curated by Seda Pesen

with Anne de Boer, Felix Breidenbach, Frederik E. & Jakob Sjøberg, Alexander Föllenz, Thomas Geiger, Maarten Van Roy, Tristan Stevens, Morgaine Schäfer, Eugen Wist

What do you see? When I ask you what you see, I ask you: What do you recognize? Perhaps you'll see the spatiality of the gallery first - a long, white tube, that is followed by an almost perfect White Cube, illuminated by neon lights and gripped by a shallow, grey-blue floor. Here, different things were placed: objects, works of art, sometimes brittle, sometimes smooth and some you would like to touch, to nestle up to them, to go around them or dance. If you do, experience the spaces between you and the pieces - what is space? The space of the works, their interior, and the space between you and these works is perhaps a gap, an interstice; a narrative space that evolves through your shared presence.

Get closer to the object called *Valantis*. It stands on a podium: steel stilts, a wooden plate, then an amorphous and porous mass from which a black torso with stumps protrudes. The head is way too big and looks in your direction but not in your eyes. Perhaps he is trapped in this yellow-violet mass. But he does not fight against anything, not against your looks, he does not even care. After seeing, your word can come – but because I do not hear you talking, I can try to continue: his body is modelled on the original size of a body and the head is bigger than a real head. The torso is the casting of a sportsman, the head is of the artist. Here, two levels meet: a real and a fictional. The real level is supposedly closer to our reality; it is not a real body – do we agree on the concept of fiction of reality? Real-ity is a little inaccurate, and I will contradict myself by calling something fictional. But perhaps you can understand what I am saying - a wiping out of concepts leads to a total negation of these anyway. Let us think: fictional because something is simulated, which exists for real, but is in fact not real. The form has changed, the material is different, a new something has been created. The fictional level also has a real reference - the artist's head - but moved in proportions and placed on a strange torso. I'd call it fiction of authenticity. You can see all contours, but it does not correspond to any reality, perhaps more to a dream that allows impossibilities. The levels described are combined as different fictions that grow out of a crater, creating a fiction together: fictionality takes place outside, fictions within, in their own world. One might think that we live permanently in a fiction, everyone in his own. For what we define as reality (the space of experience in which we live) is a permanent construction of the sense-stimulus we receive and our own thought-performance.

Let yourself fall and turn around. There is this round plate on the wall as you can see, on which is written: *"I am breathing and I can see everything I should be seeing: the sky, the earth and the sun's brilliant shafts. But it 's as if I' m in a dreadful turbulence. My breath is hot and hot out of my lungs in my spasm! W h a t? What am I doing here? I am confused. I can not remember where I am. Can one of you, friends over there, help me understand? I can not understand what is going on. Will my silence alone give me the answer? Tell me what happened to me! My limbs are frozen. I can not leave this place. How I wish I could turn into a rock"*. The narrator seems to be confused. Something has happened and we do not know what it is - maybe he has just fallen out of the sky or lost his memory. Perhaps he does not know how to speak, what language to use to be understood. I think I understand

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him - but can I really say that? After all, I do not know him. My supposed understanding is only my own projection, a reflection in the surface of his speech. Even if I knew him, I would not know what he was saying; at least I can never be sure that I know what another says when he speaks – not because I do not understand the words, but because my idea of its content will always be fundamentally different from the one that speaks the words. I do not know whether you understand me at all. The white writing is widely printed on a red and brown background, which is full of light and dark nuanced fibres - it is marble. I thought it was some sort of neural networks that absorb senses, process them, and then it comes out again as a language ... but I am going too far again and astray in my own thoughts. The text is an excerpt from *Hercules* by Euripides. His protagonist realises that he knows nothing more and has lost his bearings. The only thing he can perceive is all that is happening around him.

You're still sitting on the floor or maybe you're standing. It's not too comfortable there. If you are sitting, stand up quietly and go to the white cloth. Do not be distracted by the quiet female voice in the background, we talk about them right away. Close your eyes and lift your hand. Imagine that you are touching it - you feel every seam, follow the artist's stitches, follow the routes she has drawn. *Fußmarsch im Winter* is the title of the work. Open your eyes and look at the red line. It is not clear where the start and the destination is. Step back and realise that the cloth carries a map of a historical atlas. The lines are determined by their colour in their content. The red line marks an artificial path across borders. Without this and the title, the map would only be an analogue medium for representing a section of the earth - the red line marks a path to what can be considered narration. To your right you see a photograph depicting a woman. She opens her jacket, on which one is also a map printed. The narrative space is opened. The problem of narration that we always have is the misconception that the story of the other might be yours. I told you earlier that you can never really understand others, that everyone lives in their own reality. Perhaps it becomes clearer here: the scene and the narrative, which originate from the communication of the two images, determine your own, empathic feeling about the story. The different textures intensify these states, but can also frighten you. How do you translate a story into a picture? Is the picture as a supporting medium perhaps a way to create a narrative whereby the viewer can not only establish similarities, but also dissimilarities between his own self and the depicted self, and thus can sincerely feel empathy without forgetting himself and the disparities of their respective realities?

From the small niche, with the pale curtain, a gentle female voice continues to speak. "*I walked 125 kilometres without sleep. I walked, wearing a white tuxedo, through a slum in Kenya. (...) I pulled a sandstone through the city for the entire day. (...)*". I, I, I - I, I, myself. Again someone I do not understand. Not because of this whole language concept of which I spoke earlier, but because it really makes no sense to me now. I do not understand what this `I` is doing there. At least I do not hear a strict narrative. The stories told are retellings, legends, and aphorisms of different actors of art, various narratives, which a constructed narrator has appropriated and now calls out. It tries to tell us stories and is a punch in the face for all narratologists: the figure that tells is homodiegetic and heterodiegetic. The *I* claims to be speaking as part of the narrated world, at the same time it only tells of worlds that have existed, but in which it, the *I*, did not exist. It lays itself like a net over the history of art and is adopting various narratives - suddenly everything seems to be equivalent. I do not know who ran 125 km without sleeping and who did pull a sandstone through a city for a whole day. Another punch that hits. This time to the historians: an absolute hierarchization of the occurrence, an anonymization of the great names, a dissolution of the existing brands. This is an important point for me - art history presents me a canon which it has fixed, names to which I should to cling, works that I must consider as important. What is the value of a canon which I can only look at in these paradoxical time machines called museums? I do not feel like talking about this anymore. It is very annoying to me - the lack of insight of the ancients and my own anarchic attitude.

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Are you bored? You are stepping on your own feet. Let's look at the smallest object of the exhibition. It is located under a plexiglass enclosure. It is called *Noctedeite: Found fossil of a night out*; a found fossil? The grey surface shimmers in the light, a heavy, apparently milky-green paste has sprinkled on it, and somehow dried. It does not look like a fossil, certainly not with the paste. When you look closely, you realise that it is a pressed or crushed mass with human hands. Plaster, which was subsequently coloured. A few lint can be seen. Do you recognize a testimony of past life or is it nevertheless a fiction of authenticity? What do you believe in? What is the authenticity of the title to the work? Is it about the power of reality and self-realised fictions? Thoughts run tenaciously over my cranium: I'll show you the chaos.

Before we go there, take a moment and look at the picture with a temple that stands upside down. Did you notice the unusual frame? The image is pushed away from the wall. The temple is marked with a bright orange lettering "*TRUST / POWER LIVE*". Trust? Power? Live? Who should I trust if the frame does not trust its wall? I trust the picture: a sacred monument meets advertising aesthetics. Duality arises. Interspaces are opened up, which we meet every day; The old one, fixed auratic, meets the young, smooth, ephemeral. The combination of these causalities is characterised by its polarity. It does not negotiate about worlds, about valences, but brings them together - call me naive.

Keep going. You see a lot of rocks, some are lying on the ground, as this glove lies on the floor, from which sand trickles. I think of dreamers. There is no hand in it, the sand has shaped the fingers. On the glove are verses printed: "*a small yellow tongue flickers / The candle drips and drips / This is how you and I live - our souls flare, flesh disappears*" - a poem by Arsenij Tarkovsky. There is this little story, which is told by loved ones. The sand irritates, I inevitably have the image in mind of how someone finds the glove with the printed poem in a desert, and exposes it in another, contrary place like this gallery. Through the supposedly obvious decontextualisation of the object and the concomitant causalities, you weave a new, idiosyncratic narrative.

To the right of you see vases, shiny elements, stones, dirt and other remains. A self-contained topographic object, it is called (5): *a lasting evidence, reminder, or example of someone or something*. It looks deconstructed, like doubt and struggle, destructed, but still holds together. The title is part of the encyclopaedic definition of a monument. The choreography is different than you know it. Your look is unclear. On the ground lies white aerated concrete, partly broken. The space gets a new level, a path on which you could walk, but it could also only be a prism shattered extension of the wall. On this landscape of combined elements, you find heavy lattices and further, deep black, partly battered, clay-shaped vases, bearing golden drops. I can not exactly understand what happened within this environment. Despite its apparent arrangement, it carries a lack of time and space, perhaps because of the colours – perhaps because of my association of a frozen moment. I think that something happens here that does not ask for authenticity or fiction, nor for reality or truth: you are given the opportunity to watch and recognise something. A new starting point from the destruction – from chaos. This is very real, which now also sounds pathetic, but it reflects processes and thought structures in the broken elements and vases, the arranged earth, the rough grids. You can see the tracks, trace them and understand them. You can leave yourself behind, but you will not forget that you are there, as self.

Every time I pass these caps, I'd like to grab one, pull the brim deep into the face and get out into the world. They are colourful: the artist has cut various caps in the middle and sewn them together with other ones. Two different, existing things are coming together: what changes? The function remains the same. The content shifts. It is no longer about the respective team logos, but about the reconstruction. I see a merging of two entities that together become entrenched into a new entity by a strong seam, but still lingering in disparity. Cling on tight. Forgive me that I am throwing a next thought to you – but it's fun: the dissimilarities provoke the potential of the anagnorisis, the recognition. This is a circumstance of ancient literature: there

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were such moments as, for example, in *Iphigenia among the Taurians*. You have to look closely, step forward, step back, imagine the rest of the cap, to find out more. You must constantly change between proximity and distance in order to recognize.

The sun is rising; we have been here for a long time. If you're still there, I'll let you go soon. Do you see the paving stones on the ground, like this, accurately arranged? On the wall is written "*A stage on which to empty your pockets*". Please do it before you leave: empty your pockets. Perhaps there are a few old receipts around, a coin, a small, yellow thread. Drop those things, you do not need them. You can be perpetuated here, but only temporarily, still your tracks have been there. I wanted to think about the title of this whole construct with you - *only revolutions*. Revolution, what does that mean? Only revolutions, that sounds like a defensive gesture, there can only be revolutions, I am uncompromising. Am I? Certainly not. Are you that? I doubt that much more. Maybe everything that happens is just revolution: small and large, visible and invisible. It is not a matter of whether they are successful, nor whether you see them or not. Sometimes they are overlooked: did you see the loop in the white cube hanging on the wall at the top? I have not mentioned it.

Here our paths separate: you may go. You know, for all the time I was afraid to verbalise what I think because I was afraid that you could see me without me being able to see you. You were my only resonance space of my own narrative theory, travelling between words and concepts that lies above us like a water level. It remains ours. You can go through the door now, with empty pockets. The road has two branches, I take both.

Seda Pesen