

A Manual for Saving Head

Text by Ruth Skinner, annotated by
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Exploding¹ head syndrome is fairly common, though some people experience it more often than others (hence: syndrome). An outwards explosion² of sound interrupts in the middle space of sleep,³ the auditory complement to dream-falling and the bodily jolt that follows. The blast can be defined—a familiar voice says a name or phrase, clear as day—or cacophonous, blurted, unfiltered.⁴ Everything we've already heard is experienced all at once as something sudden and surprising, a necessary discharge of too much accumulated sound.⁵ Leftover dribbles find themselves with nowhere to go but back out,⁶ and maybe for momentum they congeal to each other: audile group mentality prompts fragments⁷ to compose themselves⁸ into startled/startling symphonies.⁹ So the experience of something quick (exploding!) betrays ingredients from many encounters,¹⁰ revocalized¹¹ (by the head, but not the mouth) and layered into something new. Numerous soundings into one¹²; or, a very analog kind of sampling. All residues of encounters at once. All audio afterimages at once. Much too much time in one go.

“People are losing their gloves like crazy.”¹³ – Lili

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1. The tufted rug is based on an illustration from a book called *A Manual of Braiding*. This image was accompanying a chapter that could have been titled “A Manual for Braiding Bread.”
2. The illustration is in motion: either exploding outward or folding inward, at either a celestial or an atomic scale.
3. The making process is mechanical and repetitive – thread the gun, tuft a row, thread the gun, tuft a row, change thread, tuft a row. This space and time I compare to what you call the “middle space of sleep.” Some in-between state of consciousness, where the body is the leader.
4. Yesterday I was rolling the words Manual for Braiding Bread in my head, Manual for Braiding Bread in my mouth - Manual for Braiding Bread, Manual for Braiding Head, Manual for Saving Head. Saving head. Like a meditation: save your head. A transformative slip of/ into focus.
5. Save your head from the excesses it has received and not yet had a chance to catch up with. Summon the middle space of sleep to conjure a bodily jolt. A transformation of states: sleep to waking.
6. In making anything, there is always something left over. Things have nowhere to go so they stick around, just move places, perhaps change elemental states.
7. In North America, standard darkroom photo paper size is 8 by 10 inches. In Europe, I found only 9.5 by 12 inch sheets. This is the size that fits into most boxes, most bags that can be carried on a body.
8. Six sheets of standard size paper are tiled together on the ground below the enlarger lens, in the pitch black.
9. The moments of exposure, in 2.5 second intervals, are the only times the composition, having been laid in the dark and seen only with the fingertips, is ocularly visible.
10. After the flash of light from the exposure fades, fabric, printed glass, a scrap of metal, dental floss, a plastic Grimace, are added, and positions shift. Another exposure commits these changes to memory. The image is an accumulation, a layering of these moments in darkness.
11. I have been reading about how the formation of thought happens in the process of speech, specifically when in conversation with another person. I walk around the house vacuuming, talking to myself, rehearsing potential conversations, at least trying to articulate out loud what I intend to say, or what I could say, or what responses I could possibly have in conversation so I don't lose myself. Perhaps there is socially or culturally something about the way that I am coded that means I struggle to make space for hesitations in the process of dialogue. As if we can't afford the time. As if the conversation, the opportunity for those thoughts, is so urgently dependent on that one moment of conversation. As if what we think, what we experience, is at risk of abandoning us if we don't instrumentalize them, ASAP. Don't sleep and turn it into *something*. Give it an *end*. *Conclude!* As I write to you Ruth, I realize even this is a kind of rehearsal for our conversation. Even though together we did consent to an unfolding, an indeterminacy, an ongoingness. Even then, I rehearse. –*I take days to respond so yes, “rehearsed” carries over even here. I already wrote you this: My old vacuum just died (donated from a European friend who hated her vacuum, is very picky, bought a new one and gifted this old one to me, poor soul, who only used a broom). I bought a cheap new model: ridiculous, sexy looking, and much lighter. I'm re-learning how to clean my house with it. My house is never cleaner than when I have other work to do. On a recent housesitting stint, I used their name-brand vacuum to clean some of the dust they overlooked. It felt like a severe imposition. I try to repurpose/ massage that anecdote into something worthwhile for you, reader.*
12. The resulting image sits tiled on a bed of black velvet: a deceiving singularity. Such theatre.
13. I haven't seen an autumn this colourful in years. –*A gardener has just told me this colour is because our usual autumn frost came late.*