

2HB

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Curious Arts – No. 4
SUSAN BRIND AND JIM HAROLD

THE SCENE OF A CRIME

Argyll Arcade, Glasgow – 8.32am on a winter Tuesday in 2010.

Object Hey, you! ... Yes, you! Could you come here, please?

Subject [*Sensitive to the unfamiliar address, but also with a sense of 'here we go again', in contradiction and conflict, she wants to look.*]

The bright diamond ring has the effect of weakening the subject, rendering her helpless. It is compelling and she gets closer. Her mouth is open; no sound is uttered.

Object Here I am. I am offering myself to you, openly ... [to itself] Well, not so openly, since I cannot speak. Anyway, I was made to be looked at by you, and I hope we will soon reach an agreement by which you will do everything I tell you.

This is like a dream for the subject, both in the oneiric and the aspirational sense; a disturbing, a traumatic dream, though, because the ring's voice is uncanny. She relates it to the unease and the fright she might get if, one morning, her own reflection in the mirror started talking to her, in her own voice. An inanimate thing speaks and she cannot take this for granted. The ring should have been dead, and it suddenly starts to move. It is comical too, as when a table starts to dance. She snaps out of it.

Subject [*Defiant, suddenly alert, not powerless anymore, still curious*] Why would I do that? I mean ... there seems to be nothing in it for me; I have my life, things to attend to, places to go. Whereas you ... well ... you are behind glass.

Object Of course I am, I do not hide it. You will do as I tell you because you will not be able to resist. I am too much for you. Besides, you will also get something out of this: you will find knowledge about yourself that you cannot quite understand now. You will only be able to get there, if you follow exactly what I say. To the letter. What you will find at the end may be pleasurable (and then again, it may not be. It is different with everyone). But I can assure you that the risk will be worth it.

Subject [*Slightly offended*] You know how many others before you have asked me for the same thing? They have all offered me a paradise of self-knowledge, a more embodied presence in the world, a kind of magnanimity, a mindfulness. Yet, I am cautious. My heart has been

broken too many times and all I am left with is a late journey to work, anxiety, and self-doubt. In most cases, the story tends to end badly. Why should I listen to you? Of course I will not be able to resist. Everything looks wonderful when it is out of reach, behind a screen. Everything looks possible too. What makes you different from the white gold ring next to you?

Object I know I have competition, for Karl Marx branded us with fetish qualities that make us mysterious, all equally mysterious until purchased, had or worn. I, however, have something to say for myself, I am distinct, unique, already yours, even if you do not know it. There are qualities only I can offer, for my shape, my weight, my shine, my clusters, and my symbolic status already have a place within you, a place that needs to be filled. I can see in your eyes that it hurts when you think of that void that has never been touched. [*Shivering slightly*] Think of the gratification, the delight ... oh ... the enjoyment!

Subject You are trying to sell yourself to me but you forget that I am experienced in these matters. [*Deviously*] I am not going to deny it. I like you, I think you are pretty and interesting, but no more than that. There are other ways of satisfying whatever it is that I am feeling, other ways than having you ... [*pointing at the shop window*] This screen is vital. It keeps us apart, but also brings us together visually, if we both adopt the right position.

Object [*Interrupting her flow before she launches into an exegesis of Jacques Lacan's experiment of the inverted bouquet*] I am no philosopher, no wise object. I am a simple platinum and diamond ring. But I can assuage your desire, for this is what is all about.

Subject Our encounter is also a matter of narcissism, not only desire. And then, there is the fetish object to consider ...

Object If you want me to know about psychoanalysis, I will. I would do and be anything you want me to, so long as you surrender your will to me. This is what I am proposing to you. You are right in thinking about narcissism: it is all about you, but in order for this to be realised, to rid yourself of that itch, you need to give up representation, all my rivals, everything, and fall for me.

Subject I suppose you are right in asking me that. [*Pitifully*] You have a displayed price, so I could impulsively open that door and have you, buy you. The fact that I can do just that is the downside of

Object [Excited] I would shine so much, I would blind you with pleasure.
Subject [After some time, she returns, transformed] Yes.
Object [More quietly] You know how precarious this situation is, how quickly it can all change. What we have is special. This kind of fit is difficult to find. I am what you are looking for, your completion. I am what will give you strength while still puzzle you. I am what will make you move and act (if not act out). I am what you fear, and what you want, what you fear-you-want.

At the trigger of the sound of the word 'fear' she regains some ground, as if her revealed weakness and the object's confusing words had given her a strength she did not know she had, an understanding of the power she holds. She composes herself, breaths deeply and looks straight into the jewel's eye. She arranges the position of her feet to show the full effect she knows she has, from previous charm offensives she has undertaken.

Subject Are you not speaking yourself from a position of desire? Oh ...
Excuse my intellectualising. What I mean to say is that I also sense fear and wanting in you. I can tell by the way you look at my hands when I move them to make my point... They possess features that captivate you; perhaps, the possibilities they contain, the skins and textures they touch, the places they go to. I think you would do anything to come with me... Is it not you who desires me, rather than the other way round? For you to leave the window would be to transgress. You dream of things and sensations you have only heard about thus far. [Excited about her realisation] Warm flesh you will surround in your circle, the touch of hair ... oh ... hair! And sweat! No, no, it is you that wants me.

Object Maybe it is not so simple, maybe it is not a matter of position, as you mentioned before, but of flow of something ineffable between us – call it energy, sparkle, desire... That is what makes us a perfect match. I admit that you are attractive. Alluring things like me tend to pick bewitching peop ...

Subject [Cutting right in, sarcastic and in control, pretending to have had enough]
Bewitching, nonetheless!

'You will do everything I tell you' ... Well, it seems that she is thinking it will be exactly the opposite way round. She begins to walk away, sure that the tide is changing and the object will soon be imploring her. She wants it.

Object You'll come back.

She comes back.

Subject [Perplexed at the insolence] Excuse me?

Object Sorry for being presumptuous but I did think you would come back. If not now, you would have calmed down while at work, and realised going away was a mistake because you need me. You have always done so, since you were a child and used to play with your mother's jewellery. Don't you think I know?

The subject is paralysed again but, this time, she does not have the rosy cheeks induced by her first arrest. She is white, colourless. Still, there is fire in her, a pale fire. She is also beginning to weep. As her defences seem to crumble at the mention of her childhood and her fantasies – a combination that represents her weakness – the object takes its chance. It is experienced in the art of lures and goes for the final thrust. For both of them, this could be a matter of life and death.

Object [Compassionately] Come, come. Get closer, crouch down. Despite the screen that separates us, or perhaps because of it, you can see what it will be like for me to be yours [*thinking to itself: and you, mine ...*]. I promise you relief and pleasure. Do it, now or never.

Subject [Surprised at her sudden decisiveness, as if it was her who was in control, remorseless. Still, tired and defeated. She does not like to be seen crying in public] You are right; I give in. I want you; I have wanted you since I first saw you in one of my idle walks. It was a matter of time ... Just make me yours.

Object No, no. Make *me* yours.

Very close by, a bell is audible and, as the shop door opens, a bright light blinds the reader's eyes.

Record of response –
'Cinema of You' Session 3: 'Making their own Television'



The responses came in three waves, each with a different trajectory. They criss-crossed paths, mixed and resonated, hummed, thrummed, then continued on their way. For a while there I felt triangulated, globally topically positioned, but this sensation soon faded, along with a wholly accurate memory of the responses. Correction: I remember ALL but my version seems at odds with photos taken at the time or the accounts of others - which may be a comment on the memory of the others or the framing of the cameras.

Therefore, in the interest of comprehensiveness if not coherency, this piece is an amalgam. There was some disagreement over the relevance of pictures submitted by a couple of the respondees, so they've been edited down and selected by a hopefully 'fair' randomising method i.e. coin tossing and dice rolling.

What I'm aiming for is an aleatory collage, but yesterday it looked like a pig's ear, today more like a patchwork quilt. I will continue with the process until Chance makes it work. Hopefully there will be something here for everybody, or most, or failing that just YOU.

"I'm not embarrassed by having TV style and pacing; I'm not ashamed of being inspired by that whole world."

Alex Bag in conversation with David Frankel

The original idea was to give a lecture-screening based around **critically reviewed** experimental moving image works rarely being entertaining. This was a contentious opinion, but one that had bubbled up from a couple of decades of watching experimental film + video and finding that formal, structurally foregrounded work was the mainstay subject of the critical writing, as if serious work necessitated gravitas - on both sides.

Seeing as humour has a richly subversive potential beyond its obvious pleasure-giving: used effectively it can undermine representational orthodoxies, question cultural assumptions, suggest new methods of articulation, and posit a radical reworking of power relations - all concomitant with the ideals of an avant garde cinema - this marginalisation must be the effect of other (more powerful) prohibitory discourses, I reckoned. That's what the talk was going to look for and at. But after a few days of thinking and initial scribbling I used my usual measure:

Writers' biographies

SUSAN BRIND AND JIM HAROLD

Susan Brind and Jim Harold are artists and academics based in Glasgow. Their independent and collaborative works have been exhibited nationally and internationally, and they individually have works held in public and private collections in the UK and USA. Their joint projects include *Mysteries of the heart*, shown at Camden Arts Centre, London and *Passieren*, for *Drückwerk*, Bremen – both shown in the 1990's. They have recently resumed working collaboratively, exhibiting a sound installation at the Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh (2008) and creating a permanent site-specific installation for the Library at Hospitalfield House, Arbroath (2010).

HANNAH ELLUL

Hannah Ellul graduated from the MFA at Glasgow School of Art in 2010. She works across media, most frequently with video and text. She also co-runs *Psykick Dancehall Recordings*, who publish a journal, *Dancehall*, and will be undertaking a Creative Lab residency at the CCA in October 2011.

LAURA GONZÁLEZ

Laura González is an artist and writer. When she is not following Freud, Lacan and Marx's footsteps with her camera, she lectures postgraduate students at the Glasgow School of Art and the Transart Institute. She keeps a blog on the objects and thoughts that seduce her: www.lauragonzalez.co.uk

PATRICK STAFF

Patrick Staff is an artist based in London. His work uses collaboration, re-enactment, abstracted movement and dialogue, sound, sculpture and obscuring structures to explore the political, physical and performative implications of social spaces.

PAUL TARRAGÓ

Paul is an artist filmmaker and sometime writer. His most recent project - *the 8 part Badger series* - has recently completed runs at the Pleasure Dome (Toronto) and Beaconsfield (London). More details about this and him can be found on the Video Data Bank website (www.vdb.org).

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