

# The Yellow Paper

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# The Yellow Paper

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As if\*  
an editorial  
Laura Edbrook

What does it mean to fall in love with a writer? Or rather, to be ensorcelled in some kind of remedial romance, or, maybe the question is, to practice weak (at the knees?) (compassionate) theory? The concluding paragraph of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank's essay 'Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins' proposes the critical attachment of love; of affection, gratitude, solidarity, as a mode of cathecting 'a theoretical moment not [of] one's own'<sup>1</sup>—a critical attention, attentiveness, a form of care as a form of practice which situates itself towards the/a present.

The caveat question Sedgwick and Frank go on to ask is: 'what else *could* [loving] mean?'<sup>2</sup> Their work on the American psychologist Silvan Tomkins (1911–1991) prefigures Sedgwick's call for a reparative reading practice<sup>3</sup> as a spirit of resistance and necessary form of renarrativising.

\* In *The Preparation of the Novel*, a series of lectures translated by Kate Briggs, Roland Barthes speaks of *as if* as the motto of *method*: 'Method = the methodical exploitation of a hypothesis; here, as you'll have grasped: a hypothesis not of *explanation* (of interpretation) (meta-Novel), but of *production*.'

1 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick & Adam Frank, 'Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins', *Critical Inquiry*, 21(2), p 521

2 Sedgwick & Frank, *ibid*.

3 In *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003), Sedgwick calls for a critical practice that seeks to nurture its objects of study as resistance of a hermeneutics of suspicion-based reading and paranoid rhetoric.

In a workshop launching the first year of the Master of Letters in Art Writing at The Glasgow School of Art, we thought about what it might, or could, mean to write in or from an art studio. We thought about the meeting point between literature, art and critical theory: supporting this conversation we read the reflective essays in *Theory, A Sunday*, a collection anthologising a Québec-based discussion group which met every two months during 1983. Proposals for the writing studio reflected hopes for the same ‘living, writing, and discussing through [one’s] own specificity’ that Lisa Robertson describes in her introduction, ‘Theory, A City’. ‘What supported [this] intellectual generosity and intensity?’<sup>4</sup> asks Robertson.

If we think of the studio as an embodied location situated in the present, then we know of its forces for writing and voicing, its capacity for active, tacit, speculative and transformative practices. The shared studio is a collective activity and yet a site that does not negate solitude. Such relational and conversational modes of art, writing and theory are activated by a reparative model of practice, one that has supported each student on the Art Writing programme to flourish according to their own rhythm. I don’t attempt here to canonise this inaugural year or determine a pedagogical practice-led ontology, but to reflect on the value of temporal belonging, of friendship and care (even within the institution), both in the localised sense of encounters with one another, and in a contextual sense of the works we carry into our own, of who and what we live and write *with*.

As the year draws to a close, we contemplate Roland Barthes’ *How to Live Together*, a series of lectures translated by Kate Briggs, considering the potential of writing and art to create and reinvent shared spaces, ways of living, forms of social and ecological relations. This project saw Barthes explore forms and techniques of temporal belonging, and specifically, a fantasy of idiorrhythmy: a form of ‘living together’ where ‘cohabitation does not preclude individual freedom.’<sup>5</sup>

4 Lisa Robertson, ‘Theory, A City’, *Theory, A Sunday*. (Belladonna\* USA, 2013), p 11

5 Roland Barthes, Kate Briggs, *How to Live Together: Literary Simulations of Some Everyday Living Spaces*, (Columbia University Press, 2013), p 11

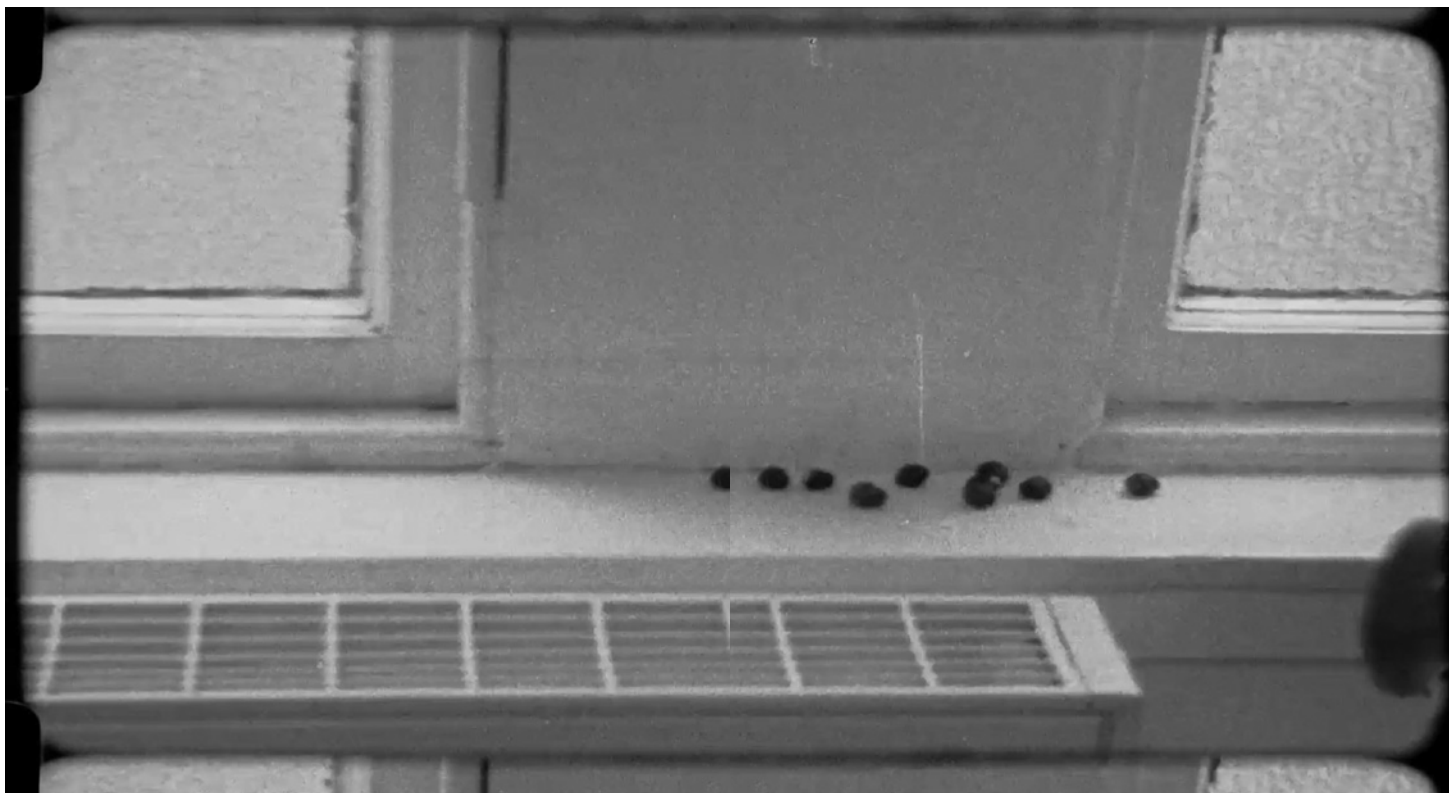
To love a writer (let’s name them a writer)<sup>6</sup> reconnects literature, art and critical theory to life and literature, art and critical theory to the writer *and* the reader. As we sit around the low circular plinth repurposed as a coffee table and cloaked in a patterned cloth (let’s name this a point of contact), we remind one another to reimagine what we see as a vital form of interaction with the world, a vigorous attempt to *clear the air*.<sup>7</sup>

This first edition of *The Yellow Paper* marks the beginning of the Graduate Programme in Art Writing at The Glasgow School of Art. It gathers work from the inaugural cohort and contributions from artists and writers who have been key to its establishment; Kate Briggs, Laurence Figgis, Daisy Lafarge and Susannah Thompson. This is by no means representative of the generosity received both this year and in the design and planning of the programme, too many people to mention here, but I would like to note with gratitude the spirited contributions of Lauren Dyer Amazeen and Elizabeth Reeder.

August 2019

6 Kate Briggs’ ‘A bit, a piece, a thing, a twin’ (pp 17-20) considers an anxiety of interdisciplinarity (Julia Kristeva 1998) in how we speak of or name the work that we do, its critical intentions, its particular epistemology. Her workshop, with reference to the interdisciplinary field of art writing and semantic claims for its post-critical surge and shifting disposition, signaled the potency of naming and genre distinctions. Similarly, Laurence Figgis’ ‘Paintings with Legs’ (pp 11-14) also presents the idea of words as only names for things.

7 Norman Denny, in his introduction to the 1950 collected edition of *The Yellow Book*, refers to the significant outrage to the quarterly volume published between 1894-1897. Critics claimed that the works published signaled a decadence and a ‘fin de siècle’. Instead of an ending, writes Denny, this work—much of which has come to be acknowledged as seminal—demonstrated a ‘youthful and vigorous attempt to make a beginning, to break new ground, to clear the air.’ (p 9) Hubert Crackanthorpe’s ‘Reticence in Literature: Some Roundabout Remarks’ (pp 94-104) comments upon this fury as caused by a sense of unease, a struggle with not knowing and a difficulty in naming. *The Yellow Book: A Selection* (London, Bodley Head, 1950)



Rosie Roberts, just/only, 2019  
still, hand-processed 16mm film

## Paintings with Legs Laurence Figgis

*and the world is a white laundry,  
where we are boiled and wrung  
and dried and ironed,  
and smoothed down!*

When I visit Lotte in her studio, and I look at one of her paintings, I see legs. These L-shapes have been made from cut-wood shapes smeared with ink, pressed against the calico to leave a mark (a sort of wood-cut, a sort of mono-printing). And all I can see is legs. But that seems like a heavy cumbersome word—“legs”—too cumbersome—and I keep the word to myself, until the artist says it—*legs*.

She reminds me that, a while ago, she left the city to spend time making work in a rural place—much of her new work was made there. She has done it a few times: collapsed her studio down, and taken it away, and set it up again, in a new place. I think of an artist in transit—carrying their tools and materials and the works they are making. I think of these works and tools as a kind of language.

I think of Gulliver, on his travels; how in the fictional metropolis, Lagado, he found the most educated citizens practicing an unusual form of speech. Fearing that spoken language would

<sup>1</sup> Inger Christensen, *From Letter in April: VI*, 2009

be corrosive to the lungs and contribute to the shortening of lives, they proposed ‘a scheme for entirely abolishing all words whatsoever,’ and since words are ‘only names for *things*’ found it preferable to carry about them such *things* as were necessary to express their business. As Gulliver remarks: ‘I have often beheld two of those sages almost sinking under the weight of their packs, like pedlars among us; who, when they meet in the streets would lay down their loads, open their sacks, and hold conversation for an hour together’.<sup>2</sup>

Lotte draws my attention to one of the paintings—a house that looks like language or vice-versa. I have heard it said that ‘houses are really bodies’; that ‘we connect ourselves with walls, roofs, and objects, just as we hang on to our livers, skeletons, flesh and bloodstream’.<sup>3</sup> But are houses ever like the *words* spoken by these fleshy, skeletoned, en-livered, sanguine things?

Do images shelter *inside* words? Do they watch fearfully from the edges of ciphers—is the gap in the letter “A” a window in the house; is the head of the image pressed against the window and staring out?

The artist tells me that, when she was making work in the country, she overheard her child and some other children pretending to “sink” Trump in a pond, with some other notorious men, names familiar to us, heavy, ominous names for the parents listening to the children play. The children’s voices made the words seem lighter.

I imagine their voices dulled, softly muted, wrapped in cotton wool; like children’s voices heard on a summer day by someone drifting off to sleep. I think of Lotte making her paintings while half-listening to the children play; cutting bits out, sticking bits on top, letting the paint-marks that cannot be erased lie beneath other paint-marks, building space.

As I look at the paintings, the shapes that look like broken bits

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, 1726

<sup>3</sup> Leonora Carrington, *The Hearing Trumpet*, 1960

of language turn again into legs, as they might be glimpsed—silhouette-like—against bright light, two sticks flattened for a moment against the light.

Above the legs a skirt; but the image has been cut off in such a way that the skirt becomes a rectangle—and this suggests a box floating above the legs (perhaps because a skirt is, in some respects, a kind of *box* made of fluid collapsible material).

I am afraid to say: “that looks like a pair of legs coming out of a box”. I say “abstract”. And the artist, smiling, says that she does not think of the work as abstract. And she is right—I was afraid of seeming foolish by saying what I really saw: the lower half of a person walking around in a skirt shaped like a box (or a skirt shaped like a *house* made of language).

And so I say the word “abstract”—which is the perfect word to silence these perceptual fumbblings. And the word ‘abstract’ falls out of my mouth and rolls around on the floor: a perfectly hollow, a perfectly useless, shingly plastic thing. And having spat that word out, I am relieved to be rid of it. I look at my “abstract” lying there on the studio floor, shining, covered in my spit.

Soon the artist will make another journey. She will take her paintings out of the place-for-making (which sometimes looks like a house made of language) and collapse them down, and take them to a place-for-looking, and open them out again.

Lotte’s paintings can be folded and wrapped-around, they can be draped, they can be crushed in the hand. But she does not want them to be folded, wrapped-around, or draped, or crushed. She wants them to be seen as flat, as measured, and at the same time as *soft*, as the quietly-eroding fresco-walls of ancient times.

But after being folded up and carried they will likely crease. And so she will take her iron and her ironing board, and she will iron all the paintings carefully until all the creases are gone; until they can be seen as she wants them to be seen; until the person who does the looking is able to see exactly what she wants them to see.



And then, with some care (so as not to crease them again), she will lift up the paintings, and—perhaps with the help of another person—carry them across the room, and attach them to the wall. And then we will be able to look at them.

—

This text was originally commissioned for the exhibition  
'*Lotte Gertz: Migrating Eye*', Intermedia / Centre for Contemporary  
Arts Glasgow (28 February – March 2019).

## A bit, a piece, a thing, a twin

Kate Briggs

I visited The Glasgow School of Art in November 2018 and asked the writers there what names they give their writing.

The table in the room where we worked wasn't round but it felt round when we were all sitting around it. It was a table. And so we sat around it. It was a rectangle table that together and over the course of the day of working—reading, writing and thinking together—it felt to me that we had rounded. The designating, body-orientating force of a name. We called it a table and so we sat around it. We might have done something different. We might have sat at it (in fact, arguably we did this too). We might have sat or stood on it. Crouched under it. Ignored it. But collectively and reasonably at the beginning of the day we had all silently decided to call it a table. And so we sat around it. We put our things and our elbows on it, our knees under it—preparing to use it as a support for our work.

We didn't call it a novel (for example).

Or a sculpture.

An essay or a translation.

The simple point I had brought with me to make was that naming matters.

Consider, I said, what happens when we call something, often but not always writing, (a) translation. When we say: look, actually and as a matter of fact, did you (even) notice that this is a translation? Something happens. Of course it does. I've

witnessed this. So many times I've witnessed this. My guess was that the writers were likely to have witnessed it too: how reading adjusts, how a sense of the provenance of the writing changes, how a relation to an outside, some absent other source of the work is established, how the writing we're reading in this new light seems suddenly to shift and loosen. And then settle. And so on.

I put this point on the table because with translation the reorienting force of the name is so obvious and so strong. I set it down in the hope that the writers would open it out onto the broader problems and potentialities of naming the writing they write, and how much this matters.

And they did. We spoke about genre.

Genre as a kind of promise, a set of expectations to be met or thwarted or somehow both.

I asked and they shared their generic genre-desires: for the novel, for the essay, for the short story.

In my bag under the table I had a small book in French by a theorist called Marielle Macé, whose work I like a lot. It stayed in my bag over the course of the day our conversation was carried by some of what she writes. Thoughts like this:

No writer, no reader need believe in the truth or the reality of genres, nor even know how to define them, in order to mobilise them.

It is not necessary for genres to 'exist' for them to operate: there is something like a genre-effect, a genre-connotation, a genre-mode of looking that informs, massively, the writing, reading and history of literature.

It is not necessary, even, to believe in genres, for them to operate. For genres are not objects but supports of and for operations performed by writers and readers, the agents of literary life. They occupy an intermediary position: between literature and individual works, between a text and a rule, between works which show features of resemblance, of derivation, of counterpoint, between the work and the public, between the author and the reader, between memory and perception, between history and theory.

Genres exert a *pressure* on the works that get written; this pressure can be exerted in the form of a law or a constraint, as in the case of most fixed forms of poetry, but also in the more flexible form of an attraction, transforming the space of genres into a kind of magnetic field.

A magnetic field in which André Breton's *Nadja*, for instance, is pulled as much toward the pole of the novel as toward the enunciative force of the pamphlet. Contemporary literature is not immune to this pressure, and the genre 'fragment', or even the genre 'text', now constitute new poles...\*

I also had in my bag a print-out of a paragraph by Annie Ernaux: her response to the question of poetry.

What is poetry? She had been asked by a French literary magazine.\*\*

What is poetry?

(Not: what is a poem? The designating, body-orientating, transformative force of a name. But: what is poetry? Which sounds more like the flexible, transversal draw of an attraction).

I had photocopied the paragraph and distributed copies around the table. Together we tried to translate her response:

*I don't know how to say what poetry is, she/we wrote.*

*It seems to me that it is really, solely, a desire, she/we wrote.*

*...that of getting by way of words at the heart of the real, she/we wrote.*

*A desire that traverses all literature, making no distinction between genres and that is bound up for me with the desire to write, she/we wrote.*

Let's be specific, we agreed.

After spending some hours with the Annie Ernaux's exacting phrasing, with the studied precision of her image-making and her thinking, let's be—we agreed that it must be possible and might well be productive to be—(more) specific.

Let's try to name the poles we are drawn to within this vast differentiated force field we call writing. A field constituted both synchronically and diachronically, and expanding.

Let's try to think about the particular writing practices these demand: the different pressures they exert on our brains, our hands, our readers. Let's do this whether we submit to them or not, whether we believe in them or not.

Let's use the given open categories when they work: hybrid writing, cross-genre writing.  
Let's revise them when they feel not specific enough, not pressurising or supportive enough.  
Let's claim the right to name, to mess around with the relation between the expectations the name brings, the horizon it opens and the gap between this and the writing we offer for reading:  
This is a translation.  
This is an essay.  
This is the start of a novel.  
No, it's a table. A sculpture; it's a score.  
Let's claim the right to invent new names.  
It's a novel-table.  
But let's first notice the names we are already calling our writing. Perhaps privately, or only semi-publically, when the work is still in progress and becoming, and we don't know—we have literally no idea—what it is or could be.  
Let's think seriously about what those names are already doing. Because they are doing something.  
Ontologically, epistemologically, phenomenologically, politically and aesthetically they are already doing something.  
Let's start asking what names we call our writing.  
What are they? I asked. Please: tell me around a table.  
Okay, they said.  
Okay, for example, this:  
A bit,  
A piece,  
A thing,  
A twin.

\*my translation and slight modification of sentences from Marielle Macé, *Le Genre Littéraire* (Paris: Flammarion, 2013)

\*\*Annie Ernaux, 'Atteindre par des mots le coeur du réel', <https://www.poesiepremiere.fr/poesie-premiere.html>

## 1979, Women's style in four objects Esther Draycott



### 1. A man's jacket

Worn by the subject in one of a series of portraits taken in 1979, the same year and in the same city Dick Hebdige wrote and published *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. Chosen because implicit in this photograph is a sense that the photographer is concerned with the exploitation of working-class subjects, and the vexed role of community photography in the misrepresentation and stigmatisation of the marginalised.

A white backdrop obscuring a view of the run-down street on which she stands, chosen because of the way there is also, in this photo, a belief in style as a politic, a means of expression and resistance, about visual representation as a kind of freedom—when it's done right. Chosen because of the way the button in the subject's hand is attached by a long black wire to the camera shutter. Because of the temptation to see her glib smile as she shoots as some sign of her hesitancy to become a subject, a critical and even an emotional awareness of the role of photography, of visual representation in general, in the use or surveillance of women then as now and before.

Because of the way Andrea Long Chu similarly remembered the *SCUM Manifesto*, Solanas' words seen through the eyes of a teenager, reprises of politics being an *aesthetic judgement*, male and female as essentially styles, institutional memory worn on badges and tacked onto walls. Chosen because of the way

my mum, the subject, then a second-wave feminist, is wearing men's clothes, 32" jeans and her favourite battered jacket from a jumble sale, not as a pledge towards manhood but towards a kind of representational nothingness, a sartorial zero. To do with what to uncover from within the weft and warp of these histories, what to leave within their folds. Because of what Maria Fusco said about the art object as being like a corpse, *not of this world, but left behind in it*, a reason to reason backwards.

## 2. Eyes

Tangled in webs and sinew, distinct from faces or bodies, cast in knots of stone and made into benches on the street. Eyes wrapped in thread and gauze like the whorl of a fingerprint, woven onto stretched canvas like the tapestries Louise Bourgeois' mother used to make in the attic, her love of those spirals *for their freedom, and their control*, her view of abstraction not as infinity but as strangulation, tense and twisting.

Eyes to sit exactly eighteen inches away from Mark Rothko's *Red on Maroon*, to look through the rough grid of Franz Kline's seven-foot tall *Steeplechase*, paintings tall and wide covered in gestures away from the vulgarity of the female figure towards the critical, the unutterable, the contemporary, painting as one plane of a weaponisation of the male gaze. Eyes, met in silver space suits, nylon, patent, dynel and rhodoid chain-mail dresses, convex mirrors held up across bodies to higher powers and broader progress. The eyes of the ingénue, big, fluttering and lined with perfect circles of deep black khol, her turn-down school collar, white lace socks and pointed stilettos for collapsing, lids closed, as cliché and refusal.

A pair of eyes for watching the love affair between men's style and criticality, men's style and dissent, women's style as a seldom returned gaze and a history of being watched. Eyes, as Jane Jacobs said, for *on the street*, to watch from lampposts, porches, garden gates and front rooms, her refashioning of women as *the natural proprietors* of seeing and being seen. Jacobs' trademark dresses—wide black smocks with deep pockets, her

unmistakable cropped white hair and thick framed glasses that fixed her gaze at eye level and her position as a woman with clout. A pair of eyes for fighting their way into a public, making their home in it, turning away or looking back.

## 3. A turquoise two-piece

Like the one Anita Hill wore when she testified in front of the senate judiciary committee, *speaking truth to power*, line after line. Or Mlle Bourgeoisie Noire's prom dress of 360 white gloves, worn to invade Adrian Piper's show at the New Museum while beating herself with a plantation whip. Specifically, the photos of outfits worn that night splashed across newspapers, context forgotten, the curse of being too beautiful, too bodily, forever *stuck in this location of the imagistic rather than the conceptual*.

A turquoise two-piece like the one Poly Styrene wore when she sang *Do you see yourself on the TV screen//Do you see yourself in the magazine*. Dressing conservatively to signify that a figure that is *not a blank canvas but marked by racial, sexual and class configurations*, to signify the burden of dissent on marked bodies, of choosing what to wear in order to disappear. Like the black jeans and leather jacket Chris Kraus wore to trail Dick Hebdige at a party or the black cocktail dress Alicia Hall Moran wore in Simone Leigh's *Breakdown*, stumbling down the steps of a church in West Harlem, the one Leigh's mother still attends, howling *Because I've always done it. I've always done it. And I've been performing my whole life. Performing my whole life*.

## 4. A corpse

As in Peggy Phelan's description of writing about performance as illustrating a dead body. Later related to the question *Where is Ana Mendieta?* chanted by protesters outside the Guggenheim, the Tate Modern and the Hamburger Bahnhof as her accused killer enjoyed a run of exhibitions. To do with what Jane Blocker said about that choice of words, that simply stating the fact she was dead would have been a *painfully dissatisfying* account of the protesters' sense of loss. About how best to account instead for

disappearance, a sense of all the places Mendieta had been cut out of, an acknowledgement that no amount of re-rendering or exposure could bring her back. A corpse, less about my mum as a subject than about what to say of that stark white background, about the impossibility of repeating the instance of that glib smile, of any woman's history as writing about performance. A corpse as somewhere between one world and another. Related to Juliana Huxtable and her poem *Train*, the threat of being seen, the desire to collapse into yourself when it looms, to disappearance and all the ways it can be worn.

Quotations  
in order of appearance

*not of this world, but left behind in it*

Maria Fusco, 'Say who I am, or a broad private wink', *Judgement and Contemporary Art Criticism*, (Fillip, 2010), p 73

*for their freedom, and their control*

Louise Bourgeois, *Spiral*, (Daimani, 2019), p 59

*speaking truth to power*

Anita Hill, *Speaking Truth to Power*, (Random House USA, 1998)

*natural proprietors*

Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, (Random House, 1993), p 37

*do you see yourself on the TV screen//Do you see yourself in the magazine*

Poly Styrene, *Identity*, TV performance in 1978, accs. April 2019,  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ue5jyj\\_nosc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ue5jyj_nosc)

*stuck in this location of the imagistic rather than the conceptual*

Juliana Huxtable and Lorraine O'Grady, *Interview*, (Museum of Contemporary Art, 2018), accs. April 2019, <https://www.moca.org/stream/post/introducing-lorraine-ogrady-and-juliana-huxtable-part-2>

*because I've always done it. I've always done it. And I've been performing my whole life.*

*Performing my whole life*

Simone Leigh and Liz Magic Lazer, in collaboration with Alicia Hall Moran, *Breakdown*, digital video, 2011, accs. April 2019, <https://vimeo.com/34002478>

*where is Ana Mendieta?*

*painfully dissatisfying*

Jane Blocker, *Where is Ana Mendieta? Identity, Performativity and Exile*, (Duke University Press, 1999)

## Departure for Biography (for Lei Yamabe) Calum Sutherland



What follows is a presentation of sections from a notebook the author claims to have found on a recent trip to Brussels but which in fact he has entirely made up. This notebook which does not exist contains a pencil sketch of a painting, a series of brief diary entries spanning roughly two days, an exhibition review, and a conversation. These elements (not found in a small book on Rue de La Confiance on March 29th) the author finds so compelling on their own terms that they are simply presented here without recourse to any particular analytic project. From the author's point of view their openness and concern with general form lends them a strangely trustworthy quality—even though they are without comparative object.

First are the diary fragments, second the review, and lastly the conversation. The pencil sketch serves as a frontispiece. For the benefit of clarity it is worth stating that the author believes the conversation in the last section to be concerned with the discussion of some notable figure, possibly an artist or writer, which the voices talk around but the identity of whom remains unclear.

For the sake of full disclosure it is also important to say that although the author does not believe the text to be in any sense autobiographical, he was also in Brussels on March 28th and 29th, visited a number of galleries and museums, and enjoyed the company of a number of interesting individuals.



## DIARY

March 28th:

Had an idea this morning. What distinguishes an artist is their pursuit of coincidences or maybe the creation of them. Said this to mum over breakfast before the flight. She nodded, understood.

Airport dull, mostly bored. Drunk a sparkling water and espresso. On the plane thought of all the artists who drift out of the art world and disappear. Flight otherwise fine.

Arranged to meet in the central square. Fell quickly into conversation. While talking walked across a boulevard and settled on a bench. Close by was a stall selling the best fries in the city.

At the restaurant he explained that he preferred not to talk while he ate, nor in fact during dinner at all, particularly when dining out. He recommended focussing on the food when it came, its qualities, the balance of flavours, the way it complimented the wine—that slow engineering of pleasure. And between courses to listen, to hear the small sounds around conversations, to notice things, to watch the movement of the waiting staff, their elegance and egalitarian regard for the covers.

Found this a difficult experience. Flaws in posture became of tantamount importance. Stillness involved a kind of concentration, a meditative discipline. He looked quite at home, peaceful even.

After dinner he announced that he had to depart urgently for Monchengladbach but that the gallery would be open tomorrow and that everything had been arranged. Surprised and disappointed by this. Looking forward to the exhibition nonetheless. Shook hands, parted ways.

March 29th:

Good breakfast at a café near the hotel. Coffee, pain au chocolat, orange juice.

Went for a walk. Brussels as a backdrop, or main player perhaps, definitely important—each building different but then each street somehow the same, the same cumbersome and brooding complexity. Stone and glass. A palpable weight. History in the noble aggression of equestrian statues and Leopold repeated again and again; a dark refrain in the names of buildings and streets.

A city somehow on the edge of Westphalian flatness, a plateau, a feeling of being below water. The idea persisted. A feeling of not knowing where to look. An endlessness, a kind of deference.

Arrived at the gallery to find it closed. The door locked. Very frustrated. Called him, no answer. The building was stone, certainly a couple of hundred years old. Windows of ornamented green stained glass. Could see into one room through a small clear section on one window. Inside a figurative painting—hard to discern.

Headed to the airport.

On the phone later he explained that this was exactly what was meant to happen. He said there was no reason to be disappointed and that there was nothing to talk about.

## REVIEW

The exhibition begins. There is a proposal. It has a historical and educational remit. It is certain that projects like this are an interesting phenomenon. In some ways positive and in other ways worrying. The subject is elusive. Now is not the time for an in-depth institutional critique or analysis. That will have to wait for a longer monograph. Certainly, the disorder of artistic life

is foregrounded throughout. There is a rhythm. It is important to emphasise that this show contains no original work. I feel that the promotional material might fool the casual viewer. The significance of the technological development is also clear but only by association. Some ideas would sit better in a completely different survey or exhibit.

## CONVERSATION

Where? who?

Him, across Europe of course.

Right.

Thinking about it recently...

Yes?

When we met, sometimes for hours... beautiful connections.

Talk without end?

Real contact. Discussion of certain places in the world.

And you, working in the gallery?

At that time, sure.

Ink pots, backs of heads... the usual stuff.

But when he phoned? How did it feel?

All voice. All voice.

A certain complexity, and his distance?

Well, a conclusion never came... was never sent, as it were.

Somehow I felt he knew me.

He said look at the work and don't understand.

All those possibilities.

Perfect for a film actually.

MoMA would never allow it though.

Whatever it has to be, it has to be.

All the work he made was real.

It settled questions?

In a manner, yes.

Clarity? Never in question.

He never asked anything.

Just to remember everything, I suppose.

Just look.

Big ideas. Small actions.

And all over just a couple of weeks...

All time.

Death? A subject?

Not exactly, not for him.

He worked too much.

Yes, sometimes things went wrong.

We all went to the openings or difficult dinners.

Mind and body. You felt it.

Precisely.

He was someone you wanted to know better?

I can't explain.

You wanted to get him away from his working table?

Or piano... yes, sometimes.

Eventually, an important visit but what we discussed...

Never realised?

Exactly.

Just an invitation...

To a party that never happened.

I had a kind of intuition.

He did too, I'm sure.

Simply wanting to see how it could be.

Impossible? Average?

Probably. His only mistake, really.

Sad and normal.

The departure of biography.

It happens to us all.

It is for us now, what was his.

That kind of emotion.

Annoying, fantastic.

A real contribution.

You have to think about these things.

A generation passing?

Something like that.

Cliché is the sediment of sentiment that  
collects in my ear  
Daisy Lafarge

The cliché was born in around 1825 in a noisy factory in France. Specifically, cliché was a term in printers' jargon used to describe the stereotype block or printing plate. Cliché referred to an object, but it was named for the clicking sound made by a mould striking metal.

Cliché was the onomatopoeia of things clicking into place, coined by people made into a group by virtue of their shared labour.

The cliché's point of origin is the historical moment of text and image becoming perfectly, mechanically reproducible. Cliché is the unofficial by-product of mechanical reproduction, a sound effect of modernity.

In short, according to Walter Benjamin's phrasing, cliché began to sound in people's ears precisely when the aura of the artwork began to wither:

'Even the most perfect work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. [...] One might subsume [this] eliminated element in the term "aura" and go on to say: that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art.'

Following Benjamin, we might understand cliché as synonymous with the loss of aura. Where the aura made an artwork or text unique, unreplicable and authentic, the machinic click of cliché made it crass, multiple, unoriginal, common.

Benjamin famously saw this loss as a virtue:

[...] secondary reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself. Above all it enables the original to meet the beholder halfway ...'

Like the reproducibility of image and text, the cliché appeared as an apparently democratic medium. It permitted access to a shared sentiment, the authenticity of which remains shaky and elusive.

In her poetry, and in her academic writing, Denise Riley explores cliché as a sociable and outward-facing gesture:

'A cliché is not to be despised: its automatic comfort is the happy exteriority of a shared language which knows itself perfectly well to be a contentless but sociable turning outward toward the world.'

Following Riley, clichés embrace the notion that authenticity is a myth, that patterns occur. Before clichés we had motifs, allegories, recurring features. We had variations on a theme. Cliché's familiar—the trope—is an older word, and from the outset referred to oft-used figures of speech. But whereas trope—from the latin *tropus*, turning—is also linked to troubadours, the wandering poets of lyric and romance, cliché sprung from the demotic song of the factory.

Like the workers whose labours produced stereotype plates and sonic clichés, we perform labours of affect and attunement in producing, recognising and self-organising around cliché. The etymology of the word 'stereotype' runs parallel to that of cliché; our idiomatic use of these two words was not common in English until the 1920s.

Linguistically, and perhaps otherwise, we are still in the century of the cliché.

—  
A longer version of this text was presented at *Gestures: Writing That Moves Between*, a conference at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, February 2019.

She had found her world in touch and  
found it (so) uncomfortable

Kiah Endelman Music

and the scene is largely this:

That, knots are formed and under foot, beneath the weave  
and fixing as, above, and bare, her toes, turned in and  
under—arcing—push in to their touch the pile and find it not  
unpleasantly coarse. Her arch bent, up. Her heels—includibly  
firm to the floor and less enquiring of their surroundings—are  
pressed hard to hold her weight. She holds herself a while.

Upright and, in countering her balance in encounter with the rug,  
seeks to read its fibres with her touch as she often would when  
as a child, and as her mother told her, she would bare herself  
(though not toward) and sit upon, all over—back-side to meet the  
nap and find it fine or felt or wearing, always tender on her skin.

And not in exhibition, or performance—for which yet she had not  
learned the terms—it was, then, an action in desire (she supposed)  
and not so much to feel the breeze—for it was not so much, or at  
least purely, then, in nature she invested—as to comprehend/ to  
feel more closely than would be otherwise allowed.

But here, and clothed, and now with tact, having studied proper  
manner, she refrains from baring all and in a pressing of her heel,  
a hand reached out/ withdrawn a tend toward the floor, finds her  
bearings in only that, so bottom  
of her body:

Yes and, here it is she finds her feet,

Has held her footing here and while,

Though, an indent does not form around her heel, of late  
(and lovingly so) scraped soft, with a stone and seemingly in  
preparation, she finds this, now, to prick, beneath her, and not  
so as supposed:

to be plush, as expected, or flocked and of the type to preserve  
and impress, but she meets the warp in some pleasure, anyway;  
for her dwelling still would make the weave unmoved.

She thinks: it is for objects such as these, I keep myself, and—she lifts her foot a little, letting one withstand her all and the other scratch more loosely, stretch and stray across the bed.

See, not looking to demystify the nature of this object made so far from hands so unlike her own, or take from it some meaning, she in its place seeks only to decipher what it is it does<sup>1</sup> (she cannot truly know it) when—

Reproving herself, she draws a nail as it catches a loop and pulls at a thread not previously registered.

And all this time, not mentioning her vision, she has, in looking down and (again) in tact—in that which we register as *always on the border of touch and vision*<sup>2</sup>—seen herself, the room and the border of the rug.

She could not know the weft of cream one way and white, nor, in her position, affect to feel it the most beautiful she had seen but her eye meets the floral pattern anyway and where, with her feet and her prior knowledge, all well worn, she finds in it a history.

This is not home but it is as though she has just begun to feel it out.

Of course, flat on the ground it is hard to know its heft but:

It is important that—she understands—others have stood here also as she finds herself and always in relation and:

It is important that this rug (as she sees it) is real and that this has happened before

When—

A hand, it seems, has come to tug and to rid her of her ground.

*(From under, the edge of the frame and her vision – the rug is pulled:)*

\

In a moment, lets loose a gasp as it slips from her mouth, with her to the floor, sharp—a grasping push of air from her throat and into the room as it loses fixity as she loses hers as

Finding herself folding now and letting her feet falter, her frame lifts and begins her fall. To the ground, she tends, back, up, and thinks on being caught, being held, on holding.

On how she might now meet her object and find it more her own no longer under heel but hand and head and figure, how

Fast, she falls though it feels like waiting and

and in a sense, hers is the loss of a stable horizon<sup>3</sup>:

What this is (I suppose) is a body in anticipation.

What this is—and, *she decides*—is a giving up on verticality<sup>4</sup>

And in this she is, already fallen—yes,  
She is in reaching out now and in wanting in her fall,  
Already fallen.

But what, too, of her ankle? And her nail and the loop that has snagged—pulled as she was, as it was with her?

All, quick

The rug was pulled and yet she was alone in this, and any sense of poise retracted as

Quick, drawn to the floor her head, her knees bend in, her elbows out her arms pushed back to catch her frame falls down and then—

—  
She lands.  
Pressed hard to a ground that refused to catch her kindly, she is,  
now, fallen, and beside her finds what feels to her like gravel as  
she takes it in an open hand.

And when she falls, she often feels: to feel a body grounded  
is *some thing*. That is, she finds—and only now in landing, in  
discomfit—discourse between her body and the world.

Prostrate as holding in her hand and under leg and arm and  
tender hip, the rug, she finds to rub, tickle hair upon her skin.  
See, it seems a hand had come to tug but pulled it little further  
than where it once began

And in her fall it almost seems she waives her form and here is  
taken so to flatness, she becomes a field<sup>5</sup>, as, back-side to meet  
the rug she comprehends more closely than had been (otherwise)  
allowed

See, it's not so much it did not hurt as that (once again as when a  
child) she finds that she can feel herself in feeling

And she finds she's lost the blush she would so reasonably feel,  
that sharp prick and rush of blood and warning, her skin instead  
is warmed as she thinks: oh, what it would *be* to roll herself up,  
right and into this moment

As she turns to her front, runs cheek to the weave she had held  
underfoot prickling close on her aching limbs and inhales this  
thing as her arms, her legs make an angel unseen at her sides, she  
is now, rather, utterly feeling.

## Endnotes

1 The notion of a deciphering practice/turn is found in José Estaban Muñoz's essay, 'Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts', in which he refers to and quotes (at length) from Sylvia Wynter's 1992 essay 'Rethinking 'Aesthetics': Notes Towards a Deciphering Practice', and suggests a kind of queer writing that, in thinking through 'decipherment' 'can surpass the play of interpretation and the limits of epistemology and open new ground by focusing on what acts and objects do in a social matrix rather than what they might possibly mean.' (p 12)

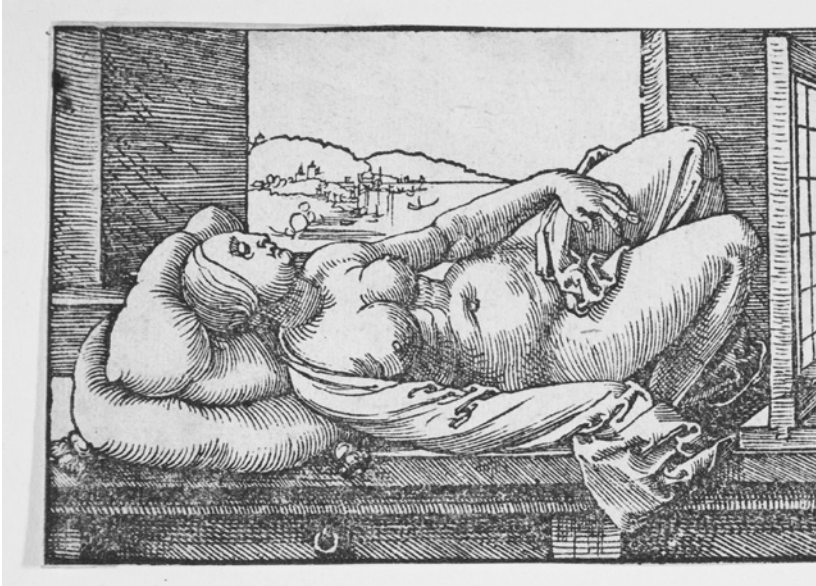
2 These misremembered words are in part taken from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's introduction to *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* where, and thinking with Renu Bora's essay 'Outing Texture', she speaks of texture as not being coexistent with one specific sense, but tending to be 'liminally registered "on the border of properties of touch and vision,"' and, of perceiving texture as always already to be 'immersed in a field of active narrative hypothesizing, testing, and re-understanding of how physical properties act and are acted upon over time.' (p 20)

3 This phrase is borrowed from Hito Steyerl's *e-flux* essay 'In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective' in which she speaks of the disorientation felt in falling as being in part due to this 'loss of a stable horizon', and with this loss coming to a 'departure of a stable paradigm of orientation.'

4 This idea of 'a giving up of verticality' is found in Andre Lepecki's essay 'Stumble Dance', in which he speaks of an interview—cited in C. Carr's essay 'In the Discomfort Zone' in *William Pope.L: The Friendliest Black in America*—between William Pope.L and C. Carr, in which Pope.L speaks of his *Crawl* performances and bringing others to join him in 'giving up their verticality'. Carr speaks specifically about Pope.L's *Crawl* works and this 'giving up of verticality' as a 'discomfort zone [...] about the vulnerable black male body and what he describes as "lack", a sense of insufficiency and damage.' She goes on to note that 'whilst postmodern theory associates this term [lack] with women, it could properly apply to anyone outside the symbolic order.' (Lepecki, p 58; Carr, p 49)

5 This phrasing, too, is taken in part from Lepecki/Carr/Pope.L but is significantly adapted and, in its original, reads that in his *Crawl* performances, Pope.L's 'body becomes a field, rather than a form, and in this field he creates "a real dialectics between the body and the world"' ; Lepecki describes Pope.L's body becoming a 'field' and quotes Carr's notion of his finding this dialectic. (Lepecki, p 58; Carr, p 49)

## Homepage: Desire and Design Imogen Harland



Albrecht Dürer, Draughtsman Making a  
Perspective Drawing of a Reclining Woman,  
ca. 1600, woodcut

The aesthetics of [websitename.com](#) have changed imperceptibly since it was established in 2004, which might speak to the success of its design; although I've always thought that the green and white colour scheme with its silhouetted palm trees is more reminiscent of a travel insurance website than a website for viewing live sex shows.<sup>1</sup>

The homepage of [websitename.com](#) is not where the majority of my work takes place; the homepage is for the clients, it's not designed as a space for models. My working time is spent in the model admin pages, where I respond to emails or on the broadcast page, where my live video feed is streamed to an audience of screen names. Having said that, I sometimes find myself looking at the homepage of the [websitename.com](#), partly as an action of simple curiosity, partly as an act of research. By clicking my way around the homepage, imagining that I'm a client, I feel as though I can attempt to understand what draws [websitename.com](#) visitors into a model's chatroom.

An equally important reason for examining the [websitename.com](#) homepage is that all design tactics have social and political implications; examining how the technical design of [websitename.com](#) regulates the way its visitors access webcam pornography reveals contemporary heteronormative attitudes towards bodies, sexuality and desires.

<sup>1</sup> [Websitename.com](#) is a pseudonym that is used here to refer to the website that I work on, as naming the website would pose a risk to my security.



The majority of websitename.com's homepage is filled a grid; a grid of the avatar images of the forty-four highest earning models that are online at that particular time. The more money a model makes on websitename.com, the higher up the grid their image appears. This means that while there are thousands more models online at any one time, the website visitor needs to scroll down the page to see anyone other than the top earners.

The homepage is full of smiling faces, sultry faces, open mouths, closed eyes, heeled boots, bare feet, underwear, wet t-shirts, chains, soft toys, against backgrounds of beaches, balconies and bedrooms. Not all avatars show the model. One avatar is an image of the 'iconic' 1976 Martin Elliot *Tennis Girl* poster, the one with the blonde tennis player lifting the back of her white skirt with one hand. One is a bright red heart emoji. One is an image of a cat, photoshopped to be wearing a pained expression. All these images sit next to each other, on top of each other, eleven wide, four deep. My avatar does not appear in this top forty-four, because I do not work enough, or more accurately, because I do not earn enough.

That these avatars appear in a grid is not only an aesthetic choice. By laying out the avatars of models in a grid formation of rows and columns, websitename.com attempts to give the viewer a sense of method and control for navigating the abundance of images, the abundance of models. The use of a grid as a tool for organising and managing a subject is nothing new. A woodcut by German Renaissance painter and printmaking Albrecht Dürer made in the 16th century as part of his book *The Painter's Manual: A Manual of Measurement of Lines, Areas and Solids by Means of Compass and Ruler* shows a draughtsman drawing a reclining nude woman using an object known as the 'the draughtsman's net' in order to maintain perspective. This net stands on the table between the draughtsman and the model; a square wooden frame with threads pulled tightly across it, through which the body is divided into sections and moved piece by piece onto the draughtsman's paper. This object has both the effect of framing the nude woman, like I am framed by my webcam and acting as a technological mediating interface, like my screen of my laptop, the screen on my phone.

In the 1997 book *Modest\_Witness@Second\_Millennium.FemaleMan©\_Meets\_OncoMouse*<sup>2</sup>: *Feminism and Technoscience*, Donna Haraway describes this object as a 'revolutionary apparatus for turning disorderly bodies into disciplined art and science.'<sup>2</sup> This attempt to disciple bodies is clearly not gender neutral; it is female bodies which are, and have for a long time been, predominantly considered disorderly and in need of discipline.

The hierarchical nature of the websitename.com homepage does not affect all webcam models equally. In the 2015 paper 'For Black Models Scroll Down: Webcam Modeling and the Racialization of Erotic Labor', Angela Jones shows how race and class based inequalities are perpetuated throughout websitename.com and how the top earning webcam models are white, native English speakers living in the Global North, writing that 'being on the bottom of the page both symbolically and structurally reproduces racial and class based inequalities.'<sup>3</sup>

The logo of websitename.com sits in the top-left corner of the page, a typical place for logos, both online and in print. Our eyes tend to follow the shape of a capital F over a page, starting from the top left-hand corner before moving right and down, which means that placing of the logo in this position has the effect of guiding the viewer's eye into the centre of the page, creating a cyclical viewing pattern. This prompts viewers to take in more information, more adverts, to spend more money, spend more time, increasing the economic value of the website, which in websitename.com's case, is in the range of two hundred million dollars.

Running down the right-hand side of the websitename.com homepage are options to view algorithmic lists of online models, such as 'Top 10 Popular Rooms,' 'Models You May Like,' or 'Trending Rooms'. The viewer can also customise these selections by how many people are in the chatroom or when the model

2 Donna Haraway. *Modest\_Witness@Second\_Millennium.FemaleMan©\_Meets\_OncoMouse*: *Feminism and Technoscience*. New York: Routledge, 1997, p 87

3 Angela Jones, 'For Black Models Scroll Down: Webcam Modeling and the Racialization of Erotic Labor,' *Sexuality & Culture* 20, no. 1, 2015, p 791

joined websitename.com. The effect is an endless identity parade tailored to the website visitor's sexual preferences. This suggested content on the outskirts of the homepage aims to keep the viewer browsing on the site in the search for that perfect imagined content, or in the case of websitename.com, the perfect model. In his article on the implications of pornography website design, Patrick Kielty cites psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's *Ecrits* where Lacan writes that nothing compares to the imagined image, the fantasy; all other images are rendered inadequate.<sup>4</sup> The user is kept searching, clicking through chatrooms, through webcam models. When a potential client enters my chatroom only to leave seconds later, I try not to take it too personally; I know that I am just one of many models that the user will click past as they browse through faces, bodies, personas, styles, fetishes, on their search for their ultimate fantasy.

When the websitename.com visitor hovers their cursor over the avatar of a model, a low-quality preview of the webcam models video stream will play. This has the effect of suggesting that the image, or rather the model herself, has been brought to life by the viewers touch. While the video preview may be a relatively recent technological possibility, the concept is not. For Melissa Gira Grant, in *Playing the Whore: The Work of Sex Work*, webcam modelling is a continuation of the peepshows of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which it appeared that the models were brought to life by the viewer's action of the dropping a coin into the slot.<sup>5</sup>

It is not only through images that the websitename.com visitor is kept searching for their ideal webcam model; they can also use words. This is done through model tags, which are mostly to identify appearance or race (blonde, brown eyes, big butt, legs, ebony, latina, tattoos), specific fetishes (double penetration, squirting, domination) and personality traits (friendly, naughty, flirty). As in pornography, these tags sometimes appear in

4 Patrick Kielty, 'Desire by Design: Pornography as Technology Industry,' *Porn Studies* 5, no. 3, 2018, p 2

5 Melissa Gira Grant, *Playing the Whore: The Work of Sex Work*, (London: Verso Books, 2014), p 152

confusing combinations, for example 'small tits' and 'big tits', in an attempt, presumably, to appear in double the amount of search results. At first, I was reluctant to use the model tags on websitename.com, resentful of having to place my body and persona under arbitrary categorisations. After reading webcam model advice blogs, however, I relented in an attempt to be more successful within the constraints of the system.

In early essays on digital culture, the act of tagging images on websites such as Flickr, the original photo tagging website, was seen as somehow utopian because there is no human or algorithmic authority dictating how the user chooses to tag an image. This is true to some degree on websitename.com, as models can tag themselves however they choose, like 'not a vegan' or 'follow the indications', whatever those mean. However, while tags are created by the model, they are deeply affected by how our clients describe us. I would never call my body curvy but that is how I've tagged myself, based on my clients' comments, attempting to appeal to similar minded viewers.

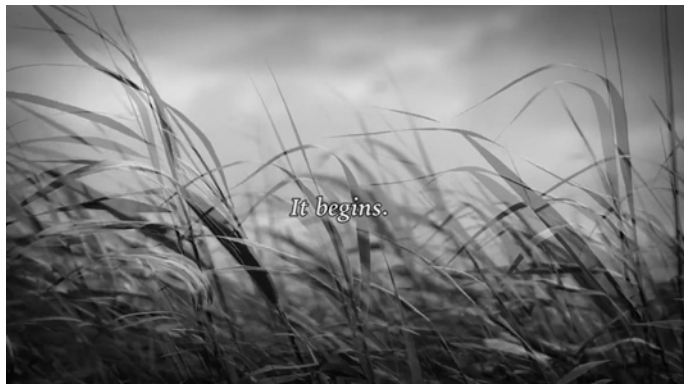
These design tactics; the logo, the grid, the suggested viewing algorithms, the tags, are of course not specific to websitename.com; free pornography websites such as Pornhub and XHamster also employ these methods for organising the abundance of images, increasing the time spent on the website, leading the viewer through. These design mechanisms might invoke a sense of fear about the controlling nature of online pornography; for so long the pornography viewer has been depicted as what Laura Kipnis describes as the 'asocial compulsively masturbating misfit,' unable to act with autonomy under the control of pornography.<sup>6</sup> However, these design tactics are not limited to pornography websites; the video hosting and sharing website YouTube, for example, features all of these elements; the grid of videos, the video preview when the cursor hover touches the thumbnail, the algorithmically suggested content at the side of the page. Rather, my point in detailing these design tactics is that technology is not autonomous;

6 Laura Kipnis, *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America*. (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2003), p 187

websitename.com didn't design itself; it was constructed this way in order to turn the viewer's browsing into a form of labour production but also to ensure that webcam models are constantly working to reach viewers, to 'stand out'. The design might keep the viewer on websitename.com but getting them to spend any money on webcam models is a whole other story.



## A stain, a sting Alison Scott



There is music. There is a rhythm, there is pause, there is poise. A clarinet, a low saxophone, a strum, could make this a frenzied forest of jazz. It builds, it grows, the drum drums. It's dense; it is a threat? It stumbles. The music halts and stops and soothes, stagger into the shade. A clearing is an attempt to tame and tempt but weedy species still grow. It's tired of walking. Keep moving, don't stop for too long. Just listen. A sniff. A breath. A dull thud a squelch a squat. It's textural, it's sticky; sticky music, sticky language, the icckk it sticks to the soft-drone, soft-mud, soft-thighs. Ass on the grass repeats ass on grass, close an unlit path, a soaked seat, a soaked sheet. Grass is sheets. It's dreamy creamy, it's fantasy, it's sci-fi. It imprints, pummels the hill into the shape we see in the daytime. Here lava flowed and is still liquid in its own span, wet and moving and hot. Slaggy interbedded tuff. Little puddles everywhere. A cymbal, a rhythm, a ticking, bubbling, ringing. All moving in liquid time, evidence is spread, covered and uncovered. You have a profile, leave a trail, can be traced. You too are not immune.

Your sister is allergic to most perfume. Well, something in them. Gifts from well-meaning grandmothers and boyfriends backfire with violent sneezes, her whole body becomes tense and curled, trying to expel whatever chemicals have been unleashed. It's truly exhausting, even to watch. The mystery chemicals are pollutants; the luxuries become poison. Rugs, too, have a similar physical effect, and she is a big hayfever sufferer. Can't lay body

loose and fingers plunged into a deep pile carpet, or in long grass carefree, like you can. You're willing an etymological link to explain the link between pollen and pollution more acutely, it's not quite there. Or at least you haven't been able to track it. Your sister's body is a siren, each sneeze an alarm alerting you to air polluted with pollen, petrochemicals, and unseen micro particles floating in the air. Finding their way up her nostrils, through her eyes and skin, interacting with her body, the hazards are everywhere. Everyone's done it at some time, or heard the stories. Carefully chop it, get it on your fingers, taste a bit, fuck that's hot, eyes prickle, rub them, rub it in your eyes, wherever is the most sensitive is where you will inevitably get the stuff. Wash it wash it get it off, keep blinking. Quick more water, here's an egg cup, no ok, then a small bowl, blink in the water, let it sit a wee bath just for your fiery eyes. There. You should really have a drink of milk too, take a swig and hold it in your mouth, not too much or the thick white droplets will dribble down your chin and you'll really be in a mess. What you need now is aloe vera on the thin red skin around your eyes, don't you have the gel it's so handy. You should really get a plant they grow so easily and they make babies, it's the best. Your auntie has a sprawling aloe vera plant in her classroom, her pupils call it the Magic Healing Plant, rub it on sore spots and teary faces. Break its limbs, rub it where it hurts, squeeze the flesh out, it's cool, it's soothing, yes, the pain will go away. Don't worry the plant will heal, it will callous over and you too will be fine, chili burns won't scab and tears don't really stain.

You remember your mum always told you not to go up the hill at night. More stories everyone seemed to know. The warnings functioned as self-defence lessons; more extreme things, like Mace spray, were reserved for American TV shows. Teenage girls given a canister by concerned parents, assuming they could spray it into the hardened eyes of attackers to survive perilous situations. You only recently realised that Mace is just an American brand name for pepper spray, active ingredient capsaicin from chili peppers. The product has no trace of mace, the spice, at all. An archaic, spikey bludgeon surely would have been the intended Mace-image for marketeers of a blinding

spray. Perhaps it should have been obvious, a thing seemingly so far from the homely, comforting stodge of rice pudding and spiced Christmas biscuits. And of course, mace has a violent story of its own. You were ignorant to the origin of the spice, even despite the ubiquitousness of the taste in your food, given also, how distanced you can feel from the production of food and the bitter history of its trade. Predominantly grown in Indonesia, mace is the crimson substance covering the nutmeg seed; it swaddles the seed in a fleshy, sinuous looking swirl. When dried these are sold as the menacing sounding 'mace blades' or are ground into a yellow powder, but while fresh appear as brilliant red, thick veins around a solid, darkened eyeball. Green Gold. You think of the type of not-gold that greens your fingers over time; a cheap ring masquerading as truth. It's the acid in your skin that does it, rubs away the surface plating, oxidises the cheaper metal (copper?) underneath and causes discolouration. It doesn't wipe off, it's a deeper stain than that. You rub your hands in the grass to hide the yellowish grey marks among the blades, fresh grass stains cut into your skin and overlay the ugly band. These are brighter but they will fade faster. Grass is so common you barely think of it as a plant, it is just in the gaps between the paths and roads. Cash crop dyes and mined pigments have far more intense colouration than this weed. Their stains lay deep in the skin, in the blood. Plants travelling around the trade routes of the world for their colour, smell, taste, physic and psychic properties. Exploitation is an attitude, it was learnt, and now it stings like nettles. Everyone knows, find a dock leaf, it will be close by, the alkali gel in the leaf will relieve the effect on the acid from the nettles. If only all stains were so benign and so easily neutralised.

## *Postscript*

First performed at *Soft Shell*, The Poetry Club, Glasgow, *A stain, a sting* is an echo of an audio work by Patrick Staff titled, *To Those In Search of Immunity* (2017). It is a response after a delay, and response is a loose term. It is additive, an elaboration, you could even say an excess. It repeats some of the sentiment but is after the fact and outwith the remit of the unseen original, trying to catch up to it in time. Speaking to another artist, who isn't aware of the echo, they're long gone by now. It can't really be said that they intended it, but text once heard has a lingering effect: a voice speaks through time as a record of its own making, and this text follows in that wake. Enacting a conversation, interacting but just slightly out of time, out of place. In the responsive echo, text bounces off of text, sometimes slotting neatly into gaps in the sentences, phrases interlock. The echo overlays the original, or rather, it underlays, underscoring what is significant in what came before, reiterating the salient, whatever rings true. It dulls one idea while amplifying another, and can be dissonant. The echo strikes the surface text from below, hitting its soft underside. Uninvited perhaps, it exists below the volume of the main track, and is stealthy. The echo makes contact, brushes with the surface, absorbing some of its substance and leaving some character behind. The surface is porous, ways through can be found, but why not continue on another level. The responsive text shoots weedy roots and spindly stems, wilfully entwining itself, unbounded and unkempt. A garden within a garden. It can remain unseen, remain weedy. It is tempting to call it a parasite, a paratext, conjoined to the main body of text but not truly of it, willing to become part of it. A hang on the end of a note, a lingering flourish, and a fade.

## After (After) Susannah Thompson



Laurence Figgis, *The General*, 2017,  
dye-sublimation print on canvas, 200 x 141 cm

In February 2003, the US Secretary of State, Colin Powell made an official statement to the Council and the international media on the decision to invade Iraq. Behind him, on the wall of the anteroom to the UN Security Council Chamber, hung one of a number of full-size tapestry copies of Picasso's *Guernica* by Jacqueline de la Baume Dürrbach. The image was deemed an 'inappropriate' backdrop to this formal announcement and was quickly covered over with a blue curtain. The episode—the veiling of politically-loaded imagery which both prefigured the destruction to come as well as memorialising another, earlier twentieth century atrocity—became emblematic. *Guernica*-inspired imagery was subsequently used on countless placards in the marches and gatherings held in opposition to the invasion. The re-appropriation of *Guernica* in this way, as a horribly ironic political allegory, is apposite in considering the critical intentions underpinning Laurence Figgis' exhibition (*After After*). Evolving from an interest in art historical citation, and, specifically, the strategic use of anachronism, the works are concerned with the way the past becomes the present, again, and ever after.

The artist's research for (*After After*) was informed by two bodies of work produced in the late 1950s: Pablo Picasso's 1957 series of paintings after Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (1656) and Robert Rauschenberg's 1958-60 drawings illustrating the thirty-four cantos of Dante's *Inferno* (1308-1320). Along with

Picasso and Rauschenberg, other visual sources include the work of British illustrator Eric Winter, known primarily for his contributions to Ladybird Books' *Well-Loved Tales*, and the US painter Eyvind Earle, who worked for Walt Disney, amongst others. Figgis' figurative paintings and digital prints implicitly ask how mid-twentieth century and post-war visual culture might inform contemporary narrative painting. How might we look to these works as reference points for current anxieties about technological progress, social inequality, gender and sexual politics? Following Picasso's Cubist take on Velásquez's painting, Figgis' own works similarly aim to generate a critical dialogue between art of the past and present. In looking back to earlier historical periods, the works simultaneously speak to their own, particular moment in history.

The reflection of Cold War-era politics through the lens of historical allegory in the works by Picasso and Rauschenberg forms the basis for Figgis' own imaginative fiction, a cross-genre narrative referencing gothic romance, dystopian literature and fairy tales. Employing *anachorism* as well as *anachronism*, the settings of these works could be amalgams of Picasso/Velásquez's Royal Court, Rauschenberg/Dante's Hell and the fairy tale worlds of Winter and Earle. The courts, kings and queens of Figgis' tale also echo the speculative fictional worlds of the Glasstown Confederacy, Angria and Gondal, those settings of Brontë juvenilia which teem with duplicitous political scheming, *coup d'états*, and intrigue. If the island colonies of the Brontë children's books and poems can be read as fictional parallels to the Empire-building events of the 1820s and 30s, the spaces in *(After) After* are intended as more deliberate, satirical comments on contemporary culture, in all of its dark, kitsch incongruity.

In their variations of *Las Meninas* and Dante's *Inferno*, Picasso and Rauschenberg saw historical appropriation as a way to satirise or respond to the present. Before Picasso, Francisco Goya's 1778 etching of *Las Meninas* and his 1801 painting *Charles IV of Spain and His Family* depicted an altogether less sympathetic portrait of royalty than its source, considered to be a satirical jibe at the corruption and decay of the royal family (a painting

within the painting shows the biblical figure of Lot and his daughters). For his part, Picasso's court of King Phillip IV of Spain points to 1950s Spain under Franco, an arch-monarchist, while Rauschenberg's evocation of Dante's Hell was composed of mass-media imagery in the age of McCarthyism and the Cold War. In Figgis' work, a similar agenda is at play. In *The Mar'ge* (2017), a royal procession is seen through cleaned-for-the-Queen, blood-red pillars, the crowds in shadow, an anonymous prole throng. A foxed, tarnished present is reflected back to us in the gaudy gilt objects of *After the Mar'ge* (2017), ripe for the bonfire of the vanities in Austerity Britain. Amongst the tableware, an image of a rocket, rendered in ice-cream colours, decorates the dinner plate of sinister papal figure. The image of *The General* (2017), could have been lifted from Oskar Schlemmer's *Triadic Ballet*, but equally this heavy automaton figure could be a latter-day iron maiden, a metal burka for men, a contemporary Pharisee, a suit of armour for a paranoid dictator. *The Club-Grande* (2017) is part Versailles, part Met Ball, and surrounded, everywhere, by watchful eyes, Rhianna meets *La Reine Margot*. Velásquez and Picasso's Infanta becomes *The Goddess of Land Services* (2017) in architectonic, draggy crinoline. All of these works could be read as allegory: what was once deemed stupid, reactionary, even implausible in this day and age is, once again, political fact. Then and now, the 'Right Force' is frequently ushered in and made possible by 'seductive pageantry'<sup>1</sup>.

*Bad Retail*, Figgis' prose-romance, was produced in parallel to the paintings and prints in *(After) After*. Seen together, the verbal and visual elements become a kind of contemporary illuminated manuscript, populated by characters who appear across both narrative forms. In its written form, the language of political spin and *corporatese* is taken to Dada-esque extremes—protagonists speak in an argot populated by buzzwords, in-jokes and neologisms recognisable to any institutional or academic worker disorientated by committee-speak and acronymic dialogue. A bureaucratic nightmare, akin to a phone call to the city council, communication in *Bad Retail* is bound up by labyrinthine codes.

<sup>1</sup> Laurence Figgis, 'Bad Retail: A Prose-Romance', *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*, (London: Intellect, 2017)



Figgis' tale also refers to the authoritarian language of classic dystopian narratives by Ursula Le Guin, George Orwell or Anthony Burgess. If, in Figgis' work, 'the tyrant becomes an administrator'<sup>2</sup> the pompous patois of admin is used to extreme comedic effect—the embedded, decontextualized fragments of Glaswegian dialect, Figgis' adopted city, are cases in point.

The text, like the visual works, constitutes an act of pillaging and self-plagiarism: references to earlier works in the artist's oeuvre are manifold. Through his verbal and visual forms, 'full of tell-tale fault lines and stitches'<sup>3</sup>, Figgis has sought to dramatise the equivalence of collage to anachronism, using the fractures and glitches created by both ways of working to foster a reading of 'period' costume, setting or speech which acts in the same push/pull manner as flatness in Modernist painting: can we be in both places at once? Are we *here* or *there*?

—

(*After*) *After*, a solo exhibition by Laurence Figgis, was held at Leeds College of Art in Summer 2017, curated by Dr Catriona McAra

2 Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny* (expanded edition), (New York: Free Press, 1991), p 255

3 Figgis, *op cit*.

## By landscape we also mean memory Clare Patterson

I begin writing and realise I don't remember the name of the town or the beach I'm thinking of. I google 'black sand beach' in hope of some clues and discover they are a small phenomenon; striking and unusual, numerous travel websites make lists chronicling the best in the world. The one that catches my eye is titled 'The 14 Most Exotic Black Sand Beaches in the World'—'exotic', applied as though it is objective, a definition, as opposed to a way of looking one imposes on another. I flip through the ad-filled slideshow: Japan; Iceland; French Polynesia; all volcanic islands, the contrast in the photos dialled uncannily high. The place they have chosen for New Zealand is not right—I recognise the foliage, large, bulbous plants I haven't seen in person in several years, but the name doesn't spark any memories. I open Google Maps and try working from my great aunt and uncle's home in the direction I remember driving, which proves a more fruitful technique.

The beach I remember isn't pure black like the most popular photos online, but a dark, rich grey, with undertones of brown. The colour is distinctly cool-toned but, as black traps heat, the sand is surprisingly hot to the touch, in some spots pleasantly warm, in some painful to stand on barefoot. My mum tells me that when she was out here for too long on sunny days it could burn the soles of your feet, leave them glowing red and peeling, sunburnt from below. Today the sky is a pale grey, the water too, a satisfying monochrome gradient of a landscape.

The sand moves in little eddies, making delicate pale patterns and swirls when picked up by the wind, which also picks up my hair, blows it wild and loose, an image with romantic notions of nature, easy to love at eighteen. The scene is bleak and beautiful, but in a different way to the moors in the north of England or the highlands which I am used to. A number of kite surfers are out in the shallows, the bright neon colours of their kites by far the most eye-catching things in the landscape. At this age I am not a good photographer, and my cheap camera doesn't help, but the pictures I take of these bright shapes dragging bodies against grey are some of my favourites from the trip.

*white lines and black beaches/blood red sangria/you travelled for weeks just to escape your demons*

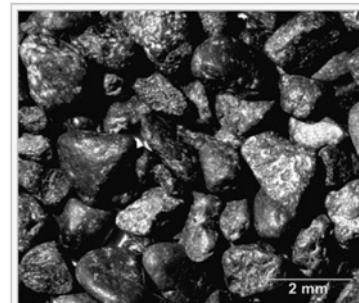
This song doesn't come out until I'm twenty-two, but listening to it on the bus on the way to a job that does not interest me, I superimpose it onto the car journey, driving into the strange, bulbous hills, past the dome of an enormous Mormon temple and the white headstones of a Māori cemetery, half-hidden in deep green ferns and stretching all the way up the steep valley.

## Black sand

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Black sand is sand that is black in color. One type of black sand is a heavy, glossy, partly magnetic mixture of usually fine sands, found as part of a placer deposit. Another type of black sand, found on beaches near a volcano, consists of tiny fragments of basalt.

When lava contacts water, it cools rapidly and shatters into sand and fragmented debris of various size. Much of the debris is small enough to be considered sand. A large lava flow entering an ocean may produce enough basalt fragments to build a new black sand beach almost overnight. Since a black sand beach is made by a lava flow in a one-time event, they tend to be rather short lived since sands do not get replenished if currents or storms wash sand into deeper water. Further, a black sand beach is vulnerable to being inundated by future lava flows, as was the case for Hawai'i's Kaimū, usually known simply as Black Sand Beach, and Kalapana beaches.<sup>[3]</sup> Unlike with white and green sand beaches, walking barefoot on black sand can result in burns, as the black sand absorbs a greater fraction of the solar radiation falling upon it.<sup>[5][not in citation given][6]</sup>



Black sand from a beach in Maui, Hawaii 🔍

I am more interested in some forms of record than others. Photos I am comfortable with, are kept visible in my bedroom. Recollections from others can be pleasant or stressful, depending on who is telling them and the tone they take, what they choose to recount to me, the picture I can see them trying to paint and how successful their technique is. Personal items are the ones I'm most comfortable with: clothes; scrapbooks; strange collections; the archive a person assembles of themselves. Luckily he kept scrapbooks for twenty years, every little inconsequential item that drove my mum 'insane': train tickets; in-flight menus; birthday and Christmas cards, the paper ephemera of a life.

Video makes me nervous. I've probably only watched a cumulative two hours, in the middle of the night at my mum's house on an old TV set with a video player. I think I wanted to know what his voice sounded like, but as I didn't remember in the first place it didn't mean much. A Northern Irish accent, I think, otherwise unremarkable. I couldn't replicate it now if you asked me to.

Such records are of a time and a place but also of a person. The place can be returned to, but feels like a record itself, gauzy and insubstantial as memory, a photograph still in the dark room, developing but not able to be fixed. The replication of place makes the absence of the other two more visible, throws them into stark relief, like entering your childhood home with all the furniture removed.

'Talismanic uses of photographs express a feeling both sentimental and implicitly magical: they are attempts to contact or lay claim to another reality', writes Susan Sontag. These days my sadness is quiet, low-level, like background radiation. When it comes, it is not from this reality, but from an acknowledgement of a potential other, the impossible possibility of a different future. The photograph-reality is one where he still exists, a reality which once mirrored my own but diverged before I could wield a camera myself. The photographs show no evidence of death; a narrative of his life constructed entirely in images would have no death scene, no definitive end. The photograph-reality is one of plausible deniability, a world where there is no evidence of him but also no lack, a world from which transmissions have stopped but which could well be carrying on regardless.

The first few weeks after I got off the plane were like swimming in memory. It all felt familiar but indescribable; the light, the warmth of the sun on my arms, the freckles that formed quickly on my skin, my body always smelling of sun cream. I felt I was witnessing everything from the bottom of a swimming pool. My white body had grown so much—I hid my upper arm as the soft flesh on the inside was blossoming with a bruise from the implant I'd just had put in, my little cyborg attachment keeping my body childless. In shorts and t-shirts I felt like a child. The sun quickly bleached the already-fading dye from my hair, made it blonde, I didn't wear makeup in the heat, all my clothes were practical. I was myself as a child, as I had left, only bigger. Things would spark memories but I could never specify what they were, I felt them in my body but had no words. When someone asked what I remembered I could only say 'it's strange'.

Ninety-mile beach, like a lot of place names, is a misnomer. An uninterrupted stretch of sand from Kaitaia to the top of the North Island, its actual length is 55 miles, or nearly 90 kilometres. The waterless part of the beach is so large that it is also used as a public highway, usually only when the main roads are closed by floods, or for tourists, which on this day is what I am - leaning towards the front of the bus, camera in hand, trying to record the way every part of this scene stretches into nothing. Where the dunes rise up there are body-boarders sliding down the sand face-first, slipping and digging out great curves in the dunes around their feet as they climb. I remember body-boarding somewhere on this trip, but I can't remember if it was here or later.

The clouds clear and the sun comes out bright as ever as we arrive at Cape Reinga, the northernmost point of New Zealand. Where the land ends, the sea splits, or more accurately, merges. The Pacific Ocean meets the Tasman Sea, one side a darker, purer blue, the other turquoise and translucent, almost glowing. The line between them is clearly visible, uneven and jagged like the path of a lightning bolt, and they can't be seen to merge until close to the horizon. In Maori belief, the souls of the dead are carried by the roots of pohutukawa trees, their bright red flowers and knotted roots along the shores of nearly every beach on the north island, and travel from Cape Reinga to Hawaiki, the ancestral Polynesian homeland from before they came to Aotearoa. It's not my mythology, but the parallels still strike me without thinking. I imagine souls moving through roots like electricity, bright white and fizzing, flying invisible to ancient homes.

## Hey Blue, did you ever know, I would do this? Rosie Roberts

*April 4th is spent sitting in front of a large computer at the head of a five-part hot desk. Four workers are busily labouring in the five-metre square room. Embarking on a research placement grounded in watching, I press play:*

An interior: a wok; a crock-pot; a pan; a pair of plastic rubber work gloves with a ribbed sleeve litter a table, a man enters. He is dressed in lounge wear, he has tattoos, he tries to turn the TV on. Are we on a boat? A clock shows that it is 10.45pm, another man enters, goes into the fridge, takes out a gallon of orange juice and takes a swig from a paper cup, he points at the crock pot.

*The phone rings, a coordinator picks up, "Good afternoon, -----, how can I help? Oh hi, hi yes!"*

The first man is watching the TV, the camera must be positioned right above it, discreet. The other man is back, this time for milk, partially obscured by a pillar, he pours himself a cup and one for the other man, there is some dialogue but it is also obscured. The first man does not like the milk, he sticks his tongue out twice, he is tired, a long theatrical yawn. At length, they watch TV, the camera watches them, I watch the video, they appear bored, more yawns. A third man arrives. The second man picks up the gloves and prizes them apart then twists one of them in his hands, it becomes a phallic tube. Is he warming it? The third man stays in the periphery, he smiles at the TV, at me? He was warming the

gloves—he starts on the second. He goes to open the crock pot but then gets distracted by the TV, the camera?

Where was this film initially shown? Where are the men from? How did I become a viewer here? The men are speaking in English—it was hard to tell until now over the roar of—an engine?—you can hear the men saying “hello, hello, hello” to each other as they come in and out of the room.

*The director leaves for the afternoon and biscuits come out, “anyone like a drink? How are you getting on? I haven’t watched that one before, is it good? How do you take it, milk or sugar?”*

Is it good? The piece is called *Still Life*, however *life* is the only thing that is moving, the camera is fixed as is the set, but if we are on a boat and that is an engine then we must be moving. And if this is real then it is not a set. The first and third man have left, I’m not sure when—the second man picks and pinches the skin of his wrist, the first man walks through the space and opens a door on the far left, of the scene, increasing the din momentarily. I wonder if they ever imagined a woman sitting in an office in Scotland watching these intimate moments *as work*. The second man brushes his moustache with his fingers, he wears frameless glasses. He rubs his hands—is he preparing for something? The gloves, the hands, the pinching— he bites his nails, work.

The first man returns, he tucks a grubby tank top into his shorts before sitting down. They speak again but it is very difficult for the viewer to discern, “yeeaaaah there you go”. The second man continues to warm his hands, their working environment must be very cold. I guess at what this all means to me, from *this* office. I am thinking about the film in a gallery, I imagine an intention is for it to be encountered as opposed to ‘watched’—I suppose this is very interesting—the video buffers giving me time and space to have this reflection, and another; if I write down an action-play of someone else’s film, whose work is the writing? The second man reaches over his shoulder and passes the first man—mayonnaise?—no, it’s a bottle of pills—he says “owh, owh, owh”.

In a big reveal—the second man lifts the lid of the crock pot in the centre of the table. Inside it I think there is a slow cooked ham. Yes, it’s a ham. He eats a slice sloppily and drinks his cup of milk. Buffering—if this action is incidental then can the story of it be mine? An elsewhere document. Or is it simply theirs. I look forward to reading about the piece further. The man eats the ham, the sound changes—perhaps it’s a siren of some sort? The second man takes his gloves in response and gets up, no I don’t think it is a siren, but maybe it is a change of pace, of, the boat? The film is 30 minutes long—how long could I do this for? How would it change if I did this for Battleship Potempkin?

*Over headphones, I peripherally watch and hear comings and goings of the office, phone calls about films, artists, workshops etc.*

The second man leaves—the third man returns—this ‘man’ system of notation is not working, I will refer to the characters by their attire: Blue and Tank watch the TV, I watch them, sort of watch me. A high-pitched noise, Blue laughs, Tank breathes heavily with his mouth open. They chat, Tank looks at the TV and says “Whaat the fuuuck”, Blue is the chirpiest of the three, if this is a staff lounge, which is my suspicion then I guess he is the most recent to his break. Not bored yet. It is lucky I can touch type. I was taught in middle school in America, buffering, alongside the other girls in my class, the boys, I suppose, were elsewhere.

There is a new aural landscape—it is very hard to tell whether this is the ‘boat’ or the TV, singing? A dog whining? An engine whining? All the same we could be in a portacabin on a building site. Blue cackles, wipes his mouth, takes a sip of his milk from his paper cup. Buffering—but I could see that Tank was about to open his mouth! The film skips, I could go back. When nothing really happens, what does happen, becomes more and more important, contrast I suppose. I go back too far in the film, am I wasting my time?

What Tank was opening his mouth to say was “oh yeeeahhh”. Then—wait—am I sure? Did Tank just see me—the camera,

for sure? I suppose unless this film is very unethical, he must know it is there. I suppose the maker is relying on the mundanity of the everyday to make the subjects forget. I think of breaking the fourth wall, of theatricality; in fact, I think of this so much I forget to watch the film for a bit there and I will have to go back, my eyes were looking but my brain was out of focus, not watching.

I notice the pill bottle again, but I can't remember seeing Tank take any pills—maybe when I look back through this text, I will have notated it. Blue left at some point, again, I didn't notice, but it can't have been long ago.

Tank does a grotty cough, he is on his own now, he looks at the clock and so do I, he looks at the door and so do I. The flickering of the TV changes the lighting of the space, reflecting from laminated notices on a cork pin board. Tank coughs again, phlegmy and disgusting. He leaves the scene, toilet? I am on my own now, he's back lurking in the left, coughing phlegm. He leaves through the door in the top left corner and I am on my own once more.

*I glance over my shoulder; another woman is watching the screen. It goes black, in the reflection my face and hers, she starts in surprise, the engine continues, the directors' names, copyright, studio, to fade out.*

As I exit full screen, I see that under the video title and settings there is a small line of description:

*A theatre of exhaustion.*





Kathleen  
Sarah Diviney

The carcass of a crow hangs by the feet and sways in the wind tunnel the shed provides.

It is a method of defence, a warning.

The carcass acts as a house alarm, warding off surviving crows. Like many burglars, the crows quickly realise the defence's flaws, all smoke and mirrors you could say, and they never forget a face.

Sheela Na Gigs and the hanging carcass share foreboding purposes. A Sheela is a stone monument which is largely associated with the Catholic Church. Ireland has the highest population of the monuments in the world. Sheela has her lady bits on full display and is the bouncer between our world and theirs. She keeps out the demons and bad spirits which is fair enough, they'll only ruin the innocent craic we're all having anyway.

The Sheela's gaping genitals were said to be the fruit of an unbelievable misogyny and were to be visual representations of the church's teachings. Their appearance varies from rib showing hags to busty long-haired goddesses (temptation comes in all forms, shapes and sizes, I guess).

To fear women? (maybe) or sex? (probably).

Found in the gaping holes of the countryside you stumble upon them, vulnerable and alone.

*Ah God Help You Gossin.*

It was lemon yellow, the top she was wearing that day. Cut off under the rib by a tight band of elastic from the waterproof trousers, distorting her body's proportions. Her hands shielded by blue latex, she lugged white buckets of milk. The never-ending journey to the babes.

It's an infectious noise they make, like sucking spit through your front teeth.

She's face-down on the kitchen table when I see her.  
I hold my breath.

Both arms hanging from her shoulders as the dead crow hung in the shed. Nose flattened by the pressure and embossed with newspaper ink she rose. With a release of breath, I smiled and laughed.

*“Did you think I was dead, did you?  
You Aul bowsey laughing at me.”*

Banishing her Evil Left, He was calling her. He was calling her through the rubber teats, through the astronomical vagina of the Sheela, but she's always been so stubborn. The light became more blinding, pulling the visor down in Dot's car. Unrecognisable without her Evil Left, I stood confused, witnessing a dying medusa through a crack in the hospital door. It was a balancing of the equilibrium, of the duality of life. I would never have described Kathleen as balanced, but definitely not unbalanced. Physically, without her Evil Left she leans, slouching in the chair as the sheep hide fails her. It becomes weak as her Right becomes stronger. Time is passing, nothing waits, we are progressing. Balanced to me is symmetry, of an even scale, but Kathleen fluctuates in this sector, jumping from one position to the other with confidence that would assure you it wouldn't change again. He took her Evil Left to give her the purity of her Right, to give her rest, to remove the darkness of night. This is what she prayed for, for purity and forgiveness.

Who knew wishing songs came true?

“Why did he do this to me,” she asked.

Perched on top of a cushion on her new mobility chair.

Not a time for humour.  
Not a time for laughs.

We didn't discuss her disability at length by any means, mainly because at that time her speech was largely affected but also so as not to dig a hole for myself, aware she would bury me in it.

As time went on alterations were made to her surroundings. Her artefacts hung at her concluding eye level, an exhibition of her in objects. The house was now re-constructed specially for her.

The house which she would argue was hers prior.

I'm teaching her to play solitaire on her Dell laptop when chatter from the kitchen radio catches my ear. The prosecution of a man from Tipperary who is said to have sold a Sheela Na Gig on the black market.

I have an image in my head of a man running through hilly Irish fields in the wind and rain in an aged eighties jumper and jeans with the small stone figure tucked under his arm like a rugby ball. Her face is covered by the hideous jumper, its cavernous vagina sticking out the back like a flag.

She looked at my confusion and began to laugh, maybe she had a similar image in her head.

Turns out you can get a fair penny for a Sheela on the black market but look at us being sold as a material once again.

I wished he was from a family of boys who received their inheritance but couldn't find women to bare their heirs. For him to be shut down with Tuberculosis and put on the farming backlist. To be messing with the dark spirits and for Sheela to call in sick that day or to be so protected by Sheela that he wished his placid mother was still alive.

His face archived by the remaining eye of the swinging carcass.

She is what I believe to be a real-life Sheela, Kathleen doesn't suit her at all really.

Equally loyal to the church as herself, she bared five children and reared none, achieving but a business relationship with her eldest son.

She is the matriarchy at the head of the table but feeding the men before herself.

I call her Misses Madam  
and The Dowager,  
a verbal deviant.

Author Biographies

Kate Briggs is a writer and translator. She published *This Little Art*, a long form essay on the practice of translation (Fitzcarraldo 2017) and has translated two volumes of lecture and seminar notes by Roland Barthes, both published by Columbia University Press. She is a tutor on the MFA in Fine Art at the Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam.

In November 2018, Kate visited Art Writing at GSA and led two workshops, *Translating, Writing and the Productions of Relations* and *The Medium(s) of Writing* and presented *Complicated Identification*, a GSA public lecture at the Glasgow Film Theatre.

Sarah Diviney is a performance artist and recent graduate of Crawford College of Art and Design in Co. Cork, Ireland. She has exhibited work at Present Performance 4th Edition, Gdansk, Poland (2017), The Royal Dublin Society (2018), MART Gallery, Dublin (2019), with recent performances at the Glasgow Women's Library and The Poetry Club, Glasgow.

Esther Draycott is a writer interested in reparative criticism and experimental forms of historical research. Her recent work has centred around fashion and cloth as a means of bringing together strands of postcolonial, queer and feminist histories. Her writing has been featured in publications such as *New Art West Midlands* and *Birmingham Arts*.

Laura Edbrook is an artist and writer. Her most recent publications include *'It is this it is this, it is this'*, co-written with Sarah Forrest, in *Of Other Spaces: Where Does Gesture Become Event?* edited by Sophia Yadong Hao (Sternberg Press 2019) and *Art Writing, Paraliterature and Intrepid Forms of Practice* co-edited with Susannah Thompson (Intellect 2017). She is the Programme Leader of the Master of Letters in Art Writing.

Kiah Endelman Music is an artist and writer whose work, grounded in ideas of embodied knowledge, takes form as situated or performative writing. She has undertaken a residency at the Artists Research Lab, Fondazione Antonio Ratti, Como,

Italy, and her writing has recently been featured in MARTHA journal. She has exhibited at Rye Wax, London and performed at The Poetry Club, Glasgow, the Glasgow Women's Library and The Deptford Project, London.

Laurence Figgis is an artist and writer based in Glasgow. Recent exhibitions include *(After) After* at the Blenheim Walk Gallery, Leeds College of Art (2017) and commissioned writing for artists include *Paintings with Legs* for Lotte Gertz's exhibition *Migrating Eye* at Intermedia, CCA Glasgow. He is a lecturer in the School of Fine Art, The Glasgow School of Art and led 'And here we sit and glitter': *Fiction in Response to Art (and Other Objects)*, a seminar with the MLitt Art Writing in October 2018.

Imogen Harland is a writer and sex worker who is interested in writing and sex work.

Daisy Lafarge is a writer and artist. She was reviews editor at MAP Magazine 2017–2019. Her lecture and workshop, *The Critic and Her Clichés* was in November 2019. A collection of poetry and a novel are forthcoming.

Clare Patterson is a writer and artist. She graduated from the University of Glasgow with an MA(Hons.) in English Literature in 2018. Her work is currently focused around gender, place and memory. She also works as a freelance journalist.

Rosie Roberts is an artist, writer and filmmaker thinking about synchronicity and complicity. She recently premiered *Not to Worry* at Alchemy Film Festival (2019) and presented 'containing, cables and cod' as part of Poetics in Commons at the Centre for Contemporary Poetry and Poetics, Sheffield University. She is a contributor to MAP Magazine.

Alison Scott works across writing, performance and video. Her work tends to develop in response to specific histories and geographies. She often works with other artists and has taken part in exhibitions and residencies including Glasgow Project Room (2019), Edinburgh Art Festival (2017), Timespan (2017),

Inverness Museum and Art Gallery (2017). In 2019–20 Alison will be in post as Satellites Associate Producer at Collective, Edinburgh.

Calum Sutherland is an artist and art writer. Recent exhibitions include, *TEN* at Artist Curated Projects, Los Angeles (2018) and *Unswep House*, Glasgow Open House Arts Festival, Glasgow (2017). He is a regular contributor to Artforum and MAP Magazine.

Susannah Thompson is an art historian, writer and critic based in Glasgow. Her research focuses on alternative, experimental and expanded forms of art writing and criticism, writing as a part of visual art practice and creative approaches to writing art history. She is Head of Doctoral Studies at The Glasgow School of Art. She led *Post-criticism and the Paraliterary: Art Criticism in the Expanded Field*, a lecture and seminar for MLitt Art Writing in October 2018.

Art Writing Graduate Programme  
The Glasgow School of Art

The Lip of the Cup, August 2019

Exhibition and event as part of the School of Fine Art  
Graduate Degree Show, including an Art Writing Graduate  
Programme evening of readings and performance at the  
Centre for Contemporary Arts Glasgow, 27 August 2019.

Class of 2019

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