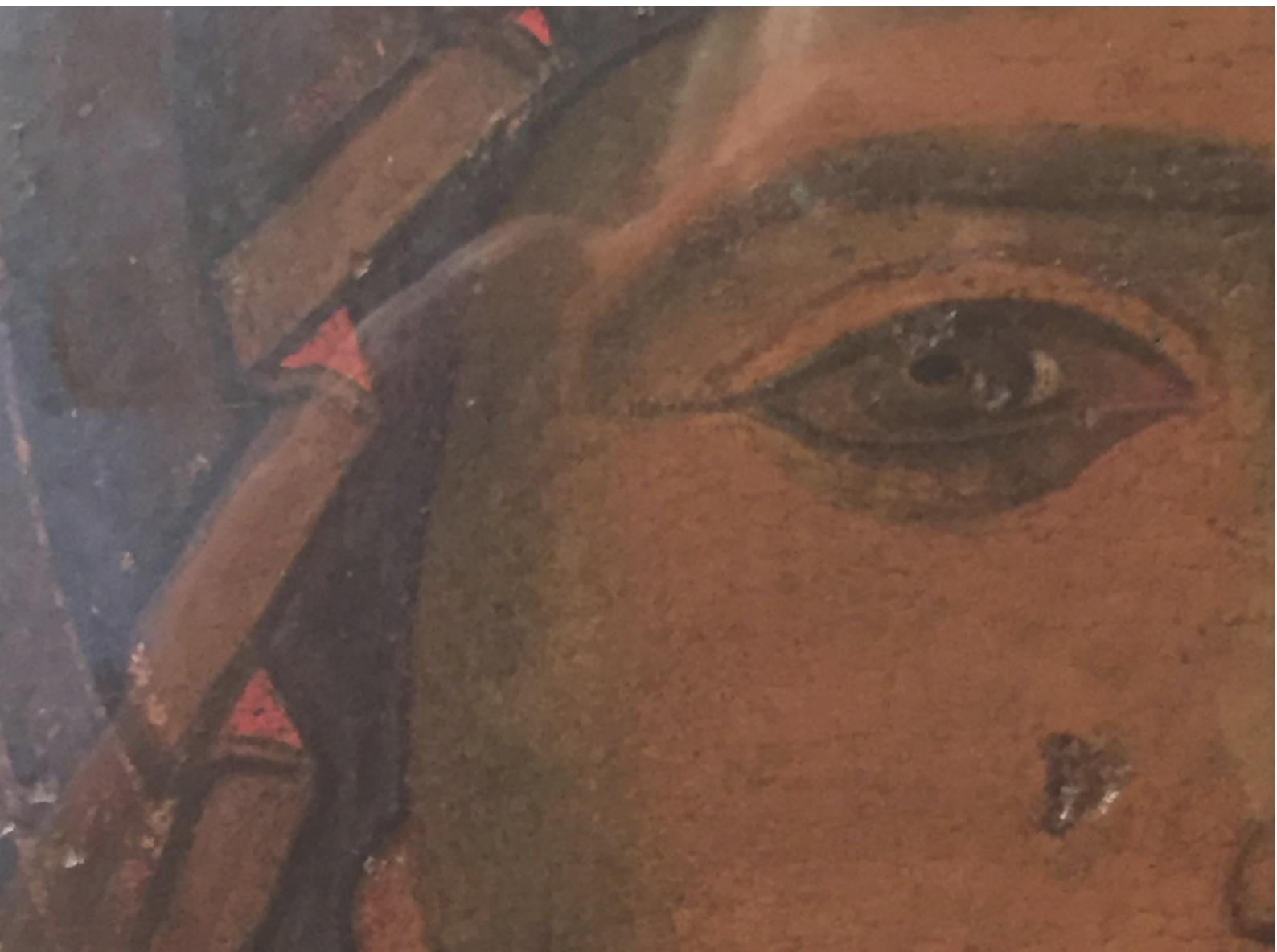


Documentation for
Teachers around

Tony Chakar

On Becoming Two

25.01.2017 - 26.03.2017



This document is aimed at teachers: it is not meant for students' use. It does not replace the visit, nor is it a record that documents the exhibition. It is a research tool to be used by the teachers to address the exhibition in relation to different knowledge backgrounds so that they can refer to it in the course of their practice. The Workbook exists to facilitate the teachers' use of the visit for work-in-class purposes and to inspire them to invent whatever their teaching practices require.

To book a group visit for your class, please write to:
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I. Curator's Statement

Tony Chakar is an architect, writer and artist who lives and works in Beirut. Ever since his first intervention in a public space in 1999, his writings and public speeches have drawn a poetic and critical map of representations. Chakar is concerned with those new forms of symbolic resistance at work in the conflicts ravaging his corner of the world; he is interested in the survival of ideologies and myths involved in, or opposed to liberal thought. Of significant interest to him is the circulation of images and texts on social media, both vernacular and insurrectionary.

My commission to Tony Chakar was to take over Beirut Art Center's ground floor, and devise his own course in the space of the gallery. The aim of this stratagem is to play with and against a certain architecture and specific context, using as a starting point Chakar's relation to his different practices: architecture, text and language. Every moment of the exhibition represents the material mutation of a specific gesture in his work, from the pages of a book growing to the size of a wall, or a map spread substituting itself to the reconstruction of an event or performative gesture. The exhibition provides the specific framework for a singular voice, one that is embodied in Beirut; a context in which post-war antagonisms and divisions have resulted in complex artistic activity, which in turn gave way to a scene dependent on the requirements and standards of the art market.

In response to this evolution, Chakar develops dialectic of presence and forgetfulness that borrows from different areas of perception, and is furthermore echoed in the title of the exhibition: On Becoming Two is a defense of dissociation, doubt and critical distance.

Chakar cites the poet Hölderlin: This conversation that we are.

Visitors will have access to a work begun twenty years ago, wherein the examination of beliefs that constitute modernity opens a poetic space, providing in the process a live quality to the sharing of knowledge.

Biography

Tony Chakar is a Lebanese architect and writer born in Beirut in 1968. He belongs to a generation of Lebanese artists and thinkers whose primordial themes are war and the post-war, which they view with a critical eye due to their focus on the processes of getting at the historical truth. It can be said that his platform his memory as a performance practice. His work also involves ways of thinking that go beyond than the traditional architectural focus by incorporating literature, philosophy and theory.

He is a contributor to Al Mulhaq, the cultural supplement of the daily newspaper 'Annahar', and to several European art journals. Architecture and living conditions in different districts of Beirut are Tony Chakar's interests, which is why another of his activities is giving Art History and History of Architecture classes at the Académie Libanaise des Beaux arts (ALBA).

Exhibitions of his work include, among others: 'A Retroactive Monument for a Chimerical City', Ashkal Alwan (Lebanon); 'Four Cotton Underwear for Tony', TownHouse Gallery (Egypt); 'Beirut, the Impossible Portrait', at the Venice Biennial (Italy);

'My Neck is Thinner than a Hair', a lecture-performance with Walid Raad and Bilal Khbeiz conducted in different places around the world; and 'A Window to the World' and 'Sky Over Beirut' (Walking tours of the city), in Ashkal Alwan (Lebanon).

"An Endless Quick Nightmare" is the name of Chakar's project for MDE11, which consists of a series of text-images. Images of the past burst into our present in the evanescent form of text-images, says this architect and writer, adding that it is possible to rescue these images if they are taken advantage of before they disappear in time. Text-images are the manifestation of the ghosts of the past ("memory") in our world, "in the same way that the old Christian icons were the manifestation of the holy in the world of the profane."

II. Tony Chakar

Tony Chakar: To Speak Shadow

This essay, published in 2014 by the journal Afterall, introduces the different voices that inform Tony Chakar's artistic practice. His discussion of trauma, war, memory and art blends highly personal, anecdotal material with a register of academic detachment created through the use of a variety of cultural and philosophical references.

Empires collapse. Gang leaders

Are strutting about like statesmen.

The peoples

Can no longer be seen under all those armaments.

So the future lies in darkness

and the forces of right

Are weak. All this was plain to you

When you destroyed a torturable body.

— Bertolt Brecht, On the Suicide of the Refugee
W.B.

As survivors of the First War (1975—90), we know that we owe our survival to nothing but blind, dumb luck. We were not saved by divine interventions brought by our mothers' prayers; we were not spared because of the amount of

prudence and suspicion that we exercised during that day that lasted fifteen years; and our infinite calculations to remain safe did nothing more than help us pass the time. Sheer blind, dumb luck: that's what it was.

As witnesses of the First War, all we can do now is witness. And we witness, and we see the head of the beast rising again, but we are powerless to stop it. We tried to speak, but our words fell in front of us, at our feet, and never reached their target. We tried to speak only to discover that the language we were using had been destroyed during the wars, but we persisted, and we made 'things' — things that speak of that long day without naming it; things that speak of lack, of absences; things that proudly acknowledged and brandished the inadequacy of existing forms of art, as well as their own forms; things that were just things, but which were later recuperated as contemporary art. Walid Raad phrased it so simply in one of our conversations: 'When I was making my videos, I never even imagined that anybody was going to watch them.' But then, many people did.

Our 'things' ceased to be things and became passed, exhibited and scrutinised under the label of 'contemporary art'; many other things are now passed under that label as well, and galleries are opening, further transforming things into art objects, and the interest of the international art market (a funny expression indeed) has not waned, and money is flowing for whoever decides to embark on a project... But what does that all mean, here, now?

I look around me and I see a land utterly destroyed by past, present and future wars, a dreamscape of ruins all around, from Lebanon to Palestine to Syria to Iraq; I listen to people and discover, astonished, that concepts like laws, states, citizens and so on mean absolutely nothing; that they are aware of the fact that this land — their land and

mine — is destroyed, like one is aware of being in a nightmare, and so they internalise their parts and act them out. Such is the case of these young Lebanese men, or Iraqi men, or Palestinian men, who go to fight in Syria, or Iraq, or Lebanon, and die. They die in what they view as a huge field of ruins, only good for incessant battles, extending from the Mediterranean coast to the mountains of Zagros, and from the mountains of Taurus to the deserts of Arabia. They die, leaving behind them video testimonies that circulate on YouTube — some of them quite poignant — where they say goodbye to the people who remain, who don't go to this battlefield. The ones who remain are in deep sorrow, of course, like all people everywhere who lose their loved ones, but they hide it well behind a hollow heroic rhetoric, and the people around them help them by making a lot of noise: they speak loudly, make grand gestures, honk their car horns as they drive angrily, and then they dance. They dance as if filled with life and joy — but there is no life here in the land of sour milk and bitter honey; sometimes they even believe it, forgetting for an instant the ones that they themselves have lost along the way, while their danse macabre turns all genuine sorrow into sheer hollowness, only thinly veiled by rigid plastic-surgery expressions.

As for witnesses, few of us remain here. Others have stopped believing in this land; many have been lured by the glitter of a successful career and a better life; and some have tried hard but were forced to leave because their lives were in danger. Such is the case, for instance, of the Syrian writer Yassin al-Haj Saleh, who published his 'Goodbye to Syria' today, 12 October 2013, on his Facebook account. People leave and we remain; people leave and I remain, and the space in which I'm allowed to move becomes narrower and narrower, emptier and emptier.

In these circumstances and conditions, making art objects to be put in the international art market seems whimsical — irresponsible even. With all images still on the same level, prior to the distinction and elevation of some images as art while the rest remain in the domain of the mundane, what does it mean for an artist to show

the world the pictures of his or her body, when we've seen the body-internal (the Syrian rebel eating the heart of his dead enemy) or the body-lifeless (the images of dozens of dead children due to the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons)? Or, less dramatically and in reverse, what does it mean when the Museum of Modern Art in New York acquires the Occupy Wall Street print portfolio?

So, again: In these circumstances and conditions, what kind of witnessing is still possible? And what are the possible and adequate forms for such witnessing? At the end of the Lebanese wars, there was an ambiguous feeling that traditional artistic forms were unsuitable to tell the stories of the day that lasted fifteen years: they were too holistic, too abstract, too caught up in their own self-sufficiency; their narrative was too linear to account for the amount of destruction and the weight of the absences. On the other hand, there was a definite need to speak, to tell, to share. This activity was often achieved clumsily, as in the cinematic attempts of the early 1990s to reduce all the war to the destruction of Martyrs' Square in Beirut or the ruined historical city centre. Sometimes other strategies were deployed, and though they were far from clumsy, they still need to be critically viewed. One of them consisted in collecting the small individual stories of those who survived the First War in order to construct not a main narrative, not a History — because that was impossible — but a historical tableau encompassing theoretical fragments that account for objective facts as well as small personal details that bring to life subjectivities utterly destroyed during and by the war. Another strategy bears the stigma of the inevitable nostalgia for what passed, what ceased to exist, including everyday life during the wars

— because after the war the destruction of everything around us it just took on other forms and acquired other names, like 'reconstruction', or the 'building frenzy', or simply 'economic growth' and 'tourism'. When you wake up everyday to find yourself in a new city, it is only natural to

cling to the sweetness of your childhood: old forgotten pop songs from the 1980s, arcade games that were one's only pastime during the difficult teenage years, B-movies produced during the war and so on. In this strategy, these elements are meant to act like symbolic tokens that would, ideally, reconnect one with a lost — yet redeemable — past.

This past that weighs as heavily as stone.

Tread softly, for the soil of this earth

Is nothing but the crumbled dust

of these bodies.

- Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arr

I stand on the balcony, it is late evening; light is dimming, cars are passing by filled with strangers; people walk down below holding objects in their hands: candy boxes, flowers, grocery bags; in the apartments around me, people are busy living their daily lives, watching TV, going from room to room. And the past still weighs as heavily as stone.

How, then, to speak it? The problem with most witnessing is that sometimes, even without knowing, it presupposes a direct relationship with the past; it assumes that the past is transparent; that the present, which is destroying that very past every single second, has no bearing on it; that it is enough to speak it 'as it was' and everything will be whole again. But this will not happen: what has been broken can never be mended.

In mystical traditions, especially the Judaic one, time is of a different essence than the sequential, linear time that we take for granted. Every second is the narrow gate from which the Messiah could enter — the end of this world and the start of a new one. So, what if, instead of the past being past and the present being present, the past was

in the present? What if every second that passes contained the totality of the history of humanity and all its possible futures? What if every fragment, all that we see around us, contained the totality of the universe — 'You think of yourself as nothing but a small speckle, and yet the larger universe was folded into you', writes Ibn 'Arabi.

If the past is in the present, if the 'true picture of the past flits by, [if] the past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognised and is never seen again', then we, the ones who survived the First War for no particular reason, have an obligation towards that past, towards the ones who passed away, towards the ones on whose crumbled dust we tread with every step we take. And the act of witnessing is nothing less than the seizing upon of these images of the past that flit by, in order to redeem them, to stop them from disappearing forever. The act of witnessing is nothing less than forcing the present to recognise that this past, which is in the present, is one of its own concerns.

Speaks true, who speaks shadows

- Paul Celan

In Beirut, I walk — either to make sense of the city or as exercise; they say it's good for the back. But even then, the past-in-the-present can strike you at any moment. While walking through Rue de Damas, I saw a massive building being constructed, right behind the Greek Melkite Archdiocese; since it's still under construction, the plot is surrounded by a tall metal fence, on which the construction company hangs promotional posters of what the building will ultimately look like and how good it will be to live there. One of the posters shows in large perspective the building in its finished state. On the plot adjacent to the construction site,

there's an old house with visible traces from the battles that took place there during the Lebanese wars. For some reason the house has not been torn down or restored, and it looks abandoned. And so, we have a building from the present, under construction, a building from the future, in the form of a promotional poster, and a building ravaged by past wars; or maybe, the skeleton of the building under construction is the future of the building in the poster, now abandoned and ruined; or maybe, the war-torn building is the future of

both buildings next to it, and not their past — which is not a far-fetched delusion in the current state of political turmoil dominating Lebanon and the region. This whole urban image acts like a vanitas, or a memento mori; death is telling us: 'I am here, even here, in this fake plastic paradise you're trying to construct over the crumbled dust of these bodies.'

'Et in Arcadia ego', death says. I move on.

Up ahead and to the right is Badaro Street: a long street lined with commerce at the ground level and residential and mixed-use floors above. Last year the municipality decided to renovate the street, the pavements, the infrastructure, etc. And so Badaro Street was under excavation for a long period; it was difficult to walk through because of all the machines and the trucks and the gravel and the sand — but the most noticeable element was a deep scar running along the street's centre, showing the earth's entrails. Then came the time to replace the sewage pipes, so the sewers were left open and they ran like a roaring river through the whole trench, a river of brown water, the excrements and waste of all the inhabitants of the street coming together into one foul-smelling entity... Probably the only place where unity and social equality will be achieved. I kept walking towards where Badaro Street ends, at Tahouita roundabout, a place infamous during the wars because it contained one of the

checkpoints that separated East Beirut from West Beirut. At that point the river disappeared under the ground again, but I could still hear the sound of the water. I stopped and looked back: I had crossed the river Lethe, the river of Forgetfulness, and was now in Hades. I knew that my father was somewhere buried in a mass grave in this area, having been shot by a sniper. My mother had gone to get his body — 'It was raining rain and bombs that day, and I was alone', she told me years later, years after remaining absolutely silent about what had happened. She insisted on getting the body, despite being insulted and shot at by the Palestinian fighter at the roadblock 'because there was a cross on the coffin'. She couldn't go too far under the rain and the bombs, so she took him to the first church she saw, a Maronite church, to perform the last rites, and then they dumped the body along with others somewhere. In a mass grave. There, where I was standing, somewhere in Hades. 'He is now buried with the Maronites, but what could I have done?' She's lucky to have made it out from there alive. And now she is 83. She is a survivor and a witness, and also for her the past is in the present. When she speaks to me, I listen; but I have a feeling that she wants me to be more than just a listener. She wants me to end what she couldn't finish, but how am I to do that? Should I dive into the pit of the under-earth like Heracles and Orpheus? And even if I did, how will I be able to distinguish his bones from so many others? I could ask her for more details; I should ask her maybe, yes, I can I can I can I can't ask her to tell more. I can't, she is too fragile and besides, it probably won't matter, probably not.

It does not get easier up there in the mountains, in that village where my grandfather comes from. They say it started at 4 p.m., on Friday, 9 September 1983. Suddenly they were all gone my kin I still don't know how to speak that moment. I don't know. I remember he was so tall I remember she had red hair and freckles I remember I used to run in the garden with him and catch frogs I remember she spoke slowly and had a nice smile. I don't know what these bits of images mean, I don't know how to arrange them, how to give them sense. I go there sometimes, during the

summers; it's beautiful there and I'm never alone. The ones with me also think it's beautiful and the cedars are so close. They take lots of pictures because it's beautiful there and they tell me it's beautiful here and I smile and nod and these images from my memory fill my head but I don't know how to speak them. So I remain silent.

When this land will die from its dreams

We will stand together, for the first time together

And all that we will see shall amaze us.

People sometimes tell me that I should leave. That I should give up on this land that this weight is too hard to bear that this land will always be the same that nothing will be fixed that I have the right to fulfil myself and be happy. To be happy. Sometimes I listen to them, and I am seduced by what they say — but then at other moments I am convinced that everything in this city is tied to me, to my presence; and that, if I leave, everything will fall apart, and Beirut, the 6,000-year-old city, will be nothing but a distant memory. A silly thought, of course. Nothing will happen if I leave and people will carry on with their lives. And I will carry on with mine, working, taking walks, talking to whomever is left here from my friends, seeing things end everywhere around me.

I have to go on I can't go on I will go on.

Towards a Phenomenology of Civil War:
Hobbes Meets Benjamin in Beirut (extracts)

Lieven De Cauter, in International Journal
of Urban and Regional Research, vol. 35.

Based on interviews with Beirut intellectuals and architects, this essay endeavours to trace the contours for a phenomenology or anthropology of civil war. The effects of ever-latent civil war in Beirut are far reaching: the fragmentation of urban space and the disappearance of public space, the loss of memory and the fragmentation of time, even the reification of language. What we discover is a city, its inhabitants, its social behaviour, but also its art and literature, in the grip of post-traumatic stress syndrome. This landmark exhibition of more than 80 photographs and a video installation challenges stereotypes surrounding the people, landscapes, and cultures of Iran and the Arab world. She Who Tells a Story refutes the conventional idea that Arab and Iranian women are oppressed or powerless, illuminating the fact that women are creating some of the most significant photographic work in the region today.

The loss of language: civil war and reification

For novelist Elias Khoury, Beirut's crisis is one of modernity. According to him, this requires art able to respond to the crisis; in a crisis the need for works of art is accentuated. The present has to be written about, not contextualized in historical terms. The present is mute, it cannot be evoked

in yesterday's language. Indeed, repeatedly in our interviews we heard about changes in art and language during and after the civil war. It was poet Abbas Beydoun who first talked to us about literature and poetry. 'The war engendered the new literature. Before, there was a mythic, dream-like, idyllic side to art. During the war and after it, it withdrew to the concrete — the all too concrete; a tap that does not work, for instance'. He insisted that literature seemed obsessed by things, by the 'thingness' of things. He talked to us about concretism as a sort of mutism of art, a language without empathy, autistic and atomized.

While he was talking like this I realized, or imagined, that the literature was attesting to a sort of reification of things in the alert, traumatized consciousness of the human mind in moments of danger. What it very well evoked was this falling back of things into their condition of being things, or this fixation of the alert and traumatized consciousness which focuses upon things like a tap that is not working in order not to lose its head.

According to him, this reification also took a hold on time: 'The time of danger is a time of minutes and seconds'. Fear makes time coagulate. What might be called 'traumatized concretism' swallowed up all poetic language, all poetic landscape and even sensuality. The architectural theoretician Tony Chakar gave more or less the same diagnosis, but saw it in everyday things as well: 'Language was destroyed during the civil war. Now we are left with nothing but the debris of language; all communication among people is codified and every dialogue is an interrogation'. For him the loss of dialogue and the mutism of literature apparently form a continuum. 'When you meet someone you try to find out his father's name, to be able to identify him; the region he comes from, where he lives. There is no dialogue,

people never say what they think'. How is this to be taken?

One might say that all communication is profoundly politicized, that people are only putting labels on others, and that none can escape this labelling logic. Although 'classifying' others is a habit in all human societies, it only becomes obsessive once everyday life is profoundly politicized. Perhaps a politicized everyday life loses its everydayness. Then he uttered this unforgettable phrase: 'Words fall before they reach you'. With this metaphor, he was (like Abbas Beydoun) trying to catch the 'traumatized concretism', that total reification of language. He gave the example of a film where in one scene two girls were walking among ruins. One of them liked a man, but she realized that there was no language of love, so she used quotes from an Egyptian film. For Chakar this is a non-perceptual analogy permitting talk about war without talking about the war. How can one express the dreadful? One cannot. There is a breakdown of language, one does not recount the history except in the debris. Nor can one express the beautiful, or love... Each catastrophe destroys language a little more. It has to be talked about without talking about it. According to Chakar there are three sorts of space-time: the idyllic space, that of one's father's village, for instance; the present, which is the space-time of catastrophe; and the projected future, which is a space without fear. 'In the alert awareness of traumatism, one makes plans but is not convinced of them, they become provisional, fictions. It would be necessary to recall everything and forget everything at the same time'. In Elias Khoury's (1992) novel *Un Parfum de Paradis*, one of the main characters, a respectable old gentleman who has lost his son in the civil war, becomes rather peculiar and, having collected the posters of his martyred son, begins wiping out all the posters and painting the walls along the streets white — a clear allegory of this loss of memory. He himself is found killed one day, and the novel buzzes with 'concretist' conversations on banal things. We feel it important to stress the fact that there is a certain dialectic here: it is in fact this reification, this 'concretized traumatism', that gave rise to Beirut's postwar modernism: a delayed modernism (since we are talking about

the 1975–90 war) yet a very authentic one, since this style of the nouveau roman, of Beckett, of this absurd nihilism of a crumbling, fragmented, meaningless language, lends itself very well to rendering this ineffable, dulling experience of civil war. Concretism and the stripped-down style has always been the sign of modernity, if not indeed its very DNA. Thus, there is no modernity without reification. And in order to turn the dialectical wheel, the extreme reification of language lends itself very well to conveying the 'traumatized concretism' of the critical situation of danger that civil war is. One might say that Beirut, art in Beirut, has experienced the shock of modernism as a modernism of shock.

The fight with the city

One young architect told us that Beirut torments him, that after his return from America he had to take tranquilizers; according to him he felt the intensity, the tension of this city in his body. Tony Chakar also talked of this problematic corporeality, of this hand-to-hand fight with the city. 'All behaviour changes: you start to ration water, even if it is not necessary. And the war behaviour comes back whenever there is a crisis, in 2006 for instance. Even in normal times, white Mercedes frighten you because they were the ones most often used to commit the murders. Even parking lots are felt to be dangerous spaces'. According to him the very experience of space has become deranged: at the red light one wants to go, and at the green one no longer does. As if the body itself is paralysed by the fragmentation of time and space. We asked him why people were so kind, as at Zoqaq el Blat where everybody talked to us, introduced us to their colleagues, etc. Chakar answered that such experiences were evidence of a sort of Janus head: violence on one side, gentleness on the other. In Beirut politeness is often a disguise for threat; for instance, Hezbollah is very polite. But otherwise politeness has disappeared, especially in the movements of bodies in space: 'In the public space people

take up the maximum space; they bump into each other without seeing, without apologies. People see only themselves. Opening the door for someone is something that one no longer does'. This alienation of physical bodily space reflects a gap between people, an existential mistrust. In a style somewhere between irony and caustic sarcasm, Rasha Salti said 'We act as if we were telling ourselves, "the civil war is over, we are not going to kill each other. There were victims . . . but the killers were extra-terrestrial"'. And yet, as Tony Chakar put it, when you shake someone's hand, you never know if it might have been the one that killed your father, your brother, your friend. The struggle with the city, the experience of modernity since Baudelaire, as an experience of shock (to use Benjamin's term: Schockerlebnis), manifests itself in Beirut as a moral or even ethical and political shock: the hurly-burly, the city as a mix-up of victims and killers (not just victims of the past and ex-killers, but undoubtedly also potential victims and potential killers).

How to make the link between the physical body and what English speakers have since Hobbes called 'the body politic' — a term that may help here? This metaphor from Hobbes, which has since become a commonplace concept in the English-speaking world, might be applied to Beirut or Lebanon, but in the Lebanese case it is a dismembered body politic. What our interlocutors revealed to us amounts to a sort of anatomy of this dismemberment. This dismemberment of the city as body politic has repercussions on the physical bodies of the inhabitants. In the absence of society, state and legality, a lawlessness, a generalized anomie, prevails; everyone is exposed in their corporeality in a literal sense. If the citizen is not clad in his/her citizenship and in rights, in personal freedoms, he/she becomes 'naked life',¹⁰ vogelfrei (outlawed), banished, deprived of protection by legality and the state. This is the state of nature: the implosion of the polis exposes bare life and atomizes individuals. In anomie and profound alienation from others, the social itself risks becoming artificial. Rasha Salti said towards the end of our last meeting, as a sort of conclusion: 'We came into a world undone'. Then she added: 'I was born into a sad world, I had no

time to lose my illusions'. A childhood without illusions — another feature of the traumatism, the collective and individual pathology of civil war. Beirut, a city without illusions? Or a city of illusions for a disillusioned population?

A phantom city

Beirut is, according to novelist Elias Khoury (2001), a broken mirror; its image as a city of intellectual refuge and cultural mixing, pioneer of freedoms in the Orient, and artistic and commercial centre, was destroyed by the civil war and its sequels. All the same, Beirut was cited among the '44 places to visit in 2009' by The New York Times. It was even named among the ten liveliest cities in the world by Lonely Planet in 2009. How is this paradox to be understood? The city 'dances' like few others, but it is a dance on the edge of a crater: the volcano of civil war may erupt at any moment. One might call it a danse macabre. Tony Chakar cited a scene from a film (the title of which he could not remember): after a disaster, people find a deserted village; the inhabitants are in the forest, dancing like lunatics with the dead. He reminds us there were 200,000 deaths during the civil war. For him, the nights of letting one's hair down at Gemmayzeh or elsewhere are moments of mad exhilaration, an escape from sadness.

III. Workbook

1- Public Space and Monuments

Tony Chakar's work sought to create a dialogue with the Abdel Nasser statue at the Corniche. His tours in Beirut made him famous, as he was telling the visible and invisible story of the town. Monuments and memorials have long been used as sites of inquiry for memory studies. This section proposes ideas to re-examine famous monuments, squares and other sites of collective memory and reflect on the knowledge of the city, as well as sites of their own personal experiences.

A. What is a monument?

For the French theorist and philosopher Michel Foucault 'history is what transforms documents into monuments'. A monument is a part of public space that commemorates events and persons. It recalls something. A monument (from the Latin monere = to remind, admonish) is a mark with a meaning that lends the mark a definitive finality: 'it remembers something definite in space and time'.

According to the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl, there are three kinds of monuments:

- Intentional monuments – Intentional commemorative value aims to preserve a moment in the consciousness of later generations
- Unintentional monuments (historical monuments) – The historical value of a monument arises from each particular stage it represents in the development of human activity in a certain field.
- Age-value monuments – Age-value in a monument betrays itself at once in the monument's dated appearance. Age-value makes explicit a sense of the life cycle of the artefact, and of culture as a whole.



INTENTIONAL MONUMENTS

UNINTENTIONAL MONUMENTS



Christoph Büchel, Dump, 2008

I. Based on that, the group could choose different monuments and define each's role. In reference to the scale and the effect intended by the artist and its history, do they agree with these definitions?

II. Make everyone think about a route that they take very often in Beirut, for example the road from their house to school.

Ask them to think about a place on this route of which they have strong memories; these could be good or bad, happy or shameful.

What if they imagine these spaces as sites of their own personal history and think about what kind of monuments they would put there.

III. Other questions to ask about monuments are The Relationship between Present Day Values and the Cult of Monuments. There are two fundamentally different responses to this question today also according to Riegl:

1- Use-Value – The need to maintain buildings in use is as compelling a demand as is the counterclaim of respect for age-value wherein the monument would be abandoned to its natural fate: the latter could only be entertained if equivalent works came to replace all monuments retired from use.

2- Art-Value – modern art-value shares with that of earlier periods the notion that every work of art needs to be a discrete entity which reveals no decay of shape or color.



"I Am A Monument" Drawing by Robert Venturi

2.a- Newness-value – Generally only new and whole things tend to be considered beautiful, and faded are thought to be ugly. Humans innately value youth over age. Newness-value has always been identified with art in the eyes of the masses, while relative art value can only be appreciated by the aesthetically educated modern person.

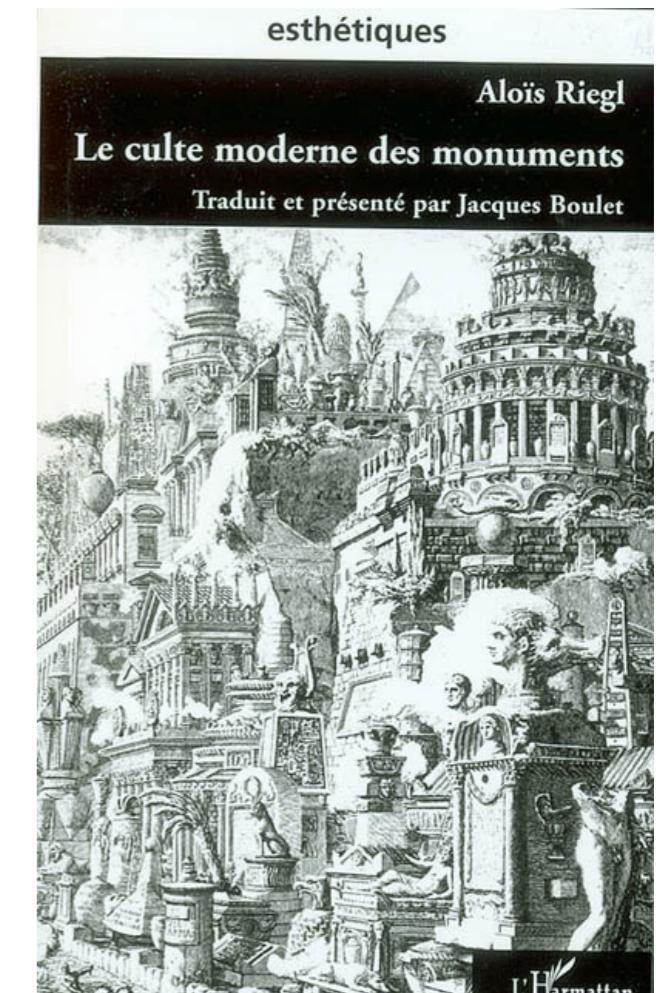
2.b- Relative art-value – Relative art-value offers the possibility of appreciating works of former generations as evidence not only of man's creative struggle with nature, but also of his peculiar perception of shape and colour. There is no ideal, absolute notion of artistic value independent of the relationship to the current cultural conditions. Relative art-value is a result of the *Kunstwollen*, roughly translated to "will to art".

2.b.1- Positive relative art-value appreciation will require 'the preservation of the monument in its present state, and sometimes even 'restauratio in integrum'

2.b.2- Negative relative art-value appreciation leads to demolition.

Discuss with the students their opinion about old monuments and if it has more value? Would they add another definition or do they have another point of view? Ask them to confront and contradict these responses with examples.

Create a debate between two students (or two groups). The first defending Riegl's ideas and the other arguing against them. Arguments should be based on examples. Do they think monuments are eternal? And what if they are destroyed? Give them the example about Palmyra's city and its history.



Le culte moderne des monuments
Aloïs Riegl

B. A reflection on modern monuments

I. A lot of artists were criticized for their artworks, some were utterly rejected and/or refused.

Give some examples to the students and discuss with them if they are affected by these critics? Even if they think the artist and his artwork are good.

Ask separately three students to do a research about the steel sculpture Clara-Clara by Richard Serra, the Monument to Balzac by Auguste Rodin and the Pont Neuf by Christo and Jeanne-Claude.

Ask these students to tell the story of these monuments for three random classmates in private and without showing them any picture. Then ask these random students to tell the story of these monuments in front of the class. Later, ask them to describe the monument and to try do draw it or modeling it.



Auguste Rodin
"the Monument to Balzac"
1892-1897



Christo and Jeanne-Claude
The Pont Neuf Wrapped
1975-1985



Richard Serra
"Clara-Clara" in the Tuileries
Gardens, 2008

II. Read this paragraph.

'Anti-monuments' originally refer to American experiences like the Smithson's earthworks, and Alan Sonfist and Michael Heizer's, works, which all referred to space as well as to time concepts, including meditations on monuments. Robert Smithson wrote:

'Instead of causing us to remember the past like the old monuments, the new monuments seem to cause us to forget the future. Instead of being made of natural materials, such as marble, granite, plastic, chrome, and electric light. They are not built for the ages, but rather against the ages. They are involved in a systematic reduction of time down to fractions of seconds, rather than in representing the long spaces of centuries. Both past and future are placed into an objective present. This kind of time has little or no space; it is stationary and without movement, it is going nowhere, it is anti-Newtonian, as well as being instant, and is against the wheels of the time-clock.'

III. Comment on this paragraph.

'A lot of Jeff Koons' work pieces are of a big scale; he uses size to defamiliarise everyday objects. In the series Banality, he takes the kind of ornaments you might find in a gift shop and enlarges them out of all proportion. His two most famous sculptures are Michael Jackson and Bubbles, a grotesquely sentimental trinket that Koons, along with the other items in the series, finds "very beautiful, very seductive" and adds "I find beauty in the acceptance of cultural history. I think what's interesting is to see them in museums with other historical artefacts. I had an exhibition in Frankfurt, Germany, in which Michael Jackson was with a sarcophagus from Egypt. It's fantastic. It's like an Egyptian pharaoh. It's a historical context.'

- Emma Brockes, The Guardian, 2015



Jeff Koons
Puppy, 1992



Jeff Koons
Michael Jackson and Bubbles, 1988

Using a similar approach, Claus Oldenburg made giant sculptures of everyday objects back in the 1960's; some you might see in an amusement park, others in a toy promotional event or even a TV show.

Discuss about difference/or similarity (if any) between these artists' works while using these terms: realism, restriction, resemblance, irony, humor, criticism, empathy, and curiosity.



Claus Oldenburg
Cupid's Span, 2002

C. A reflection on the city, Beirut

Let the students choose one of the squares or monuments of Beirut and imagine the place differently. What would they have there instead? How would they change it? What if they mix these places around in Beirut? How would this affect the way they relate to or understand the city and its history?

Depending from where they are standing and looking at the monument, they will describe its effect. How might the impact of this work change if it were small enough to rest on a table? Do they think that the main purpose is well transmitted? Is there any admiration, affection or fear? If they were given the same mission as the artist, how would they choose to tell the story?



The dialogue that is us, Tony Chakar

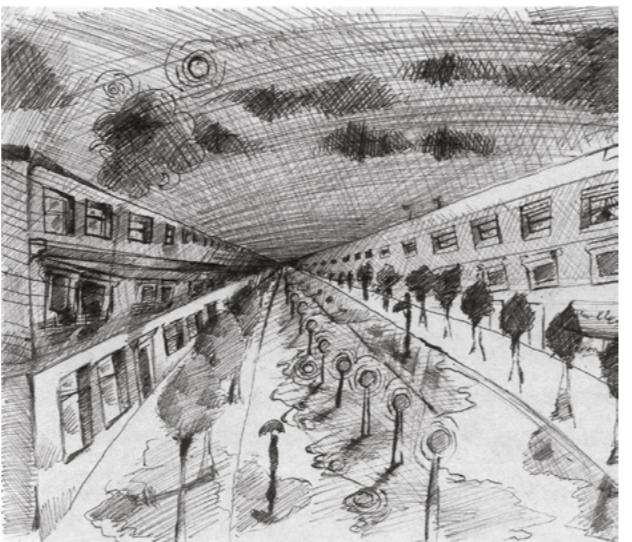
The dialogue that is us, Tony Chakar

* * *

"Erected above the heavens" – This is how one of his contemporaries described the dome that Brunelleschi would construct over the Florence cathedral in the 15th century. The dome remains one of the largest stone domes in the world, if not the largest. It was also the first to be constructed in Europe after the loss of the construction skills that the Romans once possessed during the Middle Ages.

What is of more importance is that the dome is made of an inner and an outer dome, where, between them, a spiral staircase rises allowing the visitor to reach the top. Expressly: The dome is nothing less than a huge machine that takes the visitor, spins him into the darkness (a volume of space equivalent to almost 25 modern storeys), then throws him into a naked space – where he can view the alleys from which he came and the position of his city in the Tuscan space. He sees from above, exactly as God sees; and, he is above the heavens, exactly as God is.

Architecture, when it speaks the truth of the world.



2- About Maps

Although cartography has a history dating back millennia, maps as we come to know of them today are a relatively recent invention of the mid-19th and early 20th century. These maps emerged in earnest during the 'Age of Exploration', as Europeans expanded their empires in Africa and Asia. Indeed, Benedict Anderson argued in his acclaimed work *Imagined Communities*, that the map was used as an administrative and political tool in nation building processes. The map set and delineated the boundaries of colonial rule:

'[The map] had become a real instrument to concretize projections on the earth's surface. A map was now necessary for the new administrative mechanism and for the troops to back up their claims...the discourse of mapping was the Paradigm which both administrative and military operations worked within and served.' It is the 'modern' map's particular and violent history, legitimized through claims of Western scientific rationalism, that has made it the source of critique and examination as it is inherently linked to structures of power.

I. Beirut, Imagining The City

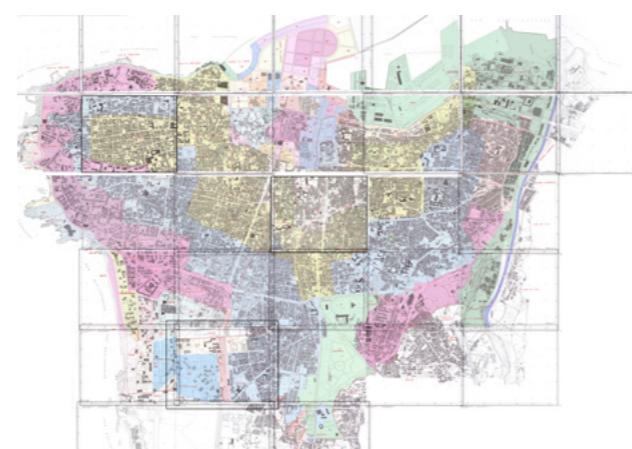
These squares form a grid of a map of Beirut. Make a group of student and ask them to rearrange, remove, or replace the squares of the map. What if they can rotate, flip, and delete some squares depending on how they use the streets while walking and taking roads from a destination to another. What if a map could be personal and individual within a changing city?



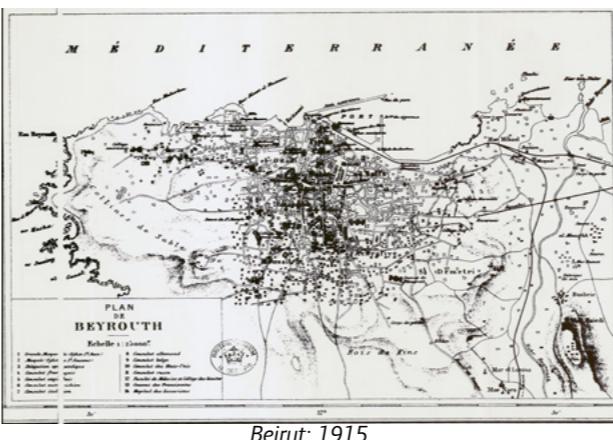
Map of Beirut



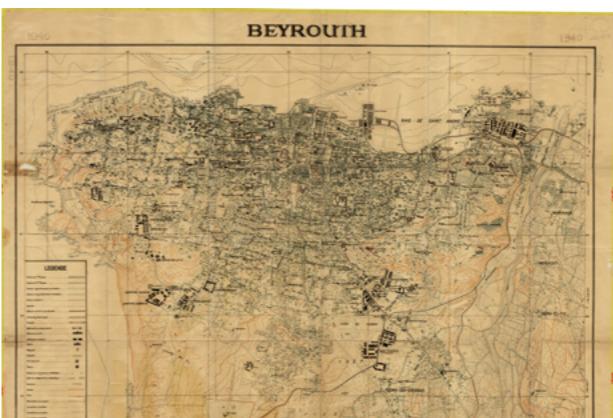
Map of Beirut modified



Map of Beirut modified



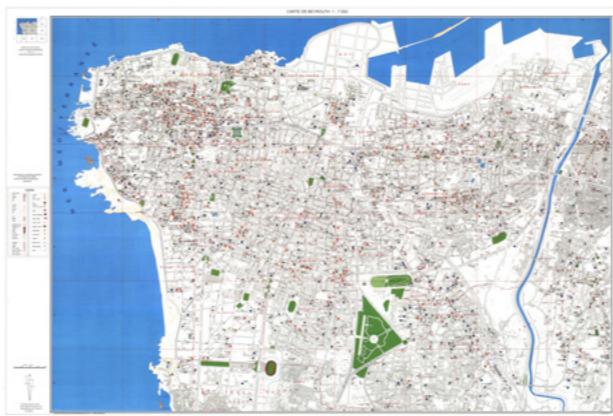
Beirut: 1915



Beirut: 1915



Beirut: 1940



Beirut: 1959

II. Beirut, Creating A Story

Five maps of Beirut, drafted in the mid- 19th century, were used to help explain the initial Bronze Age choice for urban settlement, then to discover the Hellenistic and Roman grid street-pattern, which survived in the disposition of the modern souks. The maps were also used to propose possible sites for the hippodrome of the city, and to locate the medieval defenses of Beirut.

This exercise examines how maps of Beirut can be used in the fields of urban historical geography, historical topography and archaeology of the city. Maps are, by definition, conventional renderings of phenomena observed at a precise geographical point, at a given time in History. Maps of Beirut and its environs illustrate, albeit schematically, the urban physiognomy at the date of the survey and, if correctly interpreted, will inform researchers on the local topography of the city, its economic and spatial organization as well as documenting or even locating now-disappeared sites of historical or archaeological interest.

4 maps of Beirut from 1915, 1940, 1959 and 2001.

What changes can they see? From the little they know about the city, let them tell a story of its evolution during the last 100 years. They can ask their grandparents or other members of their family to describe the old city and how it used to look like based on the map.

3- Photography

In this show, Tony Chakar wanted to take pictures of empty cityscapes, but because of computer facial recognition, dozens of strangers made into his photos.

Think of how many times you imagine things and at the delivery it was changed and it distort our reading. How can you visualize materially your vision and develop it without using any software.



I. This is a picture taken by Louis Daguerre in 1838:

1) Show the picture on a big scale to the students so they can see all the details in it. Ask them if they know what the picture is showing first? what is different and special about it? why is it a well known photography?

Feel free to explain to them the story of this picture of Louis Daguerre and the Daguerrotype.

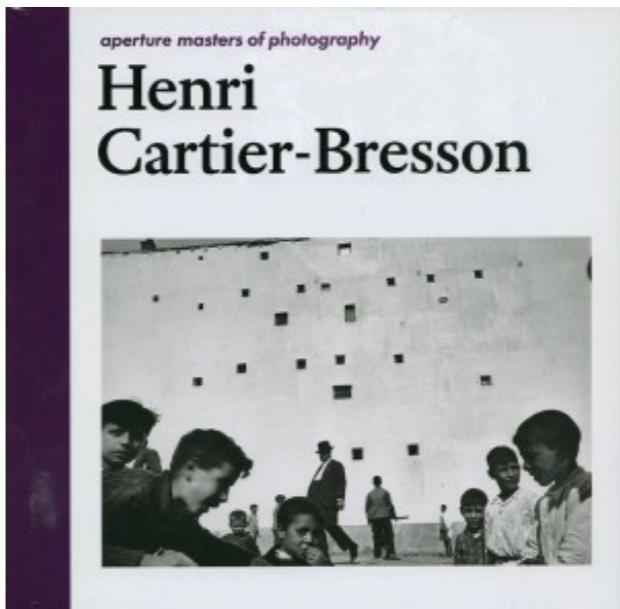
2) 'Louis Daguerre was a French artist and photographer (1787-1851) praised as one of the fathers of modern photography and the inventor of the daguerreotype. The picture above Boulevard du Temple shows the busy Boulevard du Temple and was taken in 1838 in Paris at 8 in the morning. However, there are only two visible people on the street: the shoeshine boy and his customer. The long exposure time of the daguerreotype made moving objects invisible and makes the street appear empty. As the shoeshine boy and his customer remained still for the period of time, they are the only people visible on the picture.'

3) The shoeshine boy's workplace is the street and he is always on the street.

They have to think about the people that they always see in public places like the street – who are they? they will make a list of public places and the people they encounter there on a daily basis. They can also take pictures of these places with the people in them.

4) What about semi-public places like cafés, restaurants and bars? Add them to their list.

5) Think about private spaces like their house. What pictures come to their imagination when they think about their parent's house? Write down their thoughts. Test their curiosity, and ask them to go into their parents' childhood album and think about all the forgotten photos they barely or never look at.



Vito Acconci, Step Piece, 1971; gelatin silver prints; 4 5/8 x 6 1/8 in. (11.75 x 15.56 cm); Gift of Lisa and John Pritzker; © Vito Acconci

II. Just as any literature should take into account its typos, photography needs to address its mistakes' — Denis Roche

This exercise is based on the large 'game-competition' called Fautographique organized throughout France in 1991 with the aim of collecting from amateur photographers the best of their failed pictures, and based on 'Photography by Default' by Clément Chéroux, translated by Garnet C. Butchart. Do the same exercise and ask your students to collect the most failed photo from their collections or from their family albums.

It would be necessary to question the criteria used to give importance to ratage which, varying according to the epochs and the points of view, constitute an outstanding revelator of what is expected of the photograph and of its «fluctuating relation to the mimesis».

See how far they can get using their phone's camera every day and how they evaluate the various ways to take a photo.

It would be also interesting to refer to Thomas Lelù's The Manual of the Missed Photo, where the author pledges that it is in its shadows; its failures, its accidents and its lapses, that photography indulges itself most and analyzes itself best, betting on photographic error as a cognitive tool.

IV. Selected Readings

Selections from 'Berlin Childhood around 1900' (extracts)

Walter Benjamin (Bullock, P. B. and Jennings, M. W. trans.)

Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) was a German jewish scholar, philosopher, cultural critic and essayist. His writings were as varied as they were influential, ranging from seminal commentaries on Baudelaire and Kafka, to his acclaimed Theses on the Philosophy of History. In this particular essay, from which we have extracted three different passages, Benjamin deals with his memories as a child growing up in Berlin, specifically focussing on how places and things, rather than events, form the most vivid recollections of his past.

Loggias

For a long time, life deals with the still-tender memory of childhood like a mother who lays her newborn on her breast without waking it. Nothing has fortified my own memory so profoundly as gazing into courtyards, one of whose dark loggias, shaded by blinds in the summer, was for me the cradle in which the city laid its new citizen. The caryatids that supported the loggia on the floor above ours may have slipped away from their post for a moment to sing a lullaby beside that cradle — a song containing little of what later awaited me, but nonetheless sounding the theme through which the air of the court yards has forever remaine intoxicating to me. I believe that a whiff of this air was still present in the vineyards of Capri where I held my beloved in my arms; and it is precisely this air that sustains the images and allegories which preside over my thinking, just as the caryatids, from the heights of their loggias,

preside over the court yards of Berlin's West End.

The rhythm of the metropolitan railway and of carpet beating rocked me to sleep. It was the mold in which my dreams took shape -first the unformed ones, traversed perhaps by the sound of running water or the smell of milk, then the long-spun ones: travel dreams and dreams of rain. Here, spring called up the first shoots of green before the gray façade of a house in back; and when, later in the year, a dusty canopy of leaves brushed up against the wall of the house a thousand times a day, the rustling of the branches initiated me into a knowledge to which I was not yet equal. For everything in the court yard became a sign or hint to me. Many were the messages embedded in the skirmishing of the green roller blinds drawn up high, and many the ominous dispatches that I prudently left unopened in the rattling of the roll up shutters that came thundering down at dusk. What occupied me most of all in the courtyard was the spot where the tree stood. This spot was set off by paving stones into which a large iron ring was sunk. Metal bars were mounted on it, in such away as to fence in the bare earth. Not for nothing, it seemed to me, was it thus enclosed; from time to time. I would brood over what went on within the black pit from which the trunk came. Later, I extended these speculations to hackney-carriage stands. There, the trees were similarly rooted, and similarly fenced in. Coachmen were accustomed to hanging their capes on the railing while they watered their horses, first clearing away the last remnants of hay and oats in the trough by drawing water from the pump that rose up out of the pavement. To me, these waiting-stations, whose peace was seldom disturbed by the coming and going of carriages, were distant provinces of my backyard.

Clotheslines ran from one wall of the loggia to another; the palm tree looked homeless-all the more

so as it had long been understood that not the dark soil but the adjacent drawing room was its proper abode. So decreed the law of the place, around which the dreams of its inhabitants had once played. Before this place fell prey to oblivion, art had occasionally undertaken to transfigure it. Now a hanging lamp, now a bronze, now a china vase would steal into its confines. And although these antiquities rarely did the place much honor, they suited its own antique character. The Pompeian red that ran in a wide band along its wall was the appointed background of the hours that piled up in such seclusion. Time grew old in those shadowy little rooms which looked out on the courtyards. And that was why the morning, whenever I encountered it on our loggia, had already been morning for so long that it seemed more itself there than at any other spot. Never did I have the chance to wait for morning on the loggia; every time, it was already waiting for me. It had long since arrived – was effectively out of fashion – when I finally came upon it.

Later, from the perspective of the railroad embankment, I rediscovered the courtyards. When, on sultry afternoons, I gazed down on them from my compartment, the summer appeared to have parted from the landscape and locked itself into those yards. And the red geraniums that were peeping from their boxes accorded less well with summer than the red feather mattresses that were hung over the windowsills each morning to air. Iron garden chairs, made in imitation of winding branches or of wickerwork, comprised the seating arrangements of the loggia. We drew them close together when, at dusk, our reading circle would gather there. Gaslight shone down, from a red- and green-flamed calyx, on the pages of the paperback classic. Romeo's last sigh flitted through our back yard in search of the echo that Juliet's vault held ready for it.

In the years since I was a child, the loggias have changed less than other places. This is not the only reason they stay with me. It is much

more on account of the solace that lies in their uninhabitability for one who himself no longer has a proper abode. They mark the outer limit of the Berliner's lodging. Berlin – the city god itself – begins in them. The god remains such a presence there that nothing transitory can hold its ground beside him. In his safekeeping, space and time come into their own and find each other. Both of them lie at his feet here. The child who was once their confederate, however, dwells in his loggia, encompassed by this group, as in a mausoleum long intended just for him.

Tiergarten

Not to find one's way around a city does not mean much. But to lose one's way in a city, as one loses one's way in a forest, requires some schooling. Street names must speak to the urban wanderer like the snapping of dry twigs, and little streets in the heart of the city must reflect the times of day, for him, as clearly as a mountain valley. This art I acquired rather late in life; it fulfilled a dream, of which the first traces were labyrinths on the blotting papers in my school notebooks.

No, not the first, for there was one earlier that has outlasted the others. The way into this labyrinth, which was not without its Ariadne, led over the Bendler Bridge, whose gentle arch became my first hillside." Not far from its foot lay the goal: Friedrich Wilhelm and Queen Luise. On their round pedestals they towered up from the flowerbeds, as though transfixed by the magic curves that a stream was describing in the sand before them. But it was not so much the rulers as their pedestals to which I turned, since what took place upon these stone foundations, though unclear in context, was nearer in space. That there was some thing special about this maze I could always deduce from the broad and banal esplanade, which gave no hint of the fact that here, just a few steps from the corso of cabs and carriages, sleeps the strangest part of the park.

I got a sign of this quite early on. Here, in fact, or not far away, must have lain the couch of that Ariadne in whose proximity I first experienced what only later I had a word for: love. Unfortunately, the "Fraulein" intervenes at its earliest budding to overspread her icy shadow. And so this park, which, unlike every other, seemed open to children, was for me, as a rule, distorted by difficulties and impracticalities. How rarely I distinguished the fish in its pond. How much was promised by the name "Court Hunters' Lane," and how little it held. How often I searched in vain among the hushes, which somewhere hid a kiosk built in the style of my toy blocks, with turrets colored red, white, and blue. How hopelessly, each spring, I lost my heart to Prince Louis Ferdinand, at whose feet the earliest crocuses and daffodils bloomed.¹⁴ A watercourse, which separated me from them, made them as untoouchable as though they were covered by a bell jar. Thus, coldly, the princely had to rest upon the beautiful; and I understood why Luise von Landau, who belonged to my circle of schoolfriends until she died, had to dwell on the Lutzowufer, opposite the little wilderness which nourished its flowers with the waters of the canal.

Later, I discovered other corners, and I heard of still more. But no girl, no experience, no book could tell me anything new about these things. And so, thirty years later, when an expert guide, a Berlin peasant,¹⁶ joined forces with me to return to the city after an extended, shared absence from its borders, his trail cut furrows through this garden, in which he sowed the seeds of silence. He led the way along these paths, and each, for him, became precipitous. They led downward, if not to the Mothers of all being," then certainly to those of this garden. In the asphalt over which he passed, his steps awakened an echo. The gas lamp, shining across our strip of pavement, cast an ambiguous light on this ground. The short flights of steps, the pillared porticoes, the friezes and architraves of the Tiergarten villas for the first time, we took them at their word. But above all, there were the stairwells, which, with their stained-glass windows, were the same as in the old days, though much had changed on the inside, where people lived. I still know the verses that filled the intervals between my heart

beats when, after school, I paused while climbing the stairs. They glimmered toward me from the colored pane where a woman, floating ethereally like the Sistine Madonna, a crown in her hands, stepped forth from the niche. Slipping my thumbs beneath the shoulder straps of my satchel, I would study the lines: "Work is the burgher's ornament, / Blessedness the reward of toil."¹⁸ The house door below swung shut with a sigh, like a ghost sinking back into the grave. Outside it was raining, perhaps. One of the stained-glass windows was opened, and I went on climbing the stairs in time with the patter of raindrops.

Among the caryatids and atlantes, the putti and pomonas, which in those days looked on me, I stood closest to those dust-shrouded specimens of the race of thresh old dwellers those who guard the entrance to life, or to a house. For they are versed in waiting. Hence, it was all the same to them whether they waited for a stranger, for the return of the ancient gods, or for the child that, thirty years ago, slipped past them with his schoolboy's satchel. Under their tutelage, the Old West district became the West of antiquity source of the west winds that aid the mariners who sail their craft, freighted with the apples of the Hesperides, slowly up the Landwehr Canal, to dock by the Hercules Bridge.¹⁹ And once again, as in my child hood, the Hydra and the Nemean Lion had their place in the wilderness that surrounds the Great Star.²⁰

Winter Morning

The fairy in whose presence we are granted a wish is there for each of us. But few of us know how to remember the wish we have made; and so, few of us recognize its fulfillment later in our lives. I know the wish of mine that was fulfilled, and I will not say that it was any more clever than the wishes children make in fairy tales. It took shape in me with the approach of the lamp, which, early on a winter morning, at half past six, would cast the shadow of my nursemaid on the covers of my bed.

In the stove a fire was lighted. Soon the flame – as though shut up in a drawer that was much too small, where it barely had room to move because of the coal – was peeping out at me. Smaller even than I was, it nevertheless was something mighty that began to establish itself there, at my very elbow – something to which the maid had to stoop down even lower than to me. When it was ready, she would put an apple in the little oven to bake. Before long, the grating of the burner door was outlined in a red flickering on the floor. And it seemed, to my weariness, that this image was enough for one day. It was always so at this hour; only the voice of my nursemaid disturbed the solemnity with which the winter morning used to give me into the keeping of the things in my room. The shutters were not yet open as I slid aside the bolt of the oven door for the first time, to examine the apple cooking inside. Sometimes, its aroma would scarcely have changed. And then I would wait patiently until I thought I could detect the fine bubbly fragrance that came from a deeper and more secretive cell of the winter's day than even the fragrance of the fir tree on Christmas eve. There lay the apple, the dark, warm fruit that – familiar and yet transformed, like a good friend back from a journey through the dark land of the oven's heat, from which it had extracted the aromas of all the things the day held in store for me. So it was not surprising that, whenever I warmed my hands on its shining cheeks, I would always hesitate to bite in. I sensed that the fugitive knowledge conveyed in its smell could all too easily escape me on the way to my tongue. That knowledge which sometimes was so heartening that it stayed to comfort me on my trek to school. Of course, no sooner than I had arrived than, at the touch of my bench, all the weariness that at first seemed dispelled returned with a vengeance. And with it this wish: to be able to sleep my fill. I must have made that wish a thousand times, and later it actually came true. But it was a long time before I recognized its fulfillment in the fact that all my cherished hopes for a position and proper livelihood had been in vain.

How Perspective Could Be Symbolic Form (extracts)

Allister Neher in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (Autumn, 2005)

This text serves as a commentary and introduction to Erwin Panofsky's (1892-1968) seminal work *Perspective as Symbolic Form*. The German art historian's argument in this particular book revolves around the idea that forms of representing three-dimensional space, such as Renaissance perspective, are, to an extent, artificial, given that they emerge out of and are suited to, geographically and historically specific ways of understanding the world.

As Tony Chakar puts it: The perspective way of seeing the world was truly revolutionary when it was established in the Renaissance. Its beauty came from its simplicity and from the absolute rationality of its process. But the end result was a representation of the world as a world of things, things that can be quantified, and "touched", and owned.

Erwin Panofsky's *Perspective as Symbolic Form* remains one of the most important works on the history and nature of pictorial space. As Hubert Damisch put it in the first line of *The Origin of Perspective*:

'Anyone investigating perspective today, in its double capacities as object of knowledge and object of reflection, must negotiate territory that remains under the jurisdiction of a text that has attained classic status, one that still constitutes, more than a half a century after its appearance, the inescapable horizon line and reference point

for all inquiry concerning this object of study and all related matters, to say nothing of its theoretical and philosophical implications.'

[...]

Panofsky's central contention, in its most general statement, is that the system of linear perspective that was developed during the Italian Renaissance, and that dominated Western art until the late nineteenth century, is not the only and natural way of representing three-dimensional space pictorially, but an artifice suited to a certain Western manner of apprehending the world. Panofsky also maintains that the forms of spatial organization inherent in works of art, whether they are of the Renaissance or another era, are direct correlates of the cosmologies and modes of perception of the ages to which they belong. The two eras that Panofsky singles out for special consideration in support of these claims are antiquity and the Renaissance. He argues that we can discern in the art of the times two very different and fundamentally opposed methods of perspective construction that are derived from distinct reckonings of visual experience, from distinct emphases on the elements of visual experience.

Panofsky goes on to argue that an awareness of the curvatures in vision, and an attempt to incorporate them in representation, can be discerned in certain telling efforts at two-dimensional depiction that have survived antiquity. This is supported, we are told, by an examination of the relevant philosophical and theoretical texts. From Euclid's *Optics*, for instance, we discover not only that the ancients measured relative size according to visual angles, but also that they lacked the Renaissance conception of an infinite, homogeneous space, and, hence, that they could not have conceived of a pictorial surface as a plane intersecting a visual cone. The implied conclusion is that different

peoples have apprehended the world around them in differing terms, which we see in the forms of spatial representation developed by them, and in what we could loosely call their scientific and cosmological texts; thus, as Panofsky says: "This is why it is essential to ask of artistic periods and regions not only whether they have perspective, but also which perspective they have."

[...]

There is a passage [in *Perspective as Symbolic Form*] that is of singular importance for understanding [Panofsky's] hypothesis, but to my knowledge it has been overlooked by commentators:

'For, just as for Aristotle there is no "quantum continuum" in which the quiddity of individual things would be dissolved, so there is for him also no *energeiai apeiron* (actual infinite) which would extend beyond the *Dasein* of individual objects (for, in modern terms, even the sphere of fixed stars would be an "individual object"). And precisely here it becomes quite clear that "aesthetic space" and "theoretical space" recast perceptual space in the guise of one and the same sensation: in one case that sensation is visually symbolized, in the other it appears in logical form.'

For anyone reading through Panofsky's text, looking for material that indicates that he knew what was involved in calling perspective a symbolic form, this last sentence is an important one. What is given in the perception of space can be symbolized and comprehended as aesthetic space or theoretical space in the unified world-view of antiquity. But it is what is given in perceptual space that will help us understand how both antique angle perspective and linear perspective can be said to capture what we perceive. Let us consider another important, though misunderstood, passage.

'[Linear perspective] takes no account of the enormous difference between the psychologically conditioned "visual image" through which the visible world is brought to our consciousness, and the mechanically conditioned "retinal image" which paints itself upon our physical eye....

Finally, perspectival construction ignores the crucial circumstance that this retinal image - entirely apart from its subsequent psychological "interpretation," and even apart from the fact that the eyes move - is a projection not on a flat but on a concave surface. Thus already on this lowest, still pre-psychological level of facts there is a fundamental discrepancy between "reality" and its construction.'

The "retinal image" is the phenomenon that remains the same for both angle and linear perspective. At the basis of vision is the retinal image that, as Panofsky remarks in an aptly ambiguous turn of phrase, "paints itself upon our physical eye." When I look at world, what I see, for lack of a more precise way of stating it, is derived from the retinal image (this is what Panofsky refers to as the pre-psychological level). If I pay careful attention to the experience of seeing, what I will notice is that there are curvatures in my field of vision. Supposedly, these curvatures exist in what we will now call the "optical image" - because the retinal image from which the optical image is derived is a projection onto a curved surface. This is why, if I am standing perpendicular to a rectangular wall, with my line of sight directed to its approximate center, I will see its upper edge as slightly convex and its foundation line as slightly concave, and I might also notice that the outer edges have a convex curvature. It seems, though, that what is given by the retinal image in perception-in the optical image-can be overridden, for this is apparently what happened with linear perspective: as the mode for the visual representation of space in the extraordinarily powerful world view of modern science, linear perspective has gradually habituated us to ignoring the subjective curvatures in the optical image.

Entropy and the New Monuments

Robert Smithson, in Artforum, June 1966

Robert Smithson (1938-1973) was an American artist and writer, best known for his work with sculpture and land art. His writings, which often challenged traditional categories of art, have had a profound impact on sculpture and art theory for over thirty years.

The ideas explored in Robert Smithson's essay "Entropy and the New Monuments" contextualize represent his efforts at understanding art that at once addresses and rejects dominant surrounding structures. Smithson details what he saw as the emergent trend amongst his contemporaries to produce work that faces "the possibility of other dimensions, with a new kind of sight." He roots this discussion in the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which, he states, "extrapolates the range of entropy by telling us energy is more easily lost than obtained," describing the works' ability to radically engage with our world in new ways by being "monuments to or against entropy."

- Lucy Cantwell (2011)

On rising to my feet, and peering across the green glow of the Desert, I perceived that the monument against which I had slept was but one of thousands. Before me stretched long parallel avenues, clear to the horizon of similar broad, low pillars.

- John Taine (Erick Temple Bell, *The Time Stream*)

Many architectural concepts found in science-fiction have nothing to do with science or fiction, instead they suggest a new kind of monumentality which has much in common with the aims of some of today's artists. I am thinking in particular of Donald Judd, Robert Morris, Sol Le Witt, Dan Flavin, and of certain artists in the "Park Place Group." The artists who build structured canvases and "wall-size" paintings, such as Will Insley, Peter Hutchinson and Frank Stella are more indirectly related. The chrome and plastic fabricators such as Paul Thek, Craig Kauffman, and Larry Bell are also relevant. The works of many of these artists celebrate what Flavin calls "inactive history" or what the physicist calls "entropy" or "energy-drain." They bring to mind the Ice Age rather than the Golden Age, and would most likely confirm Vladimir Nabokov's observation that, "The future is but the obsolete in reverse." In a rather round-about way, many of the artists have provided a visible analog for the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which extrapolates the range of entropy by telling us energy is more easily lost than obtained, and that in the ultimate future the whole universe will burn out and be transformed into an all-encompassing sameness. The "blackout" that covered the Northeastern states recently, may be seen as a preview of such a future. Far from creating a mood of dread, the power failure created a mood of euphoria. An almost cosmic joy swept over all the darkened cities. Why people felt that way may never be answered.

Instead of causing us to remember the past like the old monuments, the new monuments seem to cause us to forget the future. Instead of being made of natural materials, such as marble, granite, plastic, chrome, and electric light. They are not built for the ages, but rather against the ages. They are involved in a systematic reduction of time down to fractions of seconds, rather than in representing the long spaces of centuries. Both past and future are placed into an objective present. This kind of time has little or no space; it is stationary and without movement, it is going nowhere, it is anti-Newtonian, as well as being

instant, and is against the wheels of the time-clock. Flavin makes "instant-monuments"; parts for "Monument 7 for V.Tatlin" were purchased at the Radar Fluorescent Company. The "instant" makes Flavin's work a part of time rather than space. Time becomes a place minus motion. If time is a place, then innumerable places are possible. Flavin turns gallery-space into gallery time. Time breaks down into many times. Rather than saying, "What time is it?" we should say, "Where is the time?" "Where is Flavin's Monuments?" The objective present at time seems missing. A million years is contained in a second, yet we tend to forget the second as soon as it happens. Flavin's destruction of classical time and space is based on an entirely new notion of the structure of matter.

Time as decay or biological evolution is eliminated by many of these artists; this displacement allows the eye to see time as an infinity of surfaces or structures, or both combined, without the burden of what Roland Barthes calls the "undifferentiated mass of organic sensation." The concealed surfaces in some of Judd's works are hideouts for time. His art vanishes into a series of motionless intervals based on an order of solids. Robert Grosvenor's suspended structural surfaces cancel out the notion of weight, and reverse the orientation of matter within the solid-state of inorganic time. This reduction of time all but annihilates the value of the notion of "action" in art.

Mistakes and dead-ends often mean more to these artists than any proven problem. Questions about form seem as hopelessly inadequate as questions about content. Problems are unnecessary because problems represent values that create the illusion of purpose. The problem of "form vs. content," for example, leads to illusionistic dialectics that become, at best, formalist reactions against content. Reaction follows action, till finally the artist gets "tired" and settles for a monumental inaction. The action-reaction syndrome is merely the leftovers of what Marshall McLuhan calls the hypnotic state of mechanism. According to him,

an electrical numbing or torpor has replaced the mechanical breakdown. The awareness of the ultimate collapse of both mechanical and electrical technology has motivated these artists to built their monuments to or against entropy. As LeWitt points out, "I am not interested in idealizing technology." LeWitt might prefer the world "sub-monumental," especially if we consider his proposal to put a piece of Cellini's jewelry into a block of cement. An almost alchemic fascination with inert properties is his concern here, but LeWitt prefers to turn gold into cement.

This kind of architecture without "value of qualities," is, if anything, a fact. From this "undistinguished" run of architecture, as Flavin calls it, we gain a clear perception of physical reality free from the general claims of "purity and idealism." Only commodities can hold such illusionist values; for instance, soap is 99 44/100% pure, beer has more spirit in it, and dog food is ideal; all and all this mean such values are worthless. As the cloying effect of such "values" wears off, one perceives the "facts" of the outer edge, the flat surface, the banal, the empty, the cool, bland after blank; in other words, that infinitesimal condition known as entropy.

The suburbs, urban sprawl, and the infinite number, of housing developments of the postwar boom have contributed to the architecture of entropy. Judd, in a review of a show by Roy Lichtenstein, speaks of "a lot of visible things" that are "bland and empty," such as "most modern commercial buildings, new Colonial stores, lobbies, most houses, most clothing, sheet aluminum, and plastic with leather texture, the formica like wood, the cute and modern patterns inside jets and drugstores." Near the super highways surrounding the city, we find the discount centers and cut-rate stores with their sterile facades. On the inside of such places are maze-like counters with piles of neatly stacked merchandise; rank on rank it goes into a consumer oblivion. The lugubrious complexity of these interiors has brought to art a new consciousness of the vapid and the dull. But this very vapidity and dullness is what inspires many of the more gifted artists. Morris has distilled many such dull facts and made

them into monumental artifices of "idea." In such a way, Morris has restored the idea of immortality by accepting it as a fact of emptiness. His work conveys a mood of vast immobility; he has even gone so far as to fashion a bra out of lead. (This he has made for his dance partner, Yvonne Rainer, to help stop the motion in her dancer.)

This kind of nullification has re-created Kasimir Malevich's "non-objective world," where there are no more "likenesses of reality, no idealistic images, nothing but a desert!" But for many of today's artists this "desert" is a "City of the Future" made of null structures and surfaces. This "City" performs no natural function, it simply exists between mind and matter, detached from both, representing neither. It is, in fact, devoid of all classical ideals of space and process. It is brought into focus by a strict condition of perception, rather than by any expressive or emotive means. Perception as a deprivation of action and reaction brings to the mind the desolate, but exquisite, surface-structures of the empty "box" or "lattice." As action decreases, the clarity of such surface-structures increases. This is evident in art when all representations of action pass into oblivion. At this stage, lethargy is elevated to the most glorious magnitude. In Damon Knight's Sci-fi novel, "Beyond the Barrier," he describes in a phenomenological manner just such surface-structures: "Part of the scene before them seemed to expand. Where one of the flotation machines had been there was a dim lattice of crystals, growing more shadowy and insubstantial as it swelled; then darkness; then a dazzle of faint prismatic light-tiny complexes in a vast three-dimensional array, growing steadily bigger." This description has none of the "values" of the naturalistic "literary" novel, it is crystalline, and of the mind of virtue of being outside of unconscious action. This very well could be an inchoate concept for a work by Judd, LeWitt, Flavin, or Insley.

It seems that beyond the barrier, there are only more barriers. Insley's "Night Wall" is both a grid and a blockade; it offers no escape. Flavin's fluorescent lights all but prevent prolonged viewing; ultimately, there is nothing to see. Judd turns the logic of set theory into block-like facades. These facades hide nothing but the wall they hang on.

LeWitt's first one-man show at the now defunct Daniel's Gallery presented a rather un-compromising group of monumental "obstructions". Many people were "left cold" by them, or found their finish "too dreary." These obstructions stood as visible clues of the future. A future of humdrum practicality in the shape of standardized office buildings modeled after Emery Roth; in other words, a jerry-built future, a feigned future, an ersatz future very much like the one depicted in the movie "The Tenth Victim." LeWitt's show has helped to neutralize the myth of progress. It has also corroborated Wylie Sypher's insight that "Entropy is evolution in reverse." LeWitt's work carries with it the brainwashed mood of Jasper Johns' "Tennyson," Flavin's "Coran's Broadway Flesh," and Stella's "The Marriage of Reason and Squalor."

Morris also discloses this backward looking future with "errections" and "vaginas" embedded in lead. They tend to illustrate fossilized sexuality by mixing the time state or ideas of "1984" with "One Million B.C." Claes Oldenburg achieves a similar conjunction of time with his prehistoric "ray-guns." This sense of extreme past and future has its partial origin with the Museum of Natural History; there the "cave-man" and the "space-man" may be seen under one roof. In this museum all "nature" is stuffed and interchangeable.

"This City (I thought) is so horrible that its mere existence and perduration, though in the midst of a secret, contaminates the past and future and in some way even jeopardizes the stars."

- Jorge Luis Borges, *The Immortal*

"Tromaderians consider anything blue extremely pornographic."

- Peter Hutchinson, *Extraterrestrial Art*

"'Lust for Life' is the story of the great sensualist painter Vincent Van Gogh, who bounds through the pages and passions of Irving Stone's perennial bestseller. And this is the Van Gogh overwhelmingly brought before us by Kirk Douglas in M-G-M's film version, shot in Cinemascope and a sun-burst of color on the actual sites of Van Gogh's struggles to feel feelings never felt before."

- Promotion Copy, quoted in *Vincent Van Gogh-The Big Picture*, John Mulligan

Unlike the hyper-prosaism of Morris, Flavin, LeWitt, and Judd, the works of Thek, Kauffman, and Bell convey a hyper-opulence. Thek's sadistic geometry is made out of simulated hunks of torn flesh. Bloody meat in the shape of a birthday cake is contained under a pyramidal chrome framework-it has stainless steel candies in it. Tubes for drinking "blood cocktails" are inserted into some of his painful objects. Thek achieves a putrid finesse, not unlike that disclosed in William S. Burroughs' *Nova Express*; "Flesh juice in festering spines of terminal sewage - Run down of Spain and 42nd St. to the fish city of marble flesh grafts." The vacuum-formed plastic reliefs by Kanuffman have a pale Justrous surface presence. A lumpy sexuality is implicit in the transparent forms he employs. Something of the primal nightmare exists in both Thek and Kauffman. The slippery bubbling ooze from the movie "The Blob" creeps into one's mind. Both Thek and Kauffman have arrested the movement of blob-type matter. The mirrored reflections in Bell's work are contaminations of a more elusive order. His chrome-plated lattices contain a Pythagorean chaos. Reflections reflect reflections in an excessive but pristine manner.

Some artists see an infinite number of movies. Hutchinson, for instance, instead of going to the country to study nature, will go to see a movie on 42nd Street, like "Horror at Party Beach" two or three times times and contemplate it for weeks on end. The movies give a ritual pattern to the lives of many artists, and this induces a kind of "low-budget" mysticism, which keeps them in a perpetual trance. The "blood and guts" of horror movies provides for their "organic needs." Serious movies are too heavy on "values," and so are dismissed by the more perceptive artists. Such artists have X-ray eyes, and can see through all of that cloddish substance that passes for "the deep and profound" these days.

Some landmarks of Sci-fic are; *Creation of the Humanoids* (Andy Warhol's favorite movie), *The Plant of the Vampires* (movie about entropy), *The Thing*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *The Time Machine*, *Village of the Giants* (first teen-science film), *War of the Worlds* (interesting metallic machine). Some landmarks of Horror are: *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*, *Horror Chamber of Dr. Faustus* (very sickening), *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*. Artists that like Horror tend toward the emotive, while artists who like Sci-fic tend toward the perceptive.

Even more of a mental conditioner than the movies, is the actual movie house. Especially the "moderne" interior architecture of the new "art-houses" like Cinema I and II, 57th St. Lincoln Art Theatre, the Coronet, Cinema Rendezvous, the Cinema Village, the Baronet, the Festival, and the Murray Hill. Instead of the crummy baroque and rococo of the 42nd Street theaters, we get the "padded cell" look, the "stripped down" look, or the "good-taste" look. The physical confinement of the dark box-like room indirectly conditions the mind. Even the place where you buy your ticket is called a "box-office." The lobbies are usually full of box-type fixtures like the soda-machine, the candy counter, and telephone booths. Time is compressed or stopped inside the movie

house, and this in turn provides the viewer with an entropic condition. To spend time in a movie house is to make a "hole" in one's life.

Recently, there has been an attempt to formulate an analog between "communication theory" and the ideas of physics in terms of entropy. As A.J. Ayer has pointed out, not only do we communicate what is true, but also what is false. Often the false has a greater "reality" than the true. Therefore, it seems that all information, and that includes anything that is visible, has its entropic side. Falseness, as an ultimate, is inextricably a part of entropy, and this falseness is devoid of moral implications.

Like the movies and the movie houses, "printed-matter" plays an entropic role. Maps, charts, advertisements, art books, science books, money, architectural plans, math books, graphs, diagrams, newspapers, comics, booklets and pamphlets from industrial companies are all treated the same. Judd has a labyrinthine collection of "printed-matter," some of which he "looks" at rather than reads. By this means he might take a math equation, and by sight, translate it into a metal progression of structured intervals. In this context, it is best to think of "printed-matter" the way Borges thinks of it, as "The universe (which others call the library)," or like McLuhan's "Gutenberg Galaxy," in other words as an unending "library of Babel." This condition is reflected in Henry Geldzahler's remark, "I'm doing a book on European painting since 1900 - a drugstore book. Dell is printing 100,000 copies." Too bad Dell isn't printing 100,000,000,000.

Judd's sensibility encompasses geology, and mineralogy. He has an excellent collection of geologic maps, which he scans from time to time, not for their intended content, but for their exquisite structure precision. His own writing style has much in common with the terse, factual

descriptions one finds in his collection of geology books. Compare this passage from one of his books, "The Geology of Jackson Country, Missouri" to his own criticism: "The interval between the Cement City and the Raytown limestones varies from 10 to 23 feet. The lower three-quarters is an irregularly colored green, blue, red, and yellow shale which at some places contains calcareous concretions." And now an excerpt from Judd's review of Dan Flavin's first one-man show: "The light is bluntly and awkwardly stuck on the square block; it protrudes awkwardly. The red in the green attached to a lighter green is odd as color, and as a sequence."

I like particularly the way in which he (Robert Morris) subverts the "purist" reading one would normally give to such geometric arrangement.

- Barbara Rose "Looking At American Sculpture, Artforum, February 1965

"Point Triangle Gray" Faith sang, waving at an intersection ahead.

"That's the medical section. Tests and diseases, injuries and—" she giggled naughtily-

"Supply depot for the Body Bank."

- J. Williamson & F. Pohl, *The Reefs of Space*

Make a

sick

picture

or a sick

Readymade

- Marcel Duchamp, from the Green Box

May of Morris's wall structures are direct homages to Duchamp; they deploy facsimiles of ready-mades within high Manneristic frames of reference. Extensions of the Cartesian mind are carried to the most attenuated points of no return by a systematic annulment of movement. Descartes' cosmology is brought to a standstill. Movement in Morris's work is engulfed by many types of stillness: delayed action, inadequate energy, general slowness, an all over sluggishness. The ready-made are, in fact, puns on the Bergsonian concept of "creative evolution" with its idea of "ready made categories." Says Bergson. "The history of philosophy is there, however, and shows us the eternal conflict of systems, the impossibility of satisfactorily getting the real into the ready-made garments of our ready-made concepts, the necessity of making to measure." But it is just such an "impossibility" that appeals to Duchamp and Morris. With this in mind, Morris's monstrous "ideal" structures are inconsequential or uncertain ready-mades, which are definitely outside of Bergson's concept of creative evolution. If anything, they are uncreative in the manner of the 16th-century alchemist-philosopher-artist. C.G. Jung's writing on "The Materia Prima" offers many clues in this direction. Alchemy, it seems, is a concrete way of dealing with sameness. In this context, Duchamp and Morris may be seen as artificers of the uncreative or decreators of the Real. They are like the 16th-century artist Parmigianino, who "gave up painting to become an alchemist." This might help us to understand both Judd's and Morris's interest in geology. It is also well to remember that Parmigianino and Duchamp both painted "Virgins," when they did paint. Sydney Freedberg observed in the work of Parmigianino, if not in fact, at least in idea.

The impure-purist surface is very much in evidence in the new abstract art, but I think Stella was the first to employ it. The iridescent purple, green, and silver surfaces that followed Stella's all-black works, conveyed a rather lurid presence through their symmetries. An exacerbated, gorgeous color gives a chilling bite to the purist context. Immaculate beginnings are subsumed by glittering ends. Like Mallarme's "Herodiade," these surfaces disclose a "cold scintillation"; they

seem to "love the horror of being virgin." These inaccessible surfaces deny any definite meaning in the most definite way. Here beauty is allied with the repulsive in accordance with highly rigid rules. One's sight is mentally abolished by Stella's hermetic kingdom of surfaces.

Stella's immaculate but sparkling symmetries are reflected in John Chamberlain's "Kandy-Kolored" reliefs. "They are extreme, snazzy, elegant in the wrong way, immoderate," says Judd. "It is also interesting that the surfaces of the reliefs are definitely surfaces." Chamberlain's use of chrome and metalflake brings to mind the surfaces in *Scorpio Rising*, Kenneth Anger's many-faceted horoscopic film about constellated motorcyclists. Both Chamberlain and Anger have developed what could be called California surfaces. In a review of the film, Ken Kelman speaks of "the ultimate reduction of ultimate experience to brilliant chromatic surface; Thanatos in Chrome - artificial death" in a way that evokes Chamberlain's giddy reliefs.

Judd bought a purple Florite crystal at the World's Fair. He likes the "uncreated" look of it and is impenetrable color. John Chamberlain, upon learning of Judd's interest in such a color, suggested he go to the Harley Davidson Motorcycle Company and get some "Hi-Fi" lacquer. Judd did this and "self" sprayed some of his works with it. This transparent lacquer allows the "star-spangled" marking on the iron sheet to come through, making the surfaces look mineral hard. His standard crystallographic boxes come in a variety of surfaces from Saturnian orchid-plus to wrinkle-textured blues and greens - alchemy from the year 2000.

But I think nevertheless, we do not feel altogether comfortable at being forced to say that the crystal is the seat of grater disorder than the parent liquid.

- P.W. Bridgeman, *The Nature of Thermodynamics*

The formal logic of crystallography, apart from any preconceived scientific content, relates to Judd's art in an abstract way. If we define an abstract crystal as a solid bounded by symmetrically grouped surfaces, which have definite relationship to a set of imaginary lines called axes, then we have a clue to the structure of Judd's "pink plexiglas box." Inside the box five wires are strung in a way that resembles very strongly the crystallographic idea of axes. Yet, Judd's axes don't correspond with any natural crystal. The entire box would collapse without the tension of the axes. The five axes polarize between two stainless steel sides. The inside surfaces of the steel sides are visible through the transparent plexiglas. Every surface is within full view, which makes the inside and outside equally important. Like many of Judd's works, the separate parts of the box are held together by tension and balance, both of which add to its static existence.

Like energy, entropy is in the first instance a measure of something that happens when one state is transformed into another.

- P.W. Bridgeman, *The Nature of Thermodynamics*

The Park Place Group (Mark di Suvero, Dean Fleming, Peter Forakis, Robert Grosvenor, Anthony Magar, Tamara Melcher, Forrest Myers, Ed Ruda, and Leo Valledor) exists in a space-time monastic order, where they research a cosmos modeled after Einstein. They have also permuted the "models" of R. Buckminster Fuller's "vectoral" geometry in the most astounding manner.

Fuller was told by certain scientists that the fourth dimension was "ha-ha," in other words, that it is laughter. Perhaps it is. It is well to remember that the seemingly topsy-turvy world revealed by Lewis Carroll did spring from a well ordered mathematical mind. Martin Gardner in his "The Annotated Alice," notes that in science-fiction story "Mimsy Were the Borogroves" the author Lewis Carroll present the Jabberwocky as a secret language from the future, and that if rightly understood, it would explain a way of

entering the fourth dimension. The highly ordered non-sense of Carroll, suggests that there might be a similar way to treat laughter. Laughter is in a sense kind of entropic "verbalization." How could artists translate this verbal entropy, that is "ha-ha," into "solid-models"? Some of the Park Place artists seem to be researching this "curious" condition. The order and disorder of the fourth dimension could be set between laughter and crystal-structural, as a device for unlimited speculation.

Let us now define the different type of Generalized Laughter, according to the six main crystal systems: the ordinary laugh is cubic or square (Isometric), the chuckle is a triangle or pyramid (Tetragonal), the giggle is a hexagon or rhomboid (Hexagonal), the titter is prismatic (Orthorhombic), the snicker is oblique (Monoclinic), the guffaw is asymmetric (Triclinic). To be sure this definition only scratches the surface, but I think it will do for the present. If we apply this "ha-ha-crystal" concept to the monumental models being produced by some of the artists in the Park Place group, we might begin to understand the fourth-dimensional nature of their work. From here on in, we must not think of Laughter as a laughing matter, but rather as the "matter-of-laughs."

Solid-state hilarity, as manifest through the "ha-ha-crystal" concept, appears in a patently anthropomorphic way in Alice in Wonderland, as the Cheshire Cat. Says Alice to the Cat, "you make one quite giddy!" This anthropomorphic element has much in common with impure-purist art. The "grin without a cat" indicates "laugh-matter and/or anti-matter," not to mention something approaching a solid giddiness. Giddiness of this sort is reflected in Myers' plastic contraptions. Myers sets hard titter against soft snickers, and puts hard guffaws onto soft giggles. A fit of silliness becomes a rhomboid, a high-pitched discharge of mirth becomes prismatic, a happy outburst becomes a cube, and so forth.

You observed them at work in null time. From your description of what they were about, it seems apparent that they were erecting a transfer portal linking the null level with its corresponding aspect of normal entropy - in other words, with the normal continuum.

Keith Laumer, *The Other Side of Time*

Through direct observation, rather than explanation, many of these artists have developed a way to treat the theory of sets, vectoral geometry, topology, and crystal structure. The diagrammatic methods of the "new math" have led to a curious phenomenon. Namely, a more visible match that is unconcerned with size or shape in any metrical sense. The "paper and pencil operations" that deal with the invisible structure of nature have found new models, and have been combined with some of the more fragile states of minds. Math is dislocated by the artists in a personal way, so that it becomes "Manneristic" or separated from its original meaning. This dislocation of meaning provides the artist with what could be called "synthetic math." Charles Pierce (1839-1914), the American philosopher, speaks of "graphs" that would "put before us moving pictures of thought." (See Martin Gardner's *Logic Machines and Diagrams*.) This synthetic math is reflected in Duchamp's "measured" pieces of fallen threads, "Three Standard Stoppages," Judd's sequential structured surfaces, Valledor's "fourth dimensional" color vectors, Grosvenor's hypervolumes in hyperspace, and di Suvero's demolitions of space-time. These artists face the possibility of other dimensions, with a new kind of sight.

able to shake an empire to its roots, scholars have preferred to suppose that such a crisis, even though bearing the name of iconoclasm, concerned, in truth, something else completely. The historical study of the economic, social, and military circumstances pertaining at the time has often led commentators to hypothesize that the debate over the icon was only a pretext and that the reality was entirely different. Thus the interpretation of the crisis has been oriented either toward an explanation of a rather interior sort (a struggle against monarchical power), or it has insisted on the empire's reinforcement of its borders, economic recovery, the militarization and decentralization of power, or even the influence of the oriental provinces that lived in contact with aniconic cultures. The empire was undergoing a political crisis; therefore it was thought necessary to furnish a political explanation for it, and in consequence, relegate the question of the icon to the rank of secondary causes, or put it in the role of a doctrinal screen that hid reality. But what if this political crisis was precisely a crisis of iconicity provided, of course, that one examine this iconicity in the terms in which it was then linked to the overall effects of symbolization in general, and therefore also to effects that are political in nature?

What, then, was the doctrine of the icon, this philosophy of the image that for the first time not only overcame within monotheist thought certain theological prohibitions, but even surmounted those difficulties born within Greek thought of the ontological speculation about doxa, mimesis, and the phenomenon? For a Greek system of thought it most definitely is that we are dealing with here, and it can be summarized in the following formulation: an economic conception of the natural image finds the artificial image, and an economic conception of the artificial image, in turn, finds temporal power.

[...]

Introduction to *Image, icône, économie* (extracts)

Marie-José Mondzain (Frances, R. trans.)

Marie-José Mondzain (b. 1942) is a French philosopher, specialising in art and images. She is currently the director of the Political and Moral Sociology department at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris.

In the introduction to her *Image, icône, économie*, Mondzain sets out her aims for her study of Byzantine Iconoclasm; a reappraisal of the centrality of the icon to the crisis itself, and a critique of an over emphasis of factors she deems exogenous to the issue. Her justification for this reassessment is not only useful to students of Byzantine history, but indeed to anyone seeking to grasp the importance of icons and images in Eastern Christianity, which, as Mondzain argues, lie at the core of - and even support - the fabric of society.

The iconoclastic crisis in Byzantium was essentially a Constantinopolitan political crisis, which is to say, a crisis over the symbolic foundation of authority. This concerned the very conception of power at the highest level of hierarchical authority.

[...]

To privilege the icon in the study of a crisis referred to as the "crisis of iconoclasm" would seem to be obvious, but good sense sometimes appears vulgar to the wise. Thus, even though they have acknowledged that a dogmatic debate of a decidedly theological nature was indeed

Consideration of the image is still a sacred cause today only because the fate of thought and liberty

are at stake in it. The visible world, the one that is given to us to see: is it liberty or enslavement? In order to be able to envisage a world radically founded on visibility, and starting from the conviction that whatever constitutes its essence and meaning is itself invisible, it proved essential to establish a system of thought that set the visible and invisible in relation to each other. This relation was based on the distinction between the image and the icon. The image is invisible, the icon is visible. The economy was the concept of their living linkage. The image is a mystery. The icon is an enigma. The economy was the concept of their relation and their intimacy. The image is eternal similitude, the icon is temporal resemblance. The economy was the theory of the transfiguration of history.

The question of the economy cannot be separated from the question of the image itself "Whoever rejects the icon rejects the totality of the economy." This is the leitmotif of the texts that defend the legitimacy of the icon. Thinking about the subject of the icon does not in the least indicate a new meaning for a word that already possessed innumerable ones. On the contrary, it concerns the arrival on the scene of what unites all these meanings without modifying any of the previous ones at all. The term economy is therefore not the subject of a new and specific discourse during the iconoclastic crisis; rather, it supports the whole of the edifice of which the icon constitutes the final stakes, at once intellectually, spiritually, and politically. Indeed, it is at the moment of the crisis that the term finally acquires its systematicity. From this perspective, it is important to determine what was at stake theoretically in the polemic between the emperor and the patriarch as they attempted to impose their own conceptions of symbolic hegemony, and we will attempt to recreate the theoretical architecture of what might be called first the imaginal economy and then the iconic economy. This "economic" doctrine of the icon is a veritable plea for a new conception of the symbol. Something in the system of thought changes as a result of the political convulsion of iconoclasm. As

Paul Lemerle said, "Whatever one's philosophical opinion about images and the cult of images, there was a moment when their defenders, even though they were far from aware of it, held in their hands the fate of the form of humanism that is still ours today."

On Becoming Two
Beirut Art Center
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