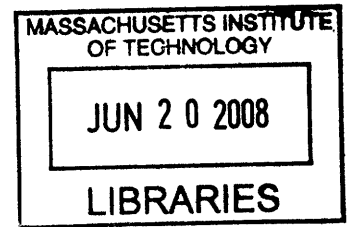


De-/Constructing Situations

by

Annatina Caprez



Diploma of Fine Arts  
University of Applied Sciences and Arts Zurich, 2005

ARCHIVES

V.1

Submitted to the Department of Architecture in Partial Fullfillment of the  
Requirements of the Degree of

Master of Science in Visual Studies  
at the  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

June 2008

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## De-/Constructing Situations

by Annatina Caprez

Submitted to the Department of Architecture on May 22, 2008,  
in Partial Fullfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of Master of Science in Visual Studies

### Abstract:

My thesis is inhabited by reflections on interweaving the constructive and the destructive development of situations. During the last year, I experimented with the observation of circumstances and their subsequent de-/construction by entangling the planned with the contingent, the staged with the genuine, the immediate with the remote. Through relinquishing control that has (just) been established, a situation can evolve that teases the „real,“ and create, eventually, a „new“ situation.

Hence, this paper attempts to discuss various challenges of „the real“ such as interruptions of set hierarchies, interventions in established role plays, or reflections on the process of artistic production. On the other hand, it talks about the creating of „new“ situations and its inherent contradictions.

I consider my artistic practice as a **de-/constructing of situations** in everyday life which, through a playful approach, is a way to better understand one's surroundings. The de-/construction begins with the observation of a situation and its social embeddedness: settings, conventions, mechanisms, behavior, signs, tactics, or the organization of space. After looking at what a situation is about and how it „functions,“ I try to **implement myself** and apply my understanding to the situation. I plan an interruption within the situation including the people that inhabit it. The actual collective experience of the de-/construction is crucial to the effect that could emerge from this event. Only through the direct perception of a disruption one can understand a situation in a broader sense. With „broader“ I mean the experience of the physical impact and the experience of the consternation which demands for reaction. It is not about proposing a solution but rather it is a **direct interruption** that (re-)opens situations, a kind of „revolution“ that allow alterations.

C: This is not an art book.

B: It's a thesis.

C: This is a thesis and you said that last time already. It's not the author's choice if, you know, the copies of the thesis are all original. You have to conform.

Thesis Advisor: Ute Meta Bauer

Title: Associate Professor of Visual Arts







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*For my written thesis, I chose to work with a 500 page copy paper pack. I thought that the scope of 500 pages allows me to fill and distribute in instead of add content chronologically. The process of writing and compiling becomes less of a linear development but rather an arranging of various reflections. My own thoughts are connected to reflections by artists, theoreticians, colleagues, classmates and professors.*

*While writing, I attended the Thesis Tutorial in which we discussed our ideas and gave each other inputs and references. I took these meetings as a starting point in order to bestow space to the situation of the production of a thesis. Also, discussions are from a different quality than writing because of their spontaneous and sometimes disjointed progression. I wanted these deviations to be part of my writing.*

*Moreover, the spreading out of the text and the including of white pages mirrors my thought process: one can browse through and dive into the writing, or, one can read it chronologically. Inserting white pages means also to leave open space for unpredictable future inscriptions.*















- Now, I have to be careful what I say.

> Well, I don't know exactly how to do this. I don't want people to know that they're gonna be in these pages.

















*I tell the group during the Thesis Tutorial:*

A: I'm gonna tape this because I have the concept that I begin my Thesis with a discussion with someone and then go on and on and take even the discussion in the Thesis Tutorial as part of the final paper. And this is the beginning.

*I wait. Then, I distribute a page with a discussion that I had with another person. It says:*

A: I just bought paper. Maybe the receipt is going to be the first page.

G: I thought you already bought paper?

A: Yeah, but it wasn't a complete pack. Now, this is the real one.

G: Okay.

A: And then I thought: this is sort of what one of my former professors once made...

G: What do you mean?

A: She collected all the receipts and the bills that she needed to work on an art project for an exhibition: the journey, the food, the hotel. Then, she reproduced the receipts. That was her work in the end. Even the receipt of the printing of the work was included.

G: That's nice. There's a tradition of that. Catellan has made some pieces like that. What's her name?

A: Maria Eichhorn.

G: Oh yeah. You told me about her. Are you happy that you made that connection?

A: Sure.

G: It should be on the tape for your thesis.

A: Yeah. It actually is. I just started taping. I think that's a good start... a reference.

*The "real" paper pack turned out to be just one of several packs I had to buy in order to get my Thesis done. And, in the end, the thesis had to be printed on precious paper: "For the first copy the paper must be chosen for its permanence and durability. This is the copy that should bear the original signatures. The paper must be acid-neutral or acid-free, as designated on the package".*





























Due to the multiple meanings of the terms I will be using throughout this paper, I will first describe how I would like to understand them.

The etymology online dictionary Etymonline says that *situation* comes from the Anglo-French *site* which again comes from the Latin *situs*. *Situs* means *place/a position* and contains the si-root *sinere*. *Sinere* means *let/permit/leave alone*.

The meaning of *situation*, therefore, ranges between a determining/locating denotation (*place/a position*) and a more ephemeral/loose one (*let/permit/leave alone*). *Let* and *permit* entail having power over a situation (giving someone permission) yet loosen it. It assumes a decision to loosen a certain amount of power. *Leave alone* also contains the same kind of giving up control, however, in an active “turning away from” or “being absent of”. It is a more radical giving up of power: being with something or someone and then leaving it to its own destiny. The term *situation*, thus, expresses at the same time an openness/uncertainty and a set condition which has just been given up. It is the moment **in-between the controlled and the unpredictable**.

The term **de-/constructing** consists of the words *construction* and *destruction*. Both of these words entail the term *structure* which comes from the Latin *structura*: *a fitting together, adjustment, building* which again comes from the Latin *struere*: *to pile, build, assemble*. *Struere* is related to *strues* and means *heap*. It comes from Proto-Indo-European *stere-* which means *to spread, extend, stretch out*. *Construction* entails the prefix **con-** originating from *com-* meaning *together*. *Destruction* again entails the prefix **de-** meaning *un-* or *down*.

*De-/construction* then could be interpreted as the back and forth **movement from heaping up and tearing down a structure**, a structure that is assembled or piled up. Simultaneously, *structure* means piled up but also entails the meaning of spread, extended, or stretched out. The term *structure* is, thus, in itself already pointing to the built and the unbuilt, the stretched out and the piled up, the heap and the building.

The online etymology dictionary Etymonline says further that the term *deconstruction* was invented in 1973 by philosopher Jacques Derrida and serves “as a strategy of critical analysis, in translations from French of the works of philosopher Jacques Derrida”. *De-/construction*, as used in this paper, does not necessarily have to coincide with Derrida’s approach to deconstruction.

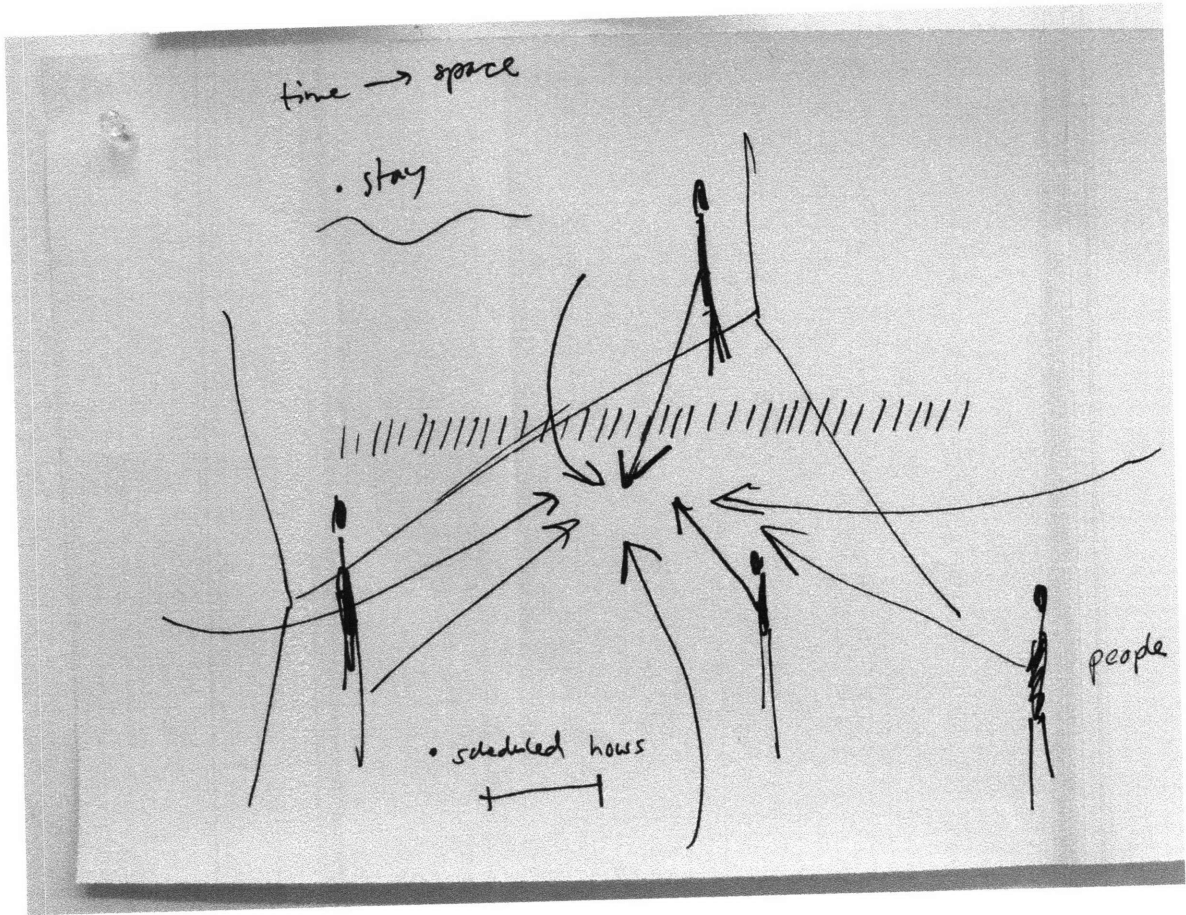




























*I was talking to E and F while considering the approach of de-/constructing situations in everyday life which could be a way to better understand one's surroundings. De-/constructing begins with the observation of a situation and how this situation "functions." It is about intervening into this situation, into the moment, or "the real." They both tried to help me think about what "working within the real" or "being in the moment" possibly means. E said he thinks that being in the moment is a moment without thinking. There would be no future and no past thoughts that would divert you from the moment. A friend of his, however, claimed that climbing rocks was when you were „in the moment“ because you have to make decisions otherwise you would fall; you have to be very aware of the moment and know how to deal with its difficulties. These two definitions are totally opposite. One is about losing control, the other about having total control over a situation and being capable considering all possible decisions. In relation to my work I would think about "being in the moment" or "working within the real" similar to the second definition. It is the moment when you understand that exercises and simulations are "the real" i.e. they are realizing around us.*

*But why, they asked me, was I convinced that considering the moment is essential. They argued that if you encounter a situation just like that you could have an unexpected effect on the situation that wouldn't necessarily be bad. Yes, I said, but this can happen only unintentionally. You could never make a statement about what you think if it is so arbitrary. Then, everything would become arbitrary and you couldn't take position anymore. I said that you have to understand a situation first, before intervening in it. The understanding of a situation, the awareness or consciousness of the surroundings, is especially important nowadays when everything is about something else. You can see it in all the powerpoint presentations we have to produce. Everything gets postponed. In the end, you have powerpoint presentations and portfolios, both referring to something in the future or in the past but never in the present.*

*In the end, we wondered if school is considered as a reality or not. And why there are all these simulations without any practical application. (E mentioned his experience in the Building Technology class where people only work with simulations and do not have any relation to the practice.) Do they actually do something, or, are they on a different level, a level that never reaches the practice? I then said that was actually what I am trying to make clear in my work: I see this academic context as real. Everything is as real as the outside of the academic context: the presentations, the exercises, the critiques, etc. It would actually be much better, I think, if all these exercises were treated as real.*











### Of Exactitude in Science

...In that Empire, the craft of Cartography attained such Perfection that the Map of a Single province covered the space of an entire City, and the Map of the Empire itself an entire Province. In the course of Time, these Extensive maps were found somehow wanting, and so the College of Cartographers evolved a Map of the Empire that was of the same Scale as the Empire and that coincided with it point for point. Less attentive to the Study of Cartography, succeeding Generations came to judge a map of such Magnitude cumbersome, and, not without Irreverence, they abandoned it to the Rigours of sun and Rain. In the western Deserts, tattered Fragments of the Map are still to be found, Sheltering an occasional Beast or beggar; in the whole Nation, no other relic is left of the Discipline of Geography.<sup>1</sup>

“In fact, even inverted, the fable is useless. Perhaps only the allegory of the Empire remains. For it is with the same imperialism that present-day simulators try to make the real, all the real, coincide with their simulation models. But it is no longer a question of either maps or territory. Something has disappeared: the sovereign difference between them that was the abstraction’s charm. For it is the difference which forms the poetry of the map and the charm of the territory, the magic of the concept and the charm of the real. This representational imaginary, which both culminates in and is engulfed by the cartographer’s mad project of an ideal coextensivity between the map and the territory, disappears with simulation, whose operation is nuclear and genetic, and no longer specular and discursive. With it goes all of metaphysics. ... It no longer has to be rational, since it is no longer measured against some ideal or negative instance. It is nothing more than operational. In fact, since it is no longer enveloped by an imaginary, it is no longer real at all. It is a hyperreal: the product of an irradiating synthesis of combinatory models in a hyperspace without atmosphere”<sup>2</sup>

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1) The piece was written by Jorge Luis Borges and Adolfo Bioy Casares. English translation quoted from J. L. Borges, *A Universal History of Infamy*, Penguin Books, London, 1975.

2) *Simulacra and Simulations* from Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford; Stanford University Press, 1988), pp.166-184.





*E told me about Newfoundland, a sparsely populated region in the North of Canada where his grandparents live. One day, his mother printed out a map from the internet of Newfoundland and showed the map to the grandfather. She said: Oh, I thought you always lied but you were right: all these sites have exactly the names you told me. Yes, the grandfather said, because they asked me when they came to make the map.*

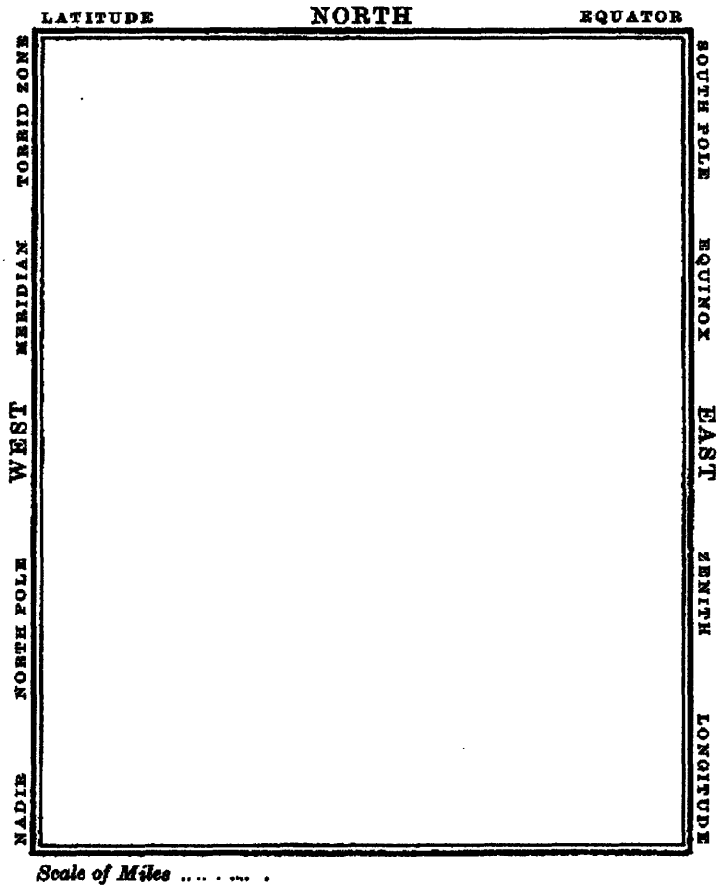




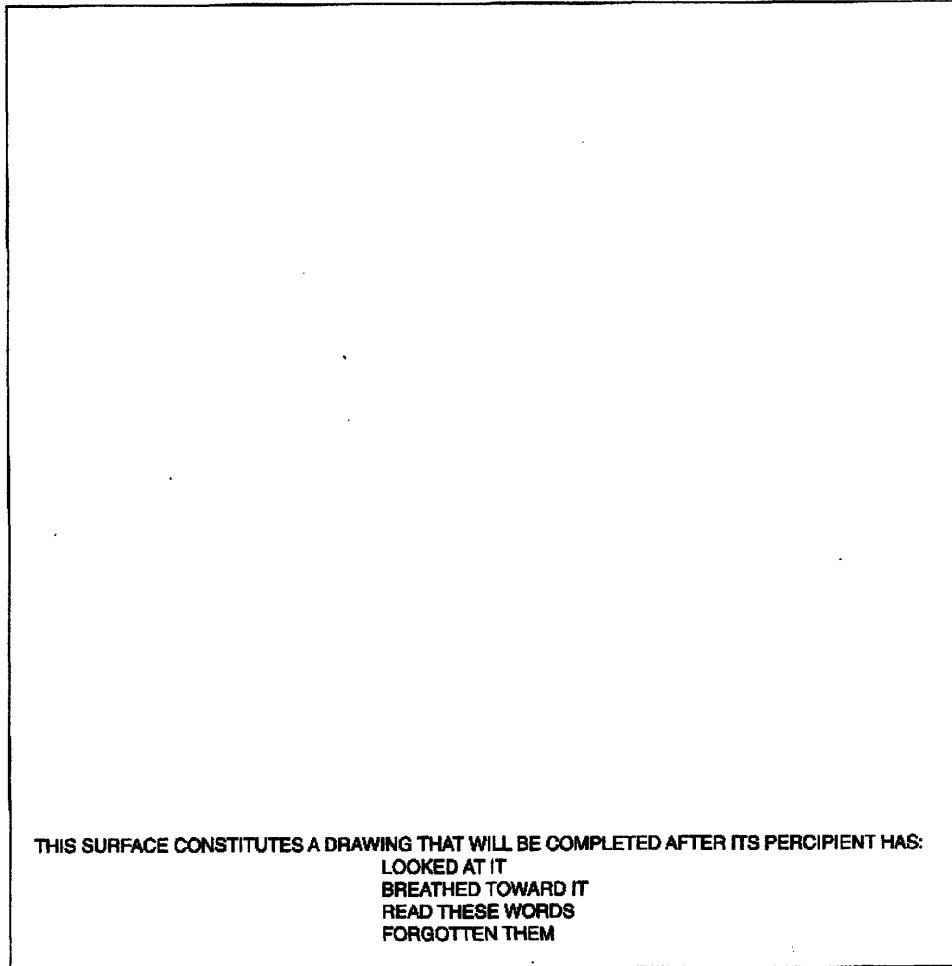






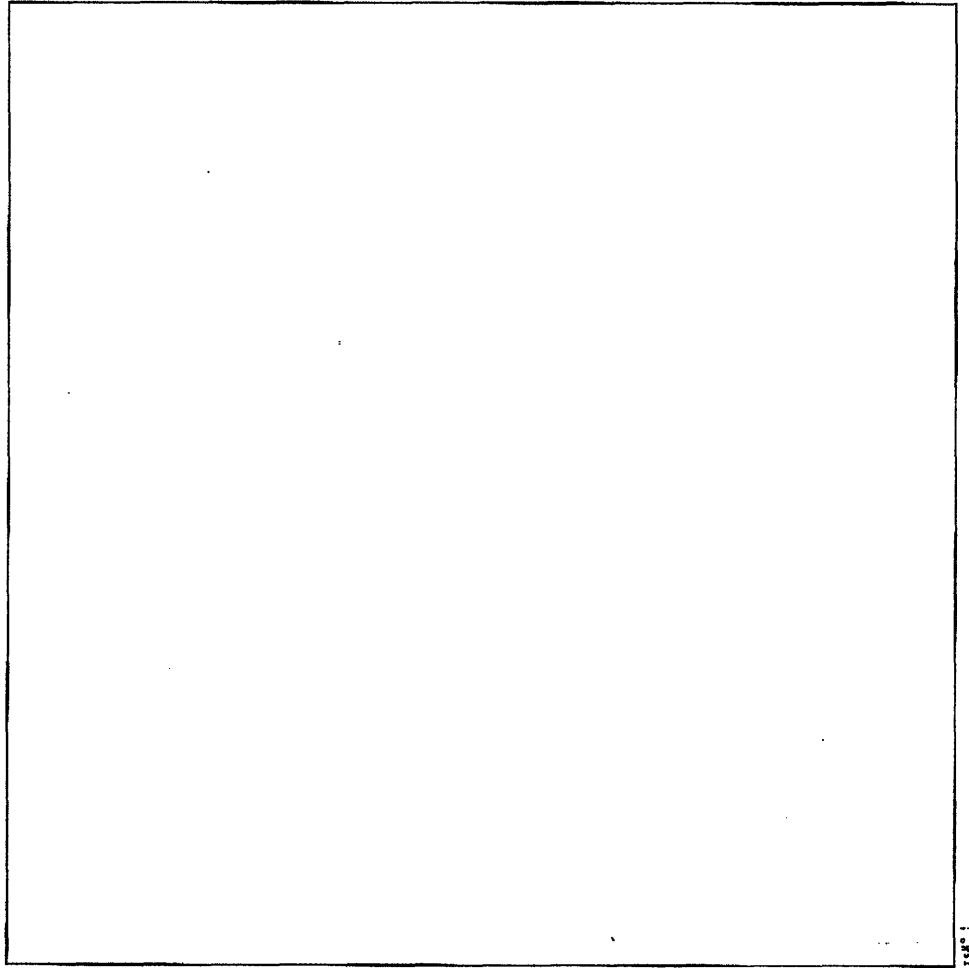






THIS SURFACE CONSTITUTES A DRAWING THAT WILL BE COMPLETED AFTER ITS PERCIPIENT HAS:  
LOOKED AT IT  
BREATHED TOWARD IT  
READ THESE WORDS  
FORGOTTEN THEM





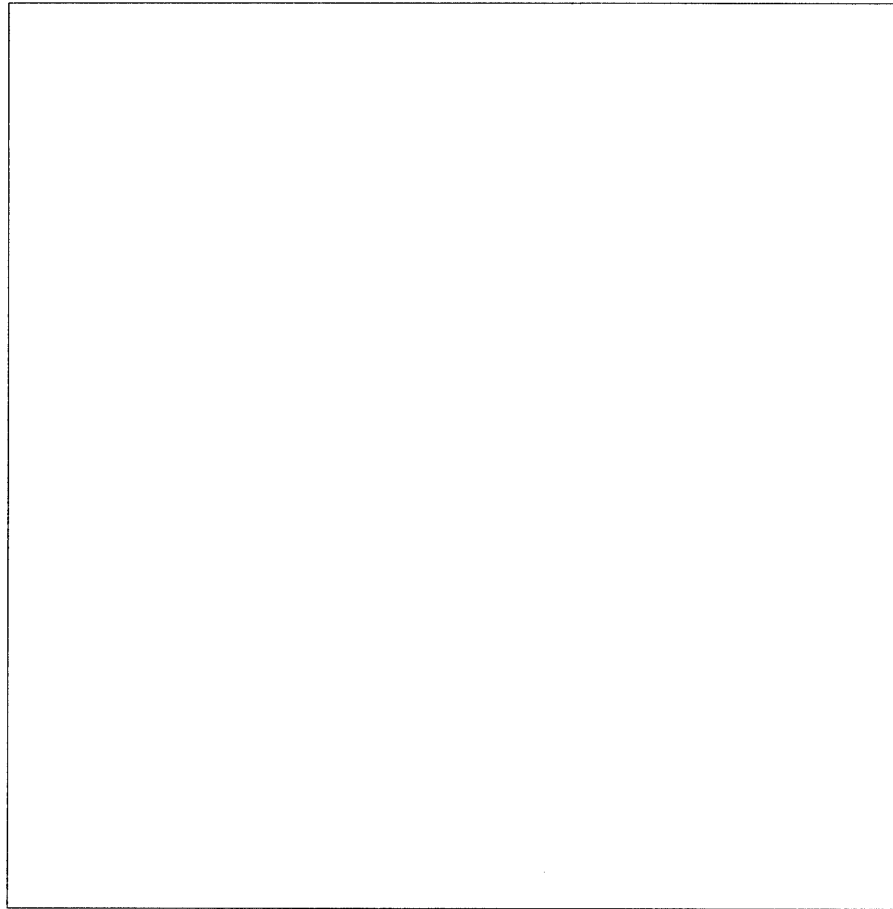
158° 1  
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Map of a thirty-six square mile surface area of the Pacific Ocean west of Oahu

Scale 3 inches : 1 mile

Map of a thirty-six square mile surface area of the Pacific Ocean west of Oahu, *Art & Language*, 1967, in: *Nothing*, page 57





Thesis

Scale 5 inches:5 inches





















































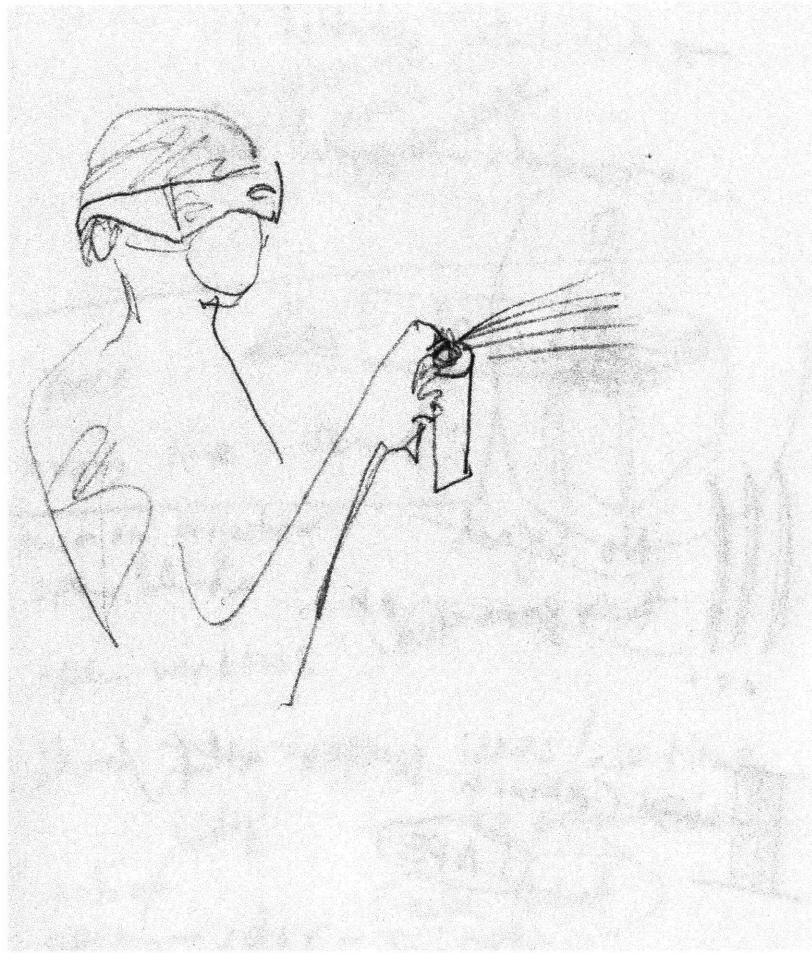












I referred literally to the Situationists when making the work „Ne Travaillez Jamais“ using the sentence that Guy Debord sprayed upon walls in the public during the 60ies, yet spraying it upon a presentation wall in school. The critique of labor and spectacle seemed to me very appropriate in the environment of MIT because labor is highly considerate in this institution. If you do not work you are not alive. If you sleep more than seven hours you are lazy. If you stroll around without doing anything you are wasting time. Only sports or other similar leisure activities are accepted besides work. Additionally, there is a great pressure to enjoy the work and internalize it so that it becomes the essence of your life.

The Situationist view on the relation between leisure/labor and the perception of space has influenced my thinking for a long time. The **leisure-labor relation** seen as an opposite but interrelated couple of capitalist society (all the leisure activities are more of a recreation in favor of labor rather than of one's own time) determines one's perception of space in a crucial way. People have their daily schedules, move from labor place to leisure place to their homes on the fastest way. The Situationists reacted to circumstances like these with inventing their own methods of living in a city, called the construction of situations: „We have to multiply poetic subjects and objects—which are now unfortunately so rare that the slightest ones take on an exaggerated emotional importance—and we have to **organize games** for these poetic subjects to play with these poetic objects. This is our entire program, which is essentially transitory. Our situations will be ephemeral, **without a future**. Passageways. **Our only concern is real life; we care nothing about the permanence of art or of anything else**. Eternity is the grossest idea a person can conceive of in connection with his acts.“<sup>3</sup>

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3) Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action, Guy Debord, 1957, translated by Ken Knabb

The *dérive* is part of the Situationist's concept of the construction of situations and a tool for activities happening beyond the leisure-labor division and the common pattern of a city's movement: "In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there."<sup>4</sup> The active searching for encounters and attractions is not only changing one's perception of a city but also, eventually, the city's flows themselves. Through withdrawing from the common pattern, people would be guided by their desires and random encounters. The *dérive* is an interruption of predetermined ways of living and a call to give up the "tunnel-view." It is a ludic approach to the perception of space: „Dérives involve playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll.”<sup>5</sup> The "users" of a city would become less of "users" but more of active and constant creators of the city: „The role played by a passive or merely bi-part playing, public' must constantly diminish, while that played by those who cannot be called actors, but rather, in a new sense of the term, ‚livers,' must steadily increase“.

My thesis title derives from the Situationist definition of constructing situations<sup>6</sup>, however, I put a prefix in front of it. The *de-* stands for the inherent destructive aspect of a construction. I see a construction only in relation to its destructiveness and vice versa: a destruction only with its constructive aspects.

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4) Theory of the *Dérive*, Guy Debord, Bureau of Public Secrets, <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/2.derive.htm>

5) Theory of the *Dérive*, Guy Debord, Bureau of Public Secrets, <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/2.derive.htm>

6) „We will also need to discover or verify certain laws, such as that according to which situationist emotions depend on extreme concentration or extreme dispersal of actions (classical tragedy giving a rough idea of the former, *dérives* of the latter). In addition to the direct means that will be used for specific ends, the positive phase of the construction of situations will require a new application of reproductive technologies. One can envisage, for example, televised images of certain aspects of one situation being communicated live to people taking part in another situation somewhere else, thereby producing various modifications and interferences between the two“.



*In a two minute performance that I made during the Fall semester 2007 I took people to the underground tunnels of MIT. I told them that I would take them to a specific place I found earlier. While explaining that, we began to walk through the corridors. I pretended to have forgotten where the place was and so we turned around, went back, turned again and suddenly two minutes were gone already. I started the performance without letting people know. Their attention was, thus, not so much on me or the tunnels but on their individual conversations while following me. The unattentive moment became the performance. I thought about this when writing on the *dérive* because I see it in relation to the notion of strolling, strolling as a moment of dispersal, to make the inattentive moment important - point at it. The moment of talking random things amongst each other. The frame of the piece is put around the audience while waiting, walking, and talking. The audience becomes the performance and the performance can happen anywhere.*

































WHO? WHAT? WHY? HOW?

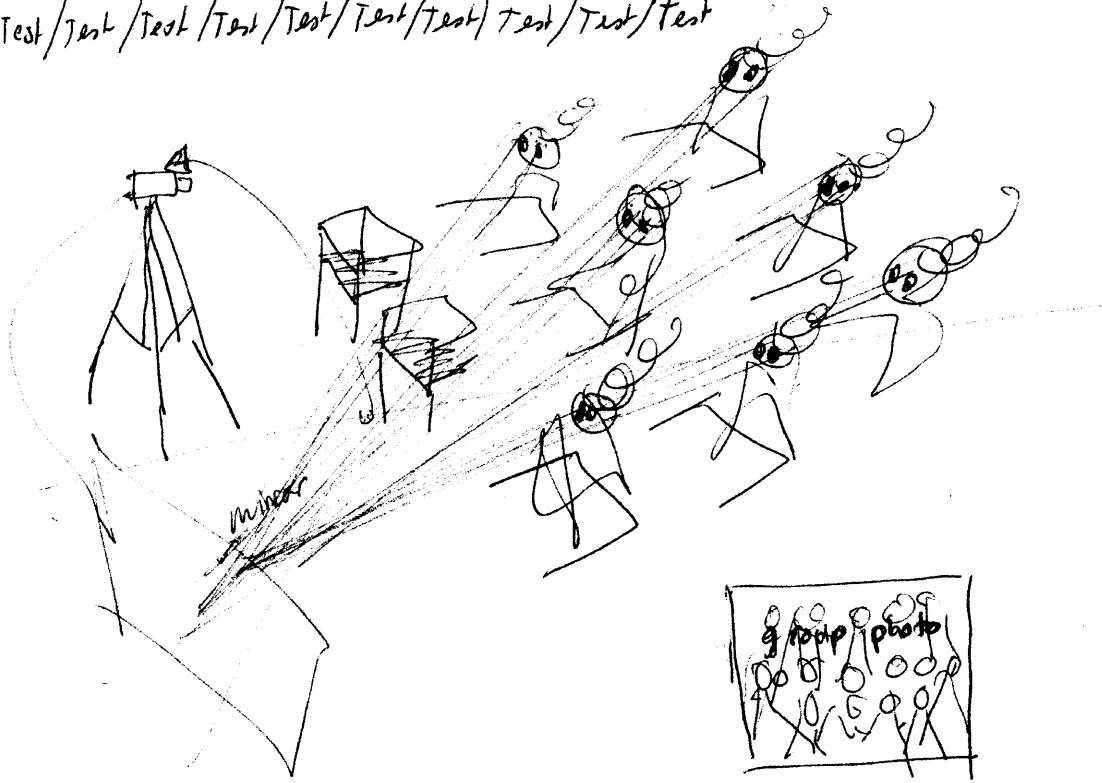
WHERE? WHEN? FOR WHO? HOW MUCH!

front space  
VAP

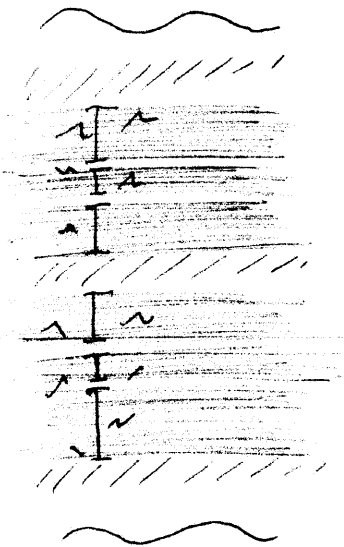
30th  
October 2007  
How LONG?  
20/30 min

faculty  
students  
myself

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20  
~~Test/Test/Test/Test/Test/Test/Test/Test/Test~~



8	sleeping <del>at the</del>
7	walking <del>at the</del>
6	learning
12	break
1	learning
4	walking
8	learning
10	sleeping



whispering  
 yelling  
 trying  
 peering  
 pretending  
 lying  
 typing  
 moving  
 answering  
 asking  
 distracting  
 thinking  
 dreaming  
 creating  
 writing  
 drawing  
 drinking  
 sitting  
 standing  
 learning  
 smelling  
 hearing  
 listening  
 both  
 enjoying  
 watching  
 walking  
 biking  
 looking  
 guessing  
 claiming  
 not knowing  
 guessing  
 wandering  
 wondering  
~~staring~~  
 shivering  
 begging  
 enacting







- This idea of disrupting expectations.. that maybe even speaks about this attitude that we spoke about: Punk, Situationism.. which is about disrupting expectations as well. Speaking for myself, and this is maybe a very American attitude, I think I gain entertainment from it.

> I would say instead of "this is where I gain entertainment from" I would say "this is where all the potential for revolution comes from"... in disrupting people's expectation. I just talked to someone recently and we both had to admit that if we're honest we still want to change the world through art.

- I think entertainment is the reason why we want to change the world... because we're not happy with it. Entertainment is about pleasure.

> Maybe it's the translation but in German it means just to pass time.

- No, that's not what I mean with entertainment.

> In German you can even say something like "to entertain a house". It means that you take care of a house.

- In America you can say you "entertain an idea". It means that you can be fascinated by it, you can hold on to it and get pleasure from it and be engaged with it. And I think ultimately it is a very interesting discussion about the relationship between entertainment and revolution. Your work doesn't entertain you? You don't think the Situationists were entertained by what they did?

> Yes, sure. But their main goal wasn't to entertain others.



















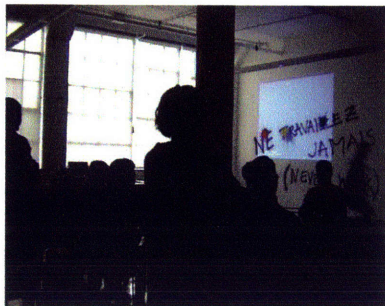
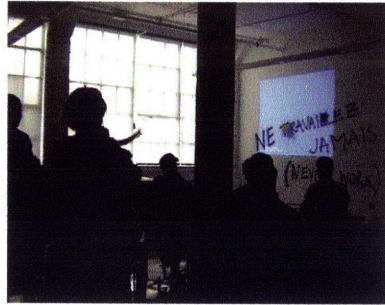








*Suddenly, in a dream I felt the desire to attack the presentation wall. I imagined myself throwing paint balls at the wall and running away from school. When I woke up, I was still dwelling on the idea and thought about actually **implementing the dream**. I have never taken a dream seriously before but at that moment I thought it might be worth it. Until two hours before my presentation, however, I couldn't decide whether I should really do it or not.*



The performance *NE TRAVAILLEZ JAMAIS* by Annatina Caprez was made for the MIT Visual Arts Program's midterm presentation on October 30th 2007. As usual, students had to present their work in progress in 20 minutes, followed by a 10 minute critique. My presentation was scheduled between 1.40pm and 2.10pm.

**1.40pm:** I positioned myself behind the projector where people usually stand to give presentations. The projector was on; however, it didn't show anything except the words: no signal. Beginning with what I did a week ago when we rehearsed the midterm presentation, I let the audience believe that this would be an ordinary overview of my work. I talked about my intention to turn every presentation into a production. In addition to taking the presentation time as "real time" I emphasized that I usually work with the immediate environment and its specific situation. Finally, I said that I had two ideas in mind for this presentation and I decided to do the following one.

**1.41pm:** Behind the projector I stored a spray paint can and light bulbs. As soon as I finished talking, I took the spray paint and ran to the projection wall. The no-signal-projection was still on as I sprayed the sentence *NE TRAVAILLEZ JAMAIS* on the wall. In order to make people immediately understand the French sentence I translated it into English.

**1.42pm:** I ran back to the projector, picked up light bulbs that I previously filled with paint, and threw them at the presentation wall.

**1.43pm:** Having finished the piece, I ran to my jacket, picked it up, ran out the room and left the VAP building.



1.44pm – 2.10pm: After this part, there are two stories to tell: one about my run out of school, the other one about the situation after my disappearance in school.

**In school:** The audience applauded and laughed. Then, they waited for me to come back. However, I didn't show up and the people in the audience didn't exactly know what to do. Due to a strong smell caused by the spray paint, some of the people wanted to disperse; nevertheless, the audience managed to arrange a discussion in a room at CAVS. Eventually, the midterm critique took place without my presence.\*\*

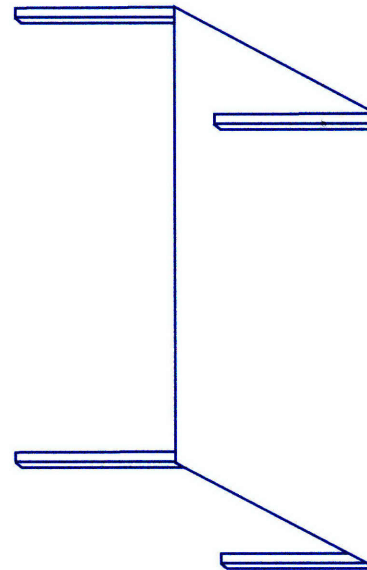
**Away from school:** I left the building fast and walked up Massachusetts Avenue until Harvard Square. Approximately 20 minutes after I left, I fell asleep on a bench next to beggars in Cambridge Common.

Quoting the sentence "NE TRAVAILLEZ JAMAIS" by the Situationists, I intended to re-introduce their attitude and, at the same time, in fact construct a situation.

\*\*The following pages are a documentation of the critique.

Thanks to: Ute Meta Bauer, Alia Farid, Andrea Frank, Joe Gibbons, Kate James, Joan Jonas, Larissa Harris, Gama Herrera, Jin Jung, Jae Rhim Lee, Matthew Mazzotta, Regina Moeller, Edgar Pedroza, Alexander Rosenberg, Meg Rotzel, Sofia Ponte, Jegan Vincent de Paul, Sergio Vega, Joe Zane.

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(1.44pm)

A: Do we have to go get her?

B: No, I don't think so. She'll find her way back.

(1.46pm)

C: I think we are supposed to talk now. I think we should start talking.

D: We should start talking together.

B: It says: NEVER WORK. So, what should we talk about?

C: Yes, we can discuss it. But it's very noisy here.

B: It really smells here. Maybe we should go somewhere else.

C: So let's go to some other place. Where should we gather?

X: At CAVS...

(1.49pm)

F: In relationship to the booklet thing I actually appreciated the gesture of using this presentation time as production time... using it to produce a work, you know, as opposed to talking about work that has happened already or is going to happen.

C: I agree.

A: I'm curious why she used French, not German?

C: She lives in Switzerland, though.

A: Right, but she speaks German. That's what I know.

B: It's a Situationist quote. I understand the context.

A: But she's doing it now. She doesn't want to be only a reference. She wants to speak about her time and emotions.

B: Oh... I don't know, we have to ask her, that, I think, is part of it.

A: But what are we supposed to discuss then?

B: I don't know. I mean... I have to say that I understand one point of it but I have a misunderstanding of the context.

D: Well, people always discuss art works without the artist necessarily being there. I mean that happens all the time.

B (points at the camera which D holds in her hands): Are you taping this for her? Is this part of the work?

D: I'm just taping it.

H: I think she wanted to tape our talk in there. She probably didn't expect us to move.

C: Well, we are part of the performance. I'm just saying that. If she does something like that she can't control what happens after that. I'm not clear about how it relates to her so-called project.

B: Me neither.

C: I think that it was a necessary thing for her to do. I mean... I see it that way. She had to do it. I mean... I like it. There's nothing to criticize about it. But I think it must have given her something, to do that. What... I don't know, but...

F: The thing that I liked about the booklet was that there was a set of rules about what could go into. You know, it had to be stuff that was around right there. Spontaneity was very important. Whereas this, I think, maybe strayed from those rules a little bit. And I don't know if those are the same rules anymore, but I saw a degree of preparation beforehand and I wonder how important that is, or, if that's a problem for that piece or not. It'd be useful to ask her.

B: I want to ask you if you feel uncomfortable talking about her work like this? Do you want to ask more questions?

C: You feel uncomfortable?

B: Yeah.

C: She set it up like this.

B: Yeah, yeah, but, therefore, I'm not talking. I'm not giving feedback if she's not... I don't talk about her work now.

K: This was an experience that we had. We are talking to each other, right? We just had this experience that she has set up for us. It's perfectly fine to talk about it.

G (to B): You can still address it to her. There's a camera.

B: I don't have feedback. The camera is not...

K: That's perfectly fine, though. If you both can choose to... in terms of that it's a work with participants we can choose to do whatever we want to do. If you choose to discuss the work, you can, if not, that's fine. And I think, this even us being videotaped is part of her work. I find that very interesting. Because we all of a sudden became her work and we're probably going to be explained to her.

C: There is something about this that reminds me of what she did in the performance class. There's a surprise, there's an element that you only understand after it's happening and it's dealing with manipulating the audience a little bit and fooling it a little bit. That's interesting and legitimate. And I also think the NEVER WORK—for better or for worse—it's her comment on the situation. But what it means, I don't know. I don't think we have to interpret it. I mean they can talk to her later... not to interpret now.

A: I'm kind of curious... it's fine that her performance... whatever she did... right now... because I know she has this half-hour and I know she knows that very well. I'm curious about her state of being. Is she still running? You know, this is high tension. This is hard to bear, I think, to use your time in that un-useful way or maybe very useful way. This

"me thinking about her" is very interesting somehow in this context.

C: I've made this experience within a workshop last summer with a participant who, with some others, was not gonna participate at the final project who was gonna... just leave it. And then, the other two people didn't want to do it so we didn't do it. He ended up staying and sort of complaining and criticizing the situation, but being part of the situation anyway. It's very hard to do it... to go away. That was different, because of the show and an opening. But, I think he should have done this much more radical thing—go and leave and be absent. So, therefore, I accept that she did this because if she thought of it, and that's what she wanted to do, she should do it. You know what I mean? And I think we are left in a kind of ridiculous situation, which is, I think, interesting.

L: Has she ever worked before with the issue of labor?

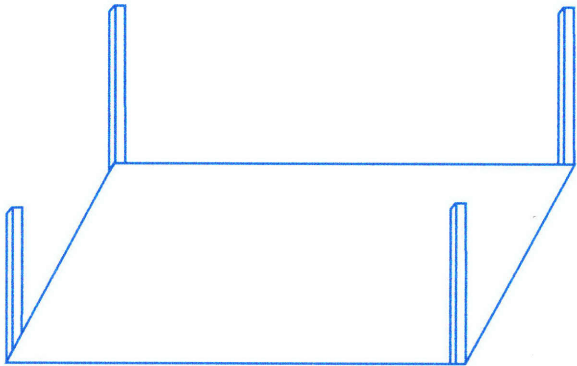
K: Yeah, last week.

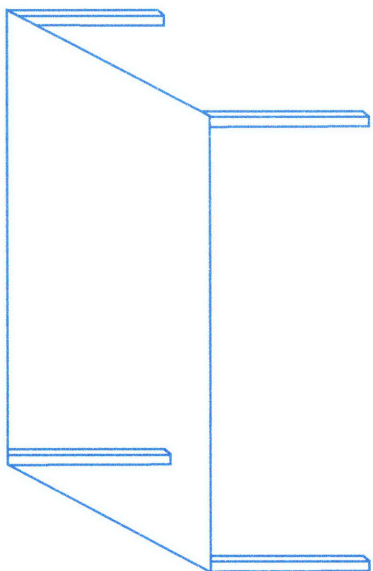
A: With Home Depot and the prison... there's labor in there.

B: What would that mean?

L: Well because, it could be a critique of labor in this context. It is obviously very much tailored for our response here in the condition of the critique of working that... right?... we've come to ask the notion of work. Why should art be about working? That's kind of like what she's proposing.

K: In relation to what she did last week... we had to do a midterm practice presentation and this was what came out of it (shows the booklet) and it was all about labor. She assigned us all these things we needed to do—it's like an assembly line almost—and then, we had to gather information for her, we had to cut each paper and then, we'd put some together.





I can see a pretty strong relationship to what she did last week and today.

**E:** I think it has to do a lot also though with... I mean her work is always very much about the exact contemporary situation, exactly our situation right now. There was a lot of struggle about when do we get to work and when do we have to present... this funny academic atmosphere of needing all the time to be making presentations instead of making work. That's very much about that moment in our discussion.

**M:** As an artist we always do work—at least I did when I still was practicing as an artist—that was all the time. And I also, at one point, decided to end art school because I didn't want to have this academic context. I'm a free person. It's my decision.

**E:** No, I'm not arguing the merits of... I'm just saying that's the thing.

**M:** No, I just wanted to say: it's a struggle sometimes where to position yourself. Do you want to have feedback or not. What form of... that is something we go through at one point. I thought it was very important yesterday what you said (**points to N**) you cannot teach somebody to be a good artist but you can train people to be professional. And the question is also: what does artistic education mean?

**C:** Well, I would say about that, that on one level she gets plenty of artistic education here. And she doesn't really need specific feedback today. She needs to do this. This action. And it also puts us in a position of looking at, you know, what we do. You know, what the purpose of these crits are. I mean... I think they're good. I'm just saying that sometimes, maybe, they seem ridiculous to the students.

**M:** I think it's at certain moment sometimes of liberation and I wish I could do the same because of all of these meetings here. I think they're also sometimes somehow crap, but it's a convention of communication that... but, I think it's also good to take the liberation and say, at the end of the day, that's what I think about it and it's important to do that. I completely agree with you. And it doesn't help you if you do it when nobody watches anyway. I think it's important to do it at a moment when somebody reacts. Because otherwise it wouldn't get...

**C:** I would look at it and say: well, I wonder if her project is gonna be about this performative thing. And how she's gonna turn... you know, continue that. It would be nice if she did a whole series of things like that. Maybe she's not. I certainly don't want to even say that to her. You know, what I mean? I don't think one has to say anything to her about what she did. On a serious issue level, I feel like—(**looks at the camera**) she'll see it anyway if she wants to—but, I don't want to engage with her in a discussion about that. I mean it wouldn't make sense!

**N:** You mean it's because this was a moment and this is another moment?

**C:** Yeah. No, no... it's because it is a moment and you don't need words to... you don't need to drum it into the ground. It's a fresh moment. We don't have to talk to her about the meaning of it. She knows.

**O:** Yeah, it's interesting the dialogue she engages with, I mean the course of the art student is taken here. How much did Hope Ginsburg elaborate and work on the artist as "employee." I mean... the role that the artist has taken now.

I mean Alia is using that same phrasing with the artist as “hustler.” And now, you know, without words and obviously through action we have the artist as “nonconformist” or as, you know, “not-worker” or it’s not an employee, unemployed, it’s not seeking work. That’s the one who is actively choosing not to work. Even though she may not wish to discuss it, or, bring us into the long-drawn wind of discourse. It’s something that, you know, we’ll do anyway and she’s already thought of and she’ll have to come to it some point later.

**M:** It also has to do with a moment of authority. And I think it is, I mean, we debate with you the work... it’s a certain power-relationship and: how open can we be? What do you gain from us in such a situation if you are not open, if you feel hurt, or maybe, sensitive to what we have to say? And then: what is it all about? What are the relations with each other? It also has to do with: can we really be open? *She was now really open*, and, I have to say now, *we are really open*. Maybe that’s what happens, what is good.

**C:** It is. Now, she created a situation.

**L:** That was really smart because it is not that we attended performance. It was the performative space erupting into the real and then turning around the whole situation. The table is upside down now. And we are now discussing all of this. I think it was quite effective in that sense. But I’m wondering about the notion of NEVER WORK as iconoclastic gesture—as an active protest. It kind of reminds me of the strategies of Maurizio Cattelan. He will send to the gallery a note that he was sick from the doctor. And they showed that because he just couldn’t come up with anything for the show. Or pretend

that his art has been stolen and sent the police record to the gallery. The gallery has nothing to show so they show that police record that the art was stolen. It’s a bit of a gimmick, you know.

**D:** But, I don’t think it was so much of an excuse.

**P:** She’s not doing that. The gesture is much more of a punk gesture.

**D:** Yeah, just the language of it.

**P:** She did a good job. I mean I’ve seen, so long, a tradition of people not showing up to critique or not doing anything. She did a really good job of not showing up. It was tough.

**Q:** Is that a Situationist’s slogan?

**D and P:** Yeah.

**B:** I think we have to move on. Five minutes.

**O:** It’s interesting, I mean, because something that has happened—the Situationist slogan—it’s happening again. Specifically with Jegan’s presentation, if this was a Surrealist gesture, then, we have this argumentation of: oh, what’s the point of doing a Surrealist gesture again? Oh, how would we try to place this now aside something Situationist? Could we call it anything other than Situationist? If we were only discussing it with contemporary... you know...

**Q:** I think it’s always... I mean times change—so it’s different.

**O:** I mean this is what Kate’s dialogue was about. It’s not Situationist, it’s about her making work about this program and being here and her work changing over each semester. I see that.

**H:** But, it’s also about experience, real life experience. You can feel it.

**M:** I don't speak French that's why I didn't understand the quote.

**C:** Don't ever work.

**D:** It was translated!

**M:** I see badly. I didn't have the time to read it. I was just looking for you. And I just thought: I don't read French... or maybe it was something else. I didn't get the point. I know the Situationists were French, but... So, it's real and you react real. There is something to that and I like that because she takes, to a certain extent, this situation as real and that makes me react... It goes beyond teacher-student. You react real. And I wish sometimes we could do that more. American academia has a lot of rules for the students. Yeah, I think so. We're human.

**C:** Human?

**M:** Yeah, I am.

**D:** Yeah, but we're an eclectic bunch. We can work around that.

**M:** No, no, I like it when I'm invited to be real because I think you have more from us and I have more from you. So for me that's really, how to say...

**C:** I can name certain people in the art world who are always in the real tense. But, they're really attractive to other... to a whole bunch of things.

**O:** Please... !

**C:** No, no, no... Well, say Charlemagne Palestine, do you know him?

**M:** Yeah.

**C:** Anyway, he's a real person.

**M:** You're real!

**D:** Are you flattering each other?

**C:** No, but... I mean people are attracted to people who have difficult personalities but they say exactly what they think so sometimes it's really painful... but a lot of people are attracted to those people because they identify and find vicarious identification because they can't say it but they really think. So, this other person who is getting all the flack for it—not in a good way and it's not always good what they do and I'm not saying it's a good way to be—but I'm just saying it's interesting in relationship talking about the real; about being real and that we're not. But it's interesting that you say American academia. Germany was another thing, I found in Germany.

**M:** They're less aware of it because it's so internalized and here I see the differences. And it is... we'd never get into a lawsuit as a teacher...

**C:** Oh, I see.

**M:** No, that's only exaggerated. But there's certain regulations how to communicate...

**C:** You mean... we are pc..

**M:** Pc, or, certainly... it is also a certain respect of understanding. The students are still in an educational relationship to you but sometimes I wish to communicate on a real level.

**C:** You mean, having drinks, smoking joints? You could do that in Europe. Here... it's a problem.

**M:** We'll meet in Europe next time. No, I think it's important. I think the communication is more beneficial but I think also when some students can't cope with that and obviously if somebody makes a sign like that people say I want to hear another feedback.

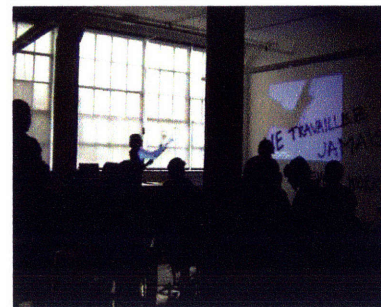
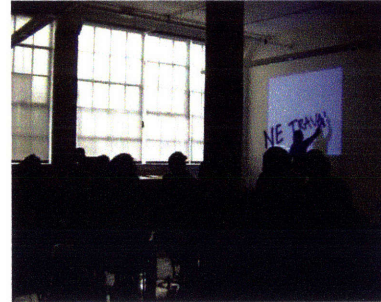
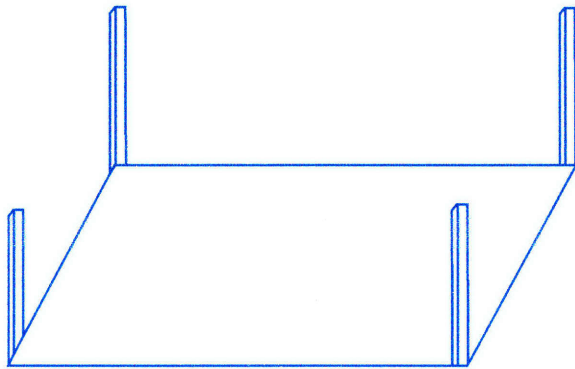


B: Can we move on? I'm sorry but it's really time...

C (to the camera): That was fun!

D: Put more, put more!

(2.10pm)





“Il Ne Marche Plus” was made out of the “Ne Travaillez Jamais” booklet (script) which is a transcription of what people said during the midterm critique. I gathered students and friends from MIT and told them to play the script. Additionally, I asked one student, Brooke Jarrett, to interpret my performance of the midterm. She did not see the midterm and, therefore, had to interpret the performance just from the script, i.e. from what people said after my performance. She was free to do whatever she wanted to. I helped her making a recording of her voice in French of what I said in English before the midterm performance.

For the performance, I asked these students to sit in a circle at the same place where the midterm critique took place. When the audience came for the critique, Brooke began her performance: She held a stereo in her hands which played the French version of my midterm introduction. Behind Brooke there was a wall with an image that Sadie (another student that participated in the performance) and Brooke made beforehand. It showed the fictive table around which both performances took place. As soon as the French voice finished, Brooke destroyed the stereo with a hammer, wrote the sentence “Il Ne Marche Plus” on the wall, and ran away. Then, the students began to read the script. In the audience there was the same faculty as there was in in the midterm critique so they could actually here what they said through the voices of younger students.

After the play, the students remained there and were part of the “real” critique.





















A: I'm in the process of analyzing what we discussed last time and making all these connections to texts that I wrote or text that you proposed. For instance, here, I was talking about that I want to include what you usually don't include in academic texts and then I remembered Pirandello's theater about these characters that suddenly come to the play and say, oh, we are the **rejected characters**, our author didn't want to include us into the play. They don't tell a story that is worth it to put in to a theater but there's something to them. This [A points to a hard copy on the wall] is the part when these six characters come and say that they want to play their own stories just the author doesn't want them to be there.

After the play of „Il Ne Marche Plus,“ Pieranna Cavalchini, an external critiquer, mentioned that it reminded her a lot of Pirandello’s „Six Characters in Search of an Author“. Soon after she told me that, I went to buy the play, read it and, indeed, **the reflection on the situation—in his case the theater—is very similar to my reflection on the situation of the critique**. While I was trying to point out the condition of making art work within an art program, Pirandello shows his reflection on theater and its conditions: the shaping of characters as a conflicting process. The play is talking about six characters that interrupt a rehearsal of a play. They take over the stage and claim that their own story is much more interesting than the composed play, the script. Through this clash an interesting scene amongst the „real“ characters, the actors and the play’s producer evolves. The illusion of the theater is radically broken and brought back to the very beginning of the production of a play: when the author decides about what kind of characters he wants to create.

In „Il Ne Marche Plus“ the characters were made out of the audience’s responses of a previous critique. So their words were taken as script and implemented into other characters. However, the persons that gave their words to this previous critique were attending the play and could hear their own comments in a delay. The reflection on the critique happened through another critique.

I see my work “Il Ne Marche Plus” in relation to Pirandello’s play “Six Characters in Search of an Author” in dealing with **the impossibility of their format**. Both works are teasing the “real” and tangling the staged with the genuine. However, in my case it is about reflecting on a situation (the critique) through theatrical means whereas Pirandello reflects on theater through theatrical means.

**Producer** (shouting): We came here to work, you know.

**Leading Actor**: We really can't be messed about like this.

**Father** (resolutely, coming forward): I'm astonished! Why don't you believe me? Perhaps you are not used to seeing the characters created by an author spring into life up here on the stage face to face with each other.

Perhaps it's because we're not in a script? (He points to the Prompter's box.)

**Stepdaughter** (coming down to the Producer, smiling and persuasive): Believe me, sir, we really are six of the most fascinating characters. But we've been neglected.

**Father**: Yes, that's right, we've been neglected. In the sense that **the author who created us, living in his mind, wouldn't or couldn't make us live in a written play for the world of art.** And that really is a crime, sir, because whoever has the luck to be born a character can laugh even at death. Because a character will never die! And to be able to live for ever you don't need to have extraordinary gifts or be able to do miracles. Who was Sancho Panza? Who was Prospero? But they will live for ever because – living seeds – they had the luck to find a fruitful soil, an imagination which knew how to grow them and feed them, so that they will live for ever.

**Producer**: This is all very well! But what do you want here?

**Father**: We want to live, sir.

**Producer** (ironically): For ever!

**Father**: No, no: only for a few moments – in you.

**An Actor**: Listen to that!

**Leading Actress**: **They want to live in us!**

**Young Actor** (pointing to the Stepdaughter): I don't mind... so long as I get her.

**Father**: Listen, listen: the play is all ready to be put together and if you and your actors would like to, we can work it out now between us.

**Producer** (annoyed): But what exactly do you want to do? We don't make up plays like that here! We present comedies and tragedies here.

**Father**: That's right, we know that of course. That's why we've come.

**Producer**: And where's the script?

**Father**: It's in us, sir. (The Actors laugh.) The play is in us: we are the play and we are impatient to show it to you: the passion inside us is driving us on.<sup>7</sup>

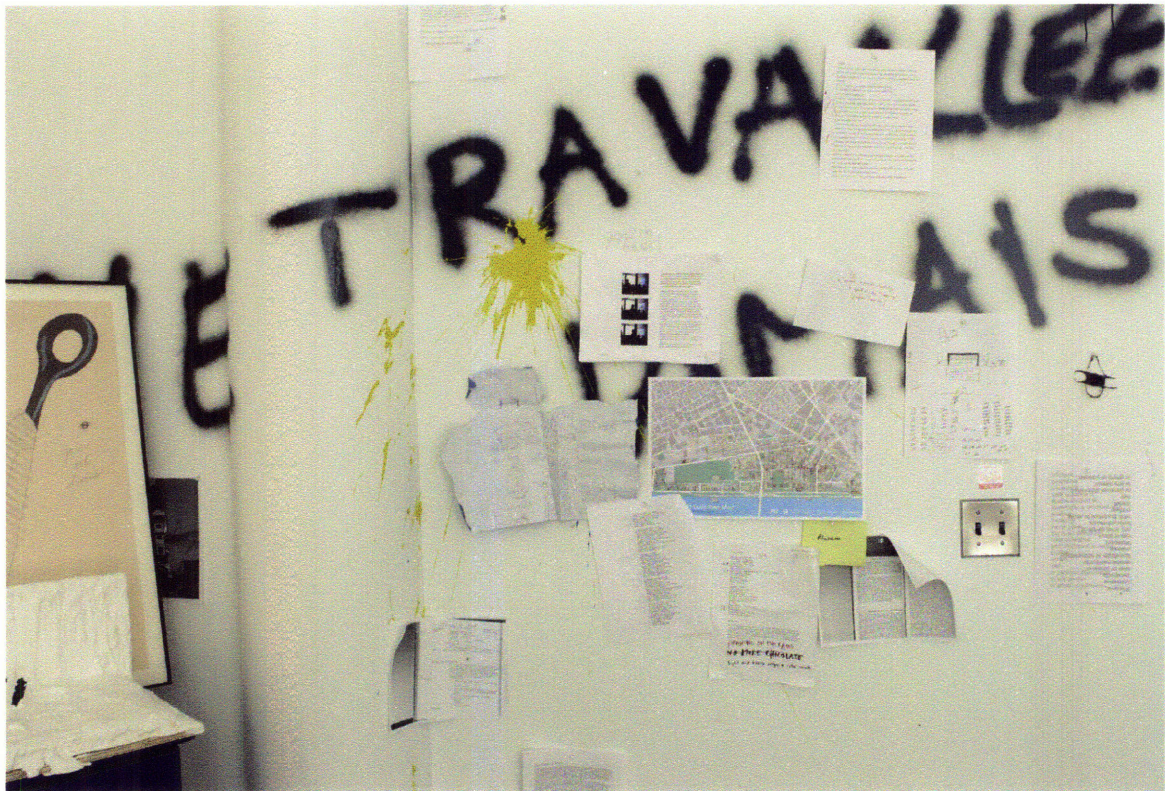
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7) Luigi Pirandello, *Six Characters In Search of an Author*, page 14/15









B: What's the title of your thesis?

A: I don't know.

B: Thesis in search of a title?

D: Title?

A: I'm still figuring out what I'm actually writing about.





**Producer:** That's good! Yes. I tell you all this interests me – it interests me very much. I'm sure we've the material here for a good play.

**Stepdaughter** (trying to push herself in): With a character like me you have!

**Father** (driving her off, wanting to hear what the Producer has decided): You stay out of it!

**Producer** (going on, ignoring the interruption): **It's new**, yes.

**Father:** Oh, it's absolutely new!

**Producer:** You've got a nerve, though, haven't you, coming here and throwing it at me like this?

**Father:** I'm sure you understand. Born as we are for the stage...

**Producer:** Are you amateur actors?

**Father:** No! I say **we are born for the stage** because...

**Producer:** Come on now! You're an old hand at this, at acting!

**Father:** No I'm not. I only act, as everyone does, the part in life that he's chosen for himself, or that others have chosen for him. And you can see that sometimes **my own passion gets a bit out of hand, a bit theatrical**, as it does with all of us.

**Producer:** Maybe, maybe... But you do see, don't you that without an author... I could give you someone's address...

**Father:** Oh no! Look here! You do it.

**Producer:** Me? What are you talking about?

**Father:** Yes, you. Why not?

**Producer:** Because I've never written anything!

**Father:** Well, why not start now, if you don't mind my suggesting it? There's nothing to it. Everybody's doing it. And your job is even easier, because we're here, all of us, alive before you.

**Producer:** That's not enough.

**Father:** Why isn't it enough? When you've seen us live our drama....

**Producer:** Perhaps so. But we'll still need someone to write it.

**Father:** Only to write it down, perhaps, while it happens in front of him – live – scene by scene. It'll be enough to sketch it out simply first and then run through it.<sup>8</sup>

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8) Luigi Pirandello, *Six Characters In Search of an Author*, page 33



Another aspect in Pirandello's play is the discussion about **what is accepted into the world of art and what is not**. In the German version of the book there is a foreword written by Pirandello himself in which he reflects on the possibility of displaying this unusual case of an author who refuses to give life to some of the characters, that were born in his fantasy. He thinks then of displaying the occasion that these characters, fulfilled with life, don't accept to be neglected anymore.<sup>9</sup> I see it also as tolerating ideas that do not fit into a symbolic structure set up for the dramatic composition of a play. They do not fit into the format even though, in the end, the play „Six Characters in Search of an Author“ was still a play. Later in the foreword Pirandello talks about **the play as a neglected drama** which depicts characters differently than a drama that would have been shaped through the end by the phantasy of the author. This neglected drama, he says, could be displayed only as a „situation“ in a certain process, in impetuous and disorderly allusions, in violent abbreviations and in a disorderly manner. And he adds that the play was again and again disrupted, ditched, questioned, denied by one of the characters and not even wanted by two of the characters.<sup>10</sup>

Similar to that I wanted to display an aspect of the production of art works that influences art immensely but is never exposed: the critique. How do people talk about the work in progress and in which ways does this affect the work? Alike drawings that were first only used as a study for a painting and then became an art form themselves, the critique is supposed to be a step in the development of an artwork and not the work itself. By exposing it to an audience, as Pirandello exposes his work in progress, the process automatically is put into question: Why do we have to create and shape characters and what consequences does it have? What gets displayed and what doesn't? Why are peripheral and meaningless things left out?

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9) "Warum eigentlich – fragte ich mich – stelle ich nicht diesen ungewöhnlichen Fall eines Autors dar, der sich weigert, einige der Figuren, die aus seiner Phantasie lebendig geboren wurden, leben zu lassen, und eben den Fall dieser Gestalten, die – da sie nunmehr von Leben erfüllt sind – es nicht mehr hinnehmen, aus der Welt der Kunst ausgeschlossen zu bleiben?" (Luigi Pirandello, Sechs Personen suchen einen Autor, Vorrede, page 7, Reclam Verlag)

10) "Und das Drama der Personen, das sich nicht so darstellt, wie es sich in meiner Phantasie ausgeformt hätte, wenn es dort aufgenommen worden wäre, sondern eben als abgelehntes Drama, konnte in meinem Werk lediglich als ‚Situation‘ und in einer gewissen Entwicklung bestehen, es konnte sich lediglich in Anspielungen ungestüm und ungeordnet, in gewaltsamen Verkürzungen und auf chaotische Weise äussern: immer wieder unterbrochen, entgleist, in Frage gestellt, von einer seiner Figuren gelehnt und von zwei anderen nicht einmal gewollt." (Luigi Pirandello, Sechs Personen suchen einen Autor, Vorrede, page 18, Reclam Verlag).



*G said, he thinks that I need to adjust the 1st line of the latter paragraph a little. Critiques are specific to school, they are part of the 'education' process, part of the institution, used as a way, not just in aiding in development (as you suggest) but also in evaluating your success or failure (the difference in perspective from student to teacher..) Out of school, there are no critiques. At least not in the sense that you describe. There are reviews but they are different in many ways (for one, they happen AFTER). There are studio visits that happen during the process of making, but they are different too, there is no judgement or assessment attached to them. No, critiques are tied to education. Maybe it could be as simple as saying "...the aspect of art production within an educational institution (or context)...."*



Why do we have to create and shape characters and what consequences does it have? What gets displayed and what doesn't? Why are peripheral and meaningless things left out? These questions posed in the last paragraph on Pirandello reminded me of a totally different writing by the French conceptual artist Daniel Buren. His essay „The Function of the Studio“ talks about the **studio as an overlooked factor** of the production of an art work: „Of all the frames, envelopes, and limits—usually not perceived and certainly never questioned—which enclose and constitute the work of art (picture frame, niche, pedestal, palace, church, gallery, museum, art history, economics, power, etc.), there is one rarely even mentioned today that remains of primary importance: the artist's studio“.<sup>11</sup> This was written in 1971. Nowadays computer work like grant writing, e-mailing, and in general organizational efforts have become a large part of the artist's work and are usually not mentioned at all. However, the entire discussion leads to the question to what cost can an art work maintain an autonomous position from its condition. As Buren analyzes very closely the condition and circumstances of the production is crucial to the meaning of the final art work: „... the work is in place, it does not take place (for the public), while it takes place (for the public) only when not in place, that is, in the museum“.<sup>12</sup> and: „This sense that the main point of the work is lost somewhere between its place of production and place of consumption forced me to consider the problem and the significance of the work's place“.<sup>13</sup>

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11) Daniel Buren, The Function of the Studio, in: October, Vol. 10, page 51

12) Daniel Buren, The Function of the Studio, in: October, Vol. 10, page 53.

13) Daniel Buren, The Function of the Studio, in: October, Vol. 10, page 56





**Father:** Yes, I know that, I understand. But on the other hand, perhaps you don't understand as yet. I'm sorry! But you see, for you and for your actors what goes on here on the stage is, quite rightly, well, **it's only a game.**

**Leading Actress** (interrupting indignantly): A game! How dare you! We're not children! What happens here is serious!

**Father:** I'm not saying that it isn't serious. And I mean, really, not just a game but an art, that tries, as you've just said, to create **the perfect illusion of reality.**

**Producer:** That's right!

**Father:** Now try to imagine that we, as you see us here, (He indicates himself and the other Characters.) that **we have no other reality outside this illusion.**

**Producer** (astonished and looking at the Actors with the same sense of bewilderment as they feel themselves): What the hell are you talking about now?

**Father** (after a short pause as he looks at them, with a faint smile) Isn't it obvious? What other reality is there for us? What for you is an illusion you create, for us is our only reality. (Brief pause. He moves towards the Producer and goes on.) But it's not only true for us, it's true for others as well, you know. Just think about it. (He looks intently into the Producer's eyes.) Do you really know who you are? (He stands pointing at the Producer.)

**Producer** (a little disturbed but with a half-smile): What? Who i am? I am me!

**Father:** What if I told you that that wasn't true: what if I told you that you were me?

**Producer:** I would tell you that you were mad!

The Actors laugh.

**Father:** That's right, laugh! Because everything here is a game! (To the Producer.) And yet you object when I say that it is only for a game that **the gentleman there (Pointing to the Leading Actor.) who is ,himself' has to be ,me', who, on the contrary, am ,myself'.** You see, I've caught you in a trap.

The Actors start to laugh.<sup>14</sup>

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14) Luigi Pirandello, *Six Characters In Search of an Author*, page 62/63

B: It's interesting also with what you did last time with the re-enactment and this time again. You step out of it and **somebody else becomes you**. I mean not you in a biographical you but you as the artist. As what do you see yourself in this moment? As an artist? As a student? And then who is the other person?

A: Well, I'm clearly the one who directs but I kind of like that someone else talks in my position so that it's not all about me and myself. There's just general topics that could be also valid for the faculty therefore I chose a faculty member to play my role, Andrea. I just asked her the day before to do it.

B: Who was she then?

C: I mean she was an actor. I mean I think it's not the role or a possibility for us to even say every single person who takes part in this performances is a surrogate of Annatina.

B: If you have Annatina obviously sitting there giving answers from what position does she speak? Maybe you say you don't represent anything but that's not true it represents something. I was not sure that's the person who represents the student or an artist.

A: The student as an artist. [the artist as a student] What would be the difference? I just wanted somehow to **remove the discussion from something personal.**

B: I don't mean it Annatina in this moment I mean somebody more abstract. Somebody who is critiquing and somebody who is critiqued. Is it this? Or is this also resolved?

A: Do you understand the question?

D: Yeah, I think it's what role Andrea is playing. Is it specific to that circumstance in this situation so in that scenario somebody is being critiqued so you kind of transferring the critique to Andrea. So is it about that dialectic of flipping or is it about something more subtle? Muddying the boundaries between...?

A: Yeah, I think it's about muddying the boundaries so that it's instead about directing the critique to someone, a person, **it's just about critiquing as such and as a discussion, as a dialogue.** I have always this opinion that the critique should work without the artist being there. I mean I think it's interesting when the artist is there but it shouldn't be that the artist is there to explain everything.



A: I don't want to talk about my life.

B: Yeah, but your life... the question is what we think what we are. Do we think that we are already ourself a scripted personality who has something inscribed in us that is determined by everything around us and that constitutes us. The question is do we take this as something original or do we comment this as a body, as a human, that is informed by everything that makes us to what we are which might be personal decisions but if he says girls instead of a woman - that already determines us.

C: That what not even what I wanted to say. I mean do you think you're capable to creating an object as an.. practice. If you're presenting this type of paper, do you want people to think of this as it being I don't understand what who this person- this could be a Brazilian artist, it could be a Swiss artist. It maybe just the fact that your work is more focused on institutional critique, you know, where other people's work is more focused on the traditional role like the artist practice is going back centuries and centuries because I know Spanish painters make paintings as well because they are from Spain whereas port painters from Sweden make paintings in this way because they are from Sweden. But as the role of the contemporary artist who's been informed by European art practice and American art practices at the end of the twentieth century you want to produce work that doesn't have a face or often does not have a face. And you only wanted to produce a dialogue you don't want it to come back on the author..

A: Why? I don't understand...

C: That's fine. Do people understand what I'm saying?

G: I sort of understand what you're saying. I mean neutrality in itself is a stance.

A: Oh, I see. I don't want to make myself neutral at all because I think there's gonna be so much in there that says a lot of where I come from just through the discussions.























In addition to the constant disillusion in Pirandello's play there's an ironical **re-illusionment** when the character of Madame Pace appears. Suddenly Pirandello uses all of the theater's power to construct an illusion and pretend someone is actually there: a real person. The questioning of the trick and the illusion is, however, included in the play. The scepticism that an illusion, a miracle, is a cheap trick is strangely countered by the father who always wanted to display the truth, his own truth. Everything is tangled, Pirandello plays with all of the theater's possibilities.

**Producer:** Would you mind telling me what you are doing?

**Father:** Yes, of course: perhaps, if we dress the set better, she will be drawn by the articles of her trade and, who knows, she may even come to join us... (He invites them to watch the door at the back of the set.) Look! Look!

The door at the back opens and Madame Pace takes a few steps downstage: she is a gross old harridan wearing a ludicrous carrotty-coloured wig with a single red rose stuck in at one side, Spanish fashion, garishly made-up, in a vulgar but stylish red silk dress, holding an ostrich-feather fan in one hand and a cigarette between two fingers in the other. At the sight of this apparition, the Actors and the Producer immediately jump off the stage with cries of fear, leaping down into the auditorium and up the aisles. The Stepdaughter, however, runs across to Madam Pace and greets her respectfully, as if she were the mistress.

**Stepdaughter** (running across to her): Here she is! Here she is!

**Father** (smiling broadly): It's her! What did I tell you? Here she is!

**Producer** (recovering from his shock, indignantly): **What sort of trick is this?**

**Leading Actor** (almost at the same time as the others): What the hell is happening?

**Juvenile Lead:** Where on earth did they get that extra from?

**Young Actress:** They were keeping her hidden!

**Leading Actress:** It's a game, a conjuring trick!

**Father:** Wait a minute! **Why do you want to spoil a miracle by being factual.** Can't you see this is a miracle of reality, that is born, brought to life, lured here, reproduced, just for the sake of this scene, with more right to be alive here than you have? Perhaps **it has more truth than you have yourselves.** Which actress can improve on Madame Pace there? Well? That is the real Madame Pace. **You must admit that the actress who plays her will be less true than she is herself -** and there she is in person! Look! My daughter recognized her straight away and went to meet her. Now watch - just watch this scene.<sup>15</sup>

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15) Luigi Pirandello, *Six Characters In Search of an Author*, page 42-47























































A: Well, I think I have a main narrative that is my writing, then this narrative [A points to the wall covered with sheets] is our last meeting, then all the references and then this discussion that I had with someone else, the first discussion, and then maybe the discussion today. **This methodology** actually comes from a text that I wrote a year ago in Benjamn Buchloh's seminar. It is this text in which Jean Genet writes about Giacometti and his art work. And it's not even sure if they ever met. Everyone wonders if Jean Genet just made up the interview with Giacometti or if it is real. It says here: ‚Giacometti to whom I'm reading this text asked me why in my opinion this difference...‘ He gave this text which is here to Giacometti and tells him to comment on it. That's what I try to do with the thesis also: **Mixing up these different sequenzenes of production and making them talk to each other on different levels**. However, despite the various times and materialities in the end it's all one text in a stack of paper.

The text “The Studio of Alberto Giacometti”<sup>16</sup> by Jean Genet gave me a new thought about the relation between art critiquer and artist, on writing on art and its relation to art. I’m interested in an approach that goes beyond a **dualistic distinction between the artist as creator and the art critique as commentator**. I think Genet went in a direction which reflects the complexity of interpenetrating relations: Genet and Giacometti seem to work on the same, yet with different means. There is no such hierarchy of the art critiquer as the authority who can explain the artist’s work and the artist who does not manage to express himself in words. Rather it is a second narrative that was generated out of the encounter with Giacometti and Giacometti’s artistic work.

Genet confronts the reader with a note that says: „Giacometti, to whom I am reading his text, asks me why, in my opinion, this difference of intensity between the statues of woman and the busts of Diego.“ On the one hand there is a coherent timeline in the text: A narration about reflections on written reflections. On the other hand, there is a strange simultaneity which brings Giacometti very close to the reader. It’s as if Giacometti jumped out of the text and the reader suddenly finds herself on the same level as Giacometti. A confusion unfurls where the text is. A confusion about dimension. It is as if you talk to each other (without really looking into each others eyes) and jump from one theme to another and back again, always attempting to make the narrative as extensive as possible. A conversation with alert partners who would, if they felt like, jump into another character (and fake it). Or it is like a sort of diary without strict chronology. Encounters merge with personal interpretations and the narration constantly changes into vivid images, turns back to the narrator in order to quickly change into the next adventure again.

In this paper I do not try to write *about* my work but *with* my work. My artistic practice is not being analyzed through this paper but rather interwoven with different kinds of other sources, materials, and reflections. The entire exercise of reflecting my own artistic practice I consider as a chance to play with readings, writings, dialogues, and opinions as an extension of my work.

Moreover, my practical work in itself reflects on the hierarchy described above in a way that the critique is being part of the art work and treated as a material for artistic practice. The art critiquers become the performance and even, later, the script for future plays. On the one hand there is this inclusion of the critique in the work and then, on the other hand, there is the direct intervention into the structure of the critique’s dialogue as seen in “Laugh and Say You Enjoy It. Or Act Differently.”

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16) Jean Genet, The Studio of Alberto Giacometti



























































A: Yeah, so this reminds me again of the text „The Death of The Author“ by Roland Barthes. It says exactly what I'm trying to do. The writer has the power to combine these different kinds of writings and to oppose some others...

D: ...to oppose some by others.

A: So, **It's about choosing and not so much about inventing new text.**

B: That's basically curating.

A: Curating?

B: Yeah, you work with things that are kind of there. And if they're not there you try to find them because they should be there. It's like **creating neighborhoods**. It's almost what you do, kind of a neighborhood. If this body of text makes that body of text. It's very interesting because it's almost like a network of dialogue.

A: Yeah, but then I still have this desire to write in a thread. But I haven't managed yet... to put it in one narrative so that you can actually read it.

B: It's almost like a hypertext. It would be wonderful if your text could be this **unfolding map**. It could unfold like it's now.

The essay „The Death of the Author“ by Roland Barthes talks about the role of the author and her/his relation to the production of text: „...the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to **mix writings**, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as **never to rest on any one of them**. Did he wish to express himself, he ought at least to know that the inner ‚thing‘ he thinks to ‚translate‘ is itself only a ready-formed dictionary, its words only explainable through other words, and so on indefinitely...“<sup>17</sup> In my work I try to detach dialogues from the idea of the original. My work consists of transcriptions of dialogues, rearrangings and editings, chains of quotes and references. Although an “original” event seems to have taken place, people involved in these events played roles—socially or academically predetermined—and referred to other situations, places and experiences. The roles that people in a critique occupy “naturally” are somewhat prewritten already, prewritten by an institutional framework. Stephen Prina, an external critiquer during “Il Ne Marche Plus”, said he recognized himself in the play without actually having been in there. He recognized himself as an art critiquer, the role you automatically have in a critique, a **prewritten role**. These roles were reinforced in the work that followed: “Laugh and Say You Enjoy It. Or act differently.” I prewrote the questions and the answers and made the audience ask these questions so that the roles would literally be put over the people. They then had to decide whether they wanted to ask the question and play this role or if they rather would intervene differently. The idea of originality has to be overcome in order to accept and react to my work.

Through the radical questioning of the expression of the author, Barthes diverts the attention put on the author to language itself: „... it is language which speaks, not the author; to write is, through a prerequisite impersonality..., to reach that point where only **language acts, ‚performs‘, and not ‚me‘**.“<sup>18</sup> This notion of the language which performs instead of the author is crucial for my work because it emphasizes the ludic potential of language when it encounters the reader. Barthes says that writing is about the reader rather than the author and it is directed to the destination rather than the origin: „For him [the author] on the contrary, the hand, cut off from any voice, born by a **pure gesture of inscription** (and not of expression), traces a field without origin - or which, at least, has no other origin than language itself, language which ceaselessly calls into question all origins.“<sup>19</sup>

In “Ne Travaillez Jamais” I tried to emphasize through leaving a critique that a work of art should be valuable **without the author explaining it**. The question was posed in an institutional framework in which the entire structure is based on the student presenting his/her work. The value and the meaning of the art work produced in school comes from the critiques that happen in these structures. Barthes says: „The explanation of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the author

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17) Image–Music–Text, Roland Barthes, page 146

18) Image–Music–Text, Roland Barthes, page 143

19) Image–Music–Text, Roland Barthes, page 146

„confiding“ in us.“<sup>20</sup> Later in the text he even mentions the critics and how he thinks they are intertwined with the authority of the author: „Hence there is no surprise in the fact that, historically, the reign of the Author has also been that of the Critic, nor again in the fact that criticism (be it new) is today undermined along with the Author“.<sup>21</sup>

My work is left open, it is open the unpredictable. It can never have one single meaning—it always creates itself only in the moment of its *utteration* and, therefore, cannot be determined in meaning. „The Author is thought to nourish the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child. In complete contrast, **the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text**, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written here and now.“<sup>22</sup> Roland Barthes refers to the fixed meaning in relation to writing: „We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‚theological‘ meaning (the ‚message‘ of the Author-God) but a **multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash**“.<sup>23</sup> And later he adds the notion of the secret to the problematic of the fixed meaning: „In precisely this way literature (it would be better from now on to say writing), by refusing to assign a ‚secret‘, an ultimate meaning, to the text (and to the world as text), liberates what may be called an anti-theological activity, an activity that is truly revolutionary since **to refuse to fix meaning** is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases—reason, science, law“.<sup>24</sup>

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20) Image–Music–Text, Roland Barthes, page 143

21) Image–Music–Text, Roland Barthes, page 147

22) Image–Music–Text, Roland Barthes, page 145

23) Image–Music–Text, Roland Barthes, page 146

24) Image–Music–Text, Roland Barthes, page 147













































B: It is interesting because it's not a re-enactment, it's new texts and it's kind of a new format. It's not a theater play either. It started as a performance then it was a sort of a re-enactment and now it started to become a new format which is kind of a scripted space. It's very interesting to even figure out where to position it... What is it? It's kind of a **staged reflection**.

C: A theater.

B: No, a theater works with repetition... we would play it.

C: Are there not elements of that happening?

B: They happened, yes, but she edits them afterwards. This is now an unedited version. It's an ongoing collection. It's a very long stream. It might be a bigger theater.

D: Yeah, I think the meta project is the theater, but this weird impulse jumps from place to place. They're small little things. There are so many layers on top of layers.

B: Do you see it as theater?

A: No, I see it as the opposite. Well, it's kind of like a theater but my intention is to give space to small thoughts or comments that usually don't get into a thesis. For instance, I just thought of taking this receipt as the first page of my thesis and so the University Stationary is in my thesis. Always when I go there they tell me these interesting stories and somehow I think they are as important as my thoughts that I have on books and texts. Or, at least, I want to have it all on the same level.

B: Yeah, this has to do with hierarchies and relationships of authority but also with interactions. ...

A: To the paradox that I don't want to call it theater but at the same time it has **theatrical elements**... I have to tell the people that they're gonna be in these pages but I don't want it to be staged.

B: It's kind of like an intellectual journey.

A: How? Can you explain that?

B: Yeah, so if it's not a theater, what is it? For the moment, if you collect everything it's more like a logbook.

A: Well, I don't say that I'm gonna make it so authentic that every sentence is gonna be in there. Already here I chose. We had a discussion for an hour and I only chose maybe ten minutes. So I'm editing.



B: But you edit a logbook also.

A: What is a logbook?

B: It's like a travel blog. It like you start somewhere and **you don't know where you'll arrive**. And it's based also on intellectual reflection. That's why I said it's an intellectual journey rather than a geographical journey. In this respect I think it might be also interesting to connect to certain practices. I think about Antonin Arthaud, the Theater and it's Double. And talk to Joan Jonas because she worked with the Wooster Group. And Joan is very distinct—we did this conference on theatricality—that she doesn't do theater. She was very upset. But I still think what she does has to do with theatricality which is not theater. It's interesting also to specify terminologies in order to locate what you want with it... what do you research.

A: I was asked this question two days ago. We discussed exactly that Joan Jonas is rejecting the term theater even though what I saw at the DIA Beacon I found very close to theater. Then, it would be interesting to see what you're exactly rejecting. What's the negative aspect of the term theater...

B: Yeah. And then it's interesting to see what theatricality means because theatricality is a theoretical term. I can quote Heidegger here: **Theatricality** comes from theorein and that is **theory**. This is why I ask so specifically because what you do is for me kind of a... It has a lot to do with theory and with a critical discourse and reflection... But you involve everybody in the process. And the question we had in the midterm was: are people quasi part of your script and you delegate them or do they have actually a voice? ...which is interesting.

A: I directed it because I thought if it's too open there's always these constraints if you don't want to participate. If you have now these questions you have to make the decision: Do I ask it or don't I? Do I want to be the person who ask this specific question or am I different? And I'm also happy that someone didn't want to ask the question and just refused to participate. But I thought maybe it's even more democratic if everyone has a question than if no one has a question. Because then only people talk who are used to talk. That's the reason why I „made“ everyone participate.

D: I thought it was a good level of participation. We were given something... We had the words in front of us. then, some people were totally doing something different... which is awesome.

C: I was confused as to when we were critiquing the work and as of when we started..

D: ...but that's amazing! That there can be that blur that you don't know when it's over.



*G suggested if I had time to write a little more, maybe a paragraph, addressing the comments that came before, particularly B's comments about 'theory': Is you work theory, practice or something in between? Or, maybe: is your work theoretical or actual? He commented that he would say my work was actual. My work might be informed by theory or reflect on theory but the work itself might be outside of a theoretical impulse...*

















































*This implementation of the dream mentioned on page... might have influenced another work I made in which I made people ask prewritten questions. One of the questions was asking about a dream and if anyone was ever inspired by dreams. I then answered with an anecdote of a „real“ situation in my life which, in hindsight, appeared to me dreamlike.*

8) Twenty years ago, I saved a young bird that fell out of a nest. I looked after it really carefully but one day a cat came around the corner outside my door at a rapid pace and seemed to catch the bird. I was so shocked that I screamed really loudly. My grandfather, afterwards, asked me why I screamed so loudly. I was still shocked and while I was thinking about the scream, I heard a voice saying: it was because you thought the bird's life was your own, right? I could never figure out whose voice that was but for sure it was a voice outside of me.

Can someone open the windows... It's so sticky in here.



5) Where do your ideas come from?



### (De)constructing Situations

Recently, a lot of artists have re-enacted historical events in order to actualize and rethink the past or to understand the present through the past. However, I think both ways of relating events to each other are based on their division. There's the enactment and a following re-enactment which is copying the old. One is "original," the other a "copy." Without regarding the original event as completed you can't re-enact it. My interest lies in the "original" that gets tangled with the "copy" and blurs their hierarchical relationship.

Last semester, people asked me if I had nostalgic feelings about the past—the Situationists—when I re-introduced one of their sentences in my work. I was confused about this question because I wasn't thinking about the quote in its past time so much but rather what it means today. Sure, it was taken from a par-

### Die (De)konstruktion von Situationen

Zurzeit arbeiten viele Künstler und Künstlerinnen mit Reenactments um vergangene Geschehnisse zu aktualisieren und neu zu denken oder durch die Vergangenheit die Gegenwart zu verstehen. Ich denke, beide Wege verschiedene Zeiten zueinander in Beziehung zu setzen, basieren jedoch auf ihrer Teilung. Da ist ein "Enactment" und dann ein darauffolgendes "Re-Enactment" welches das alte kopiert. Eines ist das "Original" das andere die "Kopie". Ohne das "Original" als abgeschlossen zu betrachten, ist ein Reenactment nicht möglich. Mein Interesse liegt im "Original", das sich mit der "Kopie" verwickelt und deren hierarchische Beziehung verwischt.

Letztes Semester fragten mich ein paar Leute, ob ich nostalgische Gefühle gegenüber der Vergangenheit habe, (bzw. den Situationisten), weil ich einer ihrer

Sätze in meiner Arbeit benützt habe. Ich war etwas irritiert über diese Frage, weil ich nicht so sehr über das Zitat in seiner Zeit nachgedacht habe, sondern vielmehr was das Zitat heutzutage für eine Bedeutung haben könnte. Natürlich ist es einer bestimmten Zeit entnommen worden - es ist aus einer spezifischen historischen Situation heraus entstanden - aber das heisst nicht, dass ich die Zeitspanne wiederholen oder wiedergeben möchte. Die Performance war keine Wiederaufführung oder Reproduktion einer Situation vielmehr war es eine Konstruktion einer neuen Situation - eine Geste der Gegenwart und der Zukunft.

Ich habe für diesen Midterm eine Situation konstruiert, die sowohl Dialoge wie auch die Dekonstruktion von Situationen als eine Möglichkeit Kunst zu produzieren, reflektiert.

Die erste Frage bitte...

particular time in the past—it was generated in a specific historical situation—but that doesn't mean I want to repeat or re-play this time period. It wasn't about re-enacting or reproducing a situation but constructing a new situation—a gesture of the present and the future.

For the midterm, I constructed a situation that reflects on dialogues as well as the (de)construction of situations as a way of producing art.

The first question please...



**6) Is your work political? If so, in which way?**

**I mean it is not talking literally about any political issues...**



1) Well, I'm kind of at a point where I'm not sure how much I can gain from a critique. In the last semester I found out how to deal with critiques in a way that satisfies me more. It's not so much about a critique of critiques but rather using this moment of attention in a different way... use it as a playground.

2) Sure. I understand your question. But let's take another one first.

3) You're right, I'm nowhere. This is a result of having nothing to say.

4) Honestly, the notion of being nostalgic in art I find very interesting.

5) Do you have any suggestions?

1) Mh. Ich bin sozusagen an einem Punkt wo ich nicht weiss, wieviel mir eine Kritik bringt. Im letzten Semester habe ich herausgefunden, wie ich mit Kritiken umgehen kann, sodass sie mich mehr befriedigen. Diese Performance ist nicht so sehr eine Kritik einer Kritik, sondern vielmehr ein Versuch mit diesem Moment von Aufmerksamkeit in einer anderen Weise umzugehen... ihn als Spielplatz zu brauchen.

2) Klar. Ich verstehe deine Frage... aber nehmen wir doch erst eine andere Frage.

3) Du hast Recht, ich bin nirgendwo. Das ist das Ergebnis, wenn man nichts zu sagen hat.

4) Ehrlich gesagt, der Gedanke nostalgisch zu sein in der Kunst, finde ich sehr interessant.

5) Habt ihr Vorschläge?

6) Ich denke meine Arbeit ist politisch, aber das ist, was jeder Künstler und jede Künstlerin von sich behauptet. Tatsächlich versuche ich die typische politische Sprache zu vermeiden. Ich denke, politische Kunst wird üblicherweise mit Kunst verwechselt, die sich einer politischen Sprache bedient. Ob diese Kunst am Ende etwas Politisches aussagt, ist eine andere Frage. Ich denke, meine Arbeit ist insofern politisch, als dass sie eine Situation analysiert und in die Situation interveniert. Ich selbst bin immer in die Arbeit miteinbezogen. Ich bin nicht ein Beobachterin von Aussen, die über die Situation herrscht.

7) Macht ihr euch lustig über mich?

6) You know, I think my work is political but that's what every artist claims. Actually, I try to avoid any typical political language. I think mostly political art is getting confused with art that uses political language. If, what they say, in the end is political is a different question. I think of my work as political in so far as it tries to analyze a situation and intervene in it. I am myself always included in this process so I'm not an outside observer that can judge over a certain situation.

7) Was this supposed to be funny?

11) You are free to ask whatever you want to...

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**2) Ask a question about the notion of repetition. Repeat your question  
right after you uttered it for the first time .. as many times as you want to.**

8) Twenty years ago, I saved a young bird that fell out of a nest. I looked after it really carefully but one day a cat came around the corner outside my door at a rapid pace and seemed to catch the bird. I was so shocked that I screamed really loudly. My grandfather, afterwards, asked me why I screamed so loudly. I was still shocked and while I was thinking about the scream, I heard a voice saying: it was because you thought the bird's life was your own, right? I could never figure out whose voice that was but for sure it was a voice outside of me.

Can someone open the windows... It's so sticky in here.

8) Vor zwanzig Jahren habe ich einmal einen Vogel gerettet, der aus seinem Nest gefallen ist. Ich habe mich sehr liebevoll um ihn gekümmert, aber eines Tages kam eine Katze um die Ecke gerannt und hat den Vogel beinahe geschnappt. Ich erschrock so fest, dass ich sehr laut schrie. Mein Grossvater hat mich danach gefragt, warum ich so laut geschrien habe. Ich stand immernoch unter Schock als ich über meinen Schrei nachdachte und eine Stimme hörte, die sagte: Du dachtest, das Leben des Vogel sei deines, nicht? Ich habe bis heute nicht herausgefunden, von woher diese Stimme kam, aber sie war sicherlich ausserhalb von mir. Könnte jemand das Fenster öffnen? Es ist so stickig hier..

9) Letztes Semester sagte jemand: Weisst du, ich denke du bist "echt." Jemand war echter als jemand anderer und seither denke ich konstant über diesen Gedanken, dass jemand wirklicher sein kann als andere, nach. Ich wundere mich, ob das an der Uebersetzung ins Deutsche liegt.

10) Ja, in einer gewissen Weise ist meine Thesis mit dieser Performance verbunden. Ich versuche auch in meiner geschriebenen Thesis aus der Form Inhalt zu gewinnen. Oder in diesem Falle ist es eine Struktur, die Inhalt zulässt.

11) Danke für diese Frage. Ich hab mich gewundert, ob jemand dazu was sagen wird.

9) Last term, someone came up with saying, you know I think you're real. Or - someone was more real than someone else and since then I keep thinking about how this notion of someone being real and someone else not being real is working. I wonder if this is because of the translation into German.

10) My thesis is kind of related. It is also about the process of gaining content out of the form. Or the form that is in this case a structure allows content to come in.

11) Thank you for this question. I was wondering if anyone says anything about this issue.



12) Sorry, I didn't hear you. Can you speak a little louder?

12) Sorry, I didn't hear you. Can you speak a little louder?

13) I'd like to think of this as a performance which is erupting into the real. I mean I don't think I play anything. I'm real.

12) Entschuldigung, ich kann dich nicht hören. Kannst du etwas lauter sprechen?

12) Entschuldigung, ich kann dich nicht hören. Kannst du etwas lauter sprechen?

13) Ich schaue das Ganze als eine Performance an, die in die Wirklichkeit ausbricht. Ich meine, ich denke nicht, dass ich euch irgendetwas vorspiele. Ich bin echt.



14) War dies ein Versuch mich zu beleidigen? Nächste Frage!

15) Ich denke, eure Fragen sind zu unkritisch. Ich meine, ich würde ganz andere Fragen stellen...

16) Ich habe über Wahrnehmung und Reflektion nachgedacht und wie diese sich gegenseitig beeinflussen. Oft wird die Reflektion und Diskussion einer Arbeit wichtiger gewichtet als deren Wahrnehmung.

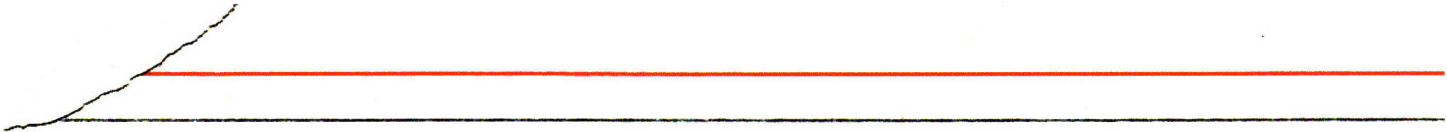
17) Ja, jetzt könnt ihr "echte" Fragen stellen..

14) Was this supposed to offend me? Next question!

15) I don't think your questions are critical enough. I mean I would ask much different kinds of questions...

16) I was thinking about perception and reflection and how they influence each other. Often, reflection and discussion become more important than the perception of a work.

17) Now is the time to ask "real" questions...



**4) Ask something about the relationship between an original and a copy.**

- 1) Ask a question about how this performance relates to the previous ones last semester.
- 2) Ask a question about the notion of repetition. Repeat your question right after you uttered it for the first time... as many times as you want to.
- 3) Ask something about her relationship to repeating.
- 4) Ask something about the relationship between an original and a copy.
- 5) Where do your ideas come from?
- 6) Is your work political? If so, in which way? I mean it is not talking literally about any political issues...
- 7) Laugh and say you enjoy it. Or act differently.
- 8) Say something about a dream you had and then ask her if she has ever been inspired by dreams.
- 9) Do you think you're real? What do you think is a "real" person?

- 10) Is this related to your thesis?
- 11) You are free to ask whatever you want to...
- 12) What is it that you want to get out of this critique?
- 12) What is it that you want to get out of this critique?
- 13) Is this part of your work?
- 14) I wonder how you will develop your work when you're not in school anymore?
- 15) Ask something that you would never dare to ask in a normal critique.
- 16) Make a comment on the settings.
- 17) How can we discuss about your work without having seen anything?
- 18) Say something about your feelings of being asked to ask prewritten questions.

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B: I'm curious when you handed the cards out at the midterm **you gave the cards randomly?**

A: Yeah.

B: It was still intriguing to me that Sofia had the one about dreaming and I had the one about thesis...

A: And Muntadas had the one that I wrote down because he asked me that question and it's really crucial to me because I'm unsure how I'll manage to work outside. And I had to laugh when he asked this question. I mean I knew that there's gonna be some coincidences but I didn't expect that there's gonna be so many.

B: Yeah. That was interesting as a mechanism.

D: Well, it's interesting to ask yourself questions which is a lot about what this thesis is.. it's like asking yourself questions and a lot of question that you don't have any good answers to it's kind of like the process... Normally you would think if you're asking yourself questions it would actually be giving yourself out so making it easier and yourself being soft about it. But it seems that you ask yourself even more direct difficult questions than anybody manages to around you.

B: I don't know in which way one gets involved if one reviews the work. You start to interact. **Do I say it or is this now staged?** Shall I say something differently? **Do I subordinate myself** but if I'm not doing it do I think I'm not creative?

John Cage wrote an afternote to his Lecture on Nothing: “Afternote to Lecture on Nothing: In keeping with the thought expressed above that a discussion is nothing more than an entertainment, I prepared six answers for the first six questions asked, regardless of what they were. In 1949 or ‘50, when the lecture was first delivered (at the Artists’ Club as described in the Foreword), there were six questions. In 1960, however, when the speech was delivered for the second time, the audience got the point after two questions, and, not wishing to be entertained, refrained from asking anything more. The answers are:

1. That is a very good question. I should not want to spoil it with an answer.
2. My head wants to ache.
3. Had you heard Marya Freund last April in Palermo singing Arnold Schoneberg’s Perrot Lunaire, I doubt wheter you would ask that question.
4. According to the Farmers’ Almanac this is False Spring.
5. Please repeat the question...  
And again...  
And again...
6. I have no more answers”<sup>25</sup>

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25) John Cage, *Silence*, page 126























































B: Oh, no. These are the misunderstandings when you say theater or writing. Maybe scripted space is the better word. But when you say the word *art* at MIT I tell you we have similar weird reactions. These words are so... we have to specify what we mean.

Luce Irigaray she tried to develop her own language because she said that she didn't want to write in the language of the master which is a male language. But she said, how can you invent your own language?

A: You can't, right?

B: Yes, but she tried. And then Deleuze/Guattari they're writing as a collective. Like in *Mille Plateau* writing unhierarchical. You can start the book at any moment. You don't read it from front to back for example.

A: It's not that I mix up what I said and other people said. I just don't put any names because I want people to tell me what they think without thinking what happens this person is gonna hear what I said.

B: Yeah, because it's not important.

◀

A: Yeah, it's the connecting thing. Then, I just heard about this book by Derrida, A Certain Impossible Possibility To Speak Of The Happening. It's a lecture that Jacques Derrida held ten years ago. So it's very recent. He summarizes his thoughts and I haven't read it yet but I ordered it. And I think it might be very interesting with what I did in the play at the Midterm of last semester. **The question if it's possible to make something new and the notion of repetition.**

D: Do you think you and these sources could start to converse in a way that these conversations happen? I'm just trying to figure out the role of you and the book and I wonder... I could imagine you making up an interview with Derrida about this.

A: Well, I don't know him so well.

D: Yeah, but you know what I mean?





I heard about the text “A Certain Impossible Possibility to Talk About the Event”<sup>26</sup> by Jacques Derrida when I talked with someone about de-/constructing situations as a way of producing art. We got into the discussion if the construction of new situations is possible at all, if the planned and the new isn’t a contradiction in itself.

In his lecture, Derrida talks about the relation between the singularity of an event and its inherent repetition. He begins with the example of language saying that one can only understand a word because it is repeatable; as soon as one speaks one uses repeatable words and the singularity has been lost in this iteration. Likewise an event, if it appears it has to be repeatable, therefore; the singularity of an event gets lost through the appearance.<sup>27</sup> But how can then something singular appear at all? There is no solution to that. Derrida plays with this aporia and continues saying that in the singularity of an event, repetition has always its part and with the repetition the extinction of the first appearance has already begun. In a certain way, Derrida concludes, death is in on it.<sup>28</sup> If new things are presented and pretend to be new it is necessarily an impossible idea. Originality has already died as soon as it is recognized as such.

My art practice happens at the most unspectacular site, the most common and uneventful location. It is a situation of everyday where conventions have determined our „behavior,“ where the „behavior“ is controlled, expected, or assigned. In relation to the notion of the impossibility of the „new,“ the environment of the school is a challenging framework. Especially the expectations evolving around critiques of student’s work involve the problematic of the notion of newness. I tried to implement my view in this environment and work on a setting unlikely to be eventful.

Derrida states, that the event, if it should exist, must not be foreseen or set in advance and not even be decided upon.<sup>29</sup> Especially nowadays events are planned, foreseen and set in advance. The essence of an „event“ has become the planned and spectacular. One wants to know in advance about the event even though it is supposed to be surprising and unpredictable. Derrida, however, insists that the event, if it exists at all, comprises to do the impossible.<sup>30</sup> And, before it becomes reality, it can only appear as impossibility. That does not mean it cannot take place or it does not exist. It only means that it neither can be uttered theoretically nor be foreseen, Derrida argues.<sup>31</sup>

When I now think again about the discussion we had, the challenge would be to acknowledge and confront the impossible, dealing with the impossibility of the event. Derrida describes it as fol-

26) „Eine gewisse unmögliche Möglichkeit, vom Ereignis zu sprechen“

27) „Man kann ein Wort nur verstehen, weil es wiederholt werden kann; sobald ich spreche, bediene ich mich wiederholbarer Worte, und die Einzigartigkeit verliert sich in dieser Iterabilität. Ebenso kann das Ereignis, wenn es erscheint, nur um den Preis erscheinen, dass es bereits in seiner Einzigartigkeit selbst wiederholbar ist.“

28) „Ebenso muss in der Singulartät des Ereignisses die Wiederholung schon am Werk sein, und mit der Wiederholung muss die Auslöschung des ersten Erscheinens schon begonnen haben... In gewisser Weise ist der Tod mit von der Partie.“ page 40.

29) „Wenn es Ereignis geben soll - soviel ist klar -, dann darf das nicht vorhergesagt oder im voraus festgelegt und noch nicht einmal wirklich entschieden werden.“

30) „Das Ereignis, wenn es das gibt, besteht darin, das Unmögliche zu tun.“

31) „Bevor es sich ereignet, kann das Ereignis mir nur als unmögliches erscheinen. Das heisst aber nicht, dass es nicht stattfinden kann, dass es nicht existiert; es heisst nur, dass ich es weder auf theoretische Weise aussagen noch es vorhersagen kann.“



lows: One has to talk about the im-possible event. The im-possible which is not only impossible, not only the contrary of the possible, but equally the condition or the opportunity of the possible. The im-possible which is the experience of the possible itself.<sup>32</sup> Through the impossible, thus, one can only relate to what is possible.

*The notion of duplication and copy fascinated me first of all when seeing Elaine Sturtevant's work. She made pieces that look exactly as for instance Duchamp's ready mades. She makes you look at art with the demand to forget about the author. She asks for your tolerance to accept the art work without considering its author. But then again, she also asks the question: what if a woman does this? What if a woman mimics the work of dominant male art figures? Does the art work still mean the same? Is it a copy or is it a new iteration?*

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32) Man muss hier vom un-möglichen Ereignis sprechen. Von einem Un-Möglichen, das nicht nur unmöglich, nicht nur das Gegenteil des Möglichen ist, sondern gleichermassen die Bedingung oder die Chance des Möglichen. Von einem Un-Möglichen, das die Erfahrung des Möglichen selbst ist.“









































































A: Oh, and then I found these drawings by René Magritte. It's in French. You know French, right? I think I want to play with text in the same way as he plays with drawings.

What is real, what is a representation? In René Magritte's „Les Mots et Les Images“ (Words and Images) drawings and writings (depiction and designation) are put into a paradoxical relationship to each other. They get tangled with each other: the drawing becomes a sign, the letter a drawing. The one that supposedly signifies precisely gets blurred and the other that seems to be blurry becomes exact. One is stronger in putting meaning over the other but then gets subverted etc. It is not that Magritte would write about the complexity of the signifier and significatum but he makes drawings that possess this complexity. Rather than rationally understand the complexity one can in fact experience it.

One drawing is described with the sentence: „Tout tend à faire penser qu'il y a peu de relation entre un objet et ce qui le représente“ it means: everything purports that there is little relation between an object and what it represents. The drawings related to this sentence look both the same but their labels differently: L'objet réel, l'objet représenté. The real object and the represented object. What is represented in this case? It looks like these two houses are representing the status of a wealthy family that represents itself with the house. So it is not only talking about the drawing and its relation to the text but also about the representation of wealthiness and its object - the house.

„Les objets qui se passent de nom“

B: This drawing has been used very strongly by the artist ... Eran Schaerf and it's about the notion .. basically you see a horse, then this painting and he says horse.. the notion of the voice. Is the voice something independent or does it belong to the body? Where is the voice when something is said.

## LES MOTS ET LES IMAGES

Un objet ne tient pas tellement à son nom qu'on ne puisse lui en trouver un autre qui lui convienne mieux



Il y a des objets qui se passent de nom :



Un mot ne sert parfois qu'à se désigner soi-même :



Un objet rencontre son image, un objet rencontre son nom. Il arrive que l'image et le nom de cet objet se rencontrent :



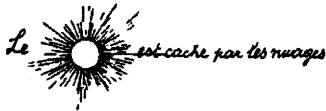
Parfois le nom d'un objet tient lieu d'une image



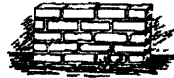
Un mot peut prendre la place d'un objet dans la réalité :



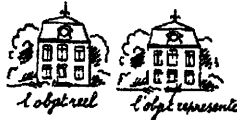
Une image peut prendre la place d'un mot dans une proposition :



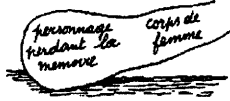
Un objet fait supposer qu'il y en a d'autres derrière lui :



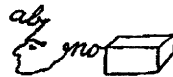
Tout tend à faire penser qu'il y a peu de relation entre un objet et ce qui le représente :



Les mots qui servent à désigner deux objets différents ne montrent pas ce qui peut séparer ces objets l'un de l'autre :



Dans un tableau, les mots sont de la même substance que les images :



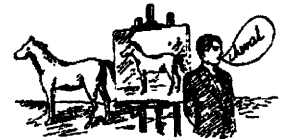
On voit autrement les images et les mots dans un tableau :



Une forme quelconque peut remplacer l'image d'un objet



Un objet ne fait jamais le même office que son nom ou que son image



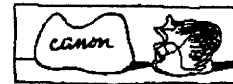
Or, les contours visibles des objets, dans la réalité, se touchent comme s'ils formaient une mosaïque :



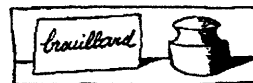
Les figures vagues ont une signification aussi nécessaire aussi parfaite que les précises :



Parfois, les noms écrits dans un tableau désignent des choses précises, et les images des choses vagues :



Ou bien le contraire :



René MAGRITTE.





































































A: Oh, and actually, I wrote this introduction about me writing that you don't use your voice when you write, right? So it's this abstract thing of thoughts that go directly in to the computer and pop up in front of you and you try to match what you have in front of you with what you think. And then there's the body in between that touches the computer, you know? That's gonna be the introduction how I'm writing.

*The intriguing thing about writing is that you are detached from your voice. Your voice is absent, hiding in your body. The writing pops up in front of you on a screen. Letters. Figures. A blinking cursor which marks your position. It indicates where to continue setting words and constructing sentences. Building. Realization (Veräußerung). Through the process of nailing down the thinking my thoughts are captured and converted. It seems a constant back and forth between what you think and what is written down. What you think and what is written down. And what is written down. There is an adamant discrepancy between the thinking and the written. In-between is the body that facilitates the mechanics of writing: The arms, the fingers, the head. It touches tools: The pen, the keyboard, the pad. The body is invisible for you but it is present and active in an unexpectedly indispensable way when I'm writing. In fact, my body is visible now that I'm writing and it is active, yet in a very low mode. It is tired, especially my eyes are out of order because of the screen light gleaming into my eyes all day. Now is the moment of writing yet I'm writing for the future.*

*Everything that is written is as a script. In the script, time isn't visible. letters are abstract, ideal. They need to get some material quality, they should appear in their materiality. Especially in computer letters don't seem to belong to any material. Maybe they belong then to the digital or the light. The spoken. The voice. Different voices responding to each other during a discussion, misunderstanding each other. All these levels are represented on one surface, the text, the print out. Mechanically distributed ink on copy paper. An image of language.*

B: Yeah, this has changed. It's very different if you type on a typewriter than if you type into a machine and it pops up in front of you. It's almost like you read a text that is no more yours. I mean if you read it as a text, it's separate from you.

A: Yeah, and that's then the transition to the scripts that I now work with.

B: **This becomes also script.**

A: Yeah.

D: Yeah, I think I was trying to say about maybe the conversation with these other authors if that is the structure of your operation of writing your thesis... If the whole thing is a **conversation of conversations**. If the structure looks the same on a cellular level and the whole thing





































































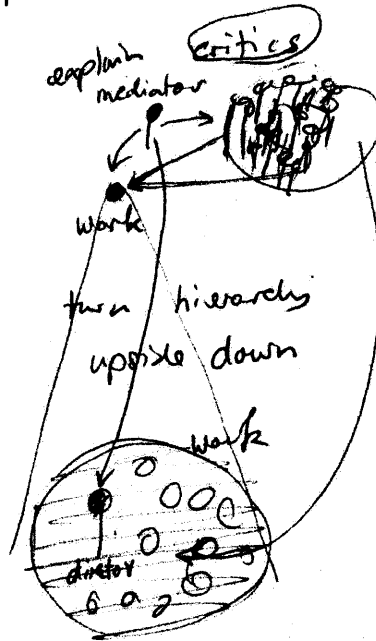
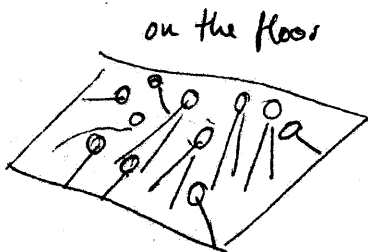
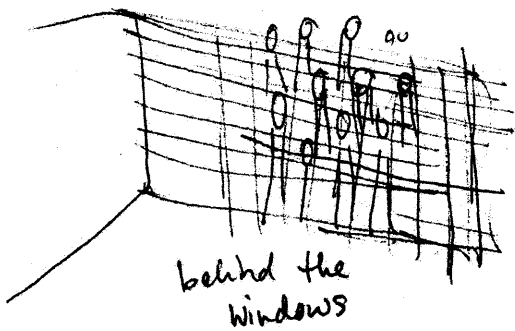
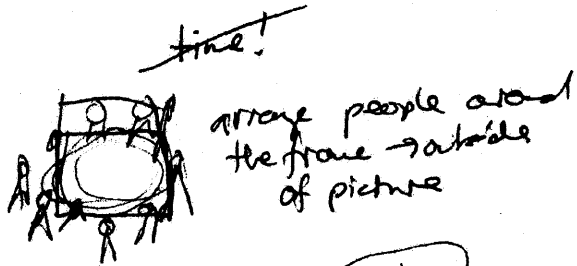
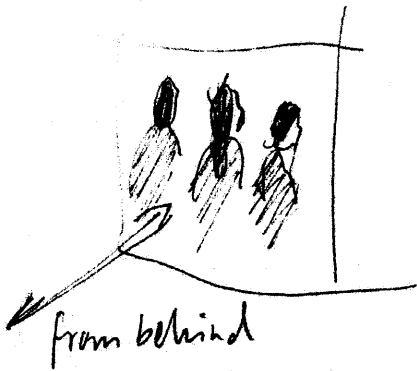




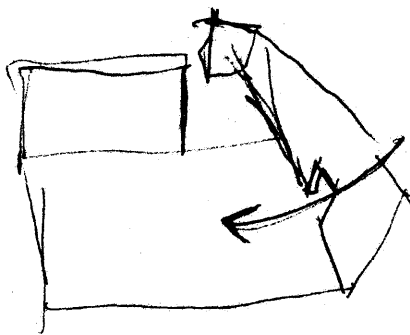
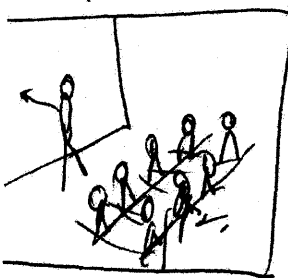




MID-TERM photo  
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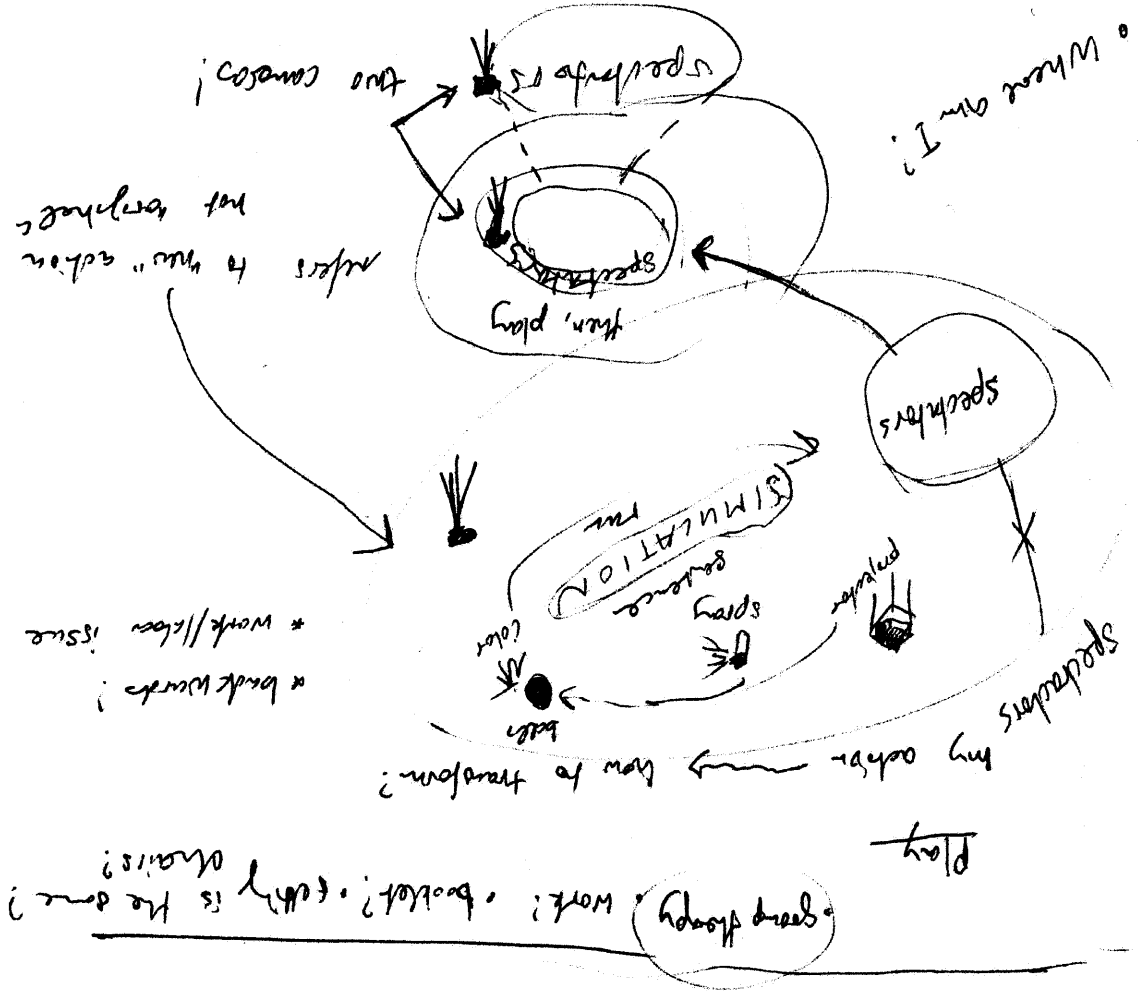
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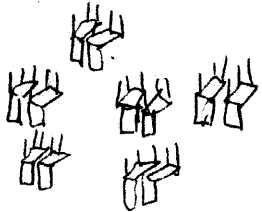
someone comes from outside

- Keiko
- strange guy
- Rob

Someone who teaches us something



stare at the ceiling



→ sit by table and look

Education











































During the Winter break in Switzerland I read a story by Nikolai Gogol that I came across when I was looking for the Pirandello play. I found it amongst the series of books that are printed cheaply so that students can buy short essays and plays just for a few dollars. *The Diary of a Madman* recounts the story of an ordinary man, a civil servant, who works in a department of some kind. He slowly goes insane through a life that is dominated by modern bureaucracy in the 19th Century Russia. The protagonist mainly sharpens quills for the director of the department. The Chief of the Division, his only colleague in the office, is grumpy and has only bad words for him. The story takes a strange turn when the protagonist begins to hear dogs talking to each other and suspects a love story amongst them. Successively, he gets lost in his fantasy, projecting himself as the king of Spain. Simultaneously, the diary's date headlines change from *October, November, December* to *Year 2000, April 43, Martober 86. Between day and night, No date. A day without date, Can't remember the day. Nor was there a month. Damned if I know what's been going on, 1st Date, Madrid, Februarius the thirtieth, January of the same year which happened after Februaruis, 25th Date and da 34 te Mnth. Yr. YraurbeF 349*. The diary's chronology is shattered by the madness of the protagonist that finally is put into a lunatic asylum. Imagining he is still the king, though unrecognized, he gets tortured because of his stolidity.

The protagonist's frustration at his working place leads him from the ordinary civil servant to a madman, from his idolization of the director's daughter to the regal imagination of being the king of Spain, and from the site of his office in the department to the lunatic asylum. Nikolai Gogol portrays the story of a man's ordinary everyday life which is boring and discouraging. His surrounding is dominated by hierarchical arrangements of departmental structures and envy. There is an uncanny entanglement between the circumstances of the ordinary man's job and his insanity. Gogol in fact draws the **connection between bureaucracy and madness, regulation and torture**. The protagonist's mental condition is not sustaining the oppression of fulfilling tasks that are unessential and of being a nobody. In addition, he does not fit the social norm of being married. Dogs are the only creatures that the protagonist relates to.

The author Nikolai Gogol as an intellectual, working at the University, puts himself into this figure of a desolate shaped figure and hopelessness. He recounts the conditioning of people struggling with modern bureaucracy and their breakouts: "I'm only forty-two, an age when one's career is really just beginning. Wait, my friend, I'll go higher than you, yet, and God willing, very, very much higher. Then I'll have a social position beyond your dreams. Do you imagine you're the only one to have dignity? Give me a fashionable new coat, let me wear a tie like yours, and you won't be worthy to shine my shoes. My lack of means—that's the only trouble".<sup>33</sup>

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33) Nikolai Gogol, *The Diary of a Madman and other Stories*, page 12

I got frustrated when I came to this huge institution because there were so many things to organize and represent that there was very few time left to actually work on my own project. Due to the huge amount of required classes, the studio work is put into a tight schedule and decisions have to be done efficiently. However, to come to ideas which I look for, I cannot sit down for an hour and come to a solution. In the past, I would dive into a subject (project) for one or two weeks and only work on this one. Classes have their schedules. Sometimes twice a week, each three hours of presenting each other's works. Then, there is a lot to do to survive as an art program at MIT: advertisement, lectures, presentations, competitions, grants, emails, etc. It is difficult to shield yourself against these administrative works. Thus, now and then, one would get frustrated or mad. Indeed, frustration and madness are part of the institution.

Ann Carlson is a choreographer, performer and conceptual artist who makes businessmen dance. She usually works with them for a long period of time and invents a new dance out of gestures from the business world. The business men themselves invent their own choreography. Recently, she showed parts of a film she made of one of her dance projects during a lecture at the ICA Boston. Four business men would stand in a hallway between elevators and say parts of sentences over and over again. Or, repeat gestures of saying hello but abruptly turn into totally different movements. Gestures of managing get tangled with dance. Artistic ideas are implemented into the site of managing.

"Now, I believe that all troubles stem from the misconception that human brains are located in the head. They are not: human brains are blown in by the winds from somewhere around the Caspian Sea".<sup>34</sup>

*My former roommate worked in the Department of Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Sciences which is located in the Green Building, a tower building on MIT campus. He told me about the office of the Head of the Department on the top floor of the tower where walls had to be built between people because they hated each other. Then, he also told me about the couple who was leading the department and that they would be totally lonesome and scratch their hands until they were bleeding. He is writing a book about these relationships on the top floors transformed to kings and queens from another century.*

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34) Nikolai Gogol, *The Diary of a Madman and other Stories*, page 22













































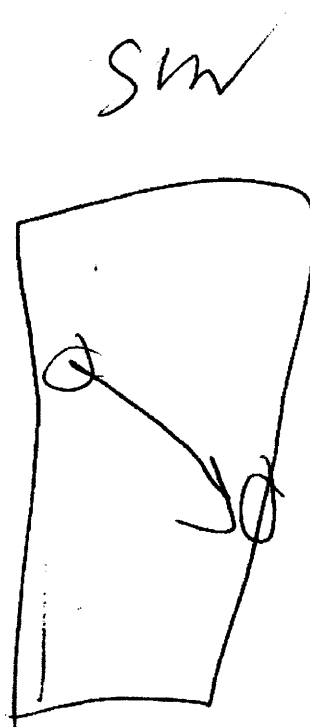








*This morning I woke up because the sun was shining directly into my eyes. It only appears in my window during spring and summer. I could follow the sun while half-sleeping wandering from one end of my the window frame to the other. As I was watching this movement I suddenly thought this must be important for my thesis. I reached for my notebook and drew a drawing of the sun's movement. I don't know anymore why I thought it was so important.*











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