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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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Inflatable Shadows

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Visual Art

by

David Richard Burch

June 2016

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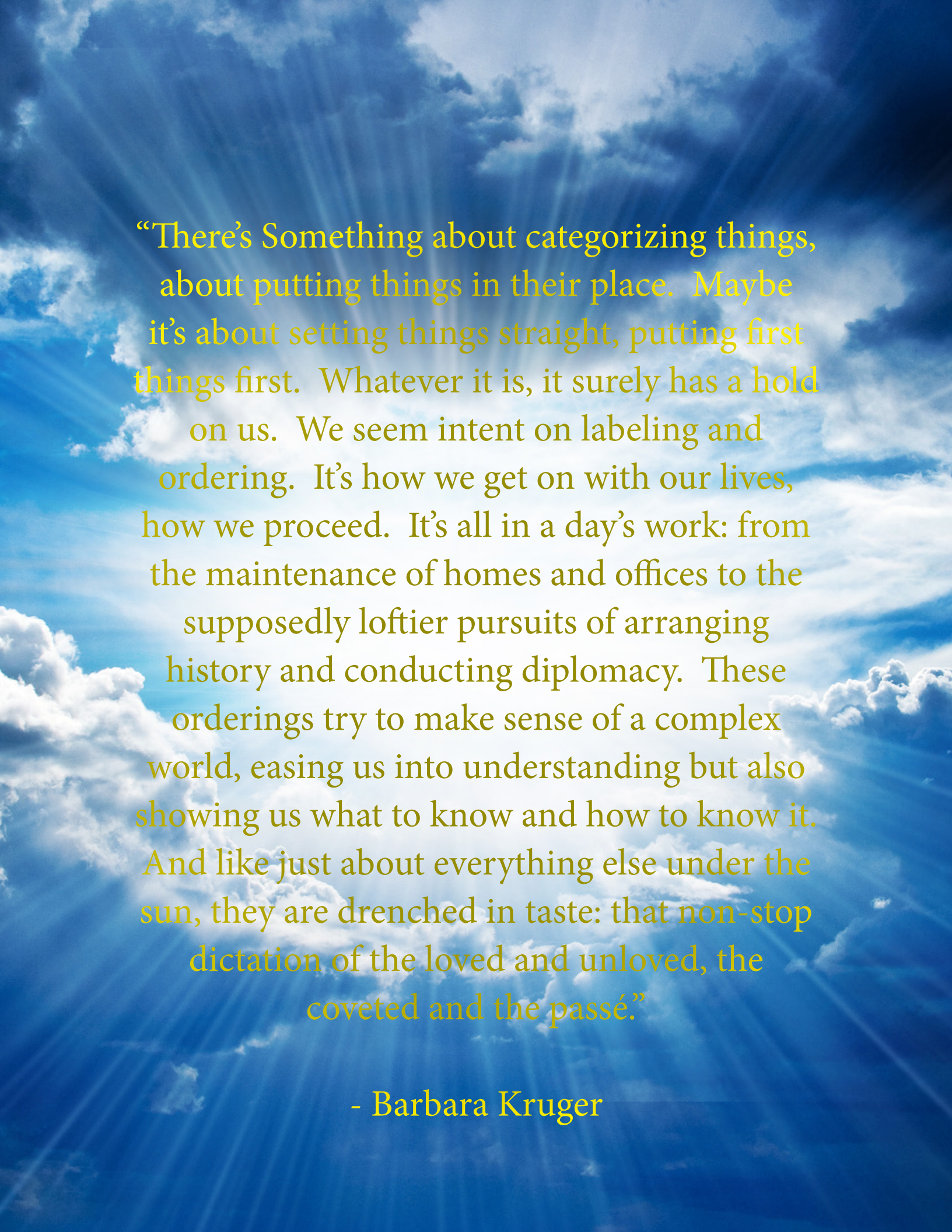
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Inflatable Shadows

David Burch



“There’s Something about categorizing things, about putting things in their place. Maybe it’s about setting things straight, putting first things first. Whatever it is, it surely has a hold on us. We seem intent on labeling and ordering. It’s how we get on with our lives, how we proceed. It’s all in a day’s work: from the maintenance of homes and offices to the supposedly loftier pursuits of arranging history and conducting diplomacy. These orderings try to make sense of a complex world, easing us into understanding but also showing us what to know and how to know it. And like just about everything else under the sun, they are drenched in taste: that non-stop dictation of the loved and unloved, the coveted and the passé.”

- Barbara Kruger

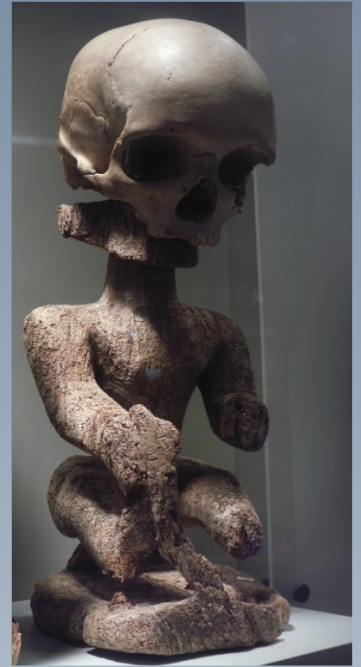
Object Power

Every object in your life holds a power, from the most mundane to the most important. For each individual, a certain hierarchy of objects develops that is attuned to one's specific subjectivity, and placement within culture. Our ability to make use of these objects has much to do with our individualized access to the various types, which qualitatively manifests an image of our placement within the hierarchy, but regardless of our personal place within that structure, our option to make use of the objects around us as tools for "advancement" is so internalized that it is hardly visible. Within the modern economic paradigm, these objects also carry within themselves a symbol of that same power structure; they signify their own making. A violence births these objects from this tiered structure of power, and arranges them within an adjacent, quasi-artificial, yet symbiotic power structure, which dominates contemporary culture. These same objects exert a power over us as well, surrounding us in our daily lives, forcing themselves upon us, in their relative use values, causing us to adapt and conform to them, in order for us to be able to exploit those "use values" to the best of our ability, in order to succeed economically and access power.

*"A concept is a brick. It can be used to build a courthouse of reason. Or it can be thrown through the window."
- Gilles Deleuze*

Household Objects

The household object signifies not only its own taste, a strength or weakness in an aesthetic subset, but also an interstitial order outside of itself. The specifics of that "order" can be envisioned in a sort of narrative, as though we imagine the wheels of production turning, global markets and investors, wars, puppet dictators, suppressed workers movements, etc. It can also be addressed on a more inherently phenomenological level, in that the experience of these various objects shows them as being indicative of, or pointing towards a larger "whole." The repetition of form, the know-ability of functions, bespeak a history, a sort of narrative we create for ourselves on an individual basis but which amounts to



a collective acceptance. The symbology of these objects, perhaps enhanced because of their ubiquity, is one that demands acceptance. Therefore they symbolize our affirmation, or at least our begrudging complacency, to the order that has befallen us, simply through the way we act out our lives according to their instructions. Even the most successful contemporary art objects do this, in that the quest for "difference" or uniqueness, signifies a quest for advancement, implies a direction, a "moving forward" within the "grand narrative."

THE SLEEP YOU'VE BEEN DREAMING OF.

A man is shown sleeping peacefully on his side, wearing a light-colored t-shirt. A glowing, translucent butterfly with green and yellow wings is perched on his chest. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting a bedroom at night.


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A photograph of a modern building at night. The building has a white facade and a glass-enclosed section. A large, pink translucent triangle is overlaid on the image, containing text. To the left of the triangle is a potted palm tree. To the right is a tree with reddish-pink leaves. The sky is dark blue.

"Who
said
that time
heals all
wounds?
It would
be better to
say that time
heals
everything -
except wounds.
With time, the
hurt of separation
loses its real
limits. With time, the
desired body will soon
disappear, and if the
desiring body has already
ceased to exist for the
other, then what remains is
a wound, disembodied."

- Chris Marker

Open Field

Incoherent scribble on a bathroom tile wall seems to be an excellent allegory of existence, or at least of culture in general. The perfect grid of white tile is the image of the rational; of structure incarnate. The satisfaction of the clean uniform surface feels reassuring on multiple levels. There's the level of the fact that all the tiles fit together perfectly, and that their pattern radiates at the same frequency on all four sides. With a square tile in particular, there is no upside down, or left to right variation, and their perfect placement in that grid is a testament to man's ingenuity and rational mind. That system is also one in which standardization presents us with a familiar situation. The expectation of a uniform tiled surface, in the room where we relieve ourselves, has the effect of providing a certain comfort when and where that expectation is met. That tiled surface becomes the field in which we can project ideas and images of the self, in a safe and unambiguous zone that is comprehensible and sanitary. The scratching or scribble on the other hand, although perhaps equally as knowable, presents itself as an irritant, a disruption in the field. Although it also connotes a different kind of operation of man, it is one that feels more primal, and obviously less rational. Its existence in that same sphere is one that threatens both the feeling of absolute comfort, and similarly, of sanitation. Also the lack of uniformity in the scribbling, in the gesture or what is being conveyed, presents itself as nuisance. What seems to me most interesting about all this is that the scribble on the tile wall is much the same as the figure on the ground; the scribble is the body, the tile is the field on which it is painted. So it can be seen that any aberration which disrupts the purity of the field necessitates immediate attention, whether we like it or not. The most infantile, crass, or mundane "thing" becomes the protagonist, simply because "it" is not the uniform surface of the field. We ourselves are the irritants, but we are also the story. Without disruption there is nothing to be said of anything, without the ideas of purity, surface, the arena, there is nothing to "push against" to cause bodies to be put in motion.



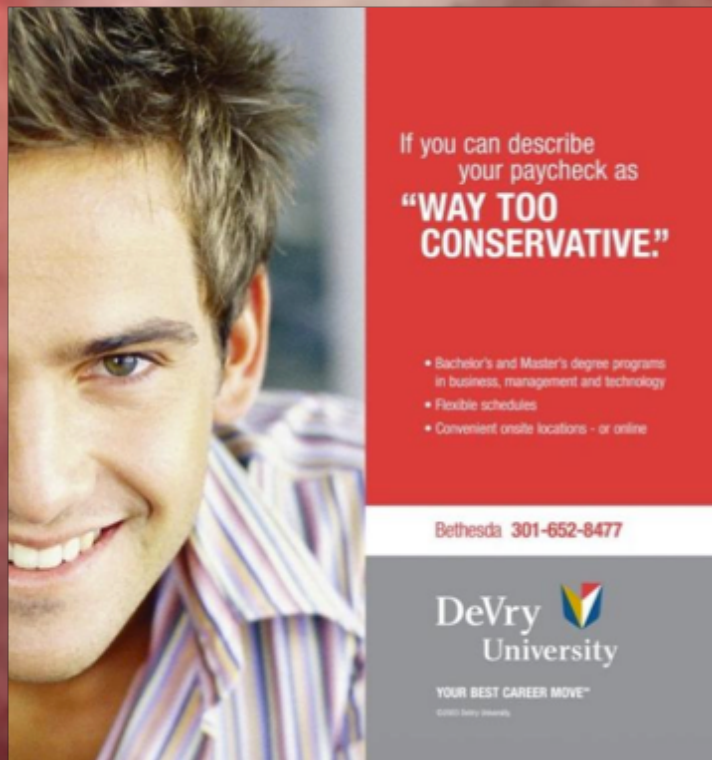
My work seems to be perpetually attempting to restrain drives for pluralities. The additions of common objects, handmade things, painted surfaces and prefabricated surface treatments, create a situation in which the possibilities become dauntingly free. That kind of freedom in material use and potential for image making is one that can become oppressive if there is no system of sorts to rein it in. If you choose everything, then in a sense you choose nothing. So, within this loose structure, a dialogue opens in which objects, images, and surface types are placed in and among each other, and a sort of back and forth of potentialities forms a type of

"dialectic" in which (hopefully) the autonomy of objects begin to speak and bring forth arrangements and placements which make sense, or at least seem to move towards a comprehensive whole. The multitude of things is necessary as a catalogue of options. The potential options will slowly, in their "dialectic," become distilled, and hopefully what is eventually arrived at in the finished object is a focused and highly concentrated abbreviation, one that somehow might retain the feelings of all those potentials within a synecdoche, a synecdoche which then becomes the whole object.



I wonder about the value of using premade and store-bought objects, compared with using objects made by my own hand and crafted in a particular way. The objects I find or buy tend to connote a certain value already before they are put to use. Because they are inexpensive objects that are usually small and highly accessible like plastic forms, glassware, and rope, these objects seem

their value in and knowable to use these that create aesthetic, systematic logic. Becoming more aware of these tendencies in my procedure forces me to reconsider the operation within a form's opera- and therefore alternative specific work, feeds back to consider uses. This into my con- sidering of pluralities. If I consider something, er something, I must also consider that consider site, or



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to express an obvious, way. I tend forms in ways their own aes-tematic, or Becoming more tendencies in forces me to form's opera-specific work, to consider uses. This into my con- pluralities. er something, consider that site, or

"not-that-thing." This makes all of the idiosyncrasies of the final product all the more peculiar. All of the why questions seem to resurface in the face of the same answer, the answer being the piece itself.





By inserting these common objects, within, and amongst the handcrafted sections of the piece, this new context changes, or at least, reconsiders the value of those prefabricated forms. I find myself wondering,

in doing this, do the handmade forms elevate

the value of the purchased forms, or do the purchased forms decrease the value of the handmade forms? Perhaps both are true, or neither. By using common materials, connotations inevitably arise, as though the work were a metaphor for something else, such as a commentary on consumer culture, or the domestic space. I have only come to notice that through a series of additions of materials, some made by my hand exclusively, and others prefabricated and put to new use, the objects within the sculpture considered as separate parts, tend to keep their status as objects, which is to say those things don't lose their names. I'm not sure if this is a good or a bad thing. On the one hand, pushing objects past a commonly recognized set of social normalities seems like a fantastic opportunity to pose questions to the viewer about the nature of reality itself, on the other hand placing commonly understood objects within a new context of contemporary painting/sculpture, and retaining the legibility of those objects, allows for a potential remove or distancing from those forms, perhaps a critical distancing, in which the new context of a familiar object opens a potential dialogue about the value, nature and purpose of these common objects.



“Trivial objects – slippers, pencils, gloves, teapots – no longer seem like innocent passive entities, but have ‘lives of their own,’ with stories to tell, and voices to tell them; the venerable subdiscipline of ‘material culture’ has news to report.”

– W.J.T. Mitchell

sardonic

<http://static.sfdict.com/staticrep/dictaudio/S01/S0107500.mp3>

3

[sahr-don-ik]

Spell Syllables

Synonyms

Examples

Word Origin

adjective

1. characterized by bitter or scornful derision; mocking
; cynical; sneering:

a sardonic grin.

sardónico

[sinónimos](#) | [definición RAE](#) | [en inglés](#) | [en francés](#) | [conjugar verbos](#) | [en contexto](#) | [imágenes](#)

Inflexiones de 'sardónico' (adj): f: sardónica, mpl: sardónicos, fpl: sardónicas

Diccionario de la lengua española © 2005 Espasa-Calpe:

sardónico,ca

1. adj. [Risa] afectada y que no nace de alegría interior:
carcajada sardónica.

sardine

<http://static.sfdict.com/staticrep/dictaudio/S01/S0106600.mp3>

3

[sahr-deen]

Spell Syllables

Examples

Word Origin

noun, plural (*especially collectively*) **sardine** (*especial y referring to two or more kinds or species*) **sardines.**

1. the pilchard, *Sardina pilchardus*, often preserved in oil and used for food.

2. any of various similar, closely related fishes of the erring family Clupeidae.

Sardinia

<http://static.sfdict.com/staticrep/dictaudio/S01/S0106800.mp3>

3

[sahr-din-ee-uh, -din-yuh]

Spell Syllables

Examples

noun

1. a large island in the Mediterranean, W of Italy: with small nearby islands it comprises a department of Italy. 9301 sq. mi. (24,090 sq. km).

2. a former kingdom 1720–

1860, including this island and Savoy, Piedmont, and Genoa (after 1815) in NW Italy: ruled by the House of Savoy.

sardina

[sinónimos](#) | [definición RAE](#) | [en inglés](#) | [en francés](#) | [conjugar verbos](#) | [en contexto](#) | [imágenes](#)

Inflexiones de 'sardina' (n) fpl: sardinas

Diccionario de la lengua española © 2005 Espasa-Calpe:

sardina

1. f. Pez osteíctio clupeiforme marino de unos 25 cm de longitud, similar al arenque, de cuerpo alargado de color negro azulado por encima, con costados y vientre plateados y cabeza dorada con la mandíbula inferior sobresaliente.
2. **sardina arenque** Véase **arenque**.
3. **como sardinas en lata** loc. adv. Con apretura o en grandes masas:
siempre vamos en el metro como sardinas en lata.

Cerdeña

Cerdeña (Sardegna)

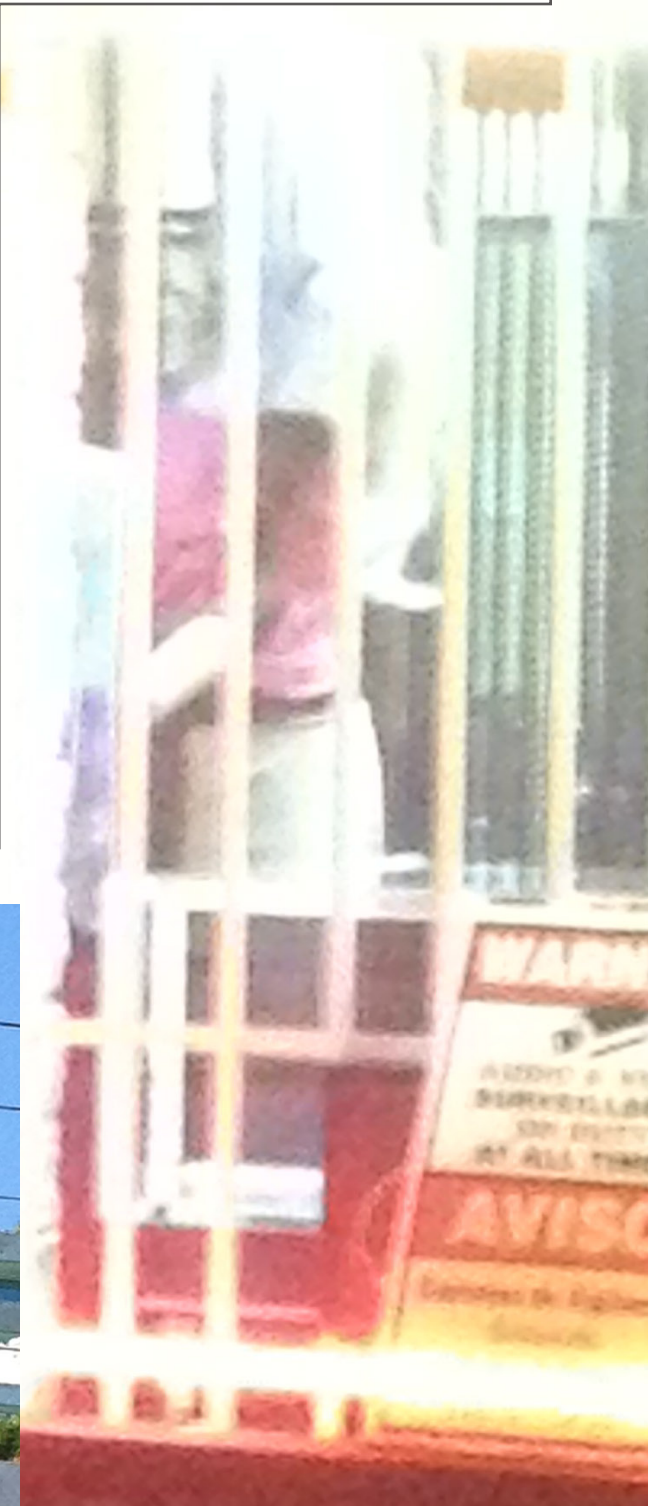
Isla italiana del Mediterráneo, al S de Córcega, de la cual la separa el estrecho de Bonifacio. Forma una región autónoma de 24 090 km² y 1 637 705 h, integrada por las prov. de Cagliari, Nuoro, Oristano y Sassari. Cap., Cagliari. Suelo montañoso y costas altas y recortadas. Agricultura; ganadería; pesca; minería. En el s. XIII fue ocupada por Aragón y perteneció a la corona española hasta 1714, en que pasó a Austria.

What Things Are

There's what things are, there's what things are not, and then there's what things could be. An essential part of art is a confounding of materials and making them say or become what they otherwise would not be. Jasper Johns' historic flag paintings are perhaps some of the best examples, within the Modernist canon, of how a set of materials has the capability both to signify and to become the very object of signification. What is a knife other than some hard material that has been forcefully persuaded to become sharp?

What things are seems to be self evident, but it can be more complex than what we can grasp empirically. In contemporary culture, especially within the arenas of image production (the arts, media, and advertising) the difference between what things are, and the images of those things becomes increasingly confounded. In sculpture, the use of an object, say for example a knowable product like a Coca Cola bottle, presents itself as much an image as an object. This seems obvious on the level that our inability to physically touch the bottle or consume its contents, puts us in a precarious situation which we feel compelled to question whether or not the bottle itself is real (in the sense that it came from a Coca Cola factory) or if it has been exquisitely fabricated, by the artist, to fool us into believing as much. So then whether it is "real real" or "artificially real" it is our collection of memories of our encounters with Coca Cola bottles which allow us to identify this "image" and then allow it to freely associate within the realm of our investigation of the sculpture. All of this is obvious, but beyond this, and still concerned with what "things" are, is the crossing of the inaccessible history of the object, with the imagined narrative of that object's history. Continuing with the example of the bottle of cola, that particular object, however it came to be, whether it came from some factory, or whether it was cast in resin and skillfully painted, has a real history. That history, more often than not, is anyone's best guess.

Our attempts to place that history, in relation to ourselves and our view of what reality is, is the imagined narrative. Even if we learn, for example, that the artist in question purchased the bottle of cola that morning from a grocery store, our sense of what the history of that object is, is still an invented narrative. This is not to say, that our "narratives" are light-years off the mark of "real history" that somehow the entire fabric of reality comes crashing down. No, our "best guesses" and our ability to predict, to use reason, are in fact the only things we can make use of to navigate reality, and therefore culture. However, suffice it to say that these best guesses determine our subjective relationship to a particular object, and in a sense hold up a mirror to ourselves depending on how that "imagined narrative" develops within each particular person. This creation of object narratives becomes even more interesting when we viewers are presented with an object that has no clear definition or "knowable history." In those moments when we are presented with something ambiguous, that seems to evade definition, a slithering, amorphous blob of material, that same desire to make sense of "that thing," to invent a narrative persists, but in this particular instance, finds itself in free fall with no clear history to cling to.



What Things Are Not

"In man's
struggle
against
the world,
bet on the
world."

- Franz
Kafka

What things are not seems like a rhetorical game. Does it do us any justice to ponder as to what things are not? It seems like any object in particular could have infinity, minus itself, as a potential arrangement of what it isn't. For myself, what seems more useful, or at least more interesting when presented with an object or an arrangement of objects, is to consider the scenario of that object, or perhaps a series of those objects, not being there. This has something to do with expectations and how, in certain ways, cultural expectations that are typified can be thwarted and played with in order to complicate a particular outcome. This also has to do with images in relation to objects. In the previous example of a cola bottle being either authentic or a facsimile, there could be something of particular

interest in case we find out that object was *not* an actual bottle of consumable cola. This would have the effect of being both a thing of real concrete existence, and yet sim-

ilarly not the actual thing of which image it wears on its surface. Photography seems to be a form that makes use

of this type of thing exceedingly well in that the photograph of something is almost never itself what is being photographed. So like words, never being things in themselves, photographs serve as a good example of signs that always point elsewhere, a system of signs pointing to other signs.



It seems clear that objects do this too, but in sculpture nearly as effectively as a two-dimensional image, since the potential of haptic interaction with the body has (usually) been removed and negated. Beyond the disguise of objects, or symbolization of objects, being something other than what the objects are materially, there's also every object's presence implying its own absence. Often when looking at art, I find myself thinking, 'What if this part wasn't there, what if this other thing?' or 'What if this part had been this other thing?' The simplest way for me to consider this with what was said before is to think about cultural expectations.



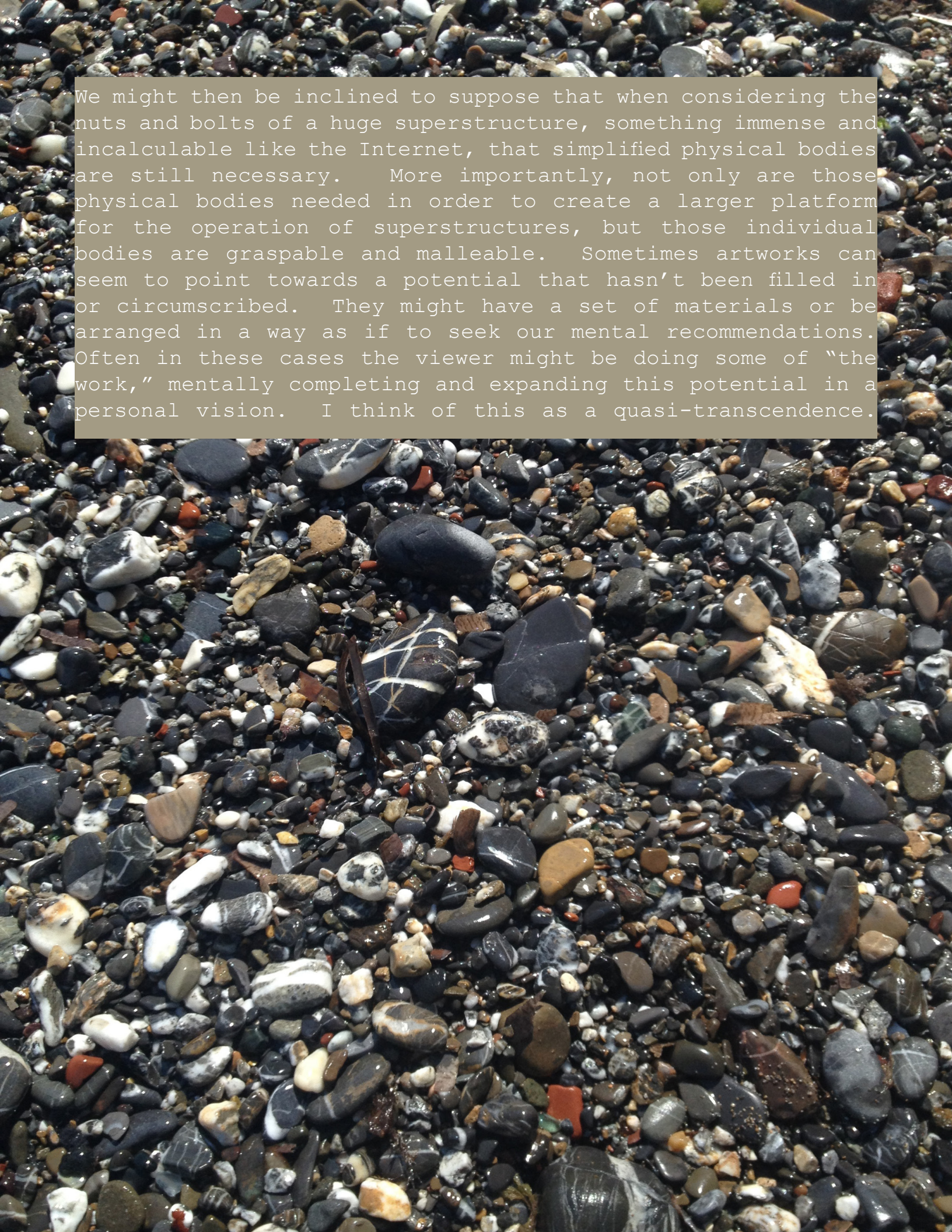
When you see a car driving down the road, you would expect to see a person sitting in the front seat driving it, but the chance exists that you might see something else entirely. A good example of the way this thought experiment functions, for me, is in jazz music. One of the elements that makes a good saxophone solo enjoyable or interesting, is the absence of the notes you would expect to hear. The ear in western music has been trained to hear certain successions of notes, again and again, in particular orders. When those expectations have been surprised or "tickled," often what is heard is a polyphony of the actual surprising note of the jazz musician and the imagined absent note.

What Things Could Be

What things could be seems to operate in a grey area between what things are and what things are not. This also has much to do with imagination. In one sense we have already dealt with one illustration of "what things could be," in the dubious question of the "authentic reality" of the cola bottle. Another way to frame this idea could be to consider it as "what things have the potential to become." This seems to me to be like the "imagined narratives," but in future tense; something like "imagined projections." A pile of sand has the potential to become glass. A glass window has the potential to be broken. A broken shard of glass has the potential to become a weapon. In sculpture this capability can operate in different ways. Sometimes the potential of an object, or a pile of material, makes its way into the sculpture becoming an obvious thing, thus completing the circuit of that particular potential, and extinguishing it. Sometimes the use of an object's potential can become more transparent, and a potential not previously considered, often altogether absurd, could be made visible. If we say, for example, that an

older computer monitor is used like a pedestal to prop up a framed photograph. In this particular example the potential of that object (the monitor) is both made visible, and actualized simultaneously. It would seem to say that, in a more obvious sense, the computer screen itself could have been the vehicle for the image, the final resting place for that particular image to reside. But it also denotes to us that the computer monitor's plastic shell is itself is a hard, flat surface, capable of something much simpler and base, like propping up another object, the way any rock could.





We might then be inclined to suppose that when considering the nuts and bolts of a huge superstructure, something immense and incalculable like the Internet, that simplified physical bodies are still necessary. More importantly, not only are those physical bodies needed in order to create a larger platform for the operation of superstructures, but those individual bodies are graspable and malleable. Sometimes artworks can seem to point towards a potential that hasn't been filled in or circumscribed. They might have a set of materials or be arranged in a way as if to seek our mental recommendations. Often in these cases the viewer might be doing some of "the work," mentally completing and expanding this potential in a personal vision. I think of this as a quasi-transcendence.

2nd Interlude



Suburban Sentinel

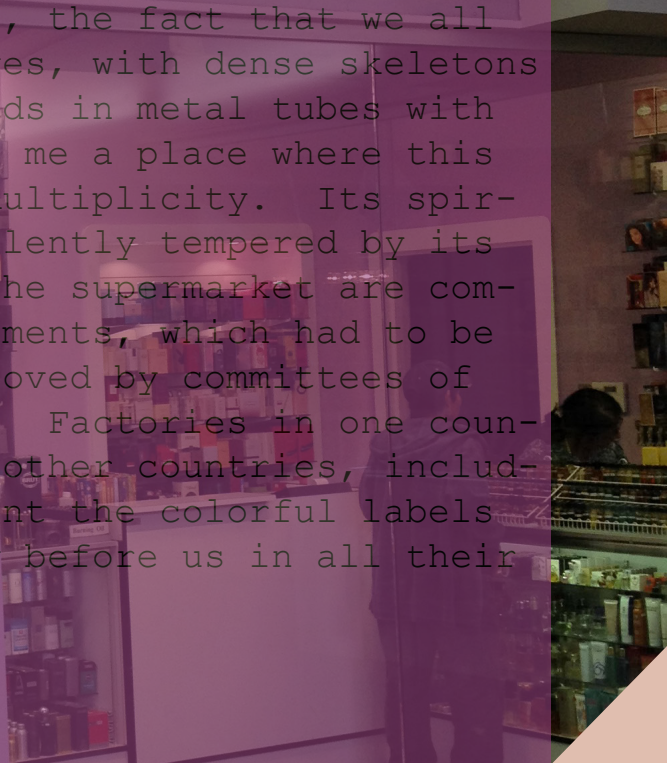
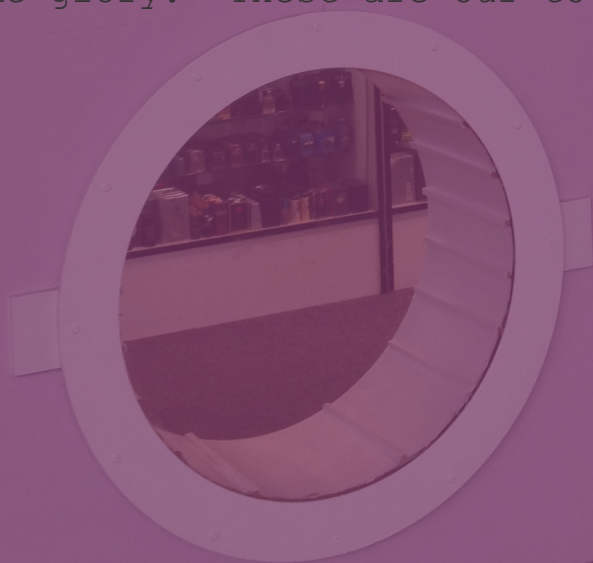
On the intersection of the 210 freeway and Carnelian St. in Rancho Cucamonga, about a mile away from the house I grew up in, a mysterious object has recently appeared. I had noticed the beginnings of the construction of it, a little over a year ago. At first I had assumed that maybe the city had decided to build a large clock tower that could be visible from the freeway. Perhaps the city beautification fund had money in place for such extraneous spending, or maybe a donor had some sort of philanthropic monument in mind. But after the construction was completed, no sign of any obvious purpose remained. It now stands, unapologetically, a benign confusion of excessive stature. It's almost as though a cynical genius made an ironic piece of post-modern, public sculpture, but no mention of any artist has been made apparent. Its stucco epidermis, and its beige coloration, along with its generic, suburban aesthetic, make it function as a subversive sentinel of strip mall culture. Considering its massive size (it stands at least 30 feet tall) it's hardly visible. I walked into several stores in the area to ask people working there if they knew what it was or who had built it, and nobody even knew what object I was referring to. The Rancho Cucamonga city council has been in the pocket of the real estate developers for decades, so it's interesting to consider the possibility that city money was laundered into a giant vessel of nondescript "sculpture." But for me the object stands as an impeccable emblem of suburban lifestyle. A giant looming beige façade, with no obvious, or even implicit meaning, lurking on the periphery of a shopping center.



Power Lies Behind an Imagined Door
Inside of an Imagined Building
In a Place Unknown

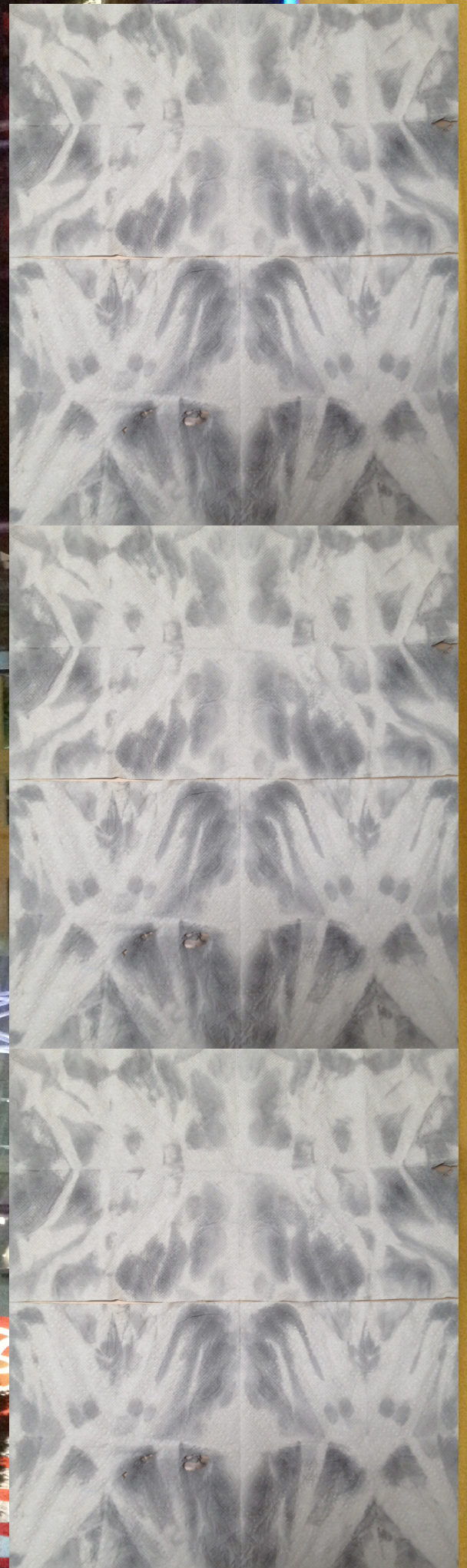
I see the supermarket as a viable space for a religious experience. In this arena, one encounters a violent, unfettered array of spectacle, of objects and images colliding into an organized frenzy of seduction. This is a zone where, once again, the imaginative process of creating a mental narrative is taking place within the personal subject, undulating between ones knowledge of certain products (what they taste like, where they might come from, etc.) and an aggressive unknown excess; excessive both in sheer quantity of what is available to the eyes, but also an excess that defies comprehension in terms of the full scale of interwoven causes and histories which allowed this series of objects and images to be accrued into this particular arrangement. It seems evident that this "spiritual" engagement with the sublime, unknown expanse, or mysterious causal force, is something that could be brought on in nearly any environment (not just a supermarket), and traditionally the image we might expect to accompany these types of internal musings is within the grand, expansive landscape.

It also goes without saying that not only are the large, corporate-chain stores understood as existing in their current form as the result of series of decisions made by powerful, wealthy men, but also that the dark reality behind the superficial gloss of these types of environments, is not just some conspiratorial myth; its consequences are real and disturbing. However, it seems foolhardy to me to attempt to divorce the actions of human beings, and therefore culture itself, from the rest of existence. The supermarket came into fruition just as any other organism has, with its own series of evolutionary mutations. The scientific demystifications of previously misunderstood phenomena never seemed to really demystify anything at all. The "fact" that a "big bang" is understood as a primal cause, doesn't even demystify itself as a cause, nor does it demystify, at all, the fact that we all walk around speaking different languages, with dense skeletons under our skin, driving down paved roads in metal tubes with wheels on them. The supermarket shows me a place where this evolutionary order is saturated with multiplicity. Its spiritual doom is grandiose and yet ambivalently tempered by its everyday banality. All the items in the supermarket are complete with animated colorful advertisements, which had to be put together by teams of artists, approved by committees of advertisers, and sent into production. Factories in one country import raw materials from several other countries, including the ink cartridges, which then print the colorful labels for the products that are now standing before us in all their horrific glory. These are our totems.





This is one highly generalized narrative, but like all others, it is necessarily a fiction. The truth of the reality of all the simultaneous occurrences to bring me here to this specific place and time, and to encounter this specific array, is one that eludes actual knowing. Its fantastic power lies in its broad scope of mystery. That mystery, of the most mundane, banal objects and disposable excess, in my mind is the same mysterious force which pervades classical concerns about the unknown mysteries of existence. It is because of the absolute unnecessary-ness, the frivolous excess, that these things stare back at you obstinately, because well... there they are! It's not a matter of question that that bizarre thing is sitting there, any more than you are standing there staring at it. It's there in the physical world, just as every bit a legitimate "thing" as your flesh and bone are. Then you consider that the order which manifests the boxed carbohydrates, with colorful cartoon animals adorned on it, is the same system which brought on your own existence. That order bestowed a ritual and framed a space on this earth that allowed your parents to meet, and caused a language to exist which then developed your ability to make sense of the objects around you, and gave you the "constructed" capacity to formulate thoughts. Power lies behind an imagined door, inside of an imagined building, in a place unknown.



In my mind this begins to get to the heart of what culture is and does. You always have products (raw materials, food, etc.) and for that matter you also always have words, syntax, and ideas. It's how they're packaged that defines a particular culture and era. It's also how these things are packaged and adorned that reflects the values and beliefs of a certain culture. It would seem that perhaps in the move towards a global capitalist superstructure, image types, values, and beliefs, are becoming increasingly homogenized, and that we are potentially on the verge of meshing into one overarching super-culture; or maybe this is the beginning of the death of culture altogether.



"It is Nature that causes all movement. Deluded by the ego, the fool harbors the perception that says "I did it,"
- Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa, The Bhagavadgita or The Song Divine

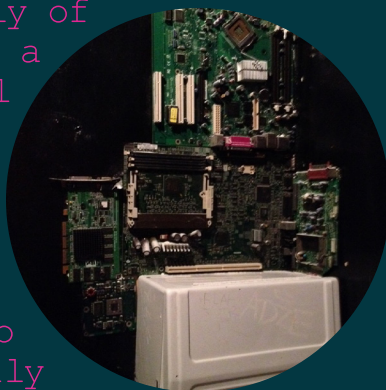
"Are we aware that this is our only true contact with the divine in our secular times? What can be more "divine" than the traumatic encounter with the bureaucracy at its craziest - when say, a bureaucrat tells me that, legally, I don't exist? It is in such encounters that we get a glimpse of another order beyond mere earthly everyday reality. Like God, bureaucracy is simultaneously all-powerful, capricious, omnipresent and invisible. Kafka was well aware of this deep link between bureaucracy and the divine: it is as if, in his work, Hegel's thesis on the State as the terrestrial existence of God is "buggered," given a properly obscene twist. It is only in this sense that Kafka's works stage a search for the divine in our deserted secular world - more precisely, they not only search for the divine, they find it in state bureaucracy."

- Slavoj Žižek



to securing our sensitive information and our organization.

It seems important for me to consider that both art and religion are things that seem to be somehow of absolute worthlessness, and yet, simultaneously of paramount importance. From a



purely pragmatic and material view of the world, both are completely excessive, and even, in the minds of certain persons, potentially harmful. Religion is a device which, not only has no relationship to the materially based, and increasingly accepted, theories of existence which are evidenced in countless scientific studies, but which historically has perpetuated hatred between different cultures, been the cause of countless wars, and has been a popular tool for the control of mass populations and the subjugation of free thought.

Visual art, as material in the world, is not much different than those excessive, brightly-colored products in the supermarket, except that from a pragmatic point of view, it is even less useful, simply because it has no obvious function. It can't be consumed (in a traditional sense of the word) it can't help in the construction of shelter, the growing of crops, etc. From that point of view it could be seen as doubly useless in that the end of product of art, which we had determined to be utterly useless, frequently requires much physical labor, and the use of raw materials, both of which could have been put to legitimate, practical use in a given social order.

On the other hand, what is the use of culture without these things? Without striving to make meaning, to fill the world with ideas, to find a place in the world to try to make sense of the self, or the "subject," or even just pushing material around out of sheer boredom, without any of these things the world would be a colorless landfill. Perhaps language itself



would be impossible without these types of things. How to make words without images to rest them on? It would be difficult to imagine a society in which no mark of the totem took its position to form an identity of any particular group.

Translations

Sometimes reframing objects within a new context has a way of redefining them. Something is lost but at the same time there is the potential for something else to be gained. I think of this being analogous to the translation of language. The specific meaning of certain words are dependent not only on the language in which they are being spoken, but further are dependent on who is speaking and who is listening. When the intended context and (known) origin of an object is removed, the new context gives the object a new flavor and feel, around what remains otherwise the same thing, or same message. This is to say that the object in its material form, and solitary image, remain qualitatively the same. However it is our engagement with it, in the space between the object itself and our comprehension of it, that begins to be altered and renegotiated. As other objects and environments come into play, new dialogues will often form between things that can cause the objects to shift or change as well, in a sort of conceptual version of what would be analogous to color relationships; as in, navy blue appears bluer when laid on top of naples yellow, etc. When concerned with object placement, or arranging series of separate objects within an environment, the same formal relationships and color systems are in play, but also there exists the potential for "historical poetry." "This thing" next to "that thing" changes both of them simultaneously while also allowing them to remain basically the same.

Considering the multitude of object types, materials and images, and the plethora of choices of sorting through, altering and arranging things, one can imagine a nearly inexhaustible potential of varied dialogue. It's interesting to consider the acute specificity of sensations and emotive properties that are possible within this framework, seeing that there are ways to produce feelings that transcend language. I find it incredible to notice how different certain minerals look and feel under colored light, and moreover to consider how potentially different that experience could be for someone else. I think it's true that all bodies in space are in this constant dialogue with each other already; that as two objects approach each other in space, their webbed histories approach each other as well, like vectors. These histories are like invisible tails that stretch out behind them and could maybe be visible if we could see time solidified. So then its interesting to consider that when we intentionally, or artificially, place objects together that wouldn't have otherwise crossed paths, we are engaging in arranging and rearranging histories, in a way manifesting historical poems, drawing from the immense well of objects to make invented tableaux of fictitious fact.



“Granted that disorder spoils pattern, it also provides the material of pattern. Order implies restriction; from all possible materials, a limited selection has been made and from all possible relations a limited set has been used. So disorder by implication is unlimited, no pattern has been realised in it, but its potential for patterning is indefinite. This is why, though we seek to create order, we do not simply condemn disorder. We recognise that it is destructive to existing patterns; also that it has potentiality. It symbolises both danger and power.”

- Mary Douglas



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