tearing interrogations

Dave Walker, Clemente Ciarrocca

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DW: I recall
in the course of our first meetings
you mentioned the notion of possession as a recurring and thorough-going trope within your work.
It seems that you are meditating on a modernist yet battered and ever disputed political issue, at the same time avoiding to arrive at its dead-end of identification by working through its normative conditions; resurrecting a philosophical concern of belonging and auth—enticity: the idea of seizing upon one's ownmost self. And by invoking your very own contract within the confines of your show, this right's inclination to aesthetics becomes prominent. Based on the reflections you have shared with me, I sense desire as the integral constituent, from which a rather peculiar yet mesmerizing aesthetic regime emerges. But I keep wondering what desire on a structural level exactly means to you and your way of working.

CC: [Desire
Meaning
Self
Structure
, , a time or an access a laying down of premises,
I]
Desire on a structural level — I echo that. I think desire could be totally experienced as structure, and specifically as a gap (or cut, some might prefer to say) between Self and world. As such I think possession, as a sort of conquest or seizing (or seizure) of that gap, can become a thorough-going trope not just in work, but within this relationship at large. I now imagine that in this gap, within the countless myriad of different colours it can take, lives a spectrum, unfolds a valley defined by two sloping sides: a side of the Throw, and a side of the Dive. I mean, you can be in so many different places at so many different points doing so many different things (and yet, only *so* many), but I feel the 'slope', the inclination, the mode of your being in the gap, this at the end of day really only takes two forms: that of a remote throw, of a projection of Self over the (now flattened, atrophied) world; or that of encountering/entering the world. And this isn't really a binary, because the entering of the world has no form — it's a full-on contamination where things just change and are other.

Just now over Christmas we were talking with my sister about the need for the Other, why is it so strong, we truly all know it, where does it come from, when she mentioned something that hit me: not only everyone comes to this world through a literal separation, but also, we all come with a history. Nine months of the closest connection and contact imaginable, and then, in what really must feel like an instant, you're on your own. Writer Melanie Rae Thon also hints at this in mentioning how our ears develop and literally already start hearing at only 4 months into pregnancy, how sonically our landscape has *already* been unlike anything we could (probably) ever hope to hear again, all at the very moment we conventionally assume our life to begin! So here's a why for that strength, I guess, for the pull of the gap: we come from a time when there was none. Or something like that. You: "get to be everything / Get to be what is gone and wanted back" [ed: this is a quote from a poem by Sophie Cabot Black entitled *You Said It Was Not*]. And so desire fires multidimensionally: bearing our point of departure, it also defines one of arrival. It can be, quite literally, space. Such relentlessness leads back to at least Hume, running through Lacan, Guattari, and there are practitioners today that are trying to break apart its fundamentality, I am thinking, for instance, of Adrian Piper's massive work around the matter. Yet I believe desire still remains deeply structural today at the level of the commons and undercommons alike, functioning both as a motive and as an objective, as an object and as a subject, defining at once the destination and the moving force — you are in the gap and yet, you also always have a smaller gap in front of you as you passage. The gap can always be subdivided into smaller segments. Any cut can be cut again. You are (in) desire at the same time as you keep desiring. And what you want is both doing itself and ever ahead of you, removed from you, endlessly drawing what feels like a possibility, the temptation of a reach. Think of an horizon that keeps shifting as you walk towards it. The point, then, might be to just stay. To wait, to let it fade, see the horizon disappear and the color embrace you as you embrace it, as night falls.

So I guess that, to try to address your point more directly, desire to me is the gap that has to be given up as gap and lived as contact. The deepening and expansion of this contact to me is practice, or working. Both undercutting individuation and resisting identification feel like important steps towards the acknowledgement that one always, already touches/is what one desires, and so, that perhaps one must begin from a different, less lethal way of moving in the valley.

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DW: It's striking
yet subtle
how the series populating the show, by bearing erasures and unreconcilable marks, allows for an intrusion of/into the negative of the archive. At the same time, the pieces' withdrawal from representation brings something else to the fore; something that is perhaps discarded by our sight… However I cannot renounce that in looking at these surfaces now, I 'see' a new image configuration, one informed by economies of affect. And this understanding also reminds me of the so-called apophatic or negative theology. And so I remain asking myself, given this circuit of representation, what, if anything, is eventually being represented in the show.

CC: I feel there is a powerful intuition in the connection between the pieces inhabiting the space and theological reasonings, or could we say, courtships? And thinking of the pieces as essentially objectifying a site of rich and diverse, essentially chaotic gesturing reminds me, for instance, of the Christian cross (both the symbol and the actual object/surface) as objectification of a place of suffering. Condensing feeling and gesture, life-space and narrative into object could perhaps be what offers somewhat of a mystical charge to the objects I am presenting…

As for representation, in a way I think (or I wish?) there might only be *pre*sentation in the show. Or at least, that in terms of an overarching system/strategy, or even in terms of output/result, something is presented and nothing is represented. Nothing is re-presented, nothing is carried on. The main access point between sign and signified, between figure and legacy is fully severed. There is nothing to see

through, nowhere to go. I think this leads to a sort of dull confusion, an aesthetic buzz, an idiocy for the viewer… it sort of negates their role… maybe it feels like a stage work where lights go down in the theatre and literally nothing happens for 2hs, apart from you getting duller and duller in your seat, and the darkness buzzier and buzzier! In this sense, also your previous use of the word 'regime' resonates with me. The pieces are kind of looped onto themselves, the gestures regimented as new 'image configurations', as you beautifully mentioned. I can see this as a regime confined to itself, isolated and relegated so to avoid having its regimental character spill all over life. To let the periphery thrive without the haunting pull/shadow of the center.

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DW: In the *Road Notes*, the process notes to the show you have shared with me before this conversation, there is a line deeming that sight is "an act of (ab)use". I'm particularly interested in the performative element behind this thought; in the reenactment that is "driven by temptation, functionality, and the everneed to reproduce", as you noted. This active part of sighting, thus
turning the sighted into an object while evolving oneself's subjectivity,
might correspond to the "reenacted" itself. Maybe more simply, I wonder: doesn't this perpetual reenactment also sustain a contemporary artistic practice like yours? Where do you draw a line between reenactment, reproduction, performance, the symbolic and/or real? Or rather, do these categories matter to you at all?

CC: Yes, I believe the perpetual reenactment of identification totally sustains a contemporary artistic practice like mine. Change the content of the sentence but leave 'like mine', and the conclusion most likely still applies. I feel when we talk about performance of course there's a whole history and development of a genre that one could and should think and feel through and that kind of differentiates the term from somewhat more 'logical' ones like reenactment or reproduction. However if we were to talk about performativity instead, I feel one could think of the performative more immediately as hinting at a wider set of constructions, at the (de)formation of reenactment and reproduction into massive, normative formations of social control. And I think the link here is a temporal and, yes, a performative one: it feels to me performativity, enactment and reproduction are all joint in the moment that carries the action in which sight is acquired; in which You/I not only see me/You, but You/I decide, conveniently, to develop a sight of me/You, to fix me/You, for a reproductive reason (which might equate to a destructive one — just think of the role of visualization in warfare).
As I say 'action' I actually realize now that that doesn't really explain what I mean exactly… I am referring to the action *in* which I *re-cognize* myself through you… or something like that. The moment in which I make you transparent. The moment from which I pretend not that you are a space for me to be invited to feel, know, inhabit, flourish in, but a sort of territory to plow and grow myself onto. In a way, it's a seclusion, the absence of an action and/for the enactment of a seclusion, and the erection of a hierarchy, of a perspective. I don't know, I'd need to think more through what term might work best here, I realize this might be confusing… But anyway, one of the things the show explores is that this (de)generation of sight, this glorious decay, is not really much of a choice but somewhat an immediate event that overtakes us, one determined by circumstances, by the world we live in and especially have grown in, meaning, an event determined by who we already are and how we have become or learnt to become, to build/erect who we are. And by 'we' I quite literally mean everyone who is or would able to read these words or a translation of these words and to identify themselves, whether agreeing or not agreeing. For instance, people are invited to a 'show', and they expect to 'see' and grasp, something, or themselves, at the very least. That's just how exhibitions 'work'. So they come, if they come, already as viewers, they come a certain way, already sloping down sight. All this doesn't mean I believe that, in general, we don't have agency 'against' sight. There are conditions we can curate and choices we can take that allow us to carry the responsibility of seeing in richer, generative ways. Definitely not in an exhibitional context though. Not in the room where *Tearing* is eventually exhibited, which, as I mention down the contract in oblique/tangential reference to Cameron Rowland's *Depreciation*, a powerful source of inspiration for me, is *only* for visitation. Maybe you feel it too, but to me, this all feels kind of sad, savage, hopeful, liberating, emotional, beautiful, pathetic, kind of touching and revealing, all at once. Hence the tears…

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DW: At first glance,
the way you're using poetry as a methodology appears to me to be in contrast with the positivist, restricted and restricting language of civil law. Personally I would argue that poetics in modern society is indispensably dependent on positivist formalism (e.g. arithmetics, syntax, …). Consequently, when uprooting poetry out of the bounds of formalism I feel it will still nevertheless substantially rely on a symbolic order from which it can emerge in the first place. Perhaps this formula is too simple and I would much rather think of the contract's form conflating with poetry. I feel your use and implementation of one and/or the other, succeeds to reconcile a tearing, promulgated in your show's title. Do you feel conflicted, perhaps torn between the normativity and the emancipation your show is conveying?

CC: I feel this is a wonderful articulation of a very essential question and to be so frank, yes, I feel conflicted, and yes, I feel torn, and I kind of just want to remain in the liminality of that conflict, of that tension, which produces exactly the kind of question you are asking. What else would you want to do with a tearing, than wo/ander? Resisting suturing, we wait for dehiscence.

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DW: I conceive of you
as someone who doesn't particularly work within the formally consensed dominance of a beginning and its respective end. However, I want you to situate yourself within this hazy locus, between a beginning and an end.

CC: 'Hazy locus' gets me truly shivering… I guess I feel like I am about to pass the half-way mark.

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Dave Walker (*1991 in Aarau, CH; lives and works in Berlin, DE) is a curator and writer. He is a PhD candidate in the normative use of language in contemporary art discourse at Universität für Angewandte Kunst Wien and works as Assistant Curator at Halle für Kunst Lüneburg.

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