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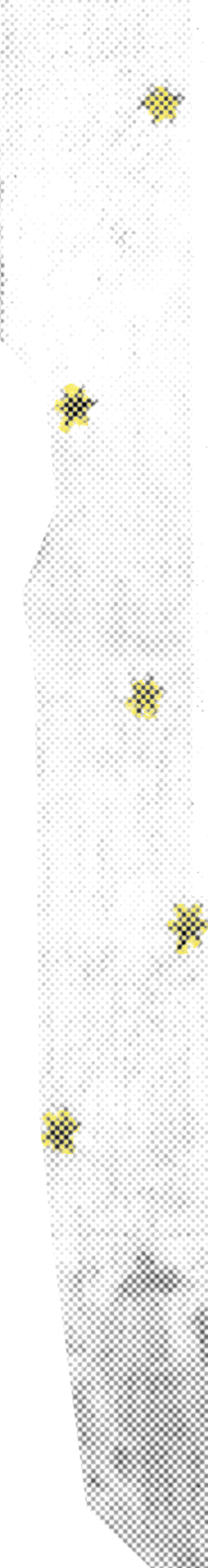




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Initially I wanted this course to see body, sensation, and thought coalescing to become writing during two weeks at the Summer Academy. Multi-layered answers crystallising. Yet soon I also began to wonder: What would a *school of questions* look, sound, and feel like? How might it move, smell, and taste? What modes of writing could emerge from not having all (if *any*) of the answers, from prioritising *not* knowing and, instead, shaping our thinking with others? From letting the so-called centre dissolve into a set of relations: questions snowballing into writings.

I became curious about the energies that could be generated; the generousities of conversations that should be exchanged; the approaches to close readings that would be shared; the relationships with intimate looking and listening that might emerge; and the types of writings and tones of criticisms that may ultimately materialise.

So, here we have worked together, in the library of the Hohensalzburg Fortress, in the 'School of Seeing' founded in 1953 by Oskar Kokoschka. Outside we heard music blaring and sounds of ecstatic screaming; we got caught in downpours walking between Salzburg's galleries; we licked plum and apricot jam from trays of *Buchteln*.

From using words as a malleable medium, to approaching the page as a playground, to compiling lists of questions every day, to writing group manifestos, to allowing inquisitiveness to shape the sayable, to showing up for both our own and another's voice, together we have prioritised good faith, approaching art (ours, yours) for what it is, rather than what we think it should be.

What form does writing want to come as?
If a sentence ends with 'and', is it ever really over?
How many fragments can be rearranged and stitched to make up a whole?

What does decentring the all-knowing critic do?
Can connoisseurship be shaped by a body?
Speaking from an island, speaking from a mountain: where do our voices gather?
Who is listening?
What does vulnerability generate and does authenticity always have to come bleeding?

What follows is a collection of the further things we've wondered together. Some of this is expressed in these pages, some is tacked onto the walls of this fortress, some is coded in a cloud, some may be read aloud. Most of it is an *attitude*, a *belief*, a *commitment* to reaching for your neighbour and asking the first question, wondering what you might be able to make of it all, together, and how writing is its own open framework.

—Louisa Elderton

Class Manifestos

My First Manifesto

1. It is NECESSARY to CULTIVATE CURIOSITY.
2. The COMFORT of the audience SHOULD NOT be CONSIDERED (as a factor).
3. The ROMANTICIZATION of the POOR, PRECARIOUS WRITER dies TODAY.
4. Art criticism can develop METHODOLOGIES, but this should not be a pretext for HOMOGENIZATION.
5. One should not be afraid to show up to DINGY, DIRTY, CRINGE, UNCOOL places.
6. STAY ALONE as much as possible.
7. We WILL NOT let ourselves be BRIBED by free TOTE bags, colourful CATALOGUES, TRANSPORTATION tickets, FANCY dinners, empty FLATTERY, AI emails.
8. THINK CRITICALLY about everything you do.
9. View the art and culture of each region as an ARCHIPELAGO of countless unique voices, treating EACH voice as an INDIVIDUAL rather than lumping them together as regional entities.
10. KIDS WILL LOVE US.

The Pinterest Manifesto

1. Believe in art writing as an act of resistance.
2. Be curious, step out of your bubble and embrace discomfort.
3. Allow the world to come to you, allow entropy to reveal the future.
4. Don't be insensitive to other people's sensitivities; critique is a form of responsibility.
5. Keep it on your back, keep it light.
6. Check in with yourself, regularly.

Class Manifestos

10 Rules to Survive in the Art World

1. Don't put yourself down because other people will do it.
2. Performances may be better after the welcome drink.
3. Don't walk. Dance.
4. Don't closely observe. Invent, nobody cares anyway.
5. Being sincere is more important than being right.
6. Carpentry, plumbing, and electrical skills are a must.
7. Go out for onion soup and wine every Monday afternoon with a friend.
8. Go to the openings just to get drunk, nobody cares anyway.
9. Avoid wearing heels at openings unless there is an Uber outside that will take you straight home.
10. Filter negativity, don't complain, don't judge, don't worry.

1. Send a meme to a sibling.
2. You're the only child and it was niche anyways.
3. Hang up your laundry; it will stink of wet dog tomorrow.
4. We're saying sorry to the librarian NOW.
5. Admitting that we did not know everything beforehand.
6. [5] we want to condemn the man at the wheel, who hurls the lance of pollution and waste across the Earth.
7. It is the time to rise to faith. And
8. If I'd say something. God is not on your phone.
9. [7] no do not accept struggle. No work without rest can be a masterpiece. Poetry must be conceived as a beautiful thing gifted to humankind and nature, a thing we cherish and adore.
10. Delete it.

“Beauty does not lie in the fleeting sparkle of a spectacle or the rush of an instant thrill, but in the quiet afterglow — in the subtle phosphorescence of time itself.” *Byung-Chul Han*

Art is a language beyond words, one that transforms emotions into something we can sense and feel. It can lead us into new experiences, moments that linger rather than vanish.

We might ask ourselves: *How is it possible that I feel this way? How can something be so powerful that it defies description?*

But what truly is a masterpiece? How does something become one? And who has the authority to decide?

Art awakens memories, and memories, in turn, awaken emotions. They connect us to what we have lived, to what we can relive again. But what happens to our memories? Do we forget them, erase them, or simply store them away to retrieve later?

And so we ask: *How can art help us? How can memories help us?* Perhaps art is not only something we see or hear, but something that lingers within us — a quiet companion to our existence — a friend in our loneliness. It speaks when words fail, it remembers when memory falters, and it comforts when silence feels too heavy.

A masterpiece, then, becomes timeless the moment it touches a human soul and refuses to let go and lives within it. It changes its meaning every time we watch it.

Memories, like art, are fragile yet enduring. They fade at the edges, change their colours, and sometimes blur into dreams — yet they remain a part of us. And every memory has its own colour that defines it.

Art has the power to call them back, to awaken what seemed forgotten, to remind us of who we were and who we might still become.

In this sense, art is not separate from life, but life itself is made visible. It is the dialogue between what has passed and what is still to come, between the fleeting and the eternal.

An uhhh... is a disturbance that swallows any sense of proximity.
An unnatural pause... The uhhh... is a widening chasm of silence.

Dragging myself to openings is usually an acute case of uhhh...
There's an uhhh... attached to the people I will see, an uhhh...
to those I might encounter, an uhhh... to those with whom I will
have to interact. I might find an uhhh... group huddled around
a secluded ashtray — if I'm lucky. Sometimes, the uhhh... pertaining
to the work makes itself known. This summer has been littered
by some especially uhhh... artworks in otherwise decent shows.
And then there is the uhhh... of attending an opening within a scene
you've willingly abandoned.

Sometimes an uhhh... creeps up on you in places where you didn't
even know it existed. I had no discernable sense of uhhh... before
this particular opening. An uhhh... facing tightening political control,
its lack of transparency, political agendas dismantling civil
society. The crumbling structure of the garage perched uhhh...
awkwardly in the atrium of the institution, which should have been
demolished already. With an odd twist of fate (bureaucracy uhhh...)
it has morphed into a DIY space directly confronting the institution
and its new, scavenger employees.

Standing in a uhhh...queue to briefly look at Daučíková's seven
pickling jars (*Untitled*, 2025) and then pushing an iPhone towards
Ondak's uhhh... duchampian peephole (*Déjà vu*, 2025).
Something... uhhh... about exhibitions that attempt crisis intervention,
but can only ever be received from a distance; the uhhh... gap
that exists between the two.

Something distinctly non-uhhh... about listening to Anna speak
about glass... something... their desire to leave... smth... their
disruptive approach to a multitude of normatives... smth... smth...
prague (moscow) prague.....

The uhhh... appeared from nowhere and was not an uhhh... attached to superficial discomforts; not an uhhh... for the work. It might have been an uhhh... for the awkward hellos but more likely it was my sense that everything had been moved two centimeters to the left.

An uhhh... for leaving, an uhhh... for no desire to return, an uhhh... for nothing to return to. Acknowledging the existence of the uhhh... of the disjointment seems to be the only way through. By writing from a 'neither here, nor there,' an uhhh... assemblage of realities... the uhhh... does not dissolve. It sits there in silence, casting its odd aura over everything. The spatial tilt is now familiar and uhhh... I dread the day it isn't there.

As dawn breaks, 74-year-old Akbar sits in his quiet studio, engrossed in perfecting the raw ceramic plate he plans to fire later today. For as long as he can remember, the studio has been his sanctuary — a creative space where the joy of crafting connects him to family roots. His skilled hands trace floral motifs inspired by the traditional Tashkent ceramic art school. Each pattern is entirely unique, a product of creativity rather than a pre-designed template.

Akbar Rakhimov represents one of the most prominent ceramist dynasties of Uzbekistan. Speaking softly, with a voice sounding like a lullaby, Akbar shares a glimpse into his family's legacy. "Seven generations of our family have been engaged in ceramics. My father, my great-grandfather, and my great-great-grandfather were ceramists. My son Alisher and grandson Shokhrukh have followed in my footsteps, and their works feature prominently in our exhibitions."

The Rakhimov family's art holds a special place in Uzbek craftsmanship — a symbol of elegance and refined taste. It has become customary for privileged families across Uzbekistan to own pieces of their work, whether used daily or treasured as *objet d'art*. Even the Senate boasts vases crafted by the Rakhimov dynasty. Art enthusiasts from across the globe visit this studio, accessible by appointment only. Rakhimovs' artworks are showcased in the world's leading museums, but available for private acquisition exclusively through direct purchase at the studio.

Yet despite their fame, the family carries themselves with remarkable humility. A visit to the studio feels like an intimate encounter rather than a commercial transaction. To touch one of the works is to feel the warmth of skilled hands — a magical connection evokes a desire to own such a living treasure. As you browse their gallery and sip tea with Akbar himself, you may hesitate to ask about costs — it feels intrusive amid such artistic grace. Occasionally, if you express

interest in a piece created by Akbar's son or grandson, they might encourage you to wait until new works from the father are added to the series.

Akbar and his family often enrich the experience with storytelling for visitors — tales drawn from Uzbek heritage and art history. Each story connects deeply, often aligning with the listener's current state of life. Their words seem prophetic, offering answers long sought unconsciously — a moment of self-discovery through art and conversation with a master.

Expeditions across Uzbekistan hold a special place in their lives as well. Spring and autumn — the most visually striking seasons — find Akbar and his sons exploring regions for inspiration. Every late autumn they release a new collection by inviting the connoisseurs to their home studio gallery nestled in Tashkent's historic old town. The house itself embodies Uzbek classical architecture, featuring a central garden perfect for all seasons.

Observing this family, even the youngest Shokhrukh, evokes a sense of witnessing an extraordinary lifestyle — an existence akin to serene meditation. Calm yet purposeful, they seem untouched by modern life's distractions: fame, materialism, ambition. In an age marked by chaos, they stay grounded and deeply fulfilled.

Akbar encapsulates this philosophy succinctly: "Finding your path — your vocation — is true happiness. The most fulfilling way to live is by dedicating yourself to what you excel at."

The three pillars of real luxury — Wellness, Wisdom, and Wonder — are ever-present in their lives, generously shared with anyone fortunate to cross their threshold.

Nadia Egan, *Dear K, Without Knowing*

Dear K,

I've been looking repeatedly at your portrait this week. I was searching for answers, but all I found were questions.

I wonder fervently about what you're thinking. What thoughts consume you and expand to the edges of your mind? Your expression keeps me guessing. Yesterday it was reluctance, today it's sorrow, perhaps tomorrow it will change again.

What are you thinking, as you stand there clutching your golden wings? Are you remembering moments from childhood? A trip to Broadway with your father and the soft, sugary goodness of the ice cream sundae you shared afterwards? The sound of this morning's coffee as it bubbled over the stove, hissing as it grazed the flames? The weeds that creep from the cracks in the ground, buried within the foundations of your home? Do you think they hold the power to uproot you?

Do you think about the summers spent in that yard? The air filled with laughter, the sickly sweet smell of lilies brought over by an old friend. Do you remember how they stained the tablecloth with their buttery yellow lint? What about the time you climbed that tree, dangling from its branches like a spider spinning the threads of its web.

Do you know when that tree was planted? Do you know its Latin name, its common name, its family name? Is it a *Quercus agrifolia*, a California sycamore, a member of the Soapberry family? Do you listen to the leaves rustle and flutter in the easterly wind? Do they whisper secrets to one another? Do you whisper back?

What about the warmth from the sun? That same warmth spreading between your arms as if you were fanning the flames. Are you holding on for dear life? Warmth oozes onto the ground below like honey. You know, it's summer here, from where I'm writing. That

same honey sticks to the stone walls outside; it glimmers in patches on the sand. I wish I could collect it in jars and send them home to my mother.

I'd like to know what you see, what lies beyond the edges and into your universe, your yard. Did you plant poppies? Crimson red casting a gentle flush against the slatted wooden fence. Is there a table, a set of chairs, now rusting and rickety from years of wind and rain and love? You can't bear to part with them even though they wobble and groan.

Did you know that I spent four days looking at your face before I discovered your name? I wonder what stopped me from asking sooner? Why I looked at you so obtusely. I'm not usually in the habit of such idleness. I thought objectivity helped me think more clearly, but you taught me otherwise.

Yours,
N

[A meditative letter to the subject of Noah Davis's 2009 painting *Isis*.]

DER HIMMEL, tief wie ein kristallklarer Bergsee, doch scheint sein Ende zum Greifen nah. Sonnenlicht blendet mich, und inmitten dieser Strahlen liegt ein Engel, gefallen und verwundet. Seine Flügel sind gestutzt, die Farben matt, nicht mehr gemacht zum Fliegen. Das Türkis, einst strahlend wie der Himmel selbst, verweigert die Verschmelzung. Er blutet. Kann ein Engel sterben?

WER BESCHÜTZT UNS? Wer hält Wache über die Schwachen, die Zerbrochenen? In seinen Wunden spiegeln sich unsere eigenen. **DER ENGEL IST JEDER VON UNS:**

Menschen die sich nach Frieden sehnen, die Tragen und ertragen, die scheitern und dennoch aufstehen.

DER VERWUNDETE ENGEL ...

WIR SOLLTEN UNS WEIGERN EINE BLUT ÜBER ERDE RINNT UND ALS WÖRTE. WIR WISSEN:

KEINEN PLATZ IN EINER GEHÖRT. WIR GLAUBEN AN NICHT ALS VERSPRECHEN WIRKLICHKEIT:


WERT IST ALS DER ANDERE, DASS TEILBAR IST, DASS GERECHTIGKEIT KANN. WIR WÄHLEN DAS MITEINANDER DAS ZUHÖREN VOR DEM ZERSTÖREN, DIE DIE FAUST DIE SCHLÄGT, WIR FORDERN EINE TRENNT, SONDERN EINT; DIE DAS LEBEN SCHÜTZT,

SO WIE DER ENGEL, GEBOCHEN UND DOCH UNSTERBLICH, SIND WIR DIE ERINNERUNG DARAN, DASS FRIEDEN KEIN GESCHENK DES HIMMELS IST - SONDERN UNSERE GEMEINSAME ENTSCHEIDUNG.

UND SO BEGINNEN WIR - MIT GLEICHEN RECHTEN FÜR ALLE, MIT FRIEDEN ALS EINZIGEM GESETZ,

MIT MENSCHLICHKEIT IM HERZEN UNSERER ZUKUNFT.





WE BELIEVE
IN EQUAL RIGHTS
- NOT AS A PROMISE

BUT AS REALITY; THAT NO HUMAN BEING IS WORTH MORE
THAT ANOTHER, THAT FREEDOM CANNOT BE DIVIDED,
THAT JUSTICE CAN LIVE WITHOUT BORDERS. WE
CHOOSE TOGETHERNESS OVER OPPOSITION,

LISTENING OVER DESTRUCTION,
THAT HAND THAT REACHES OUT
INSTEAD OF THE FIST THAT
STRIKES. WE CALL FOR A

COMMUNITY THAT
DOES NOT DIVIDE,
BUT UNITES; THAT
PROTECTS LIFE,
NOT THREATENS IT.

DANIEL RICHTER

THADDAEUS ROPAC-HITELSEN BIRNEY

How to act in this word out of time?

Beckett builds a narrative into no sense.

They are questioning but words will come.

Can a girl tell a story as a stream of consciousness?

She would never go out of contrary. She felt gradually her tongue in her mouth, her voice alone and that feeling that was coming back.

Beckett is playing with a sense of internalising and externalising the state of a soul, telling a powerful story like a kind of audiovisual poetry. Can I consider this a piece of video art?

A little mouth, no sounds flicking on and off.

Perhaps she has no idea of what she's saying (for real?) but she can't stop the stream. Can we as listeners disconnect in the same way?

It might be fun, sometimes.

*keep on trying
keep on crying
what to try? keep on.*

Ola Gu, *Frigid* and 37°C

Frigid

An iron bedframe
appears upon the mountain path.

Winter—
snow begins to fall.

This is the road to the summit,
steel chills pierce the air,
yet it forges this bed,
like the mountain itself—
unyielding, firm.

Even when strength is nearly spent,
no one rests here,
They know it is but a hallucination of hypothermia.

Now,
it will be carried down from the snowy peak,
back to the city.

37°C

I lift a handful of soil,
and keep holding it.
I do not know its warmth,
but I long to share its temperature.

This soil,
from my homeland—
like me,
it has forgotten
how long it has been away.

Like me,
it is heavy.
I keep holding it,
wanting to share its warmth.

But with the slightest force,
the soil slips away.
I do not wish to let it fall,
yet it grows lighter and lighter.

My hands restrain it,
yet also save my numbed arms.

I lean my body,
trying to gather the fallen soil.
No matter how I bend,
what I can hold grows less and less.

My arms slowly lose feeling,
numb to the end.

In the very end,
I no longer recall,
how much I could gather back—
only that the soil at my feet
had already been swallowed
by the damp, cold soil of a foreign land.

1. The absurd is not a private drama but a collective symptom.
2. The absurd is a body clashing with space. Crisis is not collapse but OPPORTUNITY.
3. Meaning is born when we stop searching for it. Every attempt at a “final explanation” creates a new void.
4. Laughter is more subversive than weapons. Let’s laugh in the face of the system and watch it collapse from within!
5. The absurd is not the privilege of the avant-garde. It breaks expectations and opens a space for critical thought.
6. The absurd is poetic activism. It sabotages seriousness as the only legitimate politics.
7. The absurd knows no compromise.
8. The absurd is sharper than logic. It unmasks the false logic of efficiency and productivity.
9. The absurd is aesthetic anarchism. It frees art from the dictates of the “beautiful,” the “grand,” and the “important.”
10. The absurd is the future of art.
11. The absurd forces us to rethink the relations between human beings, technology, society, and nature.
12. The absurdity is freedom without guarantees.
13. The absurd is born from the logic of the market, from a crisis of meaning, from an excess of images, words, and objects.
14. Very little makes sense — which is exactly why it’s worth trying.

The notion of the absurd, they say, is historically rooted in philosophical reflections on existence and meaning — which is just an elegant way of admitting that meaning constantly slips away, yet we still keep writing serious sentences about it. People are faced with a permanent imbalance: we crave order, while reality has long since established disorder, collapse, and unrest. In the field of art, the absurd emerges as a structure of expression that questions the very sense of the artistic act because, let’s be honest, who even asks whether it has one anymore? Referring to most contemporary art media, art

finds a space of freedom — where logic ends, cracks open up through which new forms of language, perception, and thought appear (take, for example, Laure Prouvost *They Parlaient Idéale* (2019) or David Shrigley *Really Good* (2016)).

As an aesthetic strategy, the absurd does not merely negate meaning, but also nurtures the hope that someone, in the crowd of nonsense, might stumble upon a new perspective. Its power lies in destabilising what was once considered solid and self-evident — because, frankly, it is more entertaining to dismantle stability than to maintain it. The contemporary presence of the absurd is not a sign of nihilism but a sophisticated survival mechanism, generating at the same time a space for imagination. “Society is in crisis, but hey — you can also see it as a performance.” It resists ideologies that promise the complete rationalisation of life, showing that it is precisely ambiguity, excess, and contradiction that make human experience alive.

After the death of “grand narratives” and Postmodernism, there was no point in pretending to have meaning. Instead, artists dove into hyperproduction, spectacle, and the contradictions of contemporary reality — reflecting the absurd as a product of that state. In the digital age, where reality is reproduced like an endless GIF, the absurd appears as a necessary strategy of resistance through grotesque, exaggeration, and paradox (e.g. artists like Beeple, Serge Labrunie, Zachary Lieberman, Pak, Jenny Holzer, and Ivana Franke). Global crises (wars, inflation, climate change, migration, humanitarian crises, etc.) only amplify its importance; they produce aesthetic gestures that simultaneously carry discomfort and humour, insecurity, and release.

The absurd is not a capitulation to meaninglessness. Contemporary artists continue the practices of the avant-garde, but reshape them in line with current social and psychological conditions. In doing so, they reveal the absurd not as mere negation but as a vital force — one that confronts us with our own instability and transforms it into a space of creation.

Margarita Kontev, *Slip*

My idling endless scripture churned out an oracle aesthetic for me to follow. I flipped to the definition of opaque. I learnt the extent to which wit can be a mystic's tool. Up on the cliffs I heard the hymns that sounded so obsolete, their memory prolonged my ancestry.

Hymn of Did

Trying Writing
Like Trying
Erected Writing
Piggybacks on
Upper Hinterlands
Kirtan Hummings
Valentine's Day
Of Praise
Students Light
Fishing Again
Dirt Music
Something Written
Slippage Notes
Of Exchange
And Ethical
Non Writing

Speed was manipulating the civil society, what remained was skid row and false starts. Organic pulses formed the bass notes of the ensemble that sounded as I walked down the aisle. A force came from below the cliffs and showed me the sound of southern and northern winds.

Hymn of Good

Good Faith
Death Deciding
Embrace Function
Formed In
Pig Latin
With Writing
Truth Seek
Truth Seek
Over Game
Kept Light

As a way to get closer to the slippage, I did what the monks said and removed the memory part of 'remember'. With a lisp I called upon my jester's privilege, but by speaking frankly, I was banished. I was banished from the fishing poles, from the solar farms. I was banished from the petrol stops and the pancake parlours. I was louder than ever when I stopped writing.

My lessons on desire and cognition come from my mind's eye. It came from rubbing against sanctioned logic. I couldn't put the words to my voice, as I caught them right before they fell out of my mouth. I caught the words with my left hand.

Hymn of No

Cold Steps
Guilty God
Tablelands On
Flogged Cliffs
Tender Prayer
Over The
Standing Space
Birth Cry
Thought Beam
God Part
Air Brain
No Love
Kneeling Proof
My Fellowship
My Doing
Fur Veil
Infant Sitting
General General
Of Course
I Played
Wrong Notes

"Quicker, the Quicker," they said, "not her voice at all" someone else shouted. Between the favela, the cliffs, and the sea I heard stretched out bleatings. But I dragged on, told myself, "answer to the prayer before it's too late."

Hymn to Keep

Eyelids Beg
No Moon
Bend Keeper
Of Course
I Played
The Caller

I was banished. With no love, I was kneeling, with no moon I was fixing, with no god I was drifting. I was drifting, buzzing, motioning, silencing, growing, knowing, stopping, sitting, voiding, falling, time ticking.

"Reflex principle" they called it. Without love, I was kneeling.

When I was six I crawled inside a painting for the first time.

Meandering to and fro somewhere within the sightline of my parents, I managed to get lost in the endless halls of the Musée D'Orsay. The dead ends and the foul smell of swollen men led me far into the somber tunnels of ocean blues, siennas, and wine reds. And the clock, always the clock; I kept it in mind.

Bored and weary I slumped onto the bench in the darkest of rooms of Maze d'Orsay. Staring back at me from the walls were departed thighs of a smooth ivory woman. Harmless fuzzy weeds grew atop the hemispheres of her pubis, like honeysuckle lining our yard.

Oddly, almost instantly, I became convinced that this torso must be my mother's, and snuck inside this newly found wet casket. I was cradled by the muted mutterings of the museum.

I was sheltered in my hideaway for days, months, or years, until a strict guard woman came and clawed me out.

"Who is this little lost boy?"

I'm now seventeen and a figure being hypnotized at Tate Britain. I was myself just a second ago, but I must have, at some queer moment, burrowed into the tight cotton of *The Hypnotist* (1963), and was now balancing on cuttlefish black.

Hockney wanted to experiment with having two figures separated by physical space. I am one of the figures, a cutout — Good Friday cardinal with a stump for a head. The Hypnotist and I are in nothingness, in an empty white space with a few swathes of grey. We stand facing each other under a jade green proscenium on a scaffold-like stage. We are actors delivering lines.

I was told paintings are to be read right-to-left; H before T,
H.Y.P.N.O.T.I.S.T.

“Now, you took an unusual step, well, unusual for a man, anyway,”
I hear The Hypnotist say, “dying your hair blond, and I’ve read it’s
really dark brown, but you’ve been a blond for the last ten years...”

He must have been reading bottom-to-top since he read me wrong.

I am an actor now. I have to deliver my line. My forehead stares into
the finger stumps of the suited hunchback hypnotist, who, facing me,
helplessly tucks his arms like a terrorist in an act of surrender. But
his sorcery must have cast a spell, eventually, as I am now a red tree
bark, riveted to cuttlefish black.

“If you have only one life; why not live it as a blond?” my mouth
proclaims, and sends all the body folds of a polka dot woman in
exhibition room two bouncing. She was pacing about the halls of
Tate Britain, hoping to crawl into one of the paintings. She calls the
shower boys, the doll boys, the jungle boys, and the magic boys
“Bad Hockneys” and the curtain falls to hide me behind Jade Velvet.

I draw the last breath of nothing and step out of Hockney to escape
The Hypnotist.

For weeks following the Hockney break in, Londoners catch sight
of a stray fair-haired man, searching for shelter, red drapes of a robe
trailing behind him.

It was said upfront that I shouldn't or mustn't sit still. It felt right for me because I wouldn't know what position to choose. And I wouldn't like what my unconscious might choose for me anyway.

It was said that it doesn't matter, how long I'll be sitting here, but what matters is the corporeal gesture. And that I don't need to worry about anything at all. Because the viewer would get it through my body language.

It was said that I have a modern body. That my body is being lived differently, subjected to various technologies and means of control, incorporated into different rhythms of production and consumption, pleasure and pain. That as an individual I'm bringing it into being.

Then it was said that it doesn't necessarily matter because that will be contested anyway. That I shouldn't stay still because when I do, he can't see me.

Then he said something about inner and outer vision, which must come to terms to visually codify my modern body.

He said that it's a challenge. Not only to cultural norms but also to academic conventions. That he sees me puppet-like, but that's fine because, after all, he had been classically trained, thus has an eye for an avant-garde theatre.

I said that maybe because my body seems anti-classical and anti-academic, therefore he too sees me like this. And that I am not sure I want the viewer to perceive me as such. That seemed too cool for me at the time. And I was against coolness long before that sitting happened.

Then the Polish-English online translator misgendered me out of nowhere. I began to look for my reflection in the horizontal black bar of my computer screen, where there are no pixels. And right where the unobscured camera is located, I found the frame of my glasses.

I

A champagne tower filled with boiling water standing in the middle of the room. 140 glasses stacked in seven tiers. The water keeps on boiling.

Underneath the pyramid lays a round, blue carpet, its diameter only slightly bigger than the tower's edge. The floor's dark wooden planks creak when touched by feet. The room is small, not bigger than a dentist's waiting room. The walls are painted black. The light is dimmed, not more than one small bulb dangling from the ceiling. Moved by the rising steam of boiling water, the light bulb slightly sways. The room is filled with heat and the sound of simmering. The tower, both fragile and dangerously hot, keeps us at a distance. All boiling water evaporates. The *coupes* are slowly emptying. The simmers fade away. The light bulb retrieves its balance. The seven-layered tower on the blue round carpet stays the same. Tomorrow morning the structure will get refilled. The water will boil again.

II

That paragraph you've just read, that's how a museum employee described me. My whole being is now compromised in a vignette hanging on the wall, multiplied in visitors' guides. Not one person asked my opinion, even though I am the subject. I cannot really blame the unknown writer; they just trusted their own senses. However, I feel misunderstood.

There is more to me than dangerously boiling water. I'm 140 glasses, carefully piled up. I'm a blue carpet as well, and a reused wooden floor. I'm a light bulb, moving hypnotically through darkness. I might be mysterious but I don't want to be intimidating. I invite you to come closer, have a seat on the chair there in the corner. Explore my atmosphere and the warmth I have to offer. Witness the water disappearing, pause the ticking clock. Let the simmers slow you down.

III

I remember the winter of 1982. I was 23 years old and considered moving to Australia to live the antipode experience. When I realised I hated packing bags, I simply stayed in Hamburg. I didn't have a lot of resources, but worked with whatever I could find. I went to the final sale of a bankrupt crockery store, where I found a load of champagne glasses and decided to use them in my next work.

The summer before, I had assisted Joseph Beuys at Documenta 7. His idea of combining oaks and stones inspired me to mix opposing materials as well. Champagne coupes are designed to show off fancy sparkling wines. Their users take their luxury for granted. Boiling water gets hidden in kettles, pans, or ordinary mugs. By pouring boiling water into champagne glasses, I created a fluid contradiction. Becoming an artist during the Cold War, I chose the title *Boiling War*. The installation got incorporated into an exhibition of women artists, and was sold to a West Berlin museum afterwards. That's when I lost control of it.

IV

Boiling War (1982) had been hidden since 2002, until a curator wanted to present it in her exhibition on the primal elements. I had never experienced the work, and only knew it through the labelled cardboard boxes in our depot.

I was responsible for the installation's reinstallation. I dove into the archives, interviewed the artist and studied lots of information sheets. I opened all the boxes. Six of them were filled with champagne glasses, another contained a water boiling mechanism, and in the last I found a lamp. My team and I packed out everything, installed the wooden floor and unrolled the bright blue carpet. They hung up the light and painted the walls in a specific shade of black. Together, our hands dressed in white gloves, we built the champagne tower in the center of the room.

Every morning, except on the museum's closing day, one of us adds water to the tower so that the play of boiling and evaporating can restart. We activate the work before it disappears again, split into the labelled boxes.

My last check-up reveals nothing: pointless. So I treat myself to a trip — my body is in a bad place and I need to breathe a little. It's my lungs again, which as you know are restless rocks always hardened and pouting amok. Especially in this heat. So instead of waiting it out, I grab the keys and toss myself from the door into the open street.

The train leaves early. I buy a one-euro croissant at the supermarket; it's soft and light and easy. Tourists wander through the wagon clumsily searching for their seats. It says online that the sound installation is set right in the ruins. As far as ghost towns go, Salzburg doesn't strike me as too depressing. I even enjoy its white sombreness. People were still living there among the rubble up till the thirties, finding shelter in tomb-like caves. Eventually the government relocated everyone for sanitarian reasons. Time itself abandoned the city along with its inhabitants, leaving Salzburg as a limp body, the dust slowly eating it away.

The bus from Linz to the ruins is packed and I am gurgling nauseated. Upon reaching the visitor centre I walk down to the river. It's pleasantly windy, paragliders fly between the peaks framing the valley's few remaining buildings. The bones of the medieval fortress glint above the town, its white walls crumbling by the mountain side. This is where Oskar Kokoschka's proto-hippie commune was founded a century ago. The artists painted the city's skin with scenes of idyllic beauty. Some of the murals still remain; Ingeborg Bachmann wrote a poem about the whole thing at some point. Perhaps they were seeking purity — or just some fresh air, I guess.

A predefined route zigzags through the rubble of the ruins — the present is here, the past there — like my mind shying away from unpleasant thoughts. Time takes mineral shape in the heaps of stone and broken steps and pale sycamores growing from the roofs of houses. The atmosphere is crystalline. I walk past a flock of tourists into a sunny square and the sound finally reaches me. It's the air

itself, which blows through a scattered system of hidden pipes. The art comes like a whisper, a low, warm humming interrupted by tiny gasps and gurglings. I listen, alone. It carries with it voices in waves, curving around the ghost space of cracked baroque churches.

Did you know it wasn't the quake that killed Salzburg but the fires that followed? I press my right hand to my chest, feel my way up the breast to the sternum and the collarbone to the back of the neck. I cast the gaze down this crumbling chest of mine. My eyes stop at the white shirt. It is filled by the breeze, empty.

At the Museum der Moderne in Salzburg, on the first floor, in the last room of Jacqueline Maesmaker's retrospective, there is a slide projection of images that succinctly encapsulates what her practice is about. The piece, titled *Introduction Roses*, is a compilation of images from the mid-1990s that documents a playful gesture Maesmaker devised while living in her apartment in Ixelles, Brussels. She began inserting thin strips of pink fabric into unexpected places — think of holes in the floor, grooves in doors, or the space between a window glass and its frame. As the carousel paces through the slides, it becomes evident that every crack, niche, and crevice in the artist's home was transformed into a site of tender attention and aesthetic play. Maesmaker was in her 70s and at the cusp of receiving long-overdue international recognition when she undertook this idiosyncratic mending of her home. Having this in mind, the work can be read as an expression of care for that which is crumbling — the aging home standing as a potent metaphor for the aging body — but also as a meditation on what it means to claim a voice from dwelling the space, let's say, of a crack.

I am writing these lines in front of a vase of pink chrysanthemums, 500 metres above the ground, in a room within what was once a fortress — part of which now houses the Summer Academy, founded in 1953 by Oskar Kokoschka. The task, in part, is to discover our writer's voice — one I pursue by reflecting on ideas of location, positionality, and inverted perspectives that broaden narratives of art history, hence my gravitation towards Maesmaker's immersion in what lies at the edges of perception. Yet, to ruminate on the intimate scale of crevices from a space built to survey and command inverts the insinuated logic of the elevated vantage point only up to the moment when questions begin to emerge such as: What does it mean to climb a mountain to find one's voice? What does this physical — and by extent conceptual separation from the world — say about making and reflecting on art? S. mentions that Kokoschka came here to found an alternative school after he was rejected a professorship at the Academy of Fine Art in Vienna. That we are now here on the

peak of a mountain because of a rupture in the career of an artist speaks, to some extent, of what can potentially germinate in the space of a crack.

Back from the mountain in the afternoon at the Salzburger Kunstverein for a tour of the exhibitions by Esben Weile Kjær and Laila Shawa, which I feel an affinity for. Born in Gaza, but educated in Cairo and Rome, Shawa spent time between 1960 and 1963 at Kokoschka's Summer Academy. In the tour, the choice to host the particular artist, who passed before the events of October 2023, is framed as non-political. Yet the works inevitably resonate with histories, identities, and tensions inseparable from the ongoing struggles in Gaza. I note down a point that is made: "the body of the land and the body of the woman become amalgamated."

I stay with this image of the land and body as amalgam to think that Shawa's perspective often emanates from the ground, attentive to the traces left by destruction. This is especially palpable in her print series *Walls of Gaza II* (1994), which are the result of her direct experience of witnessing the way the ruined spaces of her native city transformed into sites of protest. Through this situated engagement with her surroundings, Shawa tends to the broken, the residual, and the gaps between what was and what remains much in the way Maesmecker tends to the crumbling walls of her home.

Later, at the fortress, and while considering again the daily experience of ascending and descending a mountain, it seems that any attempt at an authentic voice in writing is possible only by practicing shifts in perspective (from crevice to expanded horizons), observed, too, in the work of both these artists so intently engaged throughout their trajectories with taking care of the marginal, the disadvantaged, and the overlooked.

Biljana Puric, *Tempest as a Creative Method in Stella do Patrocínio and Jacqueline Mesmaeker*

A tempest in words and in images. In visuals that flicker from a bluish screen, and in retrospect, of a life failed by the system, of enclosure in one's own tempest without resolution. Two female creatives exploring the tumultuous contexts of their existence: a nearly forgotten and recently rediscovered Belgian artist, Jacqueline Mesmaeker (1929-2023), who has been reintroduced into art discourse with several solo exhibitions in Europe, starting with the one at Fondation Hermès in Brussels in 2019, and Brazilian poet Stella do Patrocínio (1941-1992) who remained largely obscured from public interest, a fact only recently rectified by the sound installation of her reflections, *Falatório*, at the 35th São Paulo Biennial (2023) and the forthcoming publication in English with ICI Berlin.

I want to think about these two artists not by reading one through the other, but as unlikely companions, whose engagement with words and images conjures a narrative of circumvention and enclosure, tumultuous encounters with personal fears, and stormed-up resolutions. At the centre of these considerations lies tempest, as a concept and creative method: a stirring of one's vision to welcome singular perspectives, an artist's way out of the constraining system rooted in reason and cold analytics. It is a rejection of Enlightenment reasoning, a critique of its restrictive force.

Mesmaeker found her deepest fears embodied in the vastness of oceans: in their immeasurability, in their depths forever plunged into darkness, and in the indeterminacy of their material presence — vast yet constraining, glistening yet petrifying. Across the world, in Brazil, Patrocínio discovered the system of care similarly constraining and terrifying. In the imposed and forced idea of community, the one that is “taken care of,” yet also prodded and electrocuted at will by doctors, she existed through a continuous introspection, unfolding in a stream of words recorded by the art therapist Carla Guagliardi.

The two artists, each in their respective contexts, trace a story of

finding meaning in the chaos of motifs and ideas that surrounded them: in the accoutrements of their everyday, and in interactions, both personal and conceptual, with the textures comprising their lives. I bring their expressions together, their two positions, in two excerpts — a video work and a selection of words.

“I came to the Colony because I was ruled, ok?” Patrocínio explains. The ruling over — a constant of being in the world. In the asylum (which she named Colony) and in nature. Like a tree on that small, flickering screen by Mesmaeker, in a video piece titled *Bolsena. Tempête dans un lac volcanique* (Bolsena: Storm on a Volcanic Lake) (2015). Taken in numerous shots that were then composed and recomposed into an unsettling sequence of jump cuts, reversals, of image getting near and receding into the distance. A tempest of technique, of personal relationship to space, of being consumed by it, and rejecting its blueness — its overbearing and seemingly undefined presence. So far from the brutal scientific exactness imposed on Patrocínio in the Colony. Her tempest of mind was probed through operations, many of them, as she narrates: *“I’m operated all over, my brain mainly was operated...They made me sick...”* An induced sickness through procedures that should have made her feel better. Rationality that kills. I observe the jumping of images on the screen of Bolsena, which would not stop. Patrocínio’s words follow this sequence of jump cuts: *“they brought me here as an indigent, without family, I came here, I’m here as an indigent, without family, living here at the hospital, I’m here as an indigent, without anyone for me, with no family and living at a hospital.”* The images rush from left to right in a quick succession. It is nauseating at times to follow this play, this dance of impermanence, being caught up in its storm.

But isn’t this how art should be? Inducing tension and an overbearing sensation, plunging into reality’s terror, instead of giving repose? Stranded, staying behind the closed doors, outside of the system, yet still consumed by it: *“I can’t go out, they won’t let me go through the gate...I’m locked up every day, I really am...”* The seas around: wild, impermanent, impermeable, battering them. In response — a tempestuous art...

1. The rook eats the fruit, and its body becomes a conduit for fertilizing the earth. Without it, the desert would destroy the seed. Months later, it claims neighboring trees, and finally the rook itself — quietly waiting for the fruit to ripen. There is sorrow in how the rook, simply by eating, carried the trees' survival. Together with rain and soil, they can no longer decide when to bear fruit: *"Perhaps, for the demography of trees, this year, this century is not the best — birth rates are falling."*

"Beautiful great palm, where in the end are you meant to grow?"

2. Last week, I ran around markets in Kyiv searching for dates. In Salzburg, I studied de la Barra's diagram, where nine bananas spelled "D-I-T-A-D-U-R-A-S." The palm returns to the people who lived beside it, to dictators who once did as they pleased, reclaiming presence and agency. Earlier diagrams pushed the palm to the background; the cracked tree took center stage in art's evolution. Hélio Oiticica used palms in his 1967 installation to challenge tropical myths. *"Tropicality is more than parrots and banana trees: it is awareness of not being subordinated, inherently revolutionary."* In Tropicália, he displayed palms in pots rather than letting them grow naturally.

3. – Let me tell you something amusing! To grow a palm in your bedroom in Ukraine, first head to the nearest market and buy a handful of dates. Eat one yourself, or give it to a friend. Keep the seed! Rinse it, wrap it in cotton and place it on a jar lid. Let it rest for two days with a little moisture. Then plant the seed in soil: peat, sand, and perlite. Don't grab sand from the playground — show respect for your plant. Palm seeds can take months to sprout, so be patient. And keep it warm in winter, *not just for yourself, but for your tiny pretty palm too!*

4. In 1974, Marcel Broodthaers brought a camel from the zoo to Brussels, placing it before an exhibition. A playful critique of reality and representation, with desert imagery questioning art and society.

He said, “*There isn’t a single palm tree in Belgium, except in winter gardens. But if suddenly there were palms, I wouldn’t be surprised.*” He also showed a film of a camel, linking reality and illusion.

5. – Do you think it could produce fruit here?

– No, stop trying. A friend in Crimea once got a banana shoot — it disappeared the next day, likely eaten by mice during the occupation. Why seek its fruit? It’ll stand like a neutered cat, with no water, freezing under Kyiv blackouts from Russian bombs.

Yura Pikul knew what he was talking about — he spent three years growing palms. On OLX, people posted seeds that, after 30 years, reached the ceiling. Photos showed a huge, alien-like palm over sideboards and curtains. Fascinated, he transferred this oppressive atmosphere onto canvas almost photorealistic in its level of detail.

6. *News: “Palm Trees in Uzhgorod Warmed Up for Winter.” Each tree enclosed in a cylindrical frame, covered with transparent material, protected from frost.*

7. In a small town in Severodonetsk in the east of Ukraine my house never had room for such a palm. Instead, there were photo wallpapers with paradise gardens: indoor monsters intertwined with azure seas and distant birch trees. The ice palace’s palm is gone, just like the palace itself — only the frame and a few small tiles remain. I’m not sure a burnt palm (with its pot!) can still bear fruit.

With a background in easel and monumental painting, I primarily engage in abstract-figurative painting and drawing, employing oil and watercolour as my mediums. My work explores the emotional depth and communicative clarity of visual language, investigating themes such as death, violence, grief, and pain expressed through the agonising body. Rooted in my personal experiences, reflections, and attitudes, my art aims to evoke specific emotions and nuances of sensations, approaching these themes with intensity, while distilling the complexities of the experience of being to the emotional clarity and monumentality of the visual sign.

Alternating between watercolour and oil painting, I approach watercolour as embodied reflections and a means to process personal trauma, intertwined with external crises. Spanning a palette from neon pink to clotted, bloody red, I explore the variety of emotional nuances from innocence and naivety to crudity and pain. While in painting I seek to condense multilayered experiences communicated through colour signs, carrying meaning inseparately with form.

Starting from intuition, inner listening, and somatic response, I rely on singular material extracted from reality, crystallising the form and consciously avoiding appropriation of visual language while insisting on my position as an author. Based on introspective observation, I (de)(re)construct lived and imagined experiences, articulating a multitude of sensations through emotionally precise visual language. Constructing a clear informative message charged with dense energy, I aim to leave an emotional trace, producing a strong psychophysical encounter across a broad affective spectrum.

I approach painting as a language of sensations, expanding its communicative capacities and pose the question: how can philosophical thought unfold not by illustrating concepts, but by embodying them in painting — becoming sensible philosophy itself?



Untitled, 2022, 30 × 40 cm, oil on canvas

The ominous creatures lurking from behind the sleeping person are staring lunatically, multiplying and multiplying while no one's paying attention to them. The silhouettes of bats, owls, lynxes, and other fantastical beings are emerging from the darkness, soon they're gonna fly out the picture.

I woke up full of sweat and confusion as I don't have nightmares that often. In my dreams I rather tend to drift off into pleasurable abstractive fantasies. I put it quickly into my diary before falling asleep so I'll remember it in the morning.

"A strange man was walking around my house."

He's back tonight. Shamelessly walking into my room through the door on the opposite side where I'm laying. He doesn't say anything. I remember him better now. He's bald, around his 40s, lanky, and hunched. I can feel with my whole body that his intentions are not good. I notice him prowling around my stuff.

This is mine! Don't touch that!

I try to desperately open my eyes, trying to force my eyelids to open with my hands but it's no help. I'm trying to scream, move my whole body in any way, throw my arms in the air but

I feel pinned down to the bed, I feel paralyzed.

I need to wake up and scare the man away! He still might be in my room!

He's here again and looks much older. This time standing directly beside my bed, his apparition creeping over me.

Still silent and not making any eye contact with me either.

"In the summer time I feel like a bag of meat when I'm outside."

I'm thinking about the words of my friend on my late way back home. I notice this guy from a distance and within the blink of an eye he's next to me, eyeing my whole body, with his hand already on my shoulders.

I notice him, peeking curiously through the window into my room, I can feel him glancing at me while I'm sleeping. His obscure figure blends with the darkness of the night, I can barely see his face. How dare you! Have you got no shame! I think to myself. Stop doing that! This is my private space, I don't want you here!

I'm wondering if it's the creep that was following me last night to my friend's place at 3 am. While waiting for the bus in the city centre I realised that I forgot my bag. The streets were slowly emptying themselves with people returning to rest, only some shadows left outside.

Even though I got a new house he found his way back in. He looks like the crackies approaching me on the street recently, invading my personal space unhesitatingly. I can sense that he's moving closer and closer, about to jump on my bed.

Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters speaks to me now more than ever. All phantoms of the day, sneaking around corners of unconsciousness, seemingly forgotten, resurrect as zombie-like creatures under the cover of the night.

Class Questions

Can a description ever not be fictional to some degree?

What attracts us to artists and writers who experiment with form and how we ourselves might take risks with form in our own work?

Is form sometimes more important than content?

Which writers we can keep recommending to each other in the future?

R: Hi! We are collecting questions from today about the themes tackled today. Maybe you also have one you would want to add?

LI: For me the whole topic made me question my own personal responsibility as a writer to touch on issues of global inequality. Is it an innocent choice to not write about it?

R: Ohhh, great question!

LI: I don't know about you, but if this resonates you can, of course, add it!

R: Yes, it does resonate!

How do the vision and perception of art/form/expression differ between East and West?

How does our own social, cultural, or gendered positioning influence the way we produce knowledge, write texts, or view art?

What happens when personal experience (pain, memory, colour, sound) becomes the material of form?

How much connection to the artwork do you need to feel to be able to write about it well?

Is it possible to ever completely describe a work of art?

L: Can we consciously move away from a distanced, analytical stance and instead cultivate a "writing through feeling" that is both sensuous and critical?

R: What do you mean by "writing through feeling"?

L: That one expresses oneself through feelings and does not describe the

object, for example, but writes what one feels when looking at it. Does that make sense?

To what extent can consciously reflecting on our own perspective help to question established hierarchies and seemingly “neutral” truths?

To what extent can you inject yourself into the description before it overrides that of the original thing?

How strongly does the canon that we’re in influence our judgement of art?

From which perspectives are artist interviews usually written?

Does a writer need to imply facts and relate personally to the topic to capture the audience?

Is there a danger in writing that is too candid?

What strategies could be used to promote emerging art and local artists in the area without succumbing to the market?

How can research and innovation be combined within an art gallery?

How can the production of new works for a gallery be managed in a sustainable way?

The last question stood out to me in particular, as it touches upon sustainability. New thinking not only involves thinking about people but also thinking about how unconventional approaches may treat nature with more tenderness.

Becoming Writing: Navigating Art Through the Written Word
With Louisa Elderton; Assisted by Sandro Huber
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