

1.

Punta Banda, Baja California North

July 18, 2007

boredom...

“I’m very obsessed lately about capitalism and failure,” Stefan Brüggemann remarked to Malcolm McLaren. “How’s that?” asked the *eminence grise* of punk nihilism. “Well it’s not about criticizing it but more about just celebrating but then that’s very empty but I kind of get attracted to that,” replied Brüggemann.

What struck me about MacLaren’s part of the dialogue was that he was extremely specific. As if he’s spent most of his time since punk’s demise acquiring and refining information, i.e., becoming a thinker. It is possible for someone to be highly intelligent, and yet have no information. This condition—usually associated with youth or prolonged adolescence—results often in boredom, the existential progenitor of nearly every significant art and cultural movement. I’m thinking Dada-Surrealism-derive-Guy Debord-East-Village-punk-mid-90s-grunge-heroin-chic-late-1990s-Los-Angeles. Boredom, a brilliant and brazen stupidity, is dazzlingly pre-emptive. When the bored youth is no longer young, he/she generally either enacts his/her own early

demise, or devotes him/herself to acquiring information. Specificity preempts boredom. Like the incandescence of pop, boredom cannot be sustained indefinitely. The seduction of pop is to render everything nascent, just on the verge of becoming. “No No No No, Brüggemann“ asserts in one of his pieces. Let critics ponder the presence or absence of irony in his use of this two-letter word: is it a homage to Bruce Nauman? In “Obliteration,” Brüggemann’s graceful and casual scratches of nothing freeze on the wall as halations. Boredom is pop’s weighted corollary, but it can’t be sustained once someone acquires an interest in details.

A group (show) united under the banner of *Shallow* (I–20 New York, 2007), boxes of nothing, the subtitle of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s *Thousand Plateaus* reduced or expanded to giant Styrofoam letters alongside an M&M warehouse in Puerto Rico, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* ... is there another place in the world where this concept would have more and less resonance? *I’ll be your mirror*. Taglines of critical thought float in the vacuous space of the gallery, a passive-aggressive performance whose viewers define themselves through their responses.

I think Stefan’s real work is to act as a catalyst.

2.

Punta Banda, Baja California North

July 19, 2007

capitalism...

Chilly morning, gray coastal fog rolls in across the peninsula. I can't shake this feeling of abandonment, sadness—it's like those years in East Hampton when mornings began with *aweight*. A political scientist from Ottawa, Canada, writes about globalization in terms of extreme *loneliness*, and this is a radical thing, to imagine anyone outside the privileged West even having a subjectivity.

Contemporary fiction takes this one step further: only upper-middle class domestic life is worth considering. *My Grandmother's Cancer*, *My Divorce*, *My Subjectivity*. And they could be right. The Polish theater director Teodosz Kantor once staged a play in which a cast of elderly men and women sat at long benches and desks in an old-fashioned primary school-room—the modernist nightmare of constant return and repetition.

“I can’t explain and won’t even try “

(white neon, edition of 3, 2003)

Reinventing society from the inside, the group that gathered around Havelock Ellis in London during the late 1880s felt compelled to explain everything. “You can’t build a new wall with old bricks,” Ellis wrote, and they were the bricks: feminist, nudist, socialist, anti-monogamous, vegetarian, bi-sexual. They lived alone or in groups, rarely in couples, pursuing dangerously close friendships. All had their own work; the women were childless. They had no preconception of happiness; they were distrustful of passion. Demolishing most of the existing taboos around sex, they set out to discover what sex could actually mean and they found it meant less than personal confidences. *Skull Fuck, Dirty, Not Dirty, Tripping Out Through Each Other’s Eyes*—they pooled their pasts and their dreams. They tried to be earnest.

3.

Punta Banda, Baja California North

July 19, 2007

seduction...

It's very busy this summer on the peninsula—more than three times the traffic than last year. The blue-and-white bus, El Micro, is barely an afterthought, used only by drunks and the most destitute. The poor drive Japanese beaters, everyone else drives Lobos and Rams and Expeditions. In less than a year, the land along coastal Highway 1 from Tijuana to Ensenada has been almost completely developed. High-rise condominium towers block the view of the beach, rows of stuccoed “townhomes” have been dug into the hillside.

The billboards selling these things—now written only in English—all use some form of the word “life” in their copy: *Life Elevated*, *Oceanview Life*, *Live your Baja Dream ... Endless Moments—A Boutique Coastal Living Experience*. Donald Trump's Baja Tower ad is somewhat more sophisticated, with its genial photo of Donald in a nice business suit: *Trump Baja—Owning here is just the beginning*. The beginning of what? *Capitalism* is the new Catholic church, everything turning on death, the threat of mortality so pervasive it's barely a subtext.

This summer I'm studying plot, as if plot might offer escape from the limits of *My Subjectivity*. In the best narrative *movies*, events, or the plot and the primary

character(s) advance seamlessly, locked in a dance, so it's no longer certain which is leading. It's a *seduction*—the same complex formula Jean Baudrillard used (*de la Seduction*, 1979) to describe the metastasized movement of capital. Like Albert Einstein, Baudrillard favored suspense novels.

Georges Perec renounced plot because. He feared he had no imagination. It was too much work, making shit up. Still, there was a motive behind Perec's formal experiments, a flight both toward and away from telling the story.

Unwriting, he gives a psychological contour to form and turns the process into the story. *Disparu*, Perec's best-known novel *looks conceptual* but since his process is really himself, his books have humor, directness and warmth absent from most "meta-fiction" experiments.

(Unwriting this text, I assert my small specificity against conceptual art's grandiose blankness.)

4.

Punta Banda, Baja California North

July 20, 2007

conflict...

Last night I felt the spirit that gripped me for months leave my body. I was no longer “in love.” I was left with a vivid and heightened sense of the tangible. What was in front of my face—the rooms in this house, the carved rails on the bed, the night wind blowing against the net curtains—became suddenly real, newly interesting. Released, I was happy. Because psychoanalysis (like narrative plot) relies mostly on *conflict*, its structural method cannot account for these hauntings.

5.

Punta Banda, Baja California North

July 21, 2007

unwritting...

There's an image of a young man jerking off in a room in front of a mirror. Soft focus: the young man is half-dressed, the colors are muted. It's a very contemporary image. The room is neutral enough. It reeks of nothing but boredom. He's jerking off pretty hard, his face blurred on the dull edge of orgasm.

I made up a story about his life outside of the room. *Nothing* is always a smokescreen. There's always something inside of the box. The boy's name is Derek.

Eight months before taking this photo, Derek was traveling. He grew up in a backwater place (he's Australian) and travel was something he always expected to do because other people had done it before him. He chooses Mexico because it's a cheap third-world place and it's close to America. He's 23, and in

a “relationship” with an older artist and this has fucked with his head, and also his plans for the summer. She, Derek’s girlfriend, (her name is Trina), is on some kind art fellowship junket in Europe and she was supposed to send him a ticket for the end of the summer when she got settled but so far she hasn’t. He doesn’t know what he thinks about this, about Trina, except it’s making him crazy not knowing what’s happening, and also it would be so nice to be in Berlin, in Trina’s hotel room after living out of a bag and crashing with people for weeks. But the friends-of-friends (actually, friends of Trina’s) that he’s staying with in LA seem to be pushing him out the door, talking about how *great* it would be to travel alone, how good for his work, etcetera. They introduce him to some 40-year-old rich guy, a painter, Derek’s never heard of his work, who goes on and on about his trip there a decade ago, keeping a sketch-book.

Finally they drop him downtown at the bus terminal with a *Rough Guide* to Mexico.

Derek catches a Greyhound from LA to the Mexican border. He has no idea where he’s going, where he’ll sleep, how he’ll find a place to sleep, when the bus stops in TJ. The change rate from his country sucks and he resents this. It’s not as if he can wire his parents for money and he’s heard nothing from Trina. Also, he doesn’t speak Spanish.

Skipping Baja, he catches a bus to Hermosillo, finds a motel for \$20 a night, and then starts catching small local busses from town to town, the kind that used to be school busses. Passing through one generic Mexican village after another (goats, dust, diesel, and chickens) Derek considers his future. The thing with Trina seems to be over. Will it hurt his career? Who has she talked to about him? His return ticket back to Australia is not for another 4 weeks but he decides to just tough it out because he can't figure out what to say to his friends about coming home early.

As he moves farther south, he starts finding youth hostels, not that he meets anyone interesting but at least they're cheap and they give him some destination. But then his money gets stolen and he calls up his friend Gilbert in Melbourne practically weeping and Gilbert wires him \$400. Somehow this calms him down, and he decides to spend the rest of his time at the beach in southern Oaxaca. One of Trina's friends gave him a book about Puerto Angel about two guys who went down there to stay in the early 1960s and ended up taking hallucinogens with an evil police commander.

In Puerto Angel, he finds a cheap Casa de Cuartos and there are other foreigners here, other travelers. He settles into a pleasant routine of swimming

and sunbathing during the day, and moving between four or five local bars in the evening. On his fifth day he's lying out at Panteon Playa. The beach is pretty empty at mid-afternoon. There's just one other guy snorkeling out by the rock jetty. The locals are ok about sunbathing nude on this beach, and Derek sits up on his towel watching the waves. While he's sitting, the snorkeler starts moving around fast in the water, not snorkeling at all, but swimming against a rip-tide that's trying to pull him out of the bay. The guy's ripped off his mask and Derek runs out on the jetty. The guy is flapping around by this point. Derek's still naked from sunbathing and he crouches at the end of the rocks and he doesn't know what to do, he's not much of a swimmer, and the guy is looking directly at him. For the first time all summer Derek has no thoughts at all. Finally, the guy's head disappears under water.

Holy shit. Derek walks back to the beach and puts on his cut-offs. There's no way he can go back to sunbathing, the drowning has ruined the afternoon's drowsy calm. Derek tells no one what happened. He goes back to his room and packs up his things. The next morning he catches a bus to Mexico City and changes his ticket to go back to Australia.

6.

Punta Banda, Baja California North

July 22 2007

looks conceptual... misunderstanding

Brüggemann talks in an interview about concepts arrived at while traveling. Does he maintain a studio? he's asked. Yes, but (no surprise, he's an international contemporary artist), he spends most of his time on the move. So he adapts, turns his laptop computer into a portable hermitage, a locus of concentration that can be entered wherever he physically finds himself. In the late 1980s, the musician Fred Frith foresaw a future in which culture would be made exclusively by individuals able to function as *small intelligent mobile units*. What's in your PowerBook? Travel, the condition being nowhere and everywhere, makes the work very open, contemporary. It *looks conceptual*, wrought in the crepuscular dawn of endless transience.

The poetics of marketing: since everything is available, the point is no longer to have things but to use them as stations in eternal flux, leveraging the infinite.

Trump Baja: *Owning here is just the beginning* ... Far more creativity goes into the marketing of products than into the products themselves. Likewise, the fact

of the disappeared object is key to conceptual art, a term that (like “capitalism”) is oxymoronic: all art now is conceptual, deriving its value only through context, at a second remove.

Or am I *misunderstanding*?

7.

Punta Banda, Baja California North

July 23, 2007

critique... pop

Christy arrived last night from LA. We drove up to Maneadero this afternoon and went to the park. The park is just two streets behind the national highway, but everything's different—there's a wrought-iron gazebo, old benches, tall eucalyptus. A man rides up on a horse. The late afternoon light is golden and soft. Christy takes photos.

I'm reading *Spook Country*, William Gibson's new novel. Hubertus Bigend (an evil cross between Malcolm McLaren, Jean Baudrillard, and Charles Saatchi) tells Hollis, the androgynous heroine: "The *pop* star was actually an artifact of preubiquitous media." Bigend is clearly the bad guy, but the book is a smooth string of pop product placements for boutique hotels and "cool" merchandise. Reflecting the brushed aluminum surface of ambient life ... a narcissistic *critique* of the present.

8.

Punta Banda, Baja California North

July 24, 2007

political... movie

"All my ideas are imported, all my products are exported, (all my explanations are rubbish)"

– Stefan Brüggenmann, *Social Sculpture 2007*

There is a recurring belief that certain decisions were made for us while we were still lost in the womb of our childhoods. Transactions were brokered in windowless rooms. Armies of people speaking in bland West Coast American accents. Always, the real story was elsewhere. Las Vegas, Nevada. Phoenix and Tempe. What were the voices describing? A carton of water-stained books found in an old man's garage. Proliferation of data surpassed proliferation of nuclear warheads. Old metal, junked electronics. Dictation equipment. Depositing as testament. The sloppiness of all this. *Political* porn.

There is a recurring belief that to locate this, this margin of error, would be to trace a historiography of one's present amnesia. Can no longer remember the *movie* where the person was part of the process. Hallways leading to multiple doors. Behind them: a basketball court, loudspeakers, coaxial wires. Folding tables and chairs. Conversion. Set theories, in which the system eventually takes over. Each door leads to the room.

9.

Punta Banda, Baja California North

July 25, 2007

blind

Two years ago when my vision dropped off, I met someone who wanted to kill me. I was already half *blind* ... Death had drawn me a few times before but I always invented something to do. Running and stumbling. *Pussy smokes a cigarette, pussy blows smoke—penis exfoliation shaved pussy stories Michael Wertheim penis extraction Michael Wertheim litigation mediacom pretty women with cocks worldcast net Albany sex protein diets property management lingerie sale* ... The search-engine log of a website based in Romania. When I researched my killer online I felt something was looking over my shoulder, a primitive counting machine buried inside the circuit board. This turned out to be true.