

I. Intro

Me

Thinking about my time in grad school and just after — *Kingshoro*
Wanting to approach this from a place of generosity to my fellow artists and my peers.

A. Writing Exercises

"Inventing" the "writing about sth you love" exercise when I was in grad school

At the time: finding new language, ways of articulating

Now, realizing it's also about joy too, and playfulness. Finding new ways to preserve and act a sense of play in your studio.

B. The Red Hand Files #219

What Nick Cave reminds me is that sensitivity and bravery towards your work is rigorous in itself, it is enough. Writing about grief

Responding to a several-fold question about if he believes in joy, is an optimist, likes Leonard Cohen:

"If we do not attend to the work of projecting delight upon the world, what are we actually doing? If we do not look for joy, search for it, reach deep for it, what are we saying about the world? Are we saying that malevolence is the routine stuff of life, that oppression and corruption and degradation is the very matter of the world? That we greet each day with suspicion, bitterness and contempt? It seems to me that to make suffering the focus of our attention, to pay witness only to the malevolence of the world, is to be in service of the devil himself.

Is the world heading for disaster? I suppose so. We are constantly, relentlessly, told as much. Am I hopeful for the future? Well, yes, I am. I choose to be an optimist through a kind of necessity, because from my experience pessimism is a corrosive and damaging position to take — one that casts its shadow over all things, causing a kind of societal sickness, a contaminant that ultimately amplifies and glorifies the problems it professes to abhor.

For me, to strive towards joy has become a calling and a practice. It is carried out with the full understanding of the terms of this hallowed and harrowed world. I pursue it with an awareness that joy exists both in the worst of the world and within the best, and that joy, flighty, jumpy, startling thing that it is, often finds its true voice within its opposite. Joy sings small, bright songs in the dark — these moments, so easily disregarded, so quickly dismissed, are the radiant points of light that pierce the gloom to give validation to the world. That's how the light gets in, Leonard tells us, while casting his genius and delight forever among the cosmos."

[Barry S2: Poster]

I. BARRY

The first work to talk about, then work backwards using some of what is coming up here as a framework

When, where, how did the works start – a place of play, with Barry, obviously a semiotic play on his name (and, Harry), but also a kind of portraiture.

Wondering if something "is art"

Seeing "Songs for Drella" (it's on Criterion now)

As Criterion says, *Songs for Drella* is "a mesmerizing musical experience and a haunting reflection on memory, loss, regret, and the search for solace."

Filmed by Ed Lachman who is a really distinct cinematographer, he shot Todd Hayne's film *Carol*, and it's just really beautiful, visually it's really exciting, it's practical and succinct in a way that brings in such an openness, and is very tight in it's playfulness I guess.

"Style It Takes" – the hero John Cale, for whom improvisation is a practice and a way of living

I was very moved by the film and felt like, oh yeah, if art can't also include space for something like making art about your friend, then art isn't for me. Like, that is enough. That is just as valid a place to begin from as any, or to end. And it gave me confidence that my *Barry*'s were enough.

Barry Season 3 promotional material arrived...

Another thing I LOVE is forced perspective. Forced perspective is, of course, something used in tourist photos the world over. From the Leaning Tower of Pisa, to the Eiffel Tower, etc etc etc

Old Hollywood visual effects, camera tricks

[Barry S3: Hollywood and La Brea]

Barry S3: how we did them (cameras, film), where, look at the images

S4 is coming soon: like *Songs for Drella*, "memory, loss", how this is different now for me because Barry is no longer "here", but art can keep going

[Pippa's Barry image]

III. Signs and Wonders

Not the first time Barry appeared in my work!

[Signs and Wonders 01]

Talk about: the work (two "groups" of works, Dreamland and Signs and Wonders. Talk about the titles - X-Files); the install - "hiding in plain sight"; i.e. barely anything visible from the sidewalk. Rhythm in installations.

Starting out: sometimes I give myself a specific "thing", something I want to work out for myself, usually. Here I wanted to do something "narrative", but in a way that hinged on a kind of playfulness with material and semiotic association.

John Baldessari – playfulness w what is systematized and what is open; playfulness w association

So "what happens" here is that a Coke can transforms into a UFO, but dogs are the only witness. So PERHAPS we could SAY it is ALSO about transformation, witnessing, and the limits of what assume to be knowable.

Point out in "Signs and Wonders": how nothing is really "right" (i.e. "dog" sculpture and salt and pepper shaker, tall boy Cokes, Sugar Free Coke, Japanese mini-food Coke); How they were shot: one a green screen, some are stills from a video to embody a kind of movement

Obviously also these "things" the Coke can Wendy's thing, etc - are made by us, so reflect us in their nature, our presets like scale or size, they are human-made objects that are imperfect mirrors to us.

CON/SYMBOL → simplicity can invite investigation, an icon
ON UFOs can be a blank space too

Jungian "flying saucers" as "proof" of living folklore, took seriously what things like UFOs or other phenomena "does for us", what purpose does it serve in thought, theory, etc.

"Considering the notorious camera-mindedness of Americans, it is surprising how few 'authentic' photos of UFOs seem to exist, especially as many of them are said to have been observed for several hours at relatively close quarters. I myself know someone who saw a UFO with hundreds of other people in Guatemala. He had his camera but in the excitement he completely forgot to take a photo, although it was daytime and the UFO remained visible for an hour. I have no reason to doubt the honesty of his report. He has merely strengthened my impression that UFOs are somehow not photogenic."

Tell me more!! As a photographer this gets me going - "not photogenic", "not real" etc etc

ALSO → reflection of POWER - why we think sth is serious or NOT; worth acknowledging or NOT; what is left out is the mirror

UFO as image: defined by absence rather than presence - How rare this is as a photographic problem.

Susan Lepselter, *The Resonance of Unseen Things*: I was thinking about how to describe the book but on the back of my copy, in one of the endorsement things, someone writes about it as having "wildly resonating senses of home and the uncanny, freedom and captivity, that constitute the American ordinary now" which gets the job done for me. There is something else that the idea that a UFO challenges which is what is possessable. The history of UFOs in America is also tied to the history of Western Expansion, a history of illegal possession and forced displacement, there is something that will always stir towards this in the unconscious.

Something that Lepselter's book taught me is to afford poetics and agency to more things. For example, something like the UNCANNY, something that deals in the question of the agency of a thing, can be ITSELF be both vernacular theory and an avenue for expression.

My fellow UFO-er John McCracken: "expanded seeing", that "artists are the true activators of what can be." ALWAYS work from this place - let it be true

Dreamland I and II

On his commentary track about the episode of *The Sopranos* that this work appears in, the episode's director Steve Buscemi notes that the Wegman poster TONY looks at while he is having sex with VALENTINA was added later on. Apparently it was a different poster, and then David Chase changed it later specifically to be this poster but never told anyone why.

Coincidentally I grew up with this poster in my house

The Great Suggestion 01 and 01

Prop newspapers made into a pillow, a decorative object

Newspapers from: *Superman*, *The Twilight Zone*, *Home Alone*, others.

Using vaseline over the lens, another old time Hollywood trick to blue and here, to control what might be "legible"



POST TRUTH vs RESPONSIBLE TRUTH vs. NUANCED REALITY

independence VS being caught VS nothing at all - how to reiterate via structure and form

"The UFO can be 'known' only by not asking what it is." "Sovereignty and the UFO" (607)

"Sovereignty and the UFO" - makes the argument that our conception of sovereignty and self-determination is anthropocentric, organized only with human in mind; societal "authoritarian disregard" of UFOs illustrates the limits of anthropocentric hierarchy, and maybe more so, how much of a threat anything outside of this order it; "For both science and the state, it seems, the UFO is not an 'object' at all, but a non-object, something not just unidentifiable but unseen and thus ignored." (610)

SPECIAL FRIEND

A. Dogs

1. Golub

AG: What about the dogs?

LG: Dogs are surrogates for us. In newspaper descriptions of battles of struggles, of bombarded cities, invariably dogs are wandering around the debris. The dog is that kind of symbol... I've recently used a quote from WH Auden's poem, 'In Memory of WB Yates' (1939):

In the nightmare of the dark

All the dogs of Europe bark

The dogs were barking in 1939 and they're barking today in 1999. (2)

Not the first! Moriyama's Stray Dog, another kind of self-portrait. And again, a feeling of rootlessness, chance and alienation to accompany that portrait. Or Peter Huiar, who felt that animals should be afforded equal regard as humans

On my relationship to self-portraiture:

There is this great Steven Parrino quote about Cady Noland that I love, which Bruce Hainley quoted in something he wrote about her: "Cady Noland's subjects are not social anthropology but clues to herself."¹

Similarly there is something that the late, and very very great, Glenn O'Brien said about Richard Prince, calling him "...a portrait of the artist in negative space" which I love.

And I think there is something about that that does tie to why dogs appear in my work.

2. Wanting to tackle: Multiples, like how "far" I could push one thing that was kind of the same
3. Making a claim on photographs as an object but not sculpture - the INSTALLS in bars drawing this out or making it more complicated or whatever

It's been weighing on me how many forms I never anticipated that will inevitably arise for these images as we barrel towards the future. I often source the images from a location I know intimately: the California desert. Aside from whatever I could tell you about my personal connection to this place, the history and/or rhizometric impacts of Western photography, etc etc., the fact remains that this is an area that will not exist as we know it within my lifetime. The

¹ "The Picture of Little C.N. in a Prospect of Horrors", ArtForum International, January 2019

images of dogs thoughtfully helping their owners flip old cars or make a little extra money selling unwanted items from the garage will also grow into being records of displacement and dispossession. They hope for the best but are heavy with anticipatory grief.

"Woe when you feel homesick for the land and there is no longer any land" (Joy Williams, *Harrow*, 45)

Also, this anticipated the Barry work:

On Friday, April 13th, 2018 we invite you to the debut of "Me as a Dog", Megan Plunkett's installation of recent photographic works at Vilnius bar Who Shot John. The works installed, gathered images of dogs who vicariously appear in various "for sale" postings on Craigslist and printed in standard headshot format, are embedded throughout the interior space of the bar. The installation continues Plunkett's interest in the material condition of photography, here touching on issues of appropriation and how the site of an image operates as an opportunity for staged navigation. (also note I wrote this about myself in the third person)

MP: Over the last year, I started looking at Craigslist nearly everyday. I began to notice, peppered through the photos of various items for sale on the site, photos where dogs had wandered into the frame of the image. Standing alongside the cars, agricultural equipment, marijuana grow lights for home use, free wood, couches and generally out-casted items being hastily sold off, the dogs' presence seems, most often, accidental. Although, sometimes, it's not as clear. Some of these dogs are stars! As my friend Ethan likes to say, "You can't measure presence."

At many bars in Los Angeles, where I grew up and continue to live, actors' headshots are oftentimes plastered on the walls of dive bars across the Valley. The glossy, 8x10 inch prints of these aspiring stars of the silver screen are at once décor, archive and cue. I had been searching for just the right the way in which I wanted to present my dogs, when I was watching television [1 - David Hammonds says its ok to call this research if you are an artist] and saw an image of these headshots during some nondescript scene in a bar. [2 - Barry, Season 1] The perfect doghouse had been staring at me all along, hiding in plain sight.

CSI Class and OBJECTS, IMAGES IN PROGRESS

CSI Class

Why did I do it

What did we do

Show the binder and some images from it

One of my favorite things from the class – MATCHING IMAGE

My friend Zach Furste wrote something for me and he described it so well:

"Crime scene reconstructionists, investigators, and litigators use matching images to define the contours of an event, after the fact. More than merely defining, these images transduce the event into power; visual narrative becomes juridical "fact." Blown up for juries and attested to by experts with laser pointers, matching images are faked photos that acquire the force of law."

I feel like we have maybe touched on some related things, or maybe they have presented themselves - doubles, mirror images.

Show at The Wig – Angharad Williams, Gianmaria Andreeta, Jason Hirata – Michel de Certeau's theory of *la perruque* (the wig): "stealing time while otherwise employed"

Angharad's images of the child she was babysitting, which she had sent back to "report in" to them during the days she was a nanny

FINISH UP by showing some images of some "work in progress", different images of objects that I have been working on, where I think there is a line to be drawn from looking at that "classwork" to now

THING THEORY

Branch of critical theory that takes Heidegger's differentiation of an "object" and a "thing": "an object becomes a thing when it can no longer serve its common function" as starting place to deal with .. just the bizarre thing that is objects and why we make them, how we use them, their absences, voids, gaps.

Interest in objects is similar to the observation about Cady Noland – the thing in the NYT this weekend about Vermeer's death record, realizing how that was so similar to something P.I.'s do so often in the case of their day, trying to find lists in probate or divorce cases, or inventories from bankruptcy proceedings

Sympathetic Magic: resemblances, associations, reiterations, re-enchantment – "The uncanny story itself is about resemblances between unspoken originals" (Lepselter, 19)

"The desire to consume is a kind of lust. We long to have the world flow through us like air or food. We are thirsty and hungry for something that can only be carried inside bodies. But consumer goods merely bait this lust, they do not satisfy it. The consumer of commodities is invited to a meal without passion, a consumption that leads to neither satiation nor fire. He is a stranger seduced into feeding on the drippings of someone else's capital without benefit of its inner nourishment, and he is hungry at the end of the meal, depressed and weary as we all feel when lust has dragged us from the house and led us to nothing.

this is an
image problem

shape shifting + aesthetic survival

DEVON DEIMER - IN HYBRID MOMENTS 2022

Metamorphosis - allying w/ other things,
the broadened OTHER
as protection + survival

The preceding notes were prepared by Megan Plunkett for a visiting artist lecture she delivered at University of California, Riverside, on Tuesday, February 7, 2023.

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Why I Did It

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