

Condensation Revisited

A Lecture on Pigments:3

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At ISEA Verina Gfader and Colm Lally presented “A Lecture on Pigments”. This lecture in Singapore is the third in an open-ended series that took place over two years. The first was performed at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna on 11 April 08. The second was performed at Goldsmiths College in London on 15 May 08. Within the context and temporary community of ISEA, the structuring element of ‘the pigment’ (as materiality and sign) is redeemed and taken into another frame, into the economy of an electronic art symposium. Throughout their research, Gfader and Lally maintain interwoven strands of thought that come together in the form of a collaged text and a lecture.

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Proceeding to multiply the same lecture, but adjusting it slightly for each environment, and also adding, taking out, or “subtracting” (Alain Badiou, 2007) content, the idea of strategic walking, proposed in relation to the theme of *Locating Media*, is less related to our actual walking, but rather to the type and kind of institutions and communities in which we carry out the lecturing.

That means the project provocatively addresses the “path of the artists/makers in their carrier” (if there is any) — and the obstacles and procedures of submitting, being invited, not being invited, being ex- or included in a particular discourse, and a public: being able to operate in a circuit or not. In this enfolded way of giving a fine art lecture in a media type environment, there also

appear questions of failure, the virus, contamination, and further the question of labour: learning a skill to perhaps become an expert.

My part of the lecture begins with thinking of the pigment in relation to the *contours* of location. Among questions of substance, silhouette and media surfaces, at stake is the location of a work, how it inserts itself into an economy — is there a co-existence of different economies? In Hélio Oiticica’s work *Cosmococas* (1973–), for example, cocaine is transformed into an artistic material, its structure comparable to the painter’s pigment. As a work, or image that operates against instrumentalisation and the possibility of being exhibited in public, the force of it was precisely being excluded from the art circuit, to exist as its outline or contour only.

In “A Concise Lexicon of/for The Digital Commons,” Raqs Media Collective (2007: 340) claims that, “There can be no excess of access”. But the question is also: what does access imply, what are its consequences, aesthetically and politically? And, following Jacques Rancière

(2006: 12-13, emphasis added), “*who* can have a share in what is common to the community based on what one does and on the time and space in which this activity is performed”? “[Aesthetics] . . . is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the



The Document, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, 12 April 08.



From: CØDEshop, E:vent, Nov 07.

place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience. Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time". And when Brian Holmes (2007: 37) suggests creating a strategy of an "oppositional device", he proposes to look for the creation of meaning of events or performances lying in the tension they establish with a form of power.

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I present some thoughts on the relationship between the Document and the artists' pigment. The term *Document* here is a place-holder for that which has been established, or located. Furnished with references and citations, in

support of, and indeed constitutive of the institution/state of, for example, (art)history. The term *pigment* on the opposite relates to the substance of artistic agency, and the art movement. Within the context of *Locating Media* I describe art movement as the relentless dispersal of a counter-constitution undermining that which has been, or can be located, or is constituent. This art movement is grounded in Aristotle's notion that "movement is an unfinished, unaccomplished act, without telos, which means that movement keeps an essential relation with a privation, an absence of telos. The movement is always constitutively the relation with its lack, its absence of an end...". I propose that the contrapositions of the locatability of the document, and the forever moving operations of art maintain an antagonistic dynamic in which the art movement continuously threatens to erase

the document while simultaneously risking erasure by documentation, i.e. institutionalisation.

Understood in relation to Christian Capurro's work, *Another Misspent Portrait of Etienne de Silhouette* (1999-2004), this dynamic refers to the Document as place-holder. *Another Misspent Portrait of Etienne de Silhouette* consists of a 246-page *Vogue Hommes*, September 1986, #92, erased by hand by 250 people. Ranging in age between 8 and 80, each person was asked to write in pencil on the page both the time it took them to erase the page — ranging from 9 minutes to just beyond 3.5 hours — and whatever monetary value, translated into an hourly rate, they currently received for their time. Consequently, each page has a nominal value based on the sum of these indices. By its erasure the magazine transforms into a kind of palimpsest, a place-holder for a new taking-place: it is a relocating of the (media) object by the erasure of the magazine's pigment (in this case the surface of extreme commodification, a document of a different kind). Accompanied by a series of lectures by experts and cultural theorists, the work further underlines the idea of reactivated pigments and potential new art movements and meanings by a proliferation of its discourse.

The erasure of the document and reactivation of pigment is also operative in Michael Landy's performative work, *Breakdown* (2001). *Breakdown* was an installation/event in which Landy destroyed everything he owned, all 7,227 of his belongings, in a systematic, meticulous manner. The result of his action consisted of more than 5.75 tonnes of material, which was not archived,



Fluff, Banff, Alberta, June 07.

preserved or exhibited, or even sent to market. Rather, it was deposited in landfill sites. In different ways, Landy's *Breakdown* and Capurro's *Another Misspent Portrait of Etienne Silhouette* question the relationship between the locatable document and the activated pigment — the place-holder and the taking-place. The taking-place replaces the place-holder. That which was located is now relocated.

Aristotle, quoted in: Agamben, Giorgio, *Movement*. URL (consulted April, 2008) <<http://www.neuralyte.org/~joey/generation-online/pf/agamben3.htm>>

Badiou, Alain. 2007. *DESTRUCTION, NEGATION, SUBTRACTION - on Pier Paolo Pasolini*, seminar at the Art Center College of Design, Pasadena. URL (consulted April, 2008) <www.lacan.com/badpas.htm>

Basualdo, Carlos. 2001. *Hélio Oiticica, Quasi-Cinemas*. Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatjy Cantz Publishers.

Holmes, Brian. 2007. "The Oppositional Device or, Taking Matters into Whose Hands?" In Johanna Billing, Maria Lind & Lars Nilsson, *Taking the Matter into Common Hands. On Contemporary Art and Collaborative Practices*. London: Black Dog Publishing, pp. 35-41.

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