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This is to certify that the thesis prepared

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complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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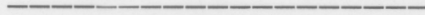
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ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC



ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

Boxer

ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

Criminologist

ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

Switchboard Operator

ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

Magistrate

ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

Venture Capitalist

ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

Marriage Counselor

ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

Ombudsman

ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

Imposter

ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

Coast Guard Officer

ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

Low-Life

ON
PARATEXTE:

The enclosed being

A

HIGHLY

- ARTICULATE -

TEMPER

TANTRUM

on the

NATURE OF ART

with a

CAPITAL

A

OVERTURE

(N.)

: a piece of music played at the start of an opera, a play, etc.

: something that is offered or suggested with the hope that it will start a relationship, lead to an agreement, etc.

: the first part of an event: the beginning of something

1 a : an initiative toward agreement or action: proposal

b: something introductory: prelude

2 a: the orchestral introduction to a musical dramatic work

b: an orchestral concert piece written especially as a single movement in sonata form

OVERTURE

(V.)

overtured overtur-ing

transitive verb

1: to put forward as an overture

2: to make or present an overture to

We place quite a high importance indeed on first impressions.
And so, I hope that I am doing this thing properly:

Oh, dearest reader! I have thought long and hard about what I want my first words to you to be, and finally, I have decided on - "hello."

And so, "Hello".

And now, what shall I tell you? Perhaps¹ this:

1. According to my parents my first word after 'mama' 'dada' and likely 'no' was: intact. The story goes that my brother gave my father a box with a 'present' inside, a small ring or jewelry box. My father, to my brother's horror shook the box good-naturedly and said "what is it?"

It had apparently once been a spider.

I expressed my concern by asking: "spider intact!?"

speaking to:

“Hello?”

“Hello!”

Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone, though we are apt to associate it, like a good many other things with Thomas Edison. Though Bell would give us the technology it was Edison who popularized the lexicon by which we know who is on the other end of the line:

“Hello?”

Considered a vulgarity, it was originally used to express a mixture of shock, surprise, un-knowing, hesitancy and yet... a certain excitably-cautious curiosity:

“Hullo! What’s that?”

“Why! it’s a guinea-pig!”³

Which, indeed is quite right in the assigning of emotions in respect to the cold unfeeling telephone receiver which resembles in no way our beloved who’s voice and self emanate from it:

“Hi. It’s me.”

"The injunction to listen is the total interpellation of one subject by another: it places above everything else the quasi-physical contact of the subjects (by voice and ear) : it creates transference: "listen to me" means touch me, know that I exist; in Jakobson's terminology, "listen to me" is a phatic expression, an operator of individual communication; the archetypal instrument of modern listening the telephone, collects the two partners into an ideal (and under certain circumstances, an intolerable) inter-subjectivity, because this instrument has abolished all senses except that of hearing: the order of listening which any telephonic communication inaugurates invites the Other to collect his whole body in his voice and announces that I am collecting all of myself in my ear. Just as listening transforms noise into index, this second listening metamorphoses man into a dual subject: interpellation leads to an interlocution in which the listener's silence will be as active as the locutor's speech: listening speaks, one might say"⁴

It isn't only the losses of context and the terms misconstrued during transmission that makes the telephone (both apparatus and the children’s game of repetition) part of my interest in storytelling:

2. According to some

3. C.S. Lewis. *The Magician’s Nephew* The Wood Between the Worlds

4 Barthes, Roland. *On listening* Responsibility Of Forms

speaking to:

"The girl's called Jill," said the Owl, as loud as it could.

*"What's that?" said the Dwarf. "The girls are all killed!
I don't believe a word of it. What girls? Who killed 'em?"*

"Only one girl, my lord," said the Owl. "Her name is Jill."

*"Speak up, speak up," said the Dwarf. "Don't stand there buzzing and
twittering in my ear. Who's been killed?"*

"Nobody's been killed," hooted the Owl.

"Who?"

"NOBODY."

*"All right, all right. You needn't shout. I'm not so deaf as all that.
What do you mean by coming here to tell me that nobody's been
killed? Why should anyone have been killed?"⁵*

It is also in large part the way in which the telephone makes relevant the idea of 'explaining oneself': speaking is acutely intertwined with listening and listening "has quite a lot to do also with the brain, and the mouth and the mysterious connections in between as much as the ear."⁶

I wrote my letter of intent addressed to the Concordia MFA program not only as an academic hoop to jump through, or a display of my prowess as a writer, but also as a way to explain myself. The instructions said 'tell us why you want to go to grad school', but you end up writing: "this is why I do what I do." and by extension "this is why I matter."

It's a fraught thing: to explain oneself: but, let's try...

Despite the derision they receive, deemed boring or uninspired, ending up in the second hand shops of the world; Landscapes of all formats and media hold a peculiar importance in my identification of art and the role of artists.

A colleague of mine once described a work in which she activated turn of the century classic English romantic landscape paintings by describing the images verbally to participants who could not see the paintings themselves. I was intrigued, having no particular allegiance nor hatred towards landscapes myself.⁷ When I considered why this work held my interest it was because unequivocally, irrefutably landscapes spoke to me as: Art. They were not portraits, cluttered with the intrigue of power, politics, narrative and narcissism. Nor are they still lifes, intellectual psychoanalysis of the often not-so-hidden semiotics of symbolic objects. They are a distinct document that somehow symbolizes a certain way of thinking about the function of the arts and the role of the artist.

5 C.S. Lewis: *The Silver Chair* The Sailing of the King

6 Miles Hoffman: *The NPR Classical Music Companion: An Essential Guide For Enlightened Listening. Absolute Pitch.*

7. Or, at least so I thought.

speaking to:

Within the western pictorial tradition there is something that still strikes me as wholesome and powerful about the presentation of 'Nature', an implied symbiosis between a deified force (God, Nature, Earth) ⁸ and the somewhat God-Like nature of the mythological genius of the artist, able to elevate the quotidian landscape into that ever elusive and yet all powerful three letter word: "Art".

In the depths of my studio desk, while looking for the index cards I wanted to plan this thesis document with, I found a crinkled note that bore the most peculiar phrase. It was written in what I could recognize as my scrawl of extreme exasperation:

"I'm sorry I don't make {explicative} landscapes you guys"

Several questions arise thanks to the evidence of this irrational and yet intensely felt index card sized apologia:

Was I truly sorry that I did not or, had not created landscapes? Was I expressing remorse for not having achieved something that I dearly wanted? Or, was I instead expressing a frustration that I felt coerced into making such things? What made me feel so pressured to make these images that I felt I needed to apologize for my lack of landscapes?

What was the work that I felt needed to be made in place of those {explicative}-ing landscapes?

Finally, who are those 'guys' to whom I had addressed my lament?
My faculty members? My peers? The art world?
Humanity at large?
Myself?

A strikingly large amount of my career in higher education in the arts has been consumed by posturing related to similarly felt apologia - or the defense of oneself, of one's actions, one's products. As artistic works and the processes that go into them are increasingly linked to the person or persons responsible for their creation these three categories (self, actions, products) collapse into one another. The current academy system has stressed buzzwords of engagement and accountability⁹ across all disciplines over the past 10 years, and those terms have made themselves known to me in the form of the increasing application of the possessive: *my work, my process, my intentions*.

The possessive is out in force, disavowing any and all interpretations that invade
8. Or just about anything else that you like with a capital letter at its beginning.

9. Hassel, Holly, and Jessica Lourey. 2005. "THE DEA(R)TH OF STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY." *Teaching* 53, no. 1: 2-13

speaking to:

the sanctified personal space of the artist: 'That's not what I meant, you're taking it the *wrong* way, that's not what *my* work is about.' How do we converse about the product of persons wholly vested in their production without addressing the maker? Do we want to divorce these notions? Why are we invested in explaining what we mean to one another?

Being able to defend one's self and one's decisions are by no means unimportant or without great merit as the products of critique and evaluation. And yet, I cannot help but wonder why I am prone to a sort of existential pain‡ related to the simple fact that *I do not make {*****} landscapes?* ‡

My work as an artist has, in many ways, evolved into a sense of embarrassment about what is considered art and how it is justified as such, exacerbated by most¹⁰ exhibitions, biennials, or artist talks I attend. By extension I suffer from an inflamed embarrassment in myself. Like many embarrassed men, I turned to authority to assuage my feelings of doubt and inadequacy. I entered an academic environment which rewarded the rich espousal of theory and verbosity and I reciprocated. I learned to speak about my work with a mastery that far exceeded the artistic interest or merits of the thing itself which I had produced.¹¹

No longer anchored to a tradition of craft, making, skill, technique or uniqueness my rampant interior criticality wound itself out of control:

Are art objects actually unique or novel? What imbues them with importance at all¹²? Surely the proclamation that they are in fact 'Art'- made by none other than the artists themselves is what elevates the quotidian into the miraculous. If Art is not meant to be the miraculous what is it? Indeed, if perfection is not what is being presented but what it being perceived by the viewer is the artist themselves not benefitting from an erroneous conclusion which they do not deserve? If the dia-

‡ TEACHABLE MOMENT

Dear self, where is all this wailing and gnashing of teeth coming from? Why should anyone feel 'existential pain' over landscapes, or any other form of pictorial representation? Have you become like Calvino's Gurduloo - yelling and shrieking at his foot being stuck through will quills by a porcupine? "Ohhhh fooooooot foot!! If you would just move but an inch! Move foot: move!!" Elliott, take a breath - it's your foot, it's up to you to move it, first you might consider taking it out of your mouth.

‡ TEACHABLE MOMENT

A landscape, or other depiction of the material world is no more or less real than a depiction of the immaterial; the personal. Narration of the outside world might have a rich and storied tradition of pictorial representation, but narrative of the interior life of humans has itself become the default representation of even the term 'narrative'. If it is a story you want to be telling, then you've come to the right place.

10. But not all.

11. At the very least in my own estimation.

speaking to:

logue between an art work, the art worker and the one whom the art works on is unequal based upon the respective domains of knowledge processed by each actor in the constellation how can each participant grow and change based on the interaction? Won't the maker continually suffer from an ignorance of the prior assumptions of the viewer¹³ and won't the viewer continually suffer from an ignorance¹⁴ of the life and circumstances of the maker?

Yet, for the art object to truly be art would the circumstances, life, and context of the maker be truly irrelevant - if the work does not achieve a transformative action in the viewer without the intervention of the artists's charisma or personality then certainly it is not art. And yet, is it not the personality and the charisma of the personhood of the maker what lives through the made object - it is what imbues the thing with the status of 'Art'. Or, is it the action of considering a thing 'Art' what actually makes it so?¹⁵ If anything has the potentiality to be art is everything always already art¹⁶ - or does it await activation by an artist as the actor who moves the thing into the realm of the event? At what point does a thing become art and after¹⁷ this does it always remain so? Is everything then, constantly Art? Perhaps everything is constantly Art-ing, in the Deleuzian sense of become-ing.¹⁸ Or, perhaps the things balance precariously between polar positions of art and not-art - poles which are actually the same thing despite the semantic and linguistic opposition applied to them. Maybe 'Art' is a problem of language rather than media or interpretation¹⁹. Maybe 'Art' is not a problem at all, maybe 'Art' is just my problem. What IS 'Art' really? Is it art, 'Art', Art, or ART²⁰?

Why am I asking myself these questions?

Am I even asking the right questions?"

Needless to say, I thought much, complained more, and made little. The more theory I consumed, the less convinced I was that the world needed any more art, least of all mine. My studies had transformed me from maker to thinker, and despite the elevation that my ego felt, I reviled the notion that I could consider art, think about art, *as* art, and though I made practically no art, in fact be an artist- perhaps even regarded as an intelligent artist, a good one. The less I made, the more I felt the need to protest; the more I protested the more eloquent my protestations became.

It seemed that I was predetermined to be this strange caricature of the

speaking to:

artist who makes nothing; the scholar who has studied himself into a corner, though now perfectly adept at deceiving himself and others that he is not in a corner, in fact there is no such thing as a corner. Finding myself there, I named myself,

THE SCHOLAR TRIUMPHANT.

12 Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*. New York: Macmillan, 1934.

13 "I confess that until that day I had not much interest in the visual arts, although I realise now, that my lack of interest was the result of the kind of ignorance I despair of in others. I knew nothing about painting and so I got very little from it." Winterson, *Art Objects*.

14 {overly conceptual artworks and} the type of conceptualism it typifies, and the contemporary paradigm of the artist-curated show are all based on an introversion that labors to keep meaning withheld from the viewer, and as such unchallengeable—as the saying goes, you can't argue with taste. -Claire Bishop *Artforum* 2015

15 "Any object can be a thing, but once it is framed as or entered into evidence - once it is mobilised - it becomes a document, an instance proper to that genre." -Paper Knowledge: Towards a Media History of Documents Gitelman 2014 pg 3

16 It suffices to understand the always-already not as an abstract model formulated in the framework of metaphysics, but as a concrete one realized in an ostensive context among beings who only learn about their death because thinking is a life-and-death operation. Gans. *Originary Thinking*. Stanford, CA.: Stanford UP, 1993.

17 "The past-in-general is, in the first place, language. Meaning: the phonetic, lexical, and grammatical system, which exists in the sense of an inexhaustible potential, a potential that is perennial because it is never exhausted or attenuated by the ensemble of its realizations." *Journal e flux*. DeJa Vu and The End of History

speaking to:

18 "...philosophy is drawn to the question of difference, that is, to the immersion of difference in and the production of difference by duration. Duration is difference, the inevitable force of differentiation and elaboration, which is also another name for becoming. Becoming is the operation of self-differentiation, the elaboration of a difference within a thing, a quality or a system that emerges or actualizes only in duration. Duration is the 'field' in which difference lives and plays itself out. Duration is that which undoes as well as what makes: to the extent that duration entails an open future, it involves the fracturing and opening up of the past and the present to what is virtual in them, to what in them differs from the actual, to what in them can bring forth the new. This unbecoming is the very motor of becoming, making the past and present not given but fundamentally ever-altering, virtual. Intuition is the precise method of discernment available to philosophy in its exploration of these durational becomings."

Elizabeth Grosz. Bergson, Deleuze and the Becoming of Unbecoming. Parallax, 2005, vol. 11, no. 2, 4–13

19 "Pieces of text then, can simplify, complicate, elaborate, amplify, confirm, contradict, deny, restate or help to define different sorts of meanings when they interact with images and objects." -Hall, Sean. *This Means This This Means That - A User's Guide To Semiotics* Laurence King Publishing pg 98

20 Levine, David and Rule, Alix. International Art English. Canopy Canopy Canopy. Issue 16, *They Were Us*. 2012

I AM
THE
SCHOLAR
TRIUMPHANT

OR,

THE SEDUCTION IN THE
UNWAVERING BELIEF THAT
THERE IS, INDEED, SOMEWHERE OUT THERE
KNOWLEDGE

speaking as:

“The Library was not just the total sum of written heritage, the locus of memory, and a representation of of respective knowledge cultures. In fact it could itself become an icon of knowledge. if effectively became the location in which knowledge was stored by a compilation of books, structured and ordered in some way, and was presented in the light of a universal science. The order of a library could, like that of a *kunstkammer*, mirror order in nature, or - if this order was considered lost - reestablish it. But a single book could also accomplish the same thing: an encyclopaedia could hold the entire knowledge of a whole library.”¹

I went to Europe for five weeks and everywhere I went, I ducked into a bookstore not the library, but the bookstore. Perhaps three of the two dozen I stepped into were antique shops or rare manuscript dealers. Rather, what I more commonly entered were commercial shops, what a passing North American traveler would recognize as ‘the local version of Barnes & Noble or Chapters - Indigo’. Places that were selling not just books in tidy stacks organized by alphabet, author, subject and seemingly, cover color but also coffee, pastries, junior art sets, maps, gardening equipment, post cards, souvenir magnets, oversized chocolate bars.

By and large, I was not stepping across the threshold of a long narrow and darkened shop crowded with antique map reproductions dangling perilously off the walls, arranged in piles on ladder shelves which raced up and away down the corridor with what seemed like someone there far and away illuminated by what one’s imagination could conjure into candle light on a kind of treasure hunt to see what I could find.

Nor was I walking beneath arched doorways and vaulted ceilings into libraries of great renown; long standing repositories of truth, knowledge, archive, aspiration, dust.

I went to Europe and despite being a ‘scholar’ I visited the bookshop instead of the archive. For some time I fancied myself interested in archives as a person who likes ‘old things’. Old photos, old maps, vintage aesthetics, faded images, facsimiles, collections arranged by date. Instead, I think I was very earnestly interested in books in a way that was not quite wholesome as an ‘artist maker’. I didn’t care if they were hand bound in leather or if they were shiny-new paperbacks. I just liked books. Thus, I was quick to align myself with the buzzword of the moment : the archive.

1 Damm, Heiko. “Close and Extensive Reading Among Artists in the Early Modern Period.” In *The Artist as Reader on Education and Non-education of Early Modern Artists*, 19. Boston: Brill, 2013.

I am interested in, and concerned by, recent trends in the categorization and treatment of archives and the so-called knowledge which they contain by artists. My introduction to the archive was that of a repository with history to be respected, acknowledged and yet investigated and challenged, made use of, even subverted. However, more recently I have experienced it framed as an authority based upon exclusivity and preciousness. The status of treasured artifacts and rare-texts elevates the content of pages held within such gold-leafed bindings of the past as that which we pay homage to, revere- without so much as the cracking of these spines in order to find out just 'knowledge' may be happening within. Mirroring the elevation of the 'unique art object' to a place of quasi-religiosity, I find this reverence misplaced and disconcerting. It lacks the critical engagement which hallmarks the interested observer, accepts 'because they said so' as both legitimacy of importance and as the thing's own justification for its being.

Let us consider the visual and verbal language of turn of the century proselytizing texts (be they treatises upon god, politics, science or society all are meant as argumentative and persuasive tracts created to argue one's case and convince the reader of it's legitimacy.) A plethora of headings, sub-headings, categorizations, and more 'or's' than you can shake a stick at characterize the attempt to categorize the ideas held within a book or treatise. Such earnest attempts to prepare a reader for what it is that they will encounter has fallen out of fashion for the coolness of the swiss design aesthetic. Contemporary textual design is drunk on white space where less is absolutely more. And yet- this curiously outdated caveat-emptor perhaps provides us with more space for surprise and investigation rather than less. What does this academic text, actually say? Why is there such a need for misdirection, verbal justification, obfuscation of one's claims, the very use of words like obfuscation?

What is the allure of the archive, the library, the bookstore, the encyclopedea? It is about buying and selling, about happiness through consumption, about the organization of materials and of ideas and thoughts, about the purchase of understanding through the use of books, which as we all know - need not imply that we are reading them². For truly, what else are all of my books for, than to assert to you my reader, that I am indeed learned?

² "To conclude, there is also the general, fundamentally relevant question concerning early modern behaviour in reading: to what extent did artists not 'read' but rather 'use' books..." Damm, Heiko. *The Artist as Reader on Education and Non-education of Early Modern Artists*, 22. Boston: Brill, 2013.

speaking as:

Similarly cashed in the desk of my studio drawer, a manifesto was drawn up on a series of notecards, my mid-graduate career learned conclusions:

I AM THE SCHOLAR
T R I U M P H A N T

1. I do not believe in the transformative power of art objects, I think they are selfish and wasteful.
2. I think the world has enough stuff in it already.
3. I make art for a specific audience I have no delusions that everyone will get something out of it. That audience is other art people.
4. Making art for other art people is an elitist enterprise.
5. I don't feel bad about it.
6. I'm tired of pretending it isn't [an elitist enterprise] and that this highly specified elitist conversation is really anything other than an elaborate use of theory, jargon and bullshit to justify someone does or does not like your work.
7. Critiques are never about the work. They're about the artist and/or the work you didn't make. They are an opportunity for other people to tell you how they would have done your project better than you did. I love hearing myself talk and deep down I probably do think I could do everyone's project better than they could; I LOVE Crits.
8. In the grad scheme of things 'art' will never cure cancer, fight global warming or stop racist classicist bigots from being [racist classicist bigots]
I do not believe it is an essential and needed public good.
I do believe it is an essential and needed private good—usually for the people making it/making money off of it.
9. Art shouldn't [be], can't [be], and isn't everything to everyone all the time. Can we please, please, please stop pretending that it is?
10. As much as I hate all of this I'm probably still going to keep doing it.

speaking *as*:

Despite my jaded manifesto of no's, there was a certain delight I took in being regarded by others as learned. Though I continued not to make anything but further complaints about my inability to make things I was being rewarded. Though I had coined a personal phrase for the sort of anti-artist I felt myself becoming my research into why it was I wanted only to research not making revealed a far longer tradition than my own self centered existential crisis.

I DISCOVERED THE *PICTOR DOCTUS*.

“ SECOND CLARINET! ”

“ YOU ARE BORING US! WHERE ARE YOU FROM? ”

INSTRUCTOR,

“ IOWA. ”

CONDUCTOR!

“ I’M QUITE SURE THAT’S THE
ROOT OF THE PROBLEM. ”

I had always liked cartoons. (They involved dogs, and some of them could talk. You had me at 'dog'.) Like most things designed ostensibly for children I was just ever so perceptive enough to realize that there were other meanings and relevance to references to things like Yankees outside of a baseball context. Perhaps there was something to this certain tree growing in Brooklyn. I noted these adult related inferences and influences. Though I lacked the context for these things I longed to know what it was that I didn't yet know (a sense of the union, national heritage, development of the modern nation state and antebellum american history) which would make these things make sense.

*In the mean time, I enjoyed the amusements, musings and exploits of Bugs and the gang. Bugs Bunny was always my favorite, why exactly, I couldn't tell you. He was everyone's favorite wasn't he? Smart, funny, charming, a wise ass- what's not to like? Perhaps what I liked above all was his trans*gressive nature: not only did he routinely get one up on almost everyone who'd done him wrong¹ but he did it by getting done up in various disguises and costumes, cross-dressing almost every boundary thinkable: gender, class, occupation, status, species...²*

Most vividly, I remember, to get back at some pompous opera singer³ he posed and passed as some legendary European conductor - decked out in tux and tails, curly white wig perched atop his brow, conveniently hiding those long ears. He broke in from off stage and was recognized at once inciting excited whispers of 'Leopold, Leopold! Leopold, Leopold!' from the assembled musicians and original concertmaster who graciously and immediately ceded the podium and place of honor to Bugs ergo Leopold.

*With the boldness that only the self importance of performance and impersonation can lend itself, he ascended the podium snapped the baton scornfully in half (rejecting the importance of tools as extensions of the self and reinforcing yet again the paradigm of the artist as a genius whose very hands are imbued with divine like supra-importance***) and proceeded to conduct {instruct} the singer with his smartly gloved hands and wriggling fingers alone.*

Extracting exacting high and low vibrato bursts 'Leopold' ran the singer ragged - producing impossible superhuman feats of vocal expulsion far beyond anyone's possible lung capacity. The tenor's once composed curly hair was now ripped out in chunks. He grew more disheveled by the moment: exploded cummerbund, split eaton collar. His straining face cascading through a roulette of improbable rainbow hues: orange, red, green, purple and back again as he rapped his fists against the floor in bodily protest but continued to sing on and on.

All this prompted by the upraised hand of the rabbit-conductor, even himself taking a break from the exertion, leaving an empty quivering glove to continue his impossible demands upon the singer.

Despite the glorious execution of the performer I quite remember that it was 'Leopold' who was celebrated after the finale. The audience unwittingly but correctly congratulating him on his infiltration, his imitation, his subversion, in getting what he wanted as well as getting away with it.

That was part of the fun. Perhaps the serious part of it.

I see myself rolling around on the floor in front of the television giggling at the bizarrely colour-faced singer and perhaps with a small sense of the deliciously backhanded justice of it all; right up to the end with the rabbit walking away with a rose between his teeth.

I have been wondering for some time now if I am interested in and attracted to this analogy of the conductor and the orchestra in general, because I wish to be the conductor. Am I the instructor able of extracting previously inconceivable feats of talents from those under my tutelage through implacable vision and in large part an unshakeable sense of purpose; the power and sheer will of my most excellent personality? Or, in point of fact, would I rather very much like such a person to inspire me, to direct me, and most importantly just to tell me what to do?

1 "Of Course you know, this means war!"

2 "...interrogating Bugs Bunny's characteristic strategies of trickstering especially cross-dressing, in which he manages simultaneously to transgress binarized gender roles, to expose the performative basis of gender, and to manipulate heterosexual economies of desire [we see] the connections, both theoretical and material, between the queer camp of gender bending and the slippery strategies of resistance, the semiotic play, of Signifyin(g) as back-talk." Savoy, Eric. 1995. "The Signifying Rabbit". Narrative 3 (2). Ohio State University Press: 188–209. <http://0-www.jstor.org/mercury.concordia.ca/stable/20107053>.

3 Long Haired Hare, June 25, 1949

WB. Dir- Chuck Jones

LEARNED

LEGITIMACY

A RETURN TO

AN OLD WORLD IDEAL

or,

having

“YOUR CAKE”

and eating it,
too.

During the actual renaissance, the classic idea of the renaissance man was termed the *Poeta Doctus* or the *Poeta Eruditus*² both variant forms of the learned scholar, the product of humanist education projects. The *Poeta Doctus* was intimately aware of the power of words from a Theological, Juridical and Philosophical perspective and tradition - the 'doctor' of the work of words. The *Pictor Doctus* on the other hand was the learned scholar whose administrations related to images, he³ of the learned hand {*Docta Manus*} was similarly learned with regard to Ecclesiastical, Polemical and Ontological concepts of the world and one's place in it. The long and as-yet unfinished process of disentangling the conception of the Artist from maker, indelibly linked the designed and fabricated object, to labour and technical skill begins here with the title *Pictor Doctus*. To be designated such aligns one with the newly⁴ elevated status of Artist rather than Artisan. By the time we arrive at the work of Dürer and the master image makers of the low countries, debates upon the modern artistic self and its relation to personality, vanity, self portraiture, self determination have begun "Dürer has always played a starring role in one of the great dramas of European cultural history. Generations of art historians have dramatised his success at creating a modern artistic self and embodying it in the new high art of the self-portrait."⁵

By the time that we arrive at the close of my career as a student the debate about my own contemporary artistic self are still revolving around personality, vanity, self portraiture and self determination: am I an artist because I make art, or because I deem myself to be one?

1 This text will privilege the use of the term *Pictor Doctus* over the seemingly interchangeable *Doctus Artifex*. The reasons for doing so are entirely egocentric in that I have always harbored slightly medical aspirations, and in so much as I am able to consider myself a practitioner I am inclined to align myself, at least linguistically if not in actuality, with those persons whom are tasked with first doing no harm, and then perhaps with helping and healing.

2 Damm, Heiko. "Close and Extensive Reading Among Artists in the Early Modern Period." In *The Artist as Reader on Education and Non-education of Early Modern Artists*. 3, Boston: Brill, 2013.

3 The author's use of the gendered male pronoun here refers to the highly stratified and restrictive pedagogical situation of the time of the terms invention and should not be taken to apply to only men/male identified persons.

4 Circa 16th Century Europe, though the exact meaning and rights appertaining to this all important designation are still very much up for grabs, as evidenced by the existence of this text.

5 Grafton, Anthony. *Bring out Your Dead: The past as Revelation.*, 63 Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001.

*TO THE
DEGREE*

TO WHICH:
ON VESTED
INTERESTES,
VESTMENTS

AND,

THE CONTEMPORARY
INVESTITURE CRISIS

speaking as:

Let us turn to a work that is about the place/role and appearance of authority (The Degree To Which) - extending to the crisis of 'because I said so' and the folly of 'anything goes' in which I struggle with and against the notions that if you deem something to be art it therefore is.

At the *conclusion* of my first existential crisis in which I tried to decide if I would pursue graduate studies in the Arts or in History I bought a tweed smoking jacket with elbow patches and brown velour collar.

At the *beginning* of my first existential crisis in which I tried to decide if I would pursue graduate studies in the Arts or in History I studied Dr. Daniel Paul Schreber. Schreber was a one time president of the German Judiciary, writer and legal scholar, who, according to scholar Eric Santner went insane¹ because he suffered an 'investiture crisis' - being entrusted with a responsibility for representing ideas and ideals far greater than himself. Despite the fact that he was totally bonkers² his legal reasoning was still completely intact. As a judicial scholar he represented himself as his own counsel as he repeatedly sued the state to release him from enforced tutelage in an asylum. He in point of fact presented an erudite line of reasoning against the abuses of a state which oversteps its legitimacy by mandating and governing not that which is illegal and the purvey of the court, but that which is socially impermissible, undesirable or unwanted based upon the discomfort or anxiety that non normative expressions of personhood provoked in his doctors.

1 Much has been written on the well documented and fascinating life and case of Dr. Daniel Paul Schreber, the former justice of the supreme court of Saxony who was later committed to an asylum at the end of the 19th century. His narrative neatly dovetails with the upheavals of the time in which he lived - the fall of the modern utopic project that was the Weimar Republic, the birth of Psychology and the medicalization of 'the soul', a shift from legal protections of the private citizen to the virulent nationalism which promoted a unified idealism and/or propaganda, and a close of the age end enlightenment which prized rationalized empirical investigation so highly that the human who was once at the center of the once famed renaissance humanist education was in danger of being lost.

The literature which exists on Dr. Schreber is in large part due to his extensive and intense personal memoirs, which, along with documents related to his ongoing legal battle to be released from state sponsored tutelage continue to be published under the title "Memoirs of my Nervous Illness". A range of studies exist on Dr. Schreber's time in Sonnenstein asylum detailing his illness and symptoms; he felt he had a direct link to god who was feminizing him and sought redress from the upset this caused him by cross dressing as a women, which seemed the only effective therapy available to him and was also very effective when used as a justification leveraged against his sanity by his physicians, one of whom he he accused of committing 'soul-murder' against him. The studies, of which I know a substantial amount, but of which I am by no means an expert on, range from the limited and homophobic/transphobic (Frued's 1911 account) to the insightful and well researched (Lothane's 1992 - "In Defense of Schreber") as well as the fascinating, if not slightly far reaching (Santner's 1998 "My Own Private Germany").

2 This author's own opinion, valid only with the caveat that I happen think we are all totally bonkers.

speaking *as*:

Despite his psychological collapse Dr. Schreber actually rose to defend the very principles which some have proposed were behind his decline- the Atlas-like task of representing and protecting those persons who may be victimized by an over zealous state apparatus intent upon policing the suitability and conformity of its citizens. Was his illness and removal from general society a punishment for championing such enshrined liberal ideals as the rights of the private citizen? Was his 'crisis' actually a fabrication of a supercilious state/medical apparatus designed to discredit the good doctor Schreber?

Or was his illness genuine, a by product of the stress and anxiety caused by feeling the collective weight of responsibility to and for 'the people'? Just who were these 'people' to whom he was indebted, and perhaps suffered for? How was even the threat of their future suffering enough to bring about the ruin of a person who was, by all accounts, an astonishingly astute mind?

Does being invested with the title Artist carry a similar weight? Is the positioning of the maker always also linked with notions of deification, pedagogue, artisan, activist? Is the call to make a call to remake oneself in the image of what it means to be a maker?

If the attendance of higher education in the arts and humanities for eight years has taught me anything, it has taught me about the investiture crisis. It has taught me that the role of the self and the personality of the artist are paramount. It has served as the paradoxical fuel needed for a minor and yet enduring investiture crisis of my own.

Art school has taught me my part, and how to act it.

I have become an instructor.

I am now more arguably masterful at speaking into being the theory of why a thing should or should not arrive into the world as a unique art object than I ever was, or perhaps will be at bringing those things into the world. I can, and have, argued furiously about the, conditions by which something finds itself being art, where its legitimacy lies, and by extension my own legitimacy lies in being the arbiter of its value as Art.

speaking as:

Why do I care so deeply that *all things*‡ be considered as potential Art(s)? Why is it so important to decide what is good art, bad art, and how we can ensure that we are not making the vapid and intellectually masturbatory work so often parodied by popular culture, and the art world itself? What could possibly be more important than concretely answering the question ‘what is art?’ in some kind of satisfying way if one is going to, in fact, dedicate the better part of one’s life to thinking/making/doing something with this strange and shapeless ameba of a word/concept/world-view?

Are the platitudes that I regurgitate to my students valid? Is the question ‘what is art?’ in fact, not the right question? Is it unhelpful? Is it invalid? Are the pursuits of “what does art do, what isn’t art, or, how does art behave” actually more fruitful? Do they really need to learn the cannon? Why? Does research and theorization strengthen our practices or does it only serve to legitimize by way of theory what could be well regarded as a highly articulate temper tantrum?

Am I unlike great masters who not only made but opined about that which they had wrought like Dürer’s “series of treatises explain[ing his] methods for students and connoisseurs and explicitly staked the claim that art was a classical, theoretical discipline, not a mere craft³.” My own narcissistic mental image of myself and my work featured the same metaphorical large forehead of great importance in considering the claim to genius and scholarship prominent in the work of the learned draftsman: “The strongly emphasized forehead is the sovereign over [the] hands, and likewise has command over the measuring instruments lying on the table. They have no practical relevance for drawing a portrait, and a thus to be interpreted, in this context, as metaphors for judgment and the *docta manus* - the learned hand of the artist⁴.”

Art school has, either instilled or just greatly exacerbated a latent narcissism in me. It has taught me to assume that I am the full stop authority with the only true power to validate and valorize my own efforts. ‘If I say it’s art, then it is.’ There is a power in naming things, a divine relation related to creation.

‡ TEACHABLE MOMENT

Aside from all of this wringing of hands- just what ‘all things’ do you mean? Surely you don’t mean the quotidian? Surely not the day to day, being elevated to something appreciated and enjoyed - because none of that is happening. What happened to the stories that you once insisted need carry equal weight? ‘Either all the stories matter or none of them matter.’ You said it in critique, you said it in seminar, you said it to instructors and in turn you instructed it to your students. So, where are your stories? Let me tell you a story: you have to start somewhere. Start here. Start with finding your way home in an unfamiliar city which would become home and discovering a surreal display of slowly revolving wig heads in a shop front window along the way. Start with the first time you took a bus across state lines; when everything that could have gone wrong did. Start with the recurring dreams, and

speaking as:

The artist creates not only the object to be venerated but also the deification of the thing. That which I have made is precious to me, and therefore, to the world. This authority is strangely childlike - it creates its own truth and its own justification.

morning routines. Start with the stories you have built with friends, and the one's you have taken from them and made your own. Start with the afternoon in LaGuardia airport in which you ran from gate to gate to gate to gate following the man in the yellow rain coat, only to find out that he was following you. Start with the accent of your hometown that you tried so hard to get rid of, that you now know you cherish sight out of mind. Start with the summer you found it difficult to tell a story, and learned that you needed to do so. Start with the stories you tell all the time, and the one's you haven't thought of yet. Start with the things of banality and hysteria, start with the moments that are funny without explanation nor causation. Start with discovering you were best friends with someone who didn't speak your native tongue as well as you did, but figuring out that somehow you both speak exactly the same

language. Start with finding yourself finishing the sentences of someone you know barely anything about but have known all your life. Start with living in a place where it takes forty-five minutes to leave anywhere because you are frankly happy to be everywhere you are. Start with a friendship that definitely began at one point in time and yet, neither of you can remember how or when you met. Start at the beginning. Start in the middle. Stop worrying about the end. Let them know that it all turned out alright in the end, in ways that you couldn't even begin to conceive of at the time.

3 Grafton, 64.

4 Damm, 36-37.

PATCHES

AND

TWEED

speaking as:

I began to make my own truths and my own justifications chiefly by way of dress. Despite my intense sympathies toward a contemporary internet based revolt against the authority supposedly inscribed in elbow patches and tweed⁵, I find myself wearing more and more houndstooth and tan. Aside from scientific studies on the relation between looking fancy and feeling good; “Formalwear elicits feelings of power, which change[...]mental processes.”⁶ I have a wealth of personal anecdotes linking the presence of dress shoes and my efficacy as an instructor.

It is clear to me that the teaching role and the role of the performer are synonymous, and that looking the part is a great aid in assuring oneself that they are also able to act it. Perhaps a great aid in allowing myself the permission to accept my work as something *in* the doing rather than something *made* by the doing, was in looking rather like I know what I am doing.

Catalysts come in all sorts of fixed and dissolving forms - it just so happens that the lance that propelled my practice into performance and performativity was the Tweed Jacket‡. Vested with the authority and importance of the instructor I moved from one who liked stories in a nebulous constellation of narrative, thematic, and stylistic choices, to the storyteller. Instruction provided me the platform to act, to be the one who does rather than the one who prepares. Wit, improvisation and chance returned to my worldview and practice after too long in the printshop ruminating on mistakes of the backwards and upside down variety had pushed practice, preparation and planning into the spotlight. The seriousness of play, humor, subversion- in short fun returned to the work.

Once I had stopped insisting on the ideology of art made with my own two hands as the be all and end all I started to use them in an entirely different way. I used them within the framework provided by that Tweed Jacket.

⁵ Consult social media posts tagged #ILookLikeAProfessor and #DoesNotComeWithElbow-Patches on various platforms, initiatives which promote the diversity of instructors within academia who do not fit within the paradigm of white, straight, male, middle/upper class, able bodied professorial imaginings of what we as western society deem appropriate or expected dress from our professors.

⁶ Wearing a Suit Makes People Think Differently. Joe Pinsker The Atlantic April 30, 2015

‡ TEACHABLE MOMENT

The Jacket, the Book, the Text, the Word. You might not be making objects any longer but don't begin for a second to fool yourself that you don't believe in the power they have, nor in their use. All things may be objects, even the ones you might WEAR, SPEAK, SAY, and, DO. And all things have their way of keeping and holding knowledge ,if you want to share that knowledge then you might as well wrap it up in something - it's soooooooooo much easier to hold.

,

ENTR ACTE

[EL BIBLIOMATA]

While researching, I would enjoy pouring over scans of an antiquated South American encyclopedia's illustrations - immaculate wood engravings, etchings and line drawings. Curious turn of the century depictions of astonishing, hair-raising, cutting edge science experiments. Perhaps they were in the fields of electro-magnetics: loops, bells, wires, switches, amperes- labeled, displayed, and diagrammed for effective educational consumption.

These experiment diagrammatics usually had one thing in common: *The Hand*.⁷

The Hand! Disembodied and belonging to the un-seen master of things off-stage and off-page, this hand is endlessly fascinating. Surely it is no one, no one in particular, and yet- this hand, his hand, is something exacting indeed.

Like the magician's white gloved assistant it hovers, strong, cuffed, masculine yet finely manicured, and well articulated, above its impending action: throwing the switch, striking a match, lighting powder, drawing the bow, releasing the flow, line lightly pinched between delicately drawn digits. The hand waits. Immobile, steady, eternally at rest in the moment of greatest anticipation:

gasp.
“ - ! ”
drumroll.

The hand is the experimenter; the apprentice stands back, hands wringing in breathless anticipation: “will it work, will it succeed- this fruit of our precious preparations?”

The Assistant *prepares*.
The Experimenter must *do*.

The hand is catalyst, actor, that which sets things into motion.

The hand steadies its exacting grip with a heavy breath: for here, now, finally we shall see what happens next.

⁷ “In fact... the portrait offers a mirror image: the hand shown is the left hand. The right hand, fully occupied with the task of painting, is present also- but implicitly. It is embodied in the matchless, meticulous detail of the work it created, rather than represented. Dürer thus cannot render every detail of the visual field: the working hand is both present and absent, perfection both given and taken away by the same divinely gifted member.” Grafton, 69.

THE EDITORIAL VOICE

“ EH? WHAT’S THAT AGAIN? ”

“ NOTHING. ”

“ WHAT’S NOTHING? ”

“ I, NOTHING. REALLY.”

“ REALLY, EH? “

speaking *with*:

The first sentence of my letter of intent to this program declared

"I am an Image maker."

Today, I might declare

"I make documents."‡

‡ TEACHABLE MOMENT

Frankly as little as I knew then about what constitutes an *image*, is summarily what I might now attest to understanding about what makes up a *document*.

Regarding the analysis of the death certificate, a very particular document indeed, Gitelman states: "One doesn't so much read a death certificate, it would seem, as perform calisthenics with one, holding it out and then holding it close, flipping it one way and fingering it another¹."

Just what exactly are documents supposed to *do* and moreover, what exactly are we supposed to *do with* them: read, copy, memorize, file, forget, annotate, shred, destroy, hide, keep safe, tear up, burn, frame, immortalize, scan, protect, reproduce, own? If one is supposed to read or rather use a text- what is the work involved in writing one then? Is the written text a testament to intelligence and mastery or a therapeutic exorcism of self doubt? Is it the space and place to demonstrate knowledge and the known order of things or, is it the space to create said knowledge, to re-order the known order of things?

Despite the omnipotence of my internal editorial voice, not the unified declaration of a journalistic staff to a newspaper readership but, the manifestation of one's own red-pen-wielding interior monologues of denial, self doubt, and self sabotage I seem still to have a desire to communicate via documents.

"The word 'document' descends from the Latin root *docer*, to teach or show, which suggests that the document exists in order to document. [...] documenting is an epistemic practice: the kind of knowing that is all wrapped up with showing, and showing wrapped with knowing²."

Is my work knowing or showing? Is the work didactic?

This is all semantics. Maybe everything is all semantics.

Remember that studio visit with an un-named non-specified Montreal area gallery director:

She was displeased.

Why is the work so self referential?

Why am I my own subject?

What will I do with all of this writing?

It seems clear to me that she is not interested in my responses to these questions.

Well, it's just that people don't have the attention span for this kind of stuff. And like, the typewriter is so cliché- why are you using it? For the hipster aesthetic?

- Because it doesn't have facebook. It's less distracting.

Oh. Well. But, I guess if you approached the scale differently... if you attempted to make the text more of an object.

speaking *with*:

- You mean like, make it big vinyl text on the wall?

Yes, exactly.

- Then it would still be text. That's just a matter of framing and semantics- it doesn't make it more or less of an object than being on a page, or on a note card or whatever. It just sexes it up and fits into a hip cool exhibition paradigm- it doesn't actually alter the language into an object, which I'm kind of not interested in anyway - I care more about the content of what the language is saying, doing, communicating...

True. But at least then it would be sexy.

-... vinyl text is pretty sexy.

Requiring of explication, or interpretation? What do I know about what it is I am trying to communicate? Is all of the work centered on the pedagogical and the notion of instruction- am I only trying to teach or show? I see instruction and making as dual practices which I engage in without separation or distinction. In each I work with the same intention, and I hope each helps us all arrive at the same location. The engagement of the instructor with students and of one's work with a viewer is a process of mediation. An honest engagement that seeks to make something between the instructor and students, between the artwork and the audience - for me there can be no question whether it is important what object is produced or made, or how it comes into the world; what keeps me connected to the work and my own inner-editor at bay is the sensation that what we are really all making is meaning together.

The document as display of information, as a representation of knowledge is worked and re-worked in this exhibition. The work enumerates endlessly on future possibilities,³ negated negations⁴, circular logic, proposals that speak, protest, implore, invite - the documents displayed here will be read, interpreted, investigated. The work arrived at hopes to speak with its viewer, reader, receiver not at them, not even to them. Is it possible that such a distinction truly matters? Are my intentions are really summed up in the differences between three short prepositions?

Perhaps it is, as I think that at the very base of things it matters quite a good deal more who we speak with than to whom we speak to and especially who we speak as.

1 Gitelman, Lisa. PAPER KNOWLEDGE: TOWARD A MEDIA HISTORY OF DOCUMENTS
Duke University Press Durham 2014 i

2 Gitelma, 1

3 *Career Counseling*

4 *Anything But Words*

SO,
IT WAS
THAT
ALL
ALONG!

“ WHAT’S THE MATTER? ”

“ NOTHING. JUST, NOT WHAT I EXPECTED ”

“ WHAT DID YOU EXPECT? ”

DOCUMENT
“ I’M QUITE SURE I DON’T KNOW...
I JUST KNOW IT WASN’T THAT. ”

I was having that pseudo dream about living in my office again. Maybe its because I don't have an office. Maybe its because I really want one. Maybe its because I sort of don't think that I deserve to have an office and my lovely home and apartment and Montreal Life. Who knows. Why do I think that I'm going to end up scraping by to teach a few classes and get paid so little that I can't afford rent? Sure, that is happening to other people but it isn't happening to everyone. I mean, I even have friends who are tenure track, homeowners, stable, maybe going for a free PHD somewhere. That could happen too.

I've been, maybe in a roundabout way, with perilous daydreams, thinking about where I see myself. Where I could end up. That list includes London, includes New York, hHarvard, Yale, some big deal school with amphitheaters and tweed jackets and large stately wooden desks and Swedish couches and paperwork, organizational schemes, blue pens, red pens, a secret crystal decanter full of amber liquid for late night 'faculty consultations'. I hear myself give lectures in my head to crowded rooms full of eager students who have heard of my reputation. I am the fun teacher, the good teacher, they say 'oh- you have Raj for that class? He's great. You'll love him.' And I am beloved of my students. We work hard, we have fun. I attend faculty mixers, I am inspired by the faculty surrounding me and I in turn, inspire them. I bubble with energy, excitement, my passion is inflamed by long hours and late nights, not diminished. I do not see myself in arts studios. I do not see myself looking at art with students, with their creations, we are coolly removed- speaking about the humanities somewhere else.

*I am the tower. I am the authority, but I do it with a wink and a nod -
and we all know that we're in on the joke.*

*I see myself teaching, and as a teacher- I see myself as part of the enclave, I am in the institution. I am the institution. I am tieless. I sit at my great ship of a desk and I write, I grade, I strike through, I lance feeble and pompous texts with sardonic question marks, encourage the timid with exclamations of my support. My door is open, as it always is. A friendly colleague comes by, we share a drink - conspiratorially. He reclines in the armchair across from my desk. We clink glasses.
And thats the dream.*

And yet. And yet, and yet - that is not the whole story, the dream isn't finished there. I don't see myself in the studio - and yet I don't not see myself there. As real or imagined as my office turned apartment fantasy life is, there is something vastly empty about it. I see the trappings and the tower and yet I also don't really see myself teaching anything. I can't quite pin down what the lesson is. I don't know what we're doing. Are we making something together, my students and I?

For those future moments, I suppose I am only taking notes.

The real work I have yet to do.

The real work is in assembling the document.

A P P E N D I X

EXHIBITED WORKS, DESCRIBED

Career Counseling,

Print Installation. Dimensions Variable. 2015.

Arrayed upon a long stretch of the gallery wall hang an imposing grid of standard black and white business cards. The artist's full name is emblazoned in center of each, above a dotted line each inscribed by hand with a profession, an occupational domain: *researcher, illustrator, volcanologist, pediatrician, writer, scholar, sales associate, arctic expedition leader, antarctic expedition leader, artisanal butcher, florist, chef, educator, department store santa claus.*

The grid of proposed vocations stretches across the gallery, a long form installation of repetition with minor difference. The final card in the grid is unlike its fellows; in block script the following message is declared:

*Elliott Robert Rajnovic
does not know what he wants
to be when he grows up
for now, he will call himself an
Artist*

With a nod to notions of professionalism, authority, license as well as vocation, calling, purpose and production this work brings into conversation the line between maker and made, between one's self and one's work. The intentional inclusion of slightly more outlandish or perhaps ill fitting career choices: national parks ranger, volcanologist, structural engineer, pharmaceutical researcher I am interested in the lingering stigma of pedagogical institutions functioning not only a places of research and discovery but also as the location in which one is trained to make a living. The delineations of belonging to particular groupings of makers, thinkers or aspiring not to belong to another collective is a politic that endures - as a sometimes member of many different allegiances and an aspirant to many more I take full advantage of my position as an artist, that all encompassing amorphous designation, to belong to belong to both, neither and all of whatever I choose.

To The Degree To Which

Digital Print 24" x 48". 2015.

At the conclusion of my first existential crisis in which I tried to decide if I would pursue graduate studies in the Arts or in History I bought a tweed smoking jacket with elbow patches and brown velour collar. Given a teaching opportunity early into my academic career I stepped into a position of power and authority which I was simultaneously mistrustful of and reveled in. That dual nature and level of unease has not entirely dissipated now 5 years since the beginning of my time in the classroom. What has developed is a hopefully healthy level of sarcasm, absurdity and posturing which notes the slippage between wanting to help, and helping so much that one is of no assistance at all.

Anything But Words

Digital Print Installation. Dimensions Variable. 2015

It is the second year of my BFA. In a darkened auditorium I listen to my instructor speak about arts and institution, museology and authority, institutional critique. The work of Felix Gonzalez Torres is mentioned in so much as it forces the museum to become a willing participant and active facilitator throughout the longevity of pieces depleted by public interactivity. A slide changes on the screen and we see a monumental stack of prints laid on the floor. Click. Another slide shows a group of asian field-trip visitors running elated with rolled copies of Torres' work in hand- a print of clouds. The image is run through with the phrase "ANYWHERE BUT HERE." A sarcastic and sly indictment of the place of art, the role of the institution and the desires of the maker and the viewer.

Or at least, that is how I remember it.

In point of fact I have not been able to locate the work which says "anywhere but here" in Torres' oeuvre. Perhaps I imagined it, conflated my instructors desire to be on summer vacation with the phraseology of the image, perhaps the mythology of the image I imagined is stronger and more important than the real Torres' on the floor. Perhaps my 'Fake Felix' is doubly so, a fiction of a fiction, and that is just fine.

Missives

Printed Booklet Installation. Dimensions Variable. 2015

A collection of 10 half-letter format booklets are hung upon the wall. They are three dimensional objects, this much we can see, yet they are inaccessible- out of reach and restricted from our access. What's inside these pamphlets? Why can't the viewer handle the object?

Oxymoronic and no-win demands of 'accessibility' of art-work as well as the paradigm of 'research-creation' both outlaws and demands the use of academic forms of 'knowing' as justification for much of contemporary art work. It is the sort of paradigm which lets me put scare-quotes around 'knowing', as even this is suspect - though I belong to the authority of the academy which supposedly produces said 'knowing'. Comprised of intricately designed typographic end-pages based upon philosophical, political and religious treatises, the work plays with the notion of the book as the container of knowledge, information and that which offers the reader the pathway to understanding within its covers. In fact- there is nothing at all between these covers.

The booklets draw upon visual and verbal language of turn of the century proselytizing texts (be they treatises upon god, politics, science or society all are meant as argumentative and persuasive tracts created to argue one's case and

convince the reader of its legitimacy.) A plethora of headings, sub-headings, categorizations, and more 'or's' than you can shake a stick at characterize the attempt to categorize the ideas held within a booklet. Such earnest attempts to prepare a reader for what it is that they will encounter has fallen out of fashion for the coolness of the industrial design aesthetic. Contemporary textual design is drunk on white space where less is absolutely more. And yet- this curiously outdated caveat-emptor perhaps provides us with more space for surprise and investigation rather than less. What does this academic text, actually say? Why is there such a need for misdirection, verbal justification, obfuscation of one's claims, the use of words like obfuscation?

The admittedly gobbledy-gook titles, subheadings and numbered lists which comprise the work are based upon those fleeting bits of text which were once tremendously important to me, as a scholar, and as an MFA student specifically: my notes. These phrases appear, almost verbatim in my notes, heavily underlined, much circled, accompanied with many excited exclamation points: this here is very important, this means something special: we have figured something out.

Today, my notations from seminars as recent as one semester past, have lost their context. The excitement of 'understanding' even then fleeting at best, has evaporated. They are strings of words strung together with an academic tongue, impressive to the eye and ear, ultimately vapid. As a self-confessed lover of all things institutional critique, perhaps my now antiquated notes have helped me figure something out in the end: more intrigued by knowing, knowledge and power as systems and networks I would rather make works which question these paradigms than to generate content which rests comfortably within them.

It is my pleasure to fondly thank everyone who has supported
the production of this text.

You know who you are.

Elliott Robert Rajnovic
Winter 2015

ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

Forger

ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

Cadet

ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

Editor

ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

High Stakes Poker

ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

Hasty Negotiator

ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

Bush Pilot

ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

Trickster

ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

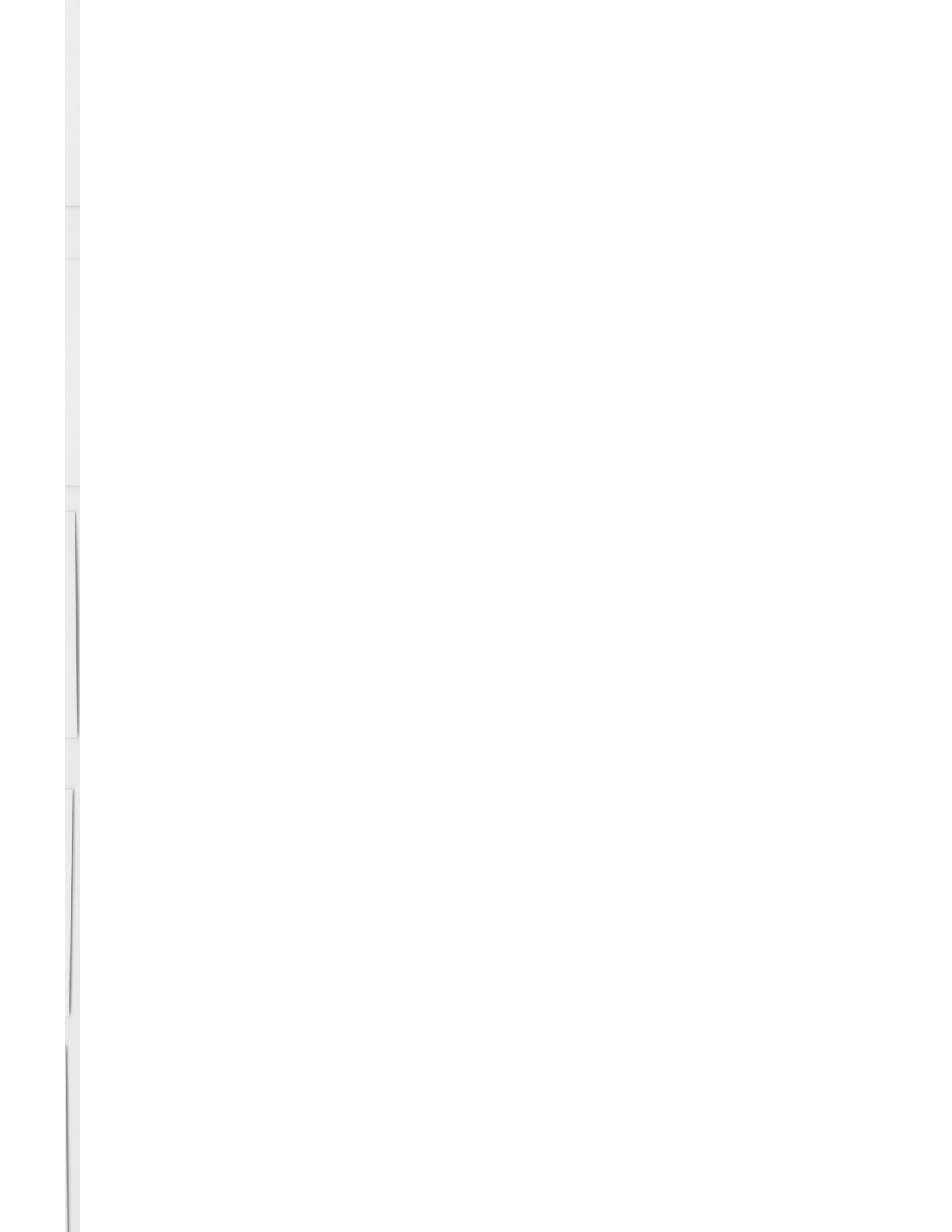
Handwriting Analysis

ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

Expert Witness

ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

Machinist



ELLIOTT ROBERT RAJNOVIC

does not know what he wants
to be when he grows up
for now, he will call himself an
ARTIST

