

PLATITUDE NORMALE

- APPENDIX -

By David Lieske

I am an artist by profession and I take the liberty to hate my job just like anybody else who has a job does. (People without a job hate their situation too, of course, but I can hardly say anything about that.)

Most people probably think that, as an artist, it is outrageous to hate one's job. They are reluctant to even call an artist's occupation a job (and rather call it a vocation in this context). To live and work as an artist they assume to be wonderful and full of freedom. They are obviously convinced that the professional artist has turned his hobby into a profession, which still seems to be generally regarded as an ideal model of economic existence in that sense.

In my profession, I have achieved some sort of middling acceptance by the audience that is not to be sniffed at, others enjoy less. I am definitely not seen as an infallible genius, extremely successful or exceptionally talented but my contributions are somehow in regard (every now and then). I went through a number of years in education of institutional and non-institutional kind and I have always followed up professional development. It is not that I am disinterested in the field of visual art, not at all I hardly talk about anything else and rarely think about other matters. I am particularly interested in the conditions of presentation, representation, production and distribution of art. Yet I quarrel with my decision of having become an artist myself and think about all the misery and pain it has brought upon me.

That's why I decided that I would be better off as a dealer and founded the gallery that is called Mathew.

In an almost theatrical act, I announced to have finished once and for all with being an artist and set up an estate for myself and as its administrator installed the American gallerist Esperanza Rosales who is now resident in Oslo.

I also think that I had to accept more and more that the gap between my ambition and what I am actually authentically capable of as an artist intellectually had become too great and that I found this situation of mine unbearable.

The decision of who is an artist is made by dealers (the buyers, that is), curators and museum directors. The decision of what constitutes a work of art is determined, in the end, by purchase transactions and not, as previously thought, by reproductions in art magazines or similar, none of which have any definitions giving powers anymore. Only if the work of art makes that transition into private or institutional property — and under no other circumstance — a situation is created, in which this work of art is unconditionally stored, administrated and conserved.

For this reason and in order to emphasise the highly speculative character of exhibited art-works before their sales, I used to offer "re-edits" (changed formats) of those works of mine that had previously 'failed' in commercial terms and I am also doing this in this current exhibition. You decide for yourself whether you want to call this act opportunistic or just in keeping with circumstances.

It is no secret and for me it came as no surprise that the curator Alexis Vailant wanted to skim off all of my possible talents when he invited me as an artist to participate in this exhibition that I called "Platitude Normale". For himself and for the institution that pays him, he gained access to several deposits of cultural capital in my portfolio. That is, to be precise, my record label "Dial" and my gallery "Mathew". I run both together with my best friend Peter Kersten. (Alexis Vailant also had my activities as a DJ on his radar, but these can hardly be adequately mediated in a museum and attempts to do so were abandoned, luckily, by the end of the 1990s.)

I must admit that I did not refuse to follow these requirements entirely. As you are able to see in the exhibition, my presentation is riddled with compromises in this respect. In my opinion, the exhibition is getting quite enriched by these so-called "Inserts" (however, they do make it much more attackable also).

My narcissistic self has assumed such radical features by now that I can hardly endure photographs of my own face anymore. My whole self-perception and as such, the only reproduction of my self bearable to me is my mirror image. I guess this is related to Apple's first generation of notebook "MacBook Pro" with inbuilt Webcam and to the inability of its pre installed software "Photo-Booth" to automatically mirror the images back after their recording (later versions of the software do this yet I have avoided them ever since getting comfortable with the original).

Maybe because for many years (and in particular those years that I went on retreat in Israel), I spent time using this software to create self

portraits that were ought to be as handsome as possible. I sent out these portraits electronically to (usually) homosexual men in the whole world with the intention to receive in return erotic messages and declarations of love that would temporarily lift my mood and self-esteem.

The self portrait "Platitude Normale Fig. II (Every Work of Art is the Fatal Enemy of Each other Work of Art)", 2013, in this exhibition, was taken through a mirror for that reason.

Obviously, the piece tries to address an emotion, or suggests that an emotion is being addressed. In truth — unfortunately I have to admit this now even if it bears the danger of spoiling your interest and enjoyment of my exhibition — I am only addressing myself.

I have to say especially amongst my colleagues, I have often felt that their unconditional will to be taken serious as politically minded and motivated individuals their practice and statements come often draped in almost religious shades — in particular when in principle they are about being above things yet with an attitude of special purity.

That seems to me just the opposite of what could possibly be gained with a potentially successful art work which aims should be transparency of its own entanglements more than anything else in my opinion.

After all political influence is usually the result of an influence on a certain social group, that is, the result of some kind of invocation that is naturally attractive to this group. Not least do we attribute more than anything a charismatic self to our political leaders.

It seems that in the 1970s the “Weathermen” organised Timothy Leary’s rescue from imprisonment in California and subsequent escape to Algeria with his wife for two reasons: first, they received 20,000 Dollars from a bunch of psychedelia infused rich kids who called themselves “The Brotherhood of Eternal Love”, and secondly, they hoped to gain access to a psychedelic youth movement, that they had discovered as the revolutionary subject per se — as postulated in their position paper “New Morning changing Weather” (1969).

To be precise, they were hoping to find this revolutionary subject amongst the whole of the (poor, uneducated) “youth” but expected the greatest revolutionary potential within this subcultural splinter group.

As may be imagined, Timothy Leary’s speech of thanks that they made him speak into a Super 8 camera was, at the time and in that format, difficult to distribute on a larger scale, in particular under clandestine conditions.

Many years ago, when my juvenile fantasies just before falling asleep made me imagine my own art installations in the world’s greatest museums, I had the idea to restage this speech with Macaulay Culkin as Timothy Leary and to project the recording on a large scale without sound. At the time, I was so fascinated by the beauty of Culkin that I wanted to erect a kind of memorial for it. I thought then that I needed this “Weathermen” story in order to avoid everybody starting to shout instantly and justifiably “Warhol” or “Screentest”, and I also took pleasure in the way that in the 1990s the condition of cultural transfers proved to be far more complex and inscrutable.

When, for instance, underground film maker Harmony Korine asked Macaulay Culkin to be the leading actor in his music video for “Sunday”, a 1998 song by art-rock group “Sonic Youth”, it was far more unclear as to who offered entry or influence to one or which other (youth) sub-culture. In the end, probably everybody benefitted and the result was somehow more satisfying as it was for the “Weathermen”, and also distribution problems had obviously been solved.

This story about Sigourney Weaver who during contract negotiations had a clause written into her artist’s contract for part three of the blockbuster series “Alien” (1979 - 1997) that disallowed the film director any display of shotguns in the entire movie was greatly intriguing to me. Justifiably, she was disgusted by James Cameron’s “Aliens” (1986), a militaristic sequel to Ridley Scott’s far more subtle and artistic “Alien” (1979), and she wanted to exert her influence as indispensable character actor of the astronaut Ellen Ripley. The plot of part three in the series, “Alien III” (1992) by David Fincher, was massively affected by Weaver’s critical intervention, in so far as the whole action had to take place on a prison planet that was run by pacifist monks who disapprove of the use of weapons. Watching “Aliens” and “Alien III” simultaneously, I was strangely reminded of the layout of the magazine “Radikal”, which was criminalised in Germany towards the end of the 1990s. At the time, “Radikal” was the only publication to print the Red Army Faction’s

historic declaration of dissolution (“Raf-Auflösungserklärung”, 1998) in its entirety. To illustrate this important text, they used amongst others the popular cartoon character “Snoopy” from the daily American comic strip “The Peanuts” (1950-2000).

In one of them, Snoopy is seen reclining on the roof of his dog house with a speech bubble full of dummy text floating above his head. The caption underneath this image quotes from a sentence in “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right” (1843-44) by Karl Marx, which I am using here as a title: “The Weapon of Critique cannot be replaced by the Critique of the Weapons”.