

Kaisa Lassinaro

begin

Poetic resistance

(inbetween rant and poetry, a sincere wildness)

"She informed me that the pictorial days of 'Life' and 'Look' were past, and that she recognized the creeping presence of the kind of separation of fact from image that she had witnessed during the Nazi era. Debilitation of language was the purpose: both the language of words and the poetry of images; and in such erosion was a great threat to freedom. For, ultimately, your freedom is in the quality of your language." Diane Lewis in *The Sex of Architecture*

Let me start at the bottom – now that propaganda has morphed into targeted manipulation, blurring our understanding of information. And again, objectivity is a belief fed to us so a certain status quo can remain. The power battles of white men and blatant lies have taken over the airwaves, dumb speech has become the new norm. Predigested bite-size chunks of words to insult our intelligence.

Let us move upwards – consider poetry as a subversive language, consider its relation to form and audience. Looking at poetry beyond the sphere of literature, as a field opposing the technocratic language and speech acts, the so-called scientific objectivity that is penetrating all areas of our public life. Poetry is an antidote to constraints and compartmentalisation, to the use of language as a weapon: poetry is the counter-agent to fearmongering.

To repeat the quote above: Your freedom is in the quality of your language. How to resist the dumbing-down and dividing use of language, which leads to stupidity, hatred and fascism itself? This reactionary age needs radical, intelligent, humorous and warm language to counter the vapid, hostile speech used by those set out to suppress any kind of beauty and imagination in the world.

stop making sense

Poetry as a political act. To expose the so-called neutrality of language and the pretence of objectivity. No longer participating in oppression by the use of language. Unpicking coherence. Collage.

"Poetry always lacks in meaning, lacks understandability – which is why, on the one hand, high school students are perpetually puzzled by it and, at the same time, write so much of it. However, pleasure is to be found in not getting 'it'. ... This is part because of Lacan's thinking that the university had replaced the master in late capitalism: now we are all technocrats, now we are rationalized subjects, now there is simply the demand for more and more knowledge, more and more scientific knowledge, rational knowledge, critical knowledge."

Clint Burnham

Considering the archivist as someone moving ‘through the words of others’, situating “[the poet Susan Howe] with the status of the pervert (who seeks to satisfy, or be the instrument of, the desire of the other – i.e., the passive aggressive status of collage and appropriation art).”*

Social collage as “work that operates on a high level of disjunction ... this disjunction operates as a critique of the hegemonic role of meaning in late capitalist society. ... [T]he argument is that such writing constitutes an attack on how capital presents itself linguistically: that coherence is the ideological structure whereby capital interpolates the subject.”

The participation of a designer in this perverse work of satisfying others by appropriating archives, creating collages to unsettle the language of *culture industry*.**

moving towards Collaborative learning vs. individual creativity → “Feminist pedagogy – with its attention to collective processes, redefining power relationships, deconstructing false dichotomies (for example, between theory and practice, client and professional), and eliminating inequities in gender, race, class, disability status, and sexual orientation – can be especially useful in constructing a new model of architectural education and practice attuned to today’s real problems and possibilities.” Leslie Kanes in *The Sex of Architecture*

No longer wishing to promote individual acts and participate in the ambitious commotion the Western world has taught us to strive for. Moving towards sharing and conversation. Moving away from the West.

[...]
Do you know
what the message of Western
Civilization is? I am alone.
Am I alone tonight?
I don't think so. Am I
the only one with bleeding gums
tonight. Am I the only
homosexual in this room
tonight. Am I the only
one whose friends have
died, are dying now.
And my art can't
be supported until it is
gigantic, bigger than
everyone else's, confirming
the audience's feeling that they are
alone.

Eileen Myles, ‘An American Poem’, an extract

* Steve Collis in *Social Collage and the Four Discourses* by Clint Burnham, The Kootenay School of Writing. → “The Kootenay School of Writing is a response to **the failure of most public institutions to serve their artistic communities**. It stands in opposition to the concept of ‘culture industry’ in its recognition that theory, practice, and teaching of writing is best left to working writers. To this end, the School represents a new hybrid: a form of parallel gallery and centre of scholarship, open to the needs of its own constituency and alert to the possibilities of all disciplines that involve language.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Kootenay_School_of_Writing [emphasis KL]

** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_industry

Thinking about Aboriginals and Dreamtime, and paintings made from an aerial viewpoint, hovering above the land, observing the natural and metaphysical forms of the landscape. Maps, you'd say in the West, but maps unlike the ones known to westerners. The Injalak Hill rockpaintings begun 10 000 years ago, continued to these days, a palimpsest through generations. Like a work made by a mutual mind, a memory that goes on for thousands of years, no individual artist putting their name on it, but a collective consciousness adding layers and layers of stories one on top of the other.

Telepathy. Thinking about orca whales who have a part in their brain humans do not have, making them highly communal: "They also have individual dialects and are highly social and hierarchical animals who pass down their knowledge from generation to generation forming unique cultures between different social groups." – a case for non-human personhood.***

distilling ... some tangents to consider the possibilities of communicating a collage of ideas, an appropriation of words and thoughts, and ideas that are already out there but searching a form. As we do want to communicate so badly so well, wanting to be more like the orca and less like the oracle.

"Can we identify a graphic language of resistance? Resistance, in this case, is taken to mean a 'refusal to comply', as in, for example, resisting authority. Stephen Duncombe suggests that through the process of resistance we are freed from the 'limits and constraints of the dominant culture'. In turn, 'cultural resistance' allows us to 'experiment with new ways of seeing and being'." Teal Triggs, *Fanzines*

"The American critic Leo Steinberg once said that the eye is part of the mind, and I would say that the visual is part of the political." Linda Nochlin

in practice Consider how resistance might read, or what resistance might look like. What does urgent language look like?

"Typographers normally design using other people's words and eventually accept a situation in which they are limited to making only slight modifications in a given text even when a syntactic rephrasing could make the message more understandable. ... Why should graphic designers, like many specialists, be afraid of words outside their own technical type of discourse?" Edward Wright & Jean Collins in *Journal of Typographic Research* [now *Visible Language*], I, Oct 1967

During the second-wave feminist movement, the creation of women's culture partly manifested through visual exploration. The 1970s saw women taking the production of printed media into their own hands, and attempting to change the oppressive public representation of women.

The collective production rejected the idea of a lone, creative genius, focussing instead on inclusiveness and interaction, in an attempt to dissolve the division between the private and public realm, letting diverse voices be heard. The political posters reached beyond social commentary – they aimed to generate response and activate the public.

Through myriad forms of design, feminist activists applied the ideal of collective production to develop processes and aesthetics specific to their identities, politics and interests in order to communicate on their own terms. The focus was

*** <https://us.whales.org/2014/10/30/are-orcas-non-human-persons/>

on the low-budget methods of image-making (collage, graffiti) and duplicating (handwriting, photocopying, stamping) that provided urgency and witty combinations of image and text.



Detail from *See Red Women's Workshop: Feminist Posters 1974–1990*, Four Corners Books 2016

"Form is defined in political-timing-specific art by the political sensibility of the time and place for which it is made. Thus, political consequences become the artwork's meaning and content. Form and content are interdependent, linked to the specificity of a political moment. Any political change requires a reevaluation of the form used to produce political art." Tania Bruguera in <https://www.artforum.com/print/201905/notes-on-political-timing-specificity-79513>

"What *is* the communal vision of poetry if you are curved, odd, indefinite, irregular, feminine. I go in disguise." Susan Howe, 'My Emily Dickinson', an extract

This image is a collage of several film-related documents and stills. At the top left is a black and white photo of a woman in a dark coat walking away from a car. To its right is a film program cover for 'serious undertakings' featuring a woman in a dark dress. Below these are two more film program covers: one for 'Often During the Day' showing a woman in a kitchen, and another for 'A House Divided' showing a woman in a doorway. The central part of the collage features a large black and white still from a documentary showing a woman's face in profile. To the right is a portrait of a woman wearing glasses and holding her hand to her face. At the bottom right is a film program cover for 'Recreating Black Women's Media Image' with a quote from Trinh Minh-ha. Other smaller documents and stills are visible in the background.

tactile manifestations The significance of physicality to memory. We look into pasts to imagine other futures. Action and memory equal archives. Archives are local memory banks of action and agency. Archives of marginalized cultures – the collections of ephemera, artifacts and recorded stories – their significance in establishing an understanding of the present. Offering methods of engaging (and re-engaging) with our surroundings.

"[T]he archive, in a myriad of ways, opens up the possibility of being in time and in history differently. ... The archival turn under neoliberalism should not be primarily read as a desire to escape the present but rather as an attempt to regain agency in an era when the ability to collectively imagine and enact other ways of being in the world has become deeply eroded." Kate Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism: Outrage in Order*

By physically visiting archives and handling archival ephemera, there is another aesthetic dimension we are losing connection with: the tactility, materiality lost with digitization. The sense of touch takes us from being observers into being actors in the world. Touch is connected to our collective memory. What happens to our past, to our memories when all our knowledge exists only as bits in a cloud server that pops onto a screen? Human beings in isolation lose their ability to empathy. Disconnection from nonverbal expression that a human body in front of us can communicate.

"The crumbling of the sensory membrane that allows human beings to understand that which cannot be verbalised, that which cannot be reduced to codified signs." Franco Berardi

You've not seen a painting if you've seen an image of it. You've not seen its real colours. You've not been in its aura. As well as losing a physical connection with each other, we are losing the energy we exchange with each other, and materia too.

Reproducing work from the archives, we are appropriating. We are taking the work to another context, to new audiences.

If I Said You Had a Beautiful Body...Would You Make It Illegal?
by Kate Bornstein
"Ultimately 'the law is enforced by the unfeeling guard punching his fellow man hard in the belly." —Judith Malina

The "Body Law" program at this year's festival is a fine pick for both men and women – both the politically sophisticated and the newly political. Themes range from AIDS to rights for sex workers. Viewpoints range from angry "Women Against Pornography" to mischievous feminist porn stars. Styles range from the wildy experimental to the stock-in-trade home movie. From police riot action shots to talking heads.

The unifying theme is the end-of-the-century concept of "body law": Who has the right to make and enforce laws about our bodies? The absolute gem in this series is *Keep Your Laws Off My Body*, by Catherine Dunnett and Zoe Leonard. Filmed in black and white, the imagery is provocative. Gentle and explicit sexuality is contrasted with the harsh reality of the law – police in riot gear. The sound track is a whirring movie projector and keening police siren – highlighting the distance law. Definition

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With South London Women's Centre
SATURDAY 22nd DECEMBER
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ARE WE A LOAD OF SCREAMING QUEENS?
ARE WE A LOAD OF FILTHY REDS?
COCKSUCKER, FREAKS, BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE

RIGHT ON

DOMESTIC

A hilarious "soap" which takes us through the day in the life of Emma, a mother who's trouble balancing her home life with her job by stuffing leaflets into envelopes and her lover Diana, whose belief in the nutritional value of muesli is interfering with attempts to help look after Emma's daughter Jenny....

Cinema of Women, 27 Cromwell Road, London E1 0AT

The film was scripted from women about their experiences and relationships and chaos, development with a difference, things get crazier and crazier just have to go with it....

VHS and U-Matic video hire £10.50 incl.
(£14.50 if money is sent with order)