

LEIGH TENNANT/ALL THINGS BEING SINGULAR (MAD IN CRAFT)

I essentially am not
in madness, but mad in craft.

-William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

This essay will take a closer look at what is an often-disregarded aspect of the historical transition from modern art to contemporary art and the forms of "subjective crises" that it demonstrates. My argument is that the different "crises" occurring in society more generally are the practical result of our critiques and political efforts being directed at traditional forms of ideology at the expense of the current material/discursive conditions of our lives. Lacanian discourse analysis—in particular the shift that has occurred historically from the master's discourse to university discourse (which Lacan famously proclaimed as early as 1968)—has helped me better grasp the nature of the transition into the "late capitalist social bond" and its effects on subjectivity. As Slavoj Žižek has stated from a more current position, the dominant ideological deadlocks of the "present" are an effect of traditional ideology having been *traversed*. By this he means that "traditional ideology," was largely defined by the position of the father whose symbolic status as law-giver has been largely eroded. Patriarchal social formation then, has undergone a radical transformation that has effects for subjectivity that are insufficiently grasped within the popular dualisms that define post-modern theory.[1] As we continue to critique traditional ideology from the perspective that it has not radically changed at the level of form, postmodern ideology becomes immune to criticism despite it being a counter-revolutionary consolidation of power after the social, political, and aesthetic creativity of the modern era.[2] In addition to discourse analysis, I will use Lacanian personality structures to look at how the logics of psychosis and

perversion are inscribed in contemporary sculptural practices. Following this, I will take the opportunity to explore a specific polemic that has existed within twentieth and twenty-first century art: one allied variously to socialist or capitalist realism. I will set the stage using the assertions that Benjamin Buchloh put forward regarding Isa Genzken's recent work for her singular capacity to demonstrate the historical change that I believe distinguishes modern art from contemporary art.[3] Genzken's application of *deductive structure* to her sculptural practice (as seen in minimalism more generally) marks the end of modernism, and her later turn towards assemblage sculpture demonstrates the excess that has come to define contemporary art. Genzken demonstrates how the series of constraints developed in modern art have been rejected within the cynical celebration of a lack of constraint that has come to define contemporary art (and correspondingly a lack of historical dialectic).

I am interested in deductive structure (developed as it was along with Russian formalist critique) for the polemic it waged with the logics sustaining western modern art and painting in particular. I will use the figure of deductive structure to mark a dualistic logic that can be traced within twentieth/twenty-first century art by turning to Lacanian psychoanalysis to see if changing the terms of the problem might move us beyond its mere repetition. I think we can shift the terms of the problem by focusing our attention on Lacan's work with *jouissance*, particularly what he calls the *jouissance of the other* and its relationship to the super-ego. This shift requires my interlocutor's introduction of the difference between the ego and/or the subject of the unconscious in order to push further the consequences of our exploration of the relationship between subjectivity (the self, psychosis) and cultural texts/objects. We

will also engage Lacan's work with ego-ideals as we work to unpack the impasse between composition and construction—a polemic that Yve-Alain Bois has identified within twentieth century art—in order to explore the true difficulty of erasing the self when paying more attention to the structural determinants of the “self/ego” via Lacanian psychoanalysis.[4] Applied explicitly to art, alienation in the *jouissance of the other* can be thought of as the consumption of art in fantasy and this consumption is related to the commands of the super-ego.[5] We will also explore the role of identification in artistic practice and the role of identification within the stylistic mimicry periodized by art history (and repeated in contemporary art) that reflects the mere adoption of signifying traits at the expense of the emergence of new singular styles. This essay will, in the end, risk the pitfalls of the reduction of art to *therapy*. Therapy is a word that has taken on all of the vulnerability of the human-animal's ego, characteristic of the dominant ideological function of psychology in our era defined as it is by bio-political-ethics.[6] Art is a place for analytic *separation* and *detachment*, and thus subjective transformation which often *feels* far from therapeutic, but will nonetheless proceed according to a Lacanian understanding of therapy.

BUCHLOH'S PROVOCATION

My use of Lacanian personality structures is inspired by a statement Buchloh made in his essay, “All things being equal: Isa Genzken.” In it, and with his usual penchant for dramatic totalization, he argues that Genzken's work submitted itself to the laws of spectacle culture and sign exchange value and that the “psychotic state may well become the only position and practice the sculptor of the future

can articulate.”[7] If we use this provocation to think through Genzken’s work, we might begin to understand why she seems so eager to collect and assemble apparently arbitrary significations and surfaces into ambiguous and yet contrived sculptural forms. Some interesting questions begin to emerge, not only from this, but also from other dominant trends in contemporary art. Is our collective submission to spectacle culture and sign exchange value constraining artistic practice to logics we generally associate with psychosis? That is, does the work speak the mere invasion of subjectivity by the jouissance of the other (random, arbitrary, demands to produce, consume, enjoy via the object/voice of the market/spectacle), rendering random our significations?[8] More importantly, is this truly the only position the sculptor of the future, much less the present, can articulate?

While considering all this, without necessarily rushing to provide answers, let’s do a bit more work with the Lacanian perspective on psychosis and see if it might change how we approach Buchloh’s diagnosis. Contra Buchloh, Lacan’s central premise is that *what seems to be* the totally arbitrary or delusional speech within psychosis, or a psychotic break, isn’t actually arbitrary. Instead Lacan sees—within the chaotic speech—an attempt to restore the otherwise foreclosed paternal function and find an anchor for subjectivity.[9] Psychosis is a relation to the signifier and thus language; not a broken relation to “reality.” Or, more accurately, psychosis demonstrates the necessity of a fixed knot within language in order to be subject to signified reality (the imaginary) in a “normative” manner. Thus, within the speech that evidences a psychotic break, there is generally a literalization of structure. For example, the *Big Other* of language transitions from the symbolic entity assumed in speech to a literal commanding

agent (small other) within a hallucinatory persecution. Without psychologizing Genzken, but with respect to the cultural artifacts she produces, we can ask: do the artefacts signify this type of madness?

In relation to contemporary artistic practice, Buchloh's statement seems short-sighted because psychosis can be engaged beyond the rhetorical effect it produces in his writing (despite my being in agreement with the sentiment underlying his accusation). Instead of stopping at a purely metaphorical use of the term psychosis (it would be more accurate to say that I am going to develop the metaphor further), I will use his introduction of the term as an opportunity to present the Lacanian "personality structures" within the context of contemporary art. Now, in our effort to relate all of this back to contemporary art (and Genzken's recent works in particular,) while adding a degree of structural knowledge regarding psychosis, we can ask one of the central questions of the project. Is there an attempt within the anchorless fragmented speech of the presumed psychotic break to restore certain restrictions that defined modern art (the subtraction of content, anti-aestheticization, the deductive structure, art's lack of self-evidence, etc.) as a mode of paternal function? Would such a constraint hold the totalitarian order of objects at bay, thereby enabling the sculptor to retain a place for subjectivity despite the constant threat of its collapse within the semio-aesthetic terror occurring in consumption?

I mentioned earlier that Genzken's practice is exemplary in that it marks the transition from modern art to contemporary art in all of its extremes. This shift is evidenced by her move toward random assemblage from her once-strict engagement with Minimalism influenced by

Constructivism (evident in her work and her status as the first artist to create a computer-generated plan for an artwork: *Ellipsoids*, 1982). In recognizing the influence of Constructivism on Minimalism, we can assert that *Ellipsoids* is a rigorous execution of a deductive structure and even go one further in comparing deductive structure to the Lacanian paternal function.[10] How do I make this comparison? Deductive structure introduces a constraint on artistic practice that is analogous to how the paternal function puts limits on the dual relation between primary caregiver and child. Basically, the paternal function or metaphor is a reference to a symbolic mandate that puts limits on the relation with our imaginary other and thus the self. It castrates us but also protects us from the aggressive, destructive, ambivalent, paranoia and narcissism of the dual relation. To be explicit: I am drawing a direct correlation between the artist and material and the risks of the dual relation without the third term (paternal function) for subjectivity (the risk being psychosis if this is not yet clear). Contemporary art is defined by a total collapse of symbolic projects that castrate but also protect us from the abyss of the self. We will eventually address the need to go beyond the paternal function as this is not the end goal of Lacanian psychoanalysis. The ends of analysis in the Lacanian clinic matters to our project because it too shares the same desire to “erase the self”. [11]

A bit more on deductive structure: the INKhUK working group set out to differentiate construction from composition in order to eliminate anything arbitrary or excessive from the artistic form.[12] Genzken clearly achieves this when she produces objects as an outcome of mathematical formulas in *Ellipsoids*. As Aleksei Gan—the agit-man of INKhUK—famously declared, “Nothing accidental, nothing not accounted for,

nothing as a result of blind taste or aesthetic arbitrariness.” [13] Deductive structure was part of the Constructivist artist’s attempt to find a different motivation for artistic production beyond individual subjective taste and to liberate different forms of socialized “artistic” practice from the modes of enjoyment that constrain art to various forms of hyper-individualism etc. INKhUK’s collective struggle against the demands of “ART” as composition can be thought through Lacan’s work on *jouissance*, or enjoyment—a concept we will address in more detail shortly. For now, we can understand deductive structure as a set of formal decisions immanently critical of the logics sustaining western art and capitalist social organization. INKhUK reduced the logic of western art and the forms of social organization that produce it to a few key signifiers: arbitrariness, excess, and relationality.

Genzken’s practice has been lauded for its heterogeneity, and so I am arguing that this heterogeneity intentionally demonstrates both sides of the polemic between composition and construction—namely, forced random hierarchal relations/random relational composition vs. planned social organization/planned artistic form. This can be seen in her transition from an absolutist commitment to Constructivist rigour in *Ellipsoids* to her recent work motivated entirely by arbitrariness, excess, and compositional logics. [14] Beyond the critique immanent to the shift in her work (the deductive structure collapsing under the weight of consumption), my argument is that this transition marks an impasse that contemporary artistic subjects must confront rather than merely repeat or act-out. This writing is my attempt at fidelity to what has been rendered conscious regarding twentieth and twenty-first century art within the composition and construction antagonism by working through

some of the problems inherent to the principles of non-composition. Genzken's early work demonstrates a predominant operation in twentieth century art, which Yve-Alain Bois asserts is the *difficult task of erasing the self*—inherent to the willed displacement of subjective taste to the constraint of the frame (conceptualism follows this lineage displacing subjective taste to the concept as frame).[15] While it is clearly possible to work against the excesses of the self in artistic practice by adopting devices such as the deductive structure, one cannot eliminate the self (imaginary), nor our new third term which remains relatively unmarked as of yet: the real, or the excess of enjoyment/jouissance.[16]

In thinking about subjectivity beyond the register of the ego, and by complicating but not rejecting structuralist analysis in our consideration that structure produces an excess that cannot be assimilated, we also need to consider how repairing or adjusting the paternal function (which prevents against the abuse of the super-ego) is far from the end-goal of Lacanian psychoanalysis. The second aspect of my argument is that absolutist alienation, or identification with deductive structure as a principal (as seen in Genzken's commitment to deductive structure) fails to accomplish the erasure of the self; it merely shifts the gaze from the imaginary to the symbolic. The change in perspective I am trying to instantiate here is analogous to Lacan's interventions into structural linguistics in his later work and his attention to the signifiers relation to jouissance (the body). My argument might become clearer with an example. In 1921, Aleksandr Rodchenko asserted that he had reduced painting to its logical conclusion, and I'd argue instead within the terms of my methodology that he reduced painting to its logical symbolic/material *conditions*, pure red, pure blue, pure yellow. The struggle with the symbolic

constrained by its material terms will never arrive at a conclusion, until the attempt to make the symbolic/imaginary speak the real and the desire to reconcile the gap between the symbolic/real is exhausted. Non-composition within minimalism and then conceptualism turns to the frame in order to evacuate subjective decision making from the development of a work of art demonstrating man's status as mere waste product of structure. However, non-composition as a concept fails to engage the singular effects of structure and, more importantly, our ability to transform these effects which the psychoanalytic clinic demonstrates.

At this point we need to back up and explore the concept of fantasy in more detail in order to further demonstrate why construction merely shifts the gaze towards the symbolic and the presumed stability between signifier/signified at the expense of what Lacan argues is the insufficiency of the signified. This insufficiency means signifiers relate to other signifiers in chains, they are not self-evident, and so ultimately the signified is barred. First let's start with a definition Lacan provides for fantasy: "fantasy is essentially an imaginary embedded in a particular signifying function." [17] Despite the imaginary's captivating allure, it functions at the level of a signifying economy. Non-composition grasps the signifying structure or economy of the imaginary while composition and any optic understanding of art remains captivated by the imaginary element. However, if the goal is to erase the self, then we need to locate the intersection between the signifying economy and the real, moving from the imaginary signified to the signifier and then to the contours of the letter in relation to jouissance. This shift in perspective is analogous to Lacan's later work when he would shift perspectives from the symbolic and structure towards the real or jouissance. The

real is the de- substantialized negativity that undermines the smooth functioning of the imaginary-symbolic orders. Acknowledging the full scope of Lacan's theorization of subjective experience encourages us to break up (minimally) what is otherwise congealed (the imaginary/image, symbolic/signifier, and real/jouissance). That is to undergo separation.

The deductive structure in its original moment was predicated on the utopian belief in the possibility of total social and subjective transparency and basically necessitated the elimination of the unconscious (a product of structure: "structures *do* march in the streets"). [18] My project seeks to reformulate new symbolic fictions (that will operate as paternal functions for contemporary art), while taking into consideration Lacan's theorizations of subjectivity and their implications for "realism" while developing a mode of working with the unconscious rather than attempting its elimination. The impossibility of realism should not inspire resignation but rather enthusiasm—ultimately increasing our capacity to creatively occupy the imaginary/symbolic while exploring how this creativity requires a loss of the self (or, at least, its heterogenization). This knowledge in the real could transform *visual art* beyond recognition because it reduces the captivations of the imaginary shifting our focus to the signifying economy of a work and thus puncturing and punctuating the imaginary beyond return. Such knowledge might produce effects that accomplish Aleksandr Rodchenko's desire for new forms, *really* bringing painting to its logical conclusion once we are no longer subjugate to it as form of unthinking enjoyment.

Now, in returning to the original goal of the essay, we need to consider that the dominant discursive structures that we occupy today

are far from prohibitory and that the deductive structure remains an important ethic based on its political implications. We also need to consider the current state of discourse and our dire need to locate and institute limits on consumption. Or in other words limit the labors of the unconscious.[19] We must consider that, in contemporary discursive structures, the dominant position is not alienation in the traditional sense of the father's "No!", but rather the permissiveness of the "Yes!" and thus why Buchloh uses the metaphor of psychosis to think contemporary art. In order to understand what I mean in saying that art often presents as a form of alienation in the *jouissance of the other*, we require a detour into Lacan's understanding of culture as that which organizes *jouissance*. From this perspective, art in the mainstream barely exceeds its own tautological myths; that the artist enjoys a surplus of *jouissance* and is less castrated than rest of us (therefore the other that enjoys/*jouissance* of the other/our enjoyment alienated in the other). Art is a prime place where fantasy forms of enjoyment can be differentiated from real forms of enjoyment, or sublimation. The goal then, within the willing adoption of the principles of deductive structure in a practice, shouldn't be to remain alienated in a rigid prohibitory universe that someone like (e.g.) Frank Stella achieves with absolute rigour in *The Marriage of Reason and Squalor II* (1959), but rather to locate a real limitation (rather than imaginary impotence) and work with it as a constraint. The frame would no longer be the determinant of all the compositional decisions of the work as seen in non-composition but rather the structural impossibility that one might struggle with to its logical end-point, in order to affect a kind of subjective destitution of "PAINTING" rather than merely trade one identification for another one.

Back to the question of psychosis. Because psychosis is indicative of a lack of limit within the dual relation, subjectivity is foreclosed in the child. The limits of the symbolic (that castrate but also protect) have been refused and, although psychotic structure is irreversible, it is conducive to treatment. If Buchloh's totalizing statement is true, then our only option is to treat this psychotic structure in a defensive manner. It should be clear at this point why Buchloh is reducing the future of sculptural practice to a "psychotic state." Discourse analysis can enable us to understand contemporary art as indicative of the collapse of subjectivity and sculptural discourses into a kind of psychotic gibberish entirely dictated by the other of spectacle and sign-exchange value. This is essentially what Buchloh is implying about the collapse of the historical subject "socialist-democrat," and the historical projects aligned with it, within the extremes of consumerism. However, as was noted earlier, within the "delusional" speech of a psychotic break there is in fact a very particular logic occurring within speech and the key to reestablishing a stable subjective universe. Let's apply our slightly more developed concept of psychosis to contemporary art in order to scrutinize Buchloh's assertion further. If we attend to Genzken's work at the level of its signifying economy rather than its status as "ART" as if that were something objective that exists beyond its discursive articulation or beyond its function in the imaginary ("signified reality"), then Genzken's work says nothing because it's busy saying everything.

Now that we have laid out a more developed concept of psychosis we can ask one of the central questions of the project, does Isa Genzken's recent work present the repeated attempt to re-consolidate the symbolic fictions of modernism within an idiosyncratic speech act in which

the self and other have collapsed? Or, in other words, within the uninterrupted flow of random signification that is presenting in her recent work is there an attempt to locate a limit that could re-establish a "subject" in relation to a distinct "other"? After all this effort, my argument, contra Buchloh, is that the dominant problem in contemporary art is the collapse of subjectivity via the route of fetishization (perversion) rather than the loss of subjectivity within the paranoid narrative that characterizes psychosis. (I also wouldn't personally grant these practices the pathos inscribed in psychotic's speech.)[20] Instead I want to stress the problematic way that these artists merely enact and then aestheticize "crisis" without marking any real form of rigorous subjective engagement or challenge to these psychotic and/or perverse logics, and thus disavow rather than foreclose potential transformation.[21]

CONTEMPORARY ART AND PERVERSION

In the perverse diagnosis, art would be the fetishistic product of our constantly being put in the position of object in relation to the overwhelming demands of the gaze/voice and objects of the market/western spectacle. The artwork and practice would be overdetermined by an attempt to repair the malfunctioning paternal function via the route of a fetish. The fetishistic practice functions counterintuitively in that the transgression works to provoke the execution of the law unconsciously aspiring for the law to come between the subject and its perverse practice and institute a space for lack and desire. When art fails as a symbolic fiction, it becomes an imaginary-real activity with the "ARTIST" as its instrument. This is the logic of perversion. Historically, this particular brand of transgression—first emergent in Dada—provoked a

marked reaction (for example, the *Degenerate Art Show* in Germany, 1937). Today, the perverse act attempts to provoke the traditional form of the law despite it already having receded. In its place we have the market encouraging transgression and basically demanding it of its "object" artists. Once an artist accepts being an object of this dynamic, we have what I am calling self-reflexive perversion. In addition to Genzken, some examples are Rachel Harrison's "slacker art," Thomas Hirschhorn's cardboard castles, Rochelle Goldberg's dystopian aestheticized landscapes, Sterling Ruby's aestheticized minimalism turned maximalism, Jutta Kuther's Pepto-Bismol junk store scrawls... The list could and does go on. I consider the above practices to be self-reflexively perverse in the simplest sense because they take obvious enjoyment in their varied processes of mere aestheticization under the cover of critique, while also appealing to some critical/curatorial "other" to step in and paradoxically reaffirm the sanctity of "ART". Their debasement points to a conservative identification with the law and with "ART" as master signifier. Regardless of how much energy and noise one expends opposing an ideal within its particular counter-identification, you are still constrained and determined by the very ideal you seek to destroy.

ART AND MODERN SCIENCE

Central to the Lacanian argument is an understanding that the radical truth of Freudian psychoanalysis must be resurrected at the expense of the post-Freudian misuse of his central insights. Freud famously stated that modern science inflicts wounds to our narcissism as it radically displaces man from the center of the universe and this loss compounds the fundamental trauma of human existence (language's petrification of the body). Lacan further argued that the subject of

psychoanalysis is the subject of modern science adrift in an impersonal universe with no "home". The goal is not to give the subject a home by bolstering the ego but to finish the job of de-personalization, as this is ultimately therapeutic. Part of the impasse between composition and construction, then, is the struggle to work with the truths of modern science and/or the struggle to avoid them at all costs.

Žižek marks two definitive moments in modern art, both found within a larger scientific-philosophical epistemological break that psychoanalysis heir that we are beginning to explore. The first is the unprecedented isolation of the frame in Malevich's *The Black Square on the White Surface*, 1915. This gesture emptied the frame of all content, ushering in an integral aspect of modern art (both in a conservative and radical application). According to Žižek, this fulfilled a precondition for Duchamp's ready-made procedure. "In short, there is no Duchamp without Malevich: only after art practice isolates the frame/place as such, emptied of all of its content, can one indulge in the ready-made procedure." [22] The isolation of the frame/place is necessary within this concept of realism which founds itself through a *negative* relation to common sense perception and thus requires the emptying out of a place of imaginary content creating space to actively manipulate the signifying economy of objects. Malevich and Duchamp evidence a mode of realism suitable to modern science and the terms of experience in Lacanian psychoanalysis. [23] As Žižek details Malevich's *Black Square 1915* locates and isolates the empty space of the real and without any precedent invents the monochrome which would then echo through twentieth century art. Malevich instantiates a modern form of realism which has by definition a negative relationship to common sense perception. Duchamp also operates within a "negative form of

realism" when he nominates a urinal as an artwork in *Fountain 1917* and in Lacanian parlance, introduces "that which doesn't work at the level of the symbolic."

The subtraction of content in modernism, as seen in Malevich's founding gesture, aligns with the use of formalization in modern science to differentiate the real instantiated/invented-by-discourse, and the imaginary which we take for the real in dominant empirical perception. Deductive structure or non-composition must then be thought through this modern subtraction of imaginary meaning, and thus working in tandem with structuralism through a formalist attention to the letter splitting the letter from meaning and ultimately undergoing separation from the other (meaning). Buchloh wrote despondently of the abstraction of phenomenological experience and the problems of constructing a "representation of the real" in contemporary society. Instead of mourning a time when phenomenology wasn't abstract, I think we need to consider the possibility that the imaginary will always be at the mercy of desire and the symbolic, and thus "abstract." And yet as far as "representing the real" goes, we cannot discredit the significance of the historical correspondence between formalisms in modern art and the epistemological break of modern science which uses formalization in order to effect a "non-intuitive, non-image based, non-imaginary approach to their field." [24] Given this, it's not surprising that critical modern art has also been defined by a certain kind of war with the image (or, in other words, the sensible) despite it being art's *modus operandi*.

This brings us to the counterintuitive goal of realism after Lacanian psychoanalysis, which moves us away from the traditional western attempt to locate reality behind (or in any dualistic sense with) fantasy. Instead,

psychoanalysis demonstrates the inevitability of fantasy/ideology as a function of what Lacan argues is the second nature of our living in the imaginary-symbolic register. There is no universal "reality" behind fantasy. There is the universal of structure and the material conditions of our lives and the body, but this cannot be grasped as a *whole*—the real can only function as a hole. However, in the tradition of materialism, we can orientate ourselves towards the gap, hole, and/or the split. The ultimate point of a rigorous atheism is to refuse to fill the gap with meaning (which is imaginary) and why mathematics is the privileged tool for "presenting the real."

As Žižek outlines: "The problem with the 'Western mechanistic attitude' is not the forgotten repressed ancient holistic wisdom, but that it did not break with it thoroughly enough: it continued to perceive the new universe of (discursive stance) from the perspective of the old one, of the ancient wisdom." [25] This echoes Lorenzo Chiesa's work on Lacan's engagement with scientific discourse, and ultimately reveals the way in which our dominant scientific attitude is animistic. [26] Thus we are able to differentiate modern science from the science of antiquity (Aristotelian science) as a break which is only instantiated through the substitution of the object with the *matheme*. This process takes into account the structural mediation of the real and the real as instantiated by discourse. The importance of the analytic act is its status as an event: a "knowledge *in* the real" which can only be measured retroactively by the change it produces. [27] This form of knowledge is based on the absence of meaning and thus the subtraction of "signified reality" down to its real kernel, which is traumatic for the ego and yet has therapeutic effects. The analytic act thus links being and thinking in a rare moment of dialectical materialist praxis.

The break of modern science is denied within hegemonic ideology, as demonstrated by Lacan's university discourse. Science becomes the mere accumulation of information and is diffused within society as a mode of social authority. Modern science distinguishes the real from its reduction to imaginary knowledge and thus destroys our anthropocentric conception of nature. [28,29,30] I believe this gesture, far from being an act of denigration or reduction of life to a "mechanical universe," is rather a gesture of radical humility which breeds a kind of secularized enthusiasm for the incompleteness of "signified reality" and thus the not-all of social and subjective experience. In other words, the point is to switch from a science of interpreting the world to a science of changing the world: a rejection of meaning and or content in exchange for an attention to form and effect of praxis.

Malevich's iconic work marks its place in the specific constellation of radical epistemological breaks by emptying the frame of imaginary content (paintings are generally symbolic uses of the imaginary). This gesture is a precondition for the ready-made procedure because, as we know, the original content of the object needs to be cancelled for it to become a ready-made art object. Much attention has been paid to Malevich's work in terms of real abstraction, however very little has been done to consider this work in terms of the formalism emergent in modern science. Despite the link between the two, that is the late development of linguistic sciences (in terms of the scientific revolution) and ultimate correspondence of linguistics to the capitalist destruction of traditional life worlds (signified realities). Duchamp aligns with the second phase of this change in perception by introducing an object that has no place in it, or in other words, a turning away from ordinary reality via the route of symbolic reconstruction.

Such a turn can only occur after there is a clearing away of imaginary content. Duchamp's nomination of a urinal as a work of art introduces a new master signifier into artistic-discourse, a master signifier that wouldn't fulfill its task restructuring artistic-discourses for multiple decades. The nomination of the new master signifier *Fountain 1917* would facilitate subjective transformation for the artist and the *effect of this gesture* would eventually prove itself to be a discursive-event.

Although Genzken avoids the codes of value associated with manual skill—marking her work as post-Duchampian (manual skill as determinant of art's value after the ready-made is always to some degree ideologically regressive)—this does not remove her work from fetishistic appraisal. Deskilling at the level of manual procedure is *only critical* if there is a reskilling that occurs as conceptualization. Deskilled, spray-painted collections of junk can clearly function as a fetish object (the objects *form* matters more as gestalt than its *content*) just as readily as any object produced through a highly skilled process. As Buchloh states elsewhere, relevant sculpture hovers between two poles: the aestheticization or building of space and the self-reflexive process of discerning the laws of this very aestheticization. In other words, the ready-made sculpture is an epistemological model (sculpture as a model investigating and contemplating the reality of aesthetic production).[31] The ready-made of the Duchampian variety marks the moment and transition into a deskilled, radically subtract, manual gesture, with a corresponding conceptualization where the art is not a property of the object but of nomination, selection and more importantly thought. If sculpture is a model of thought, then what kind of thought is Genzken's work modeling? Buchloh argues that Genzken's recent work models thought equivalent

to what is communicable within a psychotic break. The logic sustaining Genzken's work is optical-empirical (imaginary use of the real) rather than epistemological or *conceptual material* (symbolic/real). Genzken's recent work is subject to the demands of capitalist discourse, and potentially a perverse resistance to spectacle, but nowhere near any form of transformation.[32]

HISTORICAL CHANGES IN DISCURSIVE/MATERIAL STRUCTURES

The negative gestures of modern art—that is, sculpture defining itself through what it isn't (not-landscape, not-architecture) in relation to the phallic monuments of the modern-state—follow a similar trajectory to what Lacan outlines as the historical shift from the discourse of the feudal master to that of the capitalist master. This major shift, occurring as a result of “traversing traditional ideology” over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, has radically reoriented subjectivity. The prohibitions inherent to the feudal or classical master became a *call to production* of university discourse (in service of the capitalist master). Our current state of politics and aesthetics is non-dialectical because it resists a stern symbolic father who long abandoned us to the whims of the neo-nationalist zealots (imaginary fathers). While risking taking on too much of the status of “subject presumed to know” in relation to the political question, I think we need to shift our critical and transformative efforts away from the strategies used against the modern master, and with it the repudiation of any and all symbolic constraint or negative moment in relation to culture (as if they were necessarily patriarchal/oppressive) towards the master signifiers of post-modern theory and university discourse. University discourse has been used somewhat

interchangeably with the discursive arrangement of the capitalist master, wherein authority is maintained through objective knowledge rather than a classic feudal master's "NO!" without qualification. University discourse conceals the existence of a master signifier under the cloak of objective knowledge. The increased role of the curator and "cultural-theory-sans-praxis" within art points to the subjugation of art to the dead ends of university discourse. My belief is that we need to suspend what we 'post-moderns know' and shift our critical efforts toward post-modern ideology at the expense of forms of ready-made resistance to traditional ideology that clog our non-dialectical political imaginary. Aesthetics and politics will remain non-dialectical until the avant-garde of the capitalist social bond can be transformed into a genuine alternative form of universality, not just a moralizing social justice appendage to a barbaric capitalist system.

In order to return to the original premise of the essay before concluding, I will introduce Lacan's notion of the subject, which is *not* the ego. Through Lacan's critique of ego-psychology we have become wary of any argument that reduces subjectivity entirely to the imaginary and thus the ego. We have the ego, but there is also the subject of the unconscious, that is, the subject of the signifier. The statement "all things being equal" that I engage in the title of this project points to the logical affinity between the equivalence that occurs within the exchange of commodities and within the differential values exchanged in "communication." Buchloh makes the mistake however of collapsing the object of political economy and the object of psychoanalysis.

Beyond the level of the signifier's relation to meaning (its supposed use-value which Marx himself understood as produced need and thus

fantasy)—that is the word—it correlates and produces the letters of jouissance of the body (the phoneme) which is both singular and real. Our subjection to language (the operativity of language as expressive parasite) has a logical affinity with the proletarianization that occurs via the commodity-form (inherent to Marx's concept of labour-power and surplus value). [33] My point is that, despite the universal exchangeability of signs and materials in the economic register and the effects of this on art and subjectivity, the unconscious real persists and what is real at the level of subjectivity (because that is what we're talking about when we say self and psychosis) is the effect of the signifier, it's jouissance. [34] From here psychoanalysis and its scientific aspirations turn toward craft and the terrain of poetics and man's status as a poem without a poet. This revolution in poetics, however, requires the suspension of naïve dualisms because this poem is a subjugation to unthinking enjoyment at the behest of signifier. Lacanian psychoanalysis ultimately comes down to a decision, a decision to remain alienated in the jouissance of the other and or to separate from it and confront the lack in being. That is, to locate and live by a motivation other than the economic calculator that is the pleasure principle in relation to a deferred and thus fantasized jouissance?

Yve-Alain Bois makes an important qualifier to his exploration and celebration of non-compositions as it runs it relay through twentieth century art, when he acknowledges that most of the artist's (Stella, Rodchenko, Duchamp etc.) acknowledged the impossibility of actually erasing the self in practice and some even returned to the gratuitous forms of composition that they had rejected in the later years of their practice. For example, Frank Stella would go from the most restrained painting—absolutely

determined and commensurate with the frame, seemingly erasing all excess enjoyment from his practice—to obscene, cliché, and random painterly objects. Regardless of if the abandonment was self-conscious or not, this phenomenon points to the impossibility of eliminating enjoyment entirely but also the insufficiency of an act based in untraversed identifications (although one will always remain alienated in the other (language) the goal is to facilitate separation as much as possible). What we enjoy is our identifications, ideals and their meaning. They give us the substance we otherwise lack regardless of how much pain an identification can produce. The important point being that there is a difference between actually transforming the self and modeling it as an ideal and non-composition (or the left in general) is not immune to the conflicted motivations of the ego ideals. Something of the subject's singular enjoyment needs to be the *motivation* of the practice but more importantly that *motivation* must then become the *object* of the practice in order that it be scrutinized and transformed. Otherwise an identification will likely burn itself out and return to the very identification that had been rejected in the first place. There is an inherent problem with the composition-construction polemic that claims the erasure of the self but hasn't explored the role of identification to the ego as it constitutes itself in relation to the gaze of the other. I do not say this to undermine the arguments of non-composition but rather to be faithful to the position both politically and aesthetically. A true loss of the self (the ego's heterogenization) requires a transformation and a loss that cannot be undone, and this loss is what Lacan theorizes as separation. This loss would correspond to a decrease in consumption, or in other words, a decrease in the labours of enjoyment. With the traversal of the plane of identifications the art of the future could take on far more

singular consequences, however, by singular I do not mean individual. There is a huge gap between real sublimation and the general reification of the signifying traits of "ART" within fantasy. This artistic fantasy refuses to acknowledge art's signifying economy and subjection to the rules of discourse because of its captivation and enjoyment of the image.

CONCLUSION

In Genzken's work, whether self-reflexive or not, we have a demonstration of capitalist discourse: a discursive structure that promises to resolve our division with every new master signifier or good on the market, not dissimilar to how university discourse has an answer to every question. Art like anything is constrained by fantasy and fantasy ultimately denies castration. Castration is a concept that pertains to the lack and loss that define human life once the body is subject to language (the passage from nature to culture) and the real status of our jouissance, as either too much and or too little. We should by now understand that we cannot eliminate fantasy, but that we can change it by traversing it to the end, art education should facilitate this traversal. For me, what marks an interesting practice is art's capacity to initiate and trace subjective transformation, wherein art could transition from its status propping up the ego to its function in the creation of new knots between the imaginary/signifier/real, once separation has been effected. Ultimately looking for that point where the fixed coordinates of individuals and collectives are exchanged for new marks and gestures. In order that we could undergo a separation from the jouissance that constrains us to blind repetitions and ultimately (despite the lie of the goods) the destruction of the other and or the self (it's

the same thing). This essay clearly instrumentalized the discourses of *others* to paint a portrait of my own educational/artistic/psychoanalytic trajectory and personal traversal of the ART fantasy. I nominate myself as having traversed arts phantasm, and my ultimate reward is being less subjugate to ART. At the end of analysis, a subject will ultimately make a decision motivated by what love remains there for ART once the fantasy has been traversed. An artist might continue on, giving what it is they don't have (beyond the fantasy that fuels the ego's identification) and or there might be a choice to do something else, once the libidinal subjection is loosened up. This effect of analysis (personal and artistic), is not exactly what Yve-Alain Bois is after within his idea of "erasing the self" as seen in twentieth century art. "The erasure of the self" that occurs in analysis ultimately erodes the narcissistic love driving our behavior, producing singularity (singular writings of *jouissance*) rather than a group identification with an ideal. *New art* could be the art of the mismatched subjects that emerge after analysis, failing to be unified by any one style or signifying trait. Becoming able to partake in the *plentitude*, that is the emptiness of the symbolic in relation to presence of *other jouissance* (once we have separated from the *jouissance* of the other and experienced the limit of phallic *jouissance*) and marking that in the social. *All things being equal* becomes *all things being singular*.

NOTES

1. We can discuss the changed role of the father in relation to a function that anyone can occupy regardless of actual sex and or gender and also in relation to the larger symbolic order and the function of "father" or third term in subjectivity who castrates but also protects. The father as the representative of language and the symbolic.
2. I understand "the present" through Slavoj Žižek's singular capacity to discern contemporary ideological formations—for example: "The diagnosis of the postmodern ideological constellation as perverse, consumerist, liberal tolerant multiculturalism, and its diagnosis as psychotic, paranoid fundamentalism are not mutually exclusive possible diagnoses of one postmodern condition. Rather, they are two separate reactions to what grounds the postmodern condition: the traversal of traditional ideology and what needs to be acknowledged is the way in which capitalism itself created the condition in which to transform traditional social hierarchies." Clearly the point is not to resurrect the all-powerful, all enjoying patriarch which is being attempted globally in religious and neo-nationalist fundamentalisms, nor is it to remain within our current fraternity, that is our society of brothers which still excludes women from the social bond despite the changes to patriarchal social formation and the increased ability for women to occupy a masculine position. The above quote is taken from an important resource used in the development of this project: Charles H. Wells, *The Subject of Liberation: Žižek, Politics, Psychoanalysis* (London:

- Bloomsbury, 2016).
3. I engage Buchloh for his ability to cut through ideological confusion and situate artists in ongoing historical dialectics. While developing some of Buchloh's ideas I set aside his tendency towards cynical closure, a rhetorical device that runs through his work and contributes more to contemporary nihilism, and its twin-evil nostalgia, rather than unrest.
 4. Yve-Alain Bois, "The Difficult Task of Erasing... Twentieth-Century Art - Yve-Alain Bois," YouTube video, 1:08:53. Posted June 3, 2016. A fundamental aspect of Lacanian psychoanalysis is his disagreement with ego-psychology who saw subjective pathology as a result of the insufficiency of the ego. Lacan instead see's pathology as a problem of the ego's strength, not its insufficiency.
 5. The super-ego is not the law, but the *voice*, uttering a senseless command (prohibition/affirmation) which structures masochistic repetition. It largely pertains to the paranoia of being a possession or object of the capricious, arbitrary, threatening other well-demonstrated in psychotic delusions. The super-ego is that realm of imperative to jouissance, the jouissance of the other, that invades a person, and thus goes beyond the symbolic law that should have been instantiated to create a space of subjective stability, a space free from the capricious wills of the other, that then one must respond to.
 6. I'll include a critique here in order to introduce a degree of temperance that does presently exist in my thinking. "Post-modern' is one of the possible names of contemporary democratic materialism. Negri is right concerning what the post-moderns 'know': the body is the only

concrete instance for desolate individuals aspiring to enjoyment. Human being, in the regime of the 'power of life', is a slightly sad animal, who must be convinced that the law of the body fixes the secret of his hope. In order to validate the equation existence = individual = body, contemporary doxa must courageously absorb humanity into a positive vision of animality. 'Human rights' are one and the same thing as the rights of the living. The rights of the living being to remain a desolate individual aspiring to enjoyment. Mortal bodies. Suffering lives. The humanist protection of all the animals, humans included: such is the norm of contemporary materialism. Its scientific name is 'bioethics'. The philosophical and political name comes from Foucault: 'biopolitics'. This materialism is therefore a materialism of life. It is a bio-materialism." Alain Badiou, "Bodies, Language, Truths," *Lacan.com* (September 9, 2006).

7. Benjamin Buchloh, "All Things Being Equal: Isa Genzken," *Artforum* (November 2005). "In her most recent work, Genzken confronts one of the prime calamities of sculpture in the present: a terror that emerges from both the universal equivalence and exchangeability of all objects and materials and the simultaneous impossibility of imbuing any transgressive definition of sculpture with priorities or criteria of selection, of choice, let alone judgment (be it artisanal skills, choice of objects or materials, or the analytical intelligence to identify the specific structure of a contextualized readymade). To have the self-succumb to the totalitarian order of objects brings the sculptor to the brink of psychosis, and Genzken's new work seems to inhabit that position. However, since

- total submission to the terror of consumption is indeed the governing stratum of collective object-relations, that psychotic state may well become the only position and practice the sculptor of the future can articulate”.
8. The other in Lacan is the symbolic order, the totality of laws and meaning. It is a seat of interpellation for the subject. Lacan points to the way in which human intersubjectivity is defined by a subject-other relation not a subject-subject relation as assumed, such that our enjoyment is alienated in the other, $S \leftrightarrow A$.
 9. The Name of the Father or the paternal function or paternal metaphor—this is the symbolic operation that separates mother from child. By her speech the mother situates a reference to something she desires that is beyond the capacity of the child to realize and to a symbolic authority of some stripe that intervenes and limits the mother’s desire in relation to the child and thus the child’s access of the mother. Castration is the symbolic dimension of the Name of the Father that leads the child to renounce the attempt to be the phallus for the mother, and what matters is how this renunciation occurs (or doesn’t occur) for the child. The third term (within the mother’s speech and subjectivity, or via another intermediary) intervenes and limits the oppressiveness of the dual relation facilitating the child’s alienation and separation into the symbolic order.
 10. Deductive structure exchanged a purposive plan for what they thought was the randomness of composition aspiring towards the utmost economy of labour and material. The frame then, in deductive structure, becomes the guide that all of the

decisions in the work should refer back to, a concept literalized in Frank Stella's famous *Black Paintings* (1958-1960). Constructivist artists sought to shift the emphasis of the authorial intent from the artist to the material. While this is being attempted again in contemporary art—a "return to material practice" that typically ignores or disengages the historical precedence set by Constructivism and Minimalism—we lack the attention that the Constructivist and Minimalist artists paid to the material as a form of constraint against subjectivity. Now we turn to "material" in an ideological sense for its magical capacity to evacuate subjectivity. Imaginary "material" becomes real, thereby pointing to a perversion of discourse.

11. Lacan theorized a different end for analysis than Freud, who was happy to remain alienated in a father-centric universe.
12. You can also turn to Yve-Alain Bois' lecture to track the influence of constructivism to critical western art: Yve-Alain Bois, "The Difficult Task of Erasing...Twentieth-Century Art."
13. Institut Khudozhestvennoy Kultury (INKhUK: Institute of Artistic Culture, 1920-1924) was an artistic organization; a society of painters, graphic artists, sculptors, architects, and art scholars. The institute was set up in Moscow in March 1920 as a section of IZO Narkompros (the Department of Visual Arts of the People's Commissariat for Education) to determine the course of artistic experiment in post-Revolutionary Russia. "INKhUK," *Monoskop*.
14. I reject the idea that *Ellipsoids* were any more referential (had not evacuated their content to any degree less) than any other Minimalist work. I further reject the

sexist attempt to draw a line between her work with the ellipsoid as somehow *feminine* and other Minimalist sculpture exemplified by the *rectilinear* along gendered lines. This gendered hobnobbing overshadows her astute application of deductive structure to non-Euclidean spatial-object. Although I should bring this point into our discussion of realism we will discuss later in the essay, I will have to limit myself to an introduction of the problem for now.

15. I won't go into all of the significance of the experience that occurred between construction and composition and thus deductive structure, but if one wants to do so, Maria Gough has done amazing work on this historical project. Cf: Maria Gough, *Artist as Producer: Russian Constructivism in Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).
16. Jouissance is famously a kind of pleasure in pain, which goes beyond the tepid mediations of the pleasure principle and serves as that which desire pursues. How I like to conceive of jouissance or enjoyment is similar to the idea that the Lacanian subject is not a question but an answer coming back from the real: a response of the subject of the signifier to a specific situation that emerges as automatism. Jouissance is the enjoyment of sense, loaded with the sexualized aspect of the term.
17. Jacques Lacan and Jacques-Alain Miller, "The Obsessional and His Desire," *Formations of the Unconscious: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book V* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), 388.
18. This statement refers to one of Lacan's central challenges to the students of May 1968. The students were increasingly critical of structuralism and theoretical

work in the face of political demands, and ultimately were operating on the premise that the political is in excess of or exterior to structure rather than an effect of structure's own contradictions and impossibilities. Adrian Johnston, "Lacanian Theory Has Legs: Structures Marching in the Streets," *South Atlantic Review* (April 2007).

19. Samo Tomšič, "Introduction: Lacan's second return to Freud," *The Capitalist Unconscious: Marx and Lacan* (London: Verso, 2015), 1-12.
20. Psychotics have never exchanged (through symbolization) the desire of the other for the name of the father. This leaves them at the mercy of the imaginary, without recourse to symbolic alienation/separation. The pervert turns the name-of-the father (the law) into (desire). Although we can recognize the rhetorical purpose of Buchloh's assertion, I take issue with the assumption that there is no way out for the psychotic or for contemporary subjectivity in general, for that matter. My central critique of Genzken's cynicism is that it forecloses the possibility of change. If we are to utilize psychoanalysis to make an argument, it is dangerous to obscure the way in which Lacanian psychoanalysis in particular might offer everyone—psychotics, perverts and neurotics—a way out of our subjection to spectacle culture and its constraint of subjectivity to the dual relation.
21. My argument, in Buchloh's words, is that Genzken's recent work merely enacts the laws of ideological interpellation and sign exchange value rather than performing a detailed analysis of the difficulties of constructing the "representation of the real and social under the conditions of

spectacle culture.” “Precisely the question, which—if any—would be strategies that artistic (and in particular sculptural) practices could engage with to go beyond the limitations of abstraction and phenomenology and to confront spaces of ideological interpellation and sign-exchange value without simply enacting their laws [...] without pointing towards any particular example in current artistic practice (even though some do certainly exist) I would argue that the work that would perform the most detailed and the most accurate analysis of the difficulties of constructing the representation of the real and of the social under the conditions of spectacle culture and sign exchange value will most likely also be the practices that would resist totalization of these conditions the most successfully.” Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Sculpture: Publicity and the Poverty of Experience” in *Formalism and Historicity: Models and Methods in Twentieth-century Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 509–528.

22. Slavoj Žižek, Rex Butler, and Scott Stephens, “The Real of Sexual Difference” in *Interrogating the Real* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 378.
23. Žižek, et al., “The Real of Sexual Difference,” 378. “The same is true of today’s art scene: in it, the Real does not return primarily in the guise of the shocking brutal intrusion of excremental objects, mutilated corpses, shit, and so on. These objects are, for sure, out of place—but in order for them to be out of place, the (empty) place must already be there, and this place is rendered by ‘minimalist’ art, starting with Kazimir Malevich. Therein resides the complicity between the two opposed icons of high

modernism: Malevich's *The Black Square* on the white surface and Marcel Duchamp's display of readymade objects as works of art. The underlying notion of Duchamp's elevation of an everyday common object into a work of art is that a work of art is not an inherent property of the object. It is the artist himself who, by pre-empting the (or, rather, any) object and locating it at a certain place, makes it a work of art. Being a work of art is not a question of 'why' but rather 'where'. What Malevich's minimalist disposition does is render—or isolate—this place as such. It isolates an empty place (or frame) with the proto-magic property of transforming any object that finds itself within its scope into a work of art. In short, there is no Duchamp without Malevich. Only after art practice isolates the frame/place as such, emptied of all of its content, can one indulge in the readymade procedure. Before Malevich, a urinal would have remained just a urinal, even if it was displayed in the most distinguished gallery. The emergence of excremental objects that are out of place is thus strictly correlative to the emergence of the place without any object in it—the empty frame as such. Consequently, the Real in contemporary art has three dimensions, which somehow repeat the Imaginary-Symbolic-Real triad within the Real. The Real is first there as the anamorphic stain the anamorphic distortion of the direct image of reality—as a distorted image, a pure semblance that 'subjectivizes' objective reality. Then the Real is there as the empty place, as a structure, a construction that is never actual or experienced as such but can only be retroactively constructed and has to be presupposed as such—the Real as symbolic

construction. Finally, the Real is the obscene, excremental Object out of place, the Real 'itself. This last Real, if isolated, is a mere fetish whose fascinating/captivating presence masks the structural Real, in the same way that, in Nazi anti-Semitism, the Jew as an excremental Object is the Real that masks the unbearable 'structural' Real of social antagonism. These three dimensions of the Real result from the three modes by which one can distance oneself from 'ordinary' reality: one submits this reality to anamorphic distortion; one introduces an object that has no place in it; and one subtracts or erases all content (objects) of reality, so that all that remains is the very empty place that these objects were filling."

24. Lorenzo Chiesa, "Logic and Biology: Against Bio-Logy," *The Not-Two: Logic and God in Lacan* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016), 36.
25. Slavoj Žižek, "The Hegelian Ticklish Subject," *The Ticklish Subject: the Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 2009), 71.
26. Animism can be defined as any mode of knowledge which acts on the presumption that there is a correlation between that which is thought of, and the natural object in the world.
27. Alain Badiou, "Seminar 2 November 30th 1994," *Lacan*, (New York: Columbia University Press), 48. Alain Badiou details this in his Lacan Seminar which corresponds to Lacan's intervention into science. "This is a very strong and coherent statement and it defines metaphysics as 1) Aristotelian, since what comes after or along with physics forces us to see that it's not true that physics exhausts the thinkable; and as 2) anti-Aristotelian, so to speak,

inasmuch as it's not a matter of the science of being qua being, let alone of substance, as it is the fate of Aristotle's metaphysics (substance: what is there in what consists) but, on the contrary, it is a matter of a radical dis-being that eliminates all thinkability of content in favour of the thinkability of an effect."

28. Alenka Zupančič, "Object-Disorientated Ontology" in *What Is Sex?* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2017), 79. Alenka Zupančič's "Object-Disorientated Ontology" is an excellent introduction of the epistemological break of modern science, of which Lacanian psychoanalysis is also an heir. Zupančič quotes a famous Lacanian truism: "It is not worth talking about anything except the real which discourse itself has consequences." I don't want to or probably won't be able to clarify this entirely but the point is, science that appeals to an outside of discourse (the great outside of nature) is essentially meaningless and functions more like religion than science. Critical science should be understood as discursive constructions that have real effects as modes of substitution. From this perspective, materialism is not about matter but about the split that discourse instantiates—one that splits the world into two, that discourse is operative. As Alenka Zupančič outlines, "Modern Science—which is, after all, a historically assignable event—creates a new space of the real or the real as a new dimension of the ('natural') space. Physics does not cover nature (or reduplicate it symbolically) but is added to it, with nature continuing to stay where it's always been... Nature is not an impenetrable real, but as the imaginary, which we can see like and love, but which is, at the same time, somewhat

- irrelevant.”
29. Chiesa, “Logic and Biology: Against Bio-Loggy,” 36. This imaginary science, of modern science, amounts to the fact that it both seizes the real, namely the unknowable (albeit formulized) as lying outside the fantasmatic correspondence of thought and what is thought of, and at the same time intends to reduce it to imaginary knowledge.
30. Chiesa, “Logic and Biology: Against Bio-Loggy,” 26. “More generally Lacan believes that biology cannot be considered a scientific discourse, or better that the notion of science on which it relies is pre-Galilean. Instead of separating nature from so-called sensible substance by means of number (and the letters of mathematical formulas) it projects onto nature number as derived from the image of the human body as one form, and the phallic fantasy of totalization that it depends upon.”
31. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Michael Asher and the Conclusion of Modernist Sculpture,” *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, vol. 10 (1983), 278. “Tatlin’s corner-counter relief and his subsequent Monument for the Third International and Duchamp’s ‘ready-mades,’ both springing off the height of Synthetic Cubism, constitute since then the extremes of an axis on which sculpture has been resting ever since (knowingly or not): the dialectics of sculpture between functioning as a model for the aesthetic production of reality (e.g., architecture and design) or serving as a model investigating and contemplating the reality of aesthetic production (the ready-made, the allegory). Or, more precisely: architecture on the one hand and epistemological model on the other are the two poles

toward which relevant sculpture since then has tended to develop, each implying the eventual dissolution of its own discourse as sculpture.”

32. As already mentioned, I have borrowed heavily from Buchloh’s lecture “Isa Genzken: New Works” in order to address some of the historical precedents for mixed media assemblage practices that are well-represented in “returns to material practice.” In this lecture, Buchloh traces mixed media assemblage back to the historical dialectic between Duchamp’s radically subtracted ready-made as figuration and the anthropomorphic ready-made of the Dada mixed-media automaton of someone like Georges de Chirico. Deskillling on the side of the Dada automaton or doll is more of a ludic confusion between nihilism and affirmation. A more rigorous sacrifice of the ideological imperatives of art are needed to make headway in our current impasse that requires moving beyond cynicism and melancholy, which forgets the major epistemological breaks of modernity and instead takes enjoyment in cynical derision. Instead of working through the truths of the major intellectual events of modernity, we cynically ape a specific set of historical gestures drained of their once relevant symbolic fictions. MUSEUM MMK FÜR MODERNE KUNST, “Vortrag Von Benjamin H. D. Buchloh Zur Ausstellung ‘Isa Genzken. New Works,’” YouTube video, 1:07:30. March 30, 2015.
33. Tomšič, “Introduction: Lacan’s second return to Freud,” 1-12.
34. “Milner writes that “homophonies, homosemies, palindromes, anagrams, tropes, and all the imaginable figures of association” are the effects of lalangue, and are due to nothing other than the materiality or

physicality of languages, and not to that in languages which is involved in the creation of meanings—such as relations and differences among signs (L'amour 104). On Milner's reading, lalangue is, therefore, also a term for what it is of language that escapes and exceeds formalization, and it therefore presents a challenge to the science of linguistics". Ed Pluth, "An Adventure in the Order of Things: Jean-Claude Milner on Lalangue and Lacan's Incomplete Materialism," *S: Journal of the Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique* 3 (2010), 184.

