



JEREMIAH DAY  
SELECTED PRESS ARTICLES,  
INTERVIEWS & ESSAYS

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# **THE MOMENT YOU GAIN AWARENESS OF WHO YOU ARE**

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***A CONVERSATION  
WITH JEREMIAH DAY***

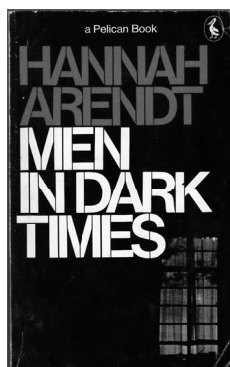
**≡ CITOYENNE REPRISE ≡**

**In 2008 the artist Jeremiah Day and scholar Wouter Davidts met in Istanbul for a studio visit – an encounter that meant the start of a long-time collaboration and friendship. In anticipation of Jeremiah Day’s exhibition at Netwerk Aalst in April 2021, the artist’s first institutional solo show in Belgium, Day, Davidts, together with art historian Eléa De Winter, convened for a conversation on Sunday, March 8, 2021. Excerpts from the three-hour long online exchange are published here:**

WOUTER DAVIDTS (WD) I am trying to find out what your stakes are. Is your focus first and foremost on the ‘cause’ – political, social, or other – itself, as a historical event? Are you as an artist interested in the capacity of art to address that event? Or does art serve mainly to display human capacity for resistance, and then the ‘cause’ itself, which is just one out of many or one of maybe few? Is art primarily used as a means or a tool to expose specific issues? Or are you, as an artist, mostly interested in the very agency of art itself to address such events and ‘causes’? In the second option, a social ‘cause’ is not the subject itself, but rather the ability of art and artists to tackle the human capacity for critical resistance.

JEREMIAH DAY (JD) I am trying to understand what the hell is happening to me. And so, in order to understand... I only understand that in concrete details. I am actually not really theoretically astute. I only think in terms of very detailed specific things.

I am interested in the ‘causes’ for their exemplary quality. They can illuminate broader issues and they are mobilized as examples, like non-fictional allegories or lo-fi fables. It is a strategy I have drawn from Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt; who both used this exemplification method; they made insights and arguments meaningful by interpreting and rooting them in concrete lived experiences and artifacts.



Bookcover of *Men in Dark Times* (1968) by Hannah Arendt.

Arendt often referred to Juan Gris: “If I am not in possession of the abstract, with what am I to control the concrete? ... if I am not in possession of the concrete with what am I to control the abstract?” For Benjamin, these concrete things could be artifacts, images, fragments with which he said he could make a kind of constellation

between past and present, and open up the present for action, literally revolutionary political action.

For Arendt, the starting point was often people themselves and their lives. Lived examples like the life of Rosa Luxemburg or Isak Dinesen, had more potential than theories or concepts to help us gain insight, she said, or as she put it, to ‘illuminate’. But how do we get to know these people? She said we live amidst a ‘web of human relationships’ that is tied together by stories, memory made concrete through things like monuments, poetry. That’s the glue that holds everything together. Art is part of this glue. I see my practice as something that has potential meaning, hopefully, even beyond the strictly professional art scene, as part of a ‘web of relationships’.

I am realizing more and more how influenced I am by John Cassavetes. For Cassavetes making films was his whole life. That was all that there was, nothing else in life besides making movies with his friends. In the filmmaking process, he had a chance to work out all of his big questions about life. About how he was a messed-up guy, about people cheating on one’s partner, about his father, about his kids, about politics, about going crazy: everything could happen, be addressed, explored in the film.

There is a story about the film *The Killing of a Chinese Bookie* (1976). The film poses the question of whether a man should commit a murder to get out of a big gambling debt. As they began the scene with the gun, Cassavetes and the film’s star Ben Gazzara stopped the production. Sitting in a car, they debated how to proceed. How far will you go for money? Would that save your life or break you? What would it mean to make a film of such murder for them, the public, or their kids? At such a moment, making art becomes a shared wrestling with the world; our place in it, our actions, and the suffering from what is done to us.



Still from *Killing of a Chinese Bookie* (1976) by John Cassavetes.

In that sense, the question of the art or the ‘cause’ is not an either-or question. Addressing a political issue is a way of asking questions about people. After all, there is no other meaningful way than to pay attention to such human things which, in turn, can only be understood by representing them. In my case, the process of representation itself is more and more a form of organizing; gathering people to share in attending, either as collaborators or the public itself.

WD As an archivist, you can document social or political matters. As a political scientist, you can write a paper about it. But you are an artist. You are addressing a different field, audience, and discourse. Does this bring another type of responsibility? Isn’t the degree of self-reflexivity somewhat different in your case? Since the capacity of art to illuminate problems is also invariably at stake in your work, isn’t it?

JD Do you mean is art’s meaning... or the potential of art itself at issue, as such?

WD Yes. It seems to me that the trajectory you go through as an artist to arrive at a practice like yours, is always at stake in your work as well. I think you genuinely believe, and I share this conviction, that art can serve as a realm to address societal, political, and cultural causes. Not to promote them, but to make them public.

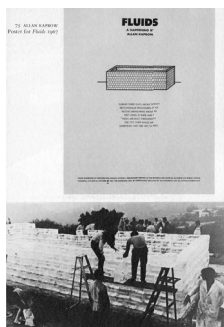
JD When I started as an artist in the 1990s in Los Angeles, I made videos about places like Venice Beach and its African American community and the town in Cape Cod where my grandmother lived. The public screening of these then laid the groundwork for a debate, an opportunity for a plenary meeting with the local community. These videos were so tied to the local discussions and intended for a local public that they didn’t really work outside that context. However, on one occasion, real political action came out of one of those video-screening-townhall meeting events. There really was an effect.

At one point, I showed those pieces, those videos that served as the basis for the town hall meetings, to Allan Kaprow – the artist who invented Happenings. Kaprow was an artist from another generation. He was a big influence and met with me a few times in a helpful way. He said: “If you want to do good in the world, you’d be much better off being a pediatrician than being an artist. Because people really need pediatricians when their kid gets sick. You really want to do good and you want to have a good feeling of having a meaningful role in the world, in people’s lives? Be a pediatrician.” He was very suspicious of these claims that art could be a basis for making anything better. In that sense, I think I am kind of testing. I am interested in testing what is possible. And so, that is why

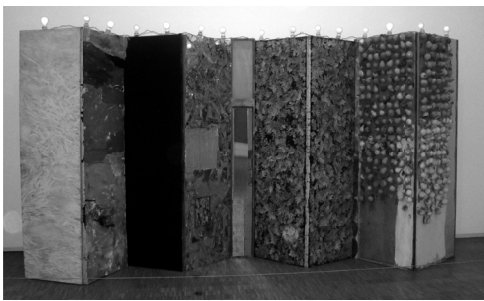
I do think about examples all the time. Like, you know, Bob Dylan's song *Hurricane* (1975): what kind of role in public life can a song have?



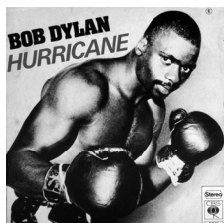
Sol Goldberg's photograph of participants in Allan Kaprow's happening *Household* (1964). Courtesy Getty Research Institute. © Estate of Sol Goldberg.



Poster of the *Happening Fluids* (1976) by Allan Kaprow.



Allan Kaprow, *Rearrangeable Panels*, 1957-59. Oil, leaves, plastic fruit, mirror and light bulbs on canvas and wood. Courtesy of the artist, Collection Centre Pompidou, Paris. Photo by Jeremiah Day.



LP cover of the single *Hurricane* (1975) by Bob Dylan.

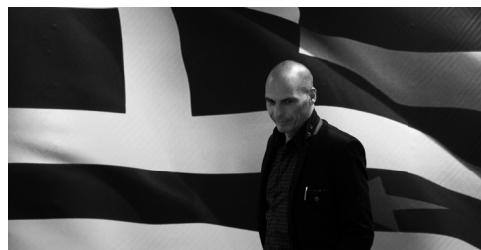
<sup>WD</sup> You seem to use art as a legitimate field to address things that happen out there in the world – as art is the field that you know best. But on an institutional level there is a deep-rooted conviction that art can and should effectively achieve something in that world it addresses. How do you relate to this type of instrumentalization?

<sup>JD</sup> The downside with this idea of having broader meaning in the world is the confusion that just because you have agency in the white cube, this invariably means

you have agency in the world. The public is given the feeling of engagement, which in actual civic terms is impossible. This belief is of course, related to 'institutional critique' and the argument that the production of critical self-awareness within an artistic context *tout court* would have some meaning in the world generally.

Also, we have to admit that there is now a phenomenon of 'artwashing'. The term comes from 'greenwashing', the way polluting businesses often make minor contributions to ecological causes in order to cover up the more substantial damage they do. The term 'artwashing' was mainly used in the debate on gentrification struggles in Los Angeles. It was understood that the supposed benevolence of the cultural scene was being used to divert attention from the underlying cultural conflict: the eviction of a traditional Mexican American community by young white professionals seeking affordable housing and working space, which was actually driven by powerful financial interests.

The issue of 'artwashing' was also prevalent in the form of censorship carried out in the exhibition on the Iraq war at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (*Theater of Operations: The Gulf Wars 1991–2011*, 2019–2020): a show that blunted questions of responsibility at an institution with interests deeply enmeshed in the business of military contractors. Or more relevant to us, the recent Documenta in Kassel in 2017, in which Yanis Varoufakis observed that even left-wing theory was used to cover up political responsibility. We make a lot of emotional gestures about capitalism but conveniently never mention the actual people and political parties (the Dutch Labour Party, for example) who take actions. What is the actual impact of, for example, the Eurogroup on our children's schools, libraries, visits to the doctor?



Portrait of Yanis Varoufakis a Greek economist and politician.

But most of all, in the Western Europe of today, the technocracy of social democracy has joined forces with the market fundamentalism of neoliberalism. This has led to a radical demand for direct applicability and instrumentalization. Art, and everything else, has to justify itself in terms of impact and usefulness. Often exaggerated claims are made on making the world a better place, exactly the kind of thing that Kaprow was so suspicious of.



Protest at *Theater of Operations: The Gulf Wars 1991–2011*, MoMa PS1, New York, 2020. Courtesy of Hyperallergic. © Hakim Bishara.

Art shows sometimes offer no more than some kind of emotional journalism on sensitive topics so that people have a feeling of participation. But in fact, they do not. As Tom Yorke from Radiohead sings in *There, There* (2003): "Just 'cause you feel it / doesn't mean it's there."

This occurred to me when I was living in the Netherlands and learned about the country's involvement in Nigeria with the firm Royal Dutch Shell. Shell had to settle out of court for its involvement in killing the poet Ken Saro Wiwa, but nobody ever talked about this. There is a kind of political correctness. The Dutch art world advocates social change, decolonization, and anti-racism, still I have never heard anyone mention the actions of Shell in Nigeria and what had happened, all those murders to protect oil profits. That lack of reckoning makes me also suspicious about what is effectively going on. But does that mean artists have to take a stand against Shell? Maybe just take a stand against self-deception and organized amnesia?



Portrait of Ken Saro Wiwa, a Nigerian writer, poet, television producer, and environmental activist who was executed in 1995.

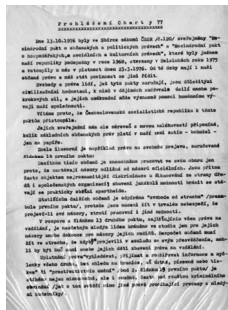


Photo of a slogan in the street during the protest against the execution of poet Ken Saro Wiwa.

It reminds me of the example of Václav Havel, when he and his friends from Charta



77 wrote in a letter that their human rights were being violated by the state. They really all took a stand on a principle. And they knew that this would cost them considerably, personally; they would lose their jobs, possibly go to jail. But by confronting the political order directly, they contributed to a dramatic shift, with Havel, initially a playwright, ultimately becoming a political leader. And that kind of stand-taking at some moments has to happen. But it remains awkward as an artist, contradictory.



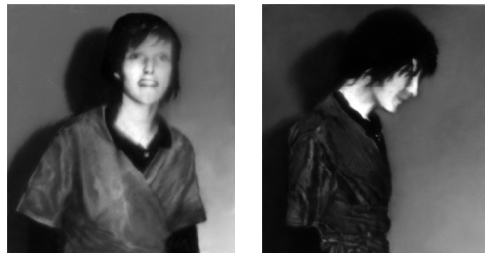
First version of the manifesto 'Charta 77' with notes from Pavel Kohout and Václav Havel. Charter 77 (Charta 77 in Czech and in Slovak) was an informal civic initiative in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic from 1976 to 1992, named after the document Charter 77 from January 1977. © Courtesy of the Moravian Museum.



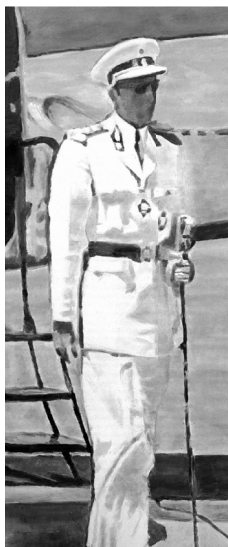
Statue of the Belgian politician, soldier, and president of the Communist Party of Belgium (KPB), Julien Lahaut. He was assassinated a week after Baudouin took the oath as royal prince on August 11, 1950 for allegedly shouting *Vive la République* at the ceremony.

An almost opposing example here would be the Baader-Meinhof paintings (1988) by Gerhard Richter and the very lack of stand that he took in painting them. It is precisely this lack of stance that gave the artworks more political meaning. Because if he had said, "I am for the RAF" or "I am against the RAF," the work would have flattened out to illustration. Richter's ambivalence allowed the work to be the basis for plural debate. This is precisely what an artist like Luc Tuymans realized. He totally mobilized that deadness in a strategic way, not only in his Congo paintings (2000) but into his whole oeuvre. He showed that this kind of detachment can be the basis for public thinking and for judgement. When I was studying at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam, Tuymans did give me one very blunt piece of advice. "Don't get into the political artist box," he said, "because once you are in the political artist box, you won't come out of it

again." It is actually a way of self-censoring, oddly enough. It is a way of neutralizing all of the implications of what you are doing. I remain very torn about this issue of art and taking a stance.



Gerhard Richter, *Gegenüberstellung 2 (Confrontation 2)*, 1988. From the cycle October 18, 1977, also known as the Baader-Meinhof paintings, which deals on the left-wing extremist, terrorist group Red Army Faction (RAF). Oil on canvas, 112 x 102 cm. Courtesy of the artist; The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York. © Gerhard Richter.



Luc Tuymans, *Mwana Kitoko*, 2000. Oil on canvas, 208 x 88 cm. Courtesy of the artist; Collection S.M.A.K., Ghent. © Luc Tuymans.

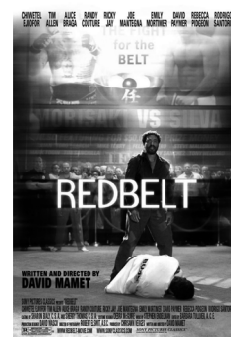
ELÉA DE WINTER (EDW) This notion of stand-taking is even more crucial when we realize how much we benefit today from those sacrifices people have made in the past. Many of the liberties and possibilities we currently take for granted we owe to the fact that people have taken action, have put pressure on the system, and demanded change. How should we relate to that?

JD It reminds me of a story that I shared with Gilles Vandaele, one of the representatives of Yourrh for Climate in Belgium, there is a small island off Mallorca called Dragonera. In the info center of the nature reserve – the whole thing is protected –, there are these posters from political demonstrations that took place in the mid-70s. If you look at these for a little bit, you can come to understand that the whole island was actually supposed to become a giant condominium complex. This was right in the period following Franco's death. There was a sea of public activity and the question was openly asked "What kind of society do we want to be?" It was, in fact, hippies and ecologists

who saved the island from the condominiums. You can read about the island in the EasyJet magazine. But the EasyJet magazine isn't going to tell you that the island only exists for you to visit because these people gave up their weekends for two years to fight for it. I have come to suspect that we are deprived, in general, of stories of such accomplishments, such successes. Because if such stories were to circulate, people might just start doing more activism! Is telling such a story taking a stance, though?

WD In any case, in your work I never get the feeling that you are wagging your finger, telling people what to do. When you address a problem or a situation, it does not immediately mean that you are telling them what to do, does it? In your work, you seem to instantiate political awareness rather than advocate it.

JD By leaving it a question, you don't fall into the trap of telling what people ought to do. Waving the finger insinuates that people know what to do next. This is a kind of left-wing position that I question. David Mamet said that the left-wing aesthetic is a lecture and the right-wing's is an action movie. And the lecture is given in a tone of superiority. It is a bit like the Noam Chomsky book that explains in three hundred pages why the US government is hypocritical, and perhaps even full of war criminals, but at the end you don't even get five pages about how you could all change it, right? It is symptomatic for states without properly functioning democracies, for countries in which people have less and less access to political power really. It is like telling people that "if only you would eat more carrots, you'd feel better," in a world where there are no more carrots. You know, as if it were enough to say: "Get up and be more involved!" But become more involved, how? Think of those in the Netherlands or Germany who built up the Green party only for them to give up their anti-war commitments and continue to support 20 years of NATO in Afghanistan? It makes people feel like, maybe these systems are not reformable. And that too needs to be described, that too is part of the aesthetics of everyday life.



Movie poster of *Red Belt* (2008) by David Mamet.



Patch of the intergovernmental military alliance NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization).

This week, I took pictures in the Dannenröder forest in the South of Kassel, pictures that will be in the show in Aalst. Activists wanted to protect this forest between Kassel and Frankfurt from having a new freeway built through it. Fritz Winter, one of the biggest auto parts manufacturers in the world, and Ferrero Rocher, the candy company, both have their major German factories in the neighboring city of Stadtlendorf. For both companies, it would be more efficient to have a direct freeway to the factories. As a reaction, a group of young people went into the woods to live in the trees, to block the freeway, because if you are concerned about the climate crisis, of course, destroying forests for freeways doesn't make sense. Then the police came and cut them out of the trees, pulled them out, and locked them up. But what did these kids do? They have stayed in their little camps next to this new freeway while it is being built. They are not going anywhere; they have set up a sort of commune. What surprised me most, however, were the kilometers of razor wire, giant lights and containers around the freeway construction site to prevent the activists from potentially breaking back in and re-occupying it. A fortress out of cargo containers was erected to protect the equipment and the construction site, because these companies and the state are afraid that the activists would try to sabotage the equipment. You really feel the scale of state power. After years of trying to build the freeway, the government finally said yes. But it is a Green government! The Greens join the seat of power and then rip the kids from the trees to build a freeway for an auto-parts manufacturer's convenience. At such a moment, it is tempting to conclude that the system cannot be reformed. These young activists, who live in their tents and have a public plenum every day, might be the ones who deal most realistically and most reasonably with these questions.



Treehouses built by activists on the planned A49 route in the Dannenröder forest, Germany.

It is similar to my experiences in Alabama when I worked there on the memory of the Freedom Struggle. This work will also be present in the exhibition through the example of Joanne Bland's story, put into juxtaposition with series of open discussions from 2019 organized with Youth For Climate. Spending time with these activists is for lack of a better word, 'inspiring'. In Alabama or in that forest, I spend my time listening to courageous people and their often life-threatening actions to bring change to the world. So, I don't offer moral criticism like Chomsky, but develop an aesthetic based on affirmative examples and arguments.



Joanne Bland; Non-Cooperation with the Status Quo, 2020, production still: public discussion, M Leuven, November 17, 2019.

WD Is the activist then a model for you as an artist?

JD No, and I am not trying to. In fact, it is complicated. The day after I did the public performance last year at Art Center Le Lait in Albi, a performance about the Sivens Dam on the Tescou River in the south of France and the occupation that blocked it, I expressed my total insecurity to one of the other performers, Claire Filmon. Did we do justice to those people? God help me, did we even do like a tenth of justice to those people? These people had done something truly remarkable; did we even describe their actions adequately? I don't think the activists who came to see the performance really appreciated it. I don't think they understood it. But it meant something to them. They saw that we were not pretending. Claire, the rock band Chicks on Speed and I were not only sincere, we brought our absolute best. We brought our absolute total commitment. We were 100% committed to dealing with their struggles at the best of our capacities. And we treated their fight like it was one of the most important things in the world ever because to us, it was, is. They may not have understood the form, but for them, it was really something to see that some people came from around the world to wrestle with this landscape and story, the death of an activist, and the preservation of a river. Also, emotionally ... it affected us emotionally, and the seriousness with which we presented it gave the performance a quality, a valorization, maybe... some sort of dignity?



LP cover of the album Cutting the Edge (2009) by Chicks on Speed.

EDW What do you mean? Did you feel a kind of debt towards them? Because you used them and their actions as the subject of your work?

JD Yes, because in artmaking about someone, there is always an aspect of exploitation involved, of course. As Audre Lorde said: "Use without consent is abuse." So, I am always shy to meet these people. Because I know that once I have met them, I am obligated towards them in a different way. It is hard not to listen to them when they would give me advice on what to picture and how to take photographs, what the work should be. In France, one of the activists insisted that contemporary art was really a meaningless, stupid framework, a perversion of actual meaning. He called it a "box that should be exploded." He wanted us to do the performance in an out-door marketplace in another village. Claire Filmon and I went there, checked it out, debated it. We spent an afternoon on this request and decided that the site he proposed was not suitable. It would not serve us and thus not serve the ambition to deal respectfully with this political situation. But we had to go, we had to take this request deadly seriously. Therefore, I am sometimes cagey about meeting these people and about how close I get to them. And that is also part of the obliqueness.



Cover of Sister Outsider (1984) by Audre Lorde

It is not so much debt as the feeling of using an inadequate vocabulary in the face of the incredible meaningfulness of the topics or subjects. Or the difference between object and subject matter, I mean. You know why Cézanne is so great? Because he painted both mountains and apples. If Cézanne had only painted the mountains, it wouldn't be

as good because the subject matter would always be so grand. But he went back home and tried to do the apples. So maybe I need to work on some more apple pieces and not so many mountain pieces?



Paul Cézanne, *Apples*, 1878. Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. Courtesy of Fitzwilliam Museum (University of Cambridge), Cambridge.

**WD** The notion of resistance seems to be at the center of most, if not all, of your works. I am thinking here of your early performance (*Maquis*, 2004), which was centered upon the French resistance in the second World War. Do you yourself also engage in forms of resistance? I am thinking of the many events you organized in Berlin and abroad concerning the European Union crisis of 2011. You mobilized your own discontent about the direction Europe was taking. Is there also a form of resistance in the way you address both the struggle against and the provocation of power?

**JD** Well, in that case, it is not about discontent or feeling bad: it is about my life, your life, our kids' lives. We pay the price, the children already pay a price for the way it went down in 2010 and 2011: they pay for it at the university, the doctor, the library, the museum, the welfare office. At the time of the Dutch restructuring of culture budgets into support for 'creative entrepreneurs' – i.e., a state ideology against poetry, in effect – indeed I wrote an open letter based on Arendt's text *The Crisis in Culture: Its Social and Its Political Significance* (1961), and we had public readings of the letter.



Bookcover of *La crise de la culture* (*The Crisis in Culture: Its Social and Its Political Significance*, 1961, French edition first published in 1972) by Hannah Arendt.

But my friend Fred Dewey suggested, really, that I should convince Marlene Dumas to join me and lock ourselves to the Van Gogh Museum doors in protest. At the time, it seemed totally wild and out of proportion, but looking back, it would have been reasonable, modest even when you consider the consequences. How many institutions 'lost' since then? And what kinds of descriptions, what kinds of art emerges in such a context? In sciences, this is called 'confirmation bias'. The vast majority of studies that get made public – the practical definition of general knowledge – confirms the interests of those who fund the research.



Public reading of open letter "Culture In Context: Preserving What Has Been Learned" to those waiting in line to enter the Van Gogh Museum. Rezi van Lankveld reading; photo by Claudia Sola, June 23, 2011.

I don't want to overstate my political activity. Today it mainly consists of trying to preserve the independent dance studio K77 in Berlin. But I would say that I am still working at the intersection of culture and the term that Dewey insists on, 'public life'.

This is why Arendt's text *The Crisis in Culture* became so crucial to me. She talks about the potential meaning of art, not in terms of it as an instrument. It laid the foundation for my interest in the status and the role that art can play, not in its use. The emphasis lies on the word capacity – which I got from you, Wouter! – a term from the hard sciences. It allows us to think about potentiality rather than instrumentalization, because it opposes the strict instrumentalist logic that prevails today.

**WD** Is it also experiencing the potential of agency, is that it? You only make decisions at the moment when you gain awareness of who you are, how you relate to your environment, structures or other people.

**JD** I think that without other people's art, I would not have survived. And that makes me believe that somehow there might be a justification for my own efforts.

**EDW** Do you mean that it helped you to take direction?

**JD** I don't think I could have dealt with the pressures of the contemporary world without art. I don't think I would have made it through high school and college without

art, music, books. All those things – Jack Kerouac, Barnett Newman, Fugazi – are actually what really kept me intact in some sense.



Fugazi, *Turnover Live*, White House Protest 1991, Unofficial Music Video Fan Edit.

I am thinking for instance of the films of Hal Hartley, of the wrestling with living in the face of nuclear war in *The Unbelievable Truth* (1989). Then in *Trust* (1990), with Adrienne Shelly, a guy carries a live hand grenade around with himself all day.



Movie poster of *Trust* (1990) by Hal Hartley.

**WD** Yes, just in case. I remember that film. She asks him: "Why do you have a hand grenade?" "Just in case."

**JD** The new official order has become so dominant that we no longer recognize it anymore. When I saw that film, it wasn't so prevalent yet. There was still more of an 'outside' to it back then. And it shaped my belief that art has a meaning. It must have the potential for meaning for other people because it has meaning for me.

**WD** How does this figure within your plans for the exhibition in Netwerk, Aalst?

**JD** It really is a 'web of human relationships.' In 2019 I read of the Belgian student strikes, and I really didn't understand. What did it mean for thousands of children to strike? I had to think of the Children's Crusade (1963) in Selma, Alabama, that chapter of the African American Freedom Struggle in which children played a big role. So, I gathered together resources and institutions and raised the money for a short tour, a series of forums with someone from that Alabama struggle – Joanne Bland – and a representative of Youth For Climate, Gilles Vandaele, who then went on to film school

and helped edit the video documentation of the tour which is in the exhibition.



De derde editie van de klimaatmars. Global Strike For Future op 20 september 2019 aankomst Jubelpark. © PhotoNews.

Vandaele has a very stark analysis, informed by many scientists, of what the future holds and what we will lose to the climate emergency. The meaning of saving things, preserving things, became more and more important in my thinking. It inspired me to do the work on that case in France I was mentioning before – about the preservation of a valley and stopping a dam from being built. I realized that preservation is paramount in a world of young people that are filled with despair. The knowledge that things can be saved is very important to them. Vandaele also made a film about a forest occupation in Arlon, Belgium. A protest of which very little is known in Belgium as it has barely been covered in the press. For a year and a half, young activists have been trying to block the Walloon Region from developing this site of biodiversity into office buildings and parking lots with dubious legality. Vandaele's film is an intimate portrait of this occupation, in which, strictly speaking, very little happens. It is very tender. The film contains, for example, a fragment of two young girls comparing tattoos and singing a song in a bathroom. As if there were no struggle.

When I discussed with Gilles my plans to include his film in my show in Aalst, he told me that wasn't an option. Before that, he had mentioned to me that he could not ever show this film, but he never made it really clear why. Apparently, he had promised the people who let him in on this protest and had agreed to be filmed that he would never show the film. Thus, if I show this movie, Gilles and I would exploit these activists, perhaps even endanger them or simply piss them off. I then asked myself if there was any way I could flip this situation? What would be the opposite? Instead of exploiting them, was there a possibility to work with the film so that one might invest in them? Instead of endangering them, could one protect them? Instead of pissing them off, could one make them happy?

At first, I thought I would enact the film all by myself. I would do a one-man performance where I acted out the whole film. I would remake the film as it were, a 'Jeremiah Day remake' of it all. But then I figured it was too sentimental. It could

be pathetic even, such an ode from a middle-aged man to activist youth. But then I came up with the following solution: what if I invite everyone I have ever collaborated with to join me and make an assembly? To reenact the whole thing together. That is what I will be doing, that is the piece. I can't invite everyone, because that would involve too many people. I have got fourteen artists now chipping in, who will contribute in different ways. There will be a painter, a musician, an artist from LA, a band... All of them will remake this video, or perhaps better said, 'cover' it, re-conceive it in their own vocabulary. I don't know what it is going to be like. Therefore, when I introduced the piece to the collaborators, I told the story of the performance in France with Filmon and Chicks on Speed: "I don't know if this will be good, but I believe that art has a capacity to produce some kind of meaning by addressing things seriously. And we are all serious." Many of us are already 25 years committed to art. "We are not playing around (even when we're playing around.) We are going to bring our 'not-playing-around-ness' to the table, and it is going to mean something to somebody." So, I don't know if it will be a good art show, but I think it will mean something to somebody.

The name of the piece is still referring to the title of Vandaele's original film. When he made it, the French *Gilets jaunes* (Yellow Vests) were considering changing their name to *Citoyens* (Citizens). So, they would just be *The Citizens*. The film was, moreover, mostly a portrait of one woman, a young woman. The title for the exhibition in Aalst is *Citoyenne Reprise*. With this title, I hope to convey the secrecy of the struggle – most people simply do not know about it – and mobilize the show's publicity machinery. With the publicity of the show, I hope to be telling an unknown story. Besides, it suggests that the exhibition can actually renew your capacity to be a citizen, right? Just imagine there is a poster that says Network Aalst, *Citoyenne Reprise*. Citizens, citizenship is back!

But then again, I remain cautious about such statements. Especially if you look at the human problems in a city like Aalst. Network is located in a neighborhood that is apparently the place where people first arrive in the city. And as soon as they can afford to leave, they move. So here I am, an American dude with a Ph.D., saying: "Oh yes, hey everybody, I have ideas about citizenship!"

<sup>WD</sup> Love me!

<sup>JD</sup> Indeed, it is presumptuous to say, "I have so many ideas for you, you know!" That is the moment I wonder whether I am proverbial putting lipstick on the pig. I am thinking here of what Robert Smithson wrote in this letter when he withdrew from

Documenta 5 in 1972: "It is better to dis-close the conditions of confinement than to make illusory gestures of freedom." This business of gesture-of-freedom is big business, you know. It is a thriving business!

<sup>EDW</sup> But there is a fundamental difference. You do not promise empowerment and agency. However, through addressing situations and events, you create a circumstance in which empowerment, agency, belief, conviction ... can actually happen. Because these are things that matter to people. You are not saying: "Here is a way to get empowerment! Let me tell you how and let me solve your problems." I think you rather offer moments and occasions of identification, as you show specific cases in which they happen.

<sup>JD</sup> Barnett Newman made a key difference between object matter and subject matter in painting. Sometimes, the things depicted in a work are not the point. This was important to him, because although his paintings depicted nothing, he always had a point to make. The story of the occupation in Arlon is actually more object matter – the occupation is not the point –, while the subject matter is something else: it is something about connection, about loss, about preservation, about shared struggles. In the show in Aalst, this endeavor is going to be on the line. For the first time, I am actually mobilizing the exhibition as a medium for a political narrative. And not only the show. The whole exhibition, including the publicity it is given, will be used to address a specific political cause in Belgium.

At the same time, I am aware of the potential downside of my strategy. I need to be cautious about what I am promising. Can I meaningfully contribute to civic life in Aalst with this exhibition? Civic life in Aalst is, after all, a big honking problem. The city of Aalst is a particular 'case', raising many questions. Should that factory remain in the center of the city? Can this city, Belgium, or Europe, come up with a model of citizenship that is multi-racial? If you don't take a stand on that, then what? How credible are you?



Destruction of the sandpit by Magnus-Idelux, March 2021, Arlon.

**Berlin – Antwerp, 08.03.21**  
**Jeremiah Day, Wouter Davidts,**  
**Eléa De Winter**



# BIOGRAPHIES

Jeremiah Day is an artist whose work employs photography, speech, and body language to re-examine political conflicts and resistances, unfolding their subjective traces.

Wouter Davidts is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Architecture & Urban Planning, as well as the Department of Art, Music and Theater Sciences of Ghent University (UGent). He publishes on art, architecture and the museum.

Eléa De Winter studied Art History at Ghent University, where she wrote her master thesis on the photographic studio images and portraits of Philippe Vandenberg.

# COLOPHON

**CITOYENNE REPRISE**  
Jeremiah Day & collaborators  
Curated by Piet Mertens &  
Pieterneel Vermoortel

*Citoyenne Reprise* is part of *The Astronaut Metaphor* (2020-2022), an evolving programme on politics, aesthetics and the human. What is the position and role that artists, writers, thinkers and institutions and their responsive practices can take up within a complex public sphere? With *The Astronaut Metaphor*, Netwerk Aalst wishes to understand what an integral support for artists can entail, how we can rethink the institution departing from the needs and wishes of artistic practices holding the here and now of Aalst as its compass.

*The Astronaut Metaphor* is: Nick Aikens, Brook Andrew, Bianca Baldi, Sam Belinfante, Mariske Broeckmeyer, Dries Boutsen, Liesel Burisch, Alex Cecchetti, Audrey Cottin, Jeremiah Day, Robbrecht

Desmet, Manon De Boer, Laurens Dhaenens, Lucile Desamory, Katya Ev, Vianney Fivel, Helen Anna Flanagan, Alexis Gautier, Dora Garcia, Daniella Géo, Dani Ghercă, Agnieska Gratz, Francesca Grilli, Maud Gyssels Aziz Hazara, Olivia Hernaiz, Michael Hirsch, Che-Yu Hsu, Nikolay Karabinovych, Nicolas Keppens, Latifa Laâbissi, Runo Lagomarsino, Diego Lama, Nokukhanya Langa, Gaëlle Leenhardt, Wendy Morris, Vanessa Joan Müller, Hadassa Ngamba, Otobong Nkanga, Pia Östlund, Matthias Philips, Elisa Pinto, Fernanda Pitta, Laure Prouvost, Alex Reynolds, Paulius Šliaupa, Jonas Staal, Oussama Tabti, Luca Vanello,...

Collaborators: Luca Bertolo, Joanne Bland, Chicks On Speed, Bart de Kroon, Fred Dewey, Discoteca Flaming Star, Ken Ehrlich, Claire Filmon, Arianne Hoffman, Yuchen Li, Alisa Margolis, Jonas Marx, Anike Joyce Sadiq & André Mulzer, Gilles Vandaele, Mirte van den Bos, Arjan Van Helmond, Rezi van Lankveld, Jeremy Woodruff

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Translations: Marianne Van Boxelaere

Coordination: Clara Beel

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# NNETWERK AALST

# ≡ THE ASTRONAUT ≡ METAPHOR

## MOUSSE MAGAZINE

*An Image Is Never Enough: Jeremiah Day*

### **Jeremiah Day in conversation with Axel Wieder**

13.10.2020

> > <https://www.moussemagazine.it/magazine/jeremiah-day-axel-wieder-2020/>

Jeremiah Day has produced since the mid-2000s a significant body of work that combines photography with other media such as spoken word, text, writing, music, and performance. Many of his projects are rooted in documentary photography. For instance for *LA Homicide* (2010), Day photographed murder sites in Los Angeles as listed by the Los Angeles Times in an effort to complete the picture beyond the five to ten percent of killings that are reported on and pictured in the news, often along lines of class and race. The images tend to be mundane and peaceful, and as an anti-monument they seem eerily timely today. Day often collaborates with the philosopher and activist Fred Dewey and the artist, dancer, choreographer, and writer Simone Forti. His latest solo presentation and his largest exhibition to date, *If It's for the People, It Needs to Be Beautiful, She Said*, was presented at Badischer Kunstverein in Karlsruhe, earlier in 2020.



*Jeremiah Day, If It's For The People, It Needs To Be Beautiful, She Said,*  
installation view at Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, 2020

This latest exhibition includes large-scale photographs and documentary materials related to German-born revolutionary Carl Schurz. Actively involved in the Baden Revolution of 1848–49, Schurz later traveled to the United States and became a journalist, politician, and advocate for integration of freed slaves and the political rights of Native Americans. The photographs, mounted on freestanding backdrop constructions, depict the Karlsruhe street named after him. Two videos, projected on the back sides of these constructions, follow Schurz through the US locations where he lived and worked, and include Day's reenactment of the dramatization of Schurz's political career as portrayed in John Ford's 1964 movie *Cheyenne Autumn*. The installation created a stage-like setting and literally a context for a series of performance events in which Day explored a history of anti-imperialism through the lens of Schurz and the various ways his thinking was discursively framed, for example during the building of a civil society in Germany after World War II. A second stage-like installation provided a platform for Day's work with contact improvisation as a collective practice, activated in regular gatherings. The occasion provided a welcome opportunity to ask Day some questions on photography as a social medium.

AXEL WIEDER

I am interested in your work from the perspective of photography—in an extended sense. Besides being beautiful, and attending to traces of history or politics in landscapes (sometimes urban landscapes) and our agency therein, I find really crucial your desire to accompany images with other forms of representation. Images seem never enough for what you aim to set in motion. Hence there are voice-overs, or perhaps a performance or a song, in your early slideshow works. I'm thinking of *The Fall of the Twelve Acres Museum* (2008), for example, for which you combined medium-format slides with a soundtrack, but also your performances that improvise movement and talking from images. How did these start?

JEREMIAH DAY

I made a photograph of the site of the Oklahoma City bombing in a transition period when it was still full of personal shrines and mementos. I found that with the photo alone, people could only refer back to what we knew about the site—in most cases a story taken from the mass media—and that the photo at worst seemed to simply substantiate those often-limited preconceptions, not complicate them or add any new understanding. That's when I started adding to the photographs, interweaving them into a broader machinery. Bringing in my story, or my version of a story, implicates me and the public at the same time, and the stakes shift from being "information" to an altogether different kind of engagement.

AXEL

In *The Fall of the Twelve Acres Museum*, the slideshow includes images of places close to where you grew up, combined with sites that a Native American chief points out to you as significant ones, and yet others with a connection to British colonial history in the United States. The work follows the legacy of a 1976 lawsuit over land in Massachusetts, as well as your own biographical entanglement with this area. I found impressive how you bring in your own biography, which comes up in many of your works. It seems to me an anti-normative, intimate take on history and politics.

## JEREMIAH

All the years I spent with Fred Dewey in his Hannah Arendt working groups really reframed my approach to politics: away from structures and concepts and more toward people, who Arendt insisted are more likely to offer us “illumination” in “dark times” than ideas. The discovery that Earl Mills, the chief of the Wampanoag Tribe who brought that 1976 lawsuit, had also been my mother and aunt’s teacher in high school, and that my uncle had taught with him when he came back from Vietnam, offered a kind of portal to a landscape in which political struggle is not alien or remote. Earl generously agreed to meet with me and I learned a great deal from him. Against my earlier assumption that the Wampanoag’s was a tragic story of alienation, I came to discover that it was in fact me and my community who were somehow lost, which also changed the work from something polemical to an open-ended, shared question.

## AXEL

Can you talk a bit about your choice of subjects? They center on representations of politics, for instance looking at major monuments and memorials (The Jefferson Project [2004–06]), radical politics such as the history of the Black Panther Party (The Lowndes County Idea [2009–ongoing]), or more recently housing and squatter projects.

## JEREMIAH

While working on *Maquis* (2004) I was talking with someone about a specific landscape, and they told me there are places where world and local history meet. I’m breaking down and building up such intersections as sites, as allegories, as commemorations. In *The Opposite of Fatalism* (2020), an ensemble improvisational performance engaging the site of the last tenant remaining in a house at the edge of the former Berlin Wall, which has been sold and resold to real estate speculators, there is also a quality of a counter-history, a counter-media, an anti-monument to struggle and strugglers.

Jeremiah Day (b. 1974, Plymouth) studied art at the University of California, Los Angeles, and received his PhD in 2017 from Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. His forthcoming projects include solo presentations at Centre d’art Le Lait, Albi, and Villa Romana, Florence, and a publication titled *A Kind of Imagination That Has Nothing to Do with Fiction* (Pete And Repeat).

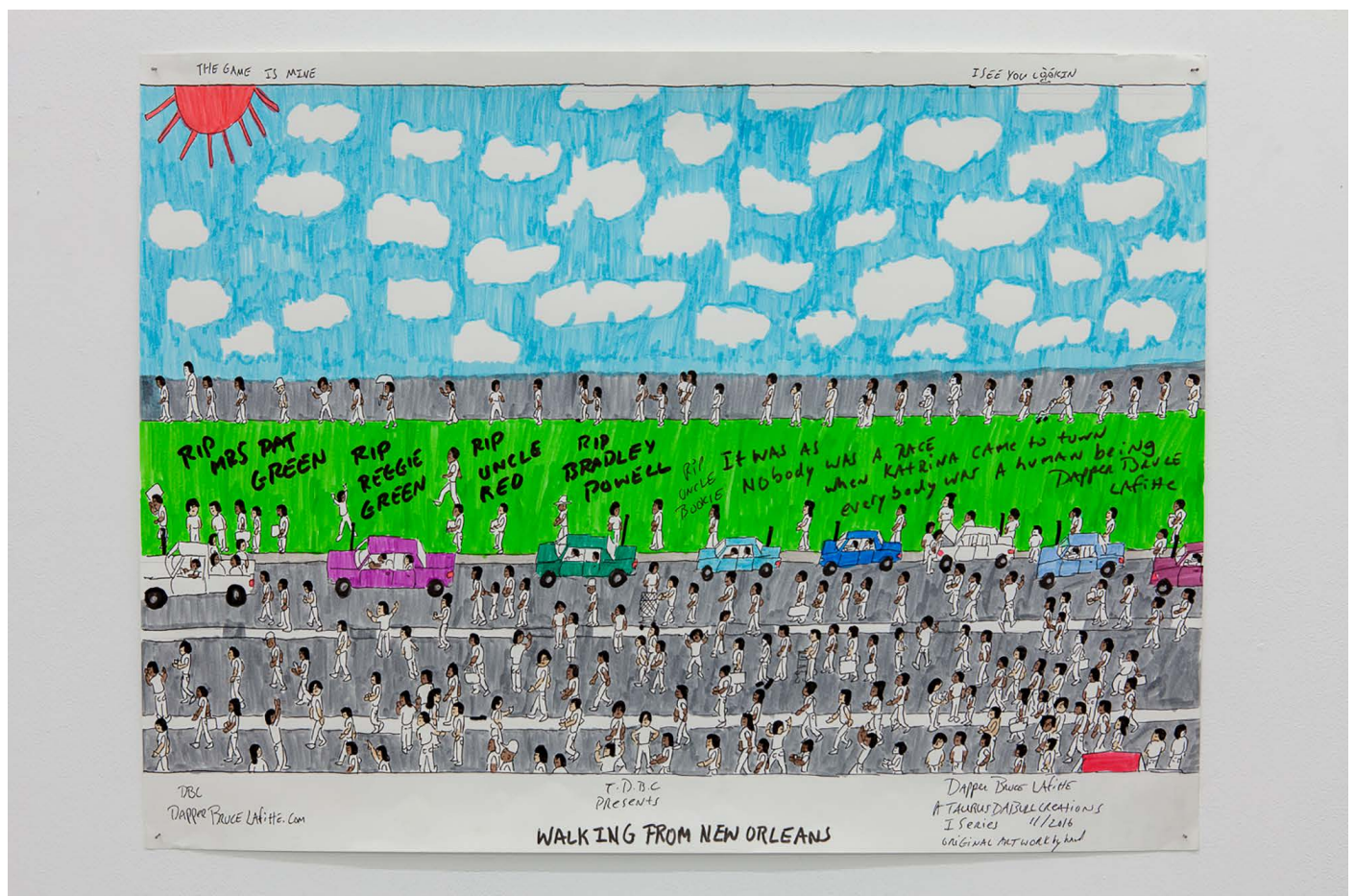
Axel Wieder is a curator and writer, and since 2018 the director of Bergen Kunsthall.



**FRIEZE CRITICS PICK** SEPTEMBER 2018  
*DAPPER BRUCE LAFITTE & JEREMIAH DAY*  
ARCADE, LONDON

> <https://www.frieze.com/event/dapper-bruce-lafitte-and-jeremiah-day>

This pairing sees the intertwining of two different forms of narrating place, bringing together the detailed felt-tip drawings of Dapper Bruce Lafitte with the annotated photographs of Jeremiah Day. Lafitte's works are filled with bustling crowds and inscribed with notes and names, often depicting his hometown of New Orleans: T.D.B.C. Presents Put the Guns Down Said the Col. (2017) shows a crowd standing outside the Ernest N. Morial Convention Centre, where thousands were evacuated after hurricane Katrina; armed soldiers and television crews stand between us and the herded escapees, interspersed with nods like 'RIP Bobby Blue Bland'. Day's photographic series 'No Words For You, Springfield' (2009) follows immigration trails to an area of Boston, similarly footnoting and cutting into his images with personal asides. Day's performances, often weaving together muted reflections with improvised choreography, usually provide an unexpectedly personal side-winding road into his work, and the show will include a performance from him on the 26 October. - Chris Fite-Wassilak



Dapper Bruce Lafitte  
*T.D.B.C. Presents: Walking From New Orleans*, 2018  
Archival ink on acid free paper, 50 x 65 cm

## Giles Bailey & Jeremiah Day

CCA, Glasgow

13 November 2015 - 10 January 2016

Review by Cicely Farrer | **This is Tomorrow** | Published on 18 December 2015

> > <http://thisistomorrow.info/articles/giles-bailey-jeremiah-day>

The complexity of how we live and communicate with one another, through our words, actions, practices and beliefs, and how these amalgamate in the traces we create, and those left for us, is the broad faculty that I'm left considering coming out of this two-man exhibition.

The artists are Giles Bailey (UK) and Jeremiah Day (USA) and, as the exhibition statement points out, these are two artists with distinct practices. As such, they are designated separate spaces in the CCA's galleries: Bailey's ambitious installation 'I Bought a Little City' (2012-2015) in the first gallery, a selection of Day's works in the second, and a new moving image work of Bailey's in the final space. Although without the immediate dialogue of shared sight-lines, Bailey and Day's pairing creates a multi-layered, sometimes contradicting, but always lively discourse, drawing out new meanings, and deciphering in each other's those that are less clear.

'I Bought a Little City', an installation of film, performance, sculpture and print, builds and dismantles the legacy of an artist inscribed in the identity of a place. In 2012, Bailey went on an artist's residency to Marfa, Texas, a town now defined by the American artist Donald Judd. In the early 1970s Judd moved there with his family and work, with the apparent ambition of creating a framework for an artistically engaged community and for the permanent installation of his large, throbbing sculptures. Bailey's installation consists of billboard signs, a lightbox, familiar condiments and appearing on a screen within, the artist speaks. In an apparent critique of Judd's Marfa, he performs the monologue of a man who buys a city with the aim of improvement but realises the futility of his plans – an appropriation of a short story by a Texan writer called Donald Barthelme. The monologue is synced with two films projected on the back of the billboards, following Bailey's friend, as he wanders amongst discarded artworks in the landscape of Marfa and Berlin. In addition a series of screen-printed posters unpack moments in Bailey's own experience while on residence.

Bailey's two exhibited works are concerned with the physical site where artists have attempted to create a legacy and his consequential relationship to them. In his new film, 'John & Michael (The Chemical History of a Candle)' (2015), we see Bailey interpret through symbolic gesture the six lectures of scientist Michael Faraday's book 'The Chemical History of a Candle' (first published 1861) in the back garden of artist John Latham's Flat Time House in Peckham. The incentive of this textual reference lies in Bailey's observation that Latham is seen selecting the book in Laure Provost's film 'All These Things Think Link'. His 'in memoriam' actions would seem less pertinent but for the reminder in the film credits of the impending fate of the setting; Latham's 'Living Sculpture', the building that was his studio for twenty years, housing part of his archive and now an active community art centre

forging collaborations with numerous artists and students, will close in 2016 with the future of the building unclear.

While Bailey's works approach the canons of art practices, Jeremiah Day's attempt to decipher his personal localities and encounters as a US citizen now in Berlin, within the broader context of the fraught social and political situations of our times. His works across performance, installation, video, photographic imagery, audio narrative and found objects, connect his audience to his concerns through symbolic and bodily aesthetics.

A selection of Day's works from his practice over the last decade feature, including his ongoing project 'If You Want Blood' (2013–) which focuses on land in Berlin where Checkpoint Bornholmer Strasse was located, and earlier works such as 'The Fall of the Twelve Acres Museum' (2008), a slideshow accompanied by recorded interview tracking a 1970s land dispute between the Mashie Wampanoag Indians native to New England, USA. Amongst his works, there is a definite method employed; the use of photographic imagery generally layered with related facts, found objects symbolising the specific site and his own presence through performance or remnant thereof.

During the exhibition's opening night, Day presented a new performance 'To a Person Sitting in Darkness (#4 Helicopter)' which unfortunately I wasn't able to see. Lining one of the walls are a number of framed 'Performance Notations' – basically planning drawings, depicting the choreography of his movements in the aforementioned performance with related emotive words. On a monitor resting against the wall as part of 'If You Want Blood' (2013), the artist performs on the stoop of a New York tenement building. The statement explains that the intention of the related ephemera is to allow a sense of the performance beyond the live event, which they do. However, I've experienced one of his performances before and I longed for the gesture, movement and physical uncertainty of the artist's presence: the anticipation of a sudden, intended fall, the anxiety (in every stretch) of our current times, and the apparent helplessness that is felt throughout the artist's and our body.

I might say that both artists deal with the narratives of specific sites, situating themselves as individuals (like us) within the legacies of those places, however this does not really do them justice. The real urgency of their practices is that they don't follow such specific trajectories. The methods used to communicate their narratives, through spoken word, broken thoughts, gesture and ephemera, reflect the multifarious nature of how we experience the events that have past and those we create and live through.

# Giles Bailey and Jeremiah Day

## 14 November 2015 – 10 January 2016

CCA presents the work of Giles Bailey and Jeremiah Day in this two-person exhibition, retelling stories, histories and actions through monologue, movement and installation. Presented as distinct practices, there are nonetheless shared concerns between the works - dilapidated landscapes, remnants of places, urban fiction, urban change. There is also an effort to create a transparent interpretation for the audience, with both artists interested in how referential material and hidden processes are communicated. At the heart of each practice is how their own relationships with family, collaborators and other performers inform their work, and how historical concerns are intertwined with local and personal encounters, acting as metaphors for a more poetic and layered consideration. Each artist's study of voice, movement and pedagogy is translated in to an expanded installation of photographs, objects and moving image, reflecting upon these personal experiences.

Giles Bailey uses different forms of presentation to expand on his relationship to film, fiction and other artists. Researching meticulously the history of performance, Bailey often opens his performances with an informal introduction, explaining his forthcoming actions and giving context to the work he is about to perform. It becomes clear however, that these introductions are also acts - a character who simultaneously provides facts, information and clarity, and who also initiates a sense of uncertainty. The audience is compelled to analyse the artist's tone, style and movement to discover how these might allude to his performative intentions.

Using various styles throughout his practice, and often referencing historical figures, Bailey explores the use of disruptive or experimental narrative through performative acts. Often reworking and expanding his artworks, for this exhibition Bailey has presented a new iteration of 'I Bought a Little City' (2012-ongoing); a monologue reminiscent of American actor and writer Spalding Gray's autobiographical works exhibited as a three-channel installation, comprising a performance documentation and two short collaboratively made films. During a residency in the Texan town of Marfa in 2012, Bailey initiated a research dialogue surrounding the history of the town and its most famous inhabitant Donald Judd. Judd's relocation to the town and his investment there was the catalyst for Marfa's reinvention, with artists, writers and galleries soon following suit. Bailey read a short story whilst living in Marfa by Texan writer Donald Barthelme, the title from which this work takes its name. The story is a semi-absurd chronicle of a man who buys a city and slowly imagines ways of improving it, ultimately realising the futility of his ideas. Bailey is interested in the legacy of a failure, with his billboard-style text works representing an unrealised site-specific artwork in Marfa. The accompanying short videos follow his friends' meandering through the cities of Berlin and Marfa, and the failure of artworks attempted or discarded therein.

A series of graphical posters line the gallery wall, outlining many of the references and encounters contained within Bailey's work, acting as interpretative tools for the audience. The posters supplement the myriad narrative devices explored in his performances, mimicking the effect of his anecdotal verbal introductions to create a moment of transparency and a foothold with which to approach the work.

Bailey's new work 'The Chemical History of a Candle' was originally inspired by and performed in Flat Time House, London. Researching the John Latham archive, and works commissioned by other artists at Flat Time House, Bailey was struck by a moment in Laure Prouvost's film 'All These Things Think Link', where Latham peruses a book shelf within the house, pulling out a

number of books. One of these was 'The Chemical History of a Candle,' by Michael Faraday, a series of six lectures for children on the chemistry and physics of combustion. In memoriam to the late Latham's practice of using books in more imaginative or spatial ways, Bailey interprets the contents page as a series of movements and gestures.

Jeremiah Day's practice focuses on moments of memory or resistance, often interweaving stories from his family and friends or local realities with geopolitical tensions and historical incident. His dynamic performance style sees him crawling, running, dancing, falling and singing, relaying his thoughts and opinions and recollecting personal anecdotes. Although many of his works were created as performances, they are also conceived to stand alone without their accompanying live elements, with photographs, texts, handwritten notes and objects leaving traces of actions and ideas.

During the process of the exhibition, Day began to notate his new performance, 'To a Person Sitting in Darkness (#4 Helicopter)', as a series of drawings as a way of making more apparent his working method, but also to try to answer one of the most challenging aspects of white-cube performance-making; how the viewer can access the work when the artist is not present. These drawings enact Day's dynamism but just like the performances, there is a tension between what might seem spontaneous or chaotic and what is planned, poised and articulate. Day presents this performance on the opening night of the exhibition with long-time collaborator and guitarist Bart de Kroon.

'The Jefferson Project, 2004-2006' is positioned during the time of the Bush re-election campaign, during which Washington DC's monuments were closed to the public to allow renovations. Day's photographic installation attempts instead to document his own monuments around the city, creating his own memorialisation of the locality, of urban decay, of his relatives and of unseen political protagonists. Handwritten messages inform the viewer of his own opinions of that particular political moment and his reflections on memory and memorial, whilst the accompanying selection of images are interpreted subjectively by the viewer.

Two photographs and a light tube are quiet representations of a larger installation, 'LA Homicide', whereby Day followed a blog by the Los Angeles Times which attempts to list every murder in the city. This was in response to the media's apparent failure to report the vast majority of violent deaths in the city. A performance, text and a number of additional images sometimes also accompany this piece, and in this version he has chosen images of a hospital exterior, a lone, derelict rock, and red neon light – mute and poetic references to the unreported violence.

'The Fall of the Twelve Acres Museum' follows a 1970s land dispute of the Mashpee Wampanoag Indians native to New England, USA, when the tribe was trying to reclaim their traditional lands. The installation comprises an audio interview with the tribal chief Earl Mills (who happened to be Day's mother's gym teacher) and the music of short-lived emo band Chilmark from Day's native Cape Cod, interspersed with emotive or banal images of the New England landscape. The title of the work juxtaposes the idea of the museum or gallery as social or political space with the historical struggle of the tribe attempting to reclaim their identity; as during the dispute the Wampanoag founded an outdoor museum to exhibit examples of their culture and way of life.

Day's installation 'If You Want Blood' is a long-term mixed-media research project, comprising performance, photography, sculpture, video and text, which looks at the post-Wall history of Checkpoint Bornholmer Strasse. Day's letter to Lidl, who built a new store on this area of historical significance, is included at the end of this handout.





*Used Car Lot, Bornholmerstrasse, Early 1990s - Courtesy State Archive Berlin*

April 5, 2011

Dear Lidl,

*I have just returned home from the former checkpoint at Bornholmerstrasse here in Berlin, and I see you have begun construction on your new store there. I've known for several years that a store was coming, and have been meaning to get in touch, but I suppose I got used to the endless deferral, seeing the store not being built and assuming it would come at some point in the more distant future, and so I now fear that I may be too late in communicating with your company.*

*I am an American artist (my German language skills are poor so I've asked a friend to translate), and I've lived part-time in Berlin since 2007. In that year I first came upon the site at Bornholmerstrasse and made the photographs attached with this email. I first glimpsed the site out the window of a passing tram and it somehow beckoned me. I returned to photograph the site and only later learned of its historical significance as the first Checkpoint to be widely crossed in the fall of 1989. Learning this history somehow confirmed my instinct that the place was special and in the years that have followed I have contemplated extensively how to relate to this site, either through performing a sculptural intervention there, or through narrating its shifting history, from Checkpoint to the first Used Car Lot in East Berlin, and the stairs in the attached image I believe are ruins of the latter, not the former, although part of their charm is not being sure which.*

*A few months ago some of these ideas came together in a new performance work that I initially titled 'Something To Hold Onto' which was first presented in Berlin and then in New York in December. (I can send you a DVD of these performances if you're interested.) And recently I have been considering rebuilding the steps in the image attached - they were removed in the fall of 2009 to clean up the site for the 20th anniversary of the Wall's fall. I can't help but think but that the anniversary and then the subsequent completion of the Wall memorial on the other side of Bornholmerstrasse is somehow linked to your decision to move forward with building.*

*My original intention was to get in touch to ask you if I could have those steps, but I was not sure if that was the best solution, so I waited until it was too late. In addition I also thought to write about the trees on the site, and I hope that it is not too late to mention these trees and their status to you.*

*In the official report of the Berlin Senate (translated in English as Wall Traces, Wall Remnants) such trees are given the formal name of Spontaneous Vegetation in the Emptiness of the Former Death Strip, and this refers to the plant life that has sprung up throughout the corridors of the city where previously there was the Wall and its security zone. This plant life that has sprung up has a special status, not as a relic of history, but as something which has been made possible by the transition from one system to another. Both literally and symbolically, both metaphoric and actually, the trees are a manifestation of the experience of potential and possibility that came into existence with the shift of political structures in Berlin.*

*Even more poetically, at Bornholmerstrasse there was once a grove of apple trees, and it was quite unique to go and gather wild (and organic!) apples from this iconic site of such lasting import for world history.*

*These trees have been largely destroyed through your construction efforts and I myself feel responsible as I'd planned to call their existence to your attention years ago. I had considered asking your company to preserve them as a symbolic gesture - alongside the apples sold in your store there would be a chance to gather wild apples in season, a preservation of this wild streak that runs through the center of Berlin. Though smaller all the time it is still there, animating and defining the city, and is I suspect a part of the attraction the city still holds for those all over the world.*

*Sometimes preservation is necessary and decisions for the future have to negotiate with aspects of the past. At the Bornholmerstrasse site there is of course also a large bunker, built during or before the Second World War. Its precise function is not known to me, but it still conditions the physical possibilities for the site and I can see that you have avoided this bunker in your plan for redevelopment. This compromise was not strictly necessary, but once you took over ownership of this former public land you accepted certain realities that came with it. - I would propose to you that the remaining trees on the site are also a reality that needs to be negotiated with, and not just destroyed. The bunker is preserved because it is easier to do so, and perhaps the preserving of these trees - the Spontaneous Vegetation in the Emptiness of the Former Death Strip - will take a bit of work, but I believe that this too was part of the reality of the public land when you took ownership of it. I'm only sorry I did not bring this to your attention earlier, in enough time to save the apple trees.*

*I think alongside the trees a small plaque would be nice, indicating that they are living relics, not of the Second World War or of the Cold War, but of Berlin in the twenty years after the Wall, when a space for spontaneity to take root flourished in the heart of the city. If you would like help with the text or design of such a plaque I am happy to contribute my energy. It also occurs to me that perhaps it is interesting for you to rebuild the steps - my imagined sculpture - somewhere on the site of the new store, or even perhaps my performance could be made at the site, narrating the shifting political and poetic realities there. In any case, please don't hesitate to get in touch, and as I said before, my sincere apologies in not calling these matters to your attention sooner.*

*Thanks, Jeremiah*

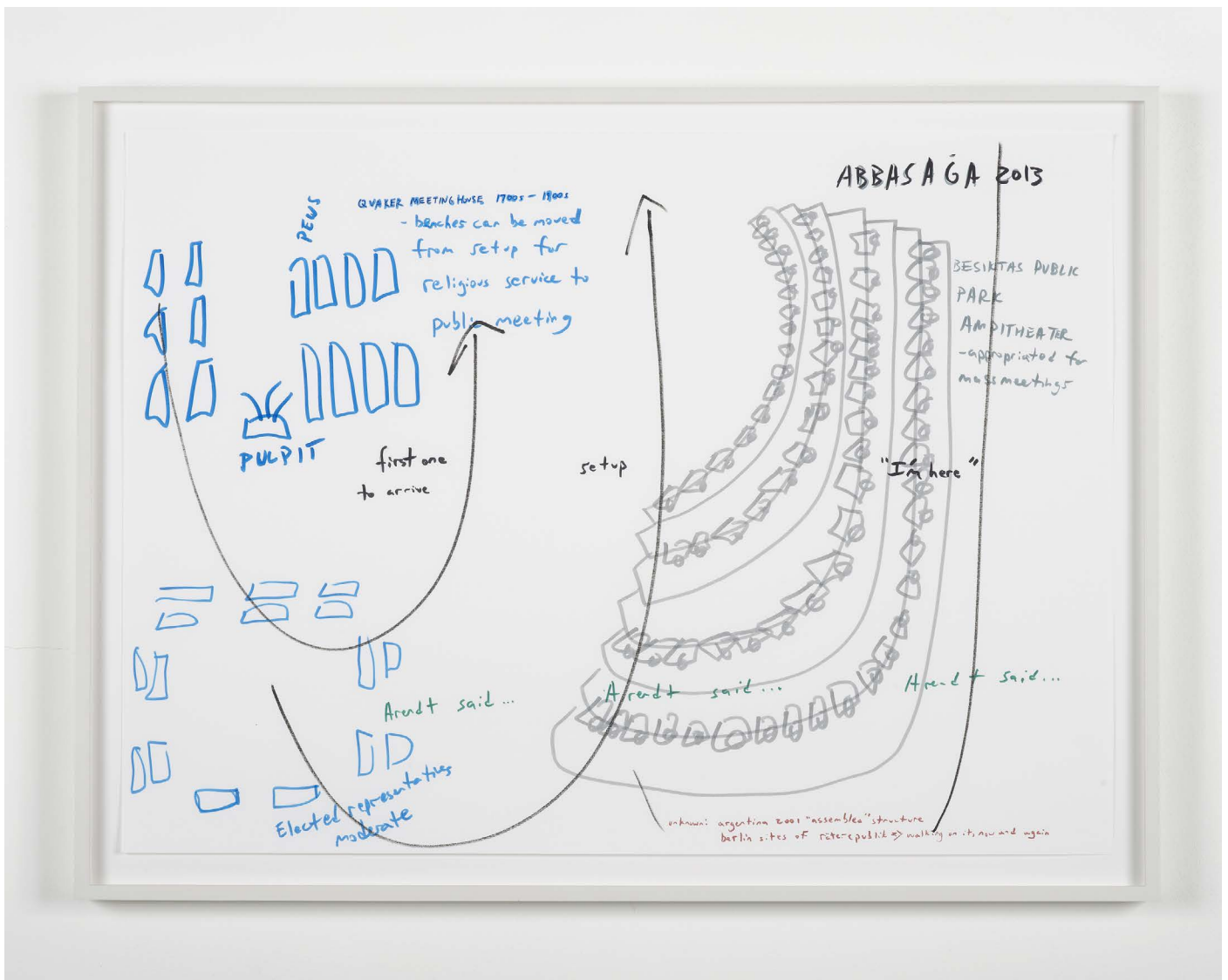
## THE QUIETUS

### *Here Time Becomes Space: From Jeremiah Day To John Latham*

Robert Barry, June 3rd, 2017 12:55

> <https://thequietus.com/articles/22551-jeremiah-day-even-dust-can-burst-into-flames-arcade-review>

Jeremiah Day's performances draw on Hannah Arendt and the events of Taksim Square and Gezi Park. Arcade Gallery's show *Even Dust Can Burst Into Flames* puts Day alongside Anna Barham, Kit Craig, and John Latham



Jeremiah Day

*The chair remains empty / But the place is set: Quaker Meeting House - Istanbul Forums*  
(Performance Notation: October 20, 2016; Gruener Salon, Volksbuhne)

2015

ink on paper

48 x 66 cm



I only noticed the arrow pointing to Bunhill Meeting House after I left. It was a little down the road from the venue I'd been in, round the corner, just a few minutes walk away. There was the van for the Quaker Mobile Library, the sign indicating the name of the estate 'Quaker House'. We pass these things all the time and scarcely give them any thought. What it means to call a place a 'meeting house' instead of a 'church', to call the people who gather there 'friends'.

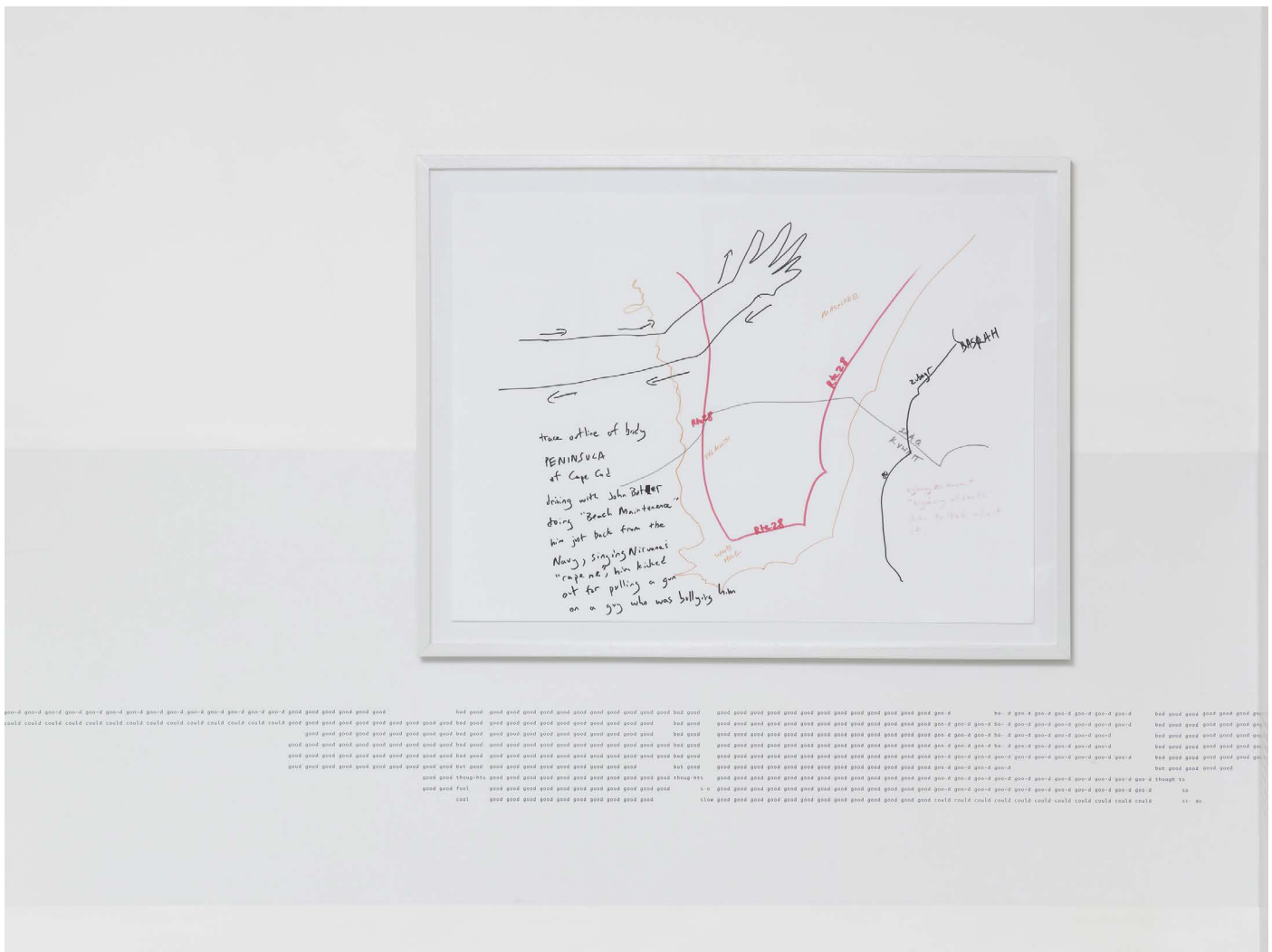
At the Kunstraum, Jeremiah Day had been riffing on the Quakers and their meeting houses – and the American tradition of town hall meetings, on Hannah Arendt and workers' councils, on Gezi Park and Taksim Square, and on a small hippie community in Cape Cod and its fight against McDonalds – for maybe twenty, thirty minutes (with a short break in the middle – a "real" five minutes, as he put it). And all the time he was moving. Stretching and flexing his limbs, crossing the room back and forth along the diagonal, lying down on the floor and sprawling out every which way, or standing on a chair and reaching up, then sitting amongst the audience and gesticulating as if gesturing with us, for us.

It feels like a process of mapping – of testing the limits of the space and of his own body, marking each out and plotting one against the other and then, further, against those other spaces alluded to in his speech: Taksim Square, Cape Cod, Berlin streets, New York highways.

At Arcade Gallery, down another road from Kunstraum, round another corner, a selection of Day's Performance Notations are framed upon the walls. Looking at them, the day after the performance, I feel some small confirmation of these initial thoughts. Executed on paper a little larger than A2 (at 54 x 72 cm), they look hastily scribbled things, like maps taken down while giving or receiving directions in the street. Within their broad pen strokes in thick blue and red and black ink, we find words plotted out against bodily gestures, an outline of an American peninsular plotted against the Iraq-Kuwait border, the space of the performance venue plotted against that of a Quaker meeting house, memories and anecdotes rubbing up against fragments of rock song lyrics. These frantic diagrams are cognitive maps in which time and space, bodies and place, memories and projections, are one.

The term 'notations' suggests something like a set of instructions, evoking a musical score laid out on manuscript paper – and, indeed, I've seen graphic scores not so far in appearance from these. But these works are more like records improvised events already taken place, jotted down quickly after the fact, but considered by the artist to be a "better registration" of what he does than any video or audio recording. They capture, not just the sound or appearance of the performance, but some of its energies, some of its psychic resonances. They scramble across the page at the speed of thought.

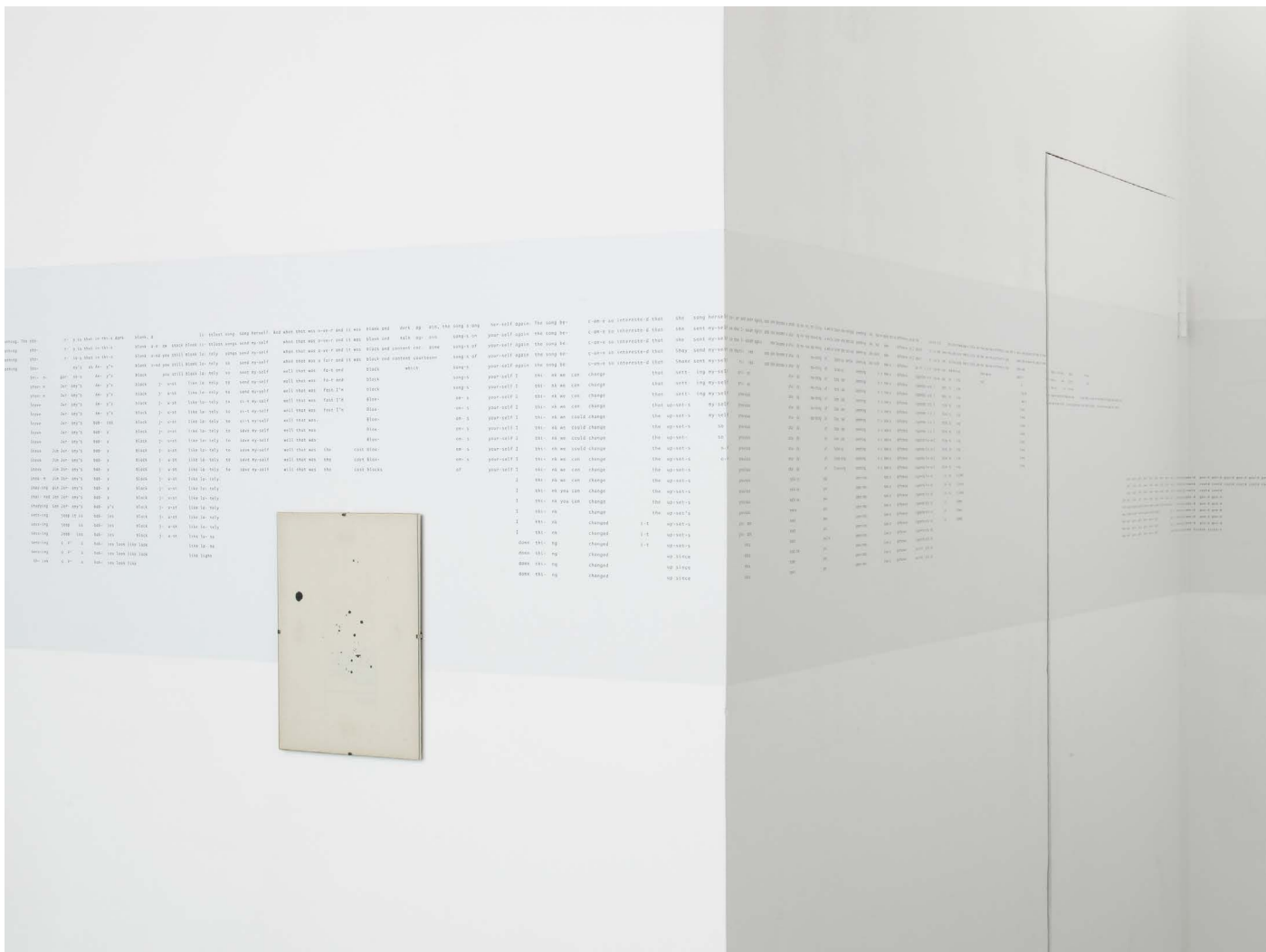
Day's Performance Notations take their place at Arcade in a group show called *Even Dust Can Burst Into Flames*. The title is abstracted from a quote by one of Day's most frequent absent interlocutors, Hannah Arendt. "In the case of art works," she writes in her *The Human Condition* of 1958, "reification is more than mere transformation; it is transfiguration, a veritable metamorphosis in which it is as though the course of nature which wills that all fire burns to ashes is reverted and even dust can burst into flames." The passage alludes to lines from a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke called 'Magic': "From transformation such amazing shapes/ appear. Oh do but feel and trust! / To ashes often turn our flaming hopes / yet art can set on fire our very dust."



Alongside Day's score-like works, there are a series of sculptures by Kit Craig – loose squiggles in black, made by a brief tease of wet clay later cast into bronze, here spreading out across the walls like an invasion into reality from the world of Children's claymation shows like Morph, Trap Door, or Splodges. There is a One Second Drawing by John Latham, a quick burst from a spray can upon a now-slightly-yellowing sheet of A4. And snaking all around the angular confines of the gallery in a continuous wallpapered trail, there is Anna Barham's We may be ready to have verbal intercourse (score)(2017), the result of a reading group held at Latham's Flat Time House in Peckham Rye. Each of these works marks in some way the trace of some performance. They are the indexical marks of absent events, rendered tangible. Dust bursting into flames.

One of Britain's pre-eminent conceptual artists, John Latham's work was concerned, above all, with the relation between art and time. His One Second Drawings were all executed in the early 70s and drew on his notion of the "least event". They represented a series of stabs towards finding the most minimal gesture, the slightest thing to remain not-nothing. In an interview with Mute magazine once, Latham described the functioning of this least event in terms of music as "somebody recognising that a sound was interesting and feeling the do-it-again impulse."

Like Barham's scores and Day's Notations, there is something intrinsically musical about Latham's work. John Cage was enormously important for him. But what comes to my mind when I read that short quoted description in the previous paragraph is not so much Cage as John Oswald – his desire



to present the entire history of CD music, compressing some 1,000 samples from popular songs into a twenty minute work, each one intended to be the smallest possible fragment to still retain some possibility of recognisability. In an interview from 1994, Oswald called each of these splintered sounds an “electroquote”, the name implying some sonic equivalent of the subatomic particle known as an electron.

After a performance by Jeremiah Day of his Letter to Turkey at the Volksbühne’s Grüner Salon in June 2016, Turkish artist Burak Delier wrote to Day: “From my perspective, [Gezi Park] was the first time that people felt that they were a society and this was their country and further, that they were multiple, diverse, fragmented, wounded but in spite of all their differences and fears they could live together and make life beautiful ... And I think this togetherness with a heterogenous, fragmented, horizontal societal space gives us the potential for expansion and emancipation. This is really crucial. This means that the space is not given, we are actively creating it; we create space while we are interacting with, reacting to, touching and addressing each other. The fearsome void between every group, community and individual had become a space of potentiality. This is how space is created and this is how we can become free.”

FRIEZE

17TH MAY 2013

# Jeremiah Day

BY CHRIS FITE-WASSILAK



Jeremiah Day, *If You Want Blood*, 2013, installation view

It's a sad party, with reflective orange, blue and silver bunting hanging over a sturdy set of three concrete steps leading to nowhere. On an adjacent screen, Jeremiah Day is waving his arms in the sky, as if miming a slow-motion rave. But he's rambling to himself, a bar-room monologue, shaking his head back and forth: 'I hear ya buddy, no, I hear ya, that's how it is.' His hands wander while he gabbles, at points as if they're adrift in a stream, or else running back and forth as if clearing a desk or smoothing out a surface. He stretches, half-reclined on the ground, turning on his haunches while he casually narrates a fragmented story about how cities change, buildings get torn down, scenes dissipate. The video and installation *If You Want Blood* (all works 2013) were the main parts of this small show that gathered together three works which hovered around the history of one of Berlin's checkpoints: after 1989, it became East Germany's first used-car lot, before turning into a branch of Lidl supermarket several years ago. The text accompanying the exhibition reprinted a letter from the artist to Lidl, in which he resignedly gives up on his hopes of 'collaborating' with the chain, attempting to save several trees that had grown on the site of the wall from being cleared for the supermarket's new carpark.

The show concisely presented the two sides of the Berlin- and Amsterdam-based American artist's practice from the past seven or so years: on one hand, photographic evidence, usually of architectural remnants, unravelled by minute familial or offhand observations. *The Turning (Antifaschinger Schutzwall fragment, Neu-Hohenschönhausen, Berlin)* is a large photograph of an overgrown graffitied remnant of the wall, the title making pointed use of the eastern GDR's label for the wall as 'anti-fascist protection'. Scrawled underneath the image are several handwritten lines, one of song lyrics that might have been written on the wall: 'specifics obscure, leaving a pile of anecdotes, less than what you had before you ever tried to make sense of at all.'

It is perhaps this handwritten narrative that takes over in the other side of Day's work, matching a loose oral re-telling of this documentary research with improvised dance. In a performance in the square opposite the gallery on the opening night, *Ghost Dance Song/Zombie Telescope*, the artist balanced, hummed and twirled in the cold, while ramblingly hinting towards the darker origins of several cultural myths. In one part, he described the Native American Ghost Dance of the late 19th century, suggesting that its ideal of a promised afterlife was more debilitating than any military campaign against the tribes, before segueing into a slightly altered version of Patti Smith's 'Ghost Dance' (1978). In the second part, speaking over a slide projection of sun-bleached landscapes, he ended up talking about the current trend for zombies, and the Haitian origins of the story created to prevent slaves from committing suicide.

In Day's performances, his tone of delivery toys with theatricality, anecdotal but half-rehearsed, spoken just a little louder than a normal conversation. Add to that the gentle, shyly enunciated songs that punctuate his performances and it suggests a sort of realist musical theatre – one that walks away from Bertolt Brecht's operas with the casual arm swoops of contemporary dance, and the chatter of the subjective documentary film. But in the documentation of *If You Want Blood*, doing his thing on a New York tenement stoop, wryly explaining how west Berliners still think it's funny that their eastern counterparts couldn't get bananas, there's another tone that creeps in: that of the cultural ambassador, the teacher. The tension and potency of Day's work has been to weave personal narratives into the broader political sweep with a tone of uneasy self-consciousness, an intimate historiography that somehow implies a democratic formation of histories: we're all involved, implicated, accused. What feels absent here, despite the considerable height of the artist in his performances, is Day himself. The irony of the barstool assurances of 'No, I hear ya buddy, I hear ya ...' fades, to seem little more than an interested and bemused distant observer, collecting anecdotes.

# The Frank Church – River of No Return Wilderness

## Jeremiah Day

*'Like Caesar peering into the colonies from distant Rome, Nixon said the choice of government by the Chileans was unacceptable to the president of the United States. The attitude in the White House seemed to be, "If in the wake of Vietnam I can no longer send in the Marines, then I will send in the CIA."'*

– Frank Church, 1975

The absent knowledge of our recent past forms an inverted history and landscape in which secrecy, amnesia and ignorance form a generalised condition; where dug-up facts accumulate to form rare markers with which to guide ourselves.

'Freedom of opinion is a farce unless factual information is guaranteed and the facts themselves are not in dispute,' Hannah Arendt once remarked, and so the deposits of things not disclosed, events unknown deprive us not just of a past, but also a present (Can anyone today say with confidence whether or not any particular communication is being monitored, and to what degree?). 'Cover-ups' build in layers; conflicting false stories shape fake debates and discussions. The 'intelligence community' logs data and figures and even synthesises details into narratives. This community, however, remains isolated from each other and from any context, ultimately remaining hidden from the public where they might present or even become 'facts' or shared truths.

In previous times, there were secrets – holes in the public record – but now the publicly documented and understood event is the exception, the interruption.

For example, almost the entire body of knowledge of the secret services of the United States depends upon one exceptional investigation: *The*

*United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities*, widely known simply as the 'Church Committee', after the politician who led it.

CIA collaborations with the mafia in assassination attempts on Castro, the opening of international mail and telegrams (dating back to 1948) and the efforts to harass Martin Luther King Jr into killing himself in shame over his extra-marital lover are just the most picturesque episodes that punctuate the Church report. Domestically, the paperwork details the efforts of the police apparatus to infiltrate and disrupt the anti-war and civil rights movements, and in the most extreme case of the Black Panther leader Fred Hampton, murder dissidents. Outside the United States, Church said that 'covert actions' were simply a semantic disguise for murder, coercion, blackmail, bribery, the spreading of lies, whatever is deemed useful to bending other countries to our will.

Frank Church, Senator from the rural mountain state of Idaho (1957–1981), was often mocked for his moralism; his colleagues called him Senator Sunday School. But can moralism explain this kind of practice of truth-seeking and truth-telling? And later, what propelled Church to travel across the United States, run for President in 1976 (winning several states in the primaries), speak of fundamental civic and republican principles such as the importance of means and ends. He said: 'American foreign policy must be made to conform once more to our historic ideals, the same fundamental belief in freedom and popular government that once made us a beacon of hope for the downtrodden and oppressed throughout the world.'

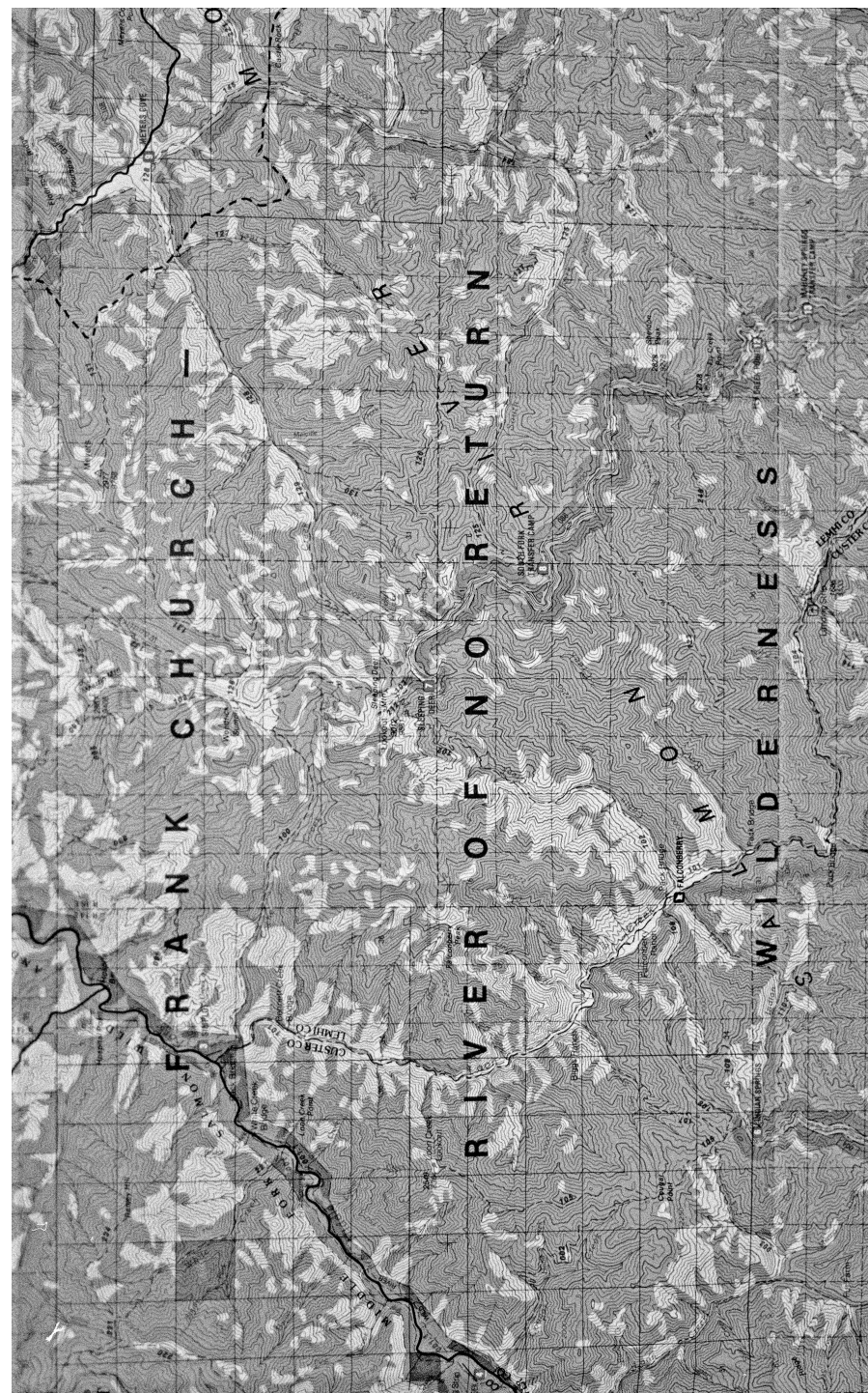
What is the interior landscape from which such public statements emerge? If almost everything we have available to us on this critical subject emerged from the maintenance and application of principle, led by an individual politician, does that not force a re-assessment of principle as a political power?

Church was also active in conserving the wilderness, and on his deathbed, an area of Idaho was named for him, as well as the famous river contained there. One can only wonder if anyone at the time had in mind the following quote made by Church about the surveillance techniques developed by the National Security Administration (the scope of which has only grown to this day):

'If this government ever became a tyranny, if a dictator ever took charge in this country, the technological capacity that the intelligence community has given the government could enable it to impose total tyranny, and there would be no way to fight back, because the most careful effort to combine together in

resistance to the government, no matter how privately it was done, is within the reach of the government to know. Such is the capability of this technology...

I don't want to see this country ever go across the bridge. I know the capacity that is there to make tyranny total in America, and we must see to it that this agency and all agencies that possess this technology operate within the law and under proper supervision, so that we never cross over that abyss. That is the abyss from which there is no return.'





**FRIEZE**

**JEREMIAH DAY / SIMONE FORTI / FRED DEWEY**

Ludlow 38, New York

BY ANNA GRITZ IN REVIEWS | 01 MAY 11

> <https://www.frieze.com/article/jeremiah-day-simone-forti-fred-dewey>



Despite its humble size, 'Jeremiah Day / Simone Forti / Fred Dewey' at Ludlow 38 was one of those exhibitions where the visit was only the beginning of a longer engagement with the artists. The works on view were mostly of an ephemeral nature: notebook pages, books, photographs and video footage were brought to life by a three-day event series featuring each of the artists. Day, Dewey and Forti have worked alongside one another for almost a decade now, writing, publishing and performing together, weaving their practices in and out of each other in a variety of configurations. Their work takes on a form of continuous, interrelated research that reveals a common interest in the synthesizing of information through language, speech, imagery, writing, movement, dance and – most of all – improvisation. Their work recalls the act of chewing – the chewing of information to make it palpable, digestible or moldable.

Improvisation – whether in public, as in the performances of Forti and Day, or more in private, such as in the notebook pages of Dewey – was treated as something that synthesizes shared experience with



the personal. Like surrealist word games, improvisation can generate a 'gap between what might be called declarative or definitive statements and more poetic or metaphorical structures and formations,' as Dewey phrases it. And it is this gap that made the works in the show so alluring.

For Day, the personal and the shared meet not only through improvisation but also through the blending of sources, media and styles. In his work *Jefferson Project* (2004–6), Day combines a series of photographs of public monuments in Washington D.C. under reconstruction during the second Bush election period with notes and a performance that allow his personal associations to seep in and inform our appreciation of the official narrative. Dewey's writing, publishing practice and work in local politics synthesize abstract political reality with the mundane everyday experience. These efforts were exhibited here in the form of eclectic thought-collages in the pages of his notebooks. The most engaging contribution in the show was Forti's. In the late 1980s, Forti, mainly known for her contributions to modern dance, developed a profound interest in the relationship between movement and language. After the death of her father, who had always kept the family informed through reading the papers, Forti felt that it was now her turn to take on this responsibility, and she started working on a project titled *News Animations*, in which she publicly reads the news. To understand often complex and intangible information, Forti began to translate the news into movement, channelling the headlines of the day through her body, allowing herself to be choreographed by the situation in the headlines. In *News Animation Improvisation*, a recording of a performance by Forti at Mad Brook Farm, Vermont in 1988, one can observe how her efforts materialize in the form of a danced social commentary. Varying from literal translations, to symbolic gestures, to abstract and impulsive gestural utterances, her movements are reminiscent of Eurhythm, the movement-art developed by Rudolf Steiner in the early 20th century. As part of his anthroposophical philosophy, the repertoire of Eurhythmic movements related to sounds, rhythms of speech, and emotions that were invented explicitly as a new means of artistic expression to remedy an apparent lack in the possibilities of physical expression. Dewey, Day and Forti seem to be developing an assorted array of bodily expressions that can be employed as a means to interpret and channel the heap of information that we encounter on a daily basis. Cross-pollinating each other's work, the practices of all three seem to stem from the common belief that sometimes language has to be disassembled, defamiliarized and acted out in order to make a difference.

I ran a literary and poetry center, Beyond Baroque, in Los Angeles, 1995–2009. It's been a long journey from L.A. to here, temporally and spatially. I started working with Jeremiah at the center in the mid-to-late-90's. Because of that I met Simone, who'd been doing contact classes in L.A., where she and Jeremiah met. The three of us go back to that extraordinary period in L.A.

A lot's happened since. But one of the things I've always been interested in, with poetry and language, is, in a literal sense, the gaps between what might normally be called declarative or definitive statements and more poetic or metaphorical structures and formations. A great deal of what I find extraordinary about the work of Jeremiah and Simone are these gaps, these emptinesses, these open-ended spaces they set up. There's a meaning that comes out of movement that is not from a declaration or definition or rhetoric in any conventional sense. It's a form of metaphor, a form of poetry. That poetry unfolds through the body, speaking, through movement. Jeremiah and Simone do a tremendous amount of research, writing, drawing or photographing, before their performances, Simone with what is around her in L.A., Vermont, Florence Italy, what she's reading and thinking, Jeremiah the same in Alabama, Dublin, Massachusetts, Washington, D.C. This research, in a sense, emerges in the writing process. They were busy writing today, preparing for this. What emerges is edited, in moving, live, in public, here. Their motion drives how things emerge. They, the person, the gestures, words, images, appear to us.

That leads me to a second thing, the book Will Holder mentioned, *Oh, Tongue*, a series of poems and transcriptions of performances by Simone. What I was interested in, as director of a poetry center and as editor/publisher, was a way to capture text that is not conventional poetry or literature, but *in-between*, in-between movements, in-between spaces, the results of decisions. The body in effect edits text. You would see this if you looked at one of our books, the one I made with Simone, or the book from Dublin they did. The text on the page is a product of a performance, it's language, it's text, but it's structured in moving and speaking. What feels like emptiness here—in the performance, the silences, the moments without speaking, the jumps, the gaps—produces metaphor. On the page it has a similar, stranger effect. So, the object of language—language as an object—

is in a sense dismantled, problematized, energized.

And this goes directly to the role of poetry in public space, to the renewal of language, why poetry renews language, why we turn to it. The relationship is between living, moving, speaking among and between people, in a space. Poetry is thought of—I think we have all suffered through such classes at some point—as in a book, lifeless, dead. Then there's spoken word, let's say in slams and so on. There's a chasm between what we think of as spoken word and the book or page. But there's this third form, one that Jeremiah and Simone are exploring, that I think is quite radical. It involves research, investigation, performance, and this uncanny way of editing in the performance, as you saw. It's a poetics.

A great American poet Charles Olson, who spent a great deal of time researching his town of Gloucester, wrote a work called the *Maximus* poems, and he had many interesting things to say about this. In a film on Olson, *Poils Is This*, by Henry Ferrini, landscape thinker John Stilgoe said of Olson's work, of his research, that to understand one place, place exists, you need every discipline you can possibly bring. Olson didn't go to, let's say, a thesis or a sociological text or a historical text, but to metaphor. Looking at how things are organized. He had background in the U.S. government, as rector of Black Mountain College, his history in Gloucester. He connects metaphor to the actuality of place, its history, to *people*. The director of the film went through Gloucester and interviewed the truck driver, the post man, the local grocer, the fisherman, and they remembered Olson because he would walk through the city every day, first as postman, then just walking, living. He would go to the library, he would go to Boston, he went abroad, he'd been all over.

On December 28, 1965, as part of a series to his local paper, Olson details addresses the town being torn down and the banality driving it. The poet says:

*"we are the created conditions of our own nature. Man is so stolen and cheated of creation as part actually of his own being. I propose Gloucester restore her original selectmen as her governing body solely to re-declare the ownership of all her public conditions, including the governance of anything in that*

*body and the total electorate's judgment. No longer any appeal to eminent domain, or larger unit of topography or environment, than the precincts of the city's limit. In other words, to reestablish the principle of commoners, for ownership of commons, he the commoner, we, Gloucester, be commons."*

This relation to language and world stands against rhetoric, propaganda, that tyranny of the screen. It's about a return to speaking to each other face-to-face, poeticizing. If any of this is going to mean anything, we need research, to think about where we are, where we came from, where we're moving, to speak about this, record it, appear, come together, and so on. The primary is talking to each other. The role of art is different from mere dialogue, although there's certainly "question" involved. What's happening here, in live performance, is an attempt to restore a sense of this, of living, through a non-one-to-one relationship between meanings, through metaphor, through gaps, through movement and, I don't want to say synthesis or wholeness, but bringing together all the human faculties. This looked like a dance performance, but I'm sure in your mind, certainly in my mind, all kinds of thoughts are going through it. I was thinking about this, I was thinking about that. Jeremiah and Simone talked about the fish, the birds, they had an economic discussion. This is based in research, in thinking, but most importantly in a strategy any one of us in this room can relate to: moving, talking, thinking, imagining. It's not listening to Larry Summers or Gordon Brown trying to explain the economy. I think this is a big plus.

I want to conclude with two quotes, since I've come quite a long distance to London. On my first day here I was in Charing Cross, at the used book stores, and came upon a little 1906 book on a prime minister here two centuries ago, Sir Robert Walpole. He created the political party gimmick that is the heart of our problems in America, and your problems here. So I did some research. I also brought with me, from L.A., two quotes I realized were from Londoners. One is from Thomas Carlyle, a Romantic, a historian: *"Unreality is death to parliaments, and to all things."* This sums up our problematic, the challenges we face.

Then, much further back, from a kind of patron saint of your great city of London, John Milton, from *Paradise Lost*, Book 12: *"to speak all tongues, to do all miracles."*

I think the notion of the tongue, language and speech, the ability to speak with tongues, to have different tongues assemble, is a place to form some kind of research into our lives and our history, it's a way to look at what happened tonight, here. I consider Jeremiah and Simone to be examples, exemplars, of things accessible to all of us, of crucial strategies.



**FRED DEWEY**  
Edited transcript from talk.  
  
Institute of Contemporary Arts,  
London, May 9, 2010

2/5: Day – Forti – Dewey

1/5: Day – Forti – Dewey

3/5: Day – Forti – Dewey

4/5: Day – Forti – Dewey

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Note: Seating for all events is limited and will be handled on a 'first-come' basis.

*Lowndes County > Berlin > New York: Art and Public Life*  
Jeremiah Day and Fred Dewey in conversation –  
Simone Forti – New Writings  
**December 4, 4pm – Ludlow 38**  
Jeremiah Day – Lowndes County: Prologue  
Simone Forti – Improvisation  
Fred Dewey – A Poils For New Conditions (Part 2)  
**December 3, 7pm – Emily Harvey Foundation, 537 Broadway, 2nd Floor**  
Jeremiah Day/Simone Forti – Improvisation  
Fred Dewey – A Poils For New Conditions (Part 1)  
Simone Forti – from *Oh, Tongue*  
Jeremiah Day – 1-2-3-4  
**Opening reception 6pm: Performance and Readings 7:30pm**  
**December 2, 6pm – Ludlow 38**

LUDLOW 38 KÜNSTLERHAUS STUTTGART GOETHE INSTITUT NEW YORK  
December 2 – December 19, 2010

JEREMIAH DAY – SIMONE FORTI – FRED DEWEY

# FRED DEWEY

# SIMONE FORTI

# JEREMIAH DAY

SF: *It's good to think way past the Earth, way past.*  
Way past.  
Way past.

JD: Brecht had said that there would be nothing left. That there would be nothing left but the wind. There would be nothing left of the cities but the wind that blew through them. And I guess that's not true really.

Brecht had said that the wind would blow through the rubbles of the cities. And that's not true because we're here. In Berlin they had to, they picked up all the rubble and they put it into piles then they made parks with the piles. And then they built buildings again, they built big buildings to try and show off that they survived.

They had this one building on the East side, they built a long street. It was like the Soviet Champs Elysee. And my godfather saw it, when he was a teenager, he was driving there, and he said so it's, there are these big beautiful buildings covered with tile.

SF: *And that was during the during the East, East Germany.*

JD: Yeah, so that would have been like '62, '63. And so he was driving there, and the buildings are covered with tile and they're like glistening. So its this long street and the buildings are covered with tile. And my godfather, he was visiting and his father had rented a, he had rented like a big American sedan to drive around Europe in.

SF: *You could get one?*

JD: I don't know, maybe he had it shipped over. I don't know. It seems unlikely that he could have rented one.

SF: *So he must have... driven it... from?*

JD: From Connecticut.

SF: *From Connecticut? How did it get from Connecticut to Germany?*

JD: Well he put the car on a boat, he put the car on a boat and then you go to Germany with it I guess. He wanted his family's sedan with him on the holiday, I guess.

SF: *And he went into East Germany with it?*

JD: And he went into East Germany and this street—

SF: *Oh they must have loved it.*

JD: and the shops. They really did enjoy the trip—

SF: *I mean the Germans seeing it.*

JD: Oh, the Germans seeing a big sedan?

SF: *What color was it?*

JD: I imagined always as a kind of maroon.

SF: *Maroon. You can just, the word: maroon.*

JD: So this big street, the Soviet Champs Elysee—

SF: *Mah—roon.*

JD: —apparently they had built it up but didn't develop anything around it or behind it. So on both sides besides of the street there was just still the rubble.

SF: *Hm... Vroom!*

...  
*Ouehahtobedahbaa! Ffstbabdebaaaah! Oo-eyah, oooh! Yahah, ooh! (Yelling, smiling) Ooo-ah! And the cars were coming down off the freeway they were coming off. And this guy, he had his he was like a crust, like a crust, a crust of a man and he was like aaaah to the cars, aaaah watching them oh—after you. And after*

*you and after you.*

*After you and after you and after you and after you and up there and up thereon the side of this big high rise building a big flat place where you can where you can buy time on it and there was like this huge poster the mad hatter looking down on the whole scene, and just this glow of pleasure just with no context just pleasure. Just pleasure. Pleasure with glazed eyes, just pleasure. And this guy goes, Ahhhhhhhggggg!! And...*

JD: My friend wanted to have the Sa— he wanted to have the Santa Monica Mountains tattooed on him. He wanted to have that ridge so that he would remember something. And I, I guess I guess I thought for a long time I thought that that would help to remember something. It would help to remember... to remember where you needed to go

SF: *Good to... look way past the earth.*

JD: and then I started to think that maybe that would be confusing, you know? You thought you should go there, but— like you have an idea inside you about how its supposed to be and then you try and put that on you, you try and put the idea of how its supposed to be on you. And its not its not really like that. And I try and imagine the mountains

SF: *the thing about Santa Monica, the Santa Monica Mountains*

JD: the water rising

SF: *is how it smells when you get up there*

JD: and the Badlands, Mt. Rushmore and those Uranium mines, Pine Ridge Indian Reservation

SF: *the bushes are spicy! And at dusk*

JD: and the Badlands, that used to be the bottom, it used to be the bottom of a giant sea

SF: *they let out all this fragrance*

JD: and so the surface of the Badlands, this kind of rumpled-like broken surface, that looks like another planet looks like Mars or something.

SF: *There's some rattlesnakes out there. You look where you step, you stay on the trail. One time a snake right across, wwooooo!*

JD: That surface is the accumulation of all these sediments of things that have fallen. things that were once on the surface of the sea or descending down through this great sea that's not there anymore. And you can imagine them descending like slowly and then coming to rest.

SF: *Why does it slide?*

JD: And those things that come to rest then form the basis of this other place. And there's all these things happening there

SF: *Heating up in the sun, just a snake lying in the sun.*

JD: and there's kind of a suicide problem on that reservation there at Pine Ridge.

SF: *Taking in the heat. They're cold blooded.*

*They don't make their own heat, they just lie on the ground, take in the sun.*

JD: This other reservation, this other Indian reservation— Harvard had all of their things. Harvard had all of their regalia, their feathers and bones, they had these things. And no one, I don't even know if people talk about how they got them, which was the process by which they accumulated these things. But at a certain point they did recognize that the way they had them there in the museum just wasn't, wasn't right somehow.

SF: *A snake, to be a snake! You can smell when something's coming.*

JD: So they offered to give it back. They said to the Indians, they said, these things you can have them back. And then the tribe which is sort of, well they are trying to get a casino now. But there was a smart guy in the tribe, and he said to Harvard, you know, you guys can keep them, you can keep the things there, and we'll just come and we'll visit them.

SF: *Those spicy bushes! There's one kind of bush that, you can breath it and you get so revived. It's kind of tender, its not all spiky and dry and stiff. Its very tender and it has this scent that just... just knocks you out.*

JD: And so somehow then they come and do their ceremonies there at Harvard. And so they've gone and Earl Mill, the Chief of the Indian Tribe goes up from Cape Cod, and he visits the things, the regalia, there, and he brings the kids there, and.... And so they've taken over Harvard for a few hours, they take them back.

SF: *I wanna go home to the Santa Monica Mountains.*

End

## JEREMIAH DAY AND SIMONE FORTI

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