

An oblique introduction.

Tristan Tzara proposed the following recipe: - Take a newspaper. Take a pair of scissors. Choose an article as long as you are planning to make your poem. Cut out the article. Then cut out each of the words that make up this article and put them in a bag. Shake it gently. Then take out the scraps one after the other in the order in which they left the bag. Copy conscientiously. The poem will be like you.

Exploiting random, chance associations Tzara's cut-up method attempts to elevate the influence of established canons of taste from a kind of coincidence beyond conscious control. For Tzara the chance result is the end result, it is the work completed. No affectations or affects of taste are added to it or subtracted from it. The cut-up technique has reappeared in the work of many later Modernists most particularly William Burrows with whom the term has become synonymous. Its effects are perhaps more wide spread and have developed into more sophisticated techniques. The filmic cut is certainly the most powerful example.

The production of formal and programmatic strategies from this perspective are non-deterministic. They were co-opted, initially, as a means by which the processes of production could be developed which avoided the closing strictures of existing taste regimes, in order to produce forms and programmes beyond the instrumental formulas of established rationalism.

What is the architect?

Camus "L'Etranger", Ward's "Outsider", Nietzsche's "Ubermench" and "Raskolnikov". Baron von Frankenstein, prefigure the role of the avant-garde Modernist adventurer; a romantic epistemologist, asserting a sense of anarchy in the face of bourgeois complacency. It is not merely a need to cock a snoot at respectability that provokes this position but a veritable obligation to tell the truth at all costs, even if this leads to the Nietzschean admission that order and chaos are merely poles in a universe of morally equivalent possibilities. What damnably marks out the marginalist, and makes her fascinating from the perspective of a putative production, is a refusal to turn away from the self-defeating tendencies of her conviction. To pursue the immediate of existence and to accept the terrifying consequences of a naturalism unfettered by the recuperating mythologies of bourgeois rationality. For the bourgeois the world is naturally ordered. It reflects the conceit of a meaningful and value laden environment of rationally congruent events and objects. It is consequently unnaturally disordered by the non-rational and the terrifying.

Alphaville's submission for the exhibition Design Machine Glasgow 1991, attempts to examine the unexamined in architecture; to effectively broaden its conceptual scope. Such work results in a kind of production that is difficult to categorise, not because it lacks meaning or significance but because the categories which exist for its historiographical interpretation are woefully inadequate and reflect only those terms and political conditions which are compatible to a specific ideological view. A remark of Adorno's in his epic critique of twentieth century aesthetics, "Aesthetic theory serves to excavate the bedrock of a conceptual geology in which such work is sedimented".

Karl Krauss sought to rescue linguistic objects as part of his vindication of what capitalism has oppressed: animal, landscape, woman.

All works are offered as a de facto critique of everything which precedes them. This is precisely what Nietzsche means when he states that all creativity is presaged by destruction. In Alphaville's work this embedded dialectic emerges as a forceful and exuberant attack on an absent sensibility for the child in conventional modes of architectural production. Under capitalism architecture is reduced to the miserable terms of what is achievable, what is operable within the suppressed and oppressing territories of a desiccated and sour pragmatism. Ask any mother if she feels her child is spiritually represented by the architectural profession. You may be rewarded with a kick to the groin. This should come as no surprise.

Krauss lists - animal, landscape, woman - as examples. The brevity of the list begs the addition of other terms of which a primary candidate must surely be child. Let me say this clearly -the conception of the scope of 'childness'

is reduced, is oppressed by the operation of capitalism. What this means for those of you frightened by these terms is simply this: when conditions of abstract exchange dominate the construction of social value the possibility of living a full childhood is impossible.

Alphaville reveals this by comparison. The work reminds us of what is absent in the everyday. This work is not an architecture and the question must surely be why? For those delirious empiricists who valourise the data-scape and other spiritually eviscerated forms of finger counting as a primary formal catalyst, child, woman, landscape, animal, among a heaven of other beings were always a sacrifice well worth making in order to attain career advantage. The cost to us all is impossible to count.

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