This is Jackalope

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About / Acerca de 2020

This is Jackalope is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the creation, dissemination and management of contemporary artistic practices. Founded and directed by Cristina Anglada and Gema Melgar, This is Jackalope is conceived as a platform from which to produce cultural projects that experiment with formats and discourse.

This is Jackalope is born out of the aim to develop international action and among its objectives is that of generating a place for exchange and dissemination between existing discourse in different artistic communities. It also seeks to promote partnerships, relationships and encounters between people, in order to produce and disseminate knowledge.

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This is Jackalope es una organización sin ánimo de lucro dedicada a la creación, producción y difusión de las prácticas artísticas contemporáneas. Fundada y dirigida por Cristina Anglada y Gema Melgar, This is Jackalope es concebida como una plataforma desde la cual producir proyectos culturales que experimenten con los formatos y discursos.

This is Jackalope nace con vocación de actuación internacional y entre sus objetivos está el de generar una vía de intercambio y difusión entre los discursos vigentes en distintas comunidades artísticas. Asimismo, busca fomentar las colaboraciones, las relaciones y los encuentros entre personas, con el fin de producir y diseminar conocimiento.

Index / Índice

Kahlil Joseph's violent beauty in slow-motion

By Abraham Rivera Duque

Watching the images on television gives the impression that history repeats itself cyclically. It returns and continues. Without end. The idea comes to me by observing the riots that take place after the killing of George Floyd at the hands of two white police officers. The scene is set in Minneapolis, but it could be any city in the United States.

That Eden, with its lights and shadows, to which sooner or later, whether we like it or not, we are getting close to resembling much more than we would like. Mike Davis, a sharp analyst of the American situation for decades and decades, has already shown the difficulty that white American society has had in understanding, respecting and, finally, internalizing everything that represents the life of the African-American community in his impressive book *Beyond Blade Runner: Urban Control, The Ecology of Fear.* "Rodney King is the symbol that links unleashed police racism in Los Angeles to the crisis of black life everywhere, from Las Vegas to Toronto," he wrote after four white officers brutally beat King. Once again, a camera captured the facts, which forced those individuals to be tried a year later on April 29, 1992. Altercations would take place the same night they were acquitted. A state of emergency was decreed for five days and more than 7,000 fires were documented. In his text, Davis described the feelings of a black teenager who was fed up with the institutionalized and normalized humiliating treatment meted out not only by the police, but also, and of even graver concern, by the citizens of Los Angeles themselves: "Rodney King? Shit! Every day the police beat my friends like they were dogs. This uprising is for all of those killed by the police, for the twenty-seven years of oppression ... The Rodney King affair was only the trigger".

When approaching the work of Kahlil Joseph (Seattle, 1981) —complex, ambitious, rich in nuances and diverse in formats—, one has the feeling that all this life history, struggle and violence, so intimately linked to the black community for centuries, is fused masterfully into the images he has been filming over the last ten years. An example? *m.A.A.d.* (2014), the short film he made to accompany the tour in which Kendrick Lamar featured with Kanye West. Fifteen minutes peppered with beautifully crafted architectural images, home videos by Lamar himself, and a setting up of a scene that captures the daily rhythm of millions of African Americans' lives. Everything could be in yet another YouTube video— where the found footage and the street footage are related without any other type of connection than the music—if it were not for all that underlies the epidermis of the mobile screen. The pain and glory of Compton, one of the most troubled neighborhoods, deprived and ignored by the metropolis of the stars. The neighbourhood where Lamar became the musician he is today. The home that N.W.A grew up in, namely Ice Cube, Dr Dre, Eazy-E, MC Ren and DJ Yella. The same names, who in the summer of 1988, released *Straight Outta Compton* as a preview of their debut album. The B-side of that 12' left no doubt about their

position within the network of violence and street conflict that existed at that time: *Fuck Tha Police*.

But I would like to go back to the mini-movie that Joseph shot for Lamar. At one point in the film, a date is superimposed at the bottom of the screen: March 23, 1992. The video is a home recording that captures moments in Kendrick Lamar's life when he was little over six years old. Moments of happiness and enjoyment recorded by his uncle. Moments that do not at all sketch out the situation of terrible savagery that one could intuit was happening. Those images would be recorded a month before Los Angeles, where Compton is, was burned down from top to bottom. Somehow Joseph had been able to show us something more than a pretty artwork or roughed out scraps. It was a vivid portrait in which the representation of race took on a decidedly deep delineation. A political, social and urban choreography so unique that it transcended the personal portrait to represent all those who have breathed being black in the United States in the last thirty years.

Now, in front of the keyboard, thinking about the theorists who have written about found footage and the power of archival images (Joseph Cornell, Angela Ricci Lucchi, Craig Baldwin, Peter Forgacs, Bruce Conner, Harun Farocki), another type of person comes to mind, less cerebral but always sharper. The great Agnès Varda said of Jacques Demy, her husband and companion in experiences behind the camera: "Jacques was not a radical filmmaker. What was radical was his desire to bring music, song, and dance to things that seemed outside of that realm – like the class struggle". There is little else to add to a comment that several years later we could adhere to the description of a filmmaker such as Kahlil Joseph. Recently, in an interview for *Surface Mag*, the collaborator with figures such as Beyoncé, Sampha or FKA Twigs, revealed that it was his late brother (the painter and intellectual Noah Davis, a promoter together with Kahlil of the Underground Museum in Los Angeles) who encouraged him to be more ambitious with the vessel that he had developed for Ye and Lamar's tour: "Noah was a genius on many levels and very intelligent. He intuitively realized that if he put Kendrick's music to an installation, along with works by Henry Taylor, Ruby Neri and Kandis Williams, it would be the most interesting show in Los Angeles," he recalls in an extensive interview published in early December last year. "But at that moment he said, 'You should turn this into a two-screen installation,' I felt the biggest defeat because it made me think: now it's art?" That exhibition was open for just over a month and was called *The Oracle*. In it, they paid homage to him

↓ Kahlil Joseph. *Double Conscience*, March 20-August 16, 2015. Installation view at MOCA Grand Avenue. Courtesy of The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA). Installation photo: Brian Forrest

and the common thread that ran through African art and artists such as Joseph himself or Henry Taylor. It was the first time that *m.A.A.d.* was seen as a multi-screen installation. However, it would not be the last. Helen Molesworth, chief curator of the almighty and restless MOCA, wanted to show it the following year, alone, but with a title so revealing that it again underlined the successful relationship of its stills: *Kahlil Joseph: Double Conscience*.

The term double consciousness was coined by the sociologist and historian W.E.B. Du Bois, who highlighted the dual identities of the black population of the United States. On the one hand trying to accept themselves as Americans and, on the other, as Africans. Along these lines, Zadie Smith developed another approach that complemented the original idea. She put it forward in the New Yorker magazine in 2018. The author of *White Teeth* and *On Beauty* went much further when talking about dual identity. Smith stressed the social context that will always accompany those African Americans who manage to leave the ghetto. "This unique aspect of African-American life means that reaching the top never entirely shields you from the bottom (or doesn't allow you, in good conscience, to forget all the people you've left behind)," she recounted. "It is a painful fact that functions structurally in his work to create interesting time signatures, where the past, the present and the future meet in traumatic collisions." The affinities between Joseph and the world of art, fashion and music have connected him with Kara Walker (curator of the *Ruffneck Constructivists* exhibition, which included a first-time video for Flying Lotus), Kenzo (a fashion company that commissioned him a medium-length film with music by Shabazz Palace) and Terrence Malick (for whom he worked as an additional cameraman in the film *To The Wonder*). We are without one important or referential kingmaking celebrity. Another star around whom some of the best black artists of the day invariably revolve. I am referring, of course, to A.J. (better known today as Arthur Jafa). It is impossible not to understand our most immediate reality without having seen his essential *Love Is the Message, the Message Is Death*. A seven-and-a-half-minute short film, based on found footage, in which many of the concerns that run through Joseph's filmography are reflected.

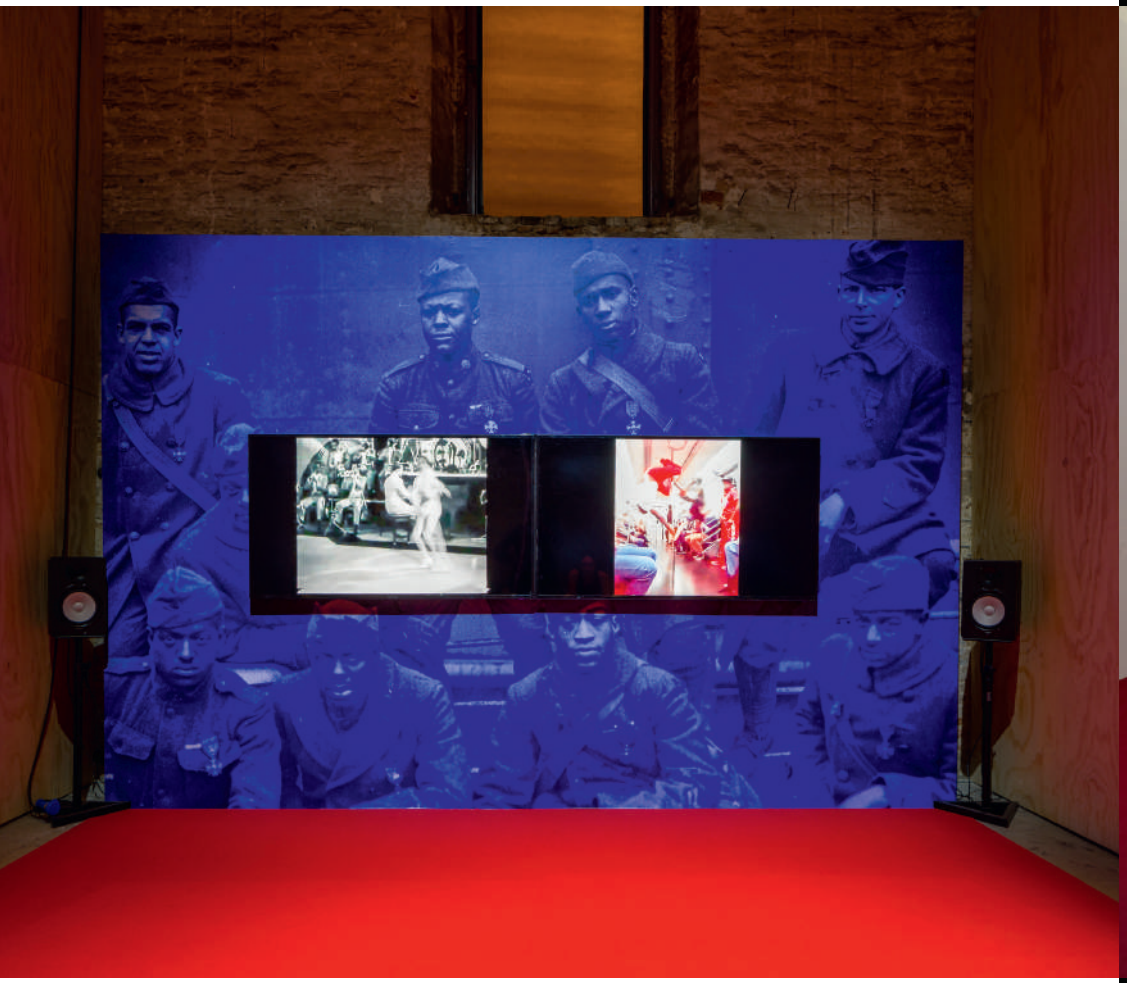
In any case, I need to jump back into the text to pay attention to two words that still resound in my head and that Varda mentions, certainly not innocently: dance and class struggle. An association that, again, leads me to the work of Joseph. Specifically, to the video he filmed with Beyoncé for *Lemonade*. The story is well known, but I will summarize it briefly. The ex-Destiny's Child member from Houston entrusted Joseph to provide the images to her most dazzling work to date. A treatise on how to be black and a woman in the 21st century. In the end, Beyoncé was taken aback when she saw the breadth and relevance that the album was going to take, and she opted to distribute the work among other members. Seven video artists (among them Jafa) participated in *Lemonade*, accompanying the sound story based on video footage. Our man was responsible for *Love Drought*, *Sorry* and *All Night*. However, the most important thing was hidden. A video of almost sixty minutes, divided into eleven chapters, in which he developed the content of the album addressing different structures, characters and ideas. Beyoncé has allowed the work to be seen in museums, but nowhere else. It is understandable when seeing Joseph's more introspective, meditative and emotional result.

His latest project is called *BLKNWS* and, although it was premiered at the Venice Biennale 2019, this year they wanted to present it in style in Los Angeles. However, due to COVID-19, this has remained on standby. We can only guess whether it will be his riskiest job yet. One that wants to map the relations of the media, its treatment of information and the underground racism of American culture. A series of jotted down thoughts to be shown on different outdoor screens throughout the city. "*BLKNWS* will be broadcast at sites across Los Angeles, with a focus on South Los Angeles and black-owned businesses. This iteration of *BLKNWS* aims to bring the work to its largest audience yet", you can read on the webpage of Nomadic Division, the non-profit association in charge of disseminating the work of new Angelenos artists.

Kahlil's father was a prominent Los Angeles attorney. A lawyer committed to social rights and young artists, such as Adrian Boseman, the protagonist of the hit Netflix series, *The Good Fight*. Eight years ago, shortly before the Underground Museum opened, he died of a brain tumour. Kahlil pays tribute to him in the video, *Fly Paper* (2017), where he can be seen at various moments, one of them with a shaved head and a scar, sitting in a wheelchair. The work is also a tribute to jazz photographer Roy DeCarava and Harlem's underground history and culture. In the film, several actors dance in different scenes. Moving in slow motion, shifting around almost rhythmically, and allowing us to enjoy all their potential. Always in his characteristic black and white, where the figures are silhouetted and reminiscent of his beloved Kara Walker. A dance that does not neglect the use of the street. Journalist Daniel McDermon pointed out in The New York Times: "His hunt for the heart of the neighborhood

also shows the influence of Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts, author of *Harlem Is Nowhere*." The neighborhood's role as the epicenter of American culture and the exuberant celebration of African-American life. The street as a point of departure and principle. Because, as Mike Davis says in his latest book, *Set the Night on Fire: L.A. in the Sixties*, published at the beginning of the pandemic: "And history was made in the streets."

↓ Kahlil Joseph. *BLKNWS*, 2019. Installation view. Courtesy of the Venice Bienale



↓ Kahlil Joseph. *BLKNWS*, 2019. Installation view. Courtesy of the Venice Bienale

Roswellness 2015 Pen and Airbrush on Bristol Board

High Plains lovers 2015 Pen and Airbrush on Bristol Board

Like the Fall of Autumn

By Carlos Fernández-Pello

ESP → PP. 146–148

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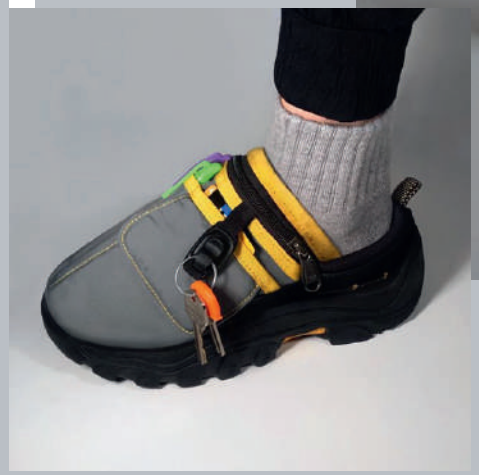


(1,2,4) Nicole McLaughlin
(3) Carlos Fernández-Pello

Lately I talk a lot with friends who complain. They complain about everything that could be done to better the state of the art world. They complain about the little attention paid to them. They complain that the public, the people, have neither the access nor the education to appreciate what they produce, to enjoy it, to buy it. They say that there is a lack of culture, a lack of investment, a lack of promotion.

You will never find—as they are among the conceptualists—[1] the artist that thinks, perhaps, that the objective of modern art has been fulfilled: that art and life have finally merged and that we have never enjoyed a creative world that is more widely distributed, more quotidian, more mundane. It doesn't occur to anyone that maybe we complain because deep down we know that it is time to retire.

It seems that there is something intrinsic to the myth of art that pushes us into thinking that the disinterest in what we do is always the responsibility of the other. Those given the denomination of "artist" have the idea, running through our veins, from a very young age, that we are visionaries, obligated special beings, or worse, revolutionaries, when a careful reading of history reveals the opposite: the artist has been and is one of the pillars on which tradition and the conservation of order, be it public or private, rests. And the history of that art, understood as an institution of modernity, was never a pioneer of anything but rather the one in charge of archiving, categorising and highlighting those changes in the human sensibility with the objective of integrating them into the social structure: a machine that talks of progress while being evermore conservative.

For quite some time, I have been a believer in this cultural myth. It was not difficult to find me talking about the miseries of the artist in this or that temple and blaming my ills on the system. In fact, to this day, I fall in line with the punctual reprimands of the museum, ministry and/or market as if they were my obligatory progenitors. That being said, when one has belonged to a cult for a long time, one feels less and less moved by the metaphors of the institutionalised art world—even with all the access and education possible—doubt compels: what if the museum is not to blame for no one having interest in what we do? And what if everything twentieth-century art wanted to achieve has been done? What would happen if we had already come to terms with the crisis of structuralist representation or achieved the fusion of art and life or fully embraced the reproduction of the work of art, it having gainined autonomy in the means of production?

(1) With notable exceptions such as Julio Le Parc in *Demystify Art* (1968), Carboneras

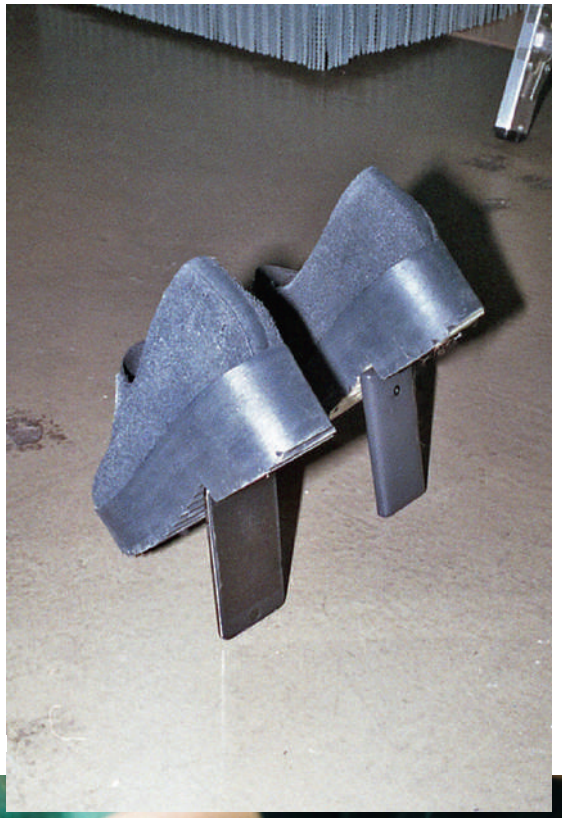
When the majority of people living in a Western context[2] are able to poeticise themselves with their home, their clothes, their phone or their own video channel—when we are able to induce an aesthetic experience without the necessity of calling upon the saints anointed by the priests of the temple—it is difficult to continue affirming that we are not the owners of our imagination without our faces sagging in shame.[3] What my favourite outsiders taught me, from Caillois to Hildebrand Wilson or the magicians of visual studies such as Buck-Morss, is that the imagination does not need priests or idols; what wields art is constituted by yourself as your own image-producing shaman, one that is on an equal footing with the rest of the interpreters of the heavens. Without the reoccurrence of the chronic dissatisfaction of the official profits who always wish to liberate but never end up exercising that wish, never escaping the walls of their own cowardice.

The permanent and continuous exposure to which we submit ourselves in social networks, personally and professionally, forces us to leave the habitual cultural nihilism aside and affirm that, in effect, art has penetrated life much more than Joseph Beuys or the surrealists could have imagined, for better or worse. From the ironic comics of avocado_ibuprofen to the daily embarrassments that tiktokers put us through, we no longer need anyone to tell us where the production of images begins and ends, if we don't want them to. But here is what is great about this achievement: and it is that if we want, nothing can also impede us from continuing to play game of artistic religion, with its court of intrigues, conservatives and orthodox hierarchies. We can choose everything.

A few years ago, Hans Belting explained that "the age of art" has not stopped having "an episodic existence" based on a history of images that, in a certain sense, has already ended. This era would come to be defined as "the work of art", understood as an artefact of the Renaissance that served for translating the forgotten ideals of Greco-Roman art into the modern world. For this very reason Belting insisted that the work and the image are not the same thing: images have always been here, way before the Renaissance, before

(2) And indeed, the work of art I am discussing is an invention of this Western culture.

(3) Of course, this visual language tends to be from the Western empire, but, as Lind and Steyerl have put forward in their criticism on documentary language, just because Castilian is given to us, does not mean that poetry is inhibited, or that when we buy a tube of paint, it does not mean a painter's represented message about buying and selling is limited. It is childish to think cultural limitation only restricts imagination precisely at the point it is enabling it: since without a limit, it would not be possible to say, "other imaginations".



Sara de Ubieta

Carlos Fernández-Pello

Greek art, and its material support would not have been canvas or video or stone but rather the mind, language, memory.

From that atavistic perspective, I have long imagined histories around the fall. Falling over, picking oneself up, tumbling, landing, walking upright. It seems logical to me because a tree that falls automatically becomes material belonging to the ground, wheels, bridges, a raft or planks with which to make a platform. The same logic that makes any stone that stands, any element on the ground that abandons the horizontal, to become a de facto sign of intelligence: that stone that is a grave, a milestone, a limit, a memory of those that have transcended. Of what has fallen.

I like this type of paradox because in it I intuit the shadow of something from antiquity. Of course, we know that the horizontal is a reconciliation, a concession that has to do with death while the vertical contains the challenge of the spirit, of life. But there is something else. This shadow has a rhythm, a doing, which cannot be reduced to either the sign of a cross or the almighty law of gravity. The function that most interests me is closer to the asemia of an orgasm, the sensation of a caress or the interruption of a fall and has to do with the pleasure of making things lose their meaning.

Footwear, for example, prevents our daily contact with the earth save for when, in effect, we fall over: when we lose balance and protect ourselves with the elbow, the knee, the hand, the face. We fall then the floor touches the rest of our body: To fall is literally to touch the ground for the first time that day, week, month. While we are not falling shoes elevate us, make us float above the surface that traps us and keeps us anchored to the world.

But it is also one of the few objects of human art with the strange quality of being moulded to the body. Only footwear, perhaps together with a chair, cap or helmet, creates a semi-rigid cabin for us to fit in. A shoe is like a mouth engulfing a foot, suspending it in a camara obscura, isolating it from the outside world, protecting it from temperature, humidity, mud and the harshness of the terrain. A refuge pre-exists in its form, something architectural and almost religious that literally underlines our difference with the rest of the world as a pedestal. In a certain way, footwear operates as a temple to the vertical, which in turn comes from the hand; the origin of our ability to elevate ourselves above our material conditions, transforming them. A temple to that which allowed us to look toward the stars.

In artistic and cultural terms, the phenomenon of trainers, of shoes, condenses so many aspects of what we call contemporary art that it deserves to have a treatise of sculpture written on it:

the shoe is full but is also a void; a closure but also an opening; it knots, binds and suffocates but also breaths; it is asymmetrical on its own and symmetrical as a whole; it contains its manufacture, exhibits it, and often turns its stitching into ornamentation; it is performative, it walks, it strolls, it forces its use, produces posture, crosses the earth, but also satisfies a bodily need; it attends to its use value without renouncing its merely aesthetic, symbolic, sacred, sexual, political, economic... character. A poetry that becomes ever richer if we pay attention to its modern layer, since it is also the brand that attracts us, it is fashion that eats you up and that, in return, gives you the gift of status, a certain sense of beauty, symbolic power.

It is for this reason that when my friends complain that no one cares about them, that no one has an interest in contemporary art, that I think of the number of people that collect trainers, shoes and platforms.[4] These seldom-used objects are often shrink-wrapped in plastic film, stowed away on a shelf or offered up as an object for auction, speculation and exchange. They are, in short, exemplary objects of the art of our time, as sacred and expensive as any work of art kept in museum storage, except for the fact that they form part of a more affordable industry. Those that complain will counter this argument by saying that a trainer does not question the prevailing system of representation, that, on the contrary, it legitimises it, and that, as a result, this analogy of the work of art is spurious. I will answer that, in effect, trainers are integrated in the capitalist system of representation, but the difference between them is that unlike the work of art, the trainers are aware of this. And it is those of us who work on this, aside from the critical and institutional, that know that today everything that revolves around a jacket, a motorbike, some shoes, is literally a carbon copy of the forms of reading and consumption related to any work made by the cultural elite of art.

It is then not difficult to derive from here that art, as a member of the imaginary, has, for me, a bigger audience than ever through distribution networks and the imaginary museums on Instagram. Perhaps its works have less and less importance in respect to the images of them. But not because people ignore them or are illiterate in some way: if they can't read them, it is because the majority of artists continue to prefer selling in Prada than in Hipercor; we aspire to be in Frieze, not on Etsy. It is not their responsibility but ours.

(4) And in effect, I could do this with people that buy cars, motorbikes or coins. But there is something in the foot, in footwear, that, as I say, reverberates with a more primordial collective unconscious.

Who has not shopped online, filled up their cart of desires and ended the session after a while without buying a single item? Perhaps this only happens to me, but, normally, consuming the images in a book, a film or an Amazon shopping cart is enough to satisfy my thirst for a fantasy. Obviously, that immaterial consumption is never free, entailing electricity bills, connection charges and subscription fees. But, is this operation not the same as a ticket to a public museum, the same as that in a "non-profit art institution"? Is the deal not: "You enjoy the works of art, you don't have to possess them, we do so as an exchange"?

If, under the sign of these questions, we accept the thesis that the era of "the work of art" is falling and touching the ground,[5] I also suggest that we also completely accept the fall of the intellectual posturing that prevents us from wielding consumption and "mainstream" channels of distribution as tools for emancipation.

An emancipation that is not like spring, full of promises, flowers, warm breezes and an Edenic harmony. A world like that is not the best one I would pursue through my imagination. On the contrary, the art that interests me is much more like the fall of autumn when the works, such as the trees, shed their leaves that fall on the ground, detached from their unique and original meaning, becoming a mere image of what they once were. And it is precisely when these leaves, fallen from their meaning, free from photosynthesis, can begin to fictionalise the colours of the earth, resemble wrinkled tongues or fuse with the soaked soil, transforming themselves into compost for the works that will return. They can, in summation, start to form part of the imagination, become absurd, and allow a break with the meaning of a sentence telling us to change our trainers, or improve them, encouraging us to have several pairs, several sizes, saving the old ones and trying on new ones along with the seasons.

This is when we know art's autumn has arrived, when everything changes colour. There is a rug on the ground. It is green, yellow and brown.

(5) Unless it falls under the crux of a critical narrative, alternative and collective compared to the socio-historical normality–for it is understood that as long as the West exists so will the myth of its art–.

(6) And I use "emancipation" in a very parochial way on purpose, as a widely abused word and in the context that the Frankfurt School would: to imply liberation from the forms of servitude and/or alienation from the capitalist system.

(5) BUCK-MORSS, Susan (2013) "Visual Imagination and global visual culture" http://susanbuckmorss.info/text/visual-studies-and-global-imagination/

SOLO PROJECT

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PP. 46–54

Süddeutsche Zeitung

Rayon Vert