

THE WOODS: FAHRENHEIT 451

FRANCESC RUIZ



THE LAST TIMES
Issue 9

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PILLER • GOBER • BOWERS • NEVAREZ & TEVERE

THE LAST TIMES

ISSUE No.9

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FREE



LUCAS • VARGAS LUGO • YOUNG • KELLEY

BEDEUTUNGSFLÄCHEN, IN LÖCHER BLICKEN, ORTSBESICHTIGUNGEN...

Julienne Lorz – Curator, Haus der Kunst, Munich – talks to artist Peter Piller, whose work features of the cover of ‘The Last Times’.



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Julienne Lorz: At the end of the 1990s it was part of your job at a media agency to look through newspapers to check the advertising of particular clients. Do you still read them regularly?

Peter Piller: Only in private. Preferably the sports pages. In the past I looked out for obvious mistakes, misunderstandings, but only with regard to the images and what the images communicate

without reading the captions.

JL: What kind of misunderstandings came about?

PP: There were not so many, rather few, which is why I had to search for them. It concerned the independent life of images. Does an image have the ability to contradict a caption? What would the image express, if it was to stand all alone without the text and context in front of us?

JL: The word newspaper keeps reappearing in your work too: in Hamburg you called a solo show *Zeitungen* (newspapers) in 2001, and in 2007 you published a book with the title *Zeitungen* and you have a huge archive that contains newspaper images you have collated over the years. What fascinates you about this medium?

PP: The newspapers were a material, my choices would never be considered to be representative of Germany's newspaper scene – it was also only regional papers from which I collected images. My selection of images, the naming, the juxtapositions of seemingly disparate images were for personal reasons. Of course, I was always fascinated with the picture's role as a carrier of information and an element of disruption.

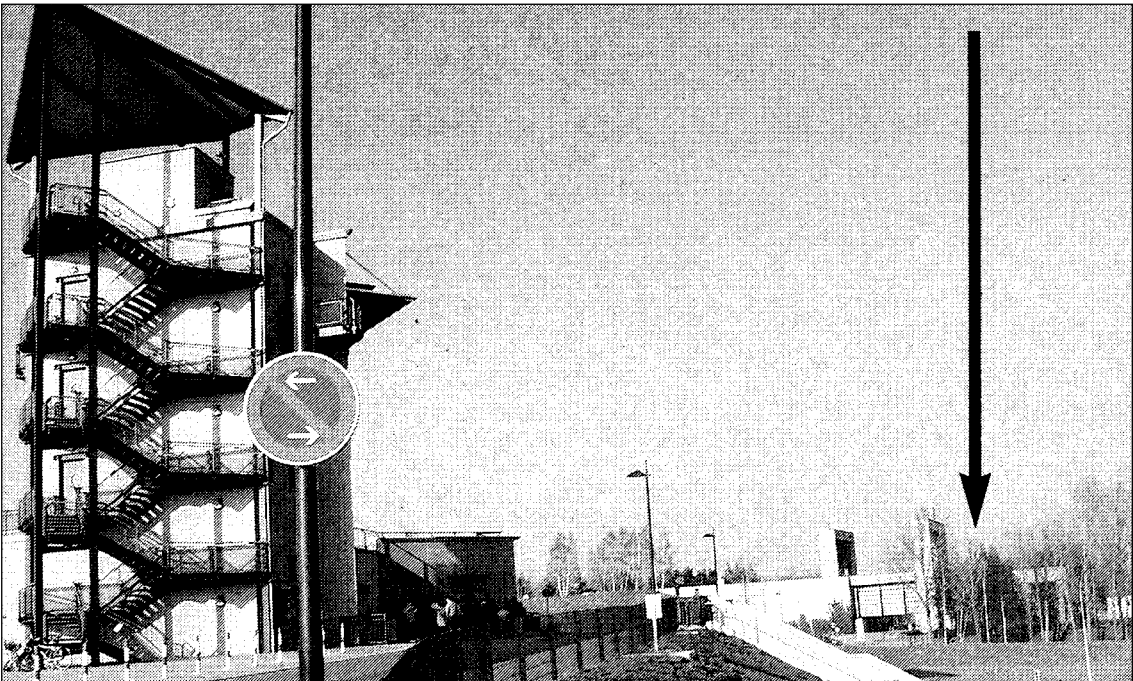
JL: Is it possible for pictures to function as elements of disruption if they have been taken out of their contexts and preserved in an archive?

PP: Yes, of course, even more so, since I am then able to rename them anew. This assertion is one of the most important artistic processes – it can

be found everywhere.

JL: The newspaper business in Germany seems to be doing quite well in comparison to other countries, do you think that there is something 'typically German' about wishing to hold on to printed news? Why is it important to you to collate these newspaper images in an archive?

PP: Possibly – everything being retained in great detail, documented and substantiated, that could indeed be something German. I archive images because, otherwise they would all have



LEFT & ABOVE Peter Piller, *Pfeile (Arrows)*. Archiv Peter Piller 2000-2006. Pigment print on paper. Courtesy the artist and ProjecteSD, Barcelona.

ended up in the bin and nobody would have bothered looking at them again. Images are often able to express something better than a text could. I spent years with this, it's a passion. I would rather act on a passion than talk about it. Power is exerted in an archive, the world is being classified, an attitude is displayed and a sub-text also exists.

JL: In your archive you sort pictures according to a theme, such as 'Areas Waiting to be Built on (nothing to see yet)', 'Exposures with Shadows', 'Looking into Holes' or 'Meaningful Areas' – some of which can be expressed in just one, multi-layered word in German. Many of these images are reminiscent of 1970s Conceptual Art, but what is particularly striking for me is their subtle humor. It's not only apparent in individual pictures but also and especially in their compilation. Is humor an important aspect for you?

PP: Yes, sure. But humor that is explained is not funny, it disappears. Maybe the humor is also important for escaping the stuffy atmosphere of the archive, that is, to escape oneself, one's own inner archival stuffiness, the dreadful earnestness of art, the pompousness. Successful humor is often a

form of sudden revelation.

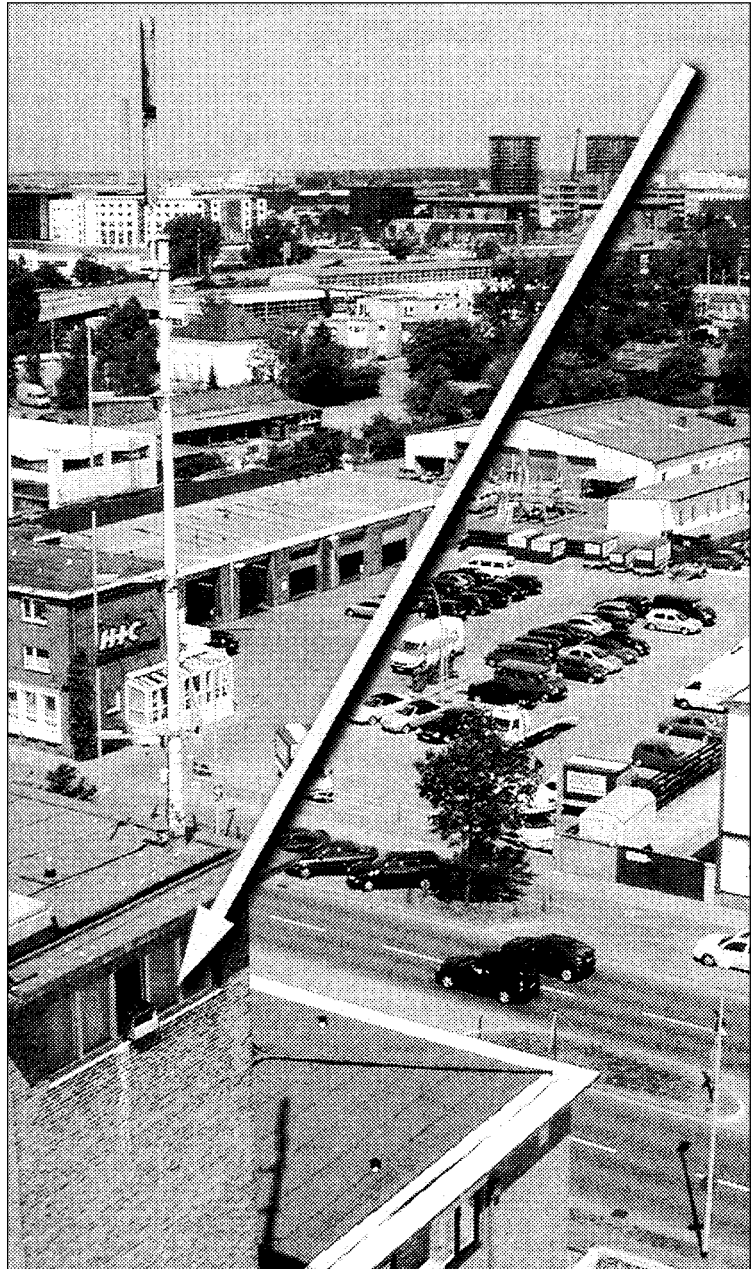
JL: Your archival category 'Unsolved Cases' seems to be the one of the largest. It sounds like something found in police files – the images all seem very mysterious. You also have other headings such as 'Scene of Crime Houses' or 'Crime Tools'. Are you particularly interested in crime and the inexplicable?

PP: I think everyone is very interested in crime and unsolved cases, however, it was more about those images that eluded my archival groupings, but which I nevertheless thought to be interesting; the resistance against the big attempt at explanation and classification. But at the moment I don't collect newspaper images. I am rather done with them, the tips of my fingers are no longer dark from leafing through newspapers. My artistic work using material from newspapers has been resting for several years now.

JL: In 2007 you began photographing your surroundings yourself. In your newest exhibition *Leistungsschau* (literally 'achievement show') at the Galerie Michael Wiesehöfer in Cologne, for example, you showed, among other works, a slide projection of forty



Peter Piller, Details of *Suchende Polizisten (Searching Policemen)*. Archiv Peter Piller 2000-2006. Pigment prints on paper. Courtesy the artist and ProjecteSD, Barcelona.



different photographs of a sign of the food company Kraft taken while driving to and from Hamburg and Leipzig (which is quite an achievement). How did this development come about?

PP: I've always taken photos of my environment; taking photos and archiving them does not preclude one from the other for me. I pass by this advert each time in drive on the A7 on my way to work at the Academy of Visual Arts in Leipzig, and it has attracted my since childhood. The word Kraft (power) is so German in its capacity for being a 'trap door' – overestimating oneself, relentlessness, hope and all that. I always take a photo of the sign whilst driving in the car. The camera performs well. I then select the best pictures, because I want to create a beautiful work for once. The sign and the environment always



PRESS VICTIM

COLLIN MUNN INTRODUCES MIKE KELLEY’S WORK IN ‘THE LAST NEWSPAPER’.

FOCUS



Installation view of Mike Kelley’s *Timeless/Authorless Series*, 1995. 15 Gelatin silver prints. Courtesy the artist and Patrick Painter Editions. Photos: Latitudes

Mike Kelley’s *oeuvre* ranges from works on paper, such as those seen in *The Last Newspaper*, to large-scale, technologically complex installations, including *Day is Done* which was shown at Gagosian Gallery in 2005. Arguably his most well-known works are his installations and ‘paintings’ that use stuffed animals, sock puppets, and

other children’s toys. Kelley has claimed that his initial employment of stuffed animals and toys was in response to the rise of commodity culture in the 1980s, but many read the subtext as being about child abuse. A dialogical approach to his art making is common between many of his projects, in that he often seems to exhibit new

work, take in criticism and others’ ideas about his project, and then further develop a body of work. Kelley has described this process as the ‘development of a materialist ritual’, which he purports to pursue in all of his pieces. This ritualistic approach is evident in Kelley’s *Timeless/Authorless* series (1995), with its amalgamation of photos and text appearing beneath newspaper mastheads of cities in which the artist has either lived or worked. The multiple panels of text and photographs act almost as an altarpiece of sorts; an altar to what exactly, however, is largely open to interpretation. In *Timeless/Authorless*, Kelley uses high school yearbook images of extracurricular activities in combination with found and fictive text that create what he refers to as ‘victim-scenarios’. These fictional constructions, recovered false memories of abuse and victimhood, clearly follow a similar vein as his toy pieces from the 1980s but are further complicated by their presence on the faux front pages. The placing of his stories under newspaper mastheads creates what Kelley has termed a ‘historical believability’, while offering a critique of news making. With his employment of the medium of the newspaper, Kelley seems to be highlighting our tendency to view the printed word as truth. By placing his fictional stories and found images on the front page, Kelley unsettles this deeply embedded understanding of the newspaper and forces us to question how we as a society determine what is trusted. This question has become even more important and complicated in the past few years, as the amount of sources of information have dramatically exploded with the internet, and the newspaper has largely begun to lose its lofty status as a monolithic arbitrator of truth. Kelley’s decision to create narratives of victimhood within the context of the newspaper points to a long-held tradition of news sources simultaneously constructing and exploiting ‘victims’ in the pursuit of interested audiences. The media love portraying victims, and do so with a predictable regularity, perhaps because it is believed that telling these stories will enact what art historian Jill Bennett has termed an ‘empathic vision’, enticing audiences to consume the story for that moment of

empathy with the portrayed victim. The politics of representation of victimhood also tell its own story, in that there are most definitely the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ kind of victims for selling news. Kelley seems to be addressing

this issue, by asking us to question: ‘why these individuals and why these stories?’ When we see the story of a victim in a paper, what other stories are elided – and why – in order to print this particular narrative? □

MIKE ON MIKE

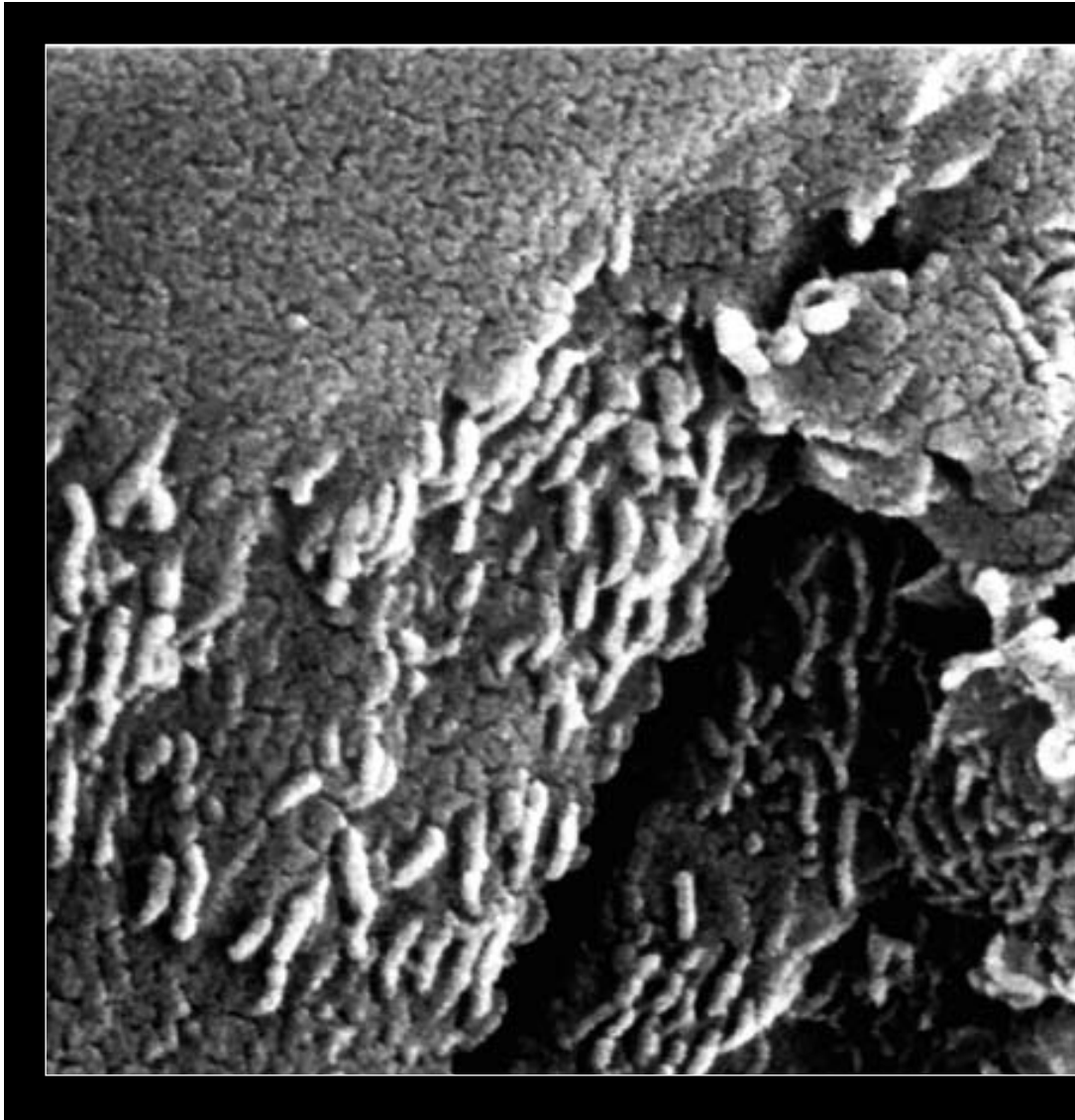
New Museum Guard & Tour Guide Mike Santistevan reflects on Mike Kelley and his ‘Timeless/Authorless Series’.



Mike Santistevan in front of Mike Kelley’s *Timeless/Authorless Series*, 1995. Photo: Latitudes

From all of the big name artists that we have on the 3rd floor of *The Last Newspaper*, I would say that Mike Kelley is my favorite, no doubt. Once I saw his work and how wacky it can be, I had to learn more. One of my favorite pieces of his is in the collection of the Whitney; the work made of stuffed toys from thrift stores all over America [*More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid* and *The Wages of Sin*, 1987], which is really terrifying and gross. It seems that Kelley is really interested, like John Waters, in the lower-level socioeconomic part of American culture. The main reaction I have noticed from visitors with his work in *The Last Newspaper*

show is one of confusion. People don’t spend enough time with the title card so they are often not sure what they are reading. A portion of the writing comes from the artist, whereas other elements Kelley appropriated from actual restaurant reviews. There was a German couple that recognized a masthead and so started paying more attention to that particular panel and noticing that the contents did not match at all with the headlines; so that was a moment where they were able to re-look at the whole thing and slow down with it. If people get a hook, they can question themselves, get more interested and start to get more of an idea of what the artist is trying to give. Working as a guard here you get a different relationship with art than your typical museum experience. I guess it would be a similar experience to a person who owns a piece of art and has it hanging in their home. You develop a relationship with the works that is often just specific to you. Sometimes having been with a particular work for a long time some of the ideas in my head about it that have turned out to be totally unrelated to it! As told to *Latitudes*. Edited by Collin Munn. □



PICTURE AGENT: OUR SINGULAR PICTURE AGENCY

PABLO VARGAS LUGO, ARTIST

In 1996, NASA released images of the probable remains of extraterrestrial life in a meteorite of Martian origin found in Antarctica. Back then I quickly latched on to the enthusiasm caused by this news, and rather opportunistically used this image as part of an ambitious newspaper project. However, shortly afterwards, scientists disputed the authenticity of these supposedly fossilized bacteria, citing the possibility of an inorganic origin. Obviously the said newspaper project lost its edge once the findings were disproved, and was shamefully filed at the end of my portfolio. Last year the original scientific team found traces of organically produced materials on their treasured meteorite, using more potent microscopes; but the cheers didn’t last for long, as their evidence was contradicted by another group working in a lab across the hall, and headed by the brother of the leader of the first team. As questions on the urgent matter of extraterrestrial life are appropriately resolved between siblings in close quarters, and hoping for further validation of the original findings, I file this picture in this other newspaper project, as a personal reminder of the troubled relationship between art, trustworthiness and whatever we choose to call news. □

100 YEARS AGO...

‘The Seattle star’ (Seattle, Washington) 1899-1947, December 1, 1910.



Image: Library of Congress / Washington State Library.

THE NEXT NEWSPAPER: WEB AGGREGATION

Profiling the organizations, projects, initiatives and individuals redefining ink-and-paper news.

What is aggregation?

Content aggregation is a practice that collects information from various websites in order to direct information to a single location, enhance a story, or create a coherent narrative. Aggregation is quickly evolving from RSS feeds to more advanced platforms to emphasize individual taste and story-telling. These new applications are designed to help journalists, bloggers, and experts sort through all available sources of information to find what is most relevant and to quickly incorporate various elements of the web into their work. Existing experiments include Curated.by, TwitterTim.es, and Qwiki. How do these websites work? Curated.by allows users to capture Tweets around a specific topic. Tweets can be tagged and organized into bundles, which can then be embedded into blog posts or stories for additional content. The TwitterTim.es is a real-time personalized newspaper generated from a Twitter account. The site analyzes a

user’s social graph to organize an overwhelming Tweet supply into a ‘curated’ newspaper, updated hourly. Qwiki aims to provide a new information experience by changing the way we consume information. Qwiki sorts through the seemingly infinite amount of information on the web by a complex algorithm to deliver a succinct narrated video presentation on a specific topic, place, person, or term. What is Storify? Storify founders Burt Herman and Xavier Damman see journalism as the aggregation and filtering of information about events in order to create a coherent narrative. They saw a possibility to ‘curate the real-time web ... because there is no real easy way to integrate social media into a story.’ Currently the most interactive service, the aim of Storify is to help users pull together content by using an API (application programming interface) to gather real-time data from Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube and other social networks and services.

It allows the user to then drag and drop the content into a story template while retaining all attribution and metadata – location, profile information, links, etc., related to sourced content. All of this information resides on Storify’s servers and stories can be embedded into any website. What are people saying about such services? “Can social media serve as source material for compelling news narratives? A number of innovative tools and programs have been developed – is it possible for any of them to carry the weight of a news story as it unfolds?” — Andrea Pitzer. “Aggregation of content only gets you so far ... you need to have great mash-ups of data and show some unique vision with that content to continually draw readers.” — Danny Briere. “I really think it’s got a lot of potential. It takes the same exact reporting, curating, and story-crafting experience; it’s just a totally different way of doing it. You’re not writing it all yourself, you’re just piecing together a giant puzzle.” — Mandy Jenkins. “Sadly, this may become what passes for ‘storytelling’ even though it has absolutely nothing to do with the craft of writing a story.” — Bob R. □ Irina Chernyakova

SARAH SEX SPORT-TRAIT

Lorena Muñoz-Alonso on ‘The Last Newspaper’ work ‘Fat, Forty and Flab-ulous’ by British artist Sarah Lucas.

FOCUS

A seriously overweight woman pouts and poses across a newspaper's double-page spread. She frolics, almost naked, apparently feeling sexy. “My borin’ hubby bleats about my weight ... Now I want someone who loves feeling’ folds of flesh in the sack”, she is quoted as saying. The story of this woman being offered for sale by her husband was originally published on November 25, 1990 in *The Sunday Sport*, an infamous English tabloid that specialises in the bizarre, amusing readers with outrageous stories including alien abductions and freakish sexual revelations.

Fat, Forty and Flab-ulous (1990) is a simple photocopy enlargement of these pages, which also include an article ridiculing ‘Arty-Farty Students’ being offered degree courses in Madonna studies, as well as advertising for sex phone lines. Made by Sarah Lucas when she was a 28 year-old emerging artist in London – just two years after the seminal group exhibition *Freeze*, yet before

her 1993 venture with Tracy Emin (*The Shop*) and perhaps her most renowned work, *Au Naturel* (1994) – it belongs to a series of works in which she uses British tabloids as her raw material. The act of photocopying the pages of a tabloid and placing the results in the gallery highlighted for the artist, the “hypocritical morality being served up daily to most people in this country”. It was also an indication of what was possible for a young woman artist with limited resources, making work with whatever she had at hand and striving to articulate society's class and gender anxieties. Already then, Lucas had directed her gaze at Britain's working class everyday life via her assemblages of found objects (newspapers, kebabs, oranges, mattresses, etc.) – works with a seemingly obnoxious sense of humour. *Fat, Forty and Flab-ulous* (1990) continues to speak, some twenty years later, about the ‘formless’ outlets of perversion and excess that swarm about in our social and cultural landscape, simultaneously suppressed and served up as mass entertainment.

What was most interesting about Lucas' work when



Caption photo: Visitor taking a picture of Sarah Lucas' *Fat, Forty and Flabulous*, 1990. Photocopy on paper. Copyright the artist. Courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London. Photo: Latitudes

she first started to exhibit in London, at the artist-run space City Racing and the Saatchi Gallery, was that its irreverence and morality relentlessly challenged the established notions about the kind of art that was expected from a female artist. It wasn't the explicit and obsessive use of genital symbols or the sexual innuendo which flooded her pieces that made her work risqué. It was its merciless gaze – and the absence of

any clichéd feminist message – that made it exciting, funny and, most importantly, truly empowering. She was appropriating the brashness, macho and sarcasm of her masculine peers, yet without betraying her gender for a second.

Admittedly, Lucas's apparently anti-intellectual approach doesn't seem to lend itself too well to theory. Yet as with many of the artist's subsequent works, *Fat, Forty and*

Flab-ulous brings to mind the ideas explored by the psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva a decade earlier in *The Powers of Horror* (1980). Heavily influenced by the writings on subversion by Bataille and Lacan, this seminal essay uncovers what lies behind our fascination with the grotesque, the dirty and the obscure: things we are systematically meant to abhor. Lucas unravels such mechanisms and presses all their buttons. □

MEDIA HABITS: CAREY YOUNG

The British artist, whose work focuses on the connections between culture, economic systems and legal language, reveals her fascination with ‘The Apprentice’.

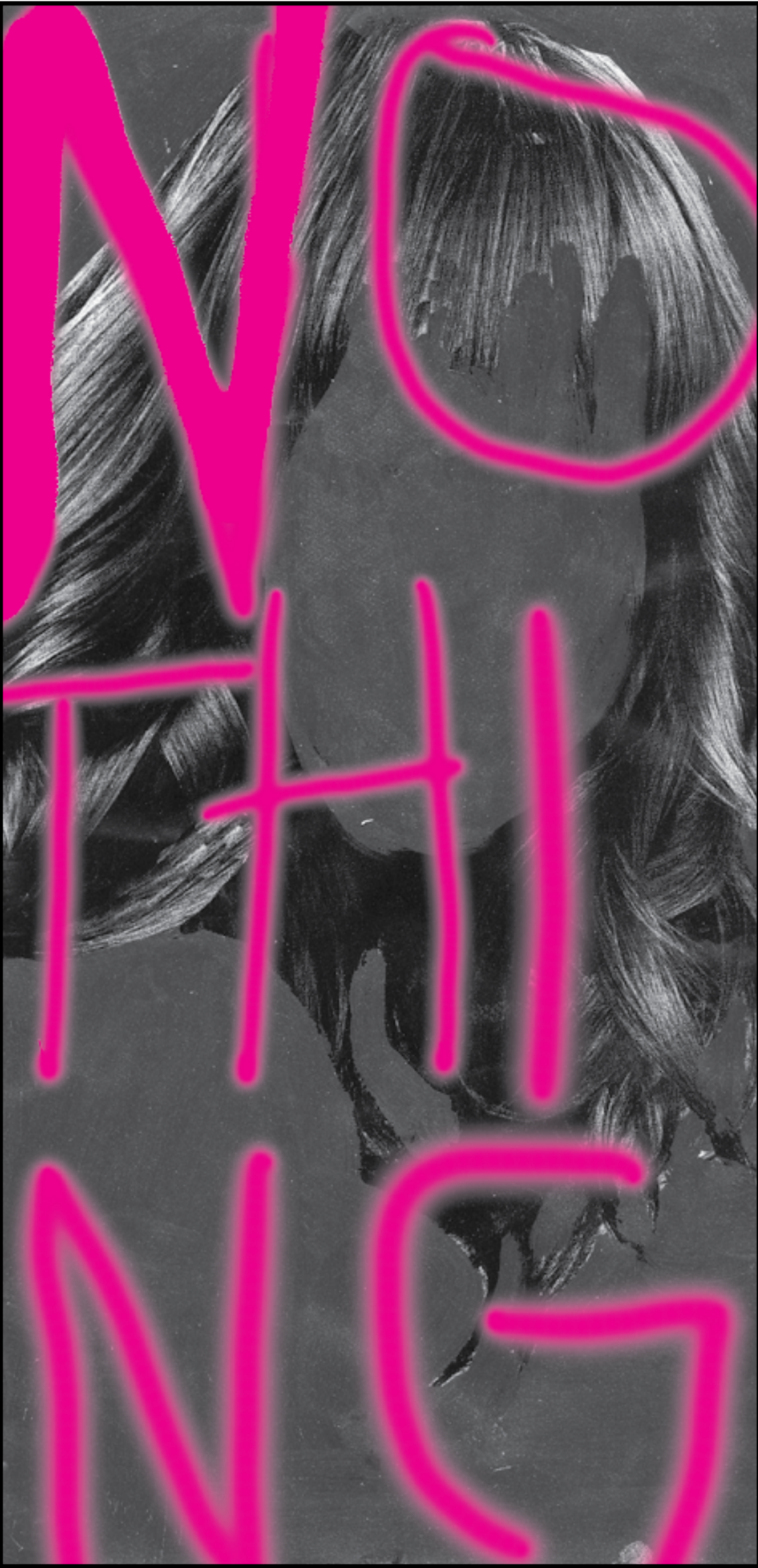


NEWSPAPERS I read *The Guardian* online every day and Google News for its collation of international news sources, plus every few days I'll dip into the websites of the *New York Times*, and Al Jazeera. WikiLeaks is worth checking regularly for leaks of classified material,

before any of it becomes ‘news’. It's fascinating and sometimes offers useful source material for my work, or for future projects. **MAGAZINES** I regularly read *Frieze*, *Art Monthly* and *Time Out* (London) as well as *Artforum* and *The Art Newspaper* more occasionally. **ONLINE** Since so much of my artistic work and research is done at my home desk, or now that I have web access on my phone, I seem to spend most of my waking hours online! Artsjournal.com collates arts news from international sources, usually before Artforum.com gets to it, although I do check that latter most days too, mainly for its news and, I'll have to admit, its gossip column. The website of *Texte zur Kunst*, the e-flux journal and eipep.net (the webjournal of the European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies) are occasional

ports of call. For research, I'm a big user of LexisNexis, an online archive for news media. It's a subscription service but one can access it via academic libraries. For fun I often check The Sartorialist fashion blog, but I don't have a blog or use Facebook. I don't have the time or inclination and I want to protect my private life. **TELEVISION** I'm totally addicted to *Mad Men*, and also recently watched all of *The Wire* and *Treme*. I don't own a TV any more – my partner and I just download the shows we want to see. On British TV, *Peep Show* is very funny, with a great script. And I watch the UK version of *The Apprentice* out of a sense of morbid fascination. But British TV has been pretty weak for a while. **RADIO** I listen to internet radio and streamed audio. Music mainly – last.fm, or pre-recorded

music shows, for example on samurai.fm. I'm not a big user of radio except as background music for making my work. **BOOKS** Sadly I never seem to have time for fiction any more. I read art theory in the main, or research material for new projects. Recently I've read a lot of books relating to outer space law, theoretical physics and cosmology and anthropology as research towards my recent Paula Cooper Gallery solo show *Contracting Universe* and I've been spending a lot of time in specialist libraries. It's been a fascinating process. On my current reading list are *Selected Maria Lind Writing*, an anthology of writings by curator Maria Lind, and *Becoming Tarden* by Jill Magid. □ Carey Young's Memento Park continues at Eastside Projects, Birmingham, UK until 29 January 2011.



DIRT SHEET

JANINE ARMIN SCREAMS FROM LIFE.



that was good about the eighties and its horror fetishism. 1982 was a seminal year, jammed with teeth-gritters like *Poltergeist* and *The Thing*, with Freddy and Jason onto the third installments of the respective gore franchises *Nightmare on Elm Street* and *Halloween*.

For me, in addition to Alfred Hitchcock's *Marnie* and the soundtrack to *The Shining*, horror is primarily the domain of nonfiction. Like televangelist Billy Graham. One of Ruppertsberg's squibs is about a man who, after watching Graham deliver a sermon on sinning neighbors, walked out of his house and shot his neighbor. The squib, being teeny, can show how judicious a newspaper is in selecting content. In this piece, the report makes sure to recount the police's defense of Graham. According to them, Graham didn't outright tell people to kill their sinning neighbors, just to take note of them. Come what may.

At an angle, and in cursive, the words “I Love You” and “I Love You Too”, bracket the abrasive news clips. Ruppertsberg gives a nod to any romantics out there, the other ripe consumer base for films in the eighties, and for films now. Horror and rom-com remain two of the best categories to choose for a successful date. Even when the real-life horrors of ticket prices and bed bugs restrict our appetite for terror and love to the relative safety of houses. □

Squibs are those crisp news items that run at about 50 to 100 words. Often unauthored, they are regularly culled from newswires to even out a paper's regional and international scope. Seven of these, with torn edges and granular type, appear in seminal conceptual artist Allen Ruppertsberg's silkscreen *Screamed From Life* (1982). In this work, included in *The Last Newspaper* exhibition, the Los Angeles-based artist unites two definitions of the squib, the first as curt, sometimes satirical piece, and the second as broken firecracker fizzling in pyrotechnic dust.

Screamed... is littered with scraps of potentially conflagratory information, from the reattachment of an eight-year-old boy's penis, his dismemberment a result of paternal punishment, to the story of a young woman whose car blew a gasket outside of Carson, leaving her vulnerable to the advances of a sexual predator. The worst is about Salt Lake City's Rachel David who in 1978 coaxed her eight children to jump off a hotel balcony, only one of whom survived.

The shortness of the clips stops short any prolonged emotional jerk. They instead fore-run the tales' entry into urban myth. Alternately brutal and devoid of the gruesomeness that would warrant any uniform position, their inclusion is less about a correlative news directive than a mendacious employment of horror rhetoric.

The silkscreen itself looks like a poster for a bad slasher film. Ruppertsberg's name appears where a director's might, the title takes the place of a movie's. Part of it is scrawled in a font similar to that used for Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, also made in 1982. Both *Screamed...* and *Thriller* pull in everything



Allen Ruppertsberg, *Screamed from Life*, 1982. Silkscreen. Courtesy the artist and Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles.

AMENDED OBITUARIES

DUTIFUL SCRIVENER



Photo: Amoula il Majnoona (2010)

On May 20 of 2010, we interviewed Bill McDonald, the *New York Times* Obituaries Editor. This interview culminated in the piece *A Dutiful Scrivener*, which takes viewers through a discussion of the journalistic criteria of posthumous representation, writing style, judgment, newsworthiness, and the obituary to be written. We see this piece as an altermausoleum where the logging of one's achievements and failures is transformed into a process of questioning. How might we critically reflect upon this form of writing, framework, limitations, and prescribed word count employed, to sum up a life?

We have included here the list questions posed to Bill McDonald during our interview.

1. Please talk about writing style in obituary writing, what is generally addressed in an obituary?
2. What are the parameters for choosing who gets an obituary published?
3. Can you talk about word

count? How many words are allotted, in a sense, to sum up a life?

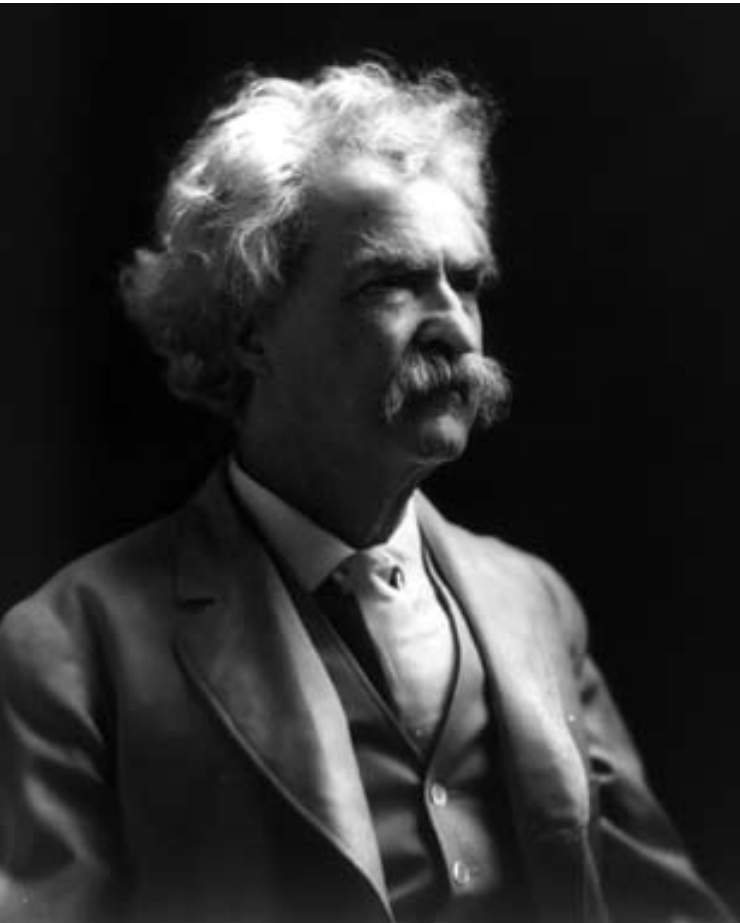
4. What is the most difficult part of writing an obituary?
5. How far in advance do you prepare an obituary?
6. How many obituaries do you currently have on file? And have they all gone digital, or are they actually in a file cabinet?
7. How do you go about approaching key figures while they're still alive to request an interview for their future obituaries?
8. How do gender and ethnicity play in obituary writing?
9. Do you see the obituary as the "last word," or a memorialization of a life?
10. Does working as the Obituaries Editor of the *New York Times* make you thing differently about your own mortality?
11. In considering the current crisis of 'print' media, and the migration of news to the web, how might the obituary of the print newspaper be written?
12. As we're sitting in this Renzo Piano designed building, I am curious if you have an obituary prepared for Renzo Piano? Or, for media figures, such as Rupert Murdoch or Sumner Redstone?
13. Then you wouldn't tell us your own obituary been written?
14. And our obituaries aren't on file, then I assume, either?

Angel Nevarez & Valerie Tevere



Angel Nevarez and Valerie Tevere, *A Dutiful Scrivener*, 2010. Single-channel video. Courtesy the artists. Photo: Benoit Pailley/New Museum.

FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO 'THE LAST TIMES' ANGEL NEVAREZ & VALERIE TEVERE – CREATORS OF 'A DUTIFUL SCRIVENER' FOR 'THE LAST NEWSPAPER' – ELECTED TO REPRINT MARK TWAIN'S 'AMENDED OBITUARIES', FROM 'HARPER'S WEEKLY', NOVEMBER 15, 1902.



Mark Twain. Public Domain.

To the Editor:

Sir, – I am approaching seventy; it is in sight; it is only three years away. Necessarily, I must go soon. It is but matter-of-course wisdom, then, that I should begin to set my worldly house in order now, so that it may be done calmly and with thoroughness, in place of waiting until the last day, when, as we have often seen, the attempt to set both houses in order at the same time has been marred by the necessity for haste and by the confusion and waste of time arising from the inability of the notary and the ecclesiastic to work together harmoniously, taking turn about and giving each other friendly assistance – not perhaps in fielding, which could hardly be expected, but at least in the minor offices of keeping game and umpiring; by consequence of which conflict of interests and absence of harmonious action a draw has frequently resulted where this ill-fortune could not have

happened if the houses had been set in order one at a time and hurry avoided by beginning in season, and giving to each the amount of time fairly and justly proper to it.

In setting my earthly house in order I find it of moment that I should attend in person to one or two matters which men in my position have long had the habit of leaving wholly to others, with consequences often most regrettable. I wish to speak of only one of these matters at this time: Obituaries. Of necessity, an Obituary is a thing which cannot be so judiciously edited by any hand as by that of the subject of it. In such a work it is not the Facts that are of chief importance, but the light which the obituarist shall throw upon them, the meanings which he shall dress them in, the conclusions which he shall draw from them, and the judgments which he shall deliver upon them. The Verdicts, you understand: that is the danger-line.

In considering this matter, in view of my approaching change, it has seemed to me wise to take such measures as may be feasible, to acquire, by courtesy of the press, access to my standing obituaries, with the privilege – if this is not asking too much – of editing, not their Facts, but their Verdicts. This, not for present profit, further than as concerns my family, but as a favorable influence usable on the Other Side, where there are some who are not friendly to me.

With this explanation of my motives, I will now ask you of your courtesy to make an appeal for me to the public press. It is my desire that such journals and periodicals as have obituaries of me lying in their pigeon-holes, with a view to sudden use some day, will not wait longer, but will publish them now, and kindly send me a marked copy. My address is simply New York City – I have no other that is permanent and not transient.

I will correct them – not the Facts, but the Verdicts – striking out such clauses as could have a deleterious influence on the Other Side, and replacing them with clauses of a more judicious character. I should, of course, expect to pay double rates for both the omissions and the substitutions; and I should also expect to pay quadruple rates for all obituaries which proved to be rightly and wisely worded in the originals, thus requiring no recommendations at all.

It is my desire to leave these Amended Obituaries neatly bound behind me as a perennial consolation and entertainment to my family, and as an heirloom which shall have a mournful but definite commercial value for my remote posterity. I beg, sir, that you will insert this Advertisement (1t-eow, agate, inside), and send the bill to Yours very respectfully. Mark Twain.

P. S. – For the best Obituary – one suitable for me to read in public, and calculated to inspire regret – I desire to offer a Prize, consisting of a Portrait of me done entirely by myself in pen and ink without previous instructions. The ink warranted to be the kind used by the very best artists. □

GRAPHITE TESTIMONY

GREG BARTON INTRODUCES ANDREA BOWERS AND 'EULOGIES TO ONE AND ANOTHER', FEATURED IN 'THE LAST NEWSPAPER', AND TALKS TO THE ARTIST ABOUT HER RELATIONSHIP TO NEWS.

FOCUS & EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



ABOVE & RIGHT Andrea Bowers, *Eulogies to One and Another*, 2006. Graphite on paper. Courtesy the artist and Gallery Praz-Delavallade, Paris; Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York; and Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects. Photos: Latitudes

In April 2005, a suicide car bombing in Baghdad killed activist Marla Ruzicka and her colleague Faiz Ali Salim. The two worked on behalf of Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict (CIVIC), an organization Ruzicka founded in 2003, of which Salim was the Iraq Country Director. In cases of armed conflict, CIVIC's goal is government recognition of civilian casualties, as well as financial compensation to surviving family members. Despite a military that refused to tabulate Iraqi deaths, CIVIC helped implement U.S.-funded remuneration programs in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

The subsequent media coverage of the pair's deaths is the subject of *Eulogies to One and Another* (2006), Andrea Bowers' contribution to *The Last Newspaper*. A selection of articles by a range of authors from the websites of media outlets including *The Independent*, *The Washington Post*, and *Christian Science Monitor* are meticulously reproduced in pencil and hung in two rows of eight frames. Inverted, text is left white and blank page space rendered graphite-grey. Installed adjacent to this is a duplicate set of the aforementioned drawn reproductions, however, the paragraphs have been stripped

down to only instances referring to Faiz Ali Salim. The majority of articles offer a single sentence, while others appear entirely blank except for a logo or URL. As the wall text observes: "The resulting double report gives testimony to the implicit inequality of an agenda in which an American and an Iraqi are remembered with an insinuating degree of difference."

Invariably symptomatic of the wider reporting and editing process, the issue of selective narrative appears to be one of Andrea Bowers' primary concerns. Through the act of correcting or documenting untold stories, from abortion rights activism to feminist nuclear protests, the artist constructs layers of historical records. One is reminded of the African proverb: "Until the lion has his or her own storyteller, the hunter will always have the best part of the story". If history is indeed written by the victors, Bowers demonstrates a form of resistance in productive revisionism.

While Bowers' practice employs archival methods to recover lost or suppressed histories, the artist also takes on the role of embedded journalist. A fierce advocate of environmentalism, Bowers remains intent

on exploring the reciprocal possibilities between art and activism. For example, in documenting the first suburban tree sit-in amidst national media coverage (*Vieja Gloria*, 2003), Bowers demonstrates an active agency, bearing witness and creating a subjective platform from which to broadcast an agenda. Fluidly switching between media, Bowers' swiftly entwines aesthetics and politics.

In *Eulogies...*, the artist depicts her source material in a labour-intensive manner, and the works on paper seductively pull viewers in, providing a means to internalize the content. The act of drawing effectively mediates and personalizes a war buffeted from American citizens.

Whereas in earlier graphite works by the artist the white of the paper dwarfed subjects, the negative space in *Eulogies...* is illustrated with a solemn grey tone. This blank space functions as a void where one can inhabit the material, project on and into the emptiness. Transcribing online articles by hand produces numerous outcomes, eliciting attention to the much-debated relationships among journalism, corporate media, the internet, dissemination, reproduction, and obsolescence.



Greg Barton: Do you feel a certain kinship with the journalist, or perhaps advocate-journalist? **Andrea Bowers:** Journalism is one of the subjects of my work and I continue to be dismayed by the corporate takeover of media outlets. I focus on the efforts of those few independent investigative journalists around today, also drawing attention to the inadequacy of our current mainstream system.

GB: What role do newspapers (both print and online) play in your research *Eulogies...* surveys a bevy of media; where do you get your news? **AB:** Almost all of my projects start with a news story or through communication with activists. I am a news junkie. I religiously watch Amy Goodman on *Democracy Now* every morning. My television is always tuned to Free Speech TV or Link TV. I use Twitter to follow independent reporters like Jeremy Schahill, Rick Rowley of Big Noise Film, Laura Flanders, and Jane Hamsher. I read Alternet.org, WikiLeaks, Al Jazeera English, *Z Magazine*, *The Nation*, *Mother Jones*, etc. I'm also a big fan of Ms. Magazine Online. I could go on...

GB: How often do you source images from media outlets? **AB:** I used to buy more images from media outlets than I do now. Recently, many of the images I draw are borrowed from people's archives, or I have photographed myself. My graphite drawings of protests against nuclear energy and weaponry came from newspaper clippings and photos saved by an activist. **GB:** What occurs for you in the act of translating source material? **AB:** In general, I choose under-recorded subject matter, and most of my drawings function as homage or memorial. The

process of translation from original material to drawing usually heightens awareness of the source document – in a way, it becomes more precious. The canonization of visual culture occurring through art institutions is a powerful locus point to activate.

GB: You have mentioned in another interview a desire for the '10% discount' of *Eulogies...* to be donated to Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict (CIVIC). Has this happened? Following such logic, art could clearly bind a documentary mechanism with a direct, economic action.

AB: None of the *Eulogies...* drawings have been purchased, but I have been able to donate a percentage of sales from other works. This practice has increased since the interview you mentioned, and collectors and galleries on a whole have been quite willing to participate. Recently I have been able to raise funds for Border Angels, an immigrant rights organization, and Tim DeChristopher, a climate activist. I ask that a percentage of a sale or a designated dollar value be donated to an activist or organization directly as part of the sale.

GB: Lastly, how do you view socio-political battles, such as abortion rights, being waged in newsprint?

AB: I feel that these issues should be much more debated and well researched than what our homogenous corporate media conglomerates provide. Important issues are consistently under reported or unreported. People need easy access to independent news sources for democracy to work; a larger quantity of information needs to be readily available, both in print and online. □

HAVING IT ALL

LATITUDES TALKS WITH
'THE LAST NEWSPAPER' CO-CURATOR
RICHARD FLOOD ABOUT
ROBERT GOBER AND HIS WORKS
IN THE EXHIBITION.



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Latitudes: Can you recall when you first saw Robert Gober's newspaper works?

Richard Flood: Oh yes, definitely. He did an amazing installation at the Dia Art Foundation in 1992 – the show that also had the prison windows – and the newspapers were all gathered and baled down a dark hallway where there was a fire door with an emergency bar on it and an exit light. You knew they were part of the installation but also knew the revelation was going to be quite mysterious. When you got up close to them you saw the Vatican as a kind of queer bating

organization; you saw Dan Quayle – at that point our extremely stupid Vice President – and then you saw Gober himself mimicking the Saks Fifth Avenue 'Having It All' ad. This ad ran week after week in the *Sunday Times*; always a bride and bouquet, with a line in a serif face – 'Having It All'. Of course, Gober had gone out and designed a dress, hired a photographer and posed as the bride in this particular newspaper.

L: When was the first time you encountered his work?

RF: In the mid to late 1980s he was working at Paula Cooper Gallery and I was working at Barbara Gladstone, which was right across the street at that time and I once saw Gober taking this enormous concrete nautilus shell down the street, and the wiring was showing through. It absolutely intrigued me. Later, when we were still across the street from Paula, he did his first 'sink' show. You knew things had changed after that show. For

me, it was an experience akin to the first time I saw Paul Thek's work at the Philadelphia ICA in 1977. You just walked in the door and you knew that the sculpture wouldn't be the same again. The sink sculptures appeared to be those funny slop sinks you see in places of business where someone is always mopping down the floors, the kind of sink you would find in the basement to rinse things out. But of course, none of them functioned and that was the point.

L: They're sinks but they're not quite right and the same way as they're newspapers but they're not quite right. How do you see his use of the newspaper in terms of the vocabulary of these objects as ready-mades and within the constellation of his practice?

RF: There is the great example of his 1987 plywood board piece. It just leaned against the wall and a number of people complained about it – 'What is that?', 'How dare you?', 'What could you be

thinking of?'. For him it was, with a touch of irony, the perfect piece of realist sculpture. But it wasn't entirely a sculpture because it was hand crafted to be exactly what it appeared to be. His bag of doughnuts was another situation where people would get furious. I remember at an opening some idiot tried to steal a doughnut – 'if it looks like a doughnut, it must be a doughnut!' – an artist who should have known better.

The newspapers are I think a perfect example of this kind of approach that Gober takes to the real. There's always something that stops short of absolute reality, but it goes so close that you're quite convinced that the purpose of it is sculpture.

L: And as far as the process of making *The Last Newspaper*, was he one of the first artists that you thought of?

RF: Yes, along with Fabro and Boetti. With Gober, it was another really fascinating sample of

literally 'the last newspaper'; with the Fabro the paper is laid on the mopped floor, whereas with the Gober it's baled and ready to go out into the trash. This idea really became a thesis point about information and how quickly it comes and goes, and both are quite remarkable contributions to sculpture.

L: Does the level of his intervention stretch to doing the entire newspaper?

RF: No, I think they are always about the bundle and what appears on the visible pages. And we were able to go through and select which front pages we wanted.

L: In terms of the installation, was it an early decision to pile them all together rather than place them individually throughout the galleries?

RF: We asked him to come in and do the installation. We had always cut off a corner for the piece, because I had seen a previous installation like that and



LEFT & ABOVE Robert Gober, *Newspaper*, 1992. Photolithography on archival paper with twine. Ten examples with supporting bundles. Courtesy the artist and Matthew Marks Gallery. Photo: Benoit Pailley/Courtesy New Museum.

I thought it really increased the energy of the piece.

L: And the particular newspapers? The *New York Times*, the *New York Post* – they're all from this city.

RF: Yes – the tabloid is a classic New York experience. Everybody's fascinated with the tabloid because it's the consummate American language – or the consummate debased American language. There used to be tons of movies about Madison Avenue and the word-crafters and that tradition continues onto the faces of tabloid newspapers in the city. I think of tabloid language as Kerouac language in a way – like verbal French fries!

L: Gober's pieces set up a relationship with what Wolfgang Tillmans is doing in the show in terms of re-orchestrating clippings and also using that as a means to address society, sexuality, and so on. How you see the relationship between the two artists?

RF: They're both very politically outspoken and involved, and that is one of the great luxuries of working with artists like that.

They wear their hearts on their sleeves but they're also enormously smart, they're not given to hysteria, their response is: 'let's analyze this'.

I wanted Tillmans' table works in the show from the very beginning and had spoken to him maybe two years ago when the show had another title and another identity. He structures an entire globe on those tables and there are really strange and miraculous things that take place in the most flat-footed way. It's like walking beside a very consistent current in a stream and yet at the same time – what's going on under the water is really very intense.

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walk through the show if you're having a bad day!

L: Also when the work was conceived in the early 90s, it was before widespread discussion really began about the decline of newspaper industry – they were still making a huge amount of money until the 2000s. Seeing piles of papers there as a physical amount of 'dead trees' lying on the street wouldn't necessarily have had that kind of efficacy then.

RF: Absolutely, newspapers were not endangered at the time, at all. It's interesting in the context of your paper and the New City Reader in the exhibition – we're really expanding our archival possibilities. They live for a week, or for the length of the show, and then are archived – and you can do that now digitally, or in any number of ways. We're living in an archived world; the best of what we have – you just want to get it in the box, paper as digital, and preserve it.

L: There's something about the physicality of Gober's work, all that information there as paper, that puts news into a dialogue

with sculpture itself.

RF: Yes, and the notion of stacking in sculpture is key to the understanding of the piece. Also the notion of collage – which has always been important in Gober's work – is extraordinary. You're looking at front pages of newspapers yet it's about their subversion and this other voice that wanders through and becomes this salutary second hit. Gober has used newspapers in another cases as well. He did a tiny column that appeared to have been clipped from a newspaper about the death of a young boy named Robert Gober in a family swimming pool in Connecticut.

L: There is also 1978–2000, the series of black-and-white photos which take you from Manhattan to Long Island and that ends with a shot of a newspaper clipping cradled on the beach and an image of the American flag.

RF: I think that is one of the most eloquent bodies of photographs anyone has done about the American situation. It's work that invites interpretation without giving itself away ever – and that's important too.

L: There was a newspaper article about the exhibition whose tone was, 'has it come to this?!' – talking about us as curators making newspapers, but also in reference to the Gober works, lamenting newspapers becoming 'museum relics'? The reaction of newspaper people has been very revealing...

RF: Right – we've actually had a lot of journalists writing about the show. And it is interesting to me that the artifice of the museum and artifice of art has been very provocative to them. In the world of imagination and illusion it has been difficult for them to suspend their disbelief, which is interesting because they are presumably the people who are dealing with and interpreting the facts. I think that was Nate Lowman's point with his work in the show – every day you get up and you read the *New York Times*, then the next day you realize perhaps a quarter of it comes back again in the corrections. The truth was an optical illusion. □

Transcribed by Irina Chernyakova.