

Conceptual Disappointment
by Victor Boulet

I noticed that male artists show bicycles in galleries, cars in museums and aircraft at major biennials. I wanted to react to that. [1]

“ If it wasn’t for the word CONCEPTUAL ART I would have absolutely nothing to do, I would have no place in art. I could only appear in art when the word Conceptual Art was used’... I can’t paint, I can’t draw, I can’t sculpt...” [2]

I am disappointed with me, you, politics, family, more to the point, I am disappointed with everything. Why talk about Conceptual Disappointment? It’s pretentious and foolish, and conceptual is a word that is completely redundant, so I won’t. Still, Conceptual Disappointment gives me great pleasure to pronounce and I’m surprised by how fellow workers in my trade have so easily joined in on the oral joy of uttering the word when suitable. Conceptual Disappointment carries a notion of nostalgic longing for a material no longer used and the impossible urge for *craftsmanship*. 1920, in Norway, there were 378 registered artists, year 2000 there were 3312 artists registered, that is a greater rate of increase than for the human population, and this only in Norway. The biggest increase occurred in the late 60’s when the conceptualist became an ism - the boom toured the world.[3]

“This is Victor Boulet, he is the man behind The Institute of Social Hypocrisy! Which is now a book?” [4]

When the two year performance piece, The Institute of Social Hypocrisy, was to end, I would know if I had succeeded in making it into a popular or even a trendy art brand. I would enter a world of pain by just closing it’s doors prematurely in order to make my art. So this is what I did. (Few have understood this, if any.)

I projected and promoted a character being an artist working on a beach or in an apartment in Paris. My aim was to create a prejudiced reaction which was rooted within their unconscious jealousy and hostility. This becomes their disappointment. This illusion would carve a deeper and more profound hypocrisy, a hypocrisy based on judgment of one another. Not the hypocrisy that could be identified elsewhere, but your own!

Producing work that can be traced back to you as the creator, means you have found your style, good on you, I for one think it’s restricting, I avoid it, if not, people expect you to continue producing the same type of work so they can feel happy and content with their own pitiful understanding of what you might be all about. This is human comfort, and it is default within us all. You know where you’re going and you know what you’re getting. i.e. In the time after The Institute of Social Hypocrisy, I am a disappointment because I don’t pass your default quality control.

Hard core rebel can’t look me into the eyes, this being is a radical with rotting teeth. Plonk is my opinion.

Moving on. He is disappointed with my thought.

No eye contact is the price I have to pay. I actually pre-paid for that.

Conceptual disappointment, the .com for future perpetrators.[5]

The last exhibition I saw in Paris was horrific, it reminded me of a show that I had just seen in Berlin, and it looked like the same work I had also recently encountered in an artist's studio. Why doesn't someone object to our conformist way of thinking / doing? In a gallery where I would like to be represented, hung a rubbish Elisabeth Peyton. My mother makes better art. Just so you know, she has been an art teacher for some 40 years. Why hang a water colour, by her, three flowers in a pot to be exact, in that gallery, today? (I know the answer) I did look at the framing and think, nice, in fact they know what they are doing here, they can make shit shine. So, I should be represented here?!

The other side of the gallery, a wall-hung work by Thomas Hirschhorn, newspaper clippings, taped onto cardboard, fashion models next to very dead people of arabic descent. This is not radical, it's downright stupid and after reading his essay Unshared Authorship [6] I am wondering if he simply needs a friend not connected to art, like a baker. Is that an other?

A group show in Paris, four grown up men, a NYC gallerist, an alternative-space man, a curator in residency and the curator of the show. Death is used twice in the title for the exhibition, and the curator was explaining why. He said something like, -It was even cooler than death. How can one be cooler than death, I asked? No reply. I also saw four screws in the wall, I guess he had not seen them whilst installing, so I cynically pointed them out, -I like the screws, do they belong to the death painting below? He just cringed, and I think he thought very little of me. Later, the four adult men stood around the center piece, an object, a sculpture made of metal, wool and other artsy materials. The gallerist from NYC said, - I LIKE THAT. The two other men agreed. I thought, - Are you guys out of your minds? I left. The man responsible for the poor show about earth, wind and death is a gallerist / curator / art historian / critic. When one is armed with all those art credentials, shouldn't one at least try to make a show with a small drop of ambition and some kind of content? What was that show all about? Other than a good opportunity being wasted. Should I expect more today? Or is that it? Oh, disappointment.

If you set your foot into a gallery today you also enter somebody's network, and this network decides what is in front of you. The art we are confronted with is quite possibly art produced by a friend of a friend shown in conjunction with a favour. In fact art is all about favours. It's trading and knowing who to trade with. And this has always been the agenda. Why be disappointed? Simply because I expect more. By having immense expectations one will also experience deep disappointments. Expecting greatness is also a tad innocent, and the resulting disappointment naïve, but accepting what is on display is idiotic.

I was in Berlin for their annual Gallery weekend, the last art bohemia according to a record sleeve designer from London featured on Art Forum's party picture web page. Rather the last european buck being spent, I thought. I stood in the sun at Douglas Gordon's new artpowertemple, a complex of studios, galleries and even a cafe. For the long concrete wall in the courtyard, he had apparently commissioned his friend, Rirkrit to make a piece, big helvetica letters stuck onto the wall, it read: COME TOGETHER. And there we were, coming together in a joyful capitalistic manner, drinking organic juice made by another professor at the Frankfurt school of art? Arts?

An art student visited me in Paris a while back, we talked about the obvious, he said something like, - When I get famous I'll do this and that. Fame, is that it?

Who's his professor? Does he need a professor?

The same student came to one of my lectures / performances. I talked, among other things, about the art and meat market, and this before the horse meat scandal. After the

lecture the student mentioned, -I'm not sure personal interests has got anything to do with art. What is he saying? What has this young hopeful learned? Will this educated artist change our perspective of how we can understand our world if personal interests can not be part of one's art? What should be part of it then? Other artist's interests? This worries me.[7]

Tino Sehgal said, - The avant-garde, radical artists of today protest against this and that, but end up producing another art object, installing it in a gallery, leaning, hanging or destroyed, the latter a sad trend, in the white cube for sale, yes, for sale![8] I do this as well, rather disappointing, no? And not at all avant-garde. And his art, people, talking in a funny manner, somewhere, to each other. Mr Sehgal is up for the Turner Prize 2013, what is he actually saying, was that a critique or just another artist biting the hypocritical dust? One cannot be avant-garde today in my opinion. Bourgeois avant-gardism is today a misunderstood, hypocritically accepted, bad boy of capitalism. So Gary Hume has made new paintings inspired by a magazine he found at a deli in NYC featuring Osama Bin Laden, this neu canon of work will also be shown in a prominent New York City gallery, that is poppycock. Good grief, how disappointing. What year is this again?[9]

Art is just a mirror for what one sees, reads and then reacts to? Is that it?

Our world does not need another black monochrome or an image of a police baton to show conflict within our system, that is just banal, pseudo political nonsense. Those types of work do nothing other than trick their way into a collector's mansion. This meaningless path of economic survival is pathetic if you're not on an art grant like myself.

(What will I do in the near future?)

Today's art commodities from artist's premature successes are the bases for our world art history. What will the children of our children think when they are exposed to an Erwin Wurm, an Olafur Eliasson, an Alex Israel or even Simon Cowell in 2113? (and many more) All entertainment and not at all art. And Billy Childish? He blatantly copies Van Gogh and Munch, it's so obtuse that I actually like the work! Now 50, I hope he survives this sudden career explosion, which is much criticized in Berlin by people who take it personally for all the wrong reasons. His work is so much better than any artist referring to a research they have done into absolutely over-researched material within the art world and that, with the mandatory guidance of a dead philosopher or a dead architect being dropped into their tedious essays / press releases or / and conversations. Early 90s Jutta Koether wrote a cover story on Billy Childish for Artscribe, will that change anybody's prejudging hypocritical minds? More power to him!

"There is a lot of hypocrisy out there" [10]

It has also come to my attention that certain dealers, curators, editors and even art-blogs have an obsession with students coming out of Frankfurt. Amazing to see this, because when the trend is over there will be too many young hipster-blogfriendly-famous artist made redundant. What happened with the students out of Leipzig? I have, first-hand, witnessed a dealer laughing and calling a young painter from Leipzig a loser. Does a punctured trend, created by the same dealer(s) give them the right to insult the people of that period? This is a catastrophe, no? And when a well-established curator kicks tarmac after an opening at a pompous gallery because he was not recognized by the artist, that disappoints me beyond words. And these are the people that I need. I am speechless at this moment. @Michael Sanchez, - yes, of course we are living in an aftermath. Some say terazzo tiles, I say Dubuffet.[11] When smartphone screens dictate the art we look at and the web hit rate is a gallerist's main aim, it means that google analytics has become the basis for curating. I feel a massive wave of disappointment.

Is there hope for our future of art, do we need hope? Or do we find ourselves in the time of post-hope, neo-hope, hyper-hope, late-hopeism or is it simply a hopeful blog curated by someone still cool enough to blog, until pushed aside by a new tattooed hopeful talented young hope, is that our hope? Please do not be fooled into believing that what is in front of you is your truth, it might just be someone else's frenetic need for acceptance, yours.

This text might digress, or is that part of my practice? yes it is! Should I end this text by expressing a longing for normality? No, I can't do that. Will this text do anything for me other than be judged as cynical? Which reminds me of the time when I had a coffee with a colleague / competitor in early 2009 and explained The Institute of Social Hypocrisy's reasons for being. The person looked at me with big bulging eyes and stuttered, - WHAT ABOUT YOUR ART CAREER, WATCH IT! I answered, - I'm 40 years old, I have nothing that even resembles an art career, what the hell can I lose? And that makes me type this digression, The Guardians clown critic manages to write "*You long for the world as it is, rather than how others see it.*" And Adrian Searle is God? [12] And I'll end with a Jean Sibelius quote, *Why listen to a critic? Nobody has ever made a sculpture in honor of one!* [13] If Goya had died the same age as Schubert we would have known him only as Goya the portrait painter and not the artist we all know him as today. The present just passed by, time, the only answer; for crying out loud be patient if not you'll be as disappointed as only fuck and myself can be.

Appendix

1. Nairy Baghramian, Room to live. Jörg Heiser, Frieze magazine, Issue 131 May 2010
 2. From a video interview w. Vito Acconci. Conceptual Paradise. Stefan Römer 2005.
 3. Unknown source, found in a book / online, in conjunction with the lecture "The Rise and the Fall of The Institute of Social Hypocrisy" given at the Art Academy, Oslo 2011.
 4. A curator, friend introducing me to someone at an art bazaar. Paris 2012.
 5. A part of the Adidas Monger text for Kronos. Victor Boulet 2012. Estate of by Antenne Publishing
 6. Unshared Authorship by Thomas Hirschhorn for The Gramsci Monument, NYC 2013
 7. The student in question is strong and determined. That is why he is mentioned.
 8. You Tube video flick, Serpentine Gallery 20?
 9. Gary Hume: 'I couldn't hold down a job. That's why I became an artist'
Sean O'Hagan The Observer, Saturday 18 May 2013
 10. An artist said this when I met him for the first time with an ISH proposal. He is, was and will sadly always be right. Bar Italia London 2009
 11. Michael Sanchez on 2011: Art and Transmission, Art Forum June 2013
 12. Venice Biennale: how much is that fox in the mini-mart? Adrian Searle, The Guardian, Sunday 2 June 2013
 13. Jean Sibelius (1865-1957) an quote I heard in 1991, not sure where it derives from.
- (ps. I am disappointed that there aren't any footnotes by G. Agamben, T. Adorno or K. Marx)
(pps. Thank you Kjell)