

D-Sides

when is
the fucking
show?

Cold Bacon

The question is how to reconcile the conflicting and codependent relationship between form and meaning. Naked human thought is naturally digressive, imperfect, unlimited? It is unformed. And as such it can hardly be shared from one to another. Form, then, is the cast into which our molten thoughts are poured; that which is liquid becomes solid. And can now be touched, handled, shared. But how much is lost in this process of transmission? How closely does what we say match what we mean? A faithful account of even the most basic feeling, like my desire for toast, would require as many words as are in a dictionary. And then we would need [sound and color](#). Taste. And crunch. So many words, so much information, it would mean everything—and therefore nothing. But form, like a sentence or a paragraph, helps us to make any sense at all. It takes us down [a path to somewhere](#). And where we [would stray](#), form brings us back.

Form unifies. The meter of a poem or the repetitive schemes in an Ozu film are good, not because they make the story more accurate or complete, but because they give pleasure and help us to feel and to remember.

So form is good. I wish I had more of it. But what about the other stuff? That isn't formed. That wants to remain liquid. The moment I write it down [it's wrong](#)? Is this where hypertext can offer some escape. When I create a link I connect two different pages as if by a small invisible stream. A new form emerges consisting of two files linked together. And like a stream of water, a thoughtful link follows one direction, by gravity. Without this force there would be no current, and movement arbitrary. And perhaps pointless even. But as it is we can float down the stream from one page to another. For as long [as we want](#). But it's also good to work our way back to [the original page](#) with its original goals and determination, lest hypertext become a mere excuse for floating happily downstream.

The idea then, of hypertext, of the internet, of connectivity, is to [enjoy the sensation](#) of completeness and incompleteness both in the same space. Is this the pursuit or the avoidance of truth?

April 2007

Labor
Shop Supply
Sub
Tax
Total

THIS IS NOT AN INVOICE- DO NOT PAY

See **reverse side for Warranty Information**

Page 1 of 1

FIRESTONE COMPLETE AUTO CARE LASER - 9 48-11-803-8 8 REV. 10/06

5/16/07 Greenpeace builds Noah's Ark replica on Mount Ararat

Ok the fact that there actually is no Mount Ararat is of little consequence. Ararat is a region of mountains and there is no one mountain named Mount Ararat. But it doesn't matter. We don't need to know this.

Our lives will be perfectly the same whether we know this or not. And explaining it all would certainly take more space than a simple headline wants.

But we must have a headline. We must feel we understand. We must have [closure](#). An image of a half-built ark jutting out of the side of some bush covered dune. What does your ark look like? Mine's on Mount Ararat.

“Now how can I, weak vessel whose only ballast is a cargo of interrogations past which life swirls with a thunder of derisively contradictory replies, pretend to say whether Priscilla ought to have had conscience-qualms or not? Am I not deafened by the roar of answers, all seemingly so right yet all so different, that the simplest question brings? And would not the answering roar to anything [so complicated](#) as a question about conscience-qualms deafen me for ever?”

—Elizabeth Von Arnim

I will also admit that once a thought is formed it is no longer mine, but takes on a life of its own. [It has needs](#), which I may or may not be able to meet. But if I keep my thoughts still warm, as drafts and drafts to be reborn, then hypertext and e-mail, may help let in the help I need. To create new streams. To vent the steam.



and, adjustment to cooking

• **Do not exceed 350°F.**

or carton: pull back corner i

“For an instant, I thought that Richard Madden in some way had penetrated my desperate plan. Very quickly, I understood that was impossible. The instructions to turn always to the left reminded me that such was the common procedure for discovering the central point of certain labyrinths. I have some understanding of labyrinths: not for nothing am I the great grandson of that Ts’ui Pên who was governor of Yunnan and who renounced worldly power in order to write a novel that might be even more populous than the Hung Lu Meng and to construct a labyrinth in which all men would become lost. Thirteen years he dedicated to these heterogeneous tasks, but the hand of a stranger murdered him—and his novel was [incoherent](#) and no one found the labyrinth.”

– JLB

“Beneath English trees I meditated on that lost maze: I imagined it inviolate and perfect at the secret crest of a mountain; I imagined it erased by rice fields or beneath the water; I imagined it infinite, no longer composed of octagonal kiosks and returning paths, but of rivers and provinces and kingdoms . . . I thought of a labyrinth of labyrinths, of one sinuous spreading labyrinth that would encompass the past and the future and in some way involve the stars. Absorbed in these illusory images, I forgot my destiny of one pursued. I felt myself to be, for an unknown period of time, an abstract perceiver of the world. The vague, living countryside, the moon, the remains of the day worked on me, as well as the slope of the road which eliminated any possibility of weariness.”

— JLB

You *know* someone got your email. They just are not answering. You *know* someone sees you called their cell phone. They just are not picking up. How does this make you feel?

Is there a mutual understanding? We all do this to each other. We all know that we all do this to each other. Does that make it hurt any less? Do you wonder sometimes when will they pick up the phone and call you back? Have they forgotten you? And what of the messages on *your* little phone? Who have you disappointed?

I worry about these things. Usually during the night.

In the old days, attempts at communication required more effort, so they were fewer. This meant that every attempt must be met with a reply. Now, there is just too much. We, therefore accept that with so many attempts at communication, it is impossible to respond to each one promptly. We arrive at a mutual understanding, a tolerance, a lenience, an expectation that our expectations will not be met. Leading to a devaluation of this form of interaction. It seems there is no other way. We become inured to each others' attempts to reach out to one another, by email, and by phone. Is this true?

“Much time has passed since I received your last letter. Please don’t hold that against me; first it was work, then a number of interruptions, and finally poor health that again and again kept me from answering, because I wanted my answer to come to you out of peaceful and happy days. Now I feel somewhat better again (the beginning of spring with its moody, bad-tempered transitions was hard to bear here too) and once again, dear Mr. Kappus, I can greet you and talk to you (which I do with real pleasure) about this and that in response to your letter, as well as I can.”

–Rilke

When a friend calls to me from the road
And slows his horse to a meaning walk,
I don't stand still and look around
On all the hills I haven't hoed,
And shout from where I am, What is it?
No, not as there is a time to talk.
I thrust my hoe in the mellow ground,
Blade-end up and five feet tall,
And plod: I go up to the stone wall
For a friendly visit.

I have trouble because whenever I think of something old I feel a sense of impending loss. Traditions being lost. Animals going [extinct](#). Loss. But maybe it's OK after all, because the current present will become the old some day. So as time passes there will always be more old to look back on. We can never RUN OUT of old. So instead of [looking disapprovingly](#) at the new, we should see it as future cool old stuff.

Old factories. Old rail yards. That was for them just the present, what today is for us. Nothing special? Maybe instead of lamenting the passage of time, we should be thankful it doesn't stop, huh? [What would that look like?](#)

*Method of receiving the Electrical Shock from
a Cat.*

Place the left hand under the throat, with the middle finger and thumb slightly pressing the bones of the animal's shoulder, then gently passing the right hand along the back, sensible electrical shocks will be felt in the left hand, and very distinct discharges may be obtained by touching the tips of the ears, after applying friction to the back: the same may be obtained from the foot.

To recover a Fly after being drowned several hours.

A fly drowned in water, wine, ale, or beer, and so thoroughly dead, being laid overhead in chalk crushed very fine, or warm ashes, (but they must not be burning, or very hot,) will recover and live again.

Valuable Transformation.

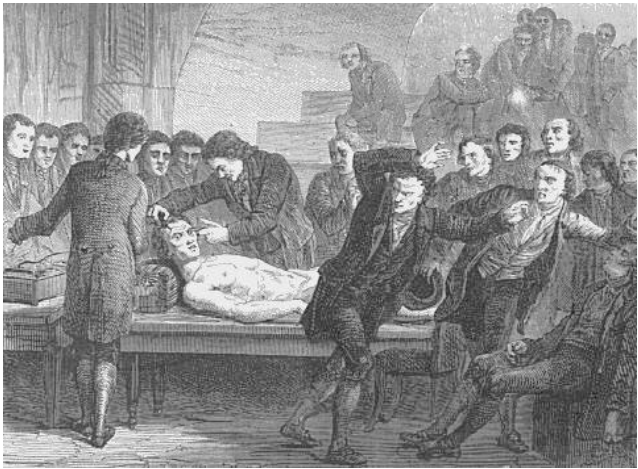
Pour half an ounce of diluted nitro-muriate of gold into an ale-glass, and immerse in it a piece of very smooth charcoal: expose the glass to the rays of the sun, in a warm place. The charcoal will very soon be covered over with a beautiful golden coat. Take it out with a foreceps, dry it, and enclose it in a glass for shew.

The exploits of nineteenth century scientists with electrical batteries and corpses.

Beautiful Electrical Experiment.

Take some oxalate of lime, obtained by precipitation, well washed, and dried in a Wedgewood's basin at a temperature of 300 degrees, until so dry as not to render a cold glass plate, placed over it, dim. Stir it with a platina spatula; in a few moments, by friction against the metal, it will become so strongly

Galvanic Reanimation of the Dead



“Le docteur Ure galvanisant le corps de l’assassin Clydsdale.”

An engraving from Les merveilles de la Science (1867) by Louis Figuier

And so it was that, for a long time afterwards, when I lay awake at night and revived old memories of Combray, I saw no more of it than this sort of luminous panel, sharply defined against a vague and shadowy background, like the panels which the glow of a Bengal light or a searchlight beam will cut out and illuminate in a building the other parts of which remain plunged in darkness: broad enough at its base, the little parlour, the dining-room, the opening of the dark path from which M. Swann, the unwitting author of my sufferings,

Vincent Yu/Associated Press

Hong Kong University Medical Center last
Kong after a trade mission to Beijing.

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Photographs by Chester Higgins Jr./The New York Times

Mark Beasley, one of the members of the Creative Time organization, at
a site of a 2005 art exhibition called "The Plain of Heaven."

“This kind of entrenchment process can help explain the slide in the culture of authenticity. The self-centered forms are deviant, as we saw, in two respects. They tend to center fulfillment on the individual, making his or her affiliations purely instrumental; they push, in other words, to a social atomism. And they tend to see fulfillments as just of the self, neglecting or delegitimizing the demands that come from beyond our own desires or aspirations, be they from history, tradition, society, nature or God; they foster, in other words, a radical anthropocentrism.

It is not hard to see how both of these stances come to be entrenched in modern industrial societies. From its very inception, this kind of society has involved mobility, at first of peasants off the land and to cities, and then across oceans and continents to new countries, and finally, today, from city to city following employment opportunities. Mobility is in a sense forced on us. Old ties are broken down. At the same time, city dwelling is transformed by the immense concentrations of population of the modern metropolis. By its very nature, this involves much more impersonal and casual contact, in place of the more intense, face-to-face relations in earlier times. All this cannot but generate a culture in which the outlook of social atomism becomes more and more entrenched.”

– Charles Taylor

Sample # 12428

- >i was originally going to reply to the sentiment by not replying (ha), but
- >thought it may not be obvious enough.
- >
- >i get pissed if my question is important and not being answered, but
- >certain people are terrible about corresponding and others are fine at it.
- >i think this has been true always, before phone or email.

“Although there is a bent or slide towards the stance of dominance, for all the reasons mentioned above, nothing says that we have to live our technology this way. The other modes are open. The prospect we face here is a struggle, in which these different modes of enframing content. With authenticity, the contest was between flatter and fuller modes of self-fulfillment; here it pits the different frameworks against each other. Once again, I am proposing that instead of seeing our predicament as fated to generate a drive for ever-increasing technological control, which we will then either rejoice or bemoan depending on our outlook, we understand it as open to contestation, as a locus of probably unending struggle.”

– Charles Taylor



“The girl and the woman, in their new, individual unfolding, will only in passing be imitators of male behavior and misbehavior and repeaters of male professions. After the uncertainty of such transitions, it will become obvious that women were going through the abundance and variation of those (often ridiculous) disguises just so that they could purify their own essential nature and wash out the deforming influences of the other sex. Women, in whom life lingers and dwells more immediately, more fruitfully, and more confidently, must surely have become ripper and more human in their depths than light, easygoing man, who is not pulled down beneath the surface of life by the weight of any bodily fruit and who, arrogant and hasty, undervalues what he thinks he loves. This humanity of woman, carried in her womb through all her suffering and humiliation, will come to light when she has stripped off the conventions of mere femaleness in the transformations of her outward status, and those men who do not yet feel it approaching will be astonished by it. Someday (and even now, especially in the countries of northern Europe, trustworthy signs are already speaking and shining), someday there will be girls and women whose name will no longer mean the mere opposite of the male, but something in itself, something that makes one think not of any complement and limit, but only life and reality: the female human being.”

—Rilke

Will file sharing on the internet and MP3's ruin music? Will the "album" as we know it go away? Has it done already? Musicians can now dribble out singles rather than work over time to actually build a cohesive whole. Like with email and I suppose now texting, but now it's music? I'm not saying a hit song is bad. I'm just saying [albums](#) are good. I want to see [more of them](#). And how often is it the case where your favorite song ends up being anything but the one that made you buy the album in the first place?

As we get smaller and smaller with our screens and with our production effort, it resurrects the question of whether [too much dilution](#) of artistic production will lead to less collective focus. Will there be a diminishing of mass spectacle. Like if the Catholics only had bunch of small churches—and were never willing to put [all the money](#) into one big one like St. Peter's in Rome. Can you imagine? What would Tolstoy say of all this user generated content? Would he would rejoice and proclaim the [art of the future](#) is here? [I hesitate](#).

The loss of retail stores is also of concern. I miss the knowledgeable guy behind the counter. Anonymous, unseen reviewers can't be trusted. Can they? We've talked about this before. Walking around the store. Glancing. Thumbing. [Finding](#). Even just the journey to the store itself and getting lost. I stepped in gum but I survived? Remember? And now with so much out there, why bother being choosy when there is [unlimited much choice](#). And now it's all in a cloud anyway. Who commits to a cloud?

And this is somewhat of a tangent, but let me also say the internet is dangerous because I get drunk and send [wrong signals](#). And they have my credit card too. Jesus Christ.

On the plus side, the internet is very good at [shame](#).

April 2007



there is no doubt that people
tury, as Hunt clearly demonstra
a new aversion to all sorts of
barbarities that previous centur

**People in the 18th
century developed
an aversion to all
sorts of cruelties
that previous
centuries had
taken for granted.**

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■ In 1985, Coca-Cola Co. announced it was changing the secret flavor formula for Coke, but public reaction later forced the company to resume selling the original version.

>

>have you read Deleuze?

>

>k

My Opinion On The Fiery Furnaces

by Me

Okay, I've listened to their second album Blueberry Boat so many times now I couldn't even tell you. I've listened to it sitting, lying down, walking, pacing, smoking on a stairs, driving, and being driven. There is nothing I can say about this album which needs saying. Lyrics and notes are subjected to a kind of x-treme creative emphasis, which could be irritating but is not. To just call it experimental seems [hardly sufficient](#). I am no musicologist nor was I meant to be. But this album kicks ass.

But what about [Bill's Opinion](#).

Bill's Opinion On BITTER TEA

by Bill

it's pretty enjoyable, but it's not COMPLEX, like Blueberry Boat and Rehearsing My Choir (the one with their grandmother, which is an [absolute scream](#)). Still, I really like this band, for me they're the most inventive band on the planet at the moment. Bitter Tea was recorded so long ago though, who knows what they're doing now. [Their live gigs](#) have been punk thrashouts. Hard to believe, but they run thru their songs with drums and guitars. I wonder if any new album will be more like that. Very interesting band.

Bill

But what about [Bill's Opinion On My Opinion of Bill's Opion On The Fiery Furnaces](#)? That's what I think everyone really wants to know?

Bill's Opinion On My Opinion of Bill's Opinion On The Fiery Furnaces

to Me

Hey, that's funny, putting my comments up -- but I don't mind.

Now, really, you shouldn't go to any trouble with putting MP3s, etc, up -- though obviously it's enjoyable for you. And I wouldn't mind just having a quick listen to these bands, to see if I like them before going out and buying.

I did indeed buy a Blonde Redhead album the other day. Not sure which one (it's not handy next to me at the moment), but I chose the earliest one the store had -- it's from 97 I think. So if I like it I can go in chronological order. Haven't played it yet.

I've been spinning new Peter Bjorn and John album. I found their single "Let's call the whole thing off" intriguing hearing it on the radio, so bought the album. I do like indie pop/rock, but sometimes I think it's just not "enough" in a way, kinda surface, it can let me down. Like Delgados last album (from '04), the only one of theirs I have -- it's enjoyable, but I can also just put it away and not care. Peter Bjorn and John has 4 or 5 really wonderful tracks on it, and the rest are filler. It's the reason I've avoided Belle & Sebastian, because I think that I may enjoy them but ultimately they'll let me down, by being too twee or superficial, etc.

Anyway, it's all good fun -- I do love my music, it's good to relax with it.

Bill

“Late in the second section, Belaño takes up residency in Spain. He becomes so peeved by a local book critic that a letter to the editor seems hardly sufficient: he proposes a duel.”

in other news, I saw the fiery furnaces last night. it was the most unusual show. They played for two hours solid, each song blending into the next in a style entirely new. very good but exhausting even to watch. – sarita

People spend more time in front of the screen now than before, and this means less time spent not in front of the screen unlike before. This is obviously maybe not helpful and there is [no detailed explanation](#).

“But wait,” you say. “The internet allows like-minded people to find each other, get together, form groups, societies, go camping, hunting and fishing, [other stuff even](#).”

If one associates exclusively with [others of like mind](#), divergent ideas are less likely to meet (bump) and be reconciled, by a shared external force, namely beer. Instead, a kind of ideological incest takes place in which more and more specific views are affirmed at the expense of evolving. Anything is better than this. Even just having a rock fall on your head, for example, can be instructive.

This brings us back (for the millionth time, I know) to the ill-fated notion of being able to buy just a few musical tracks rather than an entire album. Remember being at the mercy of the local radio DJ? If you couldn't find a radio DJ who could satisfy you, then that was a clue you lived in the wrong city. Now how will anyone know they live in the wrong city anymore?

Soon we will all be at our own myopic mercy. What will we do next start downloading individual notes. G flat.

It doesn't have to be this way.

March 2007

The proof that something is wrong with [insert currently trending mode of communication here] is when you finally do physically see a person you've been [communicating with] for [insert length of time], it's almost as though there have been two entirely different relationships going on, the internet one, and the other one. And they are way not the same. And this isn't necessarily a bad thing, but how stupid is it to have believed those two relationships were the same? Stupid.

“So that in all there will be in Europe, say, one hundred and twenty thousand painters; and there are probably as many musicians and as many literary artists. If these three hundred and sixty thousand individuals produce three works a year each (and many of them produce ten or more), then each year yields over a million so-called works of art. How many, then, must have been produced in the last ten years, and how many in the whole time since upper-class art broke off from the art of the whole people? Evidently millions. Yet who of all the connoisseurs of art has received impressions from all these pseudo works of art? Not to mention all the laboring classes who have no conception of these productions, even people of the upper classes cannot know one in a thousand of them all, and cannot remember those they have known. These works all appear under the guise of art, produce no impression on anyone (except when they serve as pastimes for the idle crowd of rich people), and vanish utterly.”

— Tolstoy

“That is what the defenders of our exclusive art say. But I think they do not themselves believe it. They cannot help knowing that fine art can arise only on the slavery of the masses of the people, and can continue only as long as the slavery lasts, and they cannot help knowing that only under conditions of intense labor for the workers can specialists—writers, musicians, dancers, and actors—arrive at that finer degree of perfection to which they do attain, or produce their refined works of art; and only under the same condition can there be a fine public to esteem such productions. Free the slaves of capital, and it will be impossible to produce such refined art.”

– Tolstoy

“People think that if there are no special art schools the technique of art will deteriorate. Undoubtedly, if by technique we understand those complications of art which are now considered an excellence, it will deteriorate; but if by technique is understood clearness, beauty, simplicity, and compression in works of art, then, even if the elements of drawing and music were not to be taught in the national schools, the technique will not only not deteriorate but, as is shown by all peasant art, will be a hundred times better. It will be improved, because all the artist of genius now hidden among the masses will become producers of art and will give models of excellence, which (as has always been the case) will be the best schools of technique for their successors. For every true artist even now learns his technique chiefly not in the schools, but in life, from the examples of the great masters; then—when the produces of art will be the best artist of the whole nation, and there will be more such examples, and they will be more accessible—such part of the school training as the future artist will lose will be a hundredfold compensated for by the training he will receive from the numerous examples of good art diffused in society.”

“The artist of the future will live the common life of man, earning his subsistence by some kind of labor. The fruits of that highest spiritual strength which passes through him he will try to share with the greatest possible number of people, for in such transmission to others of the feelings that have arisen in him he will find his happiness and his area. The artist of the future will be unable to understand how an artist, whose chief delight is in the wide diffusion of his works, could give them only in exchange for a certain payment.”

— Tolstoy

No, but you shouldn't. This is the art of the future. It has to do with the so-called "power of one." Rilke:

"A man taken out of his room and, almost without preparation or transition, placed on the heights of a great mountain range, would feel something like that: an unequalled insecurity, an abandonment to the nameless, would almost annihilate him. He would feel he was falling or think he was being catapulted out into space or exploded into a thousand pieces: what a colossal lie his brain would have to invent in order to catch up with and explain the situation of his senses. That is how all distances, all measures, change for the person who becomes solitary; many of these changes occur suddenly and then, as with the man on the mountaintop, unusual fantasies and strange feelings arise, which seem to grow out beyond all that is bearable. But it is necessary for us to experience that too. We must accept our reality as vastly as we possibly can; everything, even the unprecedented, must be possible within it. This is in the end the only kind of courage that is required of us: the courage to face the strangest, most unusual, most inexplicable experiences that can meet us. The fact that people have in this sense been cowardly has done infinite harm to life; the experiences that are called "apparitions," the whole so-called "spirit world," death, all these Things that are so closely related to us, have through our daily defensiveness been so entirely pushed out of life that the senses with which we might have been able to grasp them have atrophied. To say nothing of God. But the fear of the inexplicable has not only impoverished the reality of the individual; it has also narrowed the relationship between one human being and another, which has as it were been lifted out of the riverbed of infinite possibilities and set down in a fallow place on the bank, where nothing happens."

from an email I received:

haha. i've had a few problems that have arrived from being irresponsible on the internet. nothing i've gotten into real trouble for or anything, but i have lost a few friends.

my problem with the internet are, apparently, flirtations of the past. which are why i deleted my dumb LJ that i've kept for years.

but

i haven't really let it die completely. during the day... i undelete it. and at night i delete it again.
not often enough to actually do anything with it, just enough to check up on things
and see who notices.

anyway. i've been found out. and every little thing that i've done wrong and cared to tell him about has been repeated to me as if i were being asked to repent all of my ungodly sins.

as far as flirting being an issue?
i think it's pretty harmless. it's not like i'm married.

DEAR GOLDBACON,

WE MISS YOUR WEBSITE AND GMAIL
EMAILS HERE. A WEEK IN SPAIN HAS
PROVED THAT WE ARE NOT COMPLETELY
DEPENDENT ON THE INTERNET. WE KNOW
MAYBE WE ARE NUTS THOUGH. IT IS
DIFFICULT TO ACT SPANISH WHEN YOU
COME FROM ABROAD. OK, IT IS NOT
EXACTLY SPAIN WHERE WE ARE NOW (OR
RATHER, SPAIN IS A BROAD NOTION, AN
USELESS IDEA, A CHIMERA). THIS IS A
TOWN SUNK IN THE DEEPEST IRREALITY OF
A FANCY COUNTRY. NAMED PONFERRADA
(FROM THE OLD LATIN "IRON BRIDGE", "PONS
FERRATA"). WEATHER IS NOT NICE HERE
YET. WE HOPE YOU ARE DOING FINE THERE.

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René Borel
Olivier Guimard - La Havane, Cuba - 1982
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Images en France / PM 1484

BEST,

MR. and MRS. BRIZAS-MIRO

Albato



WILLIAM MANUEL
1422 WOODVINE DR.
HOUSTON, TX 77055

U.S.A.



[YouTube Vigilantes](#)
[Hello Kitty](#)

the plan...

is for you to go over to that bookstore and find my book there – wherever they put it – and tell them i told you to just take it and not charge you. they had three of them on consignment, but they didn't sell! and now i don't live there anymore. and so why shouldn't my myspace friends just take the copies? so [just take one](#), if you want, and i can direct others to collect the other two.

Hmmm...

i accept your mission with the condition that i may also ask you at a time of my choosing to go on an amusing mission of my choice.

but i think they are closed today bc of the memorial day holiday.
(i just tried to call.)

btw, in real life i am actually shy so i will do my best with the mission. i'm just not sure [how demanding i can be](#) . (as per the instructions).

mission accomplished.

although it was somewhat awkward. let me recreate. you= fly on wall watching girl walk up to counter.

girl: umm... so i have an unusual question to ask. my friend has a book that he told me to pick up here that the copies were not sold.

man: what's the name of the book?

girl: cold bacon or it's by cold bacon or something like that.

man: let's look together. here it is. (pick up 3 copies)

girl: umm... so he told me to take just one. others will be here for the others.

brief discussion amongst employees. yes it's ok to take the book as long as a note is written to other employee that it was taken not bought.

other employee: so he or she told you that it's ok to take the book?

girl: umm yeah. he – i think it's a he – said it was ok to take the book. really we've just been writing on the internet so i don't really know who cold bacon is. ummm yeah. (girl thinks that store employees think she is crazy bc most people don't admit to having conversations with unknown internet friends.)



"Listen to it crackle, brother!"

Talking about writing with hands...

One is that I'm lazy and don't want to write any unnecessary stuff and have to go back and cross it out. So it encourages me to go slower. And get each sentence right (or at least more properly wrong), one thought at a time as I build forward. Typing is the opposite. I tend to just type away whatever crap wants to come out. This habit is reinforced by a built-in sense of security of knowing I'll soon be going back and making corrections. The result is a lot of sentences, most of them bad. This means more revision, which is fine, but [when I do go back](#), it's difficult to be in the [exact mental](#) state as before. This means more inconsistencies, like trying to weld together [different patches of steel](#). We end up with things more like to be called juggernaut than sleek or elegant.

And to simply say [typing is faster](#) than writing by hand is misleading. Because it doesn't account for scribble or shorthand, which is essential for joining thoughts together as quickly and reliably as possible. With shorthand I need only make the mark of an idea (which I [or my descendents](#) will understand later) [as quickly as possible](#) before the flicker of the next idea goes dim. At a keyboard, I conceive of a phrase or sentence but then there is this artificially imposed period of "typing it out time," which has more to do with finger moving than thinking. My full brain is not engaged in the one single effort of conceiving and executing a thought to completion. If the word is too hard to spell I may get sidetracked. Spellchecker is fascinating to me and sometimes I just stare at all the similarly spelled words in amusement. Then my leg falls asleep and I get back pains. If the word is too long I may get anxious before I finish typing it, and have to check email. And various other distractions. Whole trains, of thought, are lost.

On a real page of paper, I can literally see the shape of things as they form relationships. I can see the writing for what it is, a spatial relationship of words on a page, of interrelated [ideas and gestures](#). Rather than the simple left to right of word processing. The freedom to scribble here and there. Cross out, cross in. Up, down. Heavy, light. Zibble. All of these freedoms are not incidental trivialities but are actually [more in tune](#) with our natural brain. Says me. Ideas come from brains. Brain connected to hand. And nowhere in any of this is Times New Roman.

It's a shame [I never do it anymore.](#)

April 2007

This will be very obvious, of course, but I think distance and time is essential to the editing process. One must get away from something in order to see it more objectively. For example, if I have a baby and someone threatens to take it away from me, I will probably call the police. That's because I've only known him a few months. Now if I have a twenty-two year old, and someone threatens to take him away, I will probably ask if there's anything else I can do for them. Objectivity.

April 2007

I have no idea what I'm talking about. This is free isn't it? I mean you're not paying for this, right?

Not just speed but you are compelled to type faster in order to finish a sentence. Because of the simple fact it's mentally uncomfortable to physically leave your keyboard in the middle of a sentence you tend to finish every one and sometimes this is not for the best. You rush and this rushing can make some sentences end badly. This is not a revelation, I know but a slightly different way of looking at the problem. You know, the problem from the other page?

but writing by hand is more work for me...and if i'm writing fast, i can't read it later. flaws inherant in the system. PLUS, what spills out of my brain onto paper is not gold. it needs lots of rework and time and me looking at it, typing different stuff, seeing how it looks, etc. so the typing is much more my style. but maybe that's cause writing by hand is too much like drawing, which is a totally different thing to me, and doesn't work for me unless it's a totally different thing.

but i don't write anymore either, so ya know. whatev.

And the thing is, at this point, I have no idea who it was who wrote this.

Diaspora!

“If only they could be more reverent toward their own fruitfulness, which is essentially one, whether it is manifested as mental or physical; for mental creation too arises from the physical, is of one nature with it and only like a softer, more enraptured and more eternal repetition of bodily delight.”

– Rilke

“Descartes was the most famous early spokesmen of this mode of disengaged reason, and he took a fateful step that has been widely followed since. We might think of this mode of reasoning as an achievement worth aiming at for certain purposes, something we manage to attain part of the time, even though, constitutionally our thought is normally embodied, dialogical, shot through with emotion, and reflects the ways of our culture. Descartes took the step of supposing that we are essentially disengaged reason; we are pure mind, distinct from body, and our normal way of seeing ourselves is a regrettable confusion. One can perhaps see why this picture appealed to him and to those who have followed. The ideal seems to gain force and authority when we suppose that it is how we really are, as against the objective attempts at rather fragile and local achievement. So it is all too easy for us in our culture to think of ourselves as essentially disengaged reason. This explains why so many people find it quite unproblematic that we should conceive human thinking on the model of the digital computer. This self-image is enhanced by the sense of power that goes along with a disengaged instrumental grasp of things.”

– Charles Taylor

For Men (girls skip to 2 pages later):

Should you go for good looking or good personality? It's a question you've asked yourself on average sixty-seven times. Cause you know you can't have both. That's for sure. You have to choose. I say try to land the best looking girl you can. Let's face it. Tastes change. What seems like a great personality today may be annoying as hell tomorrow. Whereas good looks can last years. And the decline can often be slow and gradual.

Cologne – Not important. If you smell bad it's probably because you're too excited. You need to relax. But cologne is unnecessary and you're better off spending that money on clothes.

Clothes – No specifics. Everyone should conform to the expectations of their peers. The point is to make sure you conform. Look at what you have on. Is it the same as what your friends are wearing? If not then there you go.

Facial hair – Most girls don't like it and the ones who do have their own weird reasons. Stay away from those women. Exceptions include professional athletes, and there are no other exceptions.

Fact: Girls are psycho. They'll be the first to tell you. The key is to acknowledge and accept this fact and minimize the damage. Used to be a guy could make out with a girl and as long as you didn't have sex, it was okay. Nowadays these distinctions are largely irrelevant. If you so much as look at a girl, she will get all kinds of ideas. As with all things, the key is [to not care](#).

Save the good personalities for “friends”. You want to keep those around. Learn from them. Learn how to enjoy the many things the female mind has to offer. Keep your dick away from that at all costs. Even if it means drugging yourself. Whatever it takes. Do not allow your dick near anyone you care about.



“You see: I have copied out your sonnet, * because I found that it is lovely and simple born in the shape that it moves in with such quiet decorum. It is the best poem of yours that you have let me read. And now I am giving you this copy because I know that it is important and full of new experience to rediscover a work of one’s own in someone else’s handwriting. Read the poem as if you had never seen it before, and you will feel in your innermost being how very much it is your own.

– Rilke

The following should have been left out of this book:

There comes a time when any snob must ask himself if there really is any point in cultivating an ability to make critical distinctions between different refined things, whether looking at paintings by Pablo or gurgling fancy French wines. The crisis usually arises from a nagging realization that the pursuit of such highly refined items may ultimately be unsustainable for mankind, certainly for the French, and in many cases, even against one's own personal happiness. I'm talking about having to live in the Midwest.

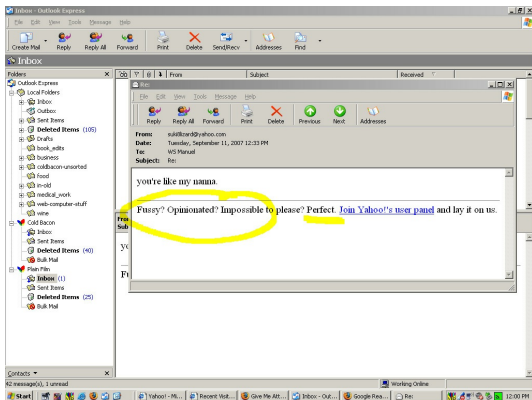
What happens when there is no good wine, no good cheese, no Matisse? It hurts. Actually. But if you can survive long enough, you may discover that the skills you develop at the high end can actually help you to enjoy seemingly more trivial distinctions at the lower end. And that's good because this is where you need it. To be able to enjoy the difference between a good frozen entrée (Ethnic Gourmet) and a not so good one (South Beach Diet). Okay well that doesn't take a lot of skill. You just have to be sober. Actually that's not even true about being sober. But to make such distinctions between, say, two similar Lean Cuisine entrées. That may take a bit of skill. The cultivation of such skills may indeed lead one to question one's purpose in life. Not me. I don't question anything. I can promise you these same skills can make life in the Midwest even possible let alone bearable. Comparing the quality of one parking ticket to another. The handwriting. The grain of the paper. Fascinating. Hey, that gas station's only got two pumps? What's with that awning anyway? Not something you'd ask in New York is it?

"What about an apple?" you say. Yes, what about an apple? The pure thing? Absolute. If it is of high quality, then yes. Wonderful. A lot of islanders would be right there with you. Because they have climate, and slowness, on their side. But here again, quality is everything. The fruit or fish or nut by itself can bring the greatest delight to the unspoiled heart. But make no mistake, a bad apple by itself is dreadful. Peanut butter can mask the badness of a bad apple just like a lot of Cajun spice can mask the flavor of odd meat. A good cantaloupe is from God. A bad cantaloupe is hopeless. Indeed, this is not an argument against the enjoyment of pure gifts from nature. I am merely saying when you are presented with two things which are both affected by man and therefore in some way inferior or fake

or insincere, you can at least derive a small sense of enjoyment in knowing you have chosen the lesser of two evils. You can make something out of nothing. [In the Midwest](#). You may want a camera too.

April 2007

P.S.



“For it is not only indolence that causes human relationships to be repeated from case to case with such unspeakable monotony and boredom; it is timidity before any new, inconceivable experience, which we don’t think we can deal with. But only someone who is ready for everything, who doesn’t exclude any experience, even the most incomprehensible, will live the relationship with another person as something alive and will himself sound the depths of his own being. For if we imagine this being of the individual as a larger or smaller room, it is obvious that most people come to know only one corner of their room, one spot near the window, one narrow strip on which they keep walking back and forth. In this way they have a certain security. And yet how much more human is the dangerous insecurity that drives those prisoners in Poe’s stories to feel out the shapes of their horrible dungeons and not be strangers to the unspeakable terror of their cells.”

– Rilke

I used to want to try to divorce an artist's work from the artist as a person. Somehow I thought these should be separate things. I suppose I thought this for a number of reasons. Foremost was probably a childish (or understandable) need for the possibility of true perfection. I wanted there to be art which was perfect. I wanted to have an ideal to hold up above all others. Maybe this was a way of [bringing order](#) to a confusing world. I suppose I subconsciously feared if I knew more about the artist as a person, it might demystify the genius I wanted there to be—in those works I liked. And this would somehow validate my opinion and thereby my continued intellectual existence.

The easiest way to believe in absolute perfection is to divorce it from its creator (or from what is knowable, *see religion and religiosity*). The artist could possess [a genius](#), but it could not be entirely his own. It had to transcend—existing long before and after it was [ever articulated](#). The perfect order of notes. One expresses such an outlook with clichés like “let the work speak for itself.” And by wanting nothing to do with “an artist's statement” (although that might still be [a good policy](#)). I used to think the cover of a book didn't matter. But at some point I began to question.

Now I see the relationship between a work of art and its audience as primarily a communion between an artist—who is but one human being—and an audience. And so to create a work is to channel a part of that being into [something sharable](#). When you see six films by one director, it's as though you are having dinner with the same friend six times, presumably one whose company you enjoy. When you read a book by _____, you are getting to know something of the person. Either you like it or you don't. Or both. And of course this reaction is free to change. Perhaps one decade you like Eliot, another Frost, and yet another time you find comfort in the music of J.S. Bach, or maybe just Jack Daniels. These artists have been able to translate something core about their unique person into their works, and you respond to it—on a fundamental human level. Whether it can or cannot or should or [should not](#) be explained by art theory and vast gobbledygook is not the issue. To appreciate genuine, original art is simply to appreciate another human being. And my god there are *a lot* of them.

Listen to [the notes of Beethoven](#). You connect with something real within the

man. How clearly or accurately depends on a lot of factors, such as the person playing the music and [your perception](#), but that is not to say a connection isn't always there. Perhaps what you hear is not at all what the artist thought he was trying to say. Or [perhaps it is](#) exactly what he was trying to say. Just as it is in real relationships with [real people](#). Whenever someone sees David Lynch interviewed on TV, they say, "How, but he seems so normal." Note, "seems."

To judge a work of art is to judge some aspect of a person at one point in time. To judge a body of work is to judge an accumulation of these things over time. It would be wrong to say a man is all bad because you happen to catch him in an act of transgression just as [it would be wrong](#) to say a filmmaker is all good just because his latest film pleased you.

To judge a work of art is often to contextualize it in its own time and place. Likewise, artists are products of their own personal history, mutable, capable of influencing and being influenced by others. Understanding where they come from allows you to make certain predictions and take extra pleasures—to think as well as feel—just as you would with anyone you meet. You [might be wrong](#) in your thoughts. But you [might be right](#).

I still believe in the sovereign act of creating art. I believe a work of art can speak for itself. And sometimes it does speak much more loudly and clearly or more noticeably than [the person behind it](#) could have using some other means—and not his art. But now I no longer want to deny there is [a person behind it](#). And that the two, the art and the artist, should be taken not as separate, but as one.

April 2007

“Reason is always a region carved out of the irrational—not sheltered from the irrational at all, but traversed by it and only defined by a particular kind of relationship among irrational factors. Underneath all reason lies delirium, and drift.”

—Deleuze

i'm not really clear on where you are going with this. i mean, obviously i don't think that the artist should have the last word on his or her work, otherwise art historians would have nothing to do. the question of perception and production, and the fluid border between the artwork and the art observer is a fascinating one; particularly in more conceptual work. am i still experiencing a felix gonzales torres if i am sitting here thinking about it? it speaks to broader questions about the relationship between object and art idea which have been under consideration for the better part of the twentieth century, but never fully resolved.

one of my favorite pieces seen in the last few years was one by karin sander at a guggenheim minimalism exhibition a few years ago. she works with sandpaper, polishing things. she took one of the walls of her guggenheim exhibition space and polished it, using very fine sandpaper, until it was a giant white plane totally shiny and smooth and perfect. it was miraculous- and not only did it not exist, in the commodity sense, but it was actually created by *removal alone*, i.e. getting rid of the paint. it was a total void. and yet beautiful, and [a raw gesture of vision](#) and technique. and i am thinking about it right now, which means to some extent that her work can now be found sitting in a cafe in salem, massachusetts.

Karin Sander? Are you kidding me? You made this up, right? Next you'll be telling me about the exhibit where Leslie Stealer sneaks in and removes everything from the museum the night before the show opens. And it's hilarious. I really hate artists.

“Yes. But first I had the nineteenth-century idea that the artist is a genius—that art comes out of him naturally and he doesn’t need any education. I had always thought this, even as a child. You could say that I had too much admiration for artists. I thought they all came from heaven. After I found out that an artwork is only partly done by the artist, that the artist is part of a larger state of things—the public, history, memory, personal history—and he must just work to find a way through it all, to remain free but connected at the same time.”



Anselm Kiefer

> This puzzle me a little bit. I'm not sure someone has
> to be all that bright to create a work of genius, or
> that it would be wrong to look for depth in the work
> of a merely talented person. I'm not sure that an
> artist should necessarily be able to explain what they
> do - that's what critics are for. There are very few
> artists, actually (and few critics), that I'd like to
> hear/read explaining their work..That's kind of why I
> respect people like David Lynch who don't do DVD
> commentaries or offer extras, etc. I'm not sure DL
> could be as enlightening about his own work as
> [someone smarter](#) could be.

I agree it can detract from the enjoyment of the work to hear an artist say something which seems to be completely wrong about her own work. But I think what's really behind this is not that an artist is "not as smart" or that a critic is so smart. I think the act of trying to explain something difficult to explain, especially in words, forces the artist to say things which do not do his ideas justice. That is the whole point, that the artist, the painter, the filmmaker, has chosen a non-verbal medium to express his ideas, for 2 reasons 1) the ideas aren't the most suited to words 2) words are not really these people's thing. Therefore, it's inevitable that when forced to use "words" to explain, the words fall flat. The sober artist himself would probably be just as disgusted at hearing his own explanation of his work as you would. The critic merely sounds smart because the critic is in his own swamp—writing pretty sentences, juxtaposing, evaluating, referencing—all nothing but mental gymnastics which may or may not semi-incidentally overlap and even shed light on a particular work. But to say that this means the critic is smarter or even understands that particular piece "better" than the artist who did it, might be wrong. Neither the critic nor the artist could possibly explain the meaning of a great work of art in a simple statement. It's likely to be based on a depth of experiences, emotions, ideas. Furthermore, the ambiguity in great art is not simply because the artist does something one way then someone else comes along and sees it in a different way (and now there are $1 + 1 = 2$ meanings?) No. If a tree falls in a forest, a tree falls in a forest. A critic can come along and say two trees have fallen in the forest. Fact is many trees have fallen. Are falling. Even now. There are multiple meanings not because we find or imagine them, but because there really is ambiguity or multiple layers of meaning, which are intrinsic to the work itself, even if the artist is not consciously aware of it all. To imply those elements which an artist does not consciously recognize in his own work are therefore less important is problematic, to my theory. On the other hand, to simply say a work can mean anything and everything (art is what it means to you) is annoying and please do not say that to me. The real truth of the meaning must be based on a serious equation which takes into account the artist's conscious meaning + the top five critical interpretations sautéed in clarified butter and garnished with the appropriate herb or dollop.





Proof around a non-actor — stuntwoman Zoe Bell, who doubled for Uma Thurman in *Kill Bill*'s action scenes.

"She's so effervescent that you can't help but fall in love with her," he says of Bell. His decision to write a central role for her was cemented when he saw her in a 2004 documentary about stuntwomen, *Double Dare*.

"I saw the whole audience respond to her the way I respond to her in real life," Tarantino says. "There's a moment in the movie where she gets a job that she really wanted to get, and like the whole audience starts crying because they're so happy for her. I thought: 'My God, she has those qualities

in cinema that she has in real life.'"



Like

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So what about us?

By being anonymous, as a creator of content, I refuse to allow myself to be fully contextualized. This deprives the viewer of an opportunity for greater understanding and appreciation. In an attempt to maintain separation between my physical life (by which I mean my day job, by which I suppose I mean money) and my creative space, I necessarily withhold a certain level of vulnerability and commitment, both of which [are helpful](#) in any would be relationship. Let me explain. If your preacher gives a wonderful sermon, how wonderful. But if you come to find out he's been molesting the neighbor's dog in his spare time, are you not likely to interpret his next sermon with a bit more, shall we say, insight? Look, I molest dogs, is what I am trying to tell you. Now despise me.

“As, thanks to man’s capacity to express thoughts by words, every man may know all that has been done for him in the realms of thought by all humanity before his day, and can in the present, thanks to this capacity to understand the thoughts of others, become a sharer in their activity and can himself hand on to this contemporaries and descendants the thoughts he has assimilated from others, as well as those which have arisen within himself; so, thanks to man’s capacity to be infected with the feelings of others by means of art, all that is being lived through by his contemporaries is accessible to him, as well as the feelings experienced by men thousands of years ago, and he has also [the possibility](#) of transmitting his own feelings to others.”

– Tolstoy

this is the law of life its real meaning

another important theme is man's experience.
in this film, my message is that it's impossible
to pass on experience to others or to learn from others
we must live our own experience. we cannot inherit it.
people often say use your father's experience
too easy: each of us must get his own
but once we've got it, we no longer have time to use it
and the new generation rightly refuse to listen to it.
they want to live it but then they also die
this is the law of life its real meaning
we cannot impose our experience on other people
or force them to feel suggested emotions.
only through personal experience we understand life

— Andrei Tarkovsky

“Now, we all of us like to believe that we understand our own poets better than any foreigner can do; but I think we should be prepared to entertain the possibility that these Frenchmen have seen something in Poe that English-speaking readers have missed”

“It is certainly possible, in reading something in a language imperfectly understood, for the reader to find what is not there; and when the reader is himself a man of genius, the foreign poem read may, by happy accident, elicit something important from the depths of his own mind, which he attributes to what he reads.”

“[But] I find that by trying to look at Poe through the eyes of Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and most of all, Valéry, I become more thoroughly convinced of his importance, of the importance of his work as a whole.”

— T.S. Eliot

Subject: on my dating an artist

i can't believe you went out with an artist - i could have told you mate! they have too much time on their hands....read to much bollocks....only absorb the bits that fit in with "what they have to say"...and they actually believe "what they have to say". obviously they are [not all like that](#) (hmmph). i do like joy division and i liked them when they became human league when thingy bob died - was it human league or something else - i always get those groups names mixed up in my head. i like antonioni too... don't think i've seen enough though - so i will try to. will also try to see unknown pleasures. that's actually the only film (i think) that i've heard of by zhang-ke jia.

- VLT (London)

yoin (Japanese) : experiential reverberation that continues to move one long after the initial external stimulus has ceased

Elements in Art

Here are my thoughts on some of the various elements that go into making and responding to a work of art. I'm going to keep it to film and video, since that's what I think about most. Hopefully, you too think about these things and will want to respond.

Plot Driven

There is much to be said about the difference between linear and non-linear narrative. But I'm not the one to say it.

Character Driven

One question which is very easy to ask when watching a film or looking at any work of art is "Do we relate to it? Do we identify with it?" Perhaps we relate to a character because we recognize ourselves or perhaps we just sympathize because the character is sympathetic, as one human to another. Perhaps the character is interesting for purely psychological or intellectual reasons, whether we truly identify with them or not.

[Helium](#) – cute, unconditional love, innocence, round, small shape

Meat Wad – cute unconditional love, innocence, round, small shape

Is there a pattern here?

If (and I say *if*) *Eyes Wide Shut* fails, perhaps it is because Tom Cruise's character is not developed properly. Yet I remain ever reluctant to assign blame to Kubrick. Maybe it is Tom Cruise's fault for being a distraction of a person.

The Usual Suspects was superficially character driven, but ultimately not. The performances were memorable and distinct—Benicio del Toro, William Baldwin, Kevin Spacey. But they were really just caricatures that we cannot relate to on a deep, emotional level. Not like in great films. Like Peter Falk and Gina Rowlands in *Woman Under The Influence*.

Anyway that reminds me I would like to see a video game which allows you to combine various characters from different films and watch them interact. We could watch Julia Roberts (her one character in all her films) attempt to convince Humphrey Bogart that he should stay in and order pizza. And that she will give him head, but he cannot kiss her and whistling is out of the question! I would like to see other things.

Raw Emotion / Depth

I believe sometimes character identification can be manifest in a more symbolic or universal way as opposed to a direct concern for specific characters. For example, in Wong Kar-Wai's *In the Mood for Love*, human beings cannot connect because they are unable to express themselves properly and/or at all and/or because they're Chinese (haha, just kidding). I don't grieve so much for Tony Leung's character as for all mankind. It's different with Cassavetes' or Polanski's characters. These people are real. When I stop watching their lives will go right on without me.

The Wild Bunch. Basically a story about a group of men who could or would not change. And they were selfish, and rotten. But ultimately they were able to redeem themselves for a larger cause. That being my entertainment. Again, we have the individual characters that drive the film. But it's more the underlying motives and stereotypes that we are responding to. Ultimately, we are more [excited by the glory](#) than concerned with their fate as individuals.

Nature Driven

Sometimes artistic imagery seems rooted to patterns in nature which perhaps appeal to us on a very primal level. The number of petals on a flower, for example. Non-robotic bees. This is kind of like the idea that the Greeks and Italians did well to recognize certain natural patterns. The architecture of Palladio, for instance (which you're free to Google; I don't feel like putting a link this time). And in the East:

Chuang Tzu and Hui Tzu were strolling along the dam of the Hao River

when Chuang Tzu said, “See how the minnows come out and dart around where they please! That’s what fish really enjoy!”

Hui Tzu said, “You’re not a fish—how do you know what fish enjoy?”

Chuang Tzu said, “You’re not I, so how do you know I don’t know what fish enjoy?”

Hui Tzu said, “I’m not you, so I certainly don’t know what you know. On the other hand, you’re certainly not a fish—so that still proves you don’t know what fish enjoy!”

Chuang Tzu said, “Let’s go back to your original question, please. You asked me how I know what fish enjoy—so you already knew I knew when you asked the question. I know it by standing here beside the Hao.”

This idea of tapping into natural rhythms can perhaps lead us to a discussion of the business of timing. Timing could be seen as the harnessing of subconscious rhythms, rooted in the biological or natural fabric. The fact that you can appreciate music without even thinking. That you can just know if it’s right or wrong, even if you’re an idiot or a child.

“This would concord with the thesis of Benedetto Croce; already Pater in 1877 had affirmed that all arts aspire to the state of music, which is pure form. Music, states of happiness, mythology, faces belabored by time, certain twilights and certain places try to tell us something, or have said something we should not have missed, or are about to say something, or this imminence of a revelation which does not occur is, perhaps, the aesthetic phenomenon.”

– JLB

Coherence

The idea of coherence holds that nothing in a work should be unrelated in any way. Everything should be related. Anything which does not contribute to the overall meaning of the work is [merely a distraction](#) and a detraction. Sigh.

Authenticity

Authenticity relates to the idea of coherence in that if something is inauthentic it does not truly cohere to the rest of the work, assuming there is some authenticity there at all. For any failure, it then becomes a question of how obvious or how contrived. Peter Weir's film *The Last Wave* (1979), for example, spends a lot of time in atmospheric transition sequences from one scene to another, such as when Richard Chamberlain drives his Volvo to the weird and eerie music. Music which powerfully conveys the strange and ominous weather patterns which haunt and shape the film's narrative. That would be a success. In Hitchcock's *The Trouble With Harry* (1955), the wonderful Bernard Herrmann score blankets everything in a frisky Autumnal tone which perfectly suits Shirley McLain, John Forsythe's and basically the entire rest of the cast's demeanor. Success. There are examples of inauthentic, contrived, tacked on elements in works of art of course, but let's move on. The notion of referencing (one work to another; dialogue, appropriation?) [could also be discussed](#) in the same way as authenticity. Never mind if it's theft. Does it serve or not serve the overall coherence of the work?

Originality

Should an artist who pioneers something new be praised unconditionally? Or is that person merely fulfilling his role in an inevitable process of evolution—as dictated by the circumstances? Sort of like filling the potholes on a time line. If one person doesn't think of it, someone else will, if not today, then tomorrow. The question of what is true originality is *too hard*. But I think it's fair to say originality is generally a positive thing from the audience's perspective in that the less derivative, the more likely a given audience will be surprised. The phrase “well it's new to me” comes to mind. And new is good because [stagnation](#) is death unbecoming.

Style vs. Content?

Okay this is a tough one. And perennial. People will never stop loving to argue about this. Even now if you listen carefully, [you will hear](#) the dulcet tones, of people fighting over this one. I will try my best to shed some light, but I promise it

will be insufficient.

“Yes. My tastes and disgusts have influenced my ten-year long work on Eugene Onegin. In translating its 5500 lines into English I had to decide between rhyme and reason—and I chose reason.”

– Nabokov

But let's pretend Russians have nothing to teach us, for just a moment. I don't know if you're familiar with Lenny Bruce or not, but I love listening to him talk. But at least one college professor has argued that Bruce is not so much funny as he is proof that comedy is about timing as much as actual “humor”. I think it depends. I think it is valid to say comedy is a constructed artifice of timing, which can make you laugh even at things which are not humorous in any lasting way. But I also think some comedians really are funny. Woody Allen and Lenny Bruce are two examples. It's easy to test. If you still find a joke funny once your initial impulse to laugh has faded. Then it's funny. If you feel neither used nor manipulated more's the better. And no that does not mean the jokes have to be funny [written out](#). That's like complaining that a translated poem has the wrong meter. Blame the translator. Or blame yourself for buying it. Or learn the other language. Go away.

Imagination

For me, imagination is certainly one of the most enjoyable and involving aspects of art. It draws me in.

“I don't usually give out advice or recipes, but you must let the person looking at the photograph go some of the way to finishing it. You should offer them a seed that will grow and open up their minds.”

– Robert Doisneau, Paris 1987

“If you give people nothingness, they can ponder what can be achieved from that nothingness.”

– Tadao Ando

Getting the audience to imagine. To fill in the blanks. Horror movies are all about this. I feel the amount to which you can make your audience imagine horror is more important than just having a lot of suspense. But that's obvious. Let's talk about music.

Radiohead – [skipped note](#)

The Meters – [skipped note](#)

Csokolom – skipped note

An alternative rock band from the now, soul funk from the 70s, and a modern day Hungarian quartet all have in common the skillful use of the skipped note.

Suspense

Sure, of course. It kind of relates to both the idea of imagination and that of timing. I think everyone has a good conception of what suspense is. It's rather like a narrative tool in my view. It can be used justly or unjustly. I don't have much else to say on this issue. Maybe some [other time](#).

Contrast

Contrast is a building block in any work of art. This is a means of purchase and allocation of attention. I don't need to explain what contrast is, I hope, other than to offer some examples for your enjoyment. (I will provide actual links for all of these at some point to make it easier.) One example is the occurrence of humanity or civility in the face of inhumanity or chaos: happens all the time in Kubrick where it is a source of satire, *Dr. Strangelove*, or bitter irony, *Barry Lyndon*, the flower plant in the window in *The Grand Illusion* (that isn't Kubrick by the way). In the flash production Strindberg and Helium we have silly matched with overly serious melodrama. Winning. Torture and transcription in Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*. Just as, if not more, disturbing than *Brazil* is a Dr. Seuss book called Wacky Wednesday. I know this because I don't tend to remember details from children's books (meaning ones I've read a long time ago, as an actual child). But this one, I remember. I remember [how freaky it is](#) to see normal scenes with small abnormalities within. If I smile at you while I stab a knife in your belly, the

psychological effect is, well. I'm sure it hurts to be stabbed. There is also more symbolic and weighty juxtaposition. In *Andrei Rublev* (1:51), the sound of the church door being battered versus the sound of holy music. Very symbolic. [Upsetting.](#)

The infusion of retro elements in a futuristic setting acts as an accelerant in such films as Godard's *Alphaville*, Kubrick's *2001*, Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* and David Lynch's *Dune*. Donald Barthelme's works abound with bona fide anachronism and flagrant juxtaposition. It's great. Hayao Miyazaki? Yes, please. Black and white? In film and in photos. I never left it.

Artist's Compendium: You can't go wrong if you do art based on these three assumptions.

things change, but not that much
everyone has something to hide
[nobody](#) ever really moves on

April 2007

Deleuze rejects this view as papering over the metaphysical flux, instead claiming that genuine thinking is a violent confrontation with reality, an involuntary rupture of established categories. Truth changes what we think; it alters what we think is possible. By setting aside the assumption that thinking has a natural ability to recognize the truth, Deleuze says, we attain a “thought without image”, thought always determined by problems rather than solving them. “All this, however, presupposes codes or axioms which do not result by chance, but which do not have an intrinsic rationality either.”



They said,
“Nothing is wacky
around here but you!”

That is why the art timeline moves forward. If the rules made any real sense, they would hold, and art would stop.

Jay Leno

Some sad news, I'm sure you've heard. The former president of Russia, Boris (Buy Me a Drink) Yeltsin, has passed away. He left behind a bar tab of \$3.2 billion.

In a speech Sunday, before a church group, San Francisco mayor Gavin Newsom said that he is going to make San Francisco a sanctuary for illegal immigrants so they can go there and not worry about being deported to their home country of Los Angeles.

The story that has rocked show business: Rosie O'Donnell announced that she's leaving "The View." The sad part: None of the other hosts on "The View" heard what she said because they were all talking at the same time.

President Bush sent out an e-mail today asking people to send money to the Republican Party. How come those e-mails never get deleted?

David Letterman

Were you aware of the fact that George W. Bush is in town? He attended a big fundraiser on Park Avenue. It's part of his pet program, "No Cash Left Behind."

The mayor of New York City, Mayor Bloomberg, has announced

that he wants to plant a million trees in New York City. A million trees in New York City. Or as Donald Trump calls it, a blight on the landscape.

“What I am saying will be considered irrational paradox, at which one can only be amazed; but for all that I must say what I think; namely, that people of our circle of whom some compose verses, stories, novels, operas, symphonies, and sonatas, paint all kinds of pictures and make statues, while others hear and look at these things, and again others appraise and criticize it all, discuss, condemn, triumph, and raise monuments to one another, generation after generation—that all these people, with very few exceptions artists, and public, and critics, have never (except in childhood and earliest youth before hearing any discussions on art) experienced that simple feeling familiar to the plainest man and even to a child, that sense of infection with another’s feeling, compelling us to joy in another’s gladness, to sorrow at another’s grief, and to mingle soul with another—which is the very essence of art. And therefore these people not only cannot distinguish true works of art from counterfeit, but continually mistake for real art the worst and most artificial, while they do not even perceive works of real art because the counterfeits are always more ornate, while true art is modest.”

— Tolstoy

It is generally held that a good work of art should have elements which work together so that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. But what does that mean for an audience and how should that influence the way we feel about a given work of art?

An email from t might go like this:

“I’ve watched *L’Avventura* much more closely, and with more appreciation, because of your emails. And I love much of it. However, I still contend that to sit down and watch it from start to finish is perhaps not as great an experience as watching all its scenes over a few nights. The whole is less than the sum of the parts. (much like Matisse/Picasso which I just saw. I’m in New York).”

Which reminds me of this quote from Pauline Kael:

“The only part of Clair’s *Porte des Lilas* I cared for was the little set-piece of the children acting out a crime as the adults read a newspaper account of it—an almost surrealist little ballet with no connection to the rest of the film. The only sequence I recall from *Rickshaw Man* is the distant view of an Englishman’s little dance of rage as he’s kept waiting in his rickshaw. *Aparajito* was beautiful, but it is all hazy in memory except for that sudden ecstasy of the child reciting poetry.

In film after film, what we recall may be a gesture or a bit of dialogue, a suggestion, an imaginative moment of acting, even the use of a prop. Suddenly something—almost anything—may bring a movie to life. It is art and imagination that bring the medium to life; not as Kracauer would have it, the recording of ‘reality.’ I can’t remember much of the streets and crowds and the lifelike milieu even from the neo-realist films—who does? But who can forget the cry of the boy at the end of *Shoeshine*, or the face of *Umberto D*, or Anna Magnani’s death in *Open City*? I would suggest these experiences are very similar to the experiences we have in the theater. But shouldn’t we take our bits and pieces of human revelation wherever we find them? There isn’t so much to be had that we need to

worry about whether what we get from a movie is only possible in ‘cinema’ or whether we could have received a similar impression, or even the total conception, in a novel or in the theatre.”

I concur. And would like to just say, “*headless mannequin torso with one arm.*” T.S. Eliot puts it like this:

“Yet it is only in a poem of some length that a variety of moods can be expressed; for a variety of moods requires a number of different themes or subjects, related either in themselves or in the mind of the poet. These parts can form a whole which is more than the sum of the parts; a whole such that the pleasure we derive from the reading of any part is enhanced by our grasp of the whole.”

And so as a viewer, this overall coherence or meaning, if you will, becomes imprinted. After this, you may recall fragments, which may have self-contained greatness of artistry and expression, but whose power still draws on your overall understanding of the work as a whole. Does this make sense? This is why a clip from a feature film watched on YouTube will always carry more impact than a similar length clip, which was never part of any greater whole. Take the line from *Caddyshack*, “This isn’t Russia? Is this Russia?” It’s funny because it resonates with the entire attitude of the film. But only if you can conjure up Chevy Chase’s persona.

And now Matisse:

“Expression, for me, does not reside in passions glowing in a human frame or manifested by violent movement. The entire arrangement of my picture is expressive. Composition is the art of arranging in a decorative manner the diverse elements at the painter’s command to express his feelings. In a picture every part will be visible and all play into appointed roles.”

Here would be Matisse’s words with equal importance given to each (these are his words, but the spacing I am just making up):

the art of arranging is composition
in a decorative manner the diverse elements at the painter's command to express
his
feelings.

In a picture every part will be visible and all play its appointed roles.

Expression,
does not reside
in passions glowing
in a human frame
or manifested
by violent movement.

The entire arrangement of my picture (is expressive).

4 me,

Is this true? Are there obvious, discrete "packets" of humanity (an emotion, a smile, something) we can grab and hold onto. In Matisse's work, sure. For example, in the one with the goldfish and the lemons, we see the fish looking pretty scared. (In case you're stupid I should mention people often put lemons on fish when they eat them?) That I can grasp, and remember. I don't much remember the color of the glass, the table, but I remember the look on that fish's face. But let's go back to his painting of _____ where it really is all a collection of color combinations, even what could be called repetition. I suppose the different elements are working together, if he says so. It certainly has a feel, a look, a very colorful look and a particular wavelength of energy? Look you won't get me to knock Matisse. I'm just saying he's over my head. I think. I would need to be smarter that's all. I don't understand relativity either, but damn.

Anyway, it's difficult to compare painting and film because the overall meaning of a painting is so difficult to discuss, let alone agree upon. But for the sake of argument, let us say we could start judging any work by asking whether the power of the fragments is in large part due to their connection with an overall meaning. If so, then a work meets both Eliot's and Matisse's demands.

But Kael says, "The film is overpowering: it's like seeing a series of teasers—violent moments and highly charged scenes without structural coherence."

I haven't seen the film she's talking about, but I can think of some films with assuredly magnificent scenes but which the coherence of the work [as a whole](#) can at least be questioned. They would include some of my most loved films from Kubrick to Godard and others. We'll call them *The Technicians*. And, you guessed it, some of t's most hated filmmakers. But then the question is why do I keep watching these films with such joy even though my (aspiring to be a human) side cannot really make an air-tight case for them. Well thankfully nobody else can either, because I just read the definitive book on Kubrick, which seeks to explain why *Full Metal Jacket* is brilliant and is not just two halves of a movie lumped together. And I agree with everything he said, and I enjoy the film immensely and often. And yet, I still can't make the case. But it does make me feel better than other people are having the same problem.

Okay so questioning the coherence of a series of scenes, yes? To get at this, let's go back and think about how do we achieve the final imprint of the overall meaning of a film? Let me ask whether the imprint need occur by seeing the film in its entirety in one sitting? May it occur more [in your head](#), after the fact, maybe after several viewings. And consequently it is subject to change over time. Architecture, is a great place to address this issue, because a building forces its inhabitants to develop a response over multiple encounters.

Charles Moore:

“Another characteristic beginning to emerge in the middle of the twentieth century is a special concern with the observer's reaction to a building over a period of time, so that the whole processing of arriving at a building, of seeing it from far away and up close, from a variety of angles, represents part of one continuing experience, in which the forms instigate the observer's movement, so that one view slides into another.”

That's right. A relationship with a film doesn't only begin when you see it. It begins when you first learn about its existence. When you see the poster on the side of a bus, or read something in a magazine. Your subsequent feelings towards the film are indeed informed by this prior knowledge. I have a habit of popping a

DVD in, becoming mesmerized by the little intro menu (with its handful of images and hopefully well chosen sound loop) and just letting it play while I do other things. It may be hours before I finally watch the film. Sometimes I'm even afraid to press "start". Bergman, for example.

Seeing a film in a theater, or later in private. Broken into bite-sized pieces. These are like different angles of looking at the same building. Part of one continuing experience.

But you can also look at it as you would a relationship with a friend. The longer it goes on, the more you become aware of certain flaws or inconsistencies. But you learn to accept them and be lenient. Would it be better if your friends were all perfect? Maybe. But face it, the only one who is, in fact, perfect just won the Nobel Prize in everything and seriously, he doesn't have time for the likes of you. But that crazy one—you know—the one who is guaranteed to either sing or cry at least once each time you go out in public. Maybe you like that? Hell maybe I like that.

As to whether one's initial viewing of a film should be straight through to the ending or in parts, I must tell you I believe [arguments can be made](#) for both approaches. And the answer may in fact depend on the film. For now, let us agree that the relationship between a work of art and an audience is ongoing, whether you see it once and think about it later or [whether you actually do](#) see it repeatedly, in whole or part.

We can all agree *Andrei Rublev* is as near perfect and unassailable as a work of art can be. But tonight I think I'd rather just watch the first half hour of *Full Metal Jacket*.

April 2007

“Bresson’s attempt is to insist on the irrefutability of what he is presenting. Nothing happens by chance; there are no alternatives, no fantasy; everything is inexorable. Whatever is not necessary, whatever is merely anecdotal or decorative, must be left out.”

— Susan Sontag

Okay, so now that what was once considered a core curriculum (in higher education) has basically been splattered, it brings ever more into question the business of making references in works of art. If nobody reads the classics, then what is the point in referencing them? And for that matter, what is the point of [any references](#) anymore? T.S. Eliot speaks eloquently on the matter:

“In a lecture of Johnson’s *Lives of the Poets*, published in one of my collections of essays and addresses, I made the point that in appraising the judgments of any critic of a past age, one needed to see him in the context of that age, to try to place oneself at his point of view. This is a difficult effort for the imagination; one, indeed, in which we cannot hope for more than partial success. We cannot discount the influence upon our formation of the creative writing and the critical writing of the intervening generations, or the inevitable modifications of taste, or our greater knowledge and understanding of the literature preceding that of the age which we are trying to understand. Yet merely to make that effort of imagination, and to have these difficulties in mind, is worth our while. In reviewing my own early criticism, I am struck by the degree to which it was conditioned by the state of literature at the time at which it was written, as well as by the stage of maturity at which I had arrived, by the influences to which I had been exposed, and by the occasion of each essay. I cannot myself bring to mind all these circumstances, reconstruct all the conditions under which I wrote: how much less can any future critic of my work have knowledge of them, or, if he has knowledge have understanding, or if he has both knowledge and understanding, find my essays of the same interest that they had for those who read them sympathetically when they first appeared? No literary criticism can for a future generation excite more than curiosity, unless it continues to be of use in itself to future generations, to have intrinsic value out of its historical context. But if any part of it does have this timeless value, then we shall appreciate that value all the more precisely if we also attempt to put ourselves at the point of view of the writer and his first readers. To study the criticism of Johnson or of Coleridge in this way is undoubtedly rewarding.”

So the problem is articulated. Now as for the reader, he can have many responses to an apparent reference. 1) he knows a reference is being made and knows he should have paid more attention in school 2) he senses the same 3) he totally misses it, and finally, 4) he knows the reference! (this event does in fact, still happen; more often in the United Kingdom, but I believe it may be rigged so never mind.)

Now I suspect the most fortunate reaction is somewhere between not knowing and knowing, [in other words](#), barely knowing. As a reader, you want to conjure up the gist of the reference, but you don't want to start drifting into an actual reconstruction of it, to be lured as Odysseus further and further away from [the primary thread](#) (getting back to Ithaca) because of a pathological thirst for knowledge. And I submit anyone reading such heavily laden works as Wasteland most definitely does have [such pathology](#). As Brando says in The Godfather, "A man can't be a real man if he doesn't spend time with his family." Your family is waiting. They are at the end of the poem. So go ahead and look, but don't stray.

When, for example, Eliot says "Oh Phlebas, something something." It's like, I don't remember who Phlebas was. But I do still get that sense of tragedy, of greatness, of myth, of searching and loss from the Greek works--for the Greek works--wherever they may be, in large stone books and corridors. Let me hold onto that feeling and move right into the next line. Maintaining speed is vital to get the inherent rhythm of a poem. If I actually remembered the story, I might start thinking about some detail or unresolved issue. Or a beat down, one of many, I may or may not have received from Mr. Thames (high school English teacher) for talking up in class. Or passing notes. I passed a lot of notes. Is this awesome y/n?

When Eliot recommends the "study" of Coleridge, he is talking about something you do later on, in your spare time, for "the fun of it." This is different from your primary response to a work of art. The primary response must be spontaneous, and personal, and at its core emotional. The other stuff comes later. So there is no right or wrong in how many references an artist should consider. All that matters is how it contributes or dilutes the final effect on an audience. Squidbillies will probably appeal to generations to come in spite of its surfeit of topicality. Other cartoons on the same network not so much.

April 2007

It might not be hard to accept that no one language has all the necessary words. The English language does not have Scheudenfreud, Glockenspiel and God knows what other German words are looming out there. Meanwhile, Germans are accordingly incapable when it's time to shizzle. If you agree, then you admit there are certain feelings which are better expressed in a language other than your own. Why not let it be film?

April 2007

>“The commentary was fantastic. So good that I want to
>suggest maybe it’s making the movie better, for you, and
>me, than it really is. Not much better, just a little. I have to
>feel that we shouldn’t need commentary to like it, but then,
>no, I don’t. We shouldn’t need commentary if we watched it >several
times. But he’s great, and I was happy to see some
>of the things I’d noticed -- all the windows and frames and
>such, were talked about. And the opening shot, with the
>types of architecture, yes. Great.”

It has been argued that films are best viewed in a theatre and in one sitting. And it would probably be fair to say this is how films were designed to be viewed. But that does not prove this is the best way to do it. In order to keep this discussion simple, let us agree to ignore the obvious fact that a theatre has better sight and sound and home viewing allows for cheaper food. Now we've agreed, we can focus on the basic difference between watching a film straight through uninterrupted versus breaking a film up into two or three parts to be viewed over a space of time. As usual, we begin with an email sent to me:

“Solaris. Wow. I watched it in two nights, because I had to, and you're right, that's better. However, I'm not sure that a movie that has to be watched in two sittings is necessarily a good thing - a movie seems to me to be designed to be watched in one sitting. if it gets boring, that's its fault.” - t

True, but just because you can watch a film over two sessions does not mean it couldn't be watched in one, as I would argue is the case with *Solaris*. I am interested in just such films, those which could be enjoyed either whole or in parts. This way there is a real and valid choice. And the question is not how to make a boring film tolerable, but how can we get the best experience possible.

The rationale for watching a movie in parts on first viewing finds precedent in the way people read works of literature. People tend to read books one segment at a time over a span of time. What are the advantages of doing it this way? First, time away offers an opportunity for [subconscious processing](#). Often in weighty art, the meaning of the whole is suffused through every part in accordance with the demands of coherence. The point is watching even the first thirty minutes of a film should give you enough to begin forming a sense of the larger meaning. “But wait,” you say, “Why can't I just process it after I see the whole thing one time?” Well, you can. But remember you only get one chance to see something for the first time. Allowing for [some interval reflection](#) (go ahead and click now) affords you the ability to enjoy the latter portion of the film having already begun to form a sense of its overall meaning. If you've ever wondered what it would be like to see a film again, for the first time. This could be [the closest thing to it](#). It is.

In fact the idea of waiting is already built directly into many films. For example, Tarkovsky gives us many long sequences where we can just meditate to the sound of his father's poetry or drive through a tunnel on the way to the airport. These are like [little intermissions](#) built right into the films. Antonioni and many others also provide such pauses.

Intervals allow not only processing but informed anticipation, which can prime and heighten your sensitivity to the work. You yearn for the story's completion. Even moreso if you wait.

Forget [action movies](#).

Of course, the final viewing session should be of sufficient duration as to allow emotional immersion. Obviously, it would not do to sit down to watch the last three minutes of a film. Common sense.

Films amenable to this strategy:

1. Andrei Rublev
2. Solaris
3. Children of Paradise
4. Once Upon A Time In The West

April 2007

Another great use for the technique is at cocktail parties. When you meet someone, talk to them for just a little while. Then go away for a while. With little to no effort at all, your subconscious will tell you whether you want to talk to that person again. And if so, it will develop a plan. What to say. What to ask. You'll get much more out of your time with people. Really.

“You will experience the great happiness of reading this book for the first time, and will move through its numberless surprises as if you were in a new dream. But I can tell you that even later on one moves through these books, again and again, with the same astonishment and that they lose none of their wonderful power and relinquish none of the overwhelming enchantment that they had the first time one read them.”

— Rilke

- > you're such a girl
- > why can't you just get a gin and tonic?
- > like other men

Conceptual Art (Does It Suck?)

Okay so I have mixed and unsolid feelings about conceptual art in general. Let us take an example and talk about it. I heard about some artist who copied another artist's works, like with a copy machine or something. And that was the concept. Hence, conceptual art. Okay. Then another artist copied that artist's work placing it on the internet. And this was another concept. Much vigorous debate ensued. You can imagine questions arose concerning whether or not so and so was a real artist and such and such was real art. You can see I'm not painting a flattering picture.

I suppose my default position is that I tend to value a work on some sort of loose amalgam of the basic principles of sincerity, expressiveness, genuineness as well as the general aesthetic theories of yesteryear. Of course, I see nothing wrong with ideas. And those ideas can drive or inform a work of art. But an idea is just an idea. It is in the execution of the idea in which good art may or may not happen. In the aforementioned example, the internet person was basically creating a tribute to the previous conceptual artist who had first thought of the idea of copying the paintings (or whatever he actually did; I sincerely apologize for not caring about the details of that story). So he reminded us of the other person's idea and raised some questions about copyright. I think the main problem in this story is any critic who bothers to discuss it for more than five minutes. My time is up.

Okay, so is painting dead? Please. Is photography dead? Please. Are movies dead? Is that the next thing to be dead? Whatever. Maybe in Hollywood. But seriously, there is no medium that can ever be dead, they just get unpopulated at times. Letter writing for example, may re-emerge one day, from the ashes. Oh yes, I just remembered another twist in that first example. Someone else copied the person's website who had copied the person who had copied some paintings. See how clever that is? Like a mirror to a mirror.

Anyway here is an excerpt from an email I had fired off to someone when I was feeling insecure. Before my great turning point. It was in response to some essay someone wrote about art which I did not like very much. Oh, and also he had

criticized some of my own work, by not mentioning it. So I wrote this to one of my friends who was studying art history at the time (and probably still is):

“We are so going to fuck his shit up.”

April 2007

You cannot see all sides of anything at once. A Frank Lloyd Wright building demands, at any one moment, that you choose from which angle, inside or out, in which hallway or on which terrace, to [stand in awe](#).

You cannot grasp the whole of such things in one instant. You must take them in parts and develop a response. Probably in your head. Perhaps years later.

Architecture is special in that it never allows us even the false comfort of looking at every detail in one glance. I say “false comfort,” because when you look at a painting, you often think you are seeing it all at once. Impossible. Whether a Chinese scroll with all its minute enticements or a Pollock (God help us). Unless a work is really—I mean, really simple. Non-existent?

Even an empty museum will change with changing light. You’ve got to come back, see it again. Each time it’s different. [Move closer](#). Appreciate the texture of the white painted walls. Or don’t.

And it’s not just painting or art. It’s everything.

Where you live, for example. Just as you cannot be both inside and outside a Lloyd-Wright, neither can you enjoy pure city and country life at the same time—try as the Japanese may. Rather, you must experience both worlds at separate times then combine them in your memory. Central Park’s a nice reminder for those New Yorkers who have once, if only for one brief moment, been outside of concrete, trash and metal.

April 2007



First you must watch [this clip by Renoir](#). Now doesn't that make you wish Renoir was your friend, and you could discuss this with him? Well you can't. You've got me. Sorry. But let's give it a try. Now consider that black and white can provide a certain quality to a filmic experience which is lost when we move to color and digital video. Black and white film would be just an example from that medium, but it could be Polaroids for photography, or a musician who will only release his music on the worst quality cassettes. The issue, Renoir explains, is that one cannot reverse the hands of time, and the advance of technology. If a modern filmmaker released a film in black and white, it would be a modern filmmaker releasing a film in black and white, and that's just not the same as watching a film made in an earlier time. The contrivance would be inescapable, in spite of all efforts to overcome on the part of the filmmaker and the audience.

So is there an answer to what I am going to call the dilemma of obsolescence? [Besides the logical one](#) put forth by Renoir, which is essentially to "get over it" and move on? I can think of one, but it will not be easy. It will involve some deception. If one can create a work which has every indication of being made in an earlier time, then perhaps we can have another film noir which is good and real and gives us more of that dark delight.

Or maybe we could discover an artist who had somehow slipped through history's microfiche. We could find a sunken ship with all its treasure on it, for which no record of its voyage can be found. A tale of 16th century love, when loved really mattered, between two young Sicilians, was reconstructed by piecing together fragments of letters, which were discovered last Summer when the top of an old marble chest was lifted by some workmen. The chest had been buried in the basement of a kindly old widow who had just passed away. She had no family that anyone knew of, and had made no will, so all her property, including her large family home, overlooking the town's main piazza, would go to the local government. Officials could not agree on what should become of the place, so they sent some workers to remove the contents along with an expert in case there was anything of value. The discovery of the letters was the talk of the town. It even made the evening news in Rome. Officials could not agree on what should become of the letters, so they were loaned to a local museum, which promptly sold them on ebay-.

Now if I could love and in loving write such letters. If I could weave a Bayeux tapestry. Could it not be as beautiful as it once was?

July 2007

The question is whether there is a direct negative impact in actively engaging in obsolescence. I would like to ask the question not in terms of the technical aspects of making art, in this case film, but in terms of the story's setting. Can period films be the strongest type of film? Is it fair to say that whatever amount of effort is spent to recreate an earlier time is effort which could have been invested in other elements of the story. Some consider *Barry Lyndon* an intellectually and visually stimulating work, but one which leaves them feeling quite cold. But this is just one example, and there are many period films which are universally affecting. Renoir, Tavernier among others have made some very moving period films.

Both Renoir's *Grand Illusion* and Tavernier's *Sunday in the Country* are simplified and stylized in order to be able to reasonably recreate the period in question. One could not just walk out on the street and shoot a crowd of people, but one had to shoot a series of actors. Thus, wonderful as they are, neither Renoir nor Tavernier's films come off as real and effortless. They both must overcome their own constructs.

On the other end of the spectrum would be someone like Cassavetes, whose films are highly affecting to anyone who takes them on. It almost seems like Cassavetes just points the camera and shoots a bit of reality. Some Fassbinder films are also this way.

I actually think it's a tradeoff. In the case of Tavernier, his most affecting film for me at least, is his first, *The Clockmaker of St. Paul*, which I believe was shot quite humbly in its contemporary setting, and less of a period piece than his later films.

Of course, Renoir can do whatever he wants. I don't know. These are just thoughts.

April 2007

The scientific theory (which we've all heard at least once and which we totally remember because it's so profound) is that the mere act of observing something (anything!) changes it. Just looking at molecules under a microscope changes them! Yeah. I know. But what about a sporting event? Why would watching it on YouTube change it? Ah, but it does!

Just knowing something, like for example a live music show, is being recorded can't help but change the show itself! And you know it's being recorded. How do you know? Because you can see the guy over there behind that camera? So now you won't take off your top due to excitement, and throw it on the stage, also due to excitement. Because someday you might want to run for office, right? And of course the band will totally play differently, without your under garments. In fact, the whole mood is different. Everything is different now. Because of you and your ambition. +1 for science.

I've learned the best responses to anything tend to emerge over time. The means of communication actually doesn't matter. Time is what matters. Online there is a sense of urgency? To respond before someone else? To be cleverer than someone else? Because it's just too hard to wait. A thoughtful response takes time. Must be allowed to germinate and grow. Should be deleted. And started over. Experience shows us the best responses are those that don't even want to come out, which must be forced out of people, like a reluctant tooth. Those are the best responses. (I'm thinking of Paul Boerner and Clare Elliott and Tamasine Ellis specifically. Paul is the worst of all. And therefore the most sought after. I think he may even have died, hopefully because of his withholding.) The point is I specifically remember all of these feelings long before the internet was in my life. I remember being mad at Paul for having better things to do than respond.

And what about the internet? And email. There are many reasons why email is so much less satisfying than real mail, but one of them is the lack of [time spent](#) processing the information received and formulating a response. Email encourages you to immediately respond to new messages in a Tetris-like attempt to keep down your inbox. Lengthy responses indicate you have [too much free time](#) or haven't thought about your response, or both. Short responses indicate you are either important and busy, or you're giving people short shrift, or both. No one ever wins. I myself have a horrendous habit of fragging responses. This is when you answer each answerable portion of an email as you go like a line item veto. Yes. No. Yes. Maybe. I even re-insert the little >'s in order to distinguish [their words from mine](#). All of this is harmful. Texting is even worse, or better.

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“Allow your judgments their own silent, undisturbed development, which, like all progress, must come from deep within and cannot be forced or hastened. Everything is gestation and then birthing. To let each impression and each embryo of a feeling come to completion, entirely in itself, in the dark, in the unsayable, the unconscious, beyond the reach of one’s own understanding, and with deep humility and patience to wait for the hour when a new clarity is born: this alone is what it means to live as an artist: in understanding as in creating.”

— Rilke

“But if we conceive of Tocqueville’s fear a little differently, then it does seem real enough. The danger is not actual despotic control but fragmentation—that is, a people increasingly less capable of forming a common purpose and carrying it out. Fragmentation arises when people come to see themselves more and more atomistically, otherwise put, as less and less bound to their fellow citizens in common projects and allegiances.”

– Charles Taylor

The other day, I went into a bar and ordered a Ramos Gin Fizz. And as I was drinking it, I thought, “You know, this [really is](#) such an odd taste.” What if I had just ordered a gin drink with a little less egg in it, a lot less, a [Tom Collins](#)? Then I thought, “No, wait. I have to drink this. This is cool. Here I am in this town which could be called New Orleans, and by God, I should be having this Ramos Gin Fizz.”

Some things you do just because they’re cool. Obviously, you must exercise judgment. Hunting rhinoceros. Very illegal. Bullfighting? On the way out. [Foie Gras](#)?

I’m sure we can all think of many traditions which have been softened or even deleted for [modern civilization](#). And that’s fine. But when you can have a tradition that is acceptable to modern sensibilities, then by God you had better hold on tight.

Maybe the very definition of tradition is that which is done because it was done before. And if it weren’t handed down, probably nobody would be starting doing it now. Probably because there are plenty of reasons not to do it. In the case of a Ramos Gin Fizz, there are several. Salmonella. Cholesterol. Or the most insidious of all, “Why bother?” Since you like the taste of a Tom Collins anyway, or even just a gin and tonic for that matter.

But this too is the definition of tradition. Doing that which requires you to give up some of what you perceive as autonomy or comfort in order to participate in [something larger](#) and previous to yourself.

In the culinary field, tradition leads us down time trodden paths to success and pleasure. Prosciutto and cantaloupe (they call it melon) is something I wouldn’t have thought of, but it’s a traditional combination. And delicious. Eggnog at Christmas. Fortified. Again, would not have thought. Will drink. Hearts for Valentine’s Day. Genius. Turkey on thanksgiving. It’s better not to ask too many questions. Unless there’s a reason to change them, I prefer to embrace traditions and [save my thinking](#) for other things.

Tradition and free thinking need not be mutually exclusive at all. Mindlessly following tradition is bad. But to thoughtfully uphold just traditions while letting go others is to be not only a free, but also a measured thinker.

April 2007

Letter Five

Rome

October 29, 1903

Dear Sir,

I received your letter of August 29 in Florence, and it has taken me this long - two months - to answer. Please forgive this tardiness - but I don't like to write letters while I am traveling, because for letter writing I need more than the most necessary tools: some silence and solitude and a not too familiar hour.

See that is a complete lie. It actually tastes really good. But for expediency, I completely lied. Now you know too much.

■ Government says they're too violent for kids, but some see it as a slight to cherished pastime

MADRID, SPAIN — State-run Spanish television has quietly yanked live coverage of bullfighting from its programming, ending a decades-old tradition of showcasing the national pastime out of concern that the duel between matador and beast

Television Espanola said this week it had nothing against bullfighting. The station noted that it aired the running of the bulls in Pamplona, in which people test their daring by racing bulls through the streets.

But the network said it had to respect a voluntary, industry-wide code that, without mentioning bullfighting, seeks to limit on-screen violence or "sequences that are particularly crude or brutal" from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. to protect children. Bullfights often start at 6 p.m.

Albendea called the argument nonsense, insisting parents, not the government, should decide whether children

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Make sure you and your



amy's bread, next door to murrays, is pretty damn good. i'll have to check out the wholefoods fromage section; although i instinctively recoil from these hood-eating behemoths. but who am i kidding? i'm essentially a [bobo](#), no matter how much i valorize the authentic.

d.

Stick To My Guns

I used to think taking one position and running with it was bad. I thought instead it would be better to be contemplative and slow. To present both sides of an argument and reason cautiously toward some tentative position. I used to get annoyed when people would seem so eager to follow decisive and extreme leaders more readily than those who were moderate. Now I'm not so sure.

Suppose someone delivers a slow, measured speech. It accommodates different points of view. It is cautious, meticulous, complex. But can it be trusted? The more reasonable it sounds, the more likely it is to be a mere summation of the ideas of others. This can be helpful, but it is not original or strong. If such speech is in fact sincere then it reflects an ambivalent mind, which is in some ways as feckless as a driven mind is dangerous. If someone takes a strong jab at something, in his excitement he may mix words or go too far or forget a fact. But, in spite of all, his speech is at least true to itself. It is inspired.

I used to think that [with argument and reason](#), disparate points of view could be reconciled into unified, more balanced views. But could it not be that in the end there are no sums of higher truth, but only a mix of singular points of view, and consequences?

Why else would history repeat itself so perfectly?

July 2007



From Rene Van Delft (my responses in italics):

To argue against it, I would say: there are many sides to onesidedness. At least many variations.

- One sided onesidedness:

Also called: fundamental sidetaking. This is having one opinion. Do not consider other possibilities, just act on that which you don't question. This is the Taliban fun of blowing up valuable utterings of other views.

Oh, this is totally it.

- Twosided onesidedness:

Also called: political sidetaking. Cling to your opinion, but investigate other possibilities so as to know how to attack them best. Always interpret the possible value and meaning of other views into the structure of your own. Never really leave it, but pretend you see the case in more than one way.

Oh yes, I was definitely right before.

- Multisided onesidedness:

Also called: dynamic sidetaking. Seriously investigate your own opinion and compare it in details against others, trying to avoid bias. The result will be that your initial opinion will change over to another, then again to another. In this so-called dialectic, the resulting opinion superficially may or may not resemble the initial one, but the outcome is bound to be more ripe, mature, subtle.

I didn't have to be, but I was.

- Currentsided onesidedness:

Also called: the time is now. In your path of opinions, there will be moments you have to act. If this involves convincing others, make the best use of metaphors to present your current view as clear and powerful as possible. But as you know this is only now, and later you may get better opinions, be careful not to do things that cannot be undone, like killing.

Everything is pointing toward this conclusion.

- Farsided onesidedness:

Also called: artistic sidetaking. Blow up your own opinion. Exaggerate until you made a caricature of all values of your opinion while barely maintaining plausibility.

Which is exactly why I was wrong.

- Metasided onesidedness:

Also called: make a mess. Combine all onesidednesses as stated above, according to your momentarily flavour. Especially farsided and fundamentally sided will give an explosive mixture.

And why I was right.

On the other hand: currentsidedness and dynamic onesidedness go nicely hand in hand.

And you should probably act now.

“And when you realize that their activities are shabby, that their vocations are petrified and no longer connected with life, why not then continue to look upon it all as a child would, as if you were looking at something unfamiliar, out of the depths of your own solitude, which is itself work and status and vocation? Why should you want to give up a child’s wise not-understanding in exchange for defensiveness and scorn, since not-understanding is, after all, a way of being alone, whereas defensiveness and scorn are participation in precisely what, by these means, you want to separate yourself from.

Think, dear Sir, of the world that you carry inside you, and call this thinking whatever you want to: a remembering of your own childhood or a yearning toward a future of your own - only be attentive to what is arising within you, and place that above everything you perceive around you. What is happening on your innermost self is worthy of your entire love; somehow you must find a way to work at it, and not lose too much time or too much courage in clarifying your attitude toward people.”

— Rilke

There is this idea of sharing ideas—of a living dialogue rather than essays which are fixed and done. When you read something heartfelt—you want to talk to the person who wrote it. Or at least you want to feel that discussion is still possible. The web offers this promise. But blogs blow up or out. Discussion forums devolve. Review sites are suspect. These things never walk the line for long. So the idea is to create a sincere discussion, which is alive, or at least feels like it could be.

It must be said, though, this web does not create the discussion. That has always been there. Across oceans. Across time. What the web does do is pull these multitudes of threads ever closer together, on faster boats. To what purpose? Well that my friend is what we are wondering all the time.

As a practical advantage, the discussion can remain fixed in one virtual yet *real* and accessible place on the web. And if it is lost, it may be [rediscovered](#). No matter how you found it, here is the discussion. Here is where it is happening. Not a recreation or rendition, but the actual thing itself. The possibility to contribute is always there, in that place. Like college, only minus the smell of dried beer.

But as I mentioned before about discussion forums devolving, the one requirement is there must be a good curator. More than just a censor. But someone who cares. Who is going to be that curator?

April 2007

From The Chuang Tzu

“In the bald and barren north, there is a dark sea, the Lake of Heaven. In it is a fish which is several thousand li across, and no one knows how long. His name is K’un. There is also a bird there, named P’eng, with a back like Mount T’ai and wings like clouds filling the sky. He beats the whirlwind, leaps into the air, and rises up ninety thousand li, cutting through the clouds and mist, shouldering the blue sky, and then he turns his eyes south and prepares to journey to the southern darkness.

The little quail laughs at him, saying, ‘Where does he think he’s going? I give a great leap and fly up, but I never get more than ten or twelve yards before I come down fluttering among the weeds and brambles. And that’s the best kind of flying anyway! Where does he think he’s going?’ Such is the difference between big and [little](#).”

With more clutter, err content every minute, search engines cannot keep up. I would define clutter not as dumb content but rather as commercial content. Sites designed to promote or sell something, are by and large, clutter. In the beginning, there was a grace period where the internet was populated by creative people with obsessions, err ideas. This meant you could pretty much stumble around and find [interesting and authentic](#) content. Now the internet is mostly redundant and plagued with agendas. This led to rise of social bookmarking sites. Which in turn led to the fall of social bookmarking sites. Seriously though the problem of search is not solved.

August 2007