

The Failed Archive¹

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¹ The digital version of this thesis is only for consulting the text part of the project, the complete form of the thesis is in its printed version.

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Introduction

This project is divided into an artistic component that consists of the set-up *Installing Allusions* that was a part of the MFA graduation exhibition *Kuvan Kevät 2022* and a written component which is a separated publication project titled *The Failed Archive*. While *Installing Allusions* is conceived as process of material becoming of a series of discursive practices which mainly focused on the process of re-materialization in the formulation of objects and bodies, and exhibition-making as medium in formulating of an archive of discourses, *The Failed Archive* attempts to continue this materialization of discursive practices in form writing and publication.

As a continuous discursive practice of the artistic component, as well as a concrete example of its own account of perpetual rematerialization, *The Failed Archive* consists of two texts titled *Archive practice - system of knowledge, failures, and discourses* and *Installing Allusions Revisited - Memory, Body, Material, and Folds*. Separately, through re-accounting the formation of system of knowledge and its problems, the *Archive practice* stands as a theoretical frame-work that contextualizes the discourses that are present in both *Installing Allusions* and its fictional revisit within a broader historical constellation of discourses. The text of *Revisited* instead explores the role of writing as a medium or apparatus in further rematerializing discourses. Through a fictional re-visiting of *Installing Allusions* in form of non-linear experimental writing, the text bonds together the set-up with its process of making, personal memories, sensations, observations, self-conversations, and it embraces reflections that might bring no conclusions, at the same time, it also stands as a definitive index of the abstract archive practice that both *Installing Allusions* and *The Failed Archive* attempt to carry out together.

As a further elaboration, of the discourses of the archive and its re-materialization are also embodied within the graphic design intervention of the publication - as in *Installing Allusions Revisited - Memory, Body, Material, and Folds* an experimental technique of writing that creates folds of detour texts as ramifications from the main text was used, therefore the reader has to constantly choose their own reading path - the folding structure of the papers is specially conceived in order to contain this intersectionality of the reading process. The main part of the publication is loosely put together by several large sheets of paper where the main text, fold text, notes, and illustrations are brought into a temporary linear order through folding, however, the binding of booklet is intentionally left out to encourage a disruption of this order - through potential spatial rearrangements of the textual structure as well as the non-linear, shifting, and oscillating reading between the main text and the fold texts.

Therefore, through emphasizing the physical engagements between the body of the text and the one of the reader, the process of reading re-materializes itself in the constant folding and unfolding gestures, bringing further the quests of linear temporality of the text and books - which was one of the painting subjects in *Installing Allusions* - into the discursive practices of writing, reading, and book making.

Archive Practice - System of Knowledge, Failures, and Discourses

For instance, this curious matter of superiority, of relative height, was important to the Urrastil they often used the word “higher” as a synonym for “better” in their writing, where Anarresti would use “more central”.

Ursula K. Le Guin, “The Dispossessed”, 1974.

The archive is, first of all, an organ of power. The process of selection constitutes the fundament of every archive, determining which residue of testimony and fact must be included and what cannot be qualified, or in which way it should be inserted. Before finding its place into the collection, every fragment of history needs to be examined, compared and catalogued in relation to what is already present. The memory of the past is thus carefully constructed through such process. The role of the archive is, in the first place, that of the collection and the administration of these fragments, then, the government of the interpretation of the relationship between these elements. It is therefore a system - a system of organized information, power, and knowledges.

Borrowing from Foucault, a system of knowledge can be defined as a network or system of power relationships which, by reproducing knowledge, allows its becoming in accordance with the system’s anonymous intentions.² If we consider the “increase” of scientific knowledges as an accumulative system, then our process of discovering the world, producing knowledge and its organization, fundamentally becomes an archiving process. And such process often, if not always, relies on the formation of a structural complexity between different elements it is constituted of. It is within this framework that the naming, classification, and the ordering of things, and therefore the reproduction of knowledge and power, become possible.

In *The Order of Things*, Foucault gives an account of the brief history of system of knowledge focusing on the example of the study and cataloguing of life. Until 18th century the biology as a subject did not exist³,

² Foucault, 1994.

³ Foucault, 1994, 127.

and, in the West, the only discipline dedicated to the study of life was natural history. According to Foucault, the reason for this was that *life itself did not exist, instead, only living beings were recognized through a grid of knowledge, where the history of a living being was that being itself*⁴. The world thus was more recognized as a collection of individual beings linked through a loose semantic network that was embodied in them, and nature was acknowledged merely through the registration and description of the visible according to signs that had been assigned on them. Natural history was, therefore, *nothing more than the nomination of the visible*⁵.

This tradition of knowledge production prioritized sight over the other senses, *being [sight] the sense by which we perceive extent and establish proof*⁶. What needs to be pointed out here is that the exclusive privilege of sight and the degradation of other senses was not a phenomenon which was specific to natural history, but it was generally present in the establishment and development of almost all of the modern western science. In other words, the process of modernization of our sciences was based on the imposition of limitations in the realm of experience and in determining a higher value to changes of scale in the visual sphere over any correlations between different kinds of evidence based on other senses. This also brought to favoring the use and invention of optical instruments. Clarity over variety, a change of perspective, just like Ursula K. Le Guin wrote describing one of the many puzzles an extra-planetary foreigner had encountering a metaphorical Western civilization⁷. There are many examples for this unfettered obsession with sight within the Western history of science: a process honed towards perfecting without apparent limit. From the microscope to the satellite surveillance system, the artificial intelligence-linked graphic generating systems, *cameras [made] for purpose from filming the mucous membrane lining the gut cavity of a marine worm living in the vent gases on a fault between continental plates to mapping a planetary hemisphere elsewhere in the solar system*⁸ and since in science the vision is linked with the objectivity, it seems that the better (quantitatively and intensively) we see the more objective we can become. The world has been reduced into visible and accountable, what is unmarked, hidden, disappeared, and blur has no place in this archive of knowledge.

If we look at the prioritization of knowledges in science as a process of formation of such an archive, the determination of certain value over others stands at the base of the process of selection. To observe, then, *is to be content with seeing - with seeing a few things systematically*⁹. In the case of natural history, this resulted in privileging the study of the appearance of a plant, which was then reduced into the description of its shapes, demonstrating the representative values that have been assigned to understand the arrangement of the plant. This registration is what botanists called *structure*¹⁰.

4 Foucault, 1994, 129.

5 Foucault, 1994, 132.

6 Foucault, 1994, 133.

7 K. Le Guin, 1999.

8 Haraway, 1998, 581.

9 Haraway, 1998, 581.

¹⁰ Foucault, 1994.

Structure is therefore the reconfiguration of the visible into language through a process of pre-linguistic sifting. Since this reconfiguration consequentially flattens the possibility of self-suggesting the connections with its surroundings, it functioned more like the assignment of a noun that contains exclusively its individual being. Therefore, a technique that is able to situate these structures into the constellation of identities and difference, that links them into specific directions was needed.

Foucault identifies the two techniques - called *character*¹¹ - used to situate the structures as systems and methods. While method consisted in gradually establishing all the identities and distinctions through comparing different groups that do not share a high number of resemblances, system suggested a thread-like connection between different individual entities that are linked by a group of characteristics they share. Within the same collection of elements, the method can usually be single, like taxonomy, but systems could be multiple and overlapping, like for today's hashtags. But only structure and characters are not enough for a system to overcome the necessity of its own empirical repetition, because it requires a continuity that marks the shifting series of events within a system, *which is that of time itself (and which can be conceived as straight, broken, or circular)*¹². Continuation gives the system a direction, like a vector, so the discourse can be organized and mobilized.

Foucault emphatically compared classification with language. While the latter searches for the similarity of impressions, the former requires the smallest possible difference between things. From this perspective, language, classification and archive all imply the very same kind of attempt in organizing knowledge which resides in the gap between the visible and the accountable. From the analysis of representation in memory, to the determination of the common elements, and further, the establishment of the signs and the nomination, they are apparatuses for the transition from the visible to a general taxonomic order.

But the account of a such general order needs to face its own problem, that of its own immobility. In any language or archive system, each element is always reduced into its structure and put in relation with the characters of the system. The continuity of the system results in the reduction of the qualities which compose the structure of its elements, as well as the immobilization of the taxonomic order of its characters. And the consequence of this problem can be an intensified hierarchical system with fixed vision that devours each subject it encounters into its reduced structure.

Therefore, just like the archive, a system of knowledge is political and violent, for the fact that it inherently embeds the reduction of its each individual element and the fixation of its ideology would be enhanced through every repetition of such action. But what happens to a subject that refuses, by its nature, a such reduction? A dissident subject that cannot be subjected, like a queer person in a society of compulsory heterosexuality; people without political identity, subject to indifference and social ghosting; an ancient forest that plays a crucial role in maintaining the local ecological stability but fall out from the subjects of the

¹¹ Foucault, 1994.

¹² Foucault, 1994, 150.

definitions in the “Preservation Act”; *a poor image that is excluded from legitimate discourse and from becoming, subject to disavowal and repression*¹³, as artist and author Hito Steyerl suggests during one of her lectures. Would they be de-subjected, excluded from the archiving process and neglected to exist, acquiring a ghost-identity outside the system, or accept a partial reduction that comes with a note of exception, a link for a further explanation? In most of the case, any included subject through the archiving process would just be devoured and reduced by force without any sign intentionally left. From the holocaust archive to militarism, the male supremacy, colonialism, capitalism, propagated disinformation driven elections... the system of knowledge constantly classifies, defines the complex, contradictory and fragmented worldly materials, bodies, and things, transforming them into homogeneously accountable subjects that are interpreted by deliberately constructed structures of ideology and control.

But is there a way of walking out from this? How can we acknowledge the world through a system of knowledge that is not materialization on hierarchy but only relations? A system where the complex, contradictory, and fragmented worldly materials, bodies, and things are not always reduced into representations for the sake of its represented knowledges. And what if knowledge is neither in the represented nor in the representation, but in the material configuration of things, thus always situated and indexical?

To imagine a different system is to first acknowledge the current one, to see its problem, finding its apertures and thus to mobilize it with instruments that are formed and honed through praxis. In the case of *Installing Allusions*, the attempt of such a praxis was intended to be carried out through a series of discursive practices, which mainly focused on the process of re-materialization in the formulation of objects and bodies, and exhibition-making as medium through which citations functioned as enablement for the emergence of discursive folds and cuts within an archive system. While the latter involves the idea of citations, as expressed by Hannah Arendt in communication with Hito Steyerl’s concept of bruises and glitches, the first one draws on Sara Ahmed’s account of orientation matter and Karen Barad’s notions of agential realism. These practices, which intertwine in a non-linear way along the production of the works, the installation of the set-up, the on-site visits and the fictional re-visiting through the writing of this paper, are intended as possible reconfigurations of the notions of the archive, as well as processes of instrumentalization meant for the mobilization of system of knowledges. An archive of discourses, through which it examines its own legitimization and failures.

In a comment to the work of her beloved friend Walter Benjamin, Hannah Arendt focuses on the role of citation recurring to the image of the *pearl diver*¹⁴. Benjamin had initiated by the time the immense - and uncompleted - *Arcade Project*, an accumulations of quotes picked up as the debris left in the city of Paris, which he compares to *caves containing fossils of an animal presumed extinct*¹⁵. In them, he

¹³ Steyerl, 2012, 40.

¹⁴ Arendt, 2007, 39.

¹⁵ U. Marks, 2000, 85.

recognizes hints and indexes of a semiotical language capable to reconstruct the fragmented and vivacious cultural and social life of the city, as well as that of the consumers of the early capitalism from the nineteenth-century.

Citation and quotes are, in this sense, a curatorial act that defies the structure of an established knowledge. Infiltrating through the gaps opened between its infrastructures, citations includes external informations which escape the structures. While becoming formally part of the system, they also state its belonging to a different structure. Each citation thus contributes the mobilization of the system. In *Installing Allusions*, the aspect of citation enhanced not merely a strategy for the realization of the works but a repetitive subject that constituted a medium in itself. Paintings of cropped public images, of pages of texts, of a section of a novel printed in A4, of the image of an own painting, or canvases that repeated the form and the weight of another exhibition's catalogue and of other books, metal curtains that repeat a part of a room from a private collection in Berlin. Here, the personal experience, bodies, images, and objects are embedded into relational matter of citations. In her essay named *Too Much World: Is the Internet Dead?* Hito Steyerl described a networked space as medium in itself that contains, sublates, and archives all previous forms of media¹⁶. The aforementioned notion can be adopted to understand citation as instrument for the construction of a relational space. A space of openness and discursive cuts, where the exhibition-making can be enabled as a powerful promiscuous medium in its own.

But a citation is not only semiotical, it can be physically embodied within the material configuration of the things itself as well. As in Benjamin's account of debris from arcade as fossils at the first place, objects are embodied with the fragments of lived experiences and therefore, through the traces of physical contact, they can be considered as citations where the indexical quality resides within their own material configuration. Laura U. Marks in *The Skin of the Film* further writes on this power of objects: *fetishes get their power not by representation that which is powerful but through contact with it, a contact where materiality has been repressed*¹⁷. Here, the fetishes and fossils shared the same notion of materiality, where contacts and repressions leave bruises and markers on objects, which were also the condition of their indexical power. Texts and images, of course, share the same kind of endowment through their material configurations too. The medium of text or image, whether of a book, a canvas, or even a digital image, they are meant to across different bodies and carriers, and each time they would acquire more and more attrition, bruises, and glitches.

In *Orientalism Matter*, Sarah Ahmed analyzed her identity as a writer by a recounting of the performativity of the materialization of subjects and objects, and how this process comes to affect both the space and bodies: *the writer writes, and the labor of writing shapes the surface of the writer's body. The objects used for writing are shaped by the intention to write [...] orientations are about how matter surfaces by being*

¹⁶ Steyerl, 2013.

¹⁷ U. Marks, Laura, 2000, 86.

*directed in one way or another*¹⁸. And if we take this notion of orientations into account, then these attrition, bruises, and glitches would in a way even exceed a common idea of *a kind of citationality*¹⁹ - mere imprints and traces that are left in the process of bodily encounters. Instead, they become a constitutional part of matter that reshapes and orientates the different bodies through the materialization of the sedimentation of actions and receptions of gestures in the space. An illustration of this concept could be the process of bending the flat surface of aluminum foils into folds, as for the curtain piece in *Installing Allusion*. The large metal sheets performed its material endowment through its their intra-action with the strength and weight of the artist's body. In this way, the physical formation of these folds become bruises that embeds these bodily encounters, and the repetitive processes of pressing, turning, and folding are actions applied both to the body of the curtain but as well the body of the artist. Similarly, in the series of canvases that repeated the form as well the weight of books, the countless strata of heavy paint can be also considered as fossils of material intra-actions between the different bodies. Through a daily reiteration of adding layers, the canvases reshaped the artist's bodily perception of heaviness and orientated his practice towards a new understanding of pictorial gestures. Furthermore, in encouraging their physical contact with the viewer's body - to be touched and held in hands - the canvases expands the notions of body within the performativity of their own material configuration.

Intra-action, is, for Karen Barad, the enactment through which agency comes to matter.²⁰ In the account of agential realism, matter is referred as a substance of its own intra-active becoming, a materialization of doing, *which is not simply the surface effect of human bodies, or the end product of linguistic or discursive acts*²¹. Instead, it is the discursive practices in its material dimensions, constrains, and exclusions that played a central role in this process. And therefore, the endowment of matter as an active agent is entailed within its own dynamics of intra-activity as well continuous materialization, namely its performativity. If we understand Barad's notion of matter and its performativity as necessary material agency for the formation of knowledge system or archive, then perhaps the porosity of such a self-enclosing system with its presumed impermeability would also become very conspicuous. It is exactly in the performativity of matters the archive system would reveal its apertures, unsteadiness, and the potential intersectionality. As the writing of this text is a material congealing of various inter-actions, between the sweaty fingers of the writer, the photon of the laptop's screen, the noise of a busy street from outside window, the written books from the bibliography, as well as the material practices of the formation of *Installing Allusion*... this materialization can be seen as an archiving practice of effects, actions, and all the nameable and unnamable things that are related, which are containers of other materializations themselves.

Similarly, *Installing Allusions* and this publication, *The Failed Archive*, should also be considered a vague archive practice. The formation of objects, installing the set-up as a discursive practice, situated

¹⁸ Ahmed, 2010, 235.

¹⁹ Butler, 1994, 15.

²⁰ Barad, 2007.

²¹ Barad, 2003, 822.

conversations with individuals, the different visits to the exhibition as well as the writing process of this text, and its material reconfiguration in form of publication... they entice various kinds of material, effects, bodies, discourses, and failures that are tied loosely together by a common subject that nevertheless remains ambiguous, fluid and unsteady. In fact, the second part of this publication, which takes form of a fictional re-visiting of *Installing Allusions*, attempts to become a definitive index of this theoretical and practical process. In it, the recount of an experience is intertwined with memories, thoughts and readings that exceeds a linear temporality. The process of writing shapes the structure of the archive, creating new relations through the syntax and the figures of speech. It is a reconfiguration which takes aid in its layout, creating folds, that brings new ramification of the discourses through their constant materialization. Therefore, this archive of discourse, in its perpetual transitory state of materialization and rematerialization, is formed and become undone in continuous motion, shaping while being shaped, effecting while being effected, seeking relations but refusing to be related. It is a system without the structure, an archive without the objects, or a discourse without the subject, therefore, failing itself.

Installing Allusions Revisited - Memory, Body, Material, and Folds

The sound of running water coming from Natalie's work²² quickly faded as I walked into the exhibition hall. It was a very white space with tall ceilings and large windows. I knew that many temporary white walls were built to hang paintings on, which together with the sculptures that were placed among them, prevented one, standing from any point to hardly cast their sight through the whole space.

I straightly moved towards where my set-up was. I quickly passed first by the silvan wood figures by Essi²³ and Tina's female figures²⁴ relaxing behind on the wall. Under the high-saturated green plants and blue sky, their white skin appeared almost pink. Then, in order to continue my path, I passed by the Kati's enigmatic matte canvases of black and dark blue color²⁵. As the wall moved slowly away at every step, the view was occupied by a wooden toilet hut²⁶, which was standing in the middle of the space drawn by the temporary wall. At its side there was a wooden stick with an information label attached on top, which allowed visitors to read the information of the work while maintaining their standing posture without, probably, extra fatigue.

Behind it, I could partly see the curtain hanging in the distance like a silver background used for stages.

As I walked past the hut, I could eventually see the curtain in its entirety. Its metallic surface was shining under the rays of the afternoon sunlight cast from the large window on its right. The curtain presented itself as an art object-protagonist to me. Although the entire piece was pending motionlessly straight in the air, some of its pleats suggested a slight movement of aperture. There was something in the space behind it.

The curtain suddenly felt higher as I got close by and my sight was immediately occupied by the sharp reflections on the top of each fold. They cut everything into sheer lines of bright grey color, and when I moved, I could see nothing but endlessly repeating reflections of shifting lines and lights. I barely recognized the moving white shirt of the writing reflection which belonged to myself, constantly swallowed and reformed by the concavities and convexities of the metallic weaves. I tried to look out for more but, somebody passing quickly by caused the whole curtain to start swing slowly back and forth from the flow

²² Natalie Seifert Eliassen, 2021

²³ Essi Pitkänen, 2022

²⁴ Tiina Tuovinen, 2022

²⁵ Kati Sankala, 2022

²⁶ Henrik Härkönen, 2021-2022

generated by the gush of air, making a rumble-like metallic sound. The movement made the junction between pleats clearer and, from where I was standing, I could see the sheer metal edges of the panels and a glance of the space on the other side of the curtain. It was filled by bright sunlight as well. A corner of a canvas was just cut visible from this angle, and the wall on which it was hanging seemed slightly diverging from the curtain.

I wanted to take a better look at the canvas, but my neck and legs started to hurt a bit as I had been squatting too long, so I stood up and walked around the curtain. I stop by the darker side of the curtain and peaked into the space it was hiding.

I wanted to take a better look of the space, so I walked around the curtain, I stopped by the darker side of the curtain and peaked into the space it was hiding.

In front of the curtain was a table standing. On the narrow strip of wall between the windows on the other side was installed a shelf holding some books. Some paintings were hanging on the long wall opposite to the curtain. One, instead, was left on the ground leaning on the wall. The space felt concealed behind the curtain. A concrete pilaster, standing at the entrance of the area, blocked the whole view. I couldn't see the entire set up from anywhere, so I had to constantly walk around and between some of the works.

Passing the pilaster, I noticed a small painting behind it. It was hanging from the ceiling attached to two steel wires, closely suspended against the curtain. The painting recalled the cover of an exhibition catalogue with a photograph of a small blank area in the centre, from which dispersed colored rays on the top of a black surface spoiled by some greasy finger marks. It was an image that showed only the surface of another image, its own reflection exposed to a flash. The words *Julia Stoschek collection - A FIRE IN MY BELLY*²⁷ were painted on the top of the image in cadmium red, which reminded of its reference as an image of a printed, shiny book-cover. However, differently from the perfect surface of a photograph or of a book-cover, the painted version of the image presented a lot of wrinkles that were probably caused by the use of an excessive amount of siccativ oil. The wrinkles froze while running down, as if the entire painted image was collapsing on itself due to the unbearably gravitational force. The straightened steel wires seemed to be a demonstration of the uncommon weight, but I wondered what it would be, the weight of a photo, of a painting or of a catalogue? I looked at the space between painting and curtain, and I noticed that some numbers were written with a black marker pen on the back of the canvas.

“845g - 41223021OC”

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27 Nam Cheung, Eugene Yiu. Lisa Long & Robert Schulte, 2021

When I turned left, I saw a horizontal painting with four wooden legs. Instead of being hung on a wall, it stood flat as a table, displaying its image like a curated showcase like a showcase of references or documents in an archive or museum, but with its contents painted on top. The surface of the painting was the surface of the table, and the objects in the paintings were the objects on the table as well.

Among objects displayed on its painted surface, there was one which was quickly recognizable. The brightly blue and gold cover of book *Cold Mountain*²⁸ stood there between a canvas and some other objects of daily use, with its worn out side covered in paper tape.

One of the stories told by the book *Cold Mountain* was about how Ida and Inman, two lovers separated by the American Civil war, tried to reunite together. Central to the whole book, however, are the endless descriptions of the trees, plants and rocks which compose the landscape of North Carolina. I read the book during a winter in Berlin. It was a difficult period for me. I suffered both for issues related to documents and because of depression. I remember that I would just sit on the S-Bahn Ring-line going round and round the city the whole day, watching the grayness of the city's typical winter sky, feeling a melancholic emptiness about the future. And this book was with me. Every time, when I switched from the grey running sky outside the window to the book, it always made me feel a special kind of warmth inside. It was a thread-like sense of hope while reading all these descriptions about the trees, shrubs, rivers... their names, their shapes, and how they were constantly shifting as the protagonists moved. It was in those small moments, I felt a genial comfort, when I think that something like this story, those landscapes, and the endless journeys of trees actually existed in the same world.

I noticed that a copy of the book was among the ones on the bookshelf that was nearby.

Besides the book, there were two pages placed on the table. The pages were excerpts of the short novel *Untitled Trip* that I wrote during the lockdown in Italy in early 2020. It began from a spontaneous solo trip to Jordan, which I took after my time in Berlin. After the journey, the imageries of the incandescent sunlight, endless sand and rock mountains, and various encounters with people, which were left in my mind for a quite long time, repeated themselves obsessively without dissipating their clarity. This prompted me to write.

On one of the pages it was written:

I nodded. And he kept talking.

“But sadly I haven't had any cigarettes with me since seven years ago I've decided to quit smoking.”

²⁸ Charles Frazier, 1997

“Oh, why would you?”

“Quitting smoking?”

“No, light the first cigarette after seven years.”

“It’s strange, isn’t it?” He shortly paused, then said, “It’s probably because of the urge.”

“The sudden desire.” I confirmed again, “Won’t you feel sorry for those seven years?”

“Yeah, in a way.” He said, “But somehow I knew this would come, so I always had a lighter with me.”

I thought it was a joke, so I laughed a bit, but then I saw he had a lighter in his hand.

There was a short silence.

“Hey,” He put my mind back, “Do you like Whisky? I got some with me.” He looked behind, in the tent.

Not a bad idea, I thought, can’t sleep anyway. So I said yes and went in with him.

It was much warmer inside, the air smelled like some mix of oily canteen and burned charcoal. A tiny round stove stood in the end of the tent, with a chair by the corner. The red light from its square aperture frailly glowed, it was hard to be perceived from outside. The rest of the space was rather large, the same pattern of carpet from the dorm room also covered everything here and it expanded from the ceiling to the floor and the walls, except an array of transparent plastic “windows” on the latter. Through the windows, some light barely casted in, soon absorbed by the dark-colored rough surface of the carpet. The stainless steel chair and tables tidily occupied most part of the tent in arrays, stood there silently in the dark, like a scene of a robot manufacturer from some sci-fi film.

The novel narrated the story of I, the traveler who arrived in a foreign country in the desert and wandered around without any specific purpose, until he accidentally met a goatherd boy who was convinced that I was there searching for a fountain and that he could help find it. Despite not knowing anything about the fountain, I decided to follow him to the fountain, to see what happens. In the story didn’t happen much, it was mainly the conversations that kept on unfolding themselves in the endless description of the landscapes. I wondered how encompassing was the shadow that *Cold Mountain* casted on the story while I was writing.

Despite the completely distinct environments, I somehow could see a gleam overlapping the landscapes of the forest and the desert.

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On the left side of the papers there was a painting, more precisely, a painting was painted on the table as if an “actual” object of painted canvas was laying there. On the wall opposite to the curtain, behind the visitor standing in front of the table, its “twin” was hanging, the “actual” canvas. So that the two images couldn’t be seen at the same time. I found very interesting the idea of having something constantly in mind while looking at another thing. The two can’t appear simultaneously in a physical form, but one is always perceived in relation with the other.

On the table there was also a medical mask that had a pleasant greenish-blue color, and, at its upper side, laid a pack of tobacco Marlboro Gold. The caution read *Il fumo riduce la fertilità* (smoking reduces fertility), under an image of a colorfully dressed woman with a baby on her lap. Another woman wearing all clothes in a dark blue color sat next to them, she looked at them impassively, with a cigarette in her right hand. The dark blue color of her trousers somehow reminded me of the color of Brunelleschi's cupola under its own shadow on sunny days. It is one of the first subjects that flickers in my head when I think about smoking. I started to smoke a late spring when I was still studying at the academy of fine arts in Florence. Our classroom was on the top floor of a renaissance palace with an outside loggia, I liked to sit there to rest after lunch, enjoying the sunlight that brought a dizzy warmth. Later, I accidentally discovered that nicotine could enhance this feeling. So, I started to smoke. The intense dark bluish-violet color of the cupola contrasting with the almost cobalt Tuscany sky was one of the things that I constantly stared at while feeling a brief euphoria brought to me by the mixture of sun and nicotine.

On the right side of the pack of tobacco there were a rollerball pen from Muji and a palm-sized notebook with some sheets underneath. One recorded an expense of 2,7 euro at a venue entitled Compass Oy and another one was a ferryboat ticket from Helsinki to Tallinn. On the notebook there were some notes that I made during one of the meetings for my MFA thesis. Reproducing “images” of your own writing feels really weird. In order to obtain the loose feeling of the pencil trace, instead of using brushes I had to copy the writings with a wax stick that I made with graphite powders. While making them, the precise and hard end point of the wax made me feel more like “drawing” than “painting” with a brush, and the trace that the graphite powder left was of the same material as the ones left by pencil on paper, and the process of “re-writing” my own writing became more like an automatic gesture of the hand than an “object to subject” painting process in a vaguely traditional sense.

I've found this process extremely interesting in terms of image-reproduction of a thing. To depict an object in a painting is often to represent it with a sign in a different material context, thus the difference between an actual piece of paper and its painted version in a painting would be mostly self-evident. This is not only because the latter is often defined as a sign and the former as an object, their material configuration also contributed this difference. While a paper is probably made of wooden fibers and glue, the signs in an oil painting are usually composed by linseed oil and pigments with a mineral or animal origin. The things that kept a subject distant from its painted version appeared to be not only a semiotic issue, but as well a material matter, and, perhaps, there's more to it. But what happens when I re-write my own writings in a painting? What happens, when the subject was already a sign itself? What happens, when the subject and its painted version share the same material configuration? How close can the same kind of semiotics, action and gesture, and material configuration bring the subject and its painted version together? How far does one need to go in order to close the gap of the representationalism, making the representation (painted version) and the represented (the subject) becoming the same? Or can representationalism really exist in painting?

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The shadow of the notebook dropped almost upright while the one of *Cold Mountain* was slightly on its right side. There was clearly two different perspectives while the painting was made, or even more.

The issue of perspective has always played a central role in the discussion and reflection in the history of Western art tradition. Starting from the early Renaissance, where the concept of *prospettiva* was formally established in the European painting tradition with Leon Battista Alberti's famous text *De Pictura*²⁹, the linear perspective has been repeatedly assumed in painters' practices. A linear perspective always comes with the construction of the view of a one-eyed and immobile spectator as a norm³⁰ - in the case of this table painting, the exact height of the eyes of the viewer, the distance they stand from the table, as well as the light source under which the work will be presented - a very specific view point, but whose? Perhaps that of the artist? The body of the artist as an apparatus of perception makes ground for every other kind of sense making, even for an ideal presumption for others.

However, the artist's body is not only an apparatus of perception, it is also one of *making*. If I was painting my subject on a canvas from a distance (it could be metaphorical or literal), my perception would shift quickly from the painted surface to the subject and back, while hands moved and "registered" which was the result of my observation (perception). I *make* what I perceive and my *perception* shapes my *making*, it can be

29 Leon Battista Alberti 2012 (1435)

30 Erwin Panofsky, 1998

seen as a slow process of material reconfiguration of body(s) and the canvas thus became a registration of such bodily sedimentation. However, the physical distance played a significant role here, because the distance deduces the small movements between the representation and represented, it is the key to keep this immobility ideally possible.

Nevertheless, in the case of the table-painting, the situation seemed to have become tricky.

Since my canvas and subject(s) were almost the same thing, this significantly reduced the distance, the key of the above-mentioned structure of representationalism, thus caused a series of material “issues” in the process of making the painting. The observation of the objects required their still presence on the table surface while the painting process needed their absence from the locations: I can’t paint that area of the canvas if there is an object on top, and if I move it, the perspective changes. The surface of the table did not share a strong sense orientation, so its painting too. Moreover, the canvas becomes a bit sloppy under the effect of gravity when standing in a vertical position which made painting details much more difficult, therefore the painting process was quite bodily and performative.

I had to constantly switch the canvas between its standing position and hanging on the wall, spinning it from vertical to horizontal and back, turning it or myself around moving while painting... The movements were simply too many to make an ideal rendering of a “perfect” linear perspective possible, so I was forced to adapt the painting process of objects in a fragmented but realistic way. First I photographed the perspective of a single image, then turned the table vertically on the wall, taped the object to the wall nearby and painted it by constantly shifting sights between the screen of my Mac to glance at the picture with the perspective I wanted to obtain, the object attached with tape for details and color, and then turn to my brain to look for the imagination needed to combine the two, and then again to the canvas to paint... in the course of two months, I always had a huge neck pain and my eyes were about falling off every day, not mentioning the constant sour pain in my wrist from weird painting postures.

In the end, the table painting was more like a presentation of the swinging process of fragmented perspectives through various apparatus in different temporal and spatial positions that were later compressed into the same layers, perhaps a failed representation of a table seen from one specific temporal and spatial point of view, a platform of uncontrollable flow of mess of time and perspective in the guise of a quiet table and a passive objects.

The brim of the canvas, as well as its four sides were painted in bright ochre color for about a length of two finger knuckles, with some occasional stripes of raw umbra, imitating the surface of the wooden bars that were used to build the frame and its foldable legs. It was hard to tell the difference between the painted

surface and the actual wooden structure from distant. I was quite happy about the result. Only when it was looked at closely, the grainy surface of the linen finish of the canvas would quickly reveal the material difference between the two surfaces.

I remembered that in the early stages of the preparation of the canvas, I had decided to use a primer that consisted of about half oil and half glue ratio in order to obtain a matte surface. It was a quite bold and experimental gesture for me, because I've always used a primer that is solely oil based, which significantly reduces the sucking capacity of the base and making the painting result quiet glossy in the end. Using an unfamiliar material in the process later made me really suffer from all its unexpected effects. The increased amount of glue in the primer altered the sucking capacity of the canvas, it thus required an altered consistency of the oil paint, as well as a different manner to apply the paint on the surface otherwise the dried layer on the canvas surface would result many patches of different color intensity, and this becomes particularly evident on monochrome background. Some changes in the color tone always occur when oil paint gets dry and this is caused by a complex range of faculties, from the sucking capacity of the canvas to the type of pigments or oil-medium, or the thickness of the paint and its oil proportion...in order to obtain some relatively satisfactory result every element needs to be tested out. Moreover, once a procedure is overhauled then the whole process might need to be redone. There is always a huge amount of labor in perpetual repetition of searching of the establishment of familiarity between the body, knowledge, and materials.

The relationship between these three elements has always puzzled me for their similitude to a paradox. As Sara Ahmed noted in her essay *Orientations Matter* about the disappearance of labor through its own repetition, if we work hard at something, then it seems *effortless*³¹. Here she was talking about a kind of bodily sedimentation of history through the performing of labor. From this perspective, the disappearance of the labor does not only indicate the transitory action of the moment - that dissipates as the action is completed - but rather they stand as an effect of sedimentation of our shaped body and knowledge, and this makes us perform the same labor more "effortlessly". The effects of our actions are also "acting" on us through bodily sensations and the things that we are making are also "making" us.

Perhaps, then the sweating and anxious process of wrestling with the material effects of the table-painting was not merely a hard laborious painting work, moreover, it was a realizing process of this bodily sedimentation through the material registration of art object. The mixture of seeing from photographs, 'actual referential objects', brainy imaginations, altered lighting conditions, the neck-pain from weird postures, and the decreased sight from "painting-transcribing" the A4 sized novel section with excessively huddling posture close to the surface, in this fragmented realization process of self-becoming the artist "becomes" an artist through "making art".

³¹ Ahmed, 2010, 246.

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As I took two steps back from the table, the silver pleats of the curtain immediately came into my sight. It was not that before I didn't notice at all that the curtain was right behind the table, but by attempting to look at the table-canvas as a whole, its background unavoidably got my attention and became thus much more evident. Then I started to notice an eccentric dynamic between the pleats and the table, which was not only caused by the distinct materials they were made off - the shiny metal surface of the curtain and the matte wood(ish) surface of the table-painting. Moreover, the frozen movement of the pleats, which seemed to anticipate an own consequential action, contrasted strongly with the stillness of the table. My sight was stuck there, shifting between the two objects, having a hard time following one and leaving the other. I found this situation of emergence very flattering, I think this probably was a question of *background*. In Husserl's account, the *background* processes an ambiguous quality of invisible visibility, it is something that is there in such a way that we don't notice it, *dimly apprehended depth or fringe of indeterminate reality*³². And it is also always a relative condition of being that things and objects constantly move in and out from according the shifting of our perception. This was perhaps what happened when I stepped back from the table, the curtain or its pleats just tended to move out from the background. However, the shift was not immediate, it was more like a gradient process, and in this case the emergence stood still in between, making them both visible as well invisible.

After staring at them for a while, I turned left. There was a huge window more like a glass wall, about four meters high. From the window I could see a gray street with some cars occasionally whooshing by, some trees on the other side and, further, there was the sea. A blurry and transparent reflection of the side of the curtain overlapped on top of them, dividing everything in half, even the sea. There was a gap between the window and the curtain. It was the size of one person, so I tried to walk through. The curtain started to rumble again as my clothes slightly brushed against on one corner of the metal. I realized that I returned where I started. Once more, all I could see was just the endless metal folds of the curtain. The curtain became again the immediate object and everything from the other side just immersed into the background.

I tried to get back to the other side of the curtain through same narrow gap between the curtain and the window. From its side, the two sideling legs of the book-shelf that was installed on the wall between the windows became clearly visible. I could see the trace of its own making process, it was a simple metal shelf welded together and screwed on the wall. However, its legs disappeared from my sight as I walked closer. I shifted to its front and took a couple steps back to examine if the legs were visible, and they were not. I stared at the bookshelf and walked backwards until I passed the perimeter of the set-up area and walked

³² Ahmed, 2010, 239.

back. Still the legs never came into my sight. The bookshelf appeared just as a sheer piece of metal, statically floating on the wall. "Perspective matters" I thought.

I was pretty happy with the result.

Some books were lined up against the left side of the shelf. Most of them were in at least two or three copies. Actually, "copy" might not be a correct word to use for books. I found this concept funny: in the publishing industry, books are objects that are often produced multiple times with exact same contents and materials, (almost) at the same time, and they are identified by the same archive code (ISBN) which they carry on the back cover. And under such context, each object seems to be just a repetition of the others. How can we call a "copy" of a book if there is not a unique "original" object in the first place? Maybe "repetition" would be a more accurate word for it. On the shelf, there was a repetition of books.

Most of the books had their own repetitions.

The books repeated themselves in the same objects.

The same objects were formed by the same information and materials.

We perceive them in the same way. We can just call all of them "books".

I walked close to browse through these books, scanning their covers and reading the titles, thinking that only then I could maybe pick them up.

There was something wrong in the repetition of the books. Not every repetition was constructed exactly in the same way. While some of them were made with paper, glue, and ink, some others were made of wood, fabric and oil paint. By holding them in my hands, although I could sense the quiet accuracy of repetition (how can a repetition be not accurate?) regarding the shape, the dimension, and the weight of the two objects - and even the colors and texts on their surfaces - I was still able to distinguish the two objects by placing them into two familiar categories of things that I know: a book and a painting. A repetition of objects, from a painting to a book, in the emergence of becoming. Book-paintings.

Books are objects of knowledge, imagination, discourse and language. They are often embedded within an intellectual background and, from this perspective, paintings are quite the same. Countless references, indexes, meanings, signs that are able to bare perpetual acts of reading, looking, interpretation, association, and conversation, and each of these actions as a consequence would generate new connections, references, meanings, and contexts and so on... In Husserl's account of phenomenology, perception (of the object) is

always in a steady flow of consciousness, constantly in flux and simultaneously gleaming forth³³. While the object remains the same. If we concentrate on the concept of “sameness” as a quality of the object instead of on the flow of perceptions, then the ability of the object to receive, to host, to store, and as well to transmit the very different actions of meaning productions becomes self-evident. And from this perspective, objects like books and paintings are, on the one hand, platforms that enable a perpetual transmission of meaning within their own “objectiveness”, and on the other hand, things historically compressed with multilayers of intellectual sedimentations, a sort of *radioactive fossils*³⁴.

Practicing painting, I have looked at theory to frame the medium I was working with and to find its position within the contemporary discourse in art theory as well as in artistic production. Following the discourse initiated above about the intersection between object, language, and image, my research was carried within the context of the medium specificity of painting.

*How do I talk about painting, when it is, on the one hand completely de-specified, [...] and on the other hand there is something specific about it, otherwise we wouldn't even need this term, painting?*³⁵ asked Isabelle Graw during the conference “Painting Today” at Foundation Louis Vuitton on April 15th 2019. From Benedetto Varchi to Clement Greenberg, the discussion on the medium specificity of painting has never lost its centrality in aesthetic studies. However, in my readings I have felt frustrated that these theses take the form of writing - mostly from the point of view of critics and historians - in an abstraction which results at times quite far from the pictorial production. And at the same time, an ambivalent relationship between the books and paintings also fascinated me. In a way, books and texts could be considered as the material results of labor that are generated from a series of intellectual productions, and there are so many books written about paintings, where the images are translated into thoughts, and further thoughts condensed into texts, and texts generate more texts, and so on.

Nevertheless, there doesn't seem to be as many paintings about books/texts³⁶. Can this process be reversed? Can I approach the medium specificity of the text/book through image/painting? So, when I read about David Joselit's notion of *architecture of time*³⁷, I started to work on a series of paintings which addressed this specific concept, as a form of auto-theory and appropriation of a concept that a critic expressed on the work of painters. In the essay *Painting Beside Itself*, the author argues that the temporal structure of painting is rather more like an “architecture of time”, where time of its perception becomes spatial as the eyes wander

³³ Husserl, 1983, 165 - 66.

³⁴ Deleuze, Guattari, 1983.

³⁵ Graw, 2019.

³⁶ Here rather than to paintings that use text in a literal sense (i.g. canvas as a place for writing or paintings as a writing gesture), I instead refer to paintings as a medium to reflect to discursiveness of text or books (e.g. R.H. Quayman's practices).

³⁷ Joselit, 2009, 130.

around the image deliberately, and this radically differs from a conventional understanding of linear time, which is fundamental for the construction of sense in texts. As a way to return the linearity of reading into images, I started making paintings which depicted blown up pages of books I have read, focusing on pages which featured text, bibliographies, quotations and captions, drawing from the same books where the reflections were started and discourse initially circulated. What would the different perceptive approach to their temporality have meant in the conception of painting as objects? The series, which I call *text-paintings*, was initiated with a page from the catalog *La Pelle*³⁸ which accompanied the exhibition on Luc Tuymans at Palazzo Grassi in Venice in 2019. The painting was intended to comment on these different conceptions of time, transposing it on the surface of the canvas. It somehow requires a necessary different point of view when reading or watching the painting. In this case, the perception of the painting, even in its most flat sense as a two-dimensional image, would necessarily involve an idea of absence and non-presence since the two actions cannot be performed simultaneously by the same viewer. The image thus became spectral, no matter how fast we flutter between perceptions, the other temporality would always be in the background.

On the wall opposite to the metal curtain, near the entrance, hung a text-painting which was specifically made for *Installing Allusions*. The painting depicted a blown-up page of a book's left page with its text cropped out from the top and right side. The bottom edge of the page was almost cut in line with the one of the canvas, nevertheless, a narrow strip of green from the background was still visible, and on the left side of the painting where the edge of the page was more distant from that of the canvas, the same gray-green color was more present with various tonalities and shapes, which remained of the me of pine trees in the winter. Although part of the text was cropped out, it was still possible to recover that it was dedicated to a discourse about *studio-laboratory*³⁹. What captured my sight the most were the black markings that were framed in the center of the canvas. The marks were drawn vertically, intermittently going along the paragraphs: a dot, a short line, forcefully drawn, then a long line followed by a shorter sloppy line, both vibrating and unsure, in the end, a quick short line starting with a light hook shape on top. They were marks that somebody - they were not my notes, I found them on a book that I've borrowed from somebody else - had drawn during their reading process, an intersectional index that is able to link both textual and pictorial discourses.

Marking while reading is probably one of the most common actions when one performs reading. When a mark is drawn, it immediately signals a possible extraction of the text, a de-contextualization and liberation of the selected words or lines. It differentiates the marked text from its surrounding, enabling its extraction for the construction of new discourses. Functioning as jumping points, the marks are often used to create alternative inter-textual connections, and through these connections new structures that are different from the inherent ones of the books can be built. Marks are the anchorage points that the reader draws to help the construction of their own discourses, but also an index of the bodily traces that the reader left with their

³⁸ Bourgeois, 2019.

³⁹ Lefebvre, 1991, 143.

physical action of reading. Through reading the marks, we would be able to evoke a *quasi-presence* of the reader, not only the re-construction of their think process, but as well as an intimate glance of their reading personality - clean or messy signs, fast or slow lines, or even the oil stains that were accidentally left while reading and eating - from this perspective, reading marks does not seem to differ itself much from the perceptive process of a painting.

But then what happens when all these indexes are painted into a canvas? What would be the linguistic significance of the reading of this semiotic gesture?

Originally, my idea was to make this painting commenting on this endless process of semantic meaning production through the rematerialization of the body and materials. How to insert my practice in the discourse of medium specificity of painting - which is circulated primarily in a textual way - through painting? How to comment on the textual discourse of medium specificity in a non-textual way? What is the position of bodily and material knowledge in this historically linguistic, semiotic, and hermeneutic practices of *eye and mind*⁴⁰?

One of my reflections partially took a concrete shape confronting the questions mentioned above in the form of an exhibition, where I performed in three dimensions the thoughts developed in the production of these paintings, reflecting on my position not as a curator but as artist using the medium of exhibition.

This is the case, for instance, of the exhibition *Untitled (E012102)*, which took place in the back space of Project Room gallery in Helsinki through August 2021. It included two main sets of works. The first one consisted in a series of paintings depicting pages of text, which also initiated the discourse which brought to the conception of the exhibition. These paintings were displayed either hanging on walls or placed against it on the ground, in the first room of the exhibition. For the occasion, I made two that represented digital pages instead of paper ones, on the background of little squares typical of .png file formats. Other page paintings included pages from theory books I have traversed, and one description of a landscape from the book *Cold mountain*, which I included to comment on the potential of language as a medium for transmitting images. The section opened with a pair of paintings depicting a rendering of the gallery space, which represented the ideal set-up plan which I had to abandon because I was assigned a different room from the one initially planned. They served as an introductory paragraph, or better, as an abstract for the project of the exhibition.

They also anticipated the second thesis of the display, which was expressed through the unorganized dissemination of stands full with stacked paintings around the gallery space. The stands - which I designed and built - investigated, in material form, the conceptual connection between book and painting, transforming the gallery space into an hypothetical library, where the visitor - like taking a book, turning its

⁴⁰ Merleau-Ponty, 1964.

pages, browsing and putting it back with carefulness - was encouraged to perform intimate actions such as to touch, grab, hang, gaze, and maybe change a painting for another one, deciding which one to exhibit. For this intention was left, around the gallery, three empty spots with a nail, two of which illuminated with a light that outlined the shape of a canvas. During the exhibition, some visitors looked through the paintings and few actually changed their dispositions, adding some in the empty spots, or even moving the ones already hanging. These changes were documented by me with the idea to be used in future projects.

The exhibition was not accompanied by a text, instead, quotes were disseminated through the walls of the space. Sentences and paragraphs were extracted from theory texts I had read and which were useful to form thoughts and sustain the thesis promoted with the exhibition. They included words from different sources such as Karen Barad and Gilles Deleuze's writings, Peter Handke's poems, as well as a section from Wikipedia's page on titanium, or even short sentences from my own note, either in English or Chinese. The way they were disposed in the space suggested a free reading of them, without a precise order to be followed. On a corner of the first room, I had piled the books from which both pages in paintings and words on the wall have been quoted, serving either as a small library and as a physical bibliography for the show.

I consider this exhibition as a sum-up of ideas that I developed through the reading of theoretical works framing the contemporary discussion on the medium specificity of painting in recent years. While this was an inquiry I principally tried to develop within my painting practices, I have encountered the necessity of finding a different space and medium to answer the questions, including but not limited to, those mentioned above. Exhibition making, intended not from the perspective of a curator producing an exhibition but from that of an artist appropriating the medium of the exhibition, was the medium I have found congenial to this case. In the process of making the exhibition, I used the instruments and the tools of the display - inspired by the way other artists did before me - to address different topics and concepts that I encountered in my readings. In the visual and conceptual understanding of painting as books and exhibition as a library, I approached the set-up and its space as a three-dimensional essay, open for visitors to read, comment and criticize. Furthermore, in encouraging such improvised poetics of displacement, I hoped that the perpetual flow of the (de-)construction of knowledges, (inter-)references and (un-)production meanings would be revealed as well.

As a playful gesture filled with irony, one of the responses for me was to take a proof by contradiction in my practice, so I've started to produce paintings that are "anti-intellectual" and rooted in a radically materialistic perspective.

After a random conversation about modernist painting, bodybuilding, and masculinity, I've started a series of canvases that were focused on the notion of weight. I often found the narration of the modernist painting weirdly fascinating: a sensible masculinity. An imagery of the male genius, in contrast with the pursuit of the

purest, almost spiritual essence of the painting, walks around in the room with a cigarette in hand and performs explosive gestures for the pleasure of the physical act of painting itself. Painting! Muscles! And intellectual weight!! The more you interact with them, the more they shape your body... like a gym for painters!

That was how *heavy paintings* started, a series of canvas that initially aimed to reach the weight of different dumbbells in order to set up a temporary fitness studio in the exhibition to be used only by qualified visitors, who possess the membership of the Finnish Painters' Union, to build their muscles. However, due to some very material problems during the preparation of the exhibition, the initial idea of dumbbell paintings was not successfully carried out. Nevertheless, the series took its own vitalistic development in my practice, which later brought to several crucial reflections on the conceptualization of weight, material, action, and body.

The weight of the canvas, which is always already present, can't be usually perceived when the painting is presented as a painting, where sight is prioritized as the main perceptual mode. Thus it demands a transversal way of looking at the objects. Heavy painting is a transitory research on two notions of weight. One is the metaphorical quality that a painting obtains for bearing the perpetual process of the intellectual productions regarding it, the other is a literal indication of the actual gravitational force acting on the materials that were needed to form an image-object. This emphasis on the material configuration of the image - the paint layer itself on the canvas - also requires a transversal approach in organizing the pre-existing knowledges. For instance, during the phase of material research, the pigments - that are chronologically classified by definition - needed to be reselected and arranged by weight. While the former classification traditionally suggested an immaterial quality to the colors, the latter linked us back to their actual material aspect. The same logic applied to the filler pigments that were not selected by weight, but by the particle size and shapes in order to fill the spaces between the large particles of heavy pigments. The added siccativ in the stand oil was meant to accelerate the drying process of the paint, but here it was also used with structural intentions, to create wrinkles on the dried oil-film in order to let the next layer to stick.

However, when it comes to matter, there are also consequences. As Karen Barad pointed out that matter is *not a fixed essence; rather, matter is substance in its intra-active becoming—not a thing but a doing, a congealing of agency*⁴¹, the matter shapes the action as well the body through the performance of the same process. The material characteristics of the oil-heavy pigments-filler-mixture required a process of adding a layer and waiting for it to dry to be repeated daily, and through such repetition, it became the only action of painting. Painting in that situation was therefore intended as adding weight to a canvas - perpetual gestures which bring to no conclusion, if not merely an expression of time. For which expression might there be, where there is no limit to weight, no sense of representation, and no goal? Can sight decipher weight?

⁴¹ Barad, 2003, 822.

An intellectual production does not always need another subject to be validated, sometimes being self-referential can still be enough. Producing a text or painting which only refers to its own making process would not be an impossible task, and we can certainly produce a further discourse on these paintings or texts, so on and on. Each book contains in itself other books, which opens up for other books. Words and images, we see and we speak, and we speak of what we see, it seems to be an eternal play of shifting that brings no conclusion. *As long as we stick to things and words we can believe that we are speaking of what we see, that we see what we are speaking of, and that the two are linked*⁴². Deleuze finds a problem in the presumed linkage between the words and things, an ontological disjunction between the intellectual production and the objects. But what would happen if we stop believing in that? Can we produce an art object which suggests such disjunction? A painting that refuses to be only perceived by seeing and speaking, and where all the intellectual references would necessarily return to its own materiality?

Eventually, some of the heavy paintings took the appearance of books, and later became the “book-paintings” that were present on the iron-shelf. The act of repeating themselves in the object of books allowed the insertion of a context, a discursive practice, which would permit a better understanding of the questions formulated at the initial stage of these processes.

The coffee stains on the fore-edges, slightly warped lines of pages from humid air, scratches pressed on the covers, folded corners that were slowly peeling off, and the worn-out strips on the back-edges, with white fuzzy paper fibers freshly exposed from underneath... The canvases repeated not only the printed graphic designs of the covers and the physical weight from the original objects, but also some traces marked by time and bodies. These traces shared a same kind of indexical quality as the mark-lines drawn by the reader between pages on the painting hung on the wall. They are signs of bodily interactions that were performed between the book-objects and the reader's body. The book objects obtained these marks by being touched and browsed constantly in time. However, what was interesting is that the orientation of these actions - the reader takes the book to browse it - was (presumably) directed towards the content, a crucial part of the book-objects that cannot be repeated in the book-paintings. One can easily take off a book-painting from the shelf and hold it in their hands, examining its surfaces, sensing its weight, and touching its layers, but they cannot “open” it. The book-painting thus is, an almost-repetition of a book, a quasi-book of which the content is absent and can be only evoked through its title, covers, marks... the stories that surround it, the reputation of its name.

In a certain way, the painting becomes a citation of the book it is repeating and of its unreported content. Equal to the paintings, there are two definitions of weight which can be applied to books. The book can be “heavy” for its content - and style of writing. But the book, as an object, has a weight which is the sum of the

⁴² Deleuze, 1988, 65.

glue, the ink, the paper it is composed of. These two ideas indeed apply to the book-paintings. They aim, first and foremost, to repeat the weight of the original book-object, through a rematerialization where paper is turned in wood, canvas and paint. However, they also hint to the metaphorical weight of the book, through the information which can be obtained by the cover, the title and the name of the author painted on the canvas.

Literature creates its own heroes too. Authors' lives - and editor's ~~one~~ too - become myths which add to the aura of their works, which is not always expressed by their style of writing and exceed in the deeds of the characters they make of themselves, and the stories by which they are surrounded.

Therefore, even without knowing - or being able to read - any of the poems by Paul Celan, it is enough to read its name on the cover of the book to get a feeling of its content. Similarly, recognizing the title *Fundbüro*⁴³ on the cover of the Chinese translation of the novel by Siegfried Lenz, makes the viewer vulnerable to the aura of the stern author, without having to know Chinese to read more of the book. These notions are apparent to us thanks to a short history of literature we are inevitably exposed to, the conventions which still divide between a fine and a difficult (heavy) literature and an easy and more accessible one, and the allure of the lives of authors, which since the German Romanticism have influenced our understanding of the practice of writing. These all concur into our own understanding of a book when we pick it up from a shelf, without reading its content and at times, going beyond what's written in it. On the shelf, the book-paintings and the books themselves weren't much different. In the opening hours of the exhibition, one could have not read each of the exhibited books in their entirety. And, even if they had read that book in the past, they would have read that which was in the exhibition.

The space on the left side of the iron shelf was cut into a corner by both the window and the wall on the other side, intersecting there obliquely, creating a sharp but bright space. Almost the entire area of the wall was illuminated into a glorying blankness by the long daylight casting through the huge window. There was nothing else there except for a small painting by the floor leaning against the wall. It was a gray-monochrome painting on a thick wooden panel, surrounded by some fine white veil on the edges, which seemed to be a part of the painting layers themselves. The imagery of the painting was dimly blurry, in a distant plain gray every line and every block of shadow appeared flickering and unsure. What was vaguely recognizable was a back figure sitting by a tent, looking towards some translucent mountains across a vast plain, whether in a sandy desert or a polar field. There was an unspeakable ambiguity, at the edge of the words, a sadness.

⁴³ Lenz, 2008.

The paint belongs to a series of two, which was realized as a translation exercise on the poem *Der Rand der Wörter 2*⁴⁴ by Peter Handke in 1968. The poem reflects about the territories of words, their edges and borders. It is an apology of the impossibility to formulate true descriptions. However, through the use of the images that words can evoke - and the ones to which the author recurs to in the poem - they can capture a certain feeling, a vague and fragile insecurity which becomes very apparent, for example in one picture of the expedition of Captain Scott to the South Pole. In there, a figure, sitting outside his tent at the edge of the then mapped world - and with the intention to draw and assess maps anew - is giving his back to the photographer. In front of him, icy hills of Antarctica draw an anonymous and mutable environment that, inaccessible, leaves little to no possibility of an accurate description. In this unmapped nothingness I found a similar feeling evoked by the words of Handke.

Thus the painting is the result of the attempt to give back visually the sense of impossibility and the lingering on edges hinted at in the poem. In my practice, this work stands out as well as one of the few in which I appropriated an existing image. Other paintings usually start with a picture I took myself. Here, I downloaded the image from Google, after a quick search. It was one of the top results, an image as common as it is easy to recall in mind. As foggy as it is captured in the low definition of the medium which was used to produce it in the 1910s.

Peter Handke

DER RAND DER WÖRTER 2

Wir sitzen am Rand des Feldwegs und reden.

Die größte Not ist lange vorbei, denn am Gletscherrand lagern die Leichen ab.

Wer steht am Rand des Feldes, am Rand des Highway? – Cary Grant!

Am Grubenrand liegt, vom Spaten gespalten, ein Engerling.

Der Rand des Schmutzflecks trocknet schon.

Es wird bitter kalt, und dem Captain Scott fängt die Wunde vom Rand her zu eitern an.

Am Rand der Erschöpfung reden wir alle in Hauptsätzen.

Von den schmutzigen Taschen des Toten haben die Fingernägel des Plünderers einen Rand.

Wir sitzen am Rand des Feldwegs, am Rand des Feldes, und reden, und reden.

Wo der Rand der Wörter sein sollte, fängt trockenes Laub an den Rändern zu brennen an, und die Wörter krümmen sich unendlich langsam in sich selber:

„Diese Trauerränder!“

Dieser Rand der Trauer

⁴⁴ Handke, 1977.

Conclusion

This publication, its layout and folds, its contents - both text and images - are a possible reconfiguration of my work. Rather than an secondary project, an auxiliary interpretation or an analysis in retrospect, the project is a field of relation, where elements are rearranged in new possible structures through the form of essays, narrative and the unbound pages which constitute this book.

In *Archive practice - system of knowledge, failures*, and discourses I delineate a theoretical framework for the analysis and study of my work *Installing Allusions*. There I draw from Foucault to explore the notion of archives as systems of knowledges, influencing both the structure of their constitutive elements and the way they can be read and understood. Acknowledging the problematics of an archive thus conceived, I propose two possible solutions, addressed in my artistic practice through the creation of objects which are featured in the set up. One relies on the concept of quotation by Hannah Arendt and Hito Steyerl, the other on Sara Ahmed's concept of bodily sedimentation as well as Karen Barad's agential realism. Rematerialization, a process which involves the reconfiguration of the material and immaterial properties of an object through the bodily encounters and registrations, thus takes the form of discursive practice in this project. In attempting to frame these practices within a broader historical constellation of ideas and discourses, the same indexical elements are rearranged through pages, crossing new references and recovering components lost through the installation - the background work, the bibliography of references that shaped my ideas.

This is taken into a further extent in the chapter *Installing Allusions revisited - memory, body, material, and folds*. Adopting the form of narration - shifting from the third-person, informal vocabulary of the essay to the first-person, involved prose - I moved around the work both geographically and temporally. Conceiving the process of the writing as an apparatus of perception and reproduction, by translating the works and the space in words, I had chance not only to recover details and stories lost, as well as to produce new possible relations which is facilitated and influenced by syntax, turning the project itself into a part of perpetually on going process - a definitive index of the abstract archive practice that both *Installing Allusions* and *The Failed Archive* attempt to carry out together.

In addition, the layout of the second part is intended to add another level to disrupt a linear reading as well as allow for new possible actions. The folds - in which parts of the text dive, belong to a different layout and can be read or skipped depending on the approach of the reader. Pages can be shuffled, rearranged in a different order, to create new understanding around the original work.

Conceiving these three elements of the publication (the theoretical framework, the writing of fictional revisiting and the graphic intervention) as furthering the ideas initially proposed in *Installing Allusions*, I intend to place this project in the same interstitial space of my other works, both as times, objects and props. *Installing Allusions* and *The Failed Archive* thus are semantics of the same archive practice, which I disassemble and reassemble in different conjugations, which take new forms that at times sustains, other

times confront and surpass, the previous ones. In a process that brings to no definitive conclusion, but leaves traces to reactivate sparking new possible understandings.

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