

AQUARIUS

20 January – 18 February

Standart Thinking

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water^{the}_side #02

February 2013

♁ To rescue urban life today would require a fundamental change in society, not just a new urban design. Important as design may be, it is a function of social life itself; and since modern society is basically irrational, it should not surprise you that the city reflects and even exaggerates the social irregularities of our time.

The modern metropolis, viewed against the background of urban history, is seen as the complete negation of city life as conceived during more civilised eras of the past.

You are slowly losing a humanistic conception of the very meaning of the word 'city'. The once clearly demarked city, inherited from the past, is being devoured by the expanding metropolis. Your city begins to lose its definition, specificity, and function as an authentic arena for community and solidarity. Limitless expansion is itself a limit, a self-devouring process in which content is surrendered to form and reality to appearance.

Your metropolis is choking with an alienated and atomised aggregate of human beings, quasi communities dissolving into competing monads pervaded by spiritual mediocrity — a cemetery of freedom and culture devoid of human spirit.

Major cosmic clashes occurring between Uranus and Pluto bring an opportunity to challenge the status quo. Deeper and darker secrets are likely to surface; friends may not be easy to make just now, but those that do come into your orbit are likely to be reliable. Try to be practical and organised. The cosmic order tells you to go beyond the city and produce a new type of community, one that combines the best features of urban and rural life in a harmonised future society.

Find out how to break away the limits of the city with Murray Bookchin (b Jan 1924). ♁

Standart thinking is a project by Javier Rodriguez and Lise Hovesen, standartthinking.tumblr.com.



Heide Hinrichs,
presence of perception,
2013, wool, leather

AN AFTERNOON BY THE SEA

Pierre d'Alancaisez

◇ I didn't find much time to holiday last year. Somehow, I forgot to plan any time off. In a diary like mine, a week away in August sticks out like a sore thumb. This is not particularly unusual, mind, not of me, not of London, not of the 'current economic climate'. In fact, it had been quite some time since I had bothered with holidays at all — I always found the beach a bit too sandy, tourist attractions too touristy, and the countryside just too far away. Why rest, we're having fun anyway, right?

I was therefore rather surprised to find myself in Oostende on the Belgian coast, sunglasses firmly on

my nose, writing postcards, scoffing seafood platters and glasses of Sauvignon Blanc, taking leisurely boat cruises, and not minding the thousands of others partaking in the same simple pleasures only feet away. Days, nights, mornings and evenings, it felt like a childhood treat, a school summer holiday which never needed to end.

I recall this because I had a similar feeling the first time I encountered the work of Heide Hinrichs in *Manifesta 8*. Her installation, sited in a former tobacco factory in Rovereto in Italy, consisted of a series of models of greater structures — a planetary system of footballs hanging on ribbons and rope, and a whole language in an alphabet of objects rendered in papier-mâché. Inside Hinrichs' installation *The Expected Obedience of Your Thoughts*, I was part of an environment in state of perfect equilibrium, where every element was in balance with my own presence.

You may think me sentimental, so please let me explain. There were, in truth, no evenings in Oostende, and no sand. My 'holiday' consisted of nine hours in total, including two train journeys. The boat rides were indeed plural, but only when I aborted a hearty walk fearing that I would miss the last Eurostar of the day. The seafood platter was not all that much either — I walked for a good hour, avoiding all the 'tourist' restaurants, only to find that there were no other restaurants at all. On the way back, I squashed into a broken-down train with hundreds of seaside day-trippers to return to London by 9pm.

It then seems even more sentimental to get hung up on an *idea* of a holiday, and one expressed with such economy. But what brings that day to mind again — when

I look at the work of Heide Hinrichs — is its encapsulation of an array of states and memories, ones I have not often, if ever taken the opportunity to act out.

With modest simplicity, Hinrichs creates arrangements in which objects act not only as simulations of other ideas, but have the potential to *become* them: one is another. More, the work dispenses with objecthood altogether, freeing itself from the need for properties and relations to the external world that would define it in other circumstances. What remains of the objects are marks of the artist's fingers in papier-mâché, pencil traces, threads sewn into fabrics, and holes cut into surfaces — executed from without.

In Rovereto and in exhibitions since, Hinrichs has created indoor landscapes using all-too familiar materials — cardboard, string, recycled rubber, fabrics. Her low-toned and restricted palette encourages an informal, open and natural reaction; the artist eases her work into the surroundings as though by chance. In Rovereto, with time, I began to notice the ambiguities contained in her arrangements, and it was no longer clear whether, for example, *The forgotten heart*, a work consisting of cardboard boxes and papier-mâché, was a 'work' or merely cardboard.

Sometimes Hinrichs deliberately toys with the idea of the ready-made, placing footballs, pearls and eggs amongst her hand-shaped pieces. In seeing these together, I wondered if a football only then and there became a metaphor for a planet and a universe, or if I had always know about their — now seemingly obvious — equivalence.

With her stripped-back *mise en scene*, Hinrichs' installations ap-

pear as familiar stories, reshaped and stretched into new forms — only the originals are impossible to place. It was like this in Oostende, too: my nostalgic synthesis of the weather or the seascape, nor even of a particular experience in my own memory. Oostende could have contained anything, and anything but Oostende. The day became a perfect simulation of a set of conditions I could only have known from secondary sources.

a whole language in an alphabet of objects rendered in papier-mâché

It is easy to get carried away here; a scene can appear so vividly drawn that one can overstep the barriers between outsider and constituent. Hinrichs is aware of this — with typically understated humour, the artist places small statuettes, actors-observers, in the periphery of her installations. The works themselves engage in an active exchange, too: in *Librarian's Eye*, for example, an isolated video animation surveys the space, encouraging other works to perform their roles. It's a peculiar moment, to recognise so clearly one's own feeling as belonging to an altogether different story, and in which either version of events could well be true. In my own seaside afternoon, I thought I was playing out some French film classic, perhaps the Louvre scene from *À bout de souffle*.

To run so carefree under the noses of museum guards is a matter of some confidence. Without drawing attention to the self-control in Hinrichs' works, the artist creates environments that are both protective and liberating. In the recent *presence of perception*, and a companion series of draw-

ings which show house-like structures encased by the fingers of two hands, the artist holds a void, a space in which a story can unfold. But despite their immateriality, Hinrichs' structures need only be held together with minimal force, as though they are determined to remain self-reliant, and confident that their fragility is only a matter of our perception.

Perhaps it is then not mere coincidence that I spent my afternoon by the sea in the company of Heide Hinrichs. ◇

Mist offers to snow self *

for five pieces by Heide Hinrichs, January 2013

Caused by the close work pencils' myopia

Slowly they walk backwards together on the sea

brief tents of breathing on water

backing into the winter pond.

Shadow puppet of the winter pond:

Borderland of saying: transient

Sign Organ of light

Coin spider

Saturn holds there

the eyes inside

shadow puppet of morning

Independent eye

Sign for nearsighted is innocence

Inside-out

the tents turn tides

* from Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*



Daniel Medina,
*Lo que es del pueblo
va pa'l pueblo y lo que
es del cura va pa'la
iglesia*, 2012
plaster statues with
patina, photographs

MYTHOGRAPHIES AND DISAPPEARANCES

Félix Suazo

◇ *Precisely because the time and place of what has been is not simply the time and place of what is, history will have to leave, to seek out and find marks, traces, left-overs, records, indexes, inscriptions of a past that will only face the threat of its own disappearance when subjected to such doggedness.*¹

*The ambivalence between image and medium arises from their connections being rethought for each specific case and to an almost limitless degree.*²

For Medina, the idea of *disappearance* connects us to the present, especially in Venezuela, a country where the corpses of illustrious figures are exhumed and new mausoleums are built to idolise former glories. This paves the way for the author's own *mythography*, which takes a deconstructivist and ambiguous approach to history by reconciling opposites. His narrative is ludic, rather than univocal, and is wrought from the intentional skewing and displacement of the monumental, architectural and urban imaginary.

The artist has returned to Venezuela's foundational archetypes — from Independence to the Republican life and, thence, to the project of modernity. But he is careful to show its fissures and dislocations by using the vessels this indolent memory is inscribed upon. Monuments, parks, buildings and public infrastructure works — out of date emblems of a future that never arrived — take on meaning again in his work. However, the artist does not limit himself to local geography; he also traces similar situations that can be found in other latitudes and other idiosyncrasies in the East and West. Madrid, Berlin, Seoul and Athens, for instance, share the scars of a past of wars and demolition, whose consequences today include a fascination for ruins and the *pathos* of reconstruction.

For Medina, printed cards, institutional books, maps and documents — which the artist uses as a creative resource — are part of a strategy to reinforce the transformation of history into a *souvenir*. History's seemingly anodyne quality is also a symptom of the modern contradictions, the insoluble binary relations and utopian ideals it is founded upon. The postcards, pages of books or photographs become "monuments" that emerge as a sort of immaterial and trans-

located heritage that goes beyond their material or the way they originally circulated. When these images — which are generally anonymous or produced for non-expert and sometimes frivolous consumption — enter the exhibition space, they take on a commemorative function, despite lacking the physical mass of the statues, buildings and situations they represent. That aura of picturesque solemnity is marked by disappearance, by the paradoxical appearance of a perishing memory. Nevertheless, in Medina's work this operation is not presented as a tragedy or as a melancholic flight toward times gone by. Instead, he is obsessed by silenced stories and incongruent events that have been omitted — slight acts of irreverence and ironic games, dissonant elements that enable him to rupture the grandiloquence of nineteenth century statues and the falsely aseptic appearance of the modern.

In Venezuela, photography makes inscriptions onto memory in ways that contrast to its physical referents' decline, mainly evidenced in public monuments suffering from neglect, vandalism and ideological retaliations. Similarly, the idea of vanishing heritage takes on a cinematic appearance in Medina's series of "postcard sized" videos based on photographs of national museums and works of urban art that are no longer functioning properly or are not being adequately looked after. Each of these works features a discontinuity between the customary "volume-less space" of photographic documents and the irreducible sitedness of the exhibition space.

Contrary to all evidence, Medina shows us that the image is a means of forgetting, especially when it turns into a stereotype: a dried-out and fixed icon of events. This is what happens with a certain

type of promotional printed material that takes on a spectral appearance in which the rough edges of uncomfortable reality have been removed. Memory is selective; anagnorisis is a consequence of tragic events. This equation can be applied to individuals and to groups of people. Our culture is

Like images, history is an unstable territory that is subject to the discretionary acts of the agents that interact with it, whether they are in positions of authority or unwitting consumers of history's narratives

besieged by a string of amnesias and capricious remembrances that take us repeatedly back to the mythology of our origins, omitting anything unsatisfactory and focusing only on fragments that are considered to be exemplary.

Like images, history is an unstable territory that is subject to the discretionary acts of the agents that interact with it, whether they are in positions of authority or unwitting consumers of history's narratives. But we already knew that, just as we were also aware of the connection between power and images' versatile nature. What is slightly harder to digest is the possibility of introducing — as Medina does — reasonable doubt into the existence of an event or the meaning of a situation, without denying its cultural implications or the way it affects collective experience.

As Hans Belting noted: an image cannot be separated from the medium that reproduces it. Images are not univocal and can thus give rise to parallel stories, where each one differs from the hegemonic narrative. Polyvalence of meanings is not just something that affects art; it affects almost the entirety of contemporary culture's iconography.

Beyond the nostalgic restoration of the past, Medina's intention is [often] to show the strategies for premeditated forgetting and silencing of other underlying narratives that differ from the dominant account. Founded on and stemming from the "deconstructivist revisionism" discourse of images, his work generates a paradoxical crossroads between territory and abstraction, and between *visuality* and history. ◇

1. Elizabeth Collinwood-Selby, *El filo fotográfico de la historia. Walter Benjamin y el olvido de lo inolvidable*. Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Metales Pesados, 2012, p.16.

2. Hans Belting, *Antropología de la imagen*. Buenos Aires: Katz Editores, 2010, p.28.

A version of this text was first published by Periférico Caracas Arte Contemporáneo, on the occasion of Daniel Medina's solo exhibition *Mythographies and Disappearances*, with a translation into English by Lisa Blackmore. Reprinted with their kind permission.

AGENDA

AT THE GALLERY

George Barber

The Freestone Drone

2 February – 23 March 2013

Artist in conversation with Sam Thorne (associate editor, *Frieze*)
Wednesday, 27 February, 7pm

Anetta Mona Chişa & Lucia Tkáčová

11 April – 25 May 2013

ELSEWHERE

Marcin Dudek

Too Close For Comfort

Harlan Levy Project, Brussels
26 January – 2 March 2013

Heide Hinrichs

Art Rotterdam

New Art Section
6 – 10 February 2013

Daniel Medina

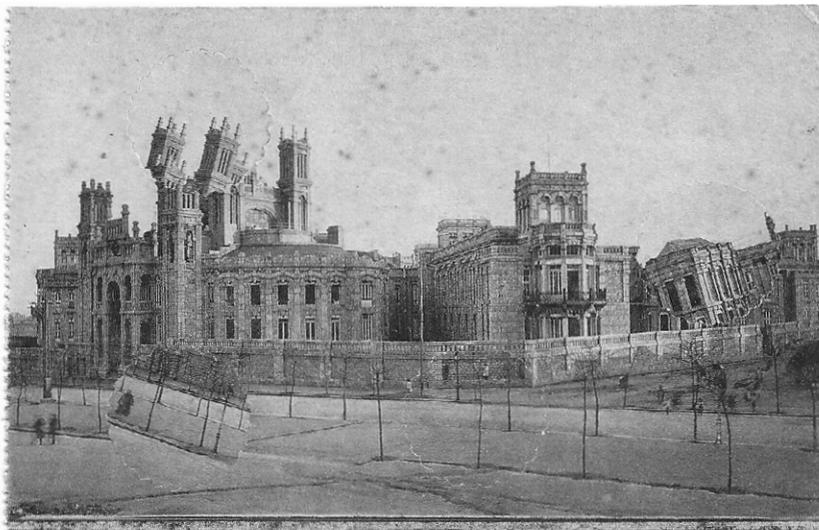
ARCO Madrid

Special Projects Latin America
13 – 17 February 2013

Frederik Van Simaey and George Barber

Art Brussels

17 – 21 April 2012



Daniel Medina,
Madrid-Hospital-Obrero, 2012
cut-out postcard, 14x10cm

Published by **waterside contemporary**
Editor: Phoebe Stubbs
Design: Matthieu Becker
Print: Hato Press
Supported by Arts Council England

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