

L'ÉCRITURE AVANT LA LETTRE



**ALPHABETUM IX
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Alphabetum IX

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**Het genootschap van de vreemde en wonderlijke
chemie van audioactief verval**

Res Feber

Er was eens een tijd dat ik woorden verzamelde die alleen in hun eigen taal bestaan.

Commuovere. ITALIAANS. Hartverwarmend geëmotioneerd zijn, vaak gerelateerd aan een verhaal dat je tot tranen toe roert.

Culaccino. ITALIAANS. Het kringetje dat het condens van een koud beslagen glas achterlaat op tafel.

Goya. URDU. Zo in de ban van een verhaal, film of voorstelling raken dat je niet meer weet dat het fictie is.

Iktsuarpok. INUKTITUT. Verwachtingsvol steeds opnieuw kijken of iemand er al aankomt.

Komorebi. JAPANS. De zon die door de blaadjes wordt gefilterd.

Lítost. TSJECHISCH. Gekweld zijn door de plotselinge aanblik van je eigen ellende.

Mångata. ZWEEDS. De reflectie van de maan op het water die een weg lijkt.

Putzfimmel. DUIJS. De drang om alles al te grondig schoon te maken.

Saudade. PORTUGEES. Beschrijft een mengsel van gevoelens. Gemis, afstand, liefde, heimwee, melancholie. Maar die zijn het dus allemaal niet precies.

Sobremesa. SPAANS. Tijd doorbrengen na de lunch met degenen met wie je aan tafel zat.

Vacilando. SPAANS. Iemand voor wie de reis belangrijker is dan de bestemming.

Waldeinsamkeit. DUIJS. In afzondering één zijn met de natuur.

De grenzen van onze taal zijn de grenzen van onze wereld, volgens Wittgenstein. Onvertaalbare woorden leggen zich daar niet bij neer. Ze rekken de randen op van het onbenoembare. Ze zijn het infrarood en het ultraviolet van de taal. Alleen met een speciaal zintuig, dat slechts een kleine gemeenschap van sprekers bezit, is te registreren wat anderen ontgaat.

Zoals er maar een klein spectrum het licht zichtbaar is in kleuren, zo blijft er ook een kolossale hoeveelheid werkelijkheid woordeloos. Er zou een woord kunnen zijn voor het vluchtige dankgebaar dat je maakt als iemand je vóór laat gaan in het verkeer. Voor het gevoel waarmee je je kind nastaat die voor het eerst vertrekt naar school. De herkenning van een geliefde op een druk perron. Dat ene blokje kaas of toastje, die ene bitterbal, die altijd als laatste overblijft omdat niemand hem van de borrelschaal durft te pakken. Het dubbele gevoel bij iets waarvan je niet weet of je er reikhalzend naar uitkijkt of juist torenhoog tegenop ziet. De uitnodiging waarvan je niet weet of je die moet afslaan of aannemen.

Want daar begint dit verhaal mee. Met zo'n brief waar ik niet echt op zit te wachten. Per post is hij gekomen, in een envelop, wat me meteen al een slecht teken lijkt. Sinds de e-mail kan papieren post alleen nog afkomstig zijn van overheidsinstanties, rouwende nabestaanden en commerciële partijen je die iets willen aansmeren. In mijn geval komen daar nog dreigementen of loftuitingen bij van luisteraars naar mijn wekelijkse radio-optreden die sommigen een 'gesproken column' noemen en anderen een 'stukje miniatuur-stand-up'. De meeste reacties krijg ik per mail, maar een enkeling – doorgaans op leeftijd – neemt de moeite om een echte brief op te stellen.

Dit lijkt me in eerste instantie ook zo'n geval. De twee kantjes zijn geschreven met een typemachine, eentje

waarvan de lus onder de g was afgesleten, tot een klein cirkeltje, waar de afzender met pen alsnog de lusjes tekende onder al die geamputeerde letters. Geen één heeft hij er gemist. Wie zoveel moeite doet, verdient mijn aandacht, besluit ik.

Zo zorgvuldig als de brief is opgesteld, zo warrig is de inhoud. Het is in elk geval geen dreigement en ook geen lof. Het past niet in de duim-op-, duim-neer-dichotomie van onze tijd. Het is een uitnodiging, voor een conferentie van vijf dagen in een hotel in de hoofdstad. Het enige wat mij over die bijeenkomst duidelijk wordt, is dat ze illegaal is. Misschien is dat waardoor ik begin te aarzelen. Heb ik niet al lang genoeg in de legaliteit vertoefd? De kans dat het een grap is, is groot, maar dat maakt mijn nieuwsgierigheid niet minder. Een stand-up-artiest speurt door de wereld als een roofdier.

Op de brug over het Verversingskanaal spreekt een vrouw met een licht wanhopige blik boven haar mondkapje me aan. Ze is op zoek naar de Johan de Wittlaan. Of eigenlijk naar de Israëlische ambassade. Ze houdt me haar telefoon voor. Op het scherm een screenshot van een routebeschrijving uit een e-mail. Zwart haar heeft ze, met grijze slierten erin. In haar felle, rusteloze ogen rilt een wereld van geregeld, paniek, gedoe. Familiezaken, overlijden, reizen, iets financieels, iets met een visum. Ze is met de bus bij World Forum eruit gegaan, en moet nu dus het hele stuk weer teruglopen, in de schrale wind, tussen de hoge gebouwen van een stuk stad dat ook in mijn ogen nu even vreemd is.

Zo heb ik vroeger wel door Genève of Rome gelopen, nog met een fysieke, gekreukte kaart in mijn hand, te trots of te verlegen om anderen de weg te vragen. Nu, met Google Maps op elk apparaat, zou het toch voor

iedereen mogelijk moeten zijn zich autonoom door om het even welke stad ter wereld te verplaatsen.

Ik herinner me hoe ik A. ten B., een goede vriend, een paar jaar geleden midden in Parijs wees op het icoontje op zijn Google Maps, het cirkeltje, als van het vizier boven een geweerloop, waarmee hij zijn huidige locatie te zien kon krijgen. Dat wist hij niet. Ik was verbijsterd. Voor hem was deze app altijd een digitaal equivalent geweest van een papieren kaart. Voor hem was het al even verbijsterend. Zijn kaart was gekanteld, voorgoed. Het was een ontdekking van dezelfde orde als dat er onder in ieder broodrooster, ook het allergeodkoopste, een sleufje zit, een lade – waar nog geen woord voor bestaat – waarmee je alle opgevangen broodkruimels eruit kunt kloppen. Of zoals je eigen huis in dromen ineens extra kamers heeft.

De vrouw liep weg tussen de gebouwen van de Kennedylaan en ik betreurde de gemiste kans haar ook zo'n sensatie te geven waar een speciaal woord voor zou moeten bestaan.

Door haar denk ik weer aan die uitnodiging. Ook als het een grap is, valt er voor mij, het roofdier, wat te winnen. De afzender noemt zich 'The Society of the Weird and Wonderful Chemistry of Audioactive Decay.' Gogelen levert vrijwel niets op, alleen wat obscure wetenschappelijke artikelen, maar die zijn net genoeg om toch nieuwsgierig te raken. Het is iets wiskundigs of taalkundigs of allebei. In mijn één-na-laatste radio-optreden zat een grap verwerkt met cijfers. En ik had het over mijn onvertaalbare woorden gehad. Die ik 'priemwoorden' had gedoopt (maar eigenlijk vallen ze in de categorie dat het vreemd is dat er geen woord voor is!) Had dit de aandacht van dit gezelschap getrokken, als het inderdaad bestaat? Kortom: het kán waar zijn. Het kán zoiets onthullen als het ronde viziertje op de kaart, de broodsleuf, de ver-

borgen kamers. En mocht dit niet zo zijn, dan nog was er niets verloren. Ook een slechte grap kan leiden tot een goed verhaal.

Wat is een verhaal? Iemand heeft me ooit iets verteld wat ik me, als een soort formule, letterlijk is bijgebleven: 'Een verhaal is een weergave van de confrontatie van iemand die iets wil met de dreiging en/of de belofte van een transformatie die hij of zij met moeite kan bewerkstelligen of voorkomen of beide.'

Terwijl ik mijn rolkoffertje inpak, schiet me een woord te binnen, *resfeber*. Een Zweeds woord, ook onvertaalbaar uiteraard, dat niet alleen perfect mijn huidige toestand samenvat, maar ook die hele definitie van een verhaal belichaamt in drie lettergrepen.

Resfeber. ZWEEDS. De onrust in je hart vlak voor een reis begint, angst en opwinding tegelijk. De confrontatie van iemand die iets wil met de dreiging en/of de belofte van een transformatie die hij of zij met moeite kan bewerkstelligen of voorkomen. Of beide.

Het Centraal Station van Amsterdam is al jarenlang een bouwplaats, en nu het verlaten is, komt het nog treuriger over. Veel is er al geschreven en gesproken over de verlaten binnenstad, over het lege Rokin, over de lege Wallen, over de adempauze van de toeristenstroom. Bij een van de in plastic reclame- of gemeenteteksten ingepakte bouwsels staat een dikke vrouw, stil op haar plek te dansen en te zingen, een swingende gospel. Doordat er ook geen geluid van bouwactiviteit is, draagt haar stem ver: 'Jezus máákt vrij!' is het enige verstaanbare, steeds terugkerende zinnetje. Het is vrijdagmiddag, maar er lopen alleen enkelingen langs, voor wie het daardoor moeilijk is om te doen alsof ze haar niet opmerken, met haar armen in de lucht en de blik hemelwaarts. Krampachtige blijheid

die eerder een vreugde moet afdwingen dan dat ze er de uiting van is.

Dit is het materiaal. Dit is het soort situaties waaruit ik mijn radio-optredens laat ontstaan. Ik heb richtmicrofoons die gevoeliger zijn dan paardenoren. Ik slurp stemmen op van straat en mix ze met mijn geïmproviseerde commentaar. Daar komt het op neer. Je zou het flaneren-de stand-up kunnen noemen, of stand-up flânerie.

Dat het hotel bestáát, is in deze omstandigheden al heel wat. Allure heeft het amper, al zit het ingeklemd tussen twee grachtenpanden. Het gat dat er ooit tussen moet zijn geslagen – gasexplosie, verval, stadsvernieuwing? – is opgevuld met glas en staal. De naam, Hotel Grafiet, staat in schreefloze letters op de pui. Ik heb mijn huiswerk gedaan: ze verwijst zowel naar een diamantslijperij die hier ooit was gevestigd als naar de drukkerij die er later voor in de plaats kwam.

Voor de draaideur aarzel ik, zoals je aarzelt bij het checken van je lotnummers. Bij de balie van de Jumbo nam ik vorige week de stem op van een grijze mevrouw: 'Het zal wel weer nul komma nul komma nul nul zijn...!' Pas buiten, door mijmerend op dit zinnetje, begreep ik waar het om moest gaan. Het was de elfde van de maand, dat betekent dat een dag eerder de trekking van de Staatsloterij was geweest. Af en toe koop ik ook een lot, of zelfs een straatje. Het mechanisme erachter is dat je een droom koopt, een fantasie. 'De voorpret kan beginnen', mailt de loterij meteen als je de loten online gekocht hebt. Het is handelen in voorpret die niet ingelost wordt. Want er is ook altijd die lichte kater (waar een speciaal woord voor zou moeten bestaan), op internet nog eens versterkt doordat ze de rond malende cijfertjes, als in een fruitmachine, eerst naar een krankzinnig hoog bedrag laten tolleren, waarna het terugzakt tot de gebruikelijke

uitslag: 'Je hebt 3 euro gewonnen! Gefeliciteerd! Veel plezier met je prijs!' We kennen de statistieken, we weten hoe kansloos het is. Maar we weten ook dat er toch altijd ergens een winnaar is. Het zal wel weer nul komma nul komma nul nul zijn, maar ook in die vrouw moet ergens de hoop gloeien op het tegendeel.

En daarom aarzel ik voor de ingang van Hotel Grafiet. Omdat hierna alles beslist is. Is het een grap, dan houdt het avontuur hier op en keer ik terug de lege straten in. De onbekende die van mij een foto maakt zal dat in zwart-wit doen om de stemming te accentueren. Man met rolkoffer in de lege stad in lockdown: uitstervende diersoort of duif na de zondvloed? In het andere geval opent zich iets waar ik me geen voorstelling van kan maken. Zolang ik niet naar binnen ga, blijft het onbeslist en bestaan ze allebei. Schrödingers kat. De pagina's in een boek die nog niet zijn omgeslagen.

Wat bedoel je met de term "taal?" Wat betekent dat precies? Wat bedoelt je? Ik bedoel, wat is daar de betekenis van? Wat voor betekenis? Wat betekent het voor jou? En wat betekent het voor mij? Snap je wat ik bedoel? Wat bedoelde ze daarmee? Wat het betekent? Wat betekent dit? Wat betekent dat? Wat bedoelen ze? Sommige mensen zullen zeggen "Wat bedoel je daarmee?" Begrijp je wat ik bedoel?

Omdat het hotel gesloten is, moet ik aanbellen en via de intercom overleggen, *onderhandelen* lijkt het eerder.

'U bent op het verkeerde adres.'

'Het Grafiet, dat is hier toch?'

'Er is nog een Grafiet.' De stem noemt een adres, dat één straat verderop blijkt. Hetzelfde logo, maar nu bij een klapdeur bovenaan een trappetje van gegalvaniseerd

staal. De typische, nooit echt prettige geur van gestoomd wasgoed. Aluminium vuilcontainers. Dit moest domweg de achteringang zijn van hetzelfde pand. De artiesten-ingang. De deur klemt. Na lang gemorrel en geduw schiet hij in één keer open, in een veel te bruuske zwaai.

De portier is een stuk chagrijn.

'We zijn gesloten,' verklaart hij, met een vuile blik op mij en mijn rolkoffer, alsof wij hoogstpersoonlijk verantwoordelijk zijn voor alle mondiale misère waar die sluiting mee samenhangt.

'Dan heb ik mij vergist.' Ik staar beschaamd tussen het metalen roosterwerk door naar de grond onder mij. Toch merk ik in de man zijn ogen iets vragends, iets van een opening en ik weet dat ik hier aan zal blijven terugdenken, woelend in bed, als ik níet op z'n minst probeer daar doorheen te komen. Dus kijk ik op en voeg toe: 'Tenzij het begrip *audioactief verval* u iets zegt.'

Het is verbijsterend. Zwijgend, haast teleurgesteld, zo lijkt het, laat hij me binnen. Het is verbijsterend. Niet alleen de pest is terug uit Shakespeares tijd, niet alleen de paniek, het verschansen en de angst, ook de poortwachters zijn het. De door gefluisterde codewoorden, de maskerades, de samenzweringen. In de lobby zijn de muren behangen met onleesbare taal.

БСГІ2
SXKQ3
*ГТТQГ

In de lobby kijk ik rond, alsof het een grap is waarvan de *punchline* maar niet komt. Er is niets wat me aan het lachen maakt, niet in deze hotellobby, niet bij de receptie, waar ik gevraagd wordt mijn naam op een lijst te schrijven. Ik zie mijn hand naar de vulpen grijpen en op de stippellijn noteer ik: Res Feber.

Daarna geeft de portier me een magneetkaart met mijn kamernummer erop, op de vierde verdieping. Er is niets wat de ontlading brengt waar ik al vanaf het openen van die brief op reken. Zoals een zin pas iets gezegd heeft na het plaatsen van de punt. Op het podium, op de radio bedoel ik, maar dat is even goed een podium, werk ik volgens dat oeroude narratieve principe, in het stand up comedy-wereldje plat samengevat als *set up* en *punch*. Maar hier bevindt ik me alleen in de set up. Nergens een doek dat opgetrokken wordt. Nergens het gotcha-momentje. Niet in de gangen, niet in de lift. Zelfs in de hotelkamer, op de vierde verdieping, zijn er geen vrienden en bekenden die bij mijn binnenkomst het licht aan knippen en schreeuwen: 'Sur-pri-i-se!'

In de kamer was het doodstil, op het gezoem van een apparatuur na, op een verre sirene buiten na, op het tikken van een elektrische wijzerklok na, op het optrekken van een brommer na, op een dichtslaan de tuindeur na, op diezelfde sirene, nu iets verder na, op vrij veel na, als ik eerlijk moest zijn.

Het gevoeligste gehoor op aarde is overigens niet dat van het paard maar van de mot. Wasmotten kunnen geluiden tot 300 kHz opvangen. Hun natuurlijke vijand, de vleermuis, blijven ze daarmee de baas, alsof ze een geheimtaal onderscheppen. Hoe is het om een wasmot te zijn, vroeg ik me af, in navolging van de beroemde vraag van Thomas Nagel: hoe is het om een vleermuis te zijn?

I bet there's a bad bat under my bed. Dat zinnetje moest ik ooit tijdens een uitspraakcursus Engels tot gekmakends toe herhalen. I bet there's a bad bat under my bed. Alle cursisten lispelden het in hun eigen tempo, een canon van gekakel. a b tðeəzəbædbæt ndəma b d. Al na paar minuten hebben de klanken geen betekenis meer.

Hoe is het om zonder letters te leven? Niet te lezen, niet te schrijven. Volgt er dan vanzelf een stille grammatica van beelden en dingen?

Ik zink in het zachte bed weg, en zodra ik mijn ogen sluit ben ik in een supermarkt, eentje in Stockholm of Malmö of een andere plaats waar ik nooit eerder was en waar ze een taal spreken die ik niet versta. Maar bij de kassa doe ik een ontdekking die daar een einde aan maakt. Alle artikelen die ik op de band plaats, en die naar de caissière toe schuiven die er met een discreet bliepje kennis van neemt – al die artikelen (krop sla, pak koffie, een paar schoenen, alleen linker, een badeentje, een stempelkussen) vormen een zin, waarachter het beurtbalkje de punt is. Verbluft kijk ik om me heen: iedereen vist syllaben, fonemen, woorden uit zijn karretje en laat ze lezen door de caissières die ze lezen zoals je een boek leest als je bijna in slaap valt, dobberend aan de oppervlakte. Maar ik zag zoveel betekenissen dat ik er spartelend wakker van schrok.

Een driftig knipperend led-lampje bij de airco stamelt iets in onbeholpen morse. Als ik me concentreer, zie ik het patroon. Ik pak papier en pen, en merk dat het me geruststelt, deze secure taak van het ontcijferen. Uiteindelijk blijft het lampje stil en ik lees na wat op ik papier heb gezet:

What I am about to say in and about language is simple. It may be difficult only in seeing how what is normally said about the world, ourselves, thinking, learning, and languages, concerns language. Perhaps it need not be said. But what need not be said is often difficult to see, and seeing it, it is often difficult to see the point of saying it.

The point of speaking about things is perhaps to make significant distinctions.

But, in trying to speak about language, I found that I had to remove distinctions; excessive distinctions. We seem to think that it is pointless to remove distinctions. If there is, perhaps, a point in saying the things I say, it is as the naive child, protesting about the cumbersome ways of grown-ups in going about things.

We zijn weliswaar verdwaald, maar niet verloren. Zolang er wegwijzers zijn, zijn we niet verloren. En wegwijzers zijn er nog. Ik volg die waar 'ontbijtzaal' op staat. Ze komen uit in het souterrain waar vroeger de drukpersen hebben gestaan.

Hier tref ik ook de anderen. Een stuk of twintig, een flinke klas vol, maar veel lawaai maken ze niet. Allemaal even eenzaam, even ontredderd, allemaal hierheen geroepen door dezelfde onzichtbare hand die lusjes onder de afgesleten g's had getekend.

Ik hoor namen die ik alweer vergeet als ze uitgesproken zijn. Unica, Tina, Hedwig. Ryan, Kenneth, Joseph. Sommigen steken, uit gewoonte of uit provocatie, hun hand uit. Sommigen schudden die, uit beleefdheid of uit rebellie. Toine, Emily, Yoko. Sommigen hebben nieuwe gebaren bedacht, een hand tegen het sleutelbeen, met een korte, plechtige knik. Gary, David, Günter. Er is de ellebooggroet, die al een quasi-formele status heeft. Goran, John, Brigitte. Als er een officieel woordenboek bestond van sociale gebaren, dan werd de ellebooggroet zondermeer opgenomen in de volgende editie. Samen met de boks. Octavian. Tine. Victorie. What's in a name?

Het is als een eerste dag op een campus. Aftastende taal. Steeds de vraag of iemand meer weet. Niemand weet meer. Twee vrouwen zijn al onderzoek uit gegaan in de keuken. Die blijkt goed bevoorraad. 'Dan zullen maar een ontbijtje gaan maken, nietwaar?'

Is het ontbijttijd? Diner? Lunch? Ik durf het niet te vragen uit angst mijn onnozelheid te verraden. We moeten ons verblijf hier zelf organiseren, vormgeven, doorkomen. Schipbreukelingen op een eiland. We zijn een doe-het-zelfpakket zonder handleiding.

Helemaal aan de andere kant van de ruimte kom ik langs Unica. Ze is een serie letters aan het tekenen, die

ze vervolgens stuk voor stuk weer doorstreept, waarna ze weer opnieuw begint.

Naast de besteklades, bakken van ruw steigerhout, heeft Emily oude letterbakken ontdekt. Ze zijn uit de tijd van de drukkerij, als een soort museumstukken, maar je kunt ze nog aanraken, de losse loden letters. Je kunt ze grijpen, zoals ik Gerard Reve eens in een filmpje heb zien doen. Reve bleek geschoold als zetter en griste hele zinnen bijeen, met het gemak van iemand die op een typemachine hamert – terwijl die letters in een volstrekt onlogische volgorde liggen, ondoorgrondelijk bedoel ik, want ook in qwertyuiop ontbreekt voor mij iedere logica.

Emily heeft dus die letters ontdekt en schrijft er op het magnetische menubord een gedicht mee van Gertrude Stein, waarvan de letters verdwijnen die we in stilte lezen en waarvan alleen de zin overblijft die we hardop uitspreken, synchroon, beurtelings, asynchroon, simultaan, de kakofonie van een canon na een weldadige stilte.

Wives of great men rest tranquil.
Come go stay philip philip.
Egg be takers.
Parts of place nuts.
Suppose twenty for cent.
It is rose in hen.
Come one day.
A firm terrible a firm terrible hindering, a firm hindering
have a ray nor pin nor.
Egg in places.
Egg in few insists.
In set a place.
I am not missing.
Who is a permit.
I love honor and obey I do love honor and obey I do.
Melancholy do lip sing.
How old is he.
Murmur pet murmur pet murmur.
Push sea push sea push sea push sea push sea push sea
push sea push sea.
Sweet and good and kind to all.
Wearing head.
Cousin tip nicely.
Cousin tip. Nicely.
Wearing head.
Leave us sit.
I do believe it will finish, I do believe it will finish.
Pat ten patent, Pat ten patent.
Eleven and eighteen.
Foolish is foolish is.
Birds measure birds measure stores birds measure stores
measure birds measure.
Exceptional firm bites.
How do you do I forgive you everything and there is no-

thing to forgive.
Never the less.
Leave it to me.
Weeds without papers.
Weeds without papers are necessary.
Left again left again.
Exceptional considerations.
Never the less tenderness.
Resting cow curtain.
Resting bull pin.
Resting cow curtain.
Resting bull pin.
Next to a frame.
The only hat hair.
Leave us mass leave us.
Leave us pass.
Leave us.
Leave us pass leave us.
Humming is.
No climate.
What is a size.
Ease all I can do.
Colored frame.
Couple of canning.
Ease all I can do.
Humming does as Humming does as humming is.
What is a size.
No climate.
Ease all I can do.
Shall give it, please to give it.
Like to give it, please to give it.
What a surprise.
Not sooner whether.
Cordially yours.

Pause.

Cordially yours.

Not sooner together.

Cordially yours.

In strewing, in strewing.

That is the way we are one and indivisible.

Pay nuts renounce.

Now without turning around.

I will give them to you tonight.

Cunning is and does cunning is and does the most beautiful notes.

I would like a thousand most most.

Center pricking petunia.

Electrics are tight electrics are white electrics are a button.

Singular pressing.

Recent thimble.

Noisy pearls noisy pearl coat.

Arrange.

Arrange wide opposite.

Opposite it.

Lily ice-cream.

Nevertheless.

A hand is Willie.

Henry Henry Henry.

A hand is Henry.

Henry Henry Henry.

A hand is Willie.

Henry Henry Henry.

All the time.

A wading chest.

Do you mind.

Lizzie do you mind. Ethel.

Ethel.

Ethel.

Next to barber.

Next to barber bury.

Next to barber bury china.

Next to barber bury china glass.

Next to barber china and glass.

Next to barber and china.

Next to barber and hurry.

Next to hurry.

Next to hurry and glass and china.

Next to hurry and glass and hurry.

Next to hurry and hurry.

Next to hurry and hurry.

Plain cases for see.

Tickle tickle tickle you for education.

A very reasonable berry.

Suppose a selection were reverse.

Cousin to sadden.

A coral neck and a little song so very extra so very Susie.

Cow come out cow come out and out and smell a little.

Draw prettily.

Next to a bloom.

Neat stretch.

Place plenty.

Cauliflower.

Cauliflower.

Curtain cousin.

Apron.

Neither best set.

Do I make faces like that at you.

Pinkie.

Not writing not writing another.

Another one.

Think.

Jack Rose Jack Rose.

Yard.

Practically all of them.

Does believe it.

Measure a measure a measure or.

Which is pretty which is pretty which is pretty.

To be top.

Neglect Waldberg.

Sudden say separate.

So great so great Emily.

Sew grate sew grate Emily.

Not a spell nicely.

Ring.

Weigh pieces of pound.

Aged steps.

Stops.

Not a plan bow.

Why is lacings.

Little slam up.

Cold seam peaches.

Begging to state begging to state begging to state
alright.

Begging to state begging to state begging to state
alright.

Wheels stows wheels stows.

Wickedness.

Cotton could mere less.

Nevertheless.

Anne.

Analysis.

From the standpoint of all white a week is none too much.

Pink coral white coral, coral coral.

Happy happy happy.

All the, chose.

Is a necessity.

Necessity.

Happy happy happy all the.

Happy happy happy all the.

Necessity.

Remain seated.

Come on come on come on on.

All the close.

Remain seated.

Happy.

All the.

Necessity.

Remain seated.

All the, close.

Websters and mines, websters and mines.

Websters and mines.

Trimming.

Gold space gold space of toes.

Twos, twos.

Pinned to the letter.

In accompany.

In a company in.

Received.

Must.

Natural lace.

Spend up.

Spend up length.

Spend up length.

Length thoroughly.

Neatness.

Neatness Neatness.

Excellent cording.

Excellent cording short close.

Close to.

When.
Pin black.
Cough or up.
Shouting.
Shouting.
Neater pin.
Pinned to the letter.
Was it a space was it a space was it a space to see.
Neither things.
Persons.
Transition.
Say say say.
North of the calender.
Window.
Peoples rest.
Preserve pulls.
Cunning piler.
Next to a chance.
Apples.
Apples.
Apples went.
It was a chance to preach Saturday.
Please come to Susan.
Purpose purpose black.
Extra plain silver.
Furious slippers.
Have a reason.
Have a reason candy.
Points of places.
Neat Nezars.
Which is a cream, can cream.
Ink of paper slightly mine breathes a shoulder able shine.
Necessity.
Near glass.

Put a stove put a stove hoarser.

If I was surely if I was surely.

See girl says.

All the same bright.

Brightness.

When a churn say suddenly when a churn say suddenly.

Poor pour percent.

Little branches.

Pale.

Pale.

Pale.

Pale.

Pale.

Pale.

Pale.

Near sights.

Please sorts.

Example.

Example.

Put something down.

Put something down some day.

Put something down some day in.

Put something down some day in my.

In my hand.

In my hand right. In my hand writing.

Put something down some day in my hand writing.

Needles less.

Never the less.

Never the less.

Pepperness.

Never the less extra stress.

Never the less.

Tenderness.

Old sight.

Pearls.
Real line.
Shoulders.
Upper states.
Mere colors.
Recent resign.
Search needles.
All a plain all a plain show.
White papers.
Slippers.
Slippers underneath.
Little tell.
I chance.
I chance to.
I chance to to.
I chance to.
What is a winter wedding a winter wedding.
Furnish seats.
Furnish seats nicely.
Please repeat.
Please repeat for.
Please repeat.
This is a name to Anna.
Cushions and pears.
Reason purses.
Reason purses to relay to relay carpets.
Marble is thorough fare.
Nuts are spittoons.
That is a word.
That is a word careless.
Paper peaches.
Paper peaches are tears.
Rest in grapes.
Thoroughly needed.

Thoroughly needed signs.

All but.

Relieving relieving.

Argonauts.

That is plenty.

Cunning saxon symbol.

Symbol of beauty.

Thimble of everything.

Cunning clover thimble.

Cunning of everything.

Cunning of thimble.

Cunning cunning.

Place in pets.

Night town.

Night town a glass.

Color mahogany.

Color mahogany center.

Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.

Loveliness extreme.

Extra gaiters.

Loveliness extreme.

Sweetest ice-cream.

Page ages page ages page ages.

Wiped Wiped wire wire.

Sweeter than peaches and pears and cream.

Wiped wire wiped wire.

Extra extreme.

Put measure treasure.

Measure treasure.

Tables track.

Nursed.

Dough.

That will do.

Cup or cup or.

Excessively illegitimate.

Pussy pussy pussy what what.

Current secret sneezers.

Ever.

Mercy for a dog.

Medal make medal.

Able able able.

A go to green and a letter spoke a go to green or praise or

Worships worships worships.

Door.

Door. Table linen.

Wet spoil.

Wet spoil gaiters and knees and little spoils little spoils

or ready silk lining.

Suppose misses misses.

Curls to butter.

Curls.

Curls.

Settle stretches.

See at till.

Louise.

Sunny.

Sail or.

Sail or rustle.

Mourn in morning.

The way to say.

Patter.

Deal own a.

Robber.

A high b and a perfect sight.

Little things singer. Jane.

Aiming.

Not in description.

Day way.

A blow is delighted.

I bet there's a bad bat under my bed. A rose is a rose is a rose. Welke onmacht proberen we te bezweren met onze formules?

Bij de lobby tref ik Günter, die me bij de postvakken vertelt dat postbodes de grootste vijanden van de klassieke brief zijn. Hij vouwt het hotelpapier op een bepaalde manier, en werpt ze op de volgens hem enige juiste manier in de postvakken.

In de binnenplaats is Yoko bij een vuurkorf bezig beschreven vellen papier te verbranden.

Wat we delen, ontdekken we deze dagen, is dat we allemaal 'iets' doen in de wereld van kunst en/of wetenschap. Zoveel was tijdens het eerste ontbijt al duidelijk. Zelf beland ik tegenover een mannetje met een bril en een muffig colbertje die zich voorstelt als Walter Benjamin.

'Ik heb een lezing voorbereid,' zegt hij.

'Stond dat bij jou in de uitnodiging?' vraag ik.

'Het was een uitnodiging voor een conferentie. Dan wordt je geacht een bijdrage te leveren!'

Een vrouw die aanschuift met een dienblad (roerei, bakje fruit, koffie) nuanceert dit. 'Het kán, maar dat hoeft niet per se in de vorm van een presentatie of lezing te zijn. Maar als er meer mensen zijn die iets hebben voorbereid, kunnen we een programma opstellen.'

Het teleurstellende aan onze soort is dat wanneer je er wat exemplaren van bij elkaar zet, ze geen oorlog of orgieën beginnen, maar een conferentie. Of heet zoiets vooruitgang? En waar moet mijn bijdrage over gaan? Als stand-up-artiest moet ik waarschijnlijk voor de *komische noot* zorgen, de entr'acte verzorgen, het tussenspel. Ik loop er over te tobben als ik later in de hal de wegwijzers volg naar 'conferentiezaal', waar een man op het podium zit te schrijven.

'raɪtɪŋ 'lɛktʃə 2010
Writing Lecture 2010

aɪ æm 'raɪtɪŋ wɪð maɪ raɪt hænd. ðə laɪt ɪz 'kʌmɪŋ
I am writing with my right hand. The light is coming
frɒm ə'boʊv lɛft.
from above left.

maɪ 'raɪtɪŋ bɪ'gɪnz wɛn ðə 'ʃædəʊ ɒv ðə pɛn ænd ðə
My writing begins when the shadow of the pen and the
pɛn ɪt'sɛlf kʌm tə'gɛðər ɒn ðə 'peɪpə.
pen itself come together on the paper.

ðə tɪp ænd ɪts 'ʃædəʊ rɪ'meɪn kləʊs tə'gɛðər ən'tɪl ɪ
The tip and its shadow remain close together until I
'ɔ:lməʊst ə'raɪv æt ðə raɪt-hænd ɛdʒ ɒv ðə 'peɪpə.
almost arrive at the right-hand edge of the paper.

'sʌmwɛə hɪər aɪ meɪk ðə dɪ'sɪʒən tu: stɒp ænd ɡəʊ tu: ðə
Somewhere here I make the decision to stop and go to the
nekst laɪn. ðə hænd wɪð ðə pɛn lɪfts ɪt'sɛlf frɒm ðə 'peɪpə,
next line. The hand with the pen lifts itself from the paper, mo-

mu:vz 'kwɪkli bæk tu: ðə lɛft ænd bɪ'gɪnz eɪt ɔ: naɪn
ves quickly back to the left and begins eight or nine
'mɪlɪ,mɪ:təz 'ləʊə daʊn, 'raɪtɪŋ ə frɛʃ laɪn tə'wɔ:dz ðə
millimetres lower down, writing a fresh line towards the

raɪt. ðə θʌm ænd 'ɪndɛks 'fɪŋgər ɒv maɪ lɛft hænd həʊld
right. The thumb and index finger of my left hand hold
ðə 'peɪpə prɛst tu: ðə 'teɪbl ɪn ðə kə'rekt pə'zɪʃən:
the paper pressed to the table in the correct position:

dɪ'rektli ɪn frʌnt ɒv mi: ænd æt ən 'æŋɡl ɒv 'fɪf'ti:n
directly in front of me and at an angle of fifteen
dɪ'ɡri:z ɪn rɪ'leɪʃən tu: ðɪ ɛdʒ ɒv ðə 'teɪbl.
degrees in relation to the edge of the table.

θʌm ænd 'ɪndɛks 'fɪŋgə pʊʃ ðə 'peɪpər æt ɪ:tʃ laɪn ə
Thumb and index finger push the paper at each line a
'lɪtl 'fɜ:ðər 'ʌpwədz, səʊ ðæt aɪ dəʊnt hæv tu: tʃeɪndʒ maɪ
little further upwards, so that I don't have to change my

'raɪtɪŋ pə'zɪʃən ɪn ə 'vɜːtɪkəl dɪ'rekʃən.

writing position in a vertical direction.

wɛn maɪ 'raɪtɪŋ ə'prəʊtʃɪz ðə 'bɒtəm ɒv ðə 'peɪpər aɪ hæv

When my writing approaches the bottom of the paper I have

tuː dɪ'saɪd haʊ mʌtʃ speɪs aɪ wɒnt tuː liːv frɪː bɪ'niːθ ðə

to decide how much space I want to leave free beneath the

lɑːst laɪn – 'ðeəfɔː, haʊ 'meni laɪnz aɪ stɪl kæn raɪt bɪ'fɔː

last line – therefore, how many lines I still can write before

bɪ'ɡɪnɪŋ ə njuː ʃiːt.

beginning a new sheet.

ɒn ðə njuː ʃiːt, ðɪ 'æŋɡl ɒv wɪtʃ aɪ hæv tuː kə'rekt ə 'kʌpl

On the new sheet, the angle of which I have to correct a couple

ɒv taɪmz tuː ɡet ɪt ɪn ðə raɪt pə'zɪʃən, aɪ stɑːt tuː raɪt æt

of times to get it in the right position, I start to write at

ə pɔɪnt ðæt ɪz ðə seɪm 'dɪstəns frɒm ðə tɒp ɒv ðə 'peɪpər

a point that is the same distance from the top of the paper

æz frɒm ðə left hænd eɟʒ.

as from the left hand edge.

ðə 'stɑːtɪŋ pɔɪnts ɒv njuː laɪnz laɪ kwɑɪt prɪ'saɪsli bɪ'ləʊ

The starting points of new lines lie quite precisely below

wʌn ə'nʌðə, ðə raɪt hænd endz ɒv ðə laɪnz ɑːr ɪ'reɡjʊlə.

one another, the right hand ends of the lines are irregular.

ɪf ə 'sentəns endz bɪ'fɔːr aɪ hæv rɪ:tʃt ðɪ end ɒv ə laɪn aɪ

If a sentence ends before I have reached the end of a line I

hæv tuː dɪ'saɪd 'wɛðər aɪ ə'laʊ maɪ nekst 'sentəns tuː

have to decide whether I allow my next sentence to

kən'tɪnjuː(ː) ɔː tuː stɑːt ɪt ɒn ə njuː laɪn.

continue or to start it on a new line.

ɪf aɪ wɒnt tuː θɪŋk ə'baʊt haʊ aɪ wɒnt tuː prə'siːd, ɪn ðə

If I want to think about how I want to proceed, in the

'mɪdl ɒv ə 'sentəns ɔːr æt ɪts end, aɪ rɪ'muːv ðə pɛn frɒm

middle of a sentence or at its end, I remove the pen from

ðə 'peɪpər ɪn 'ɔːdə tuː lʊk 'əʊv wɒt aɪ hæv 'rɪtɪn ʌp ən'tɪl

the paper in order to look over what I have written up until

naʊ. aɪ hæʊld maɪ hænd wɪð ðə pen ə'weɪ frɒm ðə ʃi:t
 now. I hold my hand with the pen away from the sheet
 ɒv 'peɪpə ənd let maɪ ɑ:m rest fɔ:r ə 'lɪtl waɪl.
 of paper and let my arm rest for a little while.
 waɪl 'kʌvəriŋ ðə 'dɪstəns, ˌhɒrɪ'zɒntli, bɪ'twi:ŋ ðə stɑ:t
 While covering the distance, horizontally, between the start
 ənd ði end ɒv ə laɪn, ðə 'fɔ:ɑ:m dʌz nɒt slaɪd ɪn 'pærəleɪ
 and the end of a line, the forearm does not slide in parallel
 wɪð ðə pen: ðə hænd 'gaɪdɪŋ ðə pen 'ðeəfɔ: 'stretʃɪz
 with the pen: the hand guiding the pen therefore stretches
 ɪt'self aʊt ə 'lɪtl æt ðə bɪ'ɡɪnɪŋ ənd æz ɪt kən'tɪnju(:)z ə'lɒŋ
 itself out a little at the beginning and as it continues along
 ðə laɪn, meɪks ɪt'self 'smɔ:lər ə'ɡen. ðɪs ɪks'tendɪŋ ənd
 the line, makes itself smaller again. This extending and
 'ʃrɪŋkɪŋ ɒv ðə hænd 'ɔ:lsəʊ 'hæpənz waɪl 'raɪtɪŋ 'letəz
 shrinking of the hand also happens while writing letters
 wɪtʃ ɪks'tend ə'bʌv ɔ: bɪ'ləʊ ðə 'mɪdɔɪnt ɒv ðə laɪn.
 which extend above or below the midpoint of the line.
 ɪf aɪ wɒnt tu: lʊk ə'ɡen æt wɒt aɪ hæv 'rɪtɪn ənd wɒnt tu:
 If I want to look again at what I have written and want to
 θɪŋk ə'baʊt ɪt ə 'lɪtl 'lɒŋgə, ðen aɪ 'ɔ:lməʊst ɔ:tə'mætɪkəli
 think about it a little longer, then I almost automatically
 pʊt ðə tɒp ɒn ðə pen tu: prɪ'vent ði ɪŋk frɒm 'draɪɪŋ ɪn ðə
 put the top on the pen to prevent the ink from drying in the
 nɪb. ðə tɒp ɒv ðə 'faʊntɪn pen ɪz 'ɔ:lweɪz kləʊs æt hænd.
 nib. The top of the fountain pen is always close at hand.

'dʒʊəriŋ ði ækt ɒv 'raɪtɪŋ, ðə 'frɪkʃən bɪ'twi:ŋ ðə 'metl
 During the act of writing, the friction between the metal
 ɒv ðə pen ənd ðə 'sɜ:fɪs 'tekstʃər ɒv ðə 'peɪpə meɪks ə
 of the pen and the surface texture of the paper makes a
 saʊnd. ðɪs saʊnd ɪz ə 'kwaɪət laɪt nɔɪz wɪtʃ ə'raɪzɪz bɪ'kɒz ɒv
 sound. This sound is a quiet light noise which arises because of
 ðə 'mu:vmənts ɒv ðə pen: 'tɜ:nɪŋ, 'slaɪdɪŋ, 'ɡlaɪdɪŋ, 'rʌbɪŋ...
 the movements of the pen: turning, sliding, gliding, rubbing...

ðə 'sɜ:fɪs ɒv ðə 'peɪpə ɪz 'nevə kəm'plɪtli smu:ð. If
The surface of the paper is never completely smooth. If
aɪ wɜ: tu: raɪt ɒn glaɪs ðeə wʊd bi: nəʊ rɪ'zɪstəns ænd
I were to write on glass there would be no resistance and
'ðeəfɔ:r 'kɔ:lsəʊ nəʊ səʊnd.
therefore also no sound.

'sʌmtaɪmz ðə səʊnd stɒps fɔ:r ə 'məʊmənt wen aɪ pleɪs ə
Sometimes the sound stops for a moment when I place a
fʊl stɒp ɔ:r ə 'kɒmə.
full stop or a comma.

ju: dəʊnt hɪə ðə nɔɪz ðen, bʌt ə tæp, 'envələʊpt ɪn
You don't hear the noise then, but a tap, enveloped in
'saɪləns. ɪn ðə tæp ju: kæn hɪə ðə 'reznəns ɒv ðə speɪs
silence. In the tap you can hear the resonance of the space
bɪ'ni:θ ðə 'sɜ:fɪs ɒn wɪtʃ ðə 'peɪpə ɪz 'laɪɪŋ.
beneath the surface on which the paper is lying.

ði 'ɒnset ɒv ə nju: wɜ:d ɪz ə træn'zɪf(ə)n frəm 'hɒvəriŋ tu:
The onset of a new word is a transition from hovering to
'raɪtɪŋ. ðə tʌtʃ ɒv ðə pen ɒn 'peɪpə 'ju:ʒəli ə'kɜ:z
writing. The touch of the pen on paper usually occurs
frəm ən 'kɔ:lməʊst ,hɒrɪ'zɒntl 'mu:vmənt: ɪt ɪz æz ɪf ðə pen
from an almost horizontal movement: it is as if the pen
glɑɪdz daʊn 'ɒntə ðə 'sɜ:fɪs ɒv ðə 'peɪpə. jət ði 'ɒnset ɪz
glides down onto the surface of the paper. Yet the onset is
ə'kʌmpənɪd baɪ 'ekstrə 'preʃə, wɪtʃ meɪks ɪt mɔ:r 'kɔ:dəbl
accompanied by extra pressure, which makes it more audible
ðæn ðə səʊnd ɒv ðə pen wɪtʃ 'sʌbsɪkwəntli 'fɒləʊz ɪts kɔ:rs
than the sound of the pen which subsequently follows its course
ə'krɒs ðə 'peɪpə wɪ'ðaʊt ɪntə'rʌpʃən, bʌt ɪt ɪz 'sɒftə ðæn
across the paper without interruption, but it is softer than
ðə səʊnd ɒv ə fʊl stɒp ɔ:r ə 'kɒmə, æt wɪtʃ ðə pen ɪg'zɜ:ts
the sound of a full stop or a comma, at which the pen exerts
ə ʃɔ:t lɪvd 'vɜ:tɪkəl 'preʃər æt wʌn pɔɪnt ɒn ðə 'peɪpə.
a short lived vertical pressure at one point on the paper.

'ɔ:lsəʊ ðə 'dʒʌmpɪŋ ɒf ɔɪnt æt ði end ɒv ə wɜ:d, 'ɑ:ftə wɪtʃ
Also the jumping off point at the end of a word, after which
ðə pen ɪz ɔɪzɪd dʒʌst ə'blʌv ðə 'peɪpə bɪ'fɔ: 'geɪnɪŋ ɪn ðə
the pen is poised just above the paper before getting in the
raɪt pə'zɪʃən tu: stɑ:t ðə nekst wɜ:d, kæn 'ɔ:lsəʊ 'prɒdʒu:s
right position to start the next word, can also produce
sʌm mɔ: sʌʊnd, bɪ'kɒz ðen ə 'lɑ:dʒə 'mu:vmənt ɪz meɪd
some more sound, because then a larger movement is made
æt ə 'haɪə spi:d, dɪ'pendɪŋ ɒn ðə 'letə ðə wɜ:d endz ɪn.
at a higher speed, depending on the letter the word ends in.
ðə 'dʒʌmpɪŋ ɒf ɔɪnt æt ði end ɒv ə 'pærəgrɑ:f ɔ: ðə fʊl
The jumping off point at the end of a paragraph or the full
tekst ɪz 'ɒf(ə)n ə bɪt mɔ: flæm'bɔɪənt. ɪt ɪz ðə rɪ'li:s 'ɑ:ftə
text is often a bit more flamboyant. It is the release after
ðɪ 'efət.
the effort.

θru: ðə mɔɪst wɔ:mθ ɒv maɪ hænd wɪtʃ rɛsts ɒn ðə
Through the moist warmth of my hand which rests on the
'peɪpə 'dʒɔəɪŋ 'raɪtɪŋ, 'dʒentl ʌndʒə'leɪʃənz stɑ:t tu: ə'pɪər
paper during writing, gentle undulations start to appear
ɪn ðə 'peɪpə. ɪn ði:z 'pleɪsɪz weə ðeər ɪz speɪs bɪ'twi:n
in the paper. In these places where there is space between
ðə 'peɪpər ænd ðɪ ʌndə'laɪɪŋ 'sɜ:fɪs, ðə 'raɪtɪŋ ɔɪz
the paper and the underlying surface, the writing noise
kæn bi: 'dɪfrənt.
can be different.

wɛn aɪ raɪt wɪð maɪ 'faʊntɪn pen, aɪ pʊl ən ə'maʊnt ɒv
When I write with my fountain pen, I pull an amount of
ɪŋk ə'lɒŋ ə laɪn, fʊl ɒv lu:ps, 'æŋglz ænd weɪvz, ən'tɪl ɪt
ink along a line, full of loops, angles and waves, until it
fɔ:mz ə wɜ:d; 'raɪtɪŋ ɪz ðə 'leɪɪŋ daʊn ɒv ɪŋk-laɪnz ɪn ðə
forms a word; writing is the laying down of ink-lines in the
fɔ:m ɒv wɜ:dz.
form of words.

'sʌmtaɪmz waɪl 'raɪtɪŋ, dɪ'pɛndɪŋ ɒn ðə fɔ:l ɒv laɪt, aɪ si:
Sometimes while writing, depending on the fall of light, I see
ði ɪŋk-laɪn æz ə wɛt træk 'laɪn ɒn ðə 'peɪpə bɪ'kɒz ði:z
the ink-line as a wet track lying on the paper because these
frɛʃ laɪnz, wɪtʃ a: 'da:kə ðæn ðə laɪnz ðæt ɔ:l'reɪdi hæv
fresh lines, which are darker than the lines that already have
bɪ:n əb'sɔ:bd baɪ ðə 'peɪpə, ʃəʊ 'veri faɪn glɔwlaɪts.
been absorbed by the paper, show very fine glowlights.
wɛn aɪ stɑ:t ɒn ə nju: wɜ:d, ðə wɛt steɪt ɒv ðə 'fɔ:mə wɜ:d
When I start on a new word, the wet state of the former word
hæz 'ju:ʒɔəli ,dɪsə'pɪəd.
has usually disappeared.

ə dɒt rɪ'meɪnz ə 'lɪtl 'lɒŋgə: ə drɒp wɪð ə glɔwlaɪt.

A dot remains a little longer: a drop with a glowlight.

ðə 'da:knis ɒv ði ɪŋk laɪnz 'flʌktjʊeɪts dɪ'pɛndɪŋ ɒn ðə
The darkness of the ink lines fluctuates depending on the
fləʊ wɪç dɪ'tɜ:mɪnz ðə ,kɒnsən'treɪʃən ɒv ði ɪŋk, æz, ɪn
flow wɪç dɛtɛrɪnɪs ðə kɒnsən'treɪʃən ɒv ði ɪŋk, æz, ɪn
'ɔ:də tu: raɪt 'dɪfrənt 'letəz, ðə pɛn meɪks 'mu:vmənts
order to write different letters, the pen makes movements
ɪn 'veəriəbl spi:d. 'ɔ:lsəʊ ðə weɪ 'letəz kə'nekt ænd laɪnz
in variable speed. Also the way letters connect and lines
krɒs ɪtʃ 'ʌðər ɪz ɪnflʊ'ɛnʃəl ɪn ðə weɪ ði ɪŋk fləʊz.

cross each other is influential in the way the ink flows.

ðɪs ɪ'fɛkt ɪz 'klɪəli 'vɪzəbl æt ðə 'veri la:st 'sɛkʃən ɒv ðə
This effect is clearly visible at the very last section of the
la:st 'letər ɒv ə wɜ:d: ði ə'maʊnt ɒv ɪŋk wɪtʃ hæz fləʊd
last letter of a word: the amount of ink which has flowed
frɒm ðə pɛn ɒntə ðə 'peɪpə, 'kænɒt ðɛn sprɛd 'fɜ:ðər
from the pen onto the paper, cannot then spread further
'ɪntu: 'fɒləʊɪŋ 'letəz ænd ə bɪld ʌp ɒv 'pɪgmənt ə'kɜ:z.
into following letters and a build up of pigment occurs.

'raɪtɪŋ ɪz ə 'kwaɪət ænd æt ðə seɪm taɪm 'restləs æk'tɪvɪti:
 Writing is a quiet and at the same time restless activity:
 ə 'rɪðəm kʌmz ə'baʊt θru: 'raɪtɪŋ ðæt hæz ə 'restfʊl
 a rhythm comes about through writing that has a restful
 ɪ'fekt, jət ɪt ɪz bɪlt ʌp ʌt Òv 'meni 'kɒmplɪkeɪtɪd
 effect, yet it is built up out of many complicated
 'mu:vmənts: wɪð ɪ:tʃ nju: wɜ:d, ðə pen bɪ'gɪnz ɒn ə ʃɔ:t
 movements: with each new word, the pen begins on a short
 ɔ: 'lɒŋgə ,hɒrɪ'zɒntl ,kɒnstə'leɪʃən ɒv laɪnz.
 or longer horizontal constellation of lines.
 'sʌmtaɪmz ə wɜ:d ɪz ʃɔ:md ɪn wʌn 'weɪvi 'mu:vmənt,
 Sometimes a word is formed in one wavy movement,
 'sʌmtaɪmz ðə pen meɪks 'sevrəl 'ɒnsets ɪn wʌn wɜ:d, ʃɔ:r
 sometimes the pen makes several onsets in one word, for
 ɪg'zɑ:mpl, ɪf dɒts ɔ: 'dæʃɪz nɪ:d tu: bɪ: meɪd ɪn ðæt wɜ:d.
 example, if dots or dashes need to be made in that word.
 ðə 'mu:vmənt ɪz 'ɒf(ə)n mɔ:r ɪn'tens ɪn wɜ:dz ɪn wɪtʃ ə
 The movement is often more intense in words in which a
 lu:p ɔ:r ə stem ɪks'tend ə'blaɪ ɔ: bɪ'ləʊ ðə 'mɪdl laɪn: ɪt
 loop or a stem extend above or below the middle line: it
 sɪ:mz laɪk sʌtʃ ə 'dʒestʃə 'hæpənz wɪð ə 'greɪtə spi:d ðæn
 seems like such a gesture happens with a greater speed than
 ɪn ðə kən'tɪnju(:)ɪŋ laɪn ɪn ðə 'mɪdl 'eəriə.
 in the continuing line in the middle area.
 'sʌmtaɪmz 'letəz ɑ: ʃɔ:md wɪð 'ekstrə 'mu:vmənts ðæt
 Sometimes letters are formed with extra movements that
 hæv nəʊ 'speʃəl 'fʌŋkʃən: ʃɔ:r ɪnstəns, ɪn maɪ əʊn əʊz
 have no special function: for instance, in my own o's
 ænd dɪz, aɪ meɪk səʊ 'meni 'ju:slɪs 'mu:vmənts ðæt ðɪ
 and d's, I make so many useless movements that the
 'əʊpənɪŋz ɒv ðɪz 'letəz ɑ: 'sʌmtaɪmz kəm'pli:tli fɪld ʌp
 openings of these letters are sometimes completely filled up
 wɪð 'kɜ:li ɪŋk laɪnz.
 with curly ink lines.

ɔ:l in ɔ:l, it ɪz i:tʃ 'pɜ:snz əʊn 'hænd,raɪtɪŋ, dɪ'veləpt
All in all, it is each person's own handwriting, developed
'əʊvə jɪəz, wɪtʃ dɪ'tɜ:mɪnz ðə kəm'pleksɪti ɔ: 'flu:(ɪ)ənsi ɒv
over years, which determines the complexity or fluency of
ðə 'mu:vmənts ɒv ðə pen ɒn ðə 'peɪpə.
the movements of the pen on the paper.

Ik weet niet hoelang ik in Hotel Grafiet heb doorgebracht, maar als ik eraan terugdenk, is het één ononderbroken conferentie, met voordrachten in de conferentiezaal, met discussies aan tafel, met als terugkerende hoofdvraag: wat doen we hier eigenlijk? Hoe zijn we hier verzeild geraakt? Wat is de bedoeling?

Sommigen lijken ons verblijf op te vatten als een highbrow-variant op een escape room of een programma als *Wie is de Mol?* Ze zoeken opdrachten, verborgen aanwijzingen.

Zo heeft Gary op een dag naast de bar een oude pick-up-platenspeler ontdekt, eentje uit de tijd van Edison zelf, of waarschijnlijk een retro-kopie ervan, in elk geval heeft het ding een koperen toeter. De vinylplaat die erop ligt is zodanig geperst dat als je hem kantelt en het licht door de groeven laat scheren, daar een tekst verschijnt.

Ceci n'est pas de hors-texte.

Wat betekent het? Wat kunnen we hiermee? Kluwen interpretaties vullen de ruimte. Uiteindelijk verklaart een man een geruit pak, met een hoed op: 'Kunnen we elkaars misverstaan niet gewoon omarmen? Is misverstand niet altijd het scharnier geweest voor kunst? In kunst bestaat er geen consensus, alleen een interpretatie, een gesprek met onenigheid en misverstand als zijn basis.'

Nog altijd weet ik niet wat er van mij verwacht wordt. Ik herinner me mijn supermarktdroom. Niet alleen de rijen met boodschappen zijn zinnen – de boodschappen zijn boodschappen! – uiteindelijk is alles teken. Alles is boodschap. Symbool, parabool, hyperbool, metabool, pseudo-bool. Het ontbreekt ons alleen aan de concentratie – of is het de moed? – om hun volle diepgang te peilen, het ontbreekt ons aan het gezichtspunt van waaruit er een punt in zicht zou kunnen zijn, en daarom is elke betekenis

provisorisch.

Ik hoor ze spreken, speculeren, mijn lotgenoten, verzeild in deze society. Wat doen we hier? Wat nu? Wat betekent 'wat'? Opgeschorte betekenis, voorlopige betekenis, geïmproviseerde zin.

Op de vierde verdieping, hoor ik ze vertellen, zit een man in taalquarantaine. Hij spreekt niet, leest niet, schrijft niet. Soms lijkt me dat een verlossende houding. Zwijgen maakt vrij.

I bet there's a bad bat under my bed. Soms snak ik naar een taalloos bestaan. Hoe prachtig zouden de dingen niet zijn, als ik ontheven was van de taak erover te spreken. Stil en onbeduidend als sporen van meteorieten in de dampkring. De wereld zonder ondertiteling. Het spontane leven zonder duiding. I bet there's a bad bat under my bed. Niets om na te vertellen.

Als we de vinylplaat afspelen horen we eerst gekraak, vervolgens praat er iemand. De groep luistert, als naar de stem van een buitenaards wezen.

...Er bestaat niet zoiets als een lege ruimte of een lege tijd. Er is altijd iets te zien, iets te horen. In feite, hoe we ook proberen te zwijgen, we kunnen het niet. Geluiden komen voor, of ze nu bedoeld zijn of niet; de psychologische wending in de richting van degenen die niet bedoeld zijn, lijkt in eerste instantie het opgeven van alles wat de mensheid toebehoort. Maar men moet inzien dat mens en natuur, niet gescheiden, samen in deze wereld zijn, dat er niets verloren is gegaan toen alles werd weggegeven...

Woorden die alleen in het Galicisch bestaan:

Enexbre. Iets puurs en authentieks wat niet vermengd mag worden met iets anders.

Luscofusco. Het moment dat het licht het verliest van de duisternis en de hemel door die strijd opkleurt.

Barallocas. Iemand die veel praat maar alleen onzin kletst.

Trapallada. Iets wat slecht gemaakt of gedaan is, zonder betekenis of waarde.

Saudade. Net als in het Portugees, waar het een mengsel van gevoelens beschrijft. Gemis, afstand, liefde, heimwee, melancholie. Maar die zijn het dus allemaal niet.

Ergens tussen de lunch en avondeten zit ik in de bibliotheek over dit lijstje gebogen. Ik denk al langer na over mijn bijdrage aan deze conferentie en wil 'iets' met mijn infraroodwoorden doen. Naast me leest iemand mee. Hij begint te vertellen over een onderzoeker uit Londen die eens een stam in Namibië opzocht, die geen woord voor de kleur blauw had. Hij liet ze die kleur aanwijzen in een diagram vol groene vlakken. Ze zagen het niet. Wel hadden ze evenveel woorden voor 'groen' als Inuïts voor 'sneeuw', Hollanders voor 'regen' (en Venetianen voor 'steeg'). Homerus heeft het in de Odyssee over een 'wijndonkere zee'. Japanners hebben lang geen woord voor blauw gehad en konden die kleur dan ook niet als aparte kleur onderscheiden. Het was simpelweg een van de schakeringen groen. Je gaat het pas zien als er een woord voor is, zegt hij. 'Niemand heeft ooit de mist boven de Thames gezien, totdat Turner die schilderde.'

Pas als hij vertrokken is, begrijp ik wat hij me wil leren.

Taal is geen raam.

Lang heb ik geloofd dat woorden gevels waren waarachter betekenissen huisden, bezield door bewoning. Misschien is dat niet waar, begin ik me te realiseren. Straten zijn de zinnen, verkeerslichten de interpunctie, jawel, maar het leven is niet elders. De betekenissen liggen niet ergens voorbĳ de klanken, niet in een niet-bestaand *jenseits* der tekens.

Al die stemmen, in de kelder naast de drukpersen, in de conferentiezaal, in de gangen, barralocas, gebrabbel, rabarber, barralocas, gebrabbelrabarberbarralocasrabarberbarbarberbarralocas

'George Orwell,' zeg ik, en er valt een stilte, alsof ik een bom laat ontploffen. Het gat in de taal is precies rond genoeg om in te springen. 'George Orwell zag de taal als een raam en zichzelf als een glazenwasser. Als je maar eenmaal zuiver formuleerde, kreeg je vanzelf een heldere manier van denken. Slordig schrijven zorgt voor slordig denken. Dwars door de brandschone taal heen zag je de werkelijkheid daar tastbaar uitgestald, als in een museumvitrine: kom er maar in. Hang je woorden er maar aan vast, als labels.'

'Het heeft mij altijd verbaasd hoe een groot denker als Orwell zich zo kon vergissen. De werkelijkheid ontstaat in de taal. New speak is geen lachspiegel op de vitrine, het is een directe manipulatie van de objecten die niet buiten de taal om bestaan. De werkelijkheid ligt niet klaar achter glas, om labels omgehangen te krijgen. Bergen, pennen, moleculen, slakroppen en maanlicht misschien, ja, die misschien (en zelfs dat betwijfel ik een beetje), maar 'democratie', 'mensenrechten', 'anderhalvemetersamenleving', 'rechtvaardigheid', 'audioactief verval': die vind je in geen enkele vitrine terug, die bestaan alleen in dat glas dat geen glas is maar water, dat wij delen als opgewonden zwemmers doen met het fonkelende badwater.'

Ziezo. Flaubert schreef dat hij de mensheid romans in de smoel wilde slingeren, en ik heb de groep hier een stukje van mijn gedachtengoed toegeworpen, en verder zoeken ze het maar uit. Barralocas.

Ze grijpen het beet. Ze zetten hun hersens en tongen erin. Ze overwoekeren het met commentaren en interpretaties, de hele wildgroei van verbositeit, voetnoten. Ik neem het op als een spons, zoals ik wekelijks taal opneem als een spons en uitknijp via de radio, het concentraat, de kwintessens van hun verbale afscheidingen. Barralocas rabarber Jezus máákt vrij.

Ze zitten gevangen in hun verhalen, en soms ben ik bereid dat met mededogen in te zien, als een beiaard in een kerktoren, hamerend op het klokkenspel van mijn letters.

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Minstens drie keer per dag loop ik langs het kamertje van de man in taalquarantaine. Mijn kamer bevindt zich namelijk in dezelfde vleugel. Soms blijf ik met ingehouden adem aan de deur staan luisteren. Misschien in de vage hoop hem te betrappen op clandestiene taalconsumptie. Misschien om iets mee te kunnen voelen of op te snuiven uit dit taallose universum.

Vandaag raak ik op de gang in gesprek met een man die Mondriaanschilderijen aan het ophangen is. Kopieën, zeg ik. Maar de man, die zich voorstelt als Goran, zegt dat hij geen idee heeft. 'Ik ben alleen de klusjesman,' verontschuldigt hij. Maar ik weet dat een van de gasten hier meer van weet. Ik blijf een paar minuten alleen achter met de werken, totdat hij terugkomt met de man die zich eerder als Walter Benjamin had voorgesteld.

'Het zijn weldegelijk originele werken,' doceert hij. 'In zekere zin hebben ze juist méér waarde dan de Mondriaans die tijdens Mondriaans leven zijn ontstaan.' Hij legt het uit, al begrijp ik het niet helemaal. Midden in zijn referaat zwaait ineens de deur open.

Voor het eerst zien we de man zonder taal, als Kafka's hongerkunstenaar, met een aureool van stilte om zich heen. Zelf vallen we ook onmiddellijk stil, alsof we hem storen. Hij kijkt ons indringend aan, alsof hij ons leest, glimlacht dan en keert terug. Zelfs zijn deur sluit zonder geluid.

Natuurlijk weet Walter niet meer waar hij gebleven is. De taal is hem ontglipt, uit handen geslagen. Dus begin ik maar te vertellen.

Eens, op een winternacht twee jaar geleden, brandde het zwembad in Monster af waar mijn kinderen allebei hun diploma's behaalden. Ik geloofde het niet echt. Ik had nog nooit water zien branden. Maar het was waar. Een frisdrankautomaat was gaan roken en door een medewer-

ker onbeheerd achtergelaten, alleen de stekker was eruit getrokken, en die had een kettingreactie aan explosies in werking gezet.

Dat het nieuwe zwembad klaar was ontdekten we in het Jeugdjournaal, in een item over glijbanen. De dag erop gingen we er voor het eerst heen. Dezelfde indeling, iets strakker, iets minder rommelig, minder speels. Glijbaan, warme bad, stroomversnelling, de duikplank: alles bevond zich op dezelfde positie. Wie de kans krijgt opnieuw te beginnen, blanco, from scratch, herschept bij voorkeur wat hij kent.

'Het was een replica,' zegt Walter. 'Een herinnering, een kopie, die altijd een extra betekenislaag in zich zal blijven dragen, die van de nostalgie naar het afgebrande origineel.'

Ik vertel hem dat zelfs de toegangspoortjes en kassa zich op dezelfde plek bevonden. Evenals de automaten met speelgoedprul waar de kinderen altijd iets uit mochten trekken als ze naar een volgend badje mochten of een diploma behaalden.

Er ontbrak maar één ding. Een nieuwe frisdrankautomaat.

Daarop moet Walter lachen. Hij vertelt over Jean Cocteau. Hem werd eens een variant op de onbevoond-eiland-vraag gesteld. 'Meneer Cocteau, als uw huis in brand zou staan, en u mocht één ding meenemen, wat zou dat zijn?' Waarop hij antwoordde, stellig en beslist: 'Het vuur!'

We lachen, en blijven nog even staan kijken naar de Mondriaans in de hal. Misschien wachten we of de man in taalquarantaine nog naar buiten komt, alsof we vissers zijn die hem proberen te lokken met stilte aan onze hengels. Maar hij vertoont zich niet meer. Vlak voor ik doorloop, geeft Walter me een boek mee. Ik lees het in mijn kamer.





REMEMBERING A MONDRIAN

Copies are memories.

*Exhibition could establish a theoretical
platform no text can.*

Walter Benjamin, *Recent Writings*

The theme of this story came from the *Composition II* painted by Piet Mondrian in Paris 1929 that is in the National Museum in Belgrade and its copy painted by me in 1983 in the same museum, but it is initiated by the numerous copies of the same painting I began making recently. Although in its epicenter is a work of art by one of the most important artists of the 20th century, the story itself has very little to do with Mondrian or art and art history. It is rather a reflection on remembering personal past and a way memories can be produced and actualized through a story built around this particular painting. At the same time, it shows how what is made as a work of art could change its meaning and role and become something else depending on the story in which it appears, in this case a living souvenir of my memories.



Fig 01
"Fragments",
apartment exhibition,
Belgrade,
August 2020 - February 2021

Recently, when I went to check the current state of the ongoing apartment exhibition "Fragments" installed in August 2020, a patchwork of memories on various stories and themes I was involved in, in one way or another, on one of the neighboring streets I noticed a horse cart full of various junk items including two desktop monitors.

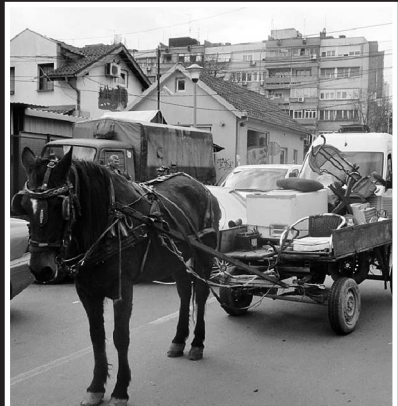


Fig 02
Street scene with horse cart,
Belgrade (Zemun), February 2021

Fig 02a
Street scene with horse cart,
Belgrade (Zemun),
February 2021



A few days later, with some sense of nostalgia, I decided to look for one that was in working condition. It took me almost a month to finally find one very nice model. However, it so happened that, while moving around this heavy piece of equipment, at some point it suddenly slipped from the armchair where I had put it just for a moment, and fell on the floor. It didn't look broken but when I plugged it in, I heard just a buzzing noise while the screen was black. I knew it was damaged and

decided to open it, hoping it could be repaired. However, when I removed the cover I noticed that the narrow end of the glass tube was broken.

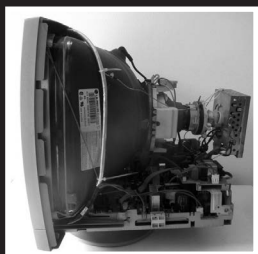


Fig 03
Broken CRT computer monitor,
May 2021

I realized that this impressive piece of equipment was beyond repair. While becoming a bit saddened, I began noticing a complexity and sophistication of this now ancient product of computer technology hidden under the monitor cover and didn't like the idea that it should be thrown away. Then, a thought crossed my mind: why don't I use it in some different way. Recently, I have been making copies of a particular Mondrian painting on various surfaces. Thought perhaps I could paint one version on the monitor's screen. Since it was smaller than the painting, I decided to reproduce just a part of it that would fit on the screen, painted in a pointillist manner. And this is what I did.

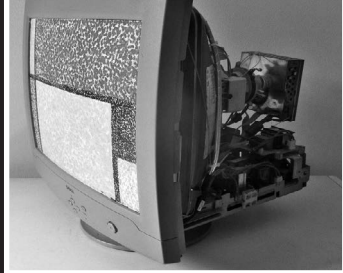


Fig 04
Fragment of the *Composition II* painted
on the screen of broken CRT monitor,
May 2021

This also reminded me of my MIT years when I wrote simple programs that would generate copies of well-known works of abstract art as computer graphics. These images generated in this way would appear on a special separate computer screen called the "frame buffer" with resolution 640×480 pixels. This was part of my "Electronic Gallery" project which interestingly later that year even received the MIT Council for the Arts award of \$950.

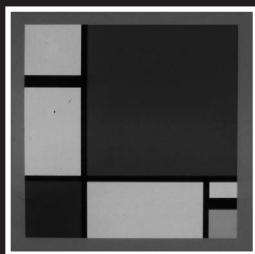


Fig 05
Computer generated copy of Mondrian,
Arch-Mach, MIT Cambridge 1983

When in 1980 I started copying "Harbingers of the Apocalypse", it was in my mind an absurd gesture since I thought that copying a worthless painting is in essence a senseless act. Then, after some time, I begin realizing that copying Harbingers is not entirely a senseless endeavor, that copy is

not always a trivial picture.



Fig 06
Harbingers of Apocalypse,
original and copy, 1980-81
(installation from City
Gallery Ljubljana 2013)

On the contrary, I became aware that a copy, although formally the same as the original, is a product of a dif-

ferent intention and thus represents a very different idea. In a way, copy has at least two layers of meaning, one of the original and another of the copy, while the original has only one.



Fig 07
Harbingers of the Apocalypse, original
and copies, apartment exhibition,
Belgrade 1980

Thus, if an original of "Harbingers" is worthless, its copies are most likely not. But in some strange twist, when copies became important, they implicitly gave a new value to the original, and thus, the worthless original now began to gain some importance as well. To paraphrase Benjamin, by making a copy we remember the original. Each new copy is like a renewed memory and it can play, not only one role (like in art history) but different roles in different stories, both physically (on display) and symbolically (in a narrative). The earliest interpretation of Mondrian that I remember is this 1972 "translation" of one of its color compositions into a monochromatic structure that came out of my "visual exploration" and has no relation to copy as a theme.

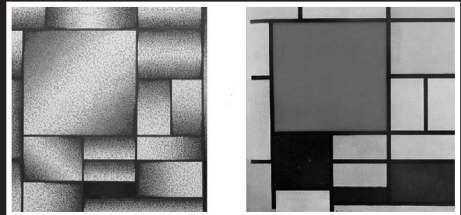
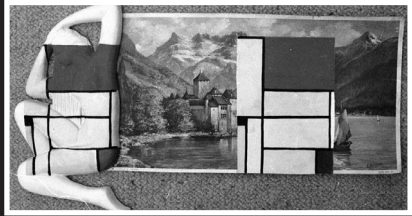


Fig 08
"Cubist" interpretation of
Mondrian Composition,
Belgrade 1972

A decade later when I became interested in copy and copying, in addition to Harbingers I also did numerous copies of modern/abstract art, usually over some already existing reproduction as its background.

Fig 09
Two copies of Mondrian,
Belgrade 1980



Among those were a number of Mondrian's like these early ones from 1980-82. Unlike the early copies of Harbingers, these copies from modern art were usually smaller than the originals, implicitly recognizing that copy is a "different animal" than the original. While an original stands for itself, copy is its representation, thus having the properties of a symbol. And in case of a symbol, its dimensions are often of secondary importance.



Fig 10
PM copy, 1980



Fig 11
Two copies of Mondrian (Nike),
Belgrade 1981



Fig 12
Two copies of Mondrian,
Belgrade 1982



Fig 13
PM copy,
Belgrade 1982

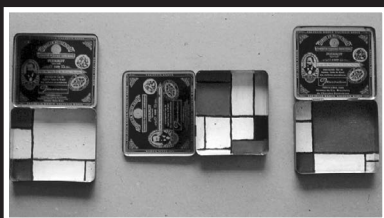


Fig 14
PM three copies,
cigarette boxes, 1982

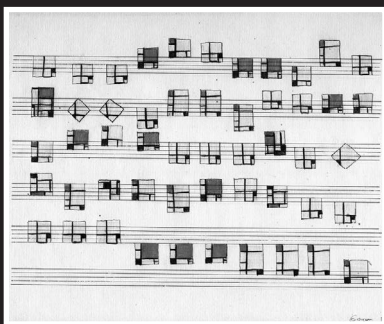
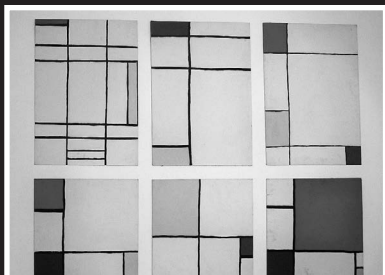


Fig 15
Mondrian composition,
Belgrade 1982

These straightforward copies on cardboard are from a series of "bad paintings", intentionally painted in a clumsy and unprofessional way.

Fig 16
PM six bad copies,
Belgrade 1982



When in 1982 I came to the US, I continued making copies on various backgrounds like these two versions of the same Mondrian in the context of different framed pictures.



Fig 17
PM copy (with photograph),
New York 1982



Fig 18
PM copy (with Duchamp),
New York 1982

Within this "Parisian" street scene which I found at a Cambridge yard sale, Mondrian appears as a mural . An interesting detail regarding this painting is its signature. It seems to be three letter initials "IME" that in my first language (Serbo-Croatian) reads "NAME". As if it somehow anticipated questions regarding the identity and authorship in relation to copy that I became aware of a couple of years later. And Name sounds like an interesting pseudonym which, for some reason, I never used.

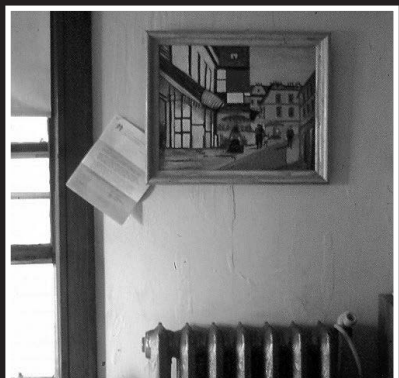


Fig 19
Mondrian mural,
Cambridge 1983



Fig 19a
Mondrian mural (detail),
Cambridge 1983

Although, while in the US I was staying in Cambridge, from time to time I would travel to NY and spend a few days at Tom Otterness' studio. This is how these copies of Mondrian came about which at some point in March 1983 I took to Washington DC for the exhibition "The Ritz" organized by Colab NY an WPA -Washington in an abundant hotel. While there, I managed to paint a Mondrian mural on one of the hotel corridor walls.

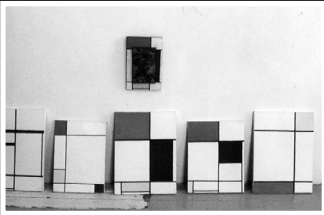


Fig 20
Tom Otterness' studio,
New York 1983



Fig 21
"The Ritz", group exhibition,
Washington DC 1983

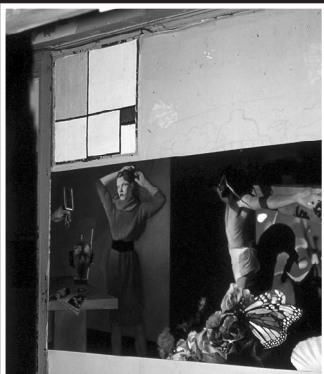


Fig 22
"The Ritz",
group exhibition,
Washington DC 1983

As mentioned in the beginning, during my Computer Graphics course at MIT, as part of my project "Electronic I wrote programs that would generate well-known abstract works like this Mondrian triptych. Interestingly, I found this Polaroid photo of the identical series but made as real, physical paintings, most likely on wood panel. Now I am not sure which came first.

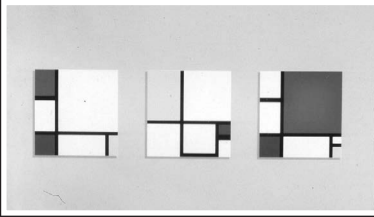


Fig 23
PM three electronic copies,
Arch-Mach, MIT Cambridge 1983

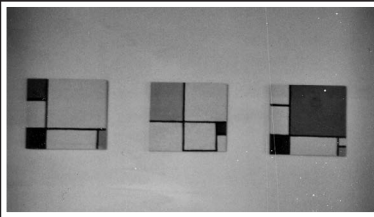


Fig 24
PM three painted copies,
Polaroid photo, Cambridge 1983

While staying at Tom's studio, I would also make copies on plaster casts of his work like these three shown here.



After posting the story, I got this note from Tom:

Fig 25
Tom Otterness' studio,
New York 1984

"I have just resurfaced after a long journey down a rabbit hole in my phone. It was full of memories and artifacts. Hard to tell which were less real than the other. Flattered to be included in this wobbly world of my most recent neural reconstructions. Loved seeing Mondrian in Stanton St... I'm left looking in the wrong end of the telescope of our past lives together. Really not a bad view in any case. Also loved your pic of the horse and wagon. I saw a donkey harnessed up to the rear end of a pickup truck in Mexico on a trip in the 80s."

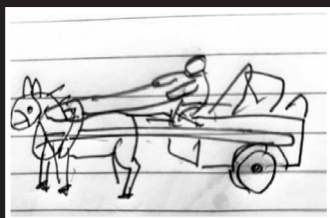


Fig 25a
Tom Otterness drawing,
New York 2021

Interestingly, these days going through some paper left-overs I noticed this piece of café napkin from our lunch together a couple of years ago. Who knows why I saved it, except to be used in this story.



Fig 25b
Café Sabarsky paper napkin,
fragment,
New York 2018

From the beginning, the main source for all these copies of modern art were reproductions from books and catalogs. In essence, these were copies of reproductions. However, when three years later I did a public demonstration "how to copy Mondrian" in the National Museum in Belgrade, it was the first copy after Harbingers I did standing in front of the original and my first copy of modern work of art painted in this way. I was told that first I had to write a letter to the museum director to get permission to do a copy. After getting a positive reply, on Dec. 23 1983 I came to the museum with all the necessary equipment. According to the permission,

dimensions of my copy could not be the same as the original (45x45cm). So I got the 44x44cm stretcher and then my friend Raša Todosijević, who was a more experienced painter, helped me to stretch on it a kitchen towel (instead of regular canvas), which I then painted with white. I don't remember why I didn't use regular canvas. Probably the towel was simply at hand and was the right size. On the day of the event, a few of my friends came to watch and Slobodan Mijušković brought some of his art history students to what became a public demonstration "How to Copy Mondrian". It is perhaps worth mentioning that my decision to copy Mondrian publicly had nothing to do with this particular painting. It so happened that it was this Mondrian that was in the Belgrade Museum collection and displayed publicly. In fact, it could have been any other abstract painting that would make obvious the absurdity of copying it.

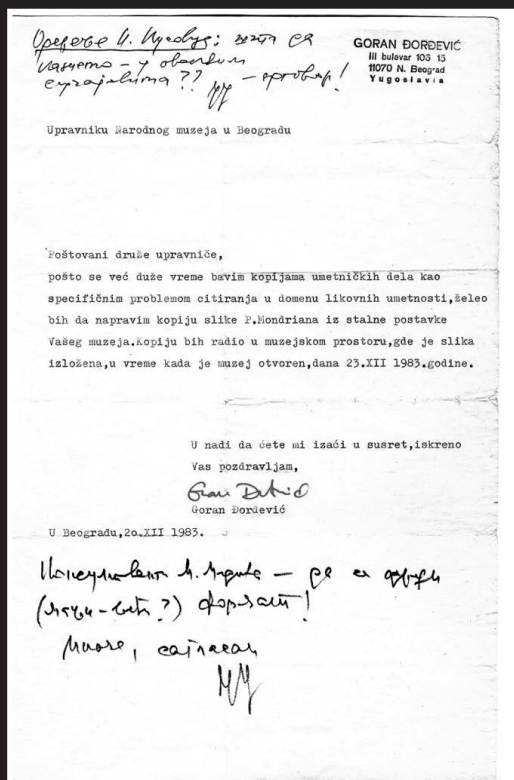


Fig 26
Letter for
permission to
copy Mondrian,
Belgrade 1983

Fig 27
How to copy Mondrian,
public demonstration,
day 1, December 23, 1983

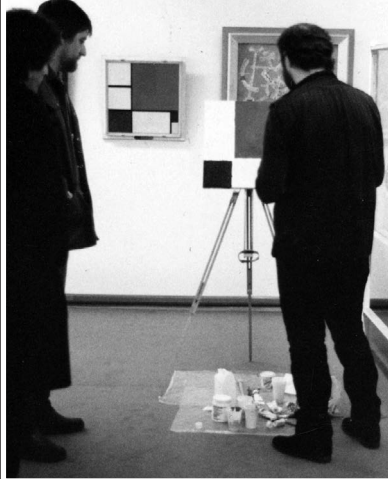


Fig 28
How to copy Mondrian,
public demonstration,
day 1, December 23, 1983



Fig 28a
How to copy Mondrian,
public demonstration,
day 1, December 23, 1983

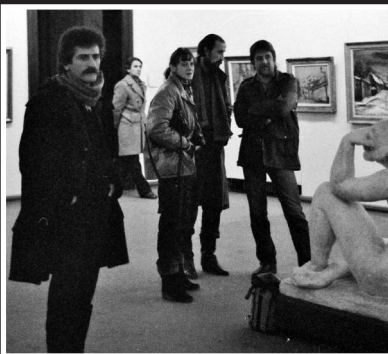


Fig 29
How to copy Mondrian,
public demonstration,
day 2, December 24, 1983



Since I didn't finish the painting that day, I had to come back the next morning. This time there was nobody there to watch except the museum guard. At some point when I was finally finishing the painting, the guard came to me to take a closer look. He was curious why of all these more interesting paintings in the room I selected to copy this simplest one. I didn't know what to say and answered that I happened to be a beginner, with not much experience in painting and decided to start to learn with this one. He nodded with sympathy and gave me a friendly tap on my shoulder. This might have been a "wise guy" reply, but in essence it was true, back then I was pretty much an inexperienced painter, in other words – an amateur.



Fig 30
How to copy Mondrian,
public demonstration,
day 2, December 24, 1983

Only a few days later, this painting was exhibited for the first time. It was included in the exhibition "Copies" organized by Mladen Stilinović at the PM Gallery in Zagreb.

Fig 31
Exhibition "Copies",
handwritten invitation
by Mladen Stilinović,
PM Gallery,
Zagreb January 6, 1984

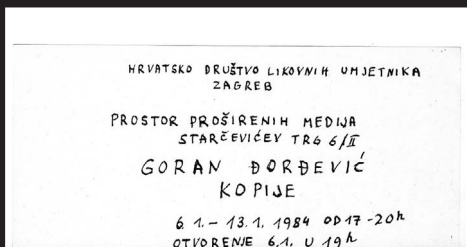


Fig 31a
Exhibition "Copies",
PM Gallery,
Zagreb 1984
(Mladen Stilinović)

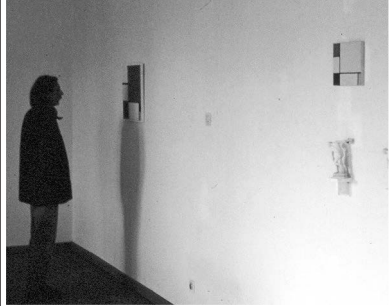


Fig 32
Exhibition "Copies",
PM Gallery, Zagreb 1984

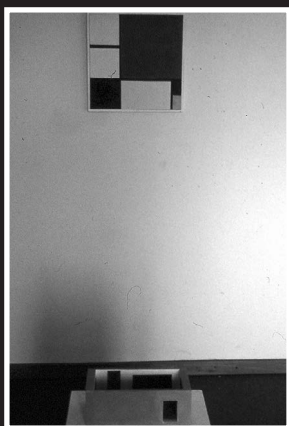
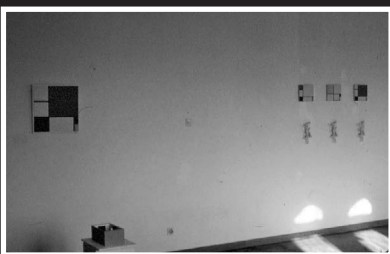


Fig 33a
Exhibition "Copies",
press announcement,
PM Gallery, Zagreb 1984

Fig 33
Exhibition "Copies",
PM Gallery, Zagreb 1984

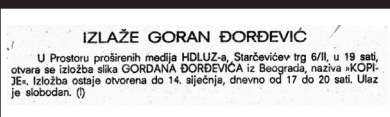
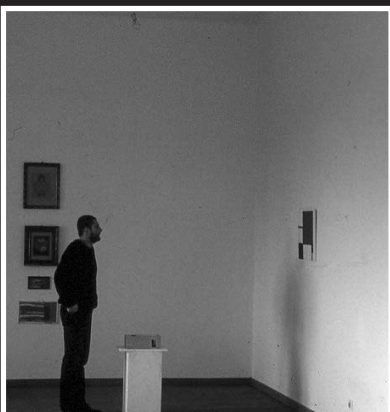
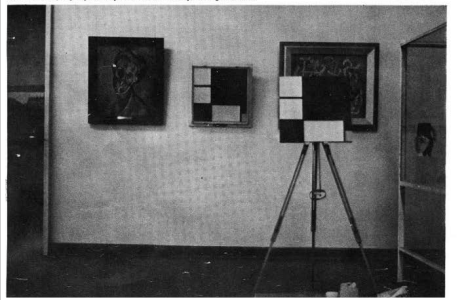


Fig 34
Exhibition "Copies",
PM Gallery,
Zagreb 1984
(Željko Kipke)



Još uvijek sam bio uvjeren u konačnu pobjedu kulturne "šlave umjetnosti" nad Tradicijom, Akademijom, Institucijom, Estetikom. Vre-
menje umjetnosti svedene na isti format i istu tehniku, i to su greve kopije koje sam uradio. Po-
sebo sam je bilo zanimljivo kopiranje radova iz
reprodukcija imenitenih medija kopije su posredstvom
ne. Čak mi se da postoji više kopija ne bi trebalo
primijetiti kao originala.

Oran Dordvil, *Kopiranje Mondriana u Narodnom muzeju u Beogradu, 1983.*



Present state of the 1983 copy is far from perfect. There are visible cracks on the canvas and on the frame, while

on the back side are visible dark spots most likely from fungus.

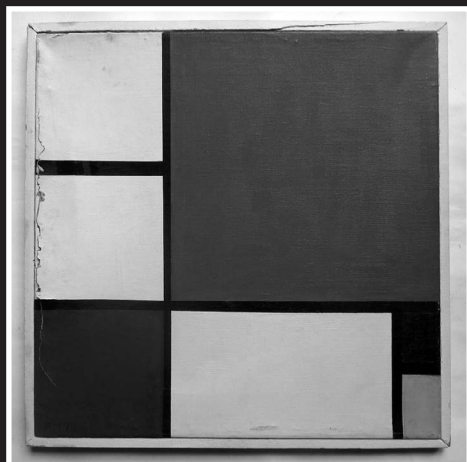


Fig 37
Composition II,
copy (front),
Belgrade 1983,
photo 2021

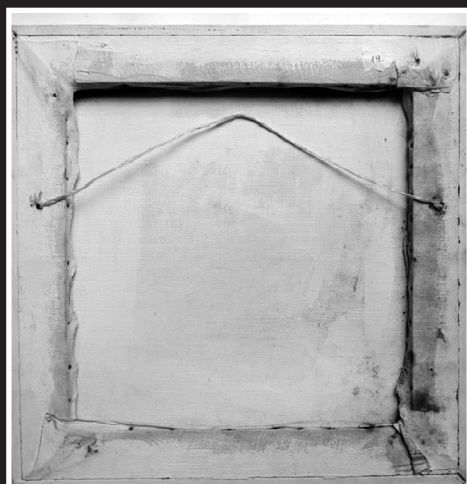


Fig 38
Composition II,
copy (back),
Belgrade 1983,
photo 2021

However, for me a bit puzzling is its signature: PM '83. On the original are the same initials but the year is '29. On the other hand, this painting was painted in 1983, thus '83 would make sense, but I couldn't find my signature even on the back, although I had painted it. And, as far as I remember, copies of Mondrian signed with his initials but dated after his death for the first time appeared in 1986 at the Walter Benjamin's lecture "Mondrian '63-'96" on which there were not one but two copies of the *Composition II*. Today I do not remember if I landed this copy for the lecture or both those copies were produced by someone later for the lecture as the other four.

Fig 39
Composition II,
copy (front-detail),
Belgrade 1983,
photo 2021

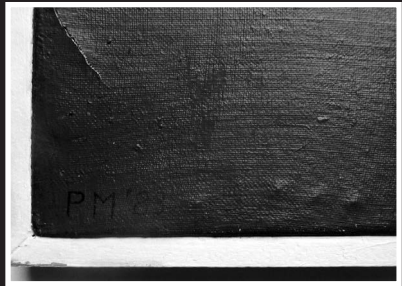
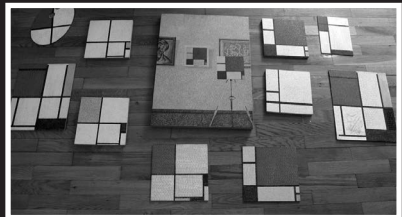


Fig 40
Pointillist copies of Mondrian,
Belgrade 1984-85



When I finally left the US that year (1984), I took with me some of the works including the Mondrian mural. A couple of years later, I got a phone call from Tom. He told me that he had had his first major sale and that in cases like this it is a custom to use a fraction of what he got to buy works from friends. And then he told me he would like the Mondrian mural for \$1500, but that I should bring it to him in person. This was his way of inviting me to come to NY and this is what I did and I spent a couple of months there in the fall of 1987.



Fig 41
In Tom Otterness' studio
with Mondrian Mural,
New York 1987

Before leaving for NY, I decided to make a copy of this painting. Now it was not only the Mondrian that I copied but the entire street scene. When I got back from the NY, I made a larger version of the same painting.



Fig 42
Belgrade apartment,
living room, 1987

It is in front of this larger version of the Mondrian mural that this group portrait of members of the Laibach group and my daughter Luna was taken. They were in Belgrade for a concert and came (on a public bus) to New Belgrade for a visit. An interesting footnote regarding this photo. After I picked-up this and other pictures at the photo shop, I went to a nearby supermarket and incidentally forgot the envelope with the photos at the checkout. When I came back and asked the cashier for the envelope, she appeared a bit nervous and called the manager. Soon after, he came holding the envelope and accompanied by a policeman. I was then escorted outside on the street and questioned by a couple of po-

licemen about the photos and my identity. In the end, they handed me back the envelope. Looking at this picture today, I could see why it would have been unusual to a cashier or policemen, since it looks a bit strange to me as well.



Fig 43
Members of Laibach group
with Luna in front of
Mondrian Mural (3rd version),
Belgrade apartment, 1987

And, unlike the copies of Harbingers, back then it didn't cross my mind that my copy of Mondrian would ever be more important than the original. Even when a copy of this same painting but signed with Mondrian's initials but dated long after his death began to appear since 1986 in Benjamin's lectures and various exhibitions. Probably the most interesting one was in the National Museum when the 1929 original, my copy from 1983 and copies from Benjamin's lecture appeared together in 2014 in the same exhibition.

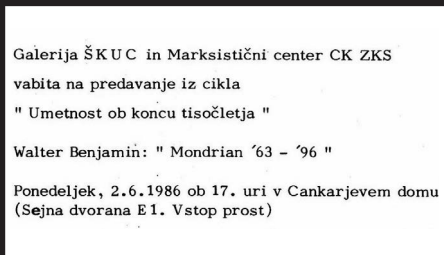


Fig 44
Walter Benjamin
"Mondrian '63-'95" lecture,
invitation card (back),
Cankarjev dom,
Ljubljana 1986

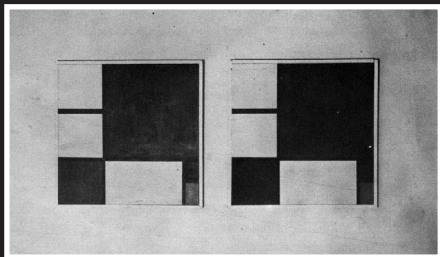


Fig 44a
Walter Benjamin
"Mondrian '63-'95" lecture,
invitation card (front)
Cankarjev dom,
Ljubljana 1986



Fig 45
Walter Benjamin
"Mondrian '63-'95" lecture,
Cankarjev dom,
Ljubljana 1986

Since I was in the audience at the 1986 Ljubljana lecture, I took some pictures that were later often reproduced, while I saw the 1987 lecture in Belgrade when it was broadcast in the cultural program "TV Gallery". Interestingly, I just learned that the most recent Benjamin's lecture took place in the Garage Museum in June 2021.



Fig 46
Walter Benjamin
"Mondrian '63-'95" lecture,
TV Gallery, Belgrade 1987

And this was a recent invitation to Benjamin from Moscow:

*Mr. Walter Benjamin,
On behalf of Garage Museum of Contemporary Art Academic programs, we invite you to give a lecture titled "Mondrian '63-'96" on 18th of June 2021 at the educational center of the museum. Our teacher and curator of Garage MCA Snejana Krasteva has offered to hold a meeting with you as part of the final lesson on exhibition activities. The students of our curatorial master program will be happy to see you as a guest and listen to your thoughts on the nature of copy in art history.*

Garage Museum of Contemporary Art Academic programs is an innovative educational system for future curators, art managers, artists and other professionals of cultural and creative field in Russia and abroad. "Curatorial practices in contemporary art" master program is aimed at developing theoretical knowledge and practical skills among students, inter-institutional and international cooperation, increasing work ethics and educational potential.

It is important for us to organize events and lessons with outstanding experts like you, so we will be glad if you will agree to come to us and show such an honor. Hope that meeting young professionals will be interesting for you too.

Team of Garage Museum of Contemporary Art Academic programs, 10.06.2021 Moscow



Fig 47
Walter Benjamin
"Mondrian '63-'95" lecture,
Garage Museum,
Moscow 2021

In addition to the Benjamin's lecture, these strange copies of Mondrian appeared at numerous exhibitions beginning with "International Exhibition of Modern Art" reinterpreting the 1913 Armory Show. It took place 1986 in the Salon of the MoCAB, in Belgrade and ŠKUC gallery in Ljubljana, although on the catalogs and invitation cards it is printed "New York 1993".





NEW YORK
1993

INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF MODERN ART

Fig 48
"International Exhibition of
Modern Art, New York 1993",
catalog,
Salon of the MoCAB,
Belgrade 1986

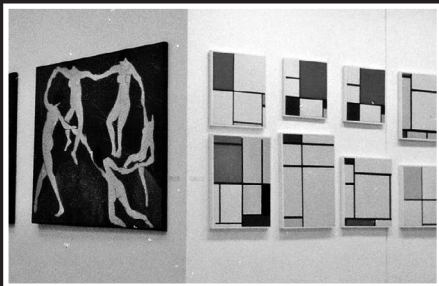


Fig 49
"International Exhibition of
Modern Art, New York 1993",
installation view,
Salon of the MoCAB,
Belgrade 1986

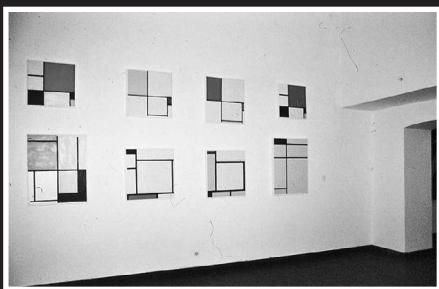


Fig 50
"International Exhibition of
Modern Art, New York 1993",
installation view,
SKUC Gallery,
Ljubljana 1986

cosseted corsets, are the catchiest, but Lisa Bowman's hardcore boxes and Letraest soaps, Julia Kidd's child abuse triptychs, Gary Bachman's clapping wall piece, Alix Pearlstein's airbags, and Candyso's video make their points too. Through February 15, fiction/nonfiction, 21 Mercer Street, 941-8611. (Levin)

→ **"MONDRIAN '63-'96":** Authoritessness strikes again. According to the announcement, Katherine Dreier will lecture at the opening of this exhibition of posthumous time-traveling Mondrians at 7 p.m. on February 13. Really? Let's just say it could be a posthistoric occasion. February 13 through 22, AC-Project Room, 580 Broadway, at Prince Street, 226-7271. (Levin)

Dance

FELD BALLETS/NY: Feld opens his five-

"THE NEW GHETTO ESTHETIC": A lecture by Jacquie Jones, editor of *Black Film Review*, precedes two prime examples—the West Coast *Boyz n the Hood* and its East Coast analogue, *Straight Out of Brooklyn*. February 16, American Museum of the Moving Image, Thirty-fifth Avenue at 36th Street, Astoria, 718-784-0077. (Hoberman)

WILD RIVER: The ever-agonized Montgomery Clift brings New Deal idealism to an obscure region of Tennessee in Elia Kazan's curiously underappreciated, unaccountably wide-screen and technicolor saga of the TVA. Released in 1960, the movie carries intimations of the New Frontier as well. Lee Remick gives Clift's ambivalence some focus. February 15, Walter Reade Theater, 165 West 65th Street, 875-5600. (Hoberman)

Music

Fig 51
"Mondrian '63-'96",
by Kim Levin, Voice Choices,
Village Voice New York 1992

After reading the article, Kim Levin e-mailed me this: "...your Remembering Mondrian is wonderful! It's an autobiography, a shaggy dog story, a terrific and inclusive expose of your work and Mondrian's and Benjamin's posthumous careers. I loved reading it and ended up with a smile on my face without realizing it. I think you should send it to everyone and every institution who owns or has exhibited your work, from the Whitney on. It's the ultimate post-pandemic Mondrian tale."

Fig 52
"Mondrian '63-'96",
AC-Project Room,
New York 1992



Fig 53
"Sense of Order",
group exhibition participants,
curated by Zdenka Badovinac,
Modern Gallery, Ljubljana 1996



Fig 54
"What is Modern Art?",
Künstlerhaus Bethanien,
Berlin 2006

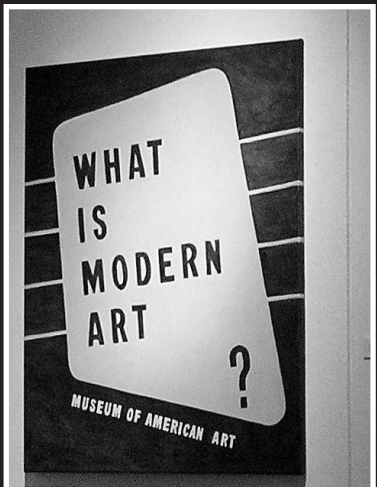




Fig 55
 Piet Mondrian – “Recent Works”,
 part of the WMA? exhibition,
 Galerie 35, Berlin 2006

Appearances of these copies of Mondrian, signed with his initials and dated after his death are very unusual events in many ways. It is clear that they came after my public copying of Mondrian and in this series are included not one but two copies of the same painting as noticed by Benjamin in the lecture. There were even open or implicit associations of my name with these paintings. Back then and now, I would say that associating any other name than Mondrian with these paintings would change their basic propositions. They should be accepted and interpreted the way they appear in public and in the primary documents. They definitely represent a *freak occurrence* as my friend Kim Levin would say. Even today, I have no clear understanding what might be all the interpretations and consequences of these kinds of phenomena. But one thing is clear, those works do not

and could not belong to a story called Art History.



Fig 56
 “Art in the Age of
 Intellectual Property”,
 HMKW, Dortmund 2008



Fig 57
 Benjamin-Mondrian at
 “Lecture Performance”,
 Kölnischer Kunstverein,
 Köln 2009



Fig 58
Benjamin-Mondrian
at "Lecture Performance",
Kuća legata, Belgrade 2010

Throughout this period of the 1990s and early 2000, it seems the only Mondrians exhibited in public were those signed with his name and dated after his death. A kind of painting that for the first time appeared as a theme in the Walter Benjamin's lecture in Ljubljana 1986. Perhaps it would be worth mentioning here the 2000 exhibition Aspects/Positions at which these Mondrian paintings were also exhibited. What makes this exhibition interesting is the only case that I know of where to the name of Mondrian my name was added as well, both on the label next to the works and in the catalog.



Fig 59
"Fifty Years of Art in Central Europe 1949-1999",
Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung
Ludwig, Wien 2000

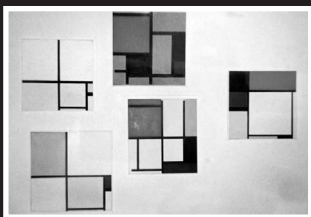
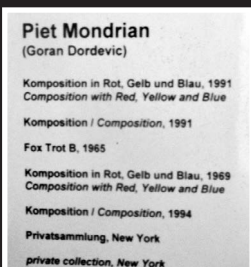


Fig 60
Piet Mondrian at the
"Fifty Years of Art in Central
Europe 1949-1999", Museum
moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig,
Wien 2000

Fig 60a
Piet Mondrian at the
"Fifty Years of Art in Central
Europe 1949-1999", labels,
Museum moderner Kunst
Stiftung Ludwig, Wien 2000



The catalog illustration is particularly interesting, since it says: Piet Mondrian (Goran Dordević) – *Komposition* 1971. This is most likely the year written on the canvas, and by adding my name to the label it gives confusing information since I began making copies eight years later (1979).

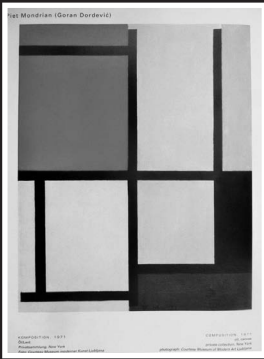


Fig 61
Piet Mondrian at the
"Fifty Years of Art in
Central Europe 1949–1999",
catalog page,
Museum moderner Kunst
Stiftung Ludwig, Wien 2000

As already mentioned above, exhibiting paintings dated after the death of its author is a pretty complicating issue. And on top of that, having a lecturer appearing many years after his death talking about these kind of paintings makes things even more confusing. Including them within a story such as Art History, based on uniqueness of its characters and artifact, is not possible. However, it might make some sense if these kinds of events are understood as having certain properties characteristic of the theater. While a character, like Benjamin, could be this way handled easier it is a bit more complicated for the artifacts/paintings, since it seems there is no precedent for cases like this as Benjamin already noticed in his lecture. The entire construction of museum and history would collapse. Since such paintings could not be included in such a story, there are two options for them. Either never show them in public or find another kind of a story, not based on uniqueness and originality, in which they will make sense and could play a certain role. Anybody can make a copy for various reasons: substitution for an original, forgery, learning to paint, or one of these Mondrian paintings dated after his death, and in each of these cases it will play its specific role. In the case of Mondrian, and for that matter

any work that is placed in the art history context, the meaningful date that could be attached to it should not be what is written on it, but its first public appearance. Also, if it doesn't make sense to attach the notion of an author to a copy, it is still possible for a copy to have the notion of ownership attached to it. The work itself as a physical object could belong to someone and be an object of transaction as a gift or commercially.



Fig 62
Chelsea flea market,
New York 1990's

At this point, I thought I should mention another, very strange episode related to Mondrian during my time in New York in the 1990s. During those years, I would regularly go to Chelsea flea markets around 6th Avenue and 25th St. One Saturday morning in May 1994 while browsing through the market, on one vendor's table I noticed a small, framed aquarelle portrait of a serious looking man with a mustache and wearing glasses. Even



through the glass, I could see it was not a reproduction.

Fig 62
Mondrian self-portrait (?)
Chelsea flea market,
New York 1994

My first thought was: who would like to have such a serious face on the wall? But then the word "self-portrait" crossed my mind, since in previous years I was interested in self-portraits and, as Adrian Kovacs, did some myself. While looking particularly at his eyes, a possibility that this could be a self-portrait appeared quite convincing to me. I managed to negotiate the price and

got it for \$20. While continuing walking through the market, I kept thinking whose self-portrait might be the picture I was carrying in the plastic bag.



Fig 62
Mondrian watercolor self-portrait (?),
found at Chelsea flea market,
New York 1994

At some point, the name Mondrian appeared in my head. In fact, this was the only name that kept coming to my mind although at that point I didn't remember seeing his photo with a mustache. Of course, at first I dismissed it as a pure fantasy, since the very idea seemed impossible to me. Even if this was Mondrian's self-portrait, I could not imagine that of all the people in the world it could come into my hands. During the next few days, after going through some Mondrian monographs, seeing

his pictures with a mustache, I gradually became convinced that this was indeed a Mondrian's self-portrait.



Fig 63
"Fragments", apartment exhibition,
Belgrade 2020

Then, for more than a year and after numerous letters and faxes, I was unsuccessfully trying to find someone that would agree with me. When I finally realized that this was becoming a failed endeavor, I gave up. For the

next few years, I kept it safe in the bank, but then it became too expensive and I took it with me. Today, twenty five years later nothing has changed. Nevertheless, now more than ever, I think this is indeed Mondrian's watercolor self-portrait painted on paper without a previous pencil sketch, probably around the early 1920s. Since I am so far the only one who sees this, it might sound crazy, but I started believing that it was in fact meant only for me, either as a gift or a warning for everything I was doing with his work. In any case, all these years I have kept it safe in a folder and have occasionally looked at it. The only time it was included in an exhibition was the ongoing "Fragments", where it was hanging above the doorway, although not a watercolor but a color photo-copy from the time I found it, placed in its original frame. Regardless of whether I am right or wrong, I thought I owe him at least to tell this story and show the

picture.

Now, back to the story of the *Composition II* and its copies...

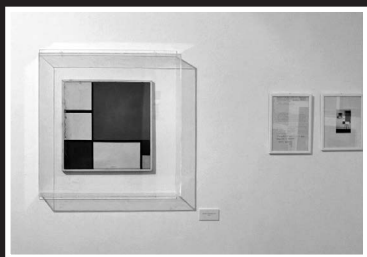


Fig 64
Copy of the *Composition II* (1983)
at the "Against Art" exhibition,
Salon of the MoCAB, Belgrade 2011

As far as I know, copies of Mondrian that I made and exhibited in the 1980s including the copy of *Composition II* for the first time reappeared in public at the 2011 exhibition "Against Art" at the MSU Gallery curated by Branko Dimitrijević, Jelena Vesić and Dejan Sretenović.

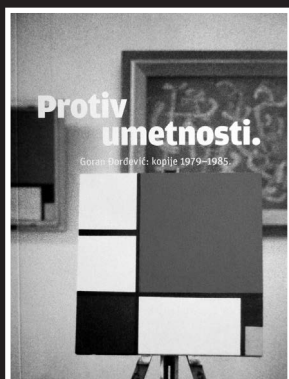


Fig 65
"Against Art", exhibition catalog,
Salon of the MoCAB, Belgrade 2011



Fig 66
Copy the *Composition II* (1983),
installation, "Against Art" exhibition,
Salon of the MoCAB, Belgrade 2011



Fig 67
"Against Art" exhibition,
installation view Salon
of the MoCAB, Belgrade 2011

During the exhibition, Jelena Vesić held several guided tours that would begin with the copy of *Composition II*. "In the entrance part of the gallery, there is a statement of the exhibition "Against Art" and an iconic work by Goran Đorđević from 1983, known as *Copying Mondrian in the National Museum*, which, figuratively speaking, can also stand for an artistic portrait. A museum retrospective genre usually involves the setting of an introductory scene or "prologue" that announces the story of the *artist-and-his-work*. Such a setting usually includes a photograph, a portrait or a self-portrait of the artist by which it is interesting to remember and some thought or "memo-citation" that we should keep in mind while watching the exhibition. In this retrospective, however, there is a brutal statement against art and one somewhat failed copy of Mondrian in those speaking positions, accompanied by modest documentation on the copying project.



Fig 67a
Guided tour by Jelena Vesić,
exhibition "Against Art", Sa-
lon MoCAB, Belgrade 2011

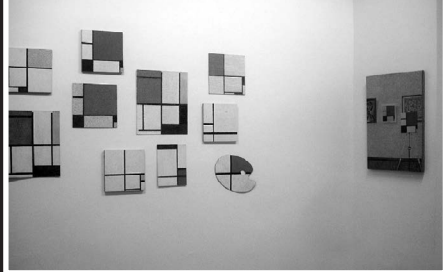


Fig 68
 "Against Art" exhibition,
 installation view,
 City Gallery, Ljubljana 2013

Exhibition "Piet Mondrian – The case of Composition II" 2014



Fig 69
 "Piet Mondrian – The Case
 of Composition II",
 National Museum,
 Belgrade 2014

Perhaps the most important event in the history of the *Composition II* was the 2014 exhibition "Piet Mondrian – The case of Composition II" curated by Jelena Dregenc and Simona Ognjanović. As Dregenc noticed "On its arrival in Belgrade, the painting was totally marginalized, it was not exhibited or written about. *Composition II* was included in the permanent exhibition of the National Museum no sooner than 1952." While Dregenc was primarily interested in the history of the *Composition II* original, Ognjanović did an excellent and detailed presentation of the post WW2 reception and interpretation of this work and its more recent reflections primarily within the Belgrade art scene in the 1990s.



Fig 70
 "Piet Mondrian – The Case
 of Composition II",
 exhibition catalog (front),
 National Museum, Belgrade 2014

On the covers of the catalog two images of the *Composition II* are reproduced, its front and back side. While I was very familiar with the front image, it was a bit surprising to see the back side. Namely, back in late 1980s I would occasionally, especially on rainy days, take my little daughter Luna to the National Museum, not so much to see the pictures but to wander around empty museum galleries. Most of the time, there were no visitors at all, except us. And you could not see any guard. So while Luna would run around I would follow her, occasionally taking a very close look at some of the paintings. Since in those days the hanging was an old-fashioned technique on two ropes attached to the ceiling, in some cases I would pull a painting and flip it around and look at its back. I remember doing this with Monet's "Cathedral" and, of course, with *Composition II* I copied a few years earlier. What makes thing interesting is that for many years I remembered that on the middle part of the wooden frame there was, handwritten in black capital letters: MONDRIAN. As one could see from this reproduction, on that place is in fact the word COMPOSITION. Almost thirty years later, I found out that my memory was wrong, it simply didn't correspond to the

fact. I don't have to say that took me a while to accept this, although somewhere in the back of my mind, the word MONDRIAN is still written.

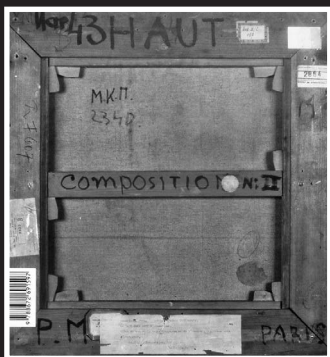


Fig 70a
"Piet Mondrian – The Case of Composition II", exhibition catalog (back), National Museum, Belgrade 2014

Composition II by Piet Mondrian, painted in 1929 in his Paris studio, was donated in 1931 to the newly-opened Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade, together with a number of works by Dutch contemporary artists. The

initiative for the gift came from Dirk Merens, the honorary general consul of Yugoslavia in Amsterdam and founder of the Friends of Yugoslavia Association which formed a Committee for the Promotion of Dutch Art in Yugoslavia. This Committee selected forty-two that included *Composition II*, the only abstract painting in this collection. The selection of this work was influenced by Jan Sluyters and Simon Maris, friends of Mondrian and Committee members. As part of the Belgrade Museum collection, this painting was completely ignored. There are indications that for many years it didn't even have an inventory number, since apparently it was not considered to be a work of art. It took two decades (1952) for the *Composition II* to be finally included in the permanent installation of the National Museum. Even then, its status was not entirely clear. When in 1957 a group of artists were preparing the Didactic Exhibition, a traveling educational show about modern art had asked Belgrade Museum to lend them *Composition II*, they were a bit surprised when one day a postman brought them a regular parcel with a Mondrian painting in it. It seems that it was exhibited in Zagreb only and did not travel to other destinations.



Fig 71
 "Diet Mondrian – The Case of *Composition II*",
 exhibition catalog (detail),
 National Museum, Belgrade 2014

Nevertheless, regardless of how *Composition II* came to Belgrade, it was one of the earliest works by Mondrian to enter into a museum collection. It was Société Antonyme in New York that in the early 1920s acquired two Mondrian neoplastic-paintings shown in the 1926 exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum. Ten years later, Alfred Barr included them in the Cubism and Abstract Art exhibition, as and thus placing Mondrian in the history of modern art. Interestingly, although Mondrian had worked most of his life in Paris, no one museum had

Mondrian in the collection for many years. One evening, a few years ago, I was at the opening dinner sitting next to an interesting madame from the Parisian cultural establishment. During our conversation, I asked her about the Mondrian case. She said "Of course, this is a well-known story". She remembered that in the late 1950s, Jean Cassou the director of the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris, realizing that the museum should finally have a Mondrian in its collection, found one painting that was available. He asked Andre Malraux, then the Minister of Culture, permission to acquire it. Malraux asked Cassou to first bring the painting to his office and leave it there. After two weeks Cassou came back and asked Malraux about his decision. Malraux said "No". And that was the end of the story. It took the next twenty years for the first Mondrian to enter the Parisian museum. When Pontus Hulten became the first director of the newly opened Beaubourg center, in 1978 he managed to acquire the first Mondrian for the museum collection. Ironically, it was the 1942 painting titled "New

York City", painted in New York. Thus, after the Modern Canon, the first Mondrian came to Paris from New York as well.

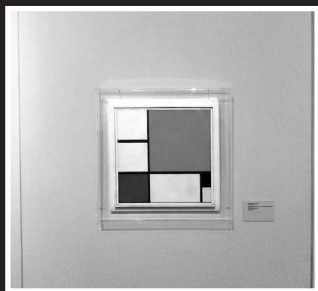


Fig 72
Piet Mondrian – *Composition II*,
1929 original, installation view,
National Museum, Belgrade 2014

As stated in the catalog "...this exhibition primarily represents another form of the institutional and curatorial reception and recontextualization of Mondrian's work. Furthermore, it is certainly close to a tendency that has been omnipresent in the past decade that envisages repetition, on various grounds of important exhibitions. Nevertheless, the matter here is somewhat different, since at this exposition several exhibitions and projects ensembles are linked directly and that the selection like

the whole exhibition, has stemmed directly from research of the case of *Composition II*. The dichotomy between experience and memory will always be stimulating for finding new ways of framing something already framed. If possible, that the frame itself remains visible. At the same time, it again faces us with and returns us to the knowledge that is impossible to repeat an event.

However, is that even necessary?" (Simona Ognjanović)



Fig 73
Piet Mondrian – *Composition II*,
(works by Goran Đorđević), installation
view, National Museum, Belgrade 2014

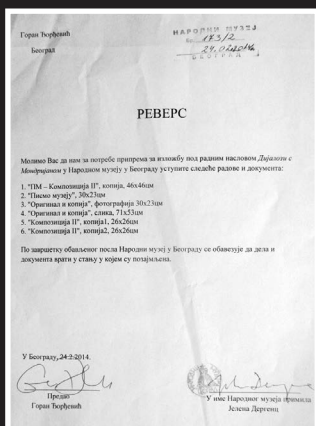


Fig 74
Receipt for landed works
by Goran Đorđević, Belgrade 2014

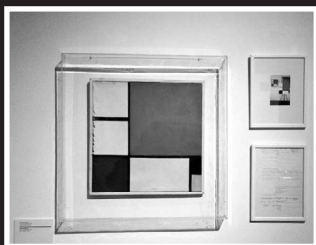


Fig 75
Composition II, 1983 copy by
Goran Đorđević, National Museum 2014

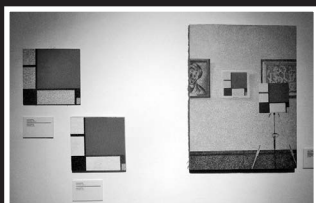


Fig 76
Composition II, 198 pointillist copies
by Goran Đorđević,
National Museum 2014

"We believe that through all these individual stories, albeit chronologically very distant, a good platform has been created that enables the critical contemplation of the institution of art, the institution of art history, but above all, of the museum itself. The intersecting of the realities which define all those individual positions is framed by our current museological and extra-museological reality, in place of which we hope to see a new meaning appear. In fact, we see that entire complex network of narrative lines as stimulating for translating that museological reality into a space in which values and positions are, at least temporarily, not fixed but rather where different artistic and counter-artistic formulas are confronted, into a space in which they, their relations, as well as our role in creating the meaning and live domain of art will be considered critically. By investigating the manifold ambivalence of meaning of work of art, a museum exhibit, but also art as a complex symbolic system, we wanted to provide space for contemplating the role of museums in creating and legitimizing values and artistic positions, their potential relation to live, contemporary art and culture, precisely today when museums are fighting for visibility and relevance in the local context".

(Simona Ognjanović, exhibition catalog)



Fig 77
"Piet Mondrian – The Case of
Composition II", installation view,
National Museum, Belgrade 2014

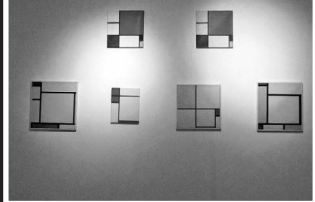


Fig 78
 "Piet Mondrian – The Case of
 Composition II", installation view,
 works from the Walter Benjamin's
 lecture, National Museum, Belgrade 2014



Fig 78a
 "Piet Mondrian – The Case of
 Composition II", installation view,
 National Museum, Belgrade 2014

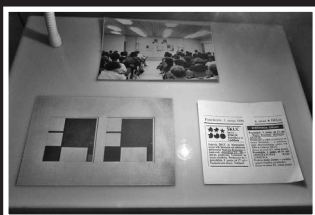


Fig 78b
 "Piet Mondrian – The Case of
 Composition II", installation view,
 National Museum, Belgrade 2014

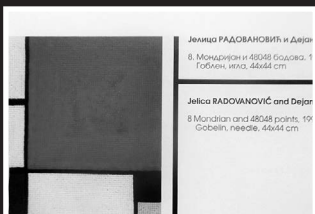
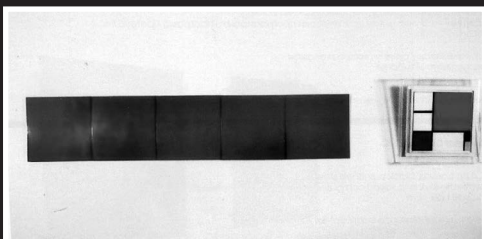


Fig 79
 Jelica Radovanović i Dejan Anđelković
 – Mondrian and 48048 points,
 needlepoint 1993

These works were realized in relation to *Composition II* during a series of exhibitions "Experiences from Memory", curated by Irina Subotić and Gordana Stanišić in the National Museum Belgrade 1995. These installation views were reproduced in the exhibition catalog "Piet Mondrian – The Case of the Composition II" 2014.

Fig 79a
 Nikola Pilipović,
 New Belgrade,
 steel plates 1994



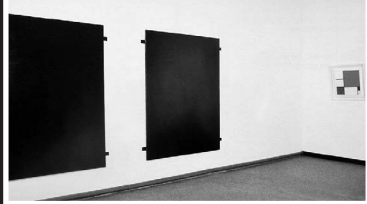


Fig 79b
Aleksandar Dimitrijević,
Mondrian, 1994



Fig 79c
Zoran Naskovski i Dobrivoje
Krgović-Composition I, 1995



Fig 79d
Mrdan Bajić,
Migrations, 1995

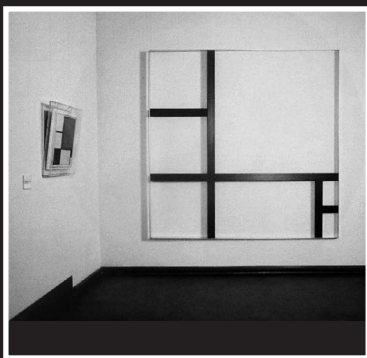


Fig 79e
Veso Sovilj,
Mondrian's window,
aluminum, 1995

PRESS CLIPPING
11000 Beograd, Miroslav Popovica 19, tel. 0117265-620

Predavanje Gorana Dordevića u sklopu izložbe
Pit Mondrian. Slučaj „Kompozicije II“

Umetnost na kopi pejst nišanu

Beograd – „Goran Dordević u Beogradu“, sasvim je iz racionalnog imazio, ali izložba kaže da to danas od 13 sati na prven spustu te institucije održati predavanje u sklopu izložbe Pit Mondrian. Slučaj „Kompozicije II“. Naravno, a ne konvencionalna, učinila je da prvo kopiranje upravo ove Mondrijanove slike Dordević, koji danas živi u Njujorku, izvede baš u periodu svog istraživanja kopija 1979–1985, posle čega ni je više nastupao kao umetnik. Doduše, ovo „kopi“ prešlo ga je tokom njegovih istraživanja u veći umetnički osećanje.

„mali“ restrikciju neki strobnjaci su ocenili upravo kao demonstraciju institucionalne moći što i jeste epigentar Dordevićevih „nestvaralčkih“ istraživanja. U svakom slučaju, zahtev da kopija bude manje veličine od originala istorijska umetnički jedina Veso komentariše kao nešto što narodi na pa-

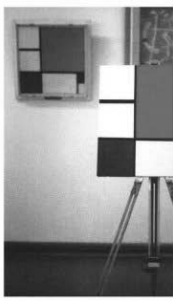
Pseudosubjektiv

Predavanje Gorana Dordevića namenjeno je svim zainteresovanim posetiocima, a pored letre u kojoj su bliže reči istraživanje kopije

Fig 80
“Piet Mondrian – The Case of
Composition II”, press review,
Belgrade 2014



ovo „kao“ prelije ga je tokom njegovih istraživanja u polju umetničkog sistema budući da je u to doba studirao na Elektrotehničkom fakultetu, ali „anater“, što njerna, verovatno, nije usudilo. Inače, javna kopiranje Mondrijanove slike iz kolekcije Narodnog muzeja usledilo je nakon niza njegovih drugih značajnih kopiranih radova, to jest: ložbi, ali je ovaj događaj bio jedan od retkih koji su '80-ih primenjeni. Tadašnjem upravniku Muzeja Dodeviću je srednja pozada pismu u kome kaže: „Poltovani drude upravniho, poito se veđ dade bavim kopiranja umetničkih



dela kao specifičnim oblikom citiranja u domenu umetnosti, jedno bih da napravim kopija slike? Mondrijana iz stalne postavke vašeg Muzeja. Kopija bih radio u muzejskom prostoru gde je slika izložena u vreme kad je Muzej otvoren...“ Zvaničnici Muzeja su dali zeleno svetlo ovom činu, ali su izričitu zapovest da kopija mora biti „za vasinstar: li dva manja od originala“. Ova

Protiv umetnosti

„Izveštaji dela, poređ stalnog izložba i neki stari u umetnosti. Radovi prikazani na ovaj list: 20 tisu umetničkih dela, to su samo starije u umetnosti. Boje crvena, to su starije protiv umetnosti. Međim da je krajnje vreme da se sa umetnosti, jednim adalho stigne kopiranja ta nauka ložbi i harmonizirani otkrije njeno pravo lice rene i postane slobodno“, a eae je tada Dodević javljom svoje listiše Protiv umetnosti 1980. godine

im zainteresovanim posetiocima, a ponekome a koje su bilješke reči iznabavne kopija original - umetnost - nauka. Bice govore i moćima predstava iz upravnih umetničkih delova, zeni u njegovim umetniškim i proizvodnim pismu galija umetnosti, a košćican pismu galija kopije izveštaje da je prav isabavni a umetniški serti listiše, dok su umetniški samo postrobnosti.

modijski zaključak - da je original umek veći od kopije i samo originali imaju smisla, inače bilo na kopiji peje niština. Konkretno dala konceptualne umetnosti su, moglo bi se reći, u konceptualna kritika imala čak prvoklasno postolje, ali i Dodevićevi nepostveni radovi. Recimo, slika „Glasnici apokalipse“ - platno zbog koga je dugo osecno stid izostalo ga imenjači revidelom, a koja je predložio u istraživački rad. Napravio je niz kopija te slike, nijedni elementa, a zatim je pozvao kolege i prijatelje da i oni učestvuju u kopiranju ovog njegovog dela. Ova „slika u procesu“ je upriličena u Dodevićevom stanu na Novom Beogradu a imala je i svoje „avdeko zatvaranje“. U svakom slučaju, to što točino 70-ih i '80-ih Dodevićevi maćani isetaju u polju umetničkog sistema nisu naročito zapuženi do kopiranja Mondrijanove slike, li u Narodnom muzeju samim potvrđuje teze umetnika-amatera u najboljem smislu te reči. Kopija Mondrijanove slike je kao rad imala svoje posebno mesto i na Dodevićevim listišt pod (originalnim) i manifestnim naslovom „Protiv umetnosti“ 1980. u Galeriji SNT i na reperto u istom prostoru 2011. godine.

Zapravo, Goran Dodević je umek svojim izlozbnama stvarljao do iznenađanja je umetnost, ma koliko u umetništva da izmiče krutim institucionalnim okvirima - deo sistema, kao što smo, uprošćeno rećemo, svi dno superkulturologijaparata bez obzira na to što verujemo da samo mi umalki. Sve te konstatacije Dodević je izradio pre više od četiri decenije, a nije bilo podložiti ih u otkazno. Zevide apokaliptično i raskolno tačno.

A. Čuk

When in September 2018, I was traveling to Ljubljana to help hang the “What was Modern Art?” exhibition, I noticed at the Belgrade airport an improvised National Museum display of reproductions from its collection that included *Composition II*.

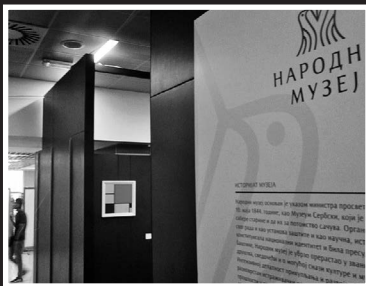
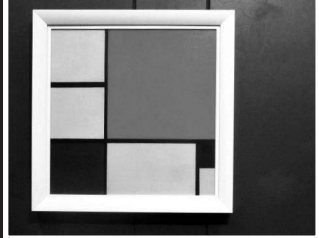


Fig 81
Composition II, reproduction, National Museum display at the Belgrade airport, September 2018



Fig 81a
Composition II, reproduction, National Museum display at the Belgrade airport, September 2018

Fig 81b
Composition II, reproduction,
National Museum display at
the Belgrade airport,
September 2018



At the 2018 exhibition "What was Modern Art?" at the SKUC Gallery in Ljubljana, that was a reflection/deconstruction of the 2006 exhibition "What is Modern Art?" at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin. It included copies of Mondrian in two ways.

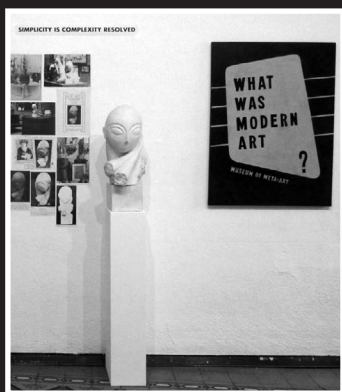


Fig 82
"What was Modern Art?",
installation view, SKUC Gallery,
Ljubljana 2018

One copy of the *Composition II* that was part of the 1986 Armory Show was, together with some other works from the same show, presented here in ethnographic manner accompanied with corresponding documentary material.



Fig 83
Composition II,
"What was Modern Art?",
installation view,
SKUC Gallery,
Ljubljana 2018

In the other room a number of Mondrian copies related to the Walter Benjamin's 1986-87 lectures "Mondrian '63-'96" in Ljubljana and Belgrade were exhibited.

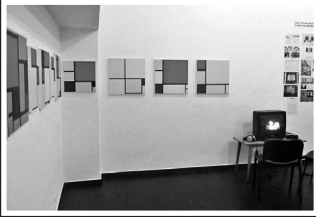


Fig 84
Walter Benjamin "Mondrian '63-'96",
"What was Modern Art?",
installation view, SKUC Gallery,
Ljubljana 2018

Interestingly, a copy of *Composition II* appears in another Benjamin's lecture titled "The Unmaking of Art", first time held 2011 at the Times Museum in Guangzhou in Mandarin language as part of the Museum of American Art (Berlin) exhibition titled "MoMA Made in China". Since then, Benjamin, appearing in both genders, has held this lecture many times in different languages.



Fig 85
Walter Benjamin,
"The Unmaking of Art",
Times Museum, Guangzhou 2011



Fig 86
Walter Benjamin,
"The Unmaking of Art",
Arnolfini, Bristol 2011



Fig 87
Walter Benjamin,
"The Unmaking of Art",
Museum of Reproductions,
Bilbao, 2013



Fig 87
Walter Benjamin,
"The Unmaking of Art",
e-flux, New York 2014

Recently, a copy of *Composition II* was also included in the installation "Four Stories on Art" at the 2019 exhibition "Anonymous is the answer" curated by Ivana Vaseva at the National Gallery (Daut Pasha Hammam) in Skopje.

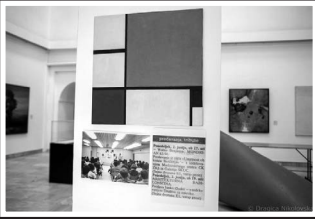


Fig 88 *Composition II*, copy, exhibition "Anonymous is the Answer", national Gallery, Skopje 2019

The latest public appearances of *Composition II* took place at the Ostavska Gallery organized by the Serbian Fine Arts in Belgrade in November 2020. This was a partial re-enactment of the 2013 exhibition "Not-now" that was held in the foyer of the New Belgrade Cultural Network.



Fig 89
Not-now, installation view,
Ostavska Gallery, Belgrade 2020



Fig 90
Richard Nilsen: Not-now,
opening scene, Los Angeles 2020

Today, after so many years I am beginning to change my mind regarding the 1983 copy of *Composition II*. Similarly to what I did with Harbingers forty years ago, recently I started making copies of this particular painting of Mondrian. The difference is that they were made on various surfaces but they always have the same dimensions/proportions as the original. If the surface is not big enough, then the painting would be partially reproduced. Not only that these copies are more complex

entities than the original, but they have also given additional importance to this Mondrian original. By being copied, now this painting is not frozen in its own time within a single story but as a recalled memory being actualized today that could play roles in some other stories, like this one about my personal memories.



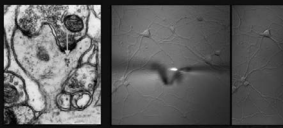
Fig 91
Express restaurant "Zagreb",
Belgrade late 1960s

When in 1971 I came to Belgrade to study at the Electrical Engineering faculty, occasionally I would go to the self-service restaurant "Zagreb" (former "Russian Tsar"). One day, I picked up a spinach puree, and as I tasted it I was transported back some 16-17 back to my kindergarten years when I last tasted this meal. It was a strange experience, and I still remember it fifty years later. Then somebody told me about Marcel Proust and his "Madeleine".



Fig 92
Erin Schuman, "The Remarkable Neuron",
lecture, Ted-Talk

One of the things I remember watching was "The Remarkable Neuron" lecture by Erin Schuman at Ted-Talk, information that the brain-cells renew their memory proteins at the synapses every 24-48h. In other words, this is how far back in time our actual memory goes, regardless of whether the events remembered are ten days or ten years old.



Proteins are made locally, at synapses.

Fig 92a
Erin Schuman,
"The Remarkable Neuron",
lecture, Ted-Talk

The Remarkable Neuron: Erin Schuman at TEDxCaltech

CONSIDER THE PROTEIN CONTENT OF A SYNAPSE

- 500 different protein species per synapse
- 50 copies of each protein
- 25,000 proteins per synapse
- 10^4 synapses per cell
- 250,000,000 proteins per cell (dendrite + synapse)

ESTIMATE: An additional 250,000,000 proteins in the axon
So ~500,000,000 proteins per cell

Fig 92b
Erin Schuman,
"The Remarkable Neuron",
lecture, Ted-Talk

Thus, today I remember my restaurant experience from 50 years ago that was about remembering a kindergarten experience 17 years earlier and also I believe that I still remember ("directly") eating spinach puree at the kindergarten, which was 67 years ago. Now, according to neuron-science all these memories are, in fact, various proteins not older than 24-48h.

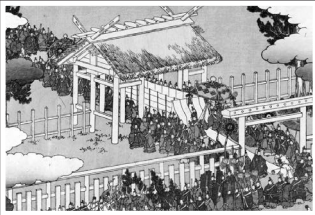


Fig 93
Ise Jingu shrine in Japan

Then I remember reading a few years ago in some paper about originality, that in Japan there is a custom regarding a fifteen hundred year old shrine. In a tradition that started in 690, the Ise Jingu shrine in Japan was completely dismantled and rebuilt every 20 years as part of the Shinto belief in death and renewal of nature.



Fig 93a
Ise Jingu shrine in Japan

In this way, the shrine has been preserved or remembered as it was in the beginning, it is demolished every twenty years and rebuilt as new, looking exactly the same. Thus, the two thousand year old temple is only 20 years old, at most. It was recently rebuilt but the memory it preserves goes back thousands of years, like proteins in our neuron synapses.

This evening, taking a break from my work on Mondrian and *Composition II*, I took a walk with my little dog Toto around the neighborhood. At some point, we ran into another little dog and while they began sniffing friendly, his owner called him "Bruno, come back!". "Bruno?", I asked, "is his first name by any chance Giordano?". She smiled and said, "Yes of course". Then a man sitting on a nearby bench, overhearing this conversation, yelled: "It can't be him, he was burnt at the stake." A bit curious. I asked when this happened, and the man

replied: some time during the sixteenth century.



Fig 94
Giordano Bruno and
Rosa Luxemburg

Then, Toto and I continued walking and soon after met another little dog, her name was Rosa. "The only name that comes to my mind is Luxemburg", I said. And her owner smiled and said "Yes it's her, and at home I also have Clara (meaning Zetkin) waiting for us". As we were walking away, I was thinking how in brief conversations with random people, names such as Gordano Bruno or Rosa Luxemburg popped up naturally as familiar names. I don't remember when was the last time I had heard or mentioned any of them. And, by the way, who were those people, how do I know about them and remember their names in the first place? Of course, I have never met them personally since these are characters from the

story we call History, and today I have forgotten most of what I had learned about them. Yet, they are part of my personal memory, even I could mention them in a casual conversation with people on the street as if I/we knew them. I wonder, how many proteins have been produced so far to keep in my memory the names of these people I have never known? And, what has all this to do with the actual people with these names that once lived on this planet long before I was born? While I'm writing all this, it crossed my mind, perhaps one of these days Toto might even come across a puppy whose name is "Piet".

Another interesting example are Super8 films I did in 1974-75, like "Blue Sky", "Book", "Family Photo", in which both camera and the object of filming are static. Usually in moving pictures, a frame differs from one preceding it. However, in these films there is no visible difference between neighboring frames, thus there is no change during the projection. As if each frame was preserving and remembering the previous one by repeating it. And that resembles copies of the Harbingers where one picture does not differ from another.

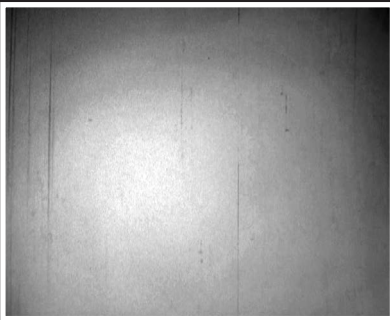


Fig 95
"Blue Sky", Super 8,
film frame, 1975

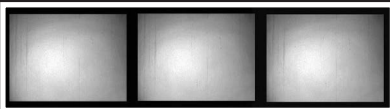


Fig 95a
"Blue Sky", Super 8,
three film frames, 1975



Fig 96
"Book", Super 8,
film frame, 1975



Fig 96a
"Book", Super 8,
three film frames, 1975

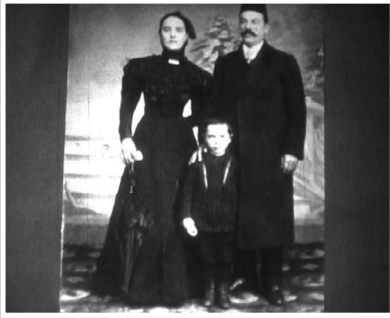


Fig 97
"Family Photo", Super 8,
film frame, 1975



Fig 97a
"Family Photo", Super 8,
film frame, 1975



Fig 98
Harbingers of the Apocalypse,
original 1970



Fig 98a
Harbingers of the Apocalypse,
copies 1980

I find some similarities between all these and my recent copying of a single Mondrian, one that I copied for the first time in 1983 in the National Museum. Recently, I began realizing that some of my works from the past are not just relics but start getting another layer of mean-

ing. In addition to the Harbingers, one that was coming back was this 1983 copy of *Mondrian Composition II*.

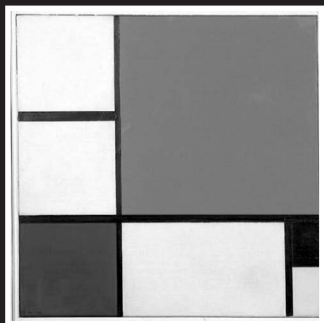


Fig 99
Composition II,
copy, 1983

I started repeating it on various surfaces and objects mostly found in or next to the garbage containers in my neighborhood. A bit later, a few of them were included in the "Fragments", an apartment exhibition which opened in August last year (2020).

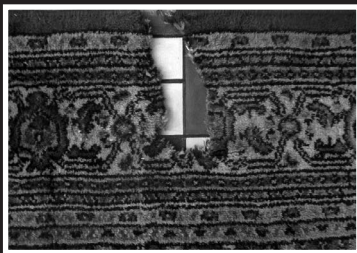


Fig 100
Mondrian under the carpet,
"Fragments",
August 2020



Fig 101
"Fragments", installation view,
Belgrade 2020



Fig 102
"Fragments",
installation view, Belgrade 2020



Fig 103
"Fragments", installation view,
Belgrade 2020

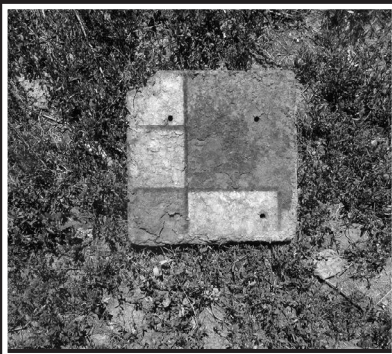


Fig 104
Copy of *Composition II*
on found wood panel,
Belgrade 2020



Fig 105
"Fragments",
installation view,
Belgrade 2020

One day, I found a simple chair with a rectangular seat. Until that point, I had been making copies of this painting in different sizes, depending on the surface, but the entire picture was reproduced. Since the original Mondrian is 45x45cm, it couldn't fit on this seat which was 35x41cm, the original dimensions could not fit in. One option was a smaller copy 35x35cm or to keep original dimensions, but not having the entire picture reproduced. Since I already had made many copies in different sizes, I decided to try making copies only in original proportions, even if the surface was smaller than the original painting, and as a result having it partially reproduced, as if it was a fragment. Thus the memory on original painting became incomplete and fragmented. And, unlike copying the Harbingers, where I had to look into the source painting to copy it, in the case of the *Composition II*,



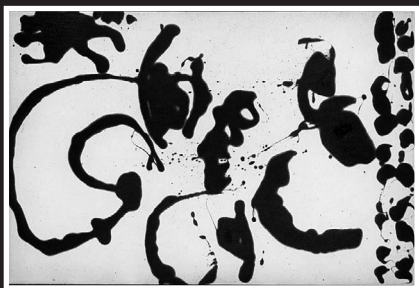
II, I didn't need any picture to look at like I did in the National Museum 1983. Since the structure of *Composition II* is very simple, after a couple of paintings I learned all its measurements and colors and could repeat them on any surface without looking at a source painting.

Of course, whenever a surface was large enough, the entire painting would be copied on it. While shape or painting style could vary from painting to painting what remains constant are proportions of the composition and basic colors that make each copy recognizable.

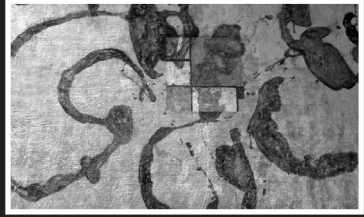




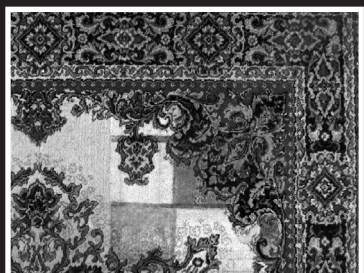
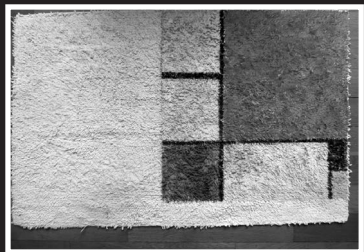
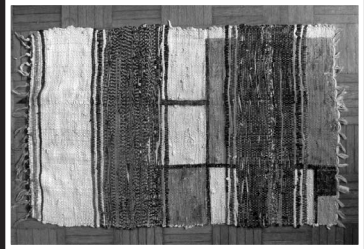
Since for more than a year I began collecting various thrown away objects I found in the neighborhood, thinking perhaps at some point to arrange an archeological exhibition of contemporary artifacts as remains of the lost ancient civilization (Volney-Ruins). Thus I already had plenty of items I could use for the *Composition II*. One day last year, while walking with Toto, I found next to a garbage container a large bright monochromatic carpet on which, after some thinking, I decided to copy this painting by Jackson Pollock.



When later I began my "project" with *Composition II*, I thought it might be interesting to paint its copy over the copy of Pollock, thus integrating non-geometric and geometric abstract art and in this way short-circuiting Barr's diagram.



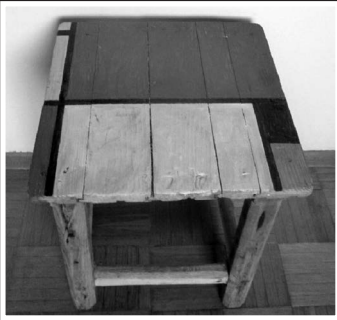
Since for more than a year I began collecting various thrown-away items (junk) I would find in the neighborhood, thinking perhaps at some point to arrange an archeological exhibition of contemporary artifacts as remains of the lost ancient civilization (Volney-Ruins). Thus I already had a plenty of items I could use now like these found rugs and carpets painted now with *Composition II*.



Another day, I picked up this old broken window and painted it on both sides.



Since it seems chairs old or broken are often left at the garbage, I picked quite a few as interesting surfaces to paint Mondrian on them.



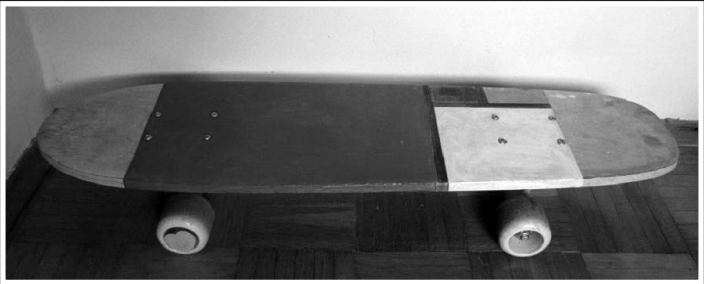
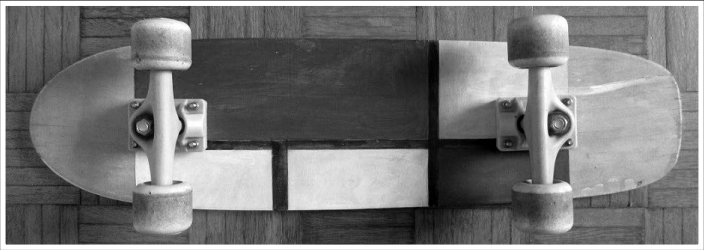
And this seems to be an old-fashioned toilet seat...



...a bird cage...

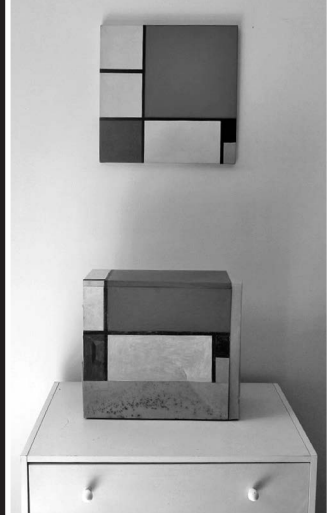


...roller board...



One day, on a garbage dump I found this old computer that became a background for yet another copy...

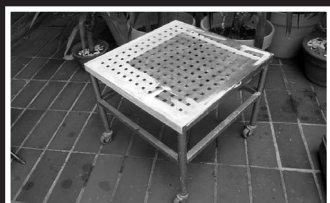




While taking pictures of these recent products...



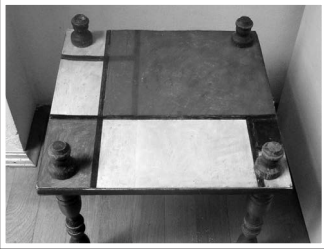
...I noticed this metal table in the garden...



...and decided to paint it as well. Its surface happened to have the exact same dimensions as *Composition II*.



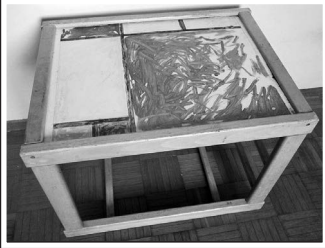
This is another table that I found on which I would keep paint and brushes.



Those old "Utrecht" paint jars I brought with me in 1984 when I came back from Cambridge and I still have quite a few of them.



And this wooden table with unfinished Mondrian on top of it reminded me reading about discussions among American artists on how to make a distinction between them and Europeans.



On the first day of the "Artists' Sessions at Studio 35 (1950)", published in the "Modern Artist in America" (1951), I found in the "Strand" basement for \$1 in early 1990s, the question was: *How do you know when a work is finished?* At the end of session, Robert Motherwell concluded:



"I dislike a picture that is too suave or too skillfully done. However, contrariwise, I also dislike a picture that looks too inept or too blundering. I noticed in looking at the Carre (gallery) exhibition of young French painters who are supposed to be close to this (our) group, that in "finishing" a picture they assume traditional criteria to a much greater degree than we do. They have a real "finish" in that the picture is a real object, a beautifully made object. We are involved in a "process" and what is the "finished" object is not so certain." Seems to me

this Motherwell's statement is perhaps one of the best observations about the distinction between abstract paintings produced those years in France and America.

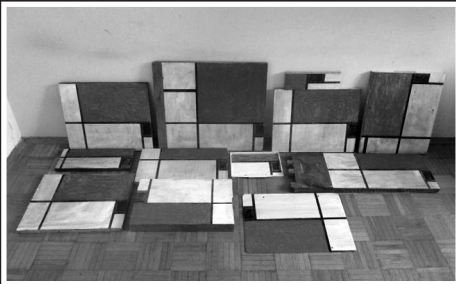


And judging by the picture below, Donald Judd would agree with this opinion.

Among all those found objects, there were a number of wood panels of various sizes on which I painted *Composition II* fragments, not individually but more like in an assembly-line manner.

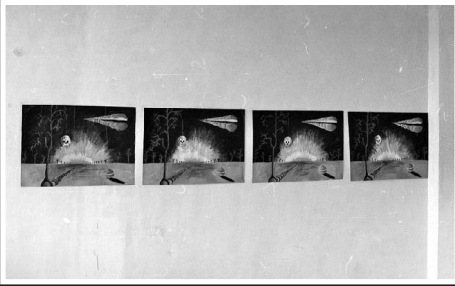


Composition II fragments, not individually but more like in an assembly-line manner.

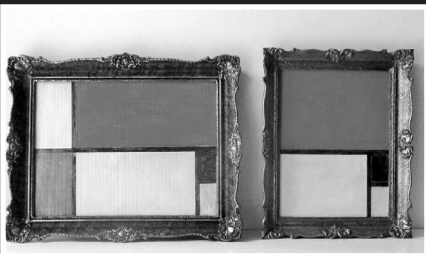


This series of fragmented copies reminded me of the Harbingers of the Apocalypse. This gave me the idea to one day make a series of full scale copies of *Composition*

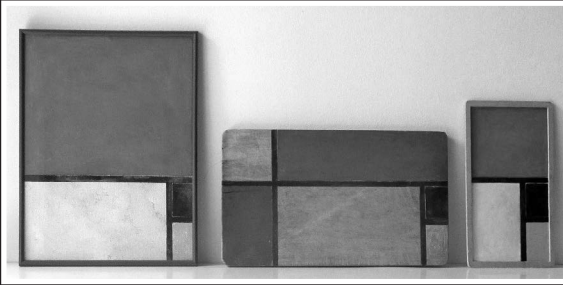
// the way I did with Harbingers some forty years ago.



These are two old-fashioned decorative picture frames I also found and decided to use them.



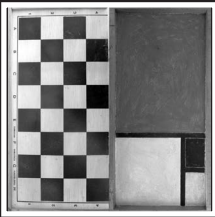
This is another series of fragments painted on various surfaces, some of them with an image on the other side...



...various flat wood boards...



...a half of aches-board...



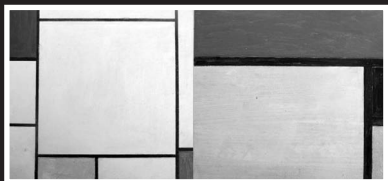
...a reproduction of St. George icon pasted on wood pane, found next to garbage container.



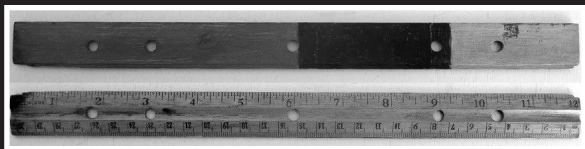
Back in Cambridge, I made this small copy of a Mondrian which I later gave to a friend.



Last year, looking at this photo I decided to make a copy of this copy, and recently I painted detail of the Composition on the other side.



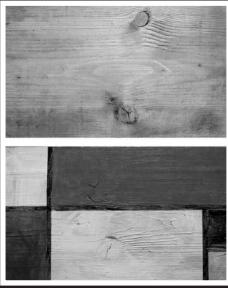
This a fragment painted on a ruler...



...memorial medal...



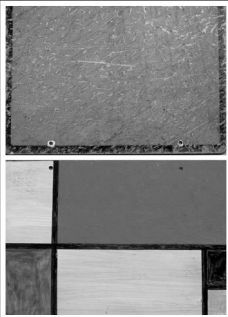
...a piece of plane wood panel...



...old decaying WW2 framed photograph...

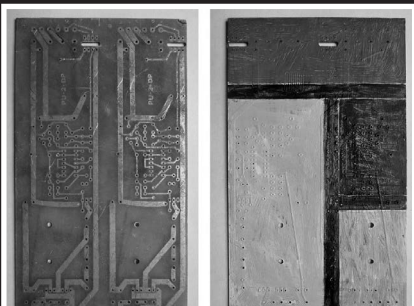
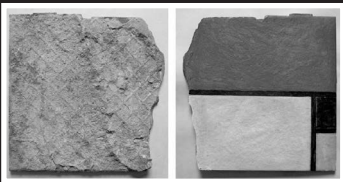
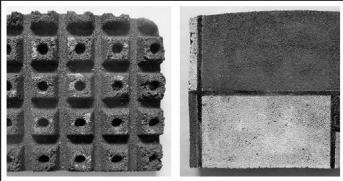
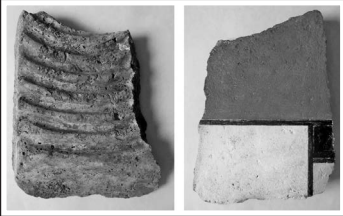
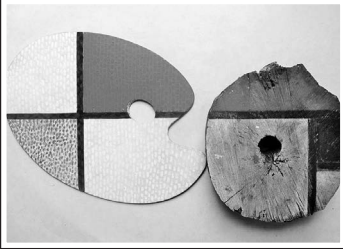


...metal street sign...



Appearance of the *Composition II* fragments in the context of various surfaces/images resembles the way we recall certain memory. It almost never appears alone by itself, but usually in the context of some other notion or event. In fact, the same memory is always different

whenever it is recalled. The same is with each word used in this text. What then makes its specific intrinsic meaning? How do we recognize it and differentiate it from everything else?

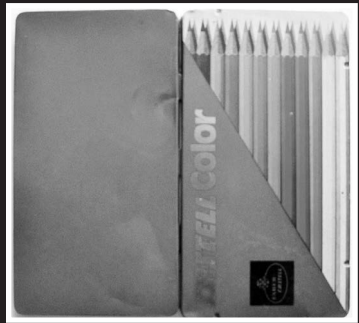


A while ago, I found in the bushes this decaying plastic bag from the 1979 Mediterranean Games that took place in the Adriatic city of Split. It was originally intended for the "Ruins" project but I thought it could now change the role and enter into this story.



At some point, I began seeing any surface or object as a potential background for yet another copy. Since there are almost no limitations where a detail of this paint-

ing could be placed, the decision to stop doing it was in essence arbitrary. Probably when I begin to feel that I have learned everything I needed to know while walking in this direction and there is no need to go further.

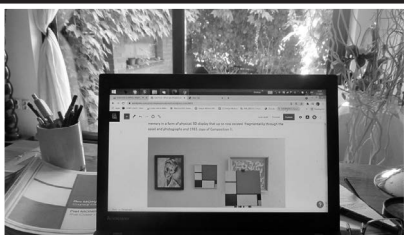


At some point, I thought it might be interesting to “re-construct” the final scene of the 1983 public demonstration “How to Copy Mondrian”. These are just a couple details from the complicated process with many steps and stages, just to remind us of what it takes before we see the final installation.



On one level, all these copies are substitutions, playing roles of the originals from the 1983 event, including the copy on the easel. What makes this complicated is that Mondrian hanging on the wall is 1983 copy playing a role of the 1929 original. On the other copies of Picasso and Mark Tobey are produced now just to play their roles in the scene while on the easel is one of recent copies of *Composition II* with no marks on it. In addition, all these copies of works of art are here in the scene primarily related to my personal memory and very little to do with the story of art. In essence, this is contemporary materialized memory in a form of physical 3D display that up to now existed fragmentarily through the easel

and photographs and 1983. copy of *Composition II*.



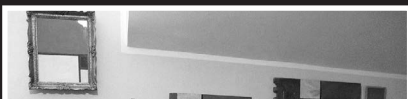
At some point, I thought perhaps it would be interesting to have 4-5 full scale copies that, shown in a series, would resemble 1980-81 installations of Harbingers of the Apocalypse copies. However, while in case of Harbingers each new copy was made after the previous was finished, always looking into the original, here I decided to copy *Composition II* in assembly-line style, having one color applied on all canvases before moving to the next and I didn't have to look into any painting as a model.





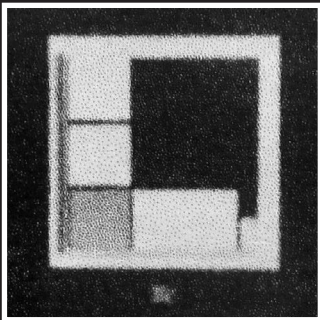
Then, having around all these individual works, naturally at some point came the idea to make an exhibition and show them together. It is interesting that, while I

was making all these works, the idea for staging an exhibition didn't come to mind until recently.





And all this started with the first public appearance of the *Composition II* at the exhibition in Zurich back in 1930.



Goran Đorđević July 10,
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Woorden die alleen bestaan in hun eigen taal (vervolg).

Eudaimonia. GRIEKS. Geluksgevoel, totale vervulling, tijdens het reizen.

Gezelligheid. NEDERLANDS. De positieve stemming die vrijkomt bij een sociaal samenzijn, meestal in kleine kring.

Goesting. VLAAMS. Zin, lust, trek, en dan vooral op een onstuimige, bourgondische manier.

Gökotta. Zweeds. Vroeg opstaan om naar de vogels te luisteren.

Hiraeth. WELSH. Heimwee naar een plaats die niet meer bestaat of misschien wel nooit heeft bestaan.

Merigiare. ITALIAANS. Midden op de dag in de schaduw onder een boom toeven.

Novaturient. LATIJN. Het verlangen naar een betekenisvolle verandering in je leven.

Soms wil ik de woorden nieuw maken, ze ontdoen van zowel de geforceerde pathetiek, de lyriek als van het dode ambtelijke. En ze toch voorbij de grenzen sturen. Pure, simpele taal, archaisch, zoals de onvertaalbare woorden, het infrarood en het ultraviolet archaische, simpele gewaarwordingen aanduiden. In hun stralende eenvoud zouden de woorden alles buiten zichzelf veranderen in een volmaakte stilte.

De meeste ultraviolette woorden hebben positieve connotaties, of in elk geval iets warm, menselijks. Ze zijn onmiddellijk aantrekkelijk. Je hart maakt een sprongetje: eindelijk blijkt er iets benoemd te kunnen worden wat je tot dan toe alleen nog maar vaag vermoedde. En er is de vage jaloezie (daar zou ook eens een woord voor moeten zijn) voor die kleine, exotische gemeenschap, die het wel kan benoemen en *daardoor*, denk je, vaker en diepgaander ervaren.

Waarom bestaan die woorden alleen voor een kleine, specifieke groep sprekers, haast als een geheimtaal? Ze hebben vanzelf iets knus. De woorden zijn 'gezellig', om dat onvertaalbare woord uit het Nederlands te nemen. *Hygge* in het Deens. Maar het zijn ook woorden met oertijd-dna. Zonsondergangen, sterren, reizen. Afscheid, heimwee. Grote betekenissen in een kleine kring. Het universele wordt er particulier, het globale lokaal.

Ze hebben een vergelijkbare affectieve waarde als het dialect, ongeschonden overgegoten van generatie op generatie. Het werpt je onmiddellijk terug in je kindertijd als het om je heen gesproken wordt. Je smelt, komt thuis in de taal. Je wilt bij een stam horen, ook als die geen woord voor blauw heeft. *The hell with blue.*

A rose is a rose is a rose and would smell as sweet by any other name. Dat is zo, maar alleen als je de taal beschouwt als een systeem dat informatie overdraagt. Esperanto. Google Translate. Twee uitersten om hetzelfde te proberen: literair communisme, waarin niemand woorden bezit, waar ze gemeenschappelijke bronnen zijn. Het is verbale globalisering, waar het corporate Engels al vrij ver in gevorderd is. Bedrijfsjargon, dode *slang* tegen het jingoïsme. Tegenover het globale staat het lokale van de onvertaalbare taal.

Daar is taal een organisme, met een etymologische evolutie, met affectieve wortels, met resonantie in andere delen dan de ratio, eerder aan muziek verwant.

Eindelijk weet ik wat ik aan dit genootschap zal vertellen. Ik zal verslag doen van mijn verblijf hier. Ik zal iedereen verzamelen beginnen met een stilte.

Nieuwe muziek, nieuw luisteren. Geen poging om iets te begrijpen dat wordt gezegd, want als er iets wordt gezegd, krijgen de klanken de vorm van woorden. Gewoon

een aandacht voor de activiteit van geluiden.

New music, new listening. Not an attempt to understand something that is being said, for, if something is being said, the sounds would be given the shapes of words. Just an attention to the activity of sounds.

Dan zal ik vertellen van mijn *resfeber*, ik zal ze het sprookje vertellen tot iedereen slaapt of wakker is. Er was eens een tijd dat ik woorden verzamelde die alleen in hun eigen taal bestaan.

Als iedereen slaapt of wakker is, zal ik weer bovenaan het trappetje staan, bij de klemmende deur, op het rooster van gegalvaniseerd staal. Niets is opgelost, het raadsel is vergroot. *Resfeber* heeft me hier gebracht en *resfeber* laat me weer vertrekken. Als ik me omdraai om de trap af te lopen blijkt het een duikplank, met fonkelend water eronder in een kleur waar geen woord voor is. Ik adem in. En ik zwem nog lang en gelukkig.

The **Alphabetum** is an artistic space to explore the formative and formal aspects of language. These aspects are mostly considered separate. Typographers and type-designers are primarily focused on the letterform and writers mostly do not pay attention to the forms of the letters they form into words. The ambition of the Alphabetum is to reveal that these two properties of written language are much more interlinked than is commonly acknowledged. A letter is a letter because it resembles a letter; and because it resembles a letter it is a letter.

Joseph Beuys said that every human being is an artist. Hans Hollein translated this idea into space and time, suggesting that everything is architecture. John Cage proposed that everything we do is music. Would it therefore not be acceptable to declare that every thing is type? When we look at art, music and architecture from a more general point of view, we see that all three disciplines have emerged from the languages we created. We might even argue that art, architecture and music are themselves languages. It is noteworthy that Beuys's, Hollein's and Cage's statements are not formulated in art, architecture and music, but in letters, forming words, combined in statements. Ludwig Wittgenstein once said that the limits of our language are the limits of our world. Could it also be the case that the limits of the alphabet are the limits of our language? This would bring us back to the typographic tautology. A letter is a letter because it resembles a letter, and because it resembles a letter, it is a letter.

The Alphabetum, inaugurated in February 2019, is part of the program of the national art institution West Den Haag.

L'écriture avant la lettre

Alphabetum IX

Met werken van David Antin, Walter Benjamin, Joseph Beuys, Hildegard van Bingen, John Cage, Uta Eisenreich, Octavian Esanu, Res Feber, Ryan Gander, Kenneth Goldsmith, Gary Hill, Victorie Hanna, Nicoline van Harskamp, Toine Horvers, Tehching Hsieh, Hedwig Houben, Emily Kocken, Günter Gerhard Lange, Stephane Mallarmé, Shigeru Matsui, Tine Melzer, Yoko Ono, Annetta Pedretti, The Rodina, Hannah Weiner, Edgar Walthert, Brigitte Willberg en Unica Zürn.

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