

Post Workshop: notes on some of the questions raised.

On the position of the writer with regard to the task of critique.

The exercises suggested in the workshop encouraged you to take an imaginative, subjective, position in relation to the exhibition. This is an intentional critical strategy that disrupts the conventional 'neutral and objective' position of the writer in relation to the work. The conventional 'neutral and objective' Enlightenment subject who explains, assesses and adjudicates according to history and theory, is, as scholars have well shown, anything but. Locating ourselves within the encounter *as thinking, feeling, people in the process of writing* is a critical strategy toward a different kind of engagement. You may like to look at these two further readings below for some theoretical background on these ideas.

In Further Reading: Bruno Latour, Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern.

My argument is that **a certain form of critical spirit has sent us down the wrong path, encouraging us to fight the wrong enemies** and, worst of all, to be considered as friends by the wrong sort of allies because of a little mistake in the definition of its main target. The question was never to get away from facts **but closer to them, not fighting empiricism but, on the contrary, renewing empiricism**...a realism dealing with what I will call matters of concern, not matters of fact...My question is thus: Can we devise another powerful descriptive tool that deals this time with matters of concern and whose import then will **no longer be to debunk but to protect and to care**, as Donna Haraway would put it? Is it really possible to **transform the critical urge** in the ethos of someone who **adds reality to matters of fact and not subtract** reality?

In Further Reading: Anna Gibbs, Writing as Method: Attunement, Resonance and Rhythm
Writing is not a transparent medium, nor something that comes somehow after the event, a simple 'outcome' of research that always takes place elsewhere, in the archive, in the field or the focus group, on the Web, **but is a mode of inquiry in its own right**... In practice this necessitates engaging with affect, **both the researcher's own affects and those of others whom she engages in her research**, and the concomitant opening up of rhetorical modes associated with it (*the lyrical, the elegiac, the rhapsodic, the humorous, the parodic, the satirical, and so on*), which enable the staging of **passionate engagements** with research questions and research subjects, and which emphasize the pragmatics as much as the semiotics of texts and writing (cf. Gibbs, 2005). For to think about writing as part and parcel of research methodology

is to acknowledge the inevitable implication of the researcher in what is researched. ***Writing itself is an affect-laden process: driven by interest and desire, subject to frustration and misery as well as productive of joy and excitement.***

On taking a position within the critique

Many writers chose to write themselves into the critique, making this disruptive critical strategy a creative opportunity to weave personal narrative and critical ideas together. Jana Perkovic's writes on theatre in this way to very successful effect IMHO. Brian Dillon's *Essayism* wonderfully describes the possibility of a writing position that is at once, critical *and* vulnerable "this simultaneity of the acute and the susceptible. To be at once, the wound and a piercing act of precision". Maggie Nelson's *Bluets* that is searingly personal as well as dazzlingly precise in its critical reflection is like this.

In Key Readings: Brian Dillon, *Essayism*

In Key Readings: Maggie Nelson, Excerpts from *Bluets*

In Further Reading: Jana Perkovic, *The Critic in the Episode Rebounds*

What is Writing in the Expanded Field? How do we 'do it'? What are we 'allowed' to write?

In exploring the Expanded Field of Writing we are playing the the hybrid zones between Empiricism and Imagination, or Fact and Fiction, or History and Literature that are all part of the binary that has made up conventional Enlightenment ways of knowing. According to Krauss' concept of the Expanded Field we can play (we are already playing) in a number of ways. In 'The Complex' are works that combine the main oppositions: you will see this in a work like Dodie Bellamy's 'The Bandaged Lady' in which the writer takes a fictional voice, that of the work of art itself (if the art could talk). Also Holly Childs' Piece for the Faux Novel catalogue (postcard PDF) in Further Readings is relevant here. Poetic and ekphrasitic responses are also, probably (IMHO), located in The Complex, combining as they do, the poetic and the art historical. The 'Specifics of a Poem' which is published in Art and Australia under their digital 'Disruptions' section is a good example here, and quite a few in the group are already working in this way. The reflexive, part of the

Expanded Field runs from the key terms to their involutory opposites, and in here would be those works that, as we have already seen above, bring attention to the position of the writer writing, or knowledge being constructed into empiricism. Another very cool example of this is the video essay 'The Prince and the President's Daughter' by Nick Modrzewski also in Art and Australia's 'Disruptions' section. Collage, cut-ups, material writing and the use of found words is also a method of reflexive critique, and one that I personally love to work with. The cut-up of Krauss included in the workshop handouts is an example of this, and the work 'A Redacted History' published in the online journal Defunct Mag is another (this work is a remix of an actual history of a Melbourne Ladies' Club).

In Key Readings: Dodie Bellamy the Bandaged Lady

In Further Readings: Holly Child Catalogue 1 & 2

In Further Readings: Josephine Mead, The Specifics of a Poem

In Further Readings: Lucinda Strahan, A Redacted History

n Further Readings: Nick Modzewski, The Prince and the President's Daughter

Finally, I think this is the bottom line

David Shields: "It is Much More Important to Be Oneself Than Anything Else".

Whether in critical or creative writing, the requirement to develop our own authentic voice is the most important thing. This is what connects and communicates and will allow the greatest expression of our ideas.

In Key Readings: David Shields, Reality Hunger