

what is a presentation if not making a passive learning experience for others?

Hello class,

Art fetishizes these blenders and these ordinary objects.

- Or does it exalt them.

Abstraction as Decontextualization

Everyone knows a picture has almost no relation to its pieces as taken in separation from the whole.

My parts are not me. They are mine.

The ships are heavier than the men.

This material relationship is the thesis of this article, which talks about a ship breaking yard in Alang India. It is heavy with visual descriptions of workers tearing apart enormous machines with tools. This conceptual extraction is artistic – such as art considers a material relationship within a complex social and economic situation. The article is presented through the lens of a conversation. The tone is simple and the writing accessible and easy to read. Through his descriptions of his interactions and experiences, the author becomes a character, strongly sensed. Through this exposition, the author outlines his own biases. Using style to achieve the exposition is believable, and feels honest. Most of the time, an author seeks to explain their bias in the same biased academic language that they use to posit and explain and declare.

The author describes the items left on the ships that are being scrapped (treadmills, spoons, blenders). He describes seeing thousands of blenders from around the world. Surely the author is struck by the visual rhythm of the repeated near-same objects, but they are described without fervor. After only a moment, the author places them back in their exhaustively intricate context and zooms out, removing his gaze before any heavy clingy emotional pathos can stick to them.

There is abstraction in both events, - in fetishization and exaltation - by means of decontextualization. The horror of a situation, or an object representing some complexity, cannot be as rich and complete without the context that is being displaced when the item is isolated.

Maybe the hope is that the horror can be manageable with fewer dimensions. We take the puzzle apart and understand its pieces.

need something to be removed and placed in a white box for review.

Or, maybe it is the other way around. Maybe the horror of a situation cannot be understood in its context, since we are so accustomed to seeing and ignoring violent and terrible consequences and actions, consuming - by necessity - products coded with the violence and destruction that went into their making. Maybe instead of just looking again or looking harder at the whole we need something to be removed and placed in a white box for review.

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Melancholy
////(unlike a ted talk)

sensitivities of privilege

[conflation]

Lymph, vessel, vein.

Making Every Problem Mine

[SOLI]PSISM
SOLO – one
IPSE – self

The author's melancholy is visible, but restrained (again) through his use of style, conversation and voice. It is known, but contained. He is not placing it on you, or demanding you to process it with your body. He has presented it, and describes his suffering in Alang and about Alang with shame and appreciation of his remove, his ignorance, his constructed bourgeoisie American sensitivities, which are sensitivities of privilege. These sensitivities are those that are inflamed and righteous, that demand comfort and ease. These sensitivities become inflamed at truly seeing anything, and in this way, conflate small troubles with immensurate ones, and by this collapsing of thing into thing completely obscure real troubles from view. The inflammation blocks the pathway, that's what inflammation does. Nothing can flow, - information cannot be transmitted. And now, first, the hurt of the inflamed sensitivities must be attended to. This is the American mechanism of Making Every Problem Mine. It is a procedure that takes any momentum toward a wish for positive change and implodes it in the solipsism of the witness.

The article takes us through Alang. It does not stop off and wail selfishly over the suffering of others.

READ: the silk article, talk about the labor politics and art, performance vs labor, ritual vs labor, meditation vs labor.

and above, the ships as an object vs art object. assemblage through labor vs assemblage through an artistic process. the framing, the privilege in how a thing came to be is maybe the only thing that disambiguates it from art. The setting. taking something that can be observed in passing which contains the perfect gesture from the vacant author (death of the author) and forcing it to be seen by putting it in against a white wall. It's all there to be seen always, but it can only be purchased if it is isolated.

this isolation vs the isolation of elements to be understood
bought

so what does art bring
reminded of ----- asking me what does my gesture bring

maybe art brings a new way for thoughts to go which does not foreclose others through its opening

Emmy E Smith
2021

Bdote

The Learning in Place: Bdote experience is was multimodal, and as an artist, that is the kind of learning that really sinks in. We stood at the meeting point of the missouri and mississippi rivers and heard about genocide, birth, the throat, atrocities, war crimes, and Iktomi. The water for two minutes picked up the sun and reflected it up onto the undersides of the maple leaves in undulating waves. Eagles circled making their watery calls to one another. The songbirds became comfortable after we had been still and listening for a number of minutes and woodpeckers and kingfishers

I was struck by both Ramona and Ethan's descriptions of how the english language is inadequate to express the stories, the place names, and the history of the B'Dote and of the Dakota people. Even now I reached for the word "capture" when trying to describe what the english language cannot do. It's actually all that the english language can do - which Ethan Neerdals expressed when he spoke about English as a language of buying and selling, which developed in a culture of progress and commodification, ownership, sale and debt and transactional worth. Ramona too spoke about the colonizer view of the world as resources in contrast to her presentation of the world and plants and animals and elements as relatives. I hesitate to parrot what we learned because I'm not qualified to teach about the nuances of the Dakota language and it's entirely different ethos, centered on realities and containing more layers of meaning than the language of empires.

Ramona's ownership of her voice and the stories of her family (I avoid putting this in purely historical terms) created a calm bedrock for us to learn from. I was humbled to hear her share her process around community work both with settlers and within Indigenous communities, and moving forward from the atrocious period concentrated omnicide (Ethan's word, broader than genocide) of the last several centuries.

The story Ethan told about la the Devouring Giant and Iktomi the spider fit in so clearly with narratives about capitalism attempting to devour everything in its path. The giant is discovered to have living people inside of his belly who been inside of the monster so long they had lost context for the world outside of their domination and suffering and confinement. The relevance of this story to capitalism and the cultural fog of technological and political constructions we can barely disobey even internally shatters the veneer of historicism that has been intentionally washed over Indigenous stories and culture. It was said but it was also clear in unspoken ways that the attempts by the US to erase Indigenous nations is an internationally recognized war crime perpetrated by innumerable slight and massive violences, and that these onslaughts have not destroyed or erased or placed the Dakota and other Indigenous nations comfortably back into history.

Ramona and Ethan's clear, generous and uncompromising presentation and story telling wove a thread that led back in time, yes, both to colonial atrocities and back further to an uncolonized time, but also led into the present and the future. Ramona said with a hint of knowing humor "Our people have been here for 12,000 years, I think we can figure out how to keep adapting."