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BROCK ENRIGHT, UNTITLED, 2004, C-print, client with puppets / OHNE TITEL, C-Print, Kunde mit Puppen. (PHOTO: BROCK ENRIGHT & KRISTINA WILLIAMSON)

Conrad Brock Enright:

JEREMY SIGLER

I first heard of Conrad Brock Enright's high-priced, "designer kidnappings"[1)]—or "ordeals" as he calls them—in 2001, the year he graduated from Columbia University's MFA program. Collectors who wanted Enright's work would submit to an arduous screening process and then wait to be abducted when least expected, held hostage, and, essentially—to quote a Fox News anchorman—"tortured."[2)] How is one to imagine this type of collector who seems to be highly invested in an economy of desire and a dialectic of symbolic domination and surrender? I found it gutsy that this young artist was so bold as to give collectors who wanted to buy his work literally what they were asking for: inclusion—actual hands-on involvement, really exposing them to the brutal, and oftentimes humiliating, scatological, childish element that is also part of the process of art-making.

Initially, Enright asks his potential client to fill out a detailed questionnaire. Then it's on to the "Meet and Greet" phase—the taped live interview, which updates Andy Warhol's and Gerard Malanga's *Screen Tests* for the Shock-and-Awe era. Once all of these ele-

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ments are assembled, Enright begins customizing the ordeal, as if he were directing a play, rendering plans for environments and sets, hunting for props, hiring and training players.

While the artist uses these preparations to score his actions, it's hard to say how much he will rely on intuition and improvisation to compose fear. After all, he can only guess what the collectors will r e a l l y find most terrifying, and hope for accurate invasions of their vulnerabilities and phobias. Game designer and theorist Eric Zimmerman points out that "Enright's work plays with involuntary abduction, but never really is. In that sense, it is very much like a horror film, a consensual temporary loss of control for the experience of being given over to an emotional thrill. With both a horror film and Enright's work (and with a game), there is ultimately a safe space outside the experience which, although it is the Other of the experience, still anchors it."[3]

In this risky game the collectors must state their personal "Do's and Don'ts." But doesn't "No" in erotic advances often mean "Yes"? Doesn't language often belie the speaker? Says one abductee: "I didn't want any scars, and didn't want my life to be threatened in any way, but I wanted to be really scared."[4] Says another client, "I did not want to be in control of what was happening... I needed to believe that this person was going to kill me."[5] As these statements reveal, the challenge of playing the game goes both ways, and Enright clearly has his work cut out for him if he is to deliver the goods. He must figure out a way to be extreme and safe at once, to jolt the collector without inflicting real harm—to allow the client to participate in a *horroresque*, not a horror.

By storming unannounced into his clients' offices or other routine haunts with a group of *Clockwork Orange*-like thugs, blindfolding them and duct-taping their mouths and hands, dumping them at anonymous, deserted locations to be hazed, and then finally returning them home a few days later, Enright strikes a pretty solid blow to the hierarchical norm. Of course, thinking so may express an unfair bias, a failure to acknowledge or appreciate what it really means to be an art collector, or, for that matter, a media-savvy artist in the era of high-profile art deals and *Jackass* TV, where a general Dadaist sensibility of juvenile provocation, pratfalls, and public clownishness functions as a kind of action-packed, radical street art for the teenage cable-tv audience. Maybe this ignores the real point: that the collectors, whoever they may be, are voluntarily signing up for Enright's "tailor-made experiences of 'safe' fear."[6] That they're game.

By many accounts, we are in a turbo age of art patronage, where collectors and artists are both very competitive. Consider a certain kind of "nouveau" collector today. There have never been so many self-made connoisseurs vying for such a wide variety of potentially valuable and valid works of art from so many international galleries and MFA-certified artists. A recent wave of fearless collectors, neophytes

In Over His Head

BROCK ENRIGHT, TALE TEETH, 1996, video still, client being taken from bed / ERZÄHLUNG ZÄHNE (?), Videostill, Kunde wird aus dem Bett gezerrt. (PHOTO: BROCK ENRIGHT)

Rolling Stone, Issue 905, September 19, 2002, p. 74.

(PHOTO: ROLLING STONE MAGAZINE)

Bound & Gagged

unclear to me, screamed at me, "A secret got out tonight!" and then pushed on the swivel chair I'd just been taped to; the chair and I tipped over backward, and my head hit the floor with a thud. Shortly thereafter, I wrote a note to Teletubby/Enright saying, "This is too intense for me," and he wrote back, "What part?" I answered, "The violence."

The next morning, two masked kidnappers and a maskless Enright appeared in my chamber. Enright claimed that he usually "isn't around" for the kidnappings – clearly a lie – but that something had "gone wrong" (the chair tipping over) the night before. Enright said, "You're kind of a different client for us because you're such a bitch. No more tape in the hair!" I countered that I thought I was going to be kidnapped, not tortured. "You guys are like kidnappers with way too much time on their hands," I wheezed. "It's like being kidnapped by Martha Stewart." Strangely, even though I had just passed the most harrowing night of my life, I didn't like criticizing Enright in front of his crew, he's formed a kind of family with these sociopaths – a situation seemingly underlined by the fact that Enright wears the Mowalo watch that his largely absent father was wearing when he jumped to his death last year – and I didn't want to undermine his authority. But, that said, the repeated tearing of duct tape from my hair the evening before had made me pig-biting mad.

When Enright departed, he left behind a shopping bag; inside was a heavy seventeen-inch-long black dildo called the Rambone. Frantic at the thought of what my captors might do with it, I unraveled the three kinds of tape that bound my now-filthy pants to my ankles, dragged a cinder block across the room, stood on it and hid the Rambone in the ventilating duct.

what a monstrously selfish act it is to order your own kidnapping.

That day, the theme of the proceedings seemed to shift from terror to humiliation. A highly strained kidnapper wearing a tutus of electrical tape hurled the swivel chair against the wall and badgered me into dancing with him. Another cut my underwear off me with scissors while seven other captors applauded and videotaped me. Post-trauma as I was, I mindlessly obliged these gentlemen. Like a senior citizen, I was simply keeping busy.

Earlier that week, the newspapers had been full of stories about a heroic seven-year-old kidnapee who'd chewed through her duct tape and escaped. The idea of trying to escape, and possibly further enraging my captors, struck me as preposterous.

That evening, the Teletubby character passed me a note under the door telling me that "the guys" were soon approaching and that I should give him the dildo "just" so he could hide it. I immediately ran to the other side of the room, stood on the cinder block and reached up three feet or so toward the ventilating duct. But I'd slid the Rambone too far back to reach it. So, finding a pencil, I dragged the Rambone forward; first one half appeared, then part of the second half and then *wham!*, the entire four pounds of it cascaded, unlikelike, and whapped me on the face. Startled, I handed it to the Teletubby.

That evening, the kidnappers put a Batman mask on me, blindfolded me, bound my wrists and ankles, taped the Rambone to my right thigh, put me in a duffel bag and deposited me on a bed in Room 81 of a hotel in lower Manhattan. I was awakened seven hours later by my friend Aaron. Aghast, he walked me back to my apartment.

It took me two days to emotionally right myself. Enright called on Sunday, saying he wanted me to tape a statement for the end of the video. I said I was slightly scared of him but willing. He showed up at my place the next day in a black T-shirt bearing a cutesy illustration of a sheepdog. A crew member filmed me talking about the experience. There were two main post-kidnapping sensations, I said. First, what a monstrously selfish act it is to order your own kidnapping – the look on Aaron's face when he unzipped the duffel bag was truly Edvard Munch-like. Second, you'd think the aftereffect of simulated kidnapping would be increased vulnerability, or sensitivity to other kidnapees and unfortunates, or an appreciation of the joys of life. No; the noticeable change in me was increased bitchiness. I was uncharacteristically demanding and unpleasant with a cashier at a local bakery; I snapped at a neighbor over a trifling incident in my lobby. The movie *Ruthless People*, in which Bette Midler plays a harridan who waxes increasingly obnoxious when she's kidnapped? It's a documentary.

Enright also wanted feedback about the level of service provided. I praised a highly fit its terror but told him that the narrative elements might have been more sustained – the character of the gunman had disappeared after the abduction it would have been richer dramatically had the Teletubby character's solicitousness toward me created further problems for him. I, of course, wanted to know what Enright's crew had thought of me. He responded, "Everyone thought you were attractive and very funny."

I asked him, too, about responsibility. Enright, who has an M.F.A. from Columbia, sees himself as an artist, not a therapist. But given the nature of his work, doesn't he carry a burden of responsibility vis-à-vis his clients' psyches? The artist was fairly detached on this topic. He claimed he's just trying to make a movie and to make sure no one gets hurt, downplaying the responsibility by saying that it's "the same responsibility that I feel toward another person on the subway, or someone at a bar." I proffered my theory that ordering your own abduction is a very selfish act. "I can see that," he said. "But I think about it like sky diving. Sky diving is scary for people around you, too – unless you know a lot about skydiving."

Having been kidnapped, I felt like I now knew a lot about this other kind of leap of faith. But that doesn't make it any less scary.

Henry Alford is a writer in New York. This is his first piece for Rolling Stone.

The healing power of art: Alford cried three times on the first day. Then one of his captors developed a crush on him.

Who Does Brock Enright Think He is?

There's nothing like a kidnapper who aims to please

Even though Brock Enright put videos of his kidnappings on exhibit at a Brooklyn art gallery this summer, he claims that his strange service for hire is simply some kind of shocking conceptual art stunt. "Personally," he says, "I see it as kidnapping."

Born in Virginia Beach, Virginia, in 1976, Enright went to live with his grandparents when he was six or seven ("It's all blurry to me"). His mother, he says, was a bodybuilder and "a wild woman." He didn't even meet his father until he was twenty-one. "Brock's work stems from his fear of abandonment," says an artist and curator who has worked with Enright. "He likes to capture people and make sure they won't abandon him like his parents did."

After getting a B.A. in painting at the Maryland Institute College of Art in 1999, Enright, now twenty-six, moved to New York. Last year, he directed a stage version of the classic porn movie *Debbie Does Dallas*. Meanwhile, two of his recent video projects bear the same hallmarks – intense vulnerability and abject willingness – of his kidnappings. In one, *Enright videotaped 135 actors pretending to commit suicide* by jump, his father took his own life. While Enright was working on this film, in another, he encouraged random strangers to tell him what to do – e.g., go to a certain roof and "ask for Frank," or sit and lie quiet – for hours at a time.

Enright's dedication to providing a service, and to being who you want him to be is remarkable. "Nothing makes me uncomfortable," he says. OK, but would he have sex if one of his kidnap customers asked for it? "That's a hard question to answer. There are rumors that that has happened. But I don't want to break the laws" – he pauses – "visibly." H.A.

of art-fair and back-room collecting, who seem not to shy away from the hedge-fund mentality, has had to become incredibly tactical in order to win the race to the coveted red dot. And the auction houses have made bidding wars for recently minted artworks front-page news, with the winners instant celebrities. In this regard, Enright's expanding circle of clients may be the early adaptors who recognize a spirit of extreme contact sport in collecting. A new breed, they want not only to ride shotgun with the artist, safari-style, but also to roll up their sleeves and get their hands r e a l l y dirty.

The collector and artist are thus finding themselves in the same boat at the same time with a feverish culture compulsion. Both are fully aware of their shared madness, fetishes, desires. Regardless of their affluence, taste, class, training, both are participating in the same "ordeal," which is to say the ordeal of psychological self-awareness. D. H. Lawrence spoke of this when he referred to "the unspeakable horror of the repressions Freud brought home to us. Gagged, bound, maniacal repressions, sexual complexes, faecal inhibitions, dream-monsters."[7)]

Of course, a certain segment of the collecting class has always been adept at seeking alternatives that allow for reckless, exotic behaviors. But it's just as easy to imagine that some of Enright's clients might be more naive, and have gotten in line for a harsh experience with a guy in a Batman mask before they've really thought about the work's potential consequences. For it is not until after an abduction has taken place, after the work has left a scar in the collector's psyche, that a syndrome with long-term composition and poetic resonance will be installed in the patron's nervous system. Interestingly, the trauma contains the artist's unquantifiable sacrifice as well as the patron's, for both have agreed to tamper, to take the chance of getting hooked.

Should Enright's action-based gestures be seen exclusively as art? Perhaps it makes sense to view them also as some form of postmodern (anti-)therapy. In psychotherapeutic treatment, it can be hard to differentiate between negative and positive. Sometimes the sensations get reversed. Sometimes pain produces catharsis. Can the torque of fear be seen as a pharmaceutical, a mood enhancer, skillfully administered in sculptural doses? Does Enright have the authority? Does it matter? Nowadays, it seems anything can be considered legitimate therapy, so long as there is a trained (even if self-taught) expert paid generously to function as guide or instigator.

Enright's services appear to combine a number of therapies—a haywire tangle of indulgence and self-help.[8] However, Enright rejects the idea that he is anything other than an artist focused on the cultural integrity of the ordeal. He denies any interest in a medical or scientific role, denies such a deep responsibility, and insists that each ordeal be regarded a work of art. Consider Antonin Artaud's "Theater of Cruelty," the transgressions of Viennese Actionism, or the mischievous tricks of the Situationst International.

Every work being unique, the stakes are high for each of Brock's ordeals to go exactly according to plan. There is great potential for error, and any miscalculation could be hazardous for participants and innocent bystanders alike. Thus, each ordeal is an open-ended work situated between a dangerous game and therapy-in-progress. The result for both artist and collector, while potentially debilitating, is also a starting point for groundbreaking realization and the conquering of inhibitions. The late cultural critic and Freudian theorist Philip Rieff suggests that "Art as therapy takes on a certain theurgic (or supernatural) quality exactly the reverse of therapy applied scientifically."[9] To partake is to be swept up in Enright's experimental mad-science as it is being written.

And how do Enright's ordeals fare when viewed as games—especially when Enright, who has a suspiciously Beuysian sense of his own myth, claims that everything he has done up until now, including his application to Columbia's MFA program, has been scripted as part of another artist's reality game, begun when Enright was an undergraduate at Baltimore's Maryland Institute College of Art?

According to Eric Zimmerman: *The classical model of a game has a clear separation between the real and the artificial. To enter into the game—whether Chess, Tag, or World of Warcraft—is to enter into a social contract known by all players. Johan Huizinga called this special time and space of a game the 'magic circle' and indeed there is something magical about the way that games can impart meaning to player action. This model of a game is the opposite of a hoax, because a hoax requires unwilling, involuntary participation. Some games in recent decades have been designed to blur the boundary between the real and the artificial, including ARGs (alternate reality games that use fictional websites), LARPing (live-action role-playing, often in public spaces) and Big Games (games that combine digital technology and real-world spaces on a large scale). Such games can be traced to the New Games Movement in the 70s, as well as to Fluxus and Happenings works.*[10]

Though Enright's work has stayed within the confines of "safety," and though it has been endorsed by numerous international galleries and museum curators, it seems to have scared off many in the upper echelons of the culture world for reasons of taste rather than security. Conventional collectors may be more afraid, ultimately, of what Enright's work signifies than what it actually is—which is ironic if you consider that the work is so open-signified. It has been reviewed by respected art journalists including *The New York Times'* Roberta Smith, but the sense of its placement crossed from high to low when the kidnappings were discovered by the tabloids and pop magazines like *Rolling Stone.* After Enright appeared on ABC's daytime television talk show *The View,* actor Toby McGuire even contacted the artist about purchasing the rights to his life story.

With its focus on ratings, the mainstream media has packaged and re-packaged Enright's work, portraying it as a testosterone-driven hybrid of violence, terrorism, and S&M. However, it turns out that the truth is much more nuanced. Enright has experienced quite a wide range of Do's and Don'ts by now, so that some of his ordeals are hardly taboo by any standards and might even be seen as quite innocent or banal. On the other hand, some of his ordeals are comprised of fetishes, therapies, and traumas far weirder and more Lynchian than garden-variety S&M, more erotic and particular than the duct tape and dildos portrayed in *Rolling Stone's* gonzo reportage. It has always been Enright's goal to remove himself from the work, and for each piece to purely reflect the client. In fact, nowadays he doesn't normally participate in the kidnappings at all, instead appearing at the beginning and end, *à la* Mr. Roark in the classic seventies television show *Fantasy Island.*

Enright does produce photographic documentation of the ordeals. Though of course the situation is completely inverted, these works can bare an un-

40 New York Post, Sunday, July 21, 2002 nypost.com

Philip Recchia
precchia@nypost.com

Coming soon to TV near you: the panic boom

Given my aversion to any landscape that doesn't feature at least three bistros, two newsstands and one Duane Reade every 300 yards, I don't ever ski. I'd be stranded on a mountaintop and have to build a signal fire using only a pile of acorns and my car keys.

On the other hand, I might one day have to crash-land an airplane in Central Park, especially if my nephew runs off for an Italian ice and leaves me holding the radio-control unit.

That's why I'm paying close attention to the new TBS series "Worst-Case Scenario," which teaches us to survive terrifying turns for the worse, so we may live to tell our grandchildren that they won't be inheriting any money anytime soon.

I can testify, for instance, it's learned how to escape from the top floor of a burning luxury hotel by knotting bed sheets together and rappelling out the window.

This procedure comes in handy if (a) the hotel is on fire; or (b) we suddenly realize that the items we've consumed from the mini-bar, including six splits of Veuve Clicquot at $89.50 a pop, weren't comped.

In another scenario, a car is driving along a dirt road when a flash flood sweeps across its path, submerging the vehicle completely. Here, we're instructed to stay put until an hour or two help if we're eaten within the past hour, as chances are we'll get cramps.

If we haven't eaten, we should pick up a cell phone and call Domino's because, conditions being what they are, our pizza will never arrive in less than 30 minutes, so there won't be any charge.

For all the show's useful information, however, I fear it gives Americans a false sense of security at a time when rogue CEOs, lascivious clerics and corrupt TV homemakers continue to threaten our financial and spiritual well-being.

Case in point: Each scenario is enacted by professional stuntmen, whose reactions are markedly different from those of professional laymen, such as myself.

I'm paying close attention to the new series "Worst-Case Scenario," which teaches us to survive terrifying turns for the worse, so we may live to tell our grandchildren that they won't be inheriting any money anytime soon.

Say I'm gliding through the Florida Everglades when a 15-foot crocodile streaks onto the rear boat without a ticket. Today I then would scream in fear in face with the carnivorous creature.

At that point, I'd dash behind the nearest fat guy and frantically douse him with Worcestershire sauce in an effort to make myself look less appetizing. Meanwhile, the other passengers — other guys — would jump ship, leaving that fat guy or no fat guy, we were all going to die.

As opposed to the "Worst-Case Scenario" version, wherein the croc secretes back into the water after being whacked on the snout with a pointing pole.

Although I am not proud of such behavior, and, in fact, I'm ashamed of it, I believe the Indiana Jones-like image — particularly in the presence of women and potential employers — is a far more valuable lesson than anything presented on the so-called reality series.

With danger lurking around every corner these days, it's best to start panicking now and avoid the holiday rush.

Fear factor!

The last empowering rush: paying to feel helpless

By CLAIRE MITCHELL

James, a 29-year-old artist and designer from Williamsburg, woke up with a start one morning in May to a rancid smell and half a dozen masked men surrounding his bed.

He felt a hood get up but couldn't move. Something heavy, thick and furry was over his mouth. He couldn't breath. The men pounced on him, binding his wrists and ankles with duct tape and blindfolding him. They stripped him to his underwear.

"It was extremely frightening," James recalled. "But I couldn't even yell because the fur was in my mouth."

Over the next nine hours, James underwent a terrifying ordeal. He was hauled out of his apartment, packed into a van and taken for off. At one point, his captors removed the blindfold briefly, and James realized he was in a crowded department store. No one came to his aid.

In fact, the men, still in masks, snapped photos of him and shot videos. He struggled against the tape, but doing so was useless. Besides, he was outnumbered.

When it was all over — after he was dumped in a motel room in New Jersey — James felt greatly disappointed. He had paid $1,500 for the privilege of being snatched from his home and carried off. And he hadn't gotten away.

Say hello to the latest wish-fulfillment fantasy: being abducted.

James is not alone. A host of others have gone through similar "kidnappings," each with his or her own motivation.

Some want to face down a primal fear. Others are looking for a survivalist challenge, a test of will and cunning. Many simply seek the adrenaline rush that comes with being taken and thrust into threatening circumstances.

The architect of these abductions is Brock Enright, a 28-year video-game loving artist who holds a masters' degree in fine arts from Columbia and works out of his home in Williamsburg. He's done 25 of them.

Come up with the money, and he'll help you design your own, custom-made abduction, which begins with a series of intensive interviews and leads to a surprise assault at a time and place he determines.

Enright, who asks each client to provide detailed information on his daily routine along with a list of biggest fears, says every encounter is handled differently, according to the desires of the "victim."

"We give them free reign to start off with, and then we narrow it down to what is realistic, what is not so dangerous. We show them different scenarios, but we pretty much try our best to meet their needs."

Some clients want to be tortured (or at least, to feel horribly humiliated). Other have asked to be squeezed into the tightest space possible and forced to stay there.

James sought to cope with a real-life nightmare.

"There was an immediate high, a lot of adrenaline, a lot of joy and fear at the same time — joy at the absurdity of it all, and fear at not being fully in control of what was going on," he said.

Among the list of fears he'd given Enright was his terror of sharks, which became translated into something both ridiculous and menacing at the same time: The suffocating fur that nearly cut off James' air was actually one of Enright's hired team of "players," a large man dressed in a fetid panda suit.

James also felt a need to experience a dangerous situation, which he found in a department store. At the end of his experience, James was left blindfolded in that musty room wondering if his kidnappers had left him or if this was just a break in his ordeal.

He got a clue when he spotted his clothing in a neat package and a chocolate mint his abductors had left on the pillow.

By contrast, Jason, a 26-year-old carpenter from Bushwick, was returned, blindfolded, to his own apartment in a recent abduction. Jason said the time he'd paid to be kidnapped. Enright considers him a regular.

Jason said he's given Enright and his players carte blanche to devise whatever plan might provide the greatest panic.

"I didn't want any scars, and didn't want my life to be threatened in any way, but I wanted to be really scared."

He said the second abduction was the most trying psychologically. He supplied Enright with a window and gutter date, which they grab him. They struck about two days, but that still allowed for plenty of time for Jason's fear factor to run high.

"Everything I was doing became suspect," he said. "Even taking a shower when I couldn't see or hear things properly became an uncanny experience."

Like some other fantasies concocted by Enright, Jason's second kidnapping had a bit of a sexual-fantasy

Facing the "fantasy": tied up and stripped to the waist.

New York Post, July 21, 2002, p. 40.

(PHOTO: NEW YORK POST)

canny resemblance to the now infamous Abu Ghraib photographs taken by U.S. prison guards in 2004. In her powerful analysis of those photos for *The New York Times Magazine* that year, Susan Sontag wrote about the guards' perverse inclusion of themselves in their souvenir snapshots of torture and domination—their portrayal of themselves as wannabe superstars, celebrities in pictures not meant to represent atrocities but to be sent home like greeting cards or, in a sense, works of art.

While documentation of Enright's ordeals may appear to be as exploitative and upsetting as the photographs from Abu Ghraib, the abductions may also have their own bizarre heroism and the potential to function as personal wake-up calls for some members of a society who have become too befuddled and passive about their own fears or "terrors." In Enright's voluntary involuntary abductions, the collector not only fears the assault, but engages with the ongoing game of horror and anticipation. The work thus provides a permanent adrenalin rush, a daily adventure, even when nothing is really happening.

Although Enright has dozens of clients in his roster and hundreds of abductions under his belt, this body of work represents a genre in its early stages. The artist is still something of a crackpot with a band of willing guinea pigs, a Dr. Moreau—not unlike early Freud, Reich, or Lacan—a Frankenstein.[11] Still inchoate, unformed, Enright's is a newsworthy text, a symptom, and not necessarily a scientific (or pseudo-scientific) thesis. As they should be, the players are all in over their heads.

1) From Vilma Gold Gallery press release announcing Brock Enright's 2005 exhibition, "Raising Dead Mothers."
2) From a conversation with Brock Enright, October 25, 2007.
3) This quote is extracted from an unrecorded telephone conversation with game theorist and game designer Eric Zimmerman on October. 19, 2007. For more on this topic, see: Katie Saten and Eric Zimmerman (eds.) *The Game Design Reader: A Rules of Play Anthology* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006).
4) Claire Mitchell, "Tie Me Up! Fear Factor!" *New York Pulse* (insert), *NY Post* (Sunday, July 21, 2002), p. 40.
5) Jon Hart, "Hostage Situation," *TimeOut New York* (June 20–27, 2002), p. 55.
6) Vilma Gold (see note 1).
7) D. H. Lawrence, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of D. H. Lawrence: Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious*, edited by Bruce Steele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) p. 9.
8) "The therapy of all therapies is not to attach oneself exclusively to any particular therapy, so that no illusion may survive of some end beyond an intensely private sense of well-being to be generated in the living of life itself." Philip Rieff, *Triumph of the Therapeutic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 261.
9) Ibid. p. 225.
10) Eric Zimmerman (see note 3).
11) From an unrecorded telephone conversation with Lacanian analyst Mark Stafford, who loosely compared Enright's work to forms of "wild" analysis practiced in the 1950s, noting the Hungarian psychoanalyst Sándor Ferenczi, who broke from Freud's inner circle to pursue his own radical methodology.

Brock Enright with client / mit Kunde, 2004, Best Western Motel. (PHOTO: BROCK ENRIGHT & KRISTINA WILLIAMSON)

Ausser Kontrolle

JEREMY SIGLER

Zum ersten Mal hörte ich von Brock Enrights teuren «Designer Kidnappings»[1] – oder, wie er sie nennt, «Ordeals» (Zerreissproben, Martyrien) – im Jahr 2001, als er das MFA-Programm der Columbia University absolvierte. Sammler, die seine Kunst kaufen wollten, mussten sich einem Prüfungsverfahren unterziehen, um dann zu einem Zeitpunkt, wenn sie es am wenigsten erwarteten, entführt, in Geiselhaft genommen und, um einen Fox-News-Moderator zu zitieren, «gefoltert» zu werden.[2] Wie muss man sich einen Sammler vorstellen, der sich derart bedingungslos auf eine Ökonomie des Begehrens und eine Dialektik symbolischer Herrschaft und Unterwerfung einzulassen scheint? Es nötigte mir Respekt ab, dass dieser junge Künstler so kühn war, einem Sammler, der seine Kunst kaufen wollte, buchstäblich das zu geben, was er haben wollte: die Einbindung – die unmittelbare Beteiligung an der Kunstproduktion, der Wunsch, dem brutalen und oft erniedrigenden, skatologischen, kindischen Element ausgesetzt zu werden, das ein Bestandteil dieses Prozesses ist.

Zuerst bittet Enright seinen potenziellen Kunden, einen detaillierten Fragebogen auszufüllen. Darauf folgt die «Meet and Greet»-Phase – das auf Band auf-

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Scene

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New York Post, Sunday, July 21, 2002

nypost.com

"People see the camera and assume we're making a video," says Brock Enright, at right with a paying customer and above with his team of "players."

tone is if the wouldn't go into the details). Many of them, however, do not.

Others, however, wanted to confront their terror head-on. One man, afraid of a bridge, he she was wanted and made to march across the Brooklyn Bridge, led by one of Enright's team dressed in a mantle and mask. She made it across but was trembling every step.

Steven, a 22-year-old undergraduate at a college in lower Manhattan, says it was all about him and his friends at the school's fraternity "doing something intense. We like to get [illegible]."

So they pooled their monies, and Steven was selected as the victim. Now that he's been abducted, he says, others on campus want to give it a try.

"My friends at the dorm all want to do it — so right now I'm trying to get them [illegible] money together," he said.

Clients mostly come to Enright through word of mouth, though some newcomers have approached him following an exhibit he had recently at Brooklyn's Dumbo Arts Center. He also offered a "kidnapping service" — for the discounted price of $500.

Much of his art, a mix of video images, sculpture and drawing (that's part of the Gotham show, "Video Games," has been generated by his abductions. The exhibit, "Party Watcher," ran from June 15 to July 6.

A great deal of preparation and planning goes into each case, Enright, who lives in Brooklyn, says. He says, drawing detailed daily calendars to build a profile of clients' day-to-day lives, and he does surveillance on they go about their business.

Often, he's given the keys to client apartments. The process takes as little as a few days, as long as a few months.

An extensive contract signed by each client indemnifies Enright and gives him the right to use the images for his art.

"The situation is controlled by me and the players," he said. "The whole situation is planned out so that the least public interaction is possible. In many other countries, such as Colombia or the Philippines, kidnapping is a lucrative and dangerous business, and ransoms are very high.

"Partly because he videotapes the encounters, Enright has not yet come up against any police interference or heroic action from misguided good Samaritans.

"People see the video camera and assume that we are making a movie," said Enright. "American culture lets us get away with it. We couldn't do this kind of thing in so many other countries."

Even in this the sort of experiment his clients feel comfortable sharing with others in their lives?

Some do and some don't. James, for example, has been selective about who he has informed.

"My girlfriend thinks I am nuts," he said. "And there is no way my boss could ever find out."

Jason, who grew up in a military family in Germany, has fewer qualms. He's told friends and family.

"It's crazy, but it is really interesting, and my mother was concerned at first, but relaxed when I explained everything to her."

New York Post, July 21, 2002, p. 42.

(PHOTO: NEW YORK POST)

gezeichnete Live-Interview, das Andy Warhols und Gerard Malangas *Screen Tests* für die «Shock and Awe»-Ära aktualisiert. Sobald alle diese Elemente zusammengestellt sind, beginnt er, das «Martyrium» wie ein Regisseur zu planen, er studiert Pläne, wählt die Requisiten aus, heuert Mitspieler an und trainiert sie.

Es ist schwer zu sagen, inwieweit der Künstler seiner Intuition und Improvisationsgabe vertraut, wenn er anhand dieser Vorbereitungen seine auf die Ängste dieses Sammlers ausgerichteten Aktionen plant. Schliesslich kann er nur erraten, was den Sammler w i r k l i c h in Angst und Schrecken versetzt, und nur hoffen, dass er ihre wunden Punkte und Phobien richtig trifft. Der Game-Designer und Theoretiker Eric Zimmerman bemerkte: «Was Enright macht, ist ein Spiel mit einer unfreiwilligen Entführung, nie jedoch eine wirkliche. Seine ‹Ordeals› haben viel mit einem Horrorfilm gemeinsam – einem einvernehmlich eingegangenen temporären Kontrollverlust, um sich einem emotionalen Nervenkitzel hinzugeben. Wie bei einem Horrorfilm (und wie bei einem Computerspiel) gibt es auch bei Enrights Inszenierungen letzten Endes einen sicheren Raum ausserhalb dieses Nervenkitzels, der, auch wenn er das Andere dieser Erfahrung ist, ihr Halt gibt.»[3)]

In diesem riskanten Spiel muss der Sammler seine persönlichen «Do's and Don'ts» angeben. Aber heisst «Nein» in erotischen Annäherungsversuchen nicht oft «Ja»? Straft die Sprache den, der spricht, nicht oft Lügen? Ein «Entführungsopfer» sagt zum Beispiel: «Ich wollte keine Narben, und ich wollte nicht in Lebensgefahr geraten, aber ich wollte mich zu Tode fürchten.»[4)] Ein anderer Klient: «Ich wollte, dass mir die Kontrolle über das Geschehen restlos genommen wurde ... Ich wollte keinen Zweifel daran haben, dass dieser Mensch mich töten würde.»[5)] Wie diese Aussagen zeigen, stellt dieses Spiel für beide Seiten eine Herausforderung dar. Enright muss sich Vorgaben geben lassen, um die Ware liefern zu können. Er muss einen Weg finden, extrem und sicher zugleich vorzugehen, den Sammler zu schockieren, aber nicht zu verletzen – ihn einem Horrortrip auszusetzen, keinem Horror.

Indem Enright unangekündigt mit einer an *Clockwork Orange* erinnernden Schlägerbande das Büro oder einen anderen gängigen Aufenthaltsort seines Kunden stürmt, ihm die Augen verbindet, mit Klebeband den Mund zuklebt und die Hände fesselt, ihn an einem unbekannten, verlassenen Ort absetzt, um ihn dort zu demütigen, und ihn schliesslich einige Tage später nach Hause zurückbringt, versetzt er der hierarchischen Norm einen ganz schön harten Schlag. In dieser Schlussfolgerung kommt natürlich möglicherweise ein ungerechtes Vorurteil zum Ausdruck, eine Verkennung dessen, was es wirklich bedeutet, in einer Zeit spektakulärer Kunstdeals und des *Jackass*-TV ein Kunstsammler zu sein, oder eben auch ein Künstler, der mit den Medien umzugehen weiss. Einer Zeit mit einer generellen dadaistischen Empfänglichkeit für jugendliche Provokation, Bauch-

landungen und albernes Verhalten in der Öffentlichkeit – als eine Art actiongeladene, radikale *Street Art* für das Teenager-TV-Publikum. Vielleicht geht das am eigentlichen Punkt vorbei, dass nämlich die Sammler, wer immer sie sein mögen, sich freiwillig für Enrights «massgeschneiderte ‹sichere› Angsterfahrungen» anmelden.[6)]

Wie ständig zu hören und zu lesen ist, leben wir in einer Zeit des Turbokunstkapitalismus; unter Sammlern wie unter Künstlern herrscht eine harte Konkurrenz. Man denke nur an einen bestimmten heutigen Typus des Sammlers junger Kunst. Noch nie gab es so viele Selfmade-Kunstkenner, die um eine so grosse Vielfalt an von so vielen internationalen Galerien und Künstlern mit MFA-Zertifikat angebotenen potenziell wertvollen und gültigen Kunstwerken wetteifern. Ein neues, unübersehbares Phänomen eines furchtlosen Sammlers, der als Neuling die Kunstmessen und die Hinterzimmer der Galerien stürmt, der vor einer Hedge-Fonds-Mentalität nicht zurückzuscheuen scheint, der unglaublich taktisch vorgehen muss, um das Rennen um den begehrten roten Punkt zu gewinnen. Mit Bieterschlachten um zeitgenössische Kunst machen die Auktionshäuser Schlagzeilen, und die Sieger sind mit einem Schlag in aller Munde. Vor diesem Hintergrund betrachtet, könnte sich Enrights expandierender Kundenkreis aus den frühen Adaptoren zusammensetzen, die im Kunstsammeln eine Art Kontaktsport mit extremem Körpereinsatz sehen. Eine neue Zielgruppe, die den Künstler nicht nur im Geländewagen auf seiner Safari begleiten will. Diese Leute wollen sich auch die Ärmel hochkrempeln und die Hände w i r k l i c h schmutzig machen.

BROCK ENRIGHT, SLEEPING CLIENT / SCHLAFENDER KUNDE, 2002, Polaroid. (PHOTO: BROCK ENRIGHT)

Der Sammler und der Künstler finden sich also zur selben Zeit im selben Boot, sie stehen unter ein und demselben fiebrigen Kulturzwang. Beide sind sich ihres gemeinsamen Wahnsinns, der gemeinsamen Fetische und Begierden völlig bewusst. Ungeachtet ihrer Vermögensverhältnisse, ihrer gesellschaftlichen Stellung, ihrer Ausbildung, ihres Geschmacks nehmen sie beide am selben Martyrium teil – am Martyrium der psychologischen Selbsterkenntnis. Dieses Martyrium meinte D. H. Lawrence, als er von einem «unbeschreiblichen Horror der Verdrängungen» sprach, «die Freud uns zu Bewusstsein gebracht hat. Geknebelt, gefesselt, wahnsinnige Verdrängungen, sexuelle Komplexe, fäkale Hemmungen, Traummonster.»[7)]

Einige Sammler wussten natürlich immer schon Alternativen zu finden, in denen verwegene, exotische Verhaltensweisen einkalkuliert werden mussten. Aber genauso leicht kann man sich vorstellen, dass einige Klienten Enrights möglicherweise naiver sind und sich auf eine krasse Erfahrung mit einem Typen in einer Batman-Maske einlassen, bevor sie sich die potenziellen Konsequenzen vor Augen geführt haben. Denn erst nachdem eine Entführung stattgefunden hat, nachdem das Werk in der Psyche des Sammlers eine Narbe hinterlassen hat, wird in seinem Nervensystem ein Syndrom mit langfristiger Zusammensetzung und poetischem Nachhall installiert. Ein Trauma, das sowohl das unquantifizierbare Opfer des Künstlers wie das des Sammlers enthält, denn beide haben in ein Spiel mit ungewissem Ausgang eingewilligt, in das Risiko, hängen zu bleiben.

Sollten Enrights auf Action basierende Gesten ausschliesslich als Kunst betrachtet werden? Vielleicht ist es sinnvoll, sie auch als eine postmoderne (Anti-)Therapieform zu sehen. In der psychothera-

peutischen Behandlung ist die Unterscheidung zwischen negativen und positiven Empfindungen oft schwierig. Manchmal kehren sie sich in ihr Gegenteil um. Manchmal bringt Schmerz eine Katharsis hervor. Kann das Drehmoment der Angst als ein Pharmazeutikum betrachtet werden, als ein stimmungshebendes Mittel, wenn es denn geschickt in skulpturalen Dosen verabreicht wird? Ist Enright dazu autorisiert? Spielt das überhaupt eine Rolle? Heutzutage scheint alles als eine legitime Therapie angesehen werden zu können, solange es einen (selbst autodidaktisch) geschulten Experten gibt, der eine anleitende oder anstiftende Funktion ausübt und sich dafür grosszügig honorieren lässt.

Enrights Dienstleistungen scheinen mehrere Therapien miteinander zu kombinieren – ein heilloses Gewirr aus Nachgiebigkeit und Selbsthilfe.[8] In seiner beispiellosen therapeutischen Rolle beharrt Enright ohne Wenn und Aber auf seinem Standpunkt, nichts anderes als ein Künstler zu sein und sich allein für die kulturelle Integrität jedes einzelnen «Ordeals» zu interessieren. Als historische Bezugspunkte seien Antonin Artauds «Theater der Grausamkeit» genannt, die Überschreitungen des Wiener Aktionismus oder die boshaften Streiche der Situationistischen Internationale. Er weist jedes Interesse an einer medizinischen oder wissenschaftlichen Rolle von sich, jede tiefe Verantwortung, die damit verbunden wäre – anders als Freud, der alles tat, was in seiner Macht stand, um die Glaubwürdigkeit der psychoanalytischen Praxis innerhalb des medizinischen Bereichs zu sichern.

Jedes Werk ist einzigartig, und es hängt viel davon ab, dass jedes «Ordeal» genau nach Plan verläuft. Jedes Mal gibt es ein grosses Fehlerpotenzial, und jede Fehleinschätzung könnte nicht nur für die Beteiligten, sondern auch für unbeteiligte Anwesende fatale Folgen haben. Jedes «Ordeal» ist somit ein Werk mit offenem Ende, angesiedelt zwischen einem gefährlichen Spiel und einer fortlaufenden Therapie. Sowohl für den Künstler wie für den Sammler ist das potenziell entkräftende Ergebnis zugleich ein Ausgangspunkt, von dem aus Hemmungen erkannt und besiegt werden können. Um den Kulturkritiker und Freudianer Philip Rieff zu zitieren: «Kunst als Therapie hat etwas Theurgisches (oder Übernatürliches), das in diametralem Gegensatz zu einer nach wissenschaftlichen Kriterien angewandten Therapie steht.»[9] Teilzunehmen heisst, in Enrights experimentelle Wahnsinnswissenschaft hineinzugeraten, während sie geschrieben wird.

Und wie nehmen Enrights «Ordeals» sich aus, wenn sie als Spiele betrachtet werden – zumal wenn Enright (der einen verdächtig Beuysschen Sinn für seinen eigenen Mythos hat) behauptet, alles, was er bislang gemacht habe, einschliesslich seiner Teilnahme am MFA-Programm der Columbia University, sei als Teil des Reality-Games eines anderen Künstlers geschrieben worden, das einsetzte, als Enright am Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore studierte?

Eric Zimmerman sagt: *Im klassischen Spielmodell gibt es eine klare Trennung zwischen dem Wirklichen und dem Künstlichen. Ein Spiel zu spielen – ob Schach, Fangen oder World of Warcraft – heisst, einen allen Spielern bekannten Gesellschaftsvertrag einzugehen. Johan Huizinga hat diese Zeit und diesen Raum eines Spiels als ‹magischen Kreis› bezeichnet, und darin, wie ein Spiel den Handlungen der Spieler Bedeutung verleihen kann, liegt tatsächlich etwas Magisches. Dieses Spielmodell ist das Gegenteil von einem Streich, denn wem ein Streich gespielt wird, der nimmt unfreiwillig daran teil, ohne es zu wollen. In den letzten Jahrzehnten sind Spiele entwickelt worden, in denen sich die Grenze zwischen dem Wirklichen und dem Künstlichen verwischt. Dazu zählen ARGs («Alternate Reality Games», die fiktive Webseiten verwenden), LARPing («Live-Action Role-Playing», oft in öffentlichen Räumen) und «Big Games» (Spiele, in denen digitale Technologie und grossdimensionale reale Räume miteinander kombiniert werden). Solche Spiele können auf das «New Games Movement» der 70er-Jahre und auch auf die Fluxus und Happening-Bewegung zurückgeführt werden.*[10]

Obwohl Enrights Werk die Grenzen der «Sicherheit» nie wirklich überschritten hat und obwohl es die Akzeptanz internationaler Galerien und Museen findet, scheint es – aus Gründen des Geschmacks, nicht der Sicherheit – viele abzuschrecken. Konventionelle Sammler fürchten sich möglicherweise letzten Endes eher vor dem, was Enrights Werk bezeichnet, als vor dem, was es tatsächlich ist – eine Ironie angesichts der Tatsache, dass dieses Werk so bedeutungsoffen ist. Es ist von angesehenen Kunst-

BROCK ENRIGHT, UNTITLED, 2001, video still, man in white appearing in a client's ordeal / OHNE TITEL, Videostill, Mann in Weiss erscheint bei einer Entführung. (PHOTO: BROCK ENRIGHT)

journalisten rezensiert worden, doch es sank aus dem Bereich der Hoch- in den der Trivialkultur hinab, als die Boulevardpresse und Pop-Magazine wie *Rolling Stone* die Kidnappings für sich entdeckten. Nach Enrights Auftritt in der ABC-Fernsehtalkshow *The View* wollte der Schauspieler Toby McGuire dem Künstler die Rechte an der Geschichte seines Lebens abkaufen. (Er lehnte ab.)

Die Mainstream-Medien sind hauptsächlich an Einschaltquoten und Auflagenhöhen interessiert; sie bringen Enrights Werk in der Sensationsecke unter und präsentieren es als ein testosteronüberladenes Gemisch aus Gewalt, Terrorismus und SM. Mittlerweile jedoch hat Enright seine Erfahrungen mit einer breiten Palette an «Do's and Don'ts» gemacht. Einige seiner «Ordeals» sind kaum noch als Tabubrüche zu bezeichnen und könnten sogar als eher harmlos oder banal betrachtet werden. Die darin zu findenden Fetische, Therapieansätze und Traumata sind oft – wie die in den Filmen von David Lynch – viel merkwürdiger als das Sado-Maso-Standardsortiment, viel erotischer und ausgefallener als die Klebebänder und Dildos in den Gonzo-Reportagen im *Rolling Stone*. Enright hat schon immer das Ziel verfolgt, sich selbst aus seinem Werk herauszuhalten; jedes «Ordeal» soll sich einzig und allein auf den Klienten konzentrieren. Tatsächlich nimmt er inzwischen normalerweise nicht mehr selbst an den Kidnappings teil; wie Mister Roarke in *Fantasy Island*, einem Fernsehserienklassiker der 70er- und 80er-Jahre, tritt er nur noch am Anfang und am Ende einer Episode auf.

Enrights photographische Dokumentationen zeigen eine unheimliche Ähnlichkeit mit den berühmt-berüchtigt gewordenen Photographien, die 2004 von amerikanischen Gefängniswärtern im Internierungslager Abu Ghraib im Irak aufgenommen wurden. In ihrer eindringlichen Analyse dieser Photos, die sie im selben Jahr im *New York Times Magazine* veröffentlichte, befasste sich Susan Sontag mit der Perversität

BROCK ENRIGHT, THRONE, 2000, polaroid, interrogation seat, room 303, Columbia University. / THRON, Verhör-Sessel. (PHOTO: BROCK ENRIGHT)

der Erinnerungsphotos der Wärter, die ihre Teilnahme an Misshandlungs- und Erniedrigungsszenen festgehalten hatten – sie präsentierten sich als Möchtegernsuperstars, als Celebrities in Bildern, die als Grusskarten oder Photos mit künstlerischem Anspruch nach Hause geschickt werden sollten.

Auch wenn die Dokumentationen der «Ordeals» einen vielleicht ebenso ausbeuterischen und bestürzenden Eindruck machen wie die Photographien aus Abu Ghraib, die Entführungen haben ihren eigenen bizarren Heroismus, und möglicherweise können sie einer Gesellschaft, die, was ihre eigenen Ängste oder «Schrecken» betrifft, zu benebelt und passiv geworden ist, als Weckruf dienen. In Enrights freiwillig-unfreiwilligen Entführungen fürchtet der Sammler nicht nur die Attacke, sondern auch das andauernde Schreckens- und Erwartungsspiel. Das Werk liefert einen permanenten Adrenalinstoss, ein tägliches Abenteuer, selbst wenn eigentlich nichts passiert. In weiten Teilen findet Enrights Werk in der Phantasie des Teilnehmers – und in der unseren – statt.

Auch wenn die Nachfrage nicht abreisst und Enright schon auf Hunderte von Entführungen zurückblicken kann, so steckt sein Genre doch noch in den Kinderschuhen. Er ist ein Spinner, der mit seinen Versuchskaninchen experimentiert, ein Dr. Moreau – ganz ähnlich wie Freud, Reich oder Lacan – ein Frankenstein. Enrights Unterfangen steht noch am Anfang, stellt einen Text dar, der seine Form noch nicht gefunden hat, er ist noch für Schlagzeilen gut, ist ein Symptom, nicht unbedingt eine wissenschaftliche (oder pseudowissenschaftliche) These. Die Akteure stecken alle tief in der Bredouille, und das ist auch gut so.[11)]

1) Aus der Pressemitteilung der Vilma Gold Gallery zu Brock Enrights Ausstellung «Raising Dead Mothers» (2005).
2) Aus einem Gespräch mit Brock Enright, 25. Oktober 2007.
3) Nach einem nicht aufgezeichneten Telefongespräch mit dem Game-Theoretiker und Designer Eric Zimmerman, 19. Oktober 2007. Für weitere Informationen siehe: Eric Zimmerman, The game Designer Reader, A Rules of Play, Anthology, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006.
4) Claire Mitchell, «Tie Me Up! Fear Factor!», in *New York Pulse*, Beilage der *NY Post*, 21. Juli 2002, S. 40.
5) Jon Hart, «Hostage Situation», in: *TimeOut New York* (20.–27. Juni 2002), S. 55.
6) Wie Anm. 1.
7) D. H. Lawrence, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of D. H. Lawrence: Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious and Fantasia of the Unconscious*, hrsg. von Bruce Steele, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, S. 9.
8) «Die Therapie aller Therapien ist es, sich nicht ausschliesslich an eine Therapie zu binden, sodass keine Illusion von einem Ziel jenseits eines zutiefst privaten, nur aus dem Leben des Lebens hervorgehenden Wohlgefühl überleben kann.» Philip Rieff, *Triumph of the Therapeutic*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966, S. 261.
9) Ebenda, S. 225.
10) Eric Zimmerman, wie Anm. 4.
11) Aus einem nicht aufgezeichneten Telefongespräch mit Mark Stafford, einem Analytiker der Lacanschen Schule, der Enrights Werk mit in den 50er-Jahren praktizierten «wilden» Analyseformen verglich. Er nannte auch den ungarischen Psychoanalytiker Sándor Ferenczi (1873–1933), der sich aus dem inneren Kreis um Freud löste, um seinen eigenen radikalen methodischen Weg zu gehen.