

Zeitschrift: Parkett : the Parkett series with contemporary artists = Die Parkett-Reihe mit Gegenwartskünstlern

Herausgeber: Parkett

Band: - (2009)

Heft: 86: Collaborations John Baldessari, Carol Bove, Josiah McElheny, Philippe Parreno

Artikel: Insert for Parkett

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-681172>

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**FRANCES STARK
INSERT
FOR PARKETT**

A conversation with
my better half

about some of the things
I was grappling with

ended with the
exhortation

'you should read Bettina
Funcke's *Urgency*'.

So I did.

It felt delightfully
pertinent

to my recent thoughts.

In the end
(or at the end)

delight turned to anxiety

because of how
you closed

with that question*

meaning I'd have to
continue

the line of questioning

(answering?)

myself.

Post-delight anxiety
was followed by

procrastination
in the form

of wanting to keep
reading your words

so as not to have to
think or write

of or with my own.

A ray of hope appeared:

“Excerpted
from the chapter:

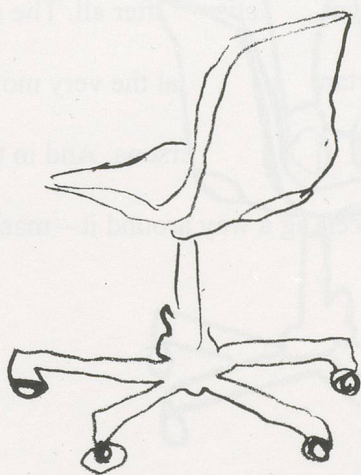
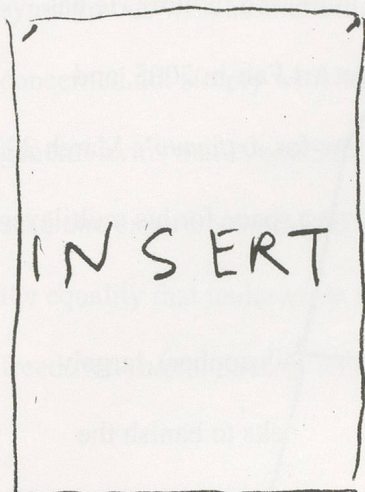
The Invention
of the Public as Enemy”

But the implied book
wasn't cited.

Looking for it led me
instead to

your
Displaced Struggles

wherein I recognized
myself as the artist
contending with

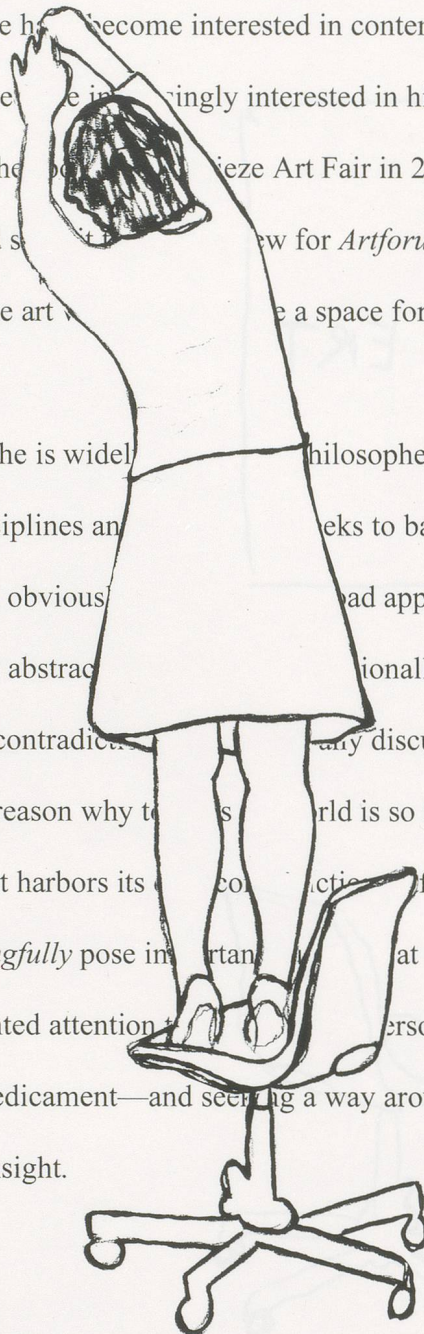


Displaced Struggles

Bettina Funcke

Why might philosopher Jacques Rancière have become interested in contemporary art, even as the art world, in neat symmetry, has become increasingly interested in him? He has apparently followed art for many years, he booked the Frieze Art Fair in 2005, and recently chose to publish an essay in and send it to the new *Artforum*'s March 2007 issue—all signs of his confidence that the art world would make a space for his multilayered discourse.

Rancière is not an easy read, yet he is widely read (as a philosopher), largely because he situates himself between disciplines and seeks to banish the division between specialist and amateur, obvious and hidden appeal. At the same time his philosophical work can be quite abstract and occasionally lodged at its core. Although this embrace of internal contradiction in any discussion of his thoughts on art, might it not also be the reason why the art world is so interested in his voice? The hothouse of contemporary art harbors its contradictions after all. The artist today finds it harder than ever to *meaningfully* pose important questions at the very moment that the culture has accorded unprecedented attention to the artist's persona. And in the difficult task of thinking through this predicament—and seeking a way around it—many have turned to Rancière's writings for insight.



One of the more intriguing ideas that Rancière has contributed to art discourse is an insistence that art and politics are simply two forms of what he calls “the distribution of the sensible”. The sensible is a sphere on which both art and politics act through processes of structuring, framing, identifying, and contextualising (that is, distribution). It is a kind of unstructured matter that precedes all else. The distribution of the sensible, then, is synonymous with aesthetics, a term Rancière employs in the sense of *aisthesis*: a science concerned not simply with beauty and art but also with appearance and perception, all general terms that evoke Schiller’s aesthetic education of man or Kant’s description of aesthetic experience. Indeed, Rancière’s own notion of aesthetic experience presupposes the equality that underwrote Kant’s formulation of the judgment of taste as a judgment freed from hierarchies of knowledge and social status.

plus-one as well as a division: a paradox at his very heart.

Such strategies were perhaps a response to an increasingly mediatized society. The artist needs new tools in order to be heard. Beuys and Warhol are in this respect outstanding in post-World War II Western art. Like Warhol, whom Beuys called "brother," Beuys operated under the assumption that the most affirmative artist enjoys the greatest success with the broadest audience because they affirm the public's latent suspicions of art as well as the public's hopes for it, thus meeting all expectations, which artists may then use to their own ends. A crucial difference separates them, however, and perhaps leaves Beuys as the last of a line: he made demands, while Warhol did not. In this sense, as an artist who both garners widespread influence and uses that influence to make concrete demands, was he the last urgent artistic position? Certainly one can point to other art with a sense of political urgency, for example, Act-Up, the Guerilla Girls, and other positions associated

with the "ident
1990s. That
it put an end
otherwise. The
tivism was no
cal dimension,
the realm of c
had become—
ic, and such st
to capture the

**"I prefer being
—Maurizio Cattelan**

Maurizio Cattelan's successful reception or trickster artist: clichés, but he last several years work that embrace culture and media to Beuys appears (*We Are the R* spacious exhibition was left last corner did representing the suspended from flaunting a lonely and helmanding space

Cattelan's might be the felled Po

entity politics" of the 1980s and era, however, is different, in that it is not based on mystical naïveté, sincere or naive. The worldness of their political action is no longer countered by any mystification, which might bring it back into the realm of art or imagination. Urgent art is not enough – or had to become – pragmatic strategies, in hindsight, may fail to engage the public's imagination.

"Being attacked to being ignored."

Cattelan

Cattelan counts as one of the more recent examples of the charlatan artist. He might play with mystical ideas but he makes no demands. Over the years he has managed to create a tension between lasting art and mass marketing. His personal debt appears in *La rivoluzione siamo Noi* (The Revolution), 2000, in which the exhibition hall of Zürich's Migros Museum was left virtually empty and only in the distance did the viewer encounter a puppet of the artist, clothed in a felt suit, hanging from a hanger on a clothing rack, with a mischievous smile yet ultimately helpless in the merciless and degrading pace of art.

His most successful work to date might be the *Ninth Hour* of *La Nona Ora* (*The Ninth*

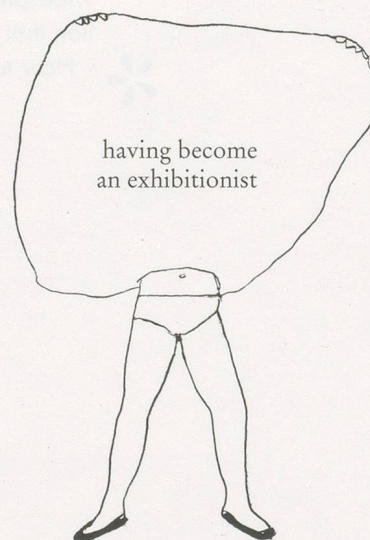
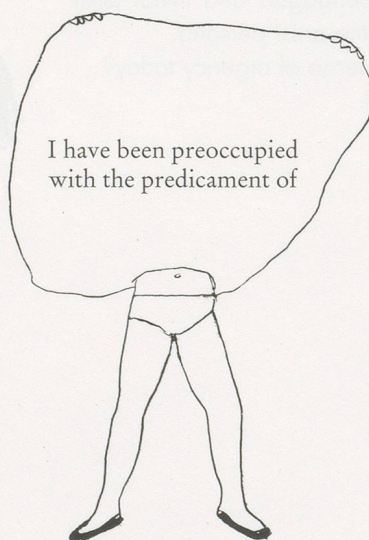
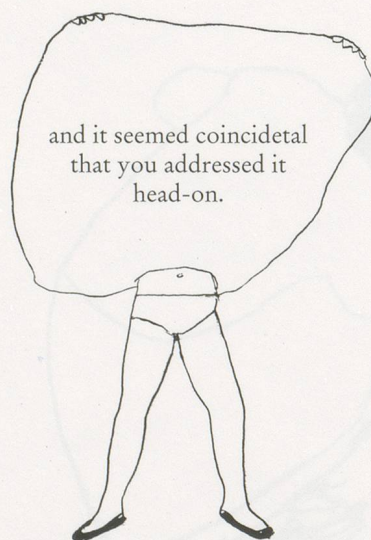
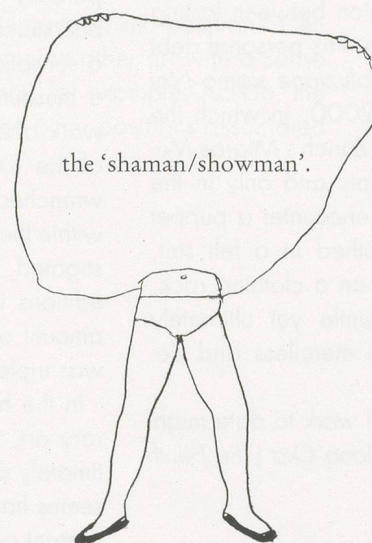
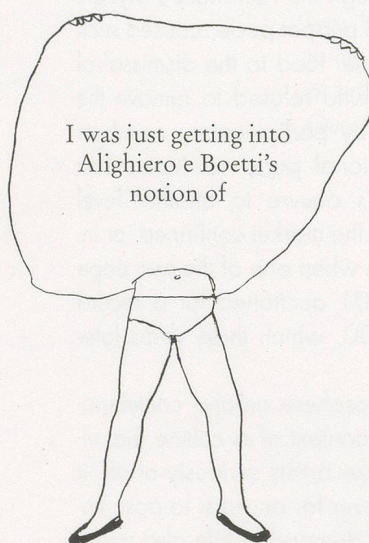
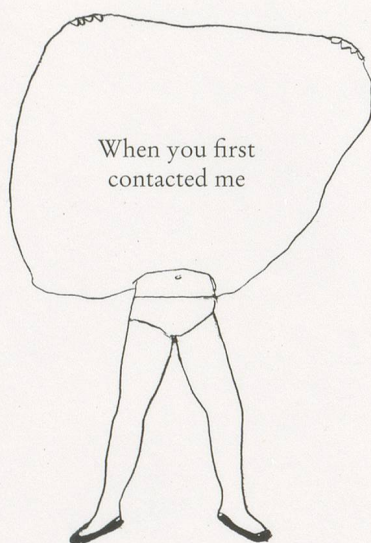
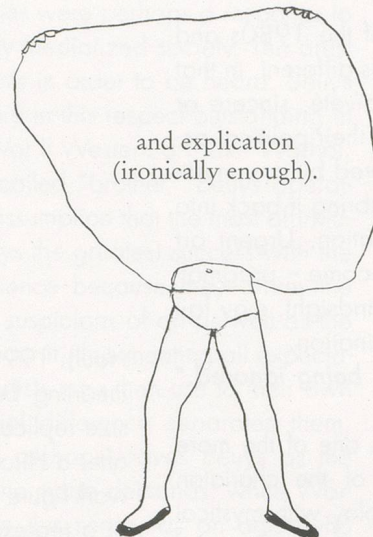
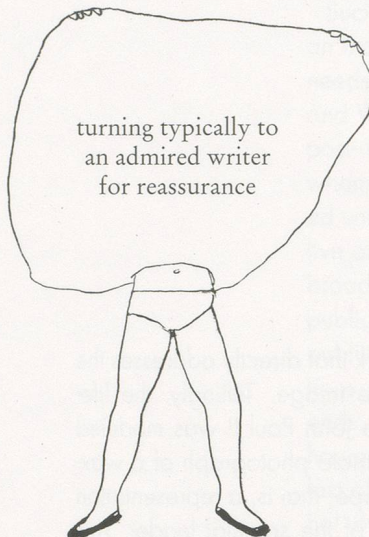
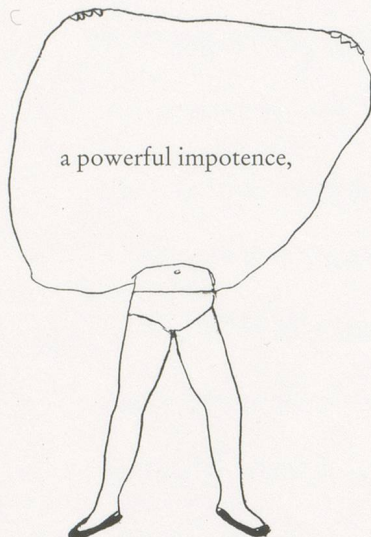
Hour), 1999, a work that directly addresses the meaning behind the image. Tellingly, the life-size replica of Pope John Paul II was modeled after a Hiroshi Sugimoto photograph of a wax-work figure of the pope, that is, a representation of a representation of the spiritual leader. This absurd scenario, in which a meteorite had apparently hurtled through the Kunsthalle's skylight and struck down this puppet pope, caused such a sensation that it later led to the dismissal of a museum director who refused to remove the work after protests by parliamentary members of the Catholic national party. *La Nona Ora* wrenched Cattelan's oeuvre to another level within the art world: the market confirmed, or instigated, his success when one of the two pope editions was in 2001 auctioned for a record amount of \$886,000, which three years later was tripled.

In the heated atmosphere around contemporary art, within the context of a culture that ultimately does not take artists seriously at all, it seems harder than ever for an artist to pose important questions or demands while also somehow making use of the unprecedented level of widespread yet disengaged and trivial attention that is paid to the artist persona.



How to create a sense of urgency today?

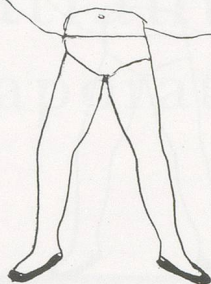




but am perhaps too
full of doubt



– more punk than hippy,
more fan than star –



to ever call
the counterpart to my



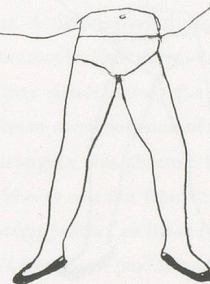
exhibitionist a shaman.



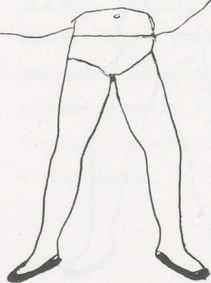
Tiring of my
two-faced attitude,



I imagine
a clear articulation



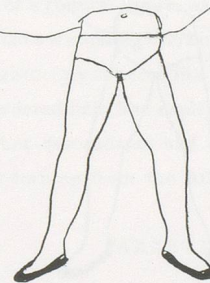
of that second
opposite-of-showman
face



might allow me to
seamlessly embody both



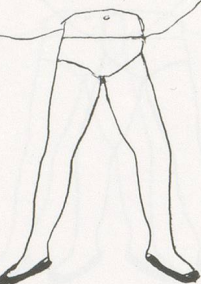
or give me an edge
to sever the ugly one.



In my last letter I
suggested I might attempt

'dismantling my tendency
toward insularism'

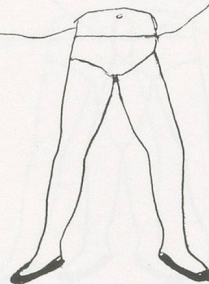
meaning I'd try to
tackle my own sense
of fraudulence



in this very insert,

this potentially very insular
exhibitionistic-y,
showman-y
insert.

So this as yet un-named
complementary character



had the audacity to put
you and what you do

into my thing
you asked me to put
in that other thing
that you do.

sincerely,
Frances Stark

