

Essay: Structure & Presentation

The Order of Things

Title Page

Contents

Abstract

Illustration List

Text Body

Reference List/Bibliography

The Order of Things

Title Page: Essential

Contents: Unnecessary in a 2500-word essay, essential for Dissertation

Abstract: Optional for this essay, essential for Dissertation

Illustration List: Essential (Unless you have not used illustrations)

Text Body: Essential - Word Count, 2,500 words including quotes

Reference List/Bibliography: Essential

Title Page

BA Fine Art: Studio, Site and Context

Research in Practice (ADAD5004)

Lecturers: Alex Duncan and Paul Duerinckx

Materials, time and disruption:

Intervening in the fabric of the present

9 May 2024

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Illustration List

List of figures

1. Found reclaimed floorboards, 'Muskoka Red Deer Brand'. Author's photos.
2. Screenshot images from internet research into 'Muskoka Red Deer Brand'.
Sources:

https://www.englishsalvage.co.uk/salvaged-strip-maple-flooring_item_26257
https://groups.google.com/g/rec.woodworking/c/KKxs_dHcXbQ
https://mycompanies.fandom.com/wiki/Muskoka_Wood_Manufacturing_Company
3. Dan Flavin *Untitled* (1968).
Source: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/197081>
4. Carl Andre *Magnesium Square* (1969).
Carl Andre/VAGA, New York and DACS, London 2024. Source:
<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/andre-144-magnesium-square-t01767>
5. Paul Klee *Angelus Novos* (1920).
Source: Photo by Christian Mantey (photographer), Kulturagent - Own work, Public Domain. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=37647723>
6. Gordon Matta-Clark *Bronx Floors* (1972-73).
Source: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/81396>
7. Mona Hatoum *Incommunicado* (1993).
Source: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hatoum-incommunicado-t06988>
8. Doris Salcedo *Untitled* (2003).
Source: <https://www.whitecube.com/artists/doris-salcedo>

Illustration List

- Fig 1.* Mallarmé, S. (1897). *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard (A Throw of the Dice will Never Abolish Chance)*. [Poem].
- Fig 2.* Arp, J. (1917). *Untitled (Collage with Squares Arranged according to the Laws of Chance)*. [Collage].
- Fig 3.* Duchamp, M. (1917). *Bicycle Wheel*. [Sculpture].
- Fig 4.* Ray, M. (1922). *Rayograph*. [Photogram].
- Fig 5.* Ray, M. (1920). *L'Enigme d'Isidore Ducasse*. [Sculpture].
- Fig 6.* Christo (1961). *Package on a Table*. [Sculpture].
- Fig 7.* Christo and Jeanne-Claude (1985). *The Pont Neuf Wrapped*. [Sculpture] Paris.
- Fig 8.* Cage, J. (1951). *Music of Changes*. [Sheet Music].
- Fig 9.* Ader, B. (1971). *Broken fall (organic)*. [Silver gelatin print].
- Fig 10.* Ader, B. (1970). *Fall I*. [Film].
- Fig 11.* Debord, G. (1955). *Psychogeographic guide of Paris*. [Print].
- Fig 12.* Oliver, A. (2019). *Dicing*. [Photographic Sculpture].
- Fig 13.* Duchamp, M. (1914). *3 stoppages étalon (3 Standard Stoppages)*. [Wood, glass and paint on canvas].
- Fig 14.* Baldessari, J. (1973). *Throwing Three Balls in the Air to Get a Straight Line (Best of Thirty-Six Attempts)*. [Photograph].
- Fig 15.* Henry, D. (1964). *Untitled*. [Mechanical pen and ink drawing].
- Fig 16.* Mohr, M. (1985). *Divisibility I*. [Ink on canvas].

Text Body

Introduction

I am interested in how art can articulate a critical response to the present. More specifically, I am intrigued by how art can articulate such a response in a way that is different from a written critique. A written text employs words, concepts, structure, reasoning and evidence to develop and set out an argument. An artist might be engaged with the same concerns as an author, but the communication of ideas through art operates in a different way. Developing an art practice requires learning to think as an artist. Like the annoying impulse of a shopping trolley which veers in an unwanted direction, my mind instinctively starts to formulate ideas in words. On this degree programme I have found that pursuing a materials-led process of enquiry is one way of breaking that instinct.

In exploring how art can articulate a critical response to the present, this research proposal therefore starts with materials. It then considers time, and the relationship between the present and the past. Finally, the proposal examines the notion of disruption. Exploration of these keywords enables me to formulate the question: 'how can artists intervene in the material of everyday life in a way that disrupts our habitual understandings of the present?'

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In-Text Quote

before darting away. Roland Barthes talks of the *Studium* in Camera Lucida, and I think it's applicable here. "The studium is that very wide field of unconcerned desire, of various interest, of inconsequential taste: *I like/ I don't like*; it mobilizes a half desire, a demi-volition (...) vague slippery, irresponsible interest one takes" (Barthes, p.27, 1980). Queer art is

Longer Quote (30+ Words)

Leaving behind the terrain of signification and deconstruction, O'Sullivan (2007, 3868) emphasises a relational and materialist idea of knowledge which can be summed up as 'affect'. This focuses not on representation, but on feeling and experience. In brief, this would lead to the question what does an art work *do*, rather than, what does it *mean*? (p. 22). O'Sullivan summarises Bergson's ideas about affect by saying that there is a gap between 'excitation and reaction' (p. 46), between '*stimulus and response*' (p. 38, emphasis added). It is in this gap that the predictability of habit can be broken, enabling instead a creative response to the world (pp. 38-47):

Following Bergson we might say that we are caught, as beings in the world, on a certain spatio-temporal register: we 'see' only what we have already seen. We see only that which we are *interested* in. At stake with art might be an altering – a switching – of this register. (O'Sullivan, 2007, 47; original emphasis).

O'Sullivan's argument is inspiring, if difficult. However, much of it seems to be about art in general – that it is art as such which has this potential to disrupt conventional habits of thought. Is there anything specific about work which engages with everyday materials? O'Sullivan (2007, 4) advocates for a 'return to matter', but this seems as much about his conception of knowledge as about a return to matter in art. He does

These unusual views and the knowledge they suggest are enabled by Matta-Clark's carefully planned incisions, which he considered a process of 'undoing' a building (1976, p. 182). Matta-Clark explained that it was the 'aspects of stratification' revealed by the cuts and removals that interested him most:

not the surface, but the thin edge, the severed surface that reveals the autobiographical process of its making. There is a kind of complexity which comes from taking an otherwise completely normal, conventional, albeit anonymous situation and redefining it, retranslating it into overlapping and multiple readings of conditions past and present. (Matta-Clark, 1976, p. 184).

The slice of floor shown above in fig. 4 was one of a series that Matta-Clark made in the early 1970s, accessing abandoned buildings in the Bronx neighbourhood of New York (Lee, 2001, p. 72-81; Bessa, 2017, p. 8-12). This was a time of economic crisis

Assuming an individual body is always solely our own, to be owned, and not 'mixed up with other species... [and] bacteria' (Bubandt, N, Gan, E, Swanson, H, Tsing, A. 2017, Pg. 4), to be liberated is,

an understanding of freedom that's about this individual independence and liberation from having to depend upon other people and having to depend upon the earth, and as a very masculine understanding, that is not just undervaluing, but also wanting to transcend, care relations and work and all these things that are feminized.

(Daggett, C. *Petromasculinity*. 2023.)

As we begin to deconstruct the relationship between the work/non-work, public and private binaries, as gendered and racial. We understand that managed categories and spaces have bound up more than just identity concepts but our time-based bodies. Time efficiency is

Paraphrased Reference

to context. This is deliberate, and central to Hatoum's practice (Hatoum, 1997a). She dislikes being categorised as a Palestinian artist addressing regional issues (Antoni, 1998). Interpreting her work through her biography, which many commentators do, is reductive of Hatoum as an artist and of the complexity of her work (Applin, 2016; Morgan, 1997, p. 9-10). Hatoum explains that her personal and family experience

Well-Presented Visuals

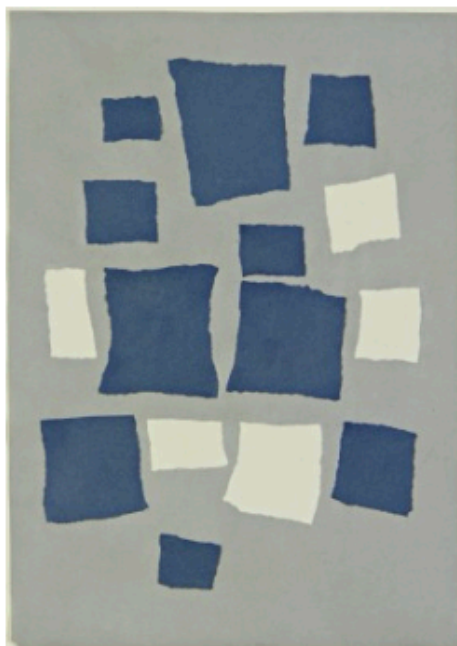


Fig. 2

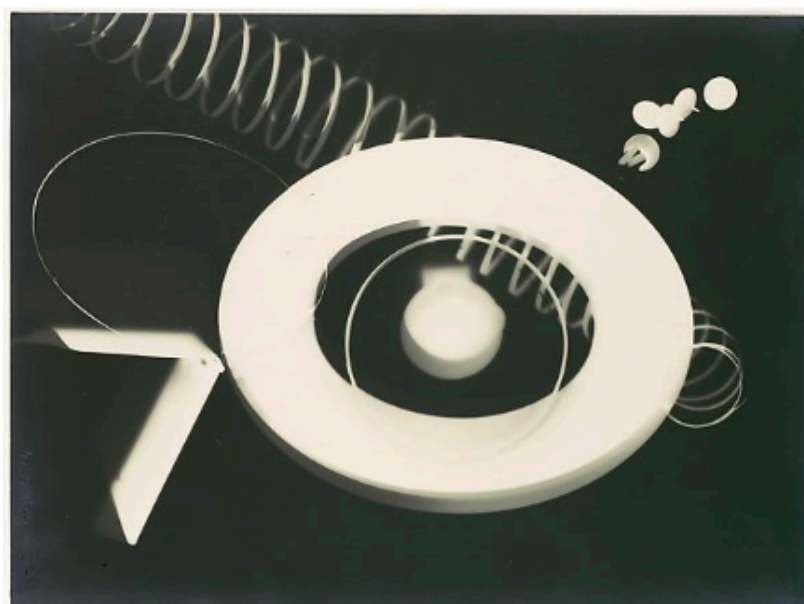


Fig. 3

The outcomes were unpredictable and revolutionary for the time; art had not been made like this before. Arp and Duchamp stopped following the rules, and allowed the art of chance to take them adrift. As the French writer, Jacques Rivière said, 'The Dadas consider words only as accidental: they let them happen. Language for them is no longer a means, it is a being.' (Rivière, 1937)

In the 'First Manifesto of Surrealism', Breton said 'to you, who write, these elements, on the surface, are as strange to you as they are to anyone else, and naturally you are wary of them.' (Breton, 1924).

This holds true for the techniques used by Man Ray's more experimental photography, for appearance that they accident. In fact, technique of arranging sensitive paper and



experimental surrealist artists. experimental example, has the were made by Ray's famous objects on light exposing them to

Voyeurism

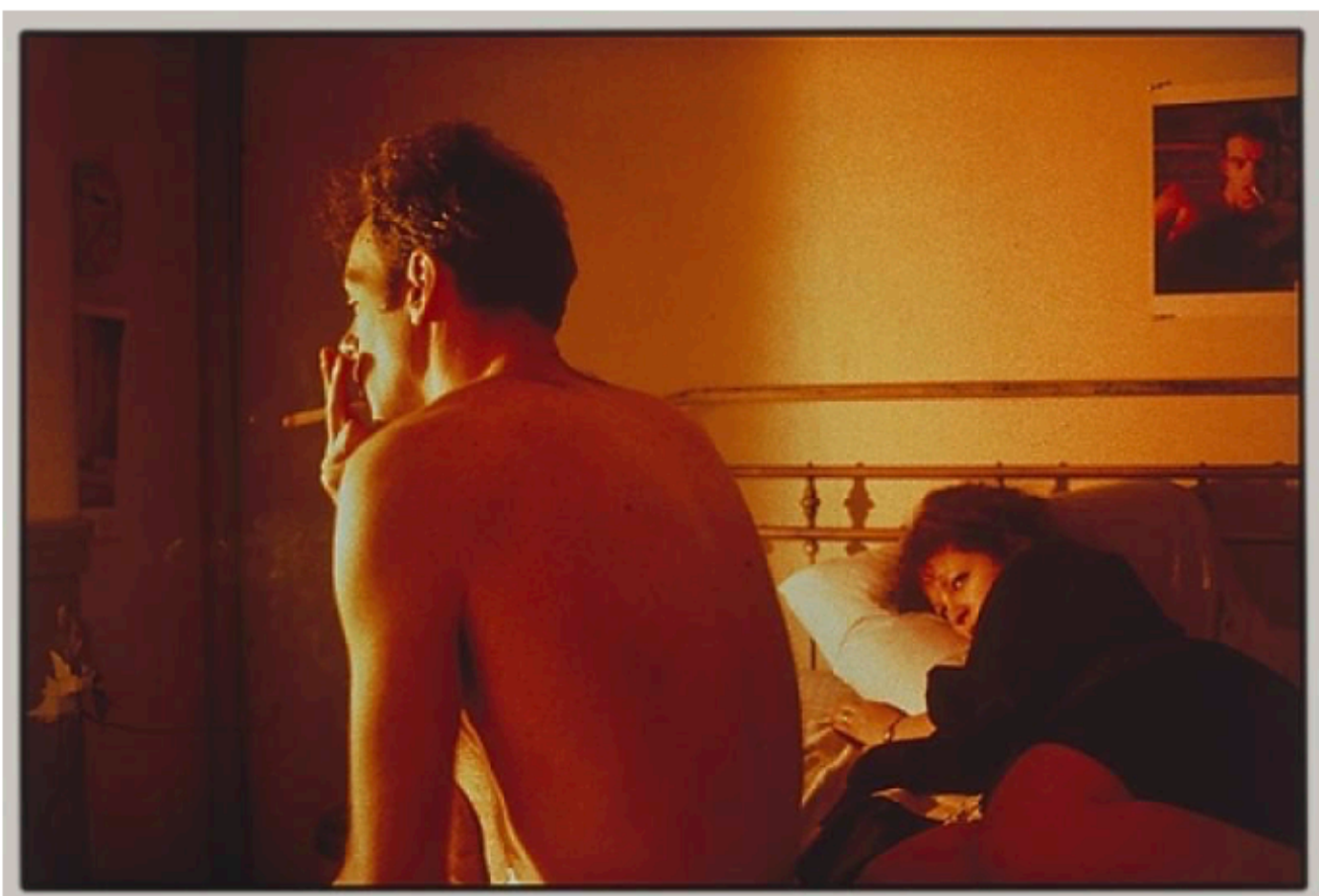


Figure 1: Nan Goldin, 1986

Voyeurism is defined as “the activity of getting pleasure from secretly watching other people in sexual situations or, more generally, from watching other people’s private lives” (Cambridge Dictionary definition). When we think of voyeurism our minds may go instantly to reality TV and CCTV, but it’s a big part of the art world. Often voyeuristic depictions of art allow us to view a piece without feeling too emotionally involved as we are *outside* and not *active* participants. It often allows the viewer to not have their gaze challenged or even acknowledged. I’m interested in this because often in queer art (along with other arts made depicting minorities) a voyeuristic approach is applied by the artist/photographer, which to me may seem like it comforts the viewer by not making it too in your face. A cisgender heterosexual viewer would certainly be more comfortable when confronted by queer art if it didn’t challenge the gaze of the disapproving or uncomprehending eyes that quickly scan



Fig 5. Paul Klee, *Angelus Novos* (1920).

Referring to a print by Paul Klee (fig. 5), he describes the figure of the ‘angel of history’ who looks back at what has already happened, rather than forward into the future:

