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MAKING IT HARDER THAN IT HAS TO BE or THIS IS THE SCULPTURE or *SIGH

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MAKING IT HARDER THAN IT HAS TO BE or

THIS IS THE SCULPTURE

or

*SIGH

Todd Barry's

BFA STATEMENT FINAL DRAFT¹

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Sculpture Major

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of Washington University in Saint Louis

in the year

2014

in the month of

May

at the moment

”“(o_o)”“

¹ This is a participatory project. It is the nature of the form. Its reading will be greatly enhanced if one actively engages with the text.

here is an

ABSTRACT

ion
of what's going on
in the pages that follow...

You will be punched in the face and then poked in the side
(it seems, someone, has something, to say)

You start off with a *slow* looking-back – making a steady assumption
You take that assumption, o p e n it up ~ into elaboration, and sing the thing

RIGHT ON out of itself

You sculpt

You step back

You say, 'wait a minute – relax'

You wake up, wiggle toes, wait for [something], move, make~ into
[something], and stand by it

You laugh, get grounded, fight

your way outside, come

back, and take care of things

You feel, in form

You go back at it, and get it out – there

(there) You endure, go away, gather, and, get, back, in

again, and again, and again

You lose

It's nothing

Together ~ it's [something]...

²you see
 I have this philoshopy
 with regards to the written word
 and all creation I suppose
 that if it doesn't come RUSHING out of you
 then
 DON'T
 WASTE
 MY TIME

but I suppose
 if you want
 the bullshit
 there's always
 plenty
 in storage³

but let's not go
 there
 let's go
 way
 back
 after all,
 que sais-je?⁴

... ..

CHAPTER I. Ethos

Horace
 a quiet meditative man
 and/or a clement Epicurean with a strong conviction by means of moralism
 alive at the tail end of the Greek Hellenistic Period
 fond of philosophy, a slower country life, afternoons of study, and
 (presumably) letter-writing, for today, we are left only with his two/part
 Epistles (or 'letters'), wherein, he writes

ut pictura poesis

or, like a picture, poetry

² beginning

³ and end of artist statement

⁴ 'what do I know?' - the spirit of unknowing to be exemplified and finally resolved, like Montaigne, through an essay form (such as this)

words, known nowadays

as our bedrock text forging a connection between things visual
and those verbal in **THE ARTS**

but for the sake of our story,

let's say...

as is poetry,

so is installation art.⁵

now

let us LEAP *forward* THROUGH TIME to the early 14th Century when Dante writes his
famous epic poem, 'The Divine Comedy'

in its second part

Purgatorio

is depicted as an upwardly spiraling climb around a mountain

much like the low-relief sculptures of Trajan's column in Rome

later in the poem (CANTO X)

Dante in fact portrays the *bereaved mother* coming across the famous column,
referring to their subsequent dialogue as **esto visibileparlare**

(or, 'this visible speaking')

somehow

this sculpture

has SPOKEN

ii

·-·

... ..

Chapter II. I see my work as a

WAKE UP call

I want to find a silence

and take that silence and have it HUM *mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm* everyone

I intend [sculpture] to talk⁶

I like wandering around and finding things to write on

more OPEN than a notebook or a novel

those always feel a bit CLOSED to me

some things are better left closed, but

it seems I have no choice

OPEN UP

sometimes less isn't more

~~Hope~~ I can open the right books for people

~~socialize~~ sometimes

share ~~anyhow~~

I want to make everyone understand

⁵ this is a claim

⁶ this is also a claim

that it's ok to not understand
that it's ok to be not okay

I propose to not just *PLAY AROUND*
to say what I want to say

in a nonbookvisualartwritingway

materials⁷ bore me...

except, like
toothbrushes

nail clippers too

like the other morning

my suitemate came up to me in our living room when I was
'working on things' on my laptop and began *galloping* his nail clipper
on the table toward my hand making little 'eeee' and 'oooo' noises of
supposed pleasure or vague desire or curiosity or anxiousness idk

i felt alert

less miserable

the other night

we were talking about ⁸the possibility of us humans all being trees that,
just like, dropped seeds everywhere instead of having sex and stuff because i
was holding half of a seed he had recently collected and placed on our dining
room table, and i had tossed it to him and he had tossed it back and i thought
he made a crack about his seed referencing his semen when he hadn't really
meant it like that but we started talking about the treelike seed-dropping sex
scenario anyhow, and then the word 'wind' came up, afterwhich i said (in a
sort of self-mockingly ashamed manner) how we all, really were, just 'blowin
in the wind' i guess, afterwhich he said a lotta phrases ending with something
like the fact that yes -- and all he really wanted was a little 'shelter from the
storm'

(no one's gonna get that i don't think
those were bob dylan references)

you see though?

it spurred something

an object

got us going

an object

should

GET

YOU

GOING

i dont know about you

but i'll make art 'till my face falls off and i can't feel my toes

just the way it goes

living sux

⁷ clay for example. I used to be obsessed, now, not so much.

⁸ art is...

art's better⁹

that'll be my next sculpture.

...or maybe this:

GIVE ME MONEY
 I'M WEAK
 HELP
 ART SUX
 GIVE ME MONEY
 I'M WEAK
 HELP
 ART SUX
 GIVE ME MONEY
 I'M WEAK
 HELP
 ART SUX
 GIVE ME MONEY
 I'M WEAK
 HELP
 ART SUX
 GIVE ME MONEY
 I'M WEAK
 HELP
 ART SUX
 GIVE ME MONEY
 I'M WEAK
 HELP
 ART SUX
 GIVE ME MONEY
 I'M WEAK
 HELP
 ART SUX

now don't get me wrong...

I like doing art
 while sitting
 while standing up
 while throwing up
 in the middle of the night
 at noon
 crepuscule
 dawn

fuck it I'll sit here
 playing the fool¹⁰ for days

but unfortunately

⁹ an expression of pessimism

¹⁰ = doing art

various bodily functions
 are rather limiting
 and I routinely
 get taken advantage of
 it's a doggy dog¹¹ world
 i'm more of a cat person myself
 :-

Chapter III. the area of pause

you see
*Writing is also my cat. Writing lets me face it. It chills me out. For a while anyhow. Then my wires get crossed and I have to do it all over again. I can't understand writers who decide to stop writing. How do they chill out?*ⁱⁱⁱ
 Bukowski
 said that.
 and good god...
 there is nothing wrong
 with resting
 yes it's nice
 to be sleeping
 when I want
 to be sleeping
 overambition
 is a condition
 worth
 proper
 recognition
 some people enjoy
 thinking about sex
 I enjoy
 thinking about
 not thinking
 nothing matters
 but sometimes
 the matter
 that is nothing
 becomes
 meaningful
 ripening

¹¹ pre-Snoop Dogg: "dog-eat-dog world"

slowly building up power
 from solitude
 I have worked hard
 for this space
 haven't I?
 putting off
 gazing out of windows
 everything
 how beautiful it is
 to be nothing
 to be nowhere
 finally
 ... '-'

Chapter IV. And then usually / the wind is part of the **process**, the rain is part of the **process**^{iv}

I like staying in bed for long extended periods of time before getting up and doing things because I usually never want to do much of anything besides occasionally read a book or check my email or masturbate or drink water or pee or something but usually I just like staying in bed doing nothing for long extended periods of time before getting up and doing something like eating cereal

And then I often watch movies that I don't actually like but seem familiar enough to something I would actually like, that I passively accept their shortcomings in stride before slowly realizing what it is that I really like (which most often isn't even a movie at all)

And then I think about that (what I like)
 – some writer, some mystery, some zone where fields zig-zag
 and swerve, some space of practicality that escapes me

And then I try
 and take that silence
 and screw~ with it
 with whatever the hell happens to be
 in front of me
 paint pens
 sharpies
 writing visual
 on
 wood panels
 styrofoam
 drywall

that moves me
 whatever found
 around
 really
 anything
 thick enough
 to pick up
 and put up
 somewhere
 to be SEEN
 sculpturally
 then I think (I)
 my work should make the

WINDOWS SHAKE

the last thing I want to do
 is write something
 STALE
 and so

journalistic jazz

i will continue to toot my visual poem horn
 no matter how torn
 they take me
 every god damn trace
 is my statement
 of intent

· · ·

... ..

Chapter V. but really...

I'm just playing with puzzles and calling it practice
 I need to make amends with the mundane
 I've been here before
 I know this now
 my artwork is eating away at me
 the atrophy of imagination
 I'm getting carried away
 caught in the clouds
 I gotta calm myself
 disarm
 and come down to face the facts of the farm

training of the body must take precedence over training of thought if it is to create and supervise its own ideas...¹²

I knew only too well the deceitful nature of any kind of conflict in art. If I must have a struggle, I felt I should take the offensive¹³ in fields outside art; in art, I should defend my citadel. It was necessary to be a sturdy defender within art, and a good fighter outside it^v

Yukio Mishima said that
and I agree

there's nothing to prove
nothing to promote

but I do like a poem
that feels

well-fought

the way I see it

lively up yourself

or else...

fall

*into disrepair
as have
the st. louis warehouses of old,
since enveloped
by rust and
sadness*

as Evan Pellervo
put it

... ..

Chapter VI. once YOU are all taken care of...

il faut cultiver notre jardin^{vi}
as Candide

water the plants
buy the groceries
clean the kitchen
do the laundry
feed the baby
organize
categorize
socialize!

¹² once YOU are all taken care of, you must

¹³ FIGHT for your right to party but I mean, really...

F--- PARTIES, WRITE POETRY

make
 some
money

 Chapter VII. you got away from it
 now you can go back to it
 but you've got
 to feel
 first
 Mary Jo Bang
 describes PUNCTUM as
*the ability of the photograph to cause actual
 exquisite physical pain to a person^{vii}*
 all art can do this
 so
 I suppose
 depression and art often come hand in hand
 it's a bit heavy
 realizing nothing is beautiful
 and you're gonna have to do it
 by your own damn self
 but you get over it
 I guess

 Chapter VIII. you do
 Pamela Alexander
 writes,
*Consider events as places to live, and
 paragraphing
 as paper sculpture.^{viii}*
 me
 I use
 text as material
 alone...
 the artist is an asshole¹⁴
 but at least
 he keeps

¹⁴ Just like you and I...

to himself
 the real artist doesn't talk
 you don't see the real artist
 the real artist toils
 the real artist has no time
 but oh!
 sometimes the art just flows
 and you just have to stop
 thinking
 your spirit is winking
 you
 woke it up
 now work with it
 the foxes are dancing around you
 congratulations
 it's about
 damn
 time
 now
 do it
 well
 I'm watching
 not really
 I'm probably installing
 after all
 the work is not the sculpture¹⁵ as Nicola Carrino would say
 or
 the art/isn't/the hard/part¹⁶
 as I would
 according to Carrino
 the work itself does not even exist
 – only its project does
 in the end, to create
 collective participation...^{ix}
 are you with me?
 are you angry?
 don't be...
 see
 if I were to have an artist's manifesto
 here's the way it would go:
 I do not want to argue with you.

¹⁵ this is a claim

¹⁶ this is a more universal elaboration of that claim

... ..

Chapter IX. WAGING WAR/BATTLING FOR EXISTENCE/THE CRITIQUE

as previously
stated
ideally the work does the talking but
academia is demanding
and so
you get this superficial seriousness-
-artspeak- -zombie-made
scenario
you see
the critique is a pretend game
where it is very important to block out the information
that it is a pretend game^x
often a cursory glance
followed by talkingtalkingtalkingtalkingtalkingtalking
followed by an appraisal of excellence
within imaginary standards
oftentimes (being) a disorienting
estrangement
but every once in a while some blithe
reassurance
often people say
'oh but
other artists use text
it reminds me of [famous artist]'
William Powhida
a modern day 'text artist'
who enjoys poking fun at well-off art world people
through cynical colorful
personal but unpoetic

longhandings

would say that
really means

it's¹⁷ such a rip off^{xi}

yes yes

we are swimming with big fish we cannot see probably

... ... '—'

Chapter X. digestion/reaction/resolution

a professor is someone who talks in someone else's sleep^{xii}

Auden said that

but ultimately

it's up
to the artist

you react
you react
you react
you react

you react

*sometimes a man
must fight so hard for life
that he doesn't have time to live it*^{xiii}

Bukowski said that

little by little
the mind
is
the grind
begins

lost

so
as
per
Schopenhauer

there would be less suffering
in our world

if people greeted each other
with

'fellow sufferer'^{xiv}

instead of (some) 'sir'
(equivalent)

and I
agree

have mercy

¹⁷ (your art)

you see
 there isn't too much compromise
 reason doesn't mean much of anything
 sure, severity has its cycles
 but it's a slow stubborn beating either way
 you know you know
 that good old, ever so gradual decay
 we are toppling!
 on fire!
 always!
 let's face it
 might as well sip on French wine
 sit around the fire
 and chill out while we can, when we're capable
 seems the best way to cope
 some holy space of unkinking, unthinking, unlearning¹⁸
 and then starting all over again, from square one
 I guess that's all that matters and ever will
 some satisfiable sitting still
 I only hope they have free halos in heaven
 either that or some decent horns in hell
 one can only wait and see
 just the way it goes
 what it is
 no one knows
 keeps you right on the tip of your toes
 surprise, the element
 the skies won't say a thing
 and the sun
 too will be spun
 spit out into spacelessness
 every single start, unstoppably unstable
 we have no choice but to entangle ourselves in intimacy
 and wait for sparks¹⁹ to begin speaking.

¹⁸ the aforementioned 'area of pause' is, finally, not entirely exclusive to one's solitude, but can be understood and seen in solidarity

¹⁹ the art follows.

andthere'stheBIBLIOGRAPHYmercimerci

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