

ARTISTS SPACE

~~ADD LOZANO PHOTO TO PPT~~

On a fortuitous day at the library in 2010 I came across two pieces of writing that have become linchpins in my art practice, one of which is the essay "Towards a Metalanguage of evil", Cady nolands entry into the Documenta 9 catalogue which accompanied her curated exhibition in Kassel, and which I'm going to use as the backbone of this talk on drop outs, aggregation and gestures that outline the edges of the playing field of art.

As an artist, I approach noland and her text as a centrifugal force that spins questions about power and relations between art objects, makers, and lookers into themselves, acting like a whirlpool of escaping possibilities. The essay raises concerns for contemporary practitioners - wrapped up in refusal, negativity and the difference between productive and critical value.

In reading through "Metalanguage" and in trying to decipher it's motivations, one uncovers a text attempting, I believe, to make a powerful critique of the art world and art market, ^{in a wider context of} predating a discourse around institutional critique and globalisation, and staking out extreme positions on cause and effect, which is explored through a 'psychopathic' relationship.

Noland begins her essay by describing that there is 'meta-game available for use in the United States. The rules of the game, or even that there is a game at all, are hidden to some'- and Noland carries on to describe ^{in an oblique manner} a relationship between X and Y, in which X is constantly, in a Tom-and-Jerry like scenario, continually trying to con Y- citing references of many contemporaneous tropes of media culture in America.

"The game is a machine composed of interconnected mechanistic devices... A con or a snow job is the site at which X preys upon the hopes, fears, and anxieties of Y for ulterior motives and/or personal gain... These machinations exist a priori of X or Y as an indifferent set of tools and could conceivably be picked up by anyone and used against anyone else."

Its important to note that Noland sets out the essay as a game or device- so it is key to keep in mind that the essay is not a 'reading' of a situation or a metaphor, but exists purely as a theoretical overview of potential moves or gestures. As in: she's not talking about herself or the art world

who is
psychopath
who is
"imitated"

as such, but rather a practice and the playing field in which all gestures can be situated.

As an overview on Noland, this essay was first delivered at a seminar in the late 80s, and was in some effect turned into ~~or used to construct~~ her Documenta installation, which was a curated exhibition of art objects by her peer group such as Steve Parinno, Barbara Kruger and Sherrie Levine, surrounded by a sculptural installation of a crashed car, and interspersed with pictures of disasters such as plane crashes. In the essay published in the Documenta catalogue, the text is accompanied by similar images.

She begins, interestingly enough by describing the cropping and foreshortening of tabloid culture as an example of the 'tactics' of the game.

"Tabloids already use many of the game's tactics by foreshortening and 'cropping' celebrities, blowing them up, and, in the case of National Enquire television commercials, reducing them to hot-objects and then animating these objects.." Further along she references BLOW UP by Antonioni, noting that it is "through the exhumation of photographic images or audio recordings, and their repeated screening that Y searches for the telling detail (of X's 'machinations and his attempts at putting forth a bankrupt reality'"")

Also throughout the essay are oblique references the the means by which images circulate, such as :

"On a larger, corporate level, the information hunt is called market research...." Information gathering is then ~~seen~~ as a way for X to win at the game, ~~to get as much context as he can around Y to make him fall into the trap.~~

And "the psychopath shares the societally sanctioned characterists of the entrepreneurial male"] X

~~These quotes point to what I think is a central contextual force in the essay, which is the fact that Noland is part of a post-pictures group of artists- and I wonder if this essay is attempting a critique of appropriation, or perhaps at the future stakes of how appropriation as a gesture used by artists opens up a game centered around belief.~~

In Pictures, an essay by Douglas Crimp written in 1979 for October Journal describing the seminal exhibition entitled Pictures at Artists

described that X performs on Y

she is out there

tail end of the picture generation

opening up which is

Space from two years prior, uses theatricality and staging as a means by which to both in effect 'set the stage' of the emergent 'pictures generation' from the performative (quote 'you had to be there' 1970's work developing from minimalism, but also to describe the means by which Jack Goldstein, Sherrie Levine and Cindy Sherman's pictures ENACT as well as present:

"The temporality of these pictures is not, then, a function of the nature of the medium as in itself temporal, but of the manner in which the picture is presented; it can obtain in a still pictures as well as a moving one".

So if we can think of the obvious setting of the 'STAGE' of the image as a condition of appropriation- we can also imply that there is a 'front stage and a back stage' - (She herself references Goffman who wrote about the 'backstage' of performance) - which is interesting to keep in mind while reading and thinking about Noland's practice in general.

the essay ends with a rumination on "Waiting for reconfiguration" as a strategy akin to using shock therapy on a patient. Noland talks about waiting for the environment in which the game is situated to change (the luck of the shuffle as she calls it) as the last option of the psychopath. I think of it as X going into hibernation-

"If X is a psychopath, the one certain thing is that this relatively passive strategy, waiting for reconfiguration, will only be used if it is the last game in town"

Cady Noland stopped exhibiting new work in the mid 1990s and there is a veil of mystery that surrounds her current presence in the form of absence. Has she 'set the stage' for herself as an image and been waiting for a reshuffle, or reconfiguration, re-emerging twenty years later, in order to alter the rules of the game?

It was after reading and discussing "Towards a Metalanguage of Evil" that I discovered in a conversation with an older female artist that Noland's work "Oozeworld" had the highest selling price of any female work of art, ever (sold for 6.6 million at Sotheby's in 2012- and again recently for Bluewald for 9.8 million at Christies in May of this year (its good to see the prices rising for female artists, but they remain, it must be noted, much much lower than male artists on the secondary market in general). Subsequent to the sale of Oozeworld, Noland denied authorship in 2012 after the sale of Oozeworld of another piece-

as the place of enactment is of a most importance

decide to go into hibernation, to await more convenient circumstances (the long game.)

photo

"Cowboys Milking from 1990, and after the May 2015 sale she has disavowed the purchase of the work "Log Cabin"- thus raising a hugely problematic moral dilemma around the authorship of the artist.

* Details - (St.) Noland ^{Subsequently} sold by Sotheby's - and Marc Jancou and won the lawsuit

In the denial of authorship of Oozewald, Noland invoked the Visual Artists Rights Act of 1990 (VARA)—part of the Copyright Act that protects artists' integrity and reputation, sometimes called their "moral rights"—in a Nov. 9, 2011 e-mail her lawyer sent to Sotheby's the evening before the scheduled Nov. 10 contemporary art afternoon auction. Noland insisted that *Cowboys Milking*, a silkscreen print on a 1/16th-inch-thick aluminum sheet, was damaged and demanded that Sotheby's not sell it because "her honor and reputation [would] be prejudiced as a result of offering [it] for sale with her name associated with it," in light of the artwork's condition. The work had already been sold or transferred five times, including the sale to Jancou just months earlier.

In the recent hyperallergic article on Noland's denial of the sale of Log Cabin is titled as "poison pill" of the art world and called 'art as bomb', but in the corrections he notes that what seemed originally like a disavowal of work in the process of purchase becomes a warning from the artist to new buyer that the current state of the work is unacceptable.

who?

author Leigh Rodney

"... So it seems that Noland's respond to Mueller (the most recent buyer) was essentially warning him off from believing this work was what she had crafted or intended".

OK lets take a deep breathe here, and retreat backstage.

What initially interested me was the idea that the HIGHEST price ever paid for a female artist was for one that was NOT PRESENT. Further, I became interested in her legal cases as the 'polar opposite' of Richard Prince's legal case around authorship: so instead of accumulating all voices into the artist Meta-Voice (as in Prince), rather it is the declaration of 'absence' of voice that accumulates value for a female artist.

Essentially it's a question of the value of presence versus absence. →

→ Noting that absence is a PRECONDITION for female artists (of the past?), I wonder how absence is in general used as a strategy - an X to the Y of presence- by women artists, historically and now.

Knowing Noland's essay, I have wondered if it provides clues to the meaning of her drop out- and how this drop out relates to what I see as perhaps and attempt at a performance of a 'con job' of the art market. Has the original (the object)- become a prop for a larger theater- of value exchange- and then if so, what role is the artist (Noland) playing in this production (of Denial)?

the
"first"
stage of
self-
presentation
in the
art
world

As with many other drop outs- her gesture to leave, has been used to effect value change, and to expand an understanding of 'authorship' as such. ~~But BUT~~ ~~important~~ the question of Noland is if

I have to note, before I move on to a more general discussion of drop outs, that I have a moral dilemma about speaking of Noland specifically- I come to her with an interest in her WORK and it's relationship to appropriation and voice, and I hope that this talk situates that interest clearly to you, the audience, rather than, I think unfortunately, perpetrating what remains a morally complex situation:

this
is an enactment / natural conclusion of work... as
my
definition
of other
artists.
Not
'dropping a
but fulfilling
the demand
of practice
regardless
of the
rules
of
authorship

Noland, by removing authorship, is also disallowing the movement of her work. ~~A conversation recently with a very intelligent patron who knows Noland ran along the lines of: eventually scarcity reverses the supply/ demand economy. Many of us miss seeing her work, it's wider contexts, and its participation in general as important historically. We can't judge Noland's actions as 'Authored' moves, precisely because they exist within the legal language that has increasingly become the window through which to view her work.~~

And THIS question of legacy, who authors it and who is written in -> becomes another whirlpool when we think about the possible consequences on Noland's work.

Noland is not the first artist to use dropping out as a conscious gesture- or rather to use the presence of absence as a device.

Other, now well-known, cases which I'm sure are familiar to everyone in the audience include Lee Lozano, Charlotte Posenenske, Laurie Parsons, each of which I'll touch on here.

briefly

I have to preface what follows by saying that i'm not interested in the obscurity, or curiosity of these artists. I'm interested in outlining how they have expanded the role of authorship and at the same time debunking the myth that they were "not able to hack it" or "hung the apron up"— but perhaps I AM interested in how they may have "washed their hands" of the situation they found themselves in. I'm interested in the FREEDOM associated with their gestures, and how, as Noland speaks about the

in. interest

game, their actions have expanded or existed OUTSIDE of the playing field of art. But also I'm interested in how their practices (and the action to ~~drop out~~ as the natural conclusion of their practices) pre-dated, influenced, and maybe have been accumulated by artists and art zeitgeists shortly after their departures.

Also for me its important to notate the shift in perception that it takes to consider dropping out an ACT or a GESTURE, rather than a circumstance: specifically it requires the removal (the absence)- of an artists biography from the understanding of their work. Which is to me, an essentially feminist condition.

There are also, of course, many instances, I think it's important to note, of female artists leaving and returning: such as Sonia Delaunay who due to her financial circumstances after the Bolshevik revolution started an incredibly successful applied arts company, and Agnes Martin, who took time out after a breakdown. These absences, historically, have given female artists a myth or mystery which has recently begun to add to their mystique.

Around forgotten or undervalued female artists can be a sense of 'discovery', a cat and mouse play: the finding of hidden histories gems that we, in the art world are trying to uncover like truffle pigs. If we, though, consider, that historically the condition of drop out was COMMON, and EXPECTED for female artists, the conundrum of presence and absence becomes a bit more fraught, especially in our re-evaluation or re-valuation of this 'rarity'.

~~First~~ I'd like to re-tell a few stories,

Charlotte Posenenske was an expressionist painter in Germany in the early 60s, and made beautiful works on paper and canvas. Her work shifted and became more sculptural and specifically machine-made- see slide - and as a conceptual gesture began selling her work at material cost. (This is perhaps quite interesting in relation to the Dan Flavin case around his fluorescents)- and her gesture as a minimalist runs exactly COUNTER to the history of the art movement which literalised a value transformation of everyday materials, by the creation of an aura through the authorship (Not HAND) of the artist. Unlike her male peers, Posenenske's 'specific objects' were specific to their value transactions in the world- materials as form, used to create systems, ideas:

Posenenske, as most drop outs, has a 'drop out' statement, published in May, 1968 in Art International, no. 5

'I make series

because I do not want to make individual pieces for individuals, in order to have elements combinable within a system, in order to make something that is repeatable, objective, and because it is economical.

The series can be prototypes for mass-production.

[...]

They are less and less recognisable as "works of art."

The objects are intended to represent anything other than what they are.^[2]

Wikipedia states:

Poseneske stopped working as an artist in 1968, no longer believing that art could influence social interaction or draw attention to social inequalities. She retrained as a sociologist and became a specialist in employment and industrial working practices until her death in 1985. During this period of self-imposed exile Poseneske refused to visit any exhibitions, and did not show her work.

So Poseneske's shift from artist to sociologist studying the workers who produced her work- ~~and her impulse to create without authorship~~ also mirrors the practice of another artist, Laurie Parsons, whose art became so ephemeral she moved laterally into becoming a social worker.

*to embody the condition
of artist, in
the
radical
demands
of art
objects,*

The little I know about Laurie Parsons comes from Bob Nikas' article in Artforum from April 2003, which begins "An artist sends her slides to a gallery and is asked to take part in a group show. (And how often does that happen? Does never sound about right?)" - and continues to tell the story of her work and exhibitions- found objects arranged such as "A pile of charcoal, a weathered coil of rope, a battered suitcase, a yellow nylon noose, an uprooted log, and more." This is 1986 and a few years of shows with no sales pass and then in 1989 her entire body of existing work sells and she then asks her dealers that nothing be offered for sale. In 1990 her show, a picture of which we see here, at Lawrence Monk gallery was empty: "I felt it essential that I consider the gallery itself, rather than continue to unquestioningly use it as a context. With its physical space and intricate social organization, it is as real, and as meaningful, as the artwork it houses and markets." Nikas remembers: I pass more than a few confused visitors and note that Parsons has enacted a reversal of sorts of Robert Barry's famous 1969 piece Closed Gallery. She eventually removes the show from her bio, later saying that it felt "righter as opposed to wronger" to leave it off. Another piece is

described as "Parsons participates in "The Big Nothing" at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York. Parsons contributes a stack of dollar bills about four inches high (the museum provides half of the three hundred dollars) and tells the guards not to interfere when people avail themselves of the piece. It quickly disappears."

Parson's fore-sighted work, whose motivations can perhaps be recognised in quote "institutional critique", such as Tarivinenja, finds it's natural conclusion in an opening out - to quote Parsons: "art must spread into other realms, into spirituality and social giving." As of the article from over 12 years ago, Parsons left behind the art world and became an advocate for the mentally ill in New York.

Why couldn't these artists remain in the art world and continue to feel they are giving, contributing something, to people?

Lee Lozano is the most 'famous' drop out, which is unfortunate as her non-dropout work is, as we see in general with drop out artists, incredibly interesting unto itself.

To quote Lucy Lippard on Lozano, from Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer's book on Dropout Piece :

"Unlike most 'instruction' or 'command pieces, for example, Lozano's are directed to herself, and she has carried them out scrupulously, no matter how difficult to sustain they may be. Her art, it has been said, becomes the means by which to transform her life, and by implication, the lives of others and the planet itself"

Lozano's handwritten, frantic language, according to Lehrer flies in the face of the language of Conceptualism: *She call the*

"the ironic posing, dry neutrality or absurd businesslike and often academic tone affected by Dan Graham, Joseph Kosuth, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, Robert Rauschenberg and Lawrence Weiner, among others"...

Lozano poses *a question about how to frame the action of a piece* ~~an interesting conundrum~~: she coined the term 'drop out' and her myth is wrapped up in a sadness around her disappearance, the general narrative ran that she was a junkie that died a lonely death in Texas after "dropping out", but the timeline tells a different story. *and very retards*

In fact after Dropout piece in 1971, was

Lozano, was 'present' as 'absent' for a full decade after the dropout piece.

If we read it:→ it's not ACTUAL piece, BUT CLOSEST IDEA.

- I HAVE NO IDENTITY
- I HAVE AN APPROXIMATE MATHMATICAL IDENTITY (BIRTHCHART)
- I HAVE SEVERAL NAMES
- I WILL GIVE UP MY SEARCH FOR IDENTITY AS A DEADEND INVESTIGATION
- I WILL MAKE MYSELF EMPTY TO RECEIVE COSMIC INFO
- I WILL RENOUCE THE ARTIST'S EGO, THE SUPREME TEST WITHOUT WHICH BATTLE A HUMAN COULD NOT BECOME 'OF KNOWLEDGE'
- I WILL BE HUMAN FIRST, ARTIST SECOND
- I WILL NOT SEEK FAME, PUBLICITY, OR SUCKSESS
- IDENTITY CHANGES CONTINUOUSLY AS MULTIPLIED BY TIME (IDENTITY AS VECTOR).

What Leher-Graiwier's book tells is of an artist who goes into hibernation- at least in terms of historically traceable 'presence'- for a decade in New York. Hiding in plain site, keeping a small room right by CBGB's, dressing and dancing with Joey Ramone, Patti Smith, and getting involved with the younger, anti-establishment east side punk scene of New York in the 1970s. In other words, very present. Her roommate of the time tells of her stance, and pose, dress and dance as being her artwork as much as her continued (private) investigations in a studio loft with language and objects.

Again, I have to state that I AM NOT interested in perpetuating the myth that the position of dropouts is sexy, glamorous or covetable. In fact, I hope I'm uncovering the wrought, troubled position of SELF that these artists felt in relation to the art world, giving depth to their decision- which was wrapped up in how the edges of themselves dissolved into their work.

In a sense, in thinking about Noland's essay, I think of their desire to act outside the 'game' of art making. I also think of their MISBEHAVIOUR, both historically and literally. *They were DIFFICULT people who made difficult decisions.*

I'm going to attempt a conclusion on authorship and value, by looking at

the contemporary essay on post-contemporaneity by David Joselit, entitled "AGGREGATORS" from October magazine late last year.

Over and over we see a removal of authorship in the drop out, running in opposition to the normative creation of 'valued' authorship in art history. They are the embodied gestures of art history - art practice brought to it's natural conclusion by following the work rather than the work servicing a system around it.

But perhaps we can also situate the drop out within feminist art history and think about how feminism and female artists have continually reshaped the art world's understanding of authorship, by foregrounding the person / body / felt relationship to objects in much seminal feminist work such as Martha Rosler's "Semiotics of the kitchen", and also reversing / mimicking or to use the one English phrase that sums up the mimic in a way I can't think of an Americanism-TAKING THE PISS- out of established peers and historic male artists such as Sherrie Levine, Sturtevant, Louise Lawler. ~~But I think,~~ One of the bigger questions of this entire week at Artists Space is to do with how contemporary female artists identify, update, respond to their historic conditions- but also to the pitfalls between aggregation and accumulation.

Joselit quotes Richard Meyer in order to make his linguistic point about 'the contemporary'

"....The spectacular immediacy of the contemporary art world threatens to overwhelm our ability to think critically about the relation of the current moment to the past", and Joselit follows: "It is precisely such fear of blindness in the face of "spectacular immediacy" that motivates the transformation of the word contemporary from a contingent adjective to a stable container..."

Most interesting for me is the fact that Joselit is describing an exit from 'the contemporary' as an international style that we have been participating in surrounding the 'derivative':

I promise this is my last quote, at length:

"One of the great impediments to an understanding of global contemporary art is the vexing problem of the 'derivative'. From a perspective that overvalues innovation, it is difficult to credit works of art that 'speak' in idioms invented elsewhere. But this is what much art made outside of the West, not to mention the preponderance of art made in the West, has done since around 1980, when strategies of appropriation and postmodern pastiche entered American and European

art. From the perspective of an international style, the 'derivative' is no longer a problem since what matters is not the invention of a visual idiom or style but how rhetorically effective it is in its particular utterances"

its not what you say, but how you say it. The message is the medium, etc.

~~The A J~~

-The

FINAL QUESTION...

Where is the "I" in this "WE" we find ourselves in. For myself, as an artist, I approach the question of the drop out with a deep desire to be, in my work, one step back from the front stage. I want to play with the normative role of 'artist' in making objects, I want to embody myself as a performer: a painter, a machine, a director, an editor.

~~But also to do away, with, I hope, the condition of the drop out as negative;~~ ~~DE TO DE FRAME NEGATIVITY~~

This taking the piss out of gender and out of 'the establishment' perhaps forms the backbone

AGGREGATE/ ACCUMULATE/ APPROPRIATE