The Art of Unknowing – The joy of amateur practice as a space for emancipation from the constraints of academic discipline.

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The Art of Unknowing

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Critical Theory  

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(25 years in Service)  
(12 years in Service)
Being immersed in the Art School for the most part of your professional life is a privileged position to find oneself in. But what if this immersion also presents a certain entrapment in the connoisseurship and knowledge that you have acquired, embodied, and are passing on. This paper is about the creative liberation of two female visual communication academics, through the pursuit of amateur practices in un-professional curatorship of personal obsessions.
Being immersed in the Art School for the most part of your professional life is a privileged position to find oneself in. But what if this immersion also presents a certain entrapment in the connoisseurship and knowledge that you have acquired, embodied, and are passing on.

This paper is about the creative liberation of two female visual communication academics, through the pursuit of amateur practices in un-professional curatorship of personal obsessions.
‘…tastes are acquired through instruction, through the acquisition of knowledge and the development of values.’

Roger Scruton (1996)
All the aesthetic and behavioral values I had embodied over years of seeking the disciplines acceptance had started to make me feel like never wanting to design anything again in my life.

**Design became the prison of my own making.**
Amateur Practice
Amateur Making
Disclaimer

This presentation is entirely fictional and any resemblance of any of the practice mentioned to any real amateur practice or any real amateur makers is completely coincidental and pure good luck.
‘An open, self-regulating, peer to peer system that operates without the centralised rules and regulations of professional intervention – yet manages to sustain a cohesive and productive culture.’

Andrew Jackson 2008
‘… they appear closer to a Rancierean act of archive excavation into forms of expression that fall outside professional realms.’

Lucia Vodanovic 2013
‘Such gazes are constructed through difference.’

John Urry 2002
No. 78 — Cretan peasant family — Famille paysanne Crétoise
Souvenir de Crète.
Mia Παραβολή αλή τα περίχων Χοιρίων.
Un Vendredi dans les environs de la Cuné
kriti
het eiland
voor alle seizoenen

THE PALACE OF
KNOSSEOS

ENGLISH

COSTAS DAVARAS
MUM, YOU ARE GOING TO GET ARRESTED

KRITI MOU
On loving foreign places

Badly designed postcards with naff type that seems, ‘I love Crete’ are to be found in abundance on the island, even though one wonders who even still bothers sending them these days. I am repulsed by their aesthetic as much as I am drawn to their sentiment. How do you love a place that does not belong to you and where you do not belong? Is my love for Crete any more meaningful, then any lame postcard sent to colder climates by a sun, sea & sand tourist holidaying in a resort in Matala? I am really not convinced, but what I am sure of is that my love for the island has led me to an engagement with areas of knowledge I’d have never guessed I’d be interested with areas of knowledge I’d have never guessed I’d be interested with. On loving foreign places

Fotini and I used to make fun of the stupid tourists who would stop to ask her directions to the ancient local Tholos tombs. Like the good Cretan girl she was, she would politely give them directions in her best English. But once they had turned the corner we would fall about laughing, imagining middle aged people stroking their chins while looking at piles of old rubble. Why waste your time with that while the sun was shining and there were people to meet? All we wanted to do was to escape the stuffy supervision of Fotini’s older brother because - as the song went, girls just wanted to have fun.

Now we are both fully grown, somewhat middle aged women, with husbands, families and duties to fulfill, we have found ourselves finding it fun to look at mounds of old stone and discussing if the Phaestos disc really is a genuine Minoan artifact or just an ancient import. Meanwhile I am also busy trying to formulate a visual research project that engages unsuspecting young people with Minoan script. Oh, the irony and arrogance of growing older.

One slight hitch remains. Though the archaeologists in the artifact of their history fascinate me, I find it very difficult to engage with them aesthetically. One reason may be that through my design education I am firmly wedded to a primarily modernist aesthetic, but then - many Minoan designs should sit quite well with that and are said to have actually influenced certain aspects of modernism. I have the suspicion that the more deciding factor is that I first became familiar with Minoan artifacts by seeing bad replicas in tasteless tourist displays. Not that I wasn’t taken/drugged to the museums when younger. But looking is not the same as seeing. And most of my seeing at that time was a rush job - the above mentioned tourist thing. Figuring out what I was going to spend my pocket money on. I would be years before I realized that Linear A is really clearly at the origins of the museums. When finally I saw some of them made me weep with their traces of human thought and creativity transitioned with such clarity through the ages.

In my most recent endeavours, I first test these artifacts in the context of visual observation, as productions and it is difficult to fully loosen that visual awareness even, much less undermine it at high quality. Maybe it’s the re-produced antique that doesn’t help - aging something artificially and just never seems to work, just like fake wood laminate never does.

Cutting a long story slightly shorter, I am currently involved in a research project that is about visually re-contextualizing the ancient scripts of Greece. 4.3.8. It is called ‘Kriti Mou’ or ‘I am a Cretan’ and is not about the actual ancient Cretans, but is about the idea of Cretans, their ancient script. Visual translations of ancient heritage – re-contextualising ancient European script through contemporary visual communication methods and media.

We will be working with an architecture firm to select a number of designers to explore how the script can be seen as a contemporary visual practice. Our reasoning behind this is that the ancient Cretans seem to have been interested in the visual and we think that this is a contributing circumstance to lead to more successful engagement of a younger audience with their European heritage. Thanks to decades of archaeological research, most surviving Linear A and Linear B signs and symbols scratched into signs and symbols scratched into public space, in a contemporary political context. This is re-contextualization in the exact same sense as the ancient Cretans did it.

We are currently at the stage where we are rapidly developing prototypes for possible execution. Our initial idea is to develop a public space, in a contemporary political context, the modernist aesthetic, but not necessarily aesthetically pleasing. Another visual art form that I have never really made friends with, although I can accept that it is the best English. But once they had really closely at the originals in the context of cheap, art-less, re-production. So in the context of this, my idea of political despair.

Since the 2008 economic crisis there have been fewer tourists. Losing the visual pull of ancient antiquities in the context of cheap, art-less, re-production. Yet, the aesthetic barrier somehow stood firm. Cut it down to a glance through the ages.

So is the context of this, my idea of political despair. Losing the visual pull of ancient antiquities in the context of cheap, art-less, re-production. But hey, whatever gone can come up with the idea of taking the streets of Heraklion and Athens...

Any ‘reading’ of the past, is also a reflection of our presence.

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Any ‘reading’ of the past, is also a reflection of our presence.
Observation of Linear B Session
The instrument's key is more than an artifact; it holds the essence of the research environment that students mentally associate with the work they do and the sense of place that they find. It is immediately comforting for someone used to working in a lab.

A smell of dry dust and freshly sanded artifacts hangs in the air, blending with the scent of varnish and DISTINGUISHED from the usual laboratory atmosphere.
As it is a basement room the ceiling is quite low with some exposed pipework and here running. There are two brown tiles on both sides of the room, one is completely covered in thin black lines and some big yellow lines just to the number, the other one is fully clean and has a small to the lettering, with a sign asking for thinner.

There's a big grey chair on the at the far end of the room, which also houses a glass display case and a small shelf on the wall. The front of the room has a whitewashed and wooden structure on it.

There are some shelves at the head, high, covered in dark with different clay coated surfaces, some easily recognizable and beautiful come at center. Others are much, - inspiration charming, too to our eyes slightly dashing, decorative painted mortar. Some of the rooms are broken and most are very dusty.

The BA Archaeology courses are here to re-examine these B tablets. In the saddle of the table is a big slab of clay and examples of ancient tablets produced by J.J. Salmon in particular years. These examples have a mixture of styles, some simple, some more intricate decorated, and all are full of Lefevre inscriptions. The tablets here are all well preserved and their vivid images range from the light brown of oven fired clay, to the black coal dust brown, black of clay fired in an oven flat to an experiment, to recreate the medieval firing of the originals. Quite few of the tablets are broken.
One of the instruments is a thumblength microscope set piece of cylinder shaped wood with a steady, blunt metal needle sticking out of one end. The other is a piece of hardwood with a metal needle sticking out of one end. The metal needle is about the same length as the microscope set piece. The metal needs to be heated so that it will ultimately impact on the production of the serum. It would be interesting to compare these to original implements.

After the small vial was set into the glass, Angela cut a piece of clay for every student, while John explained to the students the various ways to be immersion. He asked them to start by cutting a piece of clay, in any shape they wish, and to then transcribe their name in Latin. B into the clay, using one of the various instruments provided. He demonstrated the assembling of a sample tablet and wrote some instructions for the Latin B onto the whiteboard.
The students busy themselves discussing what successful test to use to spell their names in Linear B and John highlights a few of the permutations of the script, such as the omission of test cylinders and the omission in which information was communicated in relation to numbers.

The students try out the different writing implements and in conversation refer to how they are finding the viscosity of the ink. Some prefer the balsamum stick and think it moves more elegantly through the clay, whilst others prefer using the wax implement as they find it more controllable.

After having completed this first task the students move onto making a slightly larger tablet on which to record everybody’s name once. This seems quite labouring for Linear B, so in many of the original tablets there were lists of things: Goods, animals, people – lists of economic exchange, ideas of who paid what to whom, who owned and who possessed.
Move forwards 1 space

Did you Know:
The Phaistos Disk was discovered in 1908.
BUT .....
‘... amateur work, however ‘personal’ in its pursuits of curiosity, always exists in a relation – of aspiration, antagonism, or both – to the structures that govern the conferrance of legitimacy on practices: the school, the workplace, informal systems of judgment, the art institution, the state.’

Tom Roberts 2005 (in Vodanovic 2013)
‘It is, therefore, the manifestation of (again) a distance, a separation but also an engagement with this distant relationship what makes something to be amateur.’

Vodanovic 2013
The gaze therefore pre-supposes a system of social activities and signs which locate the particular tourist practices, not in terms of some intrinsic characteristics, but through the contrast implied with non-tourist social practices, particularly those based within the home and paid work.’

John Urry 2002
Hier sitzen wir!
Hallo Lydia und Heinz,
soweit Urlaubsglüüße von de Bled
Mosuni senden
Euch
Lisa + Heinz
und den Volks
und die nähere
Familie

Gewang

Gold zu

Vom u. Frau
Hans u. Familie Dieter

Finkenruck 48
9113 Breytwitz/So
G.D.R.
Here we are again.

Hiking around the coastal path in Crete.

Saw a great restaurant at the beach.

Great food, great wine, of course.

Great excitement—we went on a banana boat—got tied up at the end! Going to a mountain village to climb 210 steps up to a church.

Are we mad?

The weather is really good.

Last week in October

Still no snow in the area.

I'm 47. Tell you soon! See you later.
Fräulein Grüssse
Ausk den schönen
Terren sendet
Hier bracht man noch keine
Heizung!
Apropos of “Duchamp Tourism”
Marcel

Ray
Duchamp’s Parental Retirement Home
Rouen

Marcel Duchamp, *Erratum Musical*, 1913
Duchamp Family Grave
Rouen Cemetery
And then there is that one-man movement, Marcel Duchamp—for me a truly modern movement because it implies that each artist can do what he thinks he ought to—a movement for each person and open for everybody.

Willem de Kooning
Apropos of "Readymades"

In 1913 I had the happy idea to fasten a bicycle wheel to a kitchen stool and watch it turn.

A few months later I bought a cheap reproduction of a winter evening landscape, which I called "Pharmacy" after adding two small dots, one red and one yellow, in the horizon.

In New York in 1915 I bought at a hardware store a snow shovel on which I wrote "In advance of the broken arm."

It was around that time that the word "readymade" came to mind to designate this form of manifestation.

A point which I want very much to establish is that the choice of these "readymades" was never dictated by esthetic delectation.

This choice was based on a reaction of visual indifference with at the same time a total absence of good or bad taste... in fact a complete anesthesias.

One important characteristic was the short sentence which I occasionally inscribed on the "readymade."

That sentence instead of describing the object like a title was meant to carry the mind of the spectator towards other regions more verbal.

• Travel / Holidays (Breathing / Living / Dwelling)

• Working Environment (Making / Working / Being)

• Mapping (Planning / Recording / Documenting)

• Souvenirs (Collecting / Making / Displaying)
Marshall Chess Club
New York

Herne Bay

Apartment nr Central Park
New York
Café Meliton, Cadaqués, Spain.
1. Austerlitz train station
   2. La Bagne de l’Austerlitz '21
2. 11 Rue de la Cité 1922
   3. studio/apartment/annexe
3. Rue S-Hippolyte - studio/Bicycle wheel (No 29)
4. Hotel (9th, Rue Campagne-Première (No 29)
   5. apartment 1923-6
5. 37 Rue de Fesleveaux '23
   6. apartment (closed)
6. Rue Blomet
   7. pharmacy fe 50 m. Paris Ai
7. Entrance/Guest sketch
   8. Etoile des Champs-Élysées
10. Austerlitz
8. Rue de Rivoli
   9. Hotel de Ville : 500 m.
9. Pantheon de la Ville de Paris : Champs-Élysées
10. Entrance/Guest sketch
11. Austerlitz
12. Entrance/Guest sketch
Katy Carroll
@duchamptourist

Tweets

Katy Carroll @duchamptourist · Jan 5
Hotel Isteia, 29 Rue Campagne-Première (1923). Looks like the place to stay ;) 

Katy Carroll @duchamptourist · Jan 5
37 Rue De Froidevaux (1923) Apartment. Looks like it's check mate ;) 

Katy Carroll @duchamptourist · Jan 4
32 Ave Charles Floquet (July 1919): Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia's Apartment: after returning from Buenos Aires - retinal views ;) 

Katy Carroll @duchamptourist · Jan 4
23 Rue S-Hippolyte (1913): Bicycle Wheel. Beware the wet paint ;)
The Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen
The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Green Box), September 1934
Box in a Valise (From or by Marcel Duchamp or Rrose Sélavy) 1935 - 41
MARCEL DUCHAMP TEA TOWEL | LHOOQ

€12.90  €12.26 MEMBER’S PRICE

A funny tea towel to help you with domestic chores!

DESCRIPTION

Marcel Duchamp is an exceptional artist who is yet considered, in common modernist opinion, as the man who “killed painting”.

CHARACTERISTICS

100% cotton
EAN 3760146332171
Dimensions 480 mm x 680 mm
Publisher Centre Pompidou
Categories Home decor, Table art
‘work of art without an artist to make it’

‘letting things go by themselves’
The gaze is as socially organised and systematised [...] it is not a gaze confined to professionals ‘supported and justified by an institution’ (Foucault, 1976:89).

Urry and Larson 2011 pg1
Duchamp was a great bricoleur; he enjoyed making and fixing.

Calvin Thompkins (1996: Pg.431)
Duchamp’s Apartment
Cadaqués
Spain
The poetry of bricolage comes to the bricoleur also, and above all, from the fact that he does not limit himself to accomplishing or executing. [...] Without ever accomplishing his project, the bricoleur always puts into it something of himself. Lévis-Strauss

(in Loudrias,P. 1999. pg520)

It (bricolage) creates structures, in the form of its artefacts, by means of contingent events. To arrive at a definition, *bricolage is the creation of structure out of events.*

(Loudrias,P. 1999. pg520)
Gazing is a performance that orders, shapes and classifies rather than reflects the world.

Urry and Larson 2011 pg2
He once stated he preferred living than working, he claimed ‘Je suis a respirateur.’
Apropos of "Ready-mades"

2013 - 100 yrs anniversary

IN 1913 I HAD THE HAPPY IDEA TO FASTEN A BICYCLE WHEEL TO A KITCHEN STOOL AND WATCH IT TURN.

A FEW MONTHS LATER I BOUGHT A CHEAP REPRODUCTION OF A WINTER EVENING LANDSCAPE, WHICH I CALLED "PHARMACY" AFTER ADDING TWO SMALL DOTS, ONE RED AND ONE YELLOW, IN THE HORIZON.

IN NEW YORK IN 1915 I BOUGHT AT A HARDWARE STORE A SNOW SHOVEL

ON WHICH I WROTE IN ADVANCE OF THE BROKEN ARM.

IT WAS AROUND THAT TIME THAT THE WORD "READYMADE" CAME TO MIND TO DESIGNATE THIS FORM OF MANIFESTATION.

A POINT WHICH I WANT VERY MUCH TO ESTABLISH IS THAT THE CHOICE OF THESE "READYMADIES" WAS NEVER DICTATED BY AESTHETIC DELECTATION.

THIS CHOICE WAS BASED ON A REACTION OF VISUAL INDIFFERENCE WITH AT THE SAME TIME A TOTAL ABSENCE OF GOOD OR BAD TASTE... IN FACT A COMPLETE (ANESTHESIA).

ONE IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTIC WAS THE SHORT SENTENCE WHICH I OCCASIONALLY INScribed ON THE "READYMADIES."

THAT SENTENCE INSTEAD OF DESCRIBING THE OBJECT LIKE A TITLE WAS MEANT TO CARRY THE MIND OF THE SPECTATOR TOWARDS OTHER REGIONS MORE VERBAL.

IN 2007 I HAD THE HAPPY IDEA TO FASTEN AN OBSESSION TO GOING ON HOLIDAY.
A FEW MONTHS LATER I …
IN HERNE BAY IN 2013 I BOUGHT AT A SOUVENIR STORE A SNOW STORM ON WHICH I … considered the relationship between a/my collection and Duchamp/readymades?
IT WAS AROUND THAT TIME THAT THE WORD “DUCHAMP TOURISM” CAME TO MIND TO DESIGNATE THIS MANIFESTATION.
A POINT WHICH I WANT VERY MUCH TO ESTABLISH IS THAT THE CHOICE OF “DUCHAMP TOURISM” WAS NEVER DICTATED BY ACADEMIC DELECTATION.
THIS CHOICE WAS BASED ON A REACTION OF GEOGRAPHICAL INDIFFERENCE WITH AT THE SAME TIME A TOTAL ABSENCE OF GOOD OR BAD TASTE … IN FACT A COMPLETE LOVE.
ONE IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTIC WAS THE OBSESSION WITH RECORDING THE “DUCHAMP TOURISM” ACTIVITIES.
THAT DOCUMENTATION INSTEAD OF DESCRIBING THE HOLIDAY LIKE A TITLE WAS MEANT TO CARRY THE MIND OF THE SPECTATOR TOWARDS OTHER REGIONS MORE CONCEPTUAL.
Thank you!