

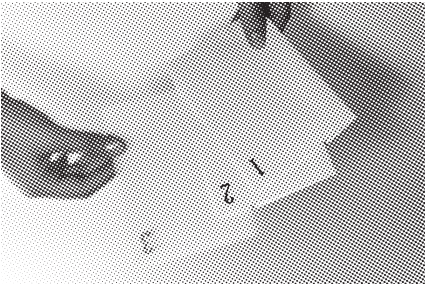
MY OWN PRIVATE IDAHO (OF ART) DANIEL NEUMANN

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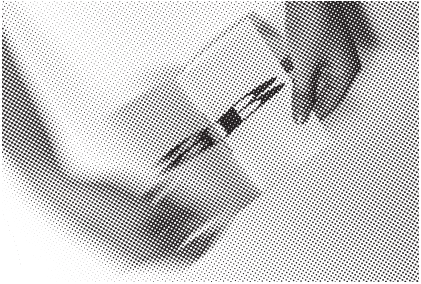
expansions of them. Just as artists create circularity and referentiality, proponents and beneficiaries are quick to create these at another level that looks like an interpretation but is, in fact, a vital part of the work itself. This implies that, just as styles and movements in art depend on former artworks as a vantage point, so too does their extension need former peripheries of statements, claims and events in order to work. In this symbiotic relationship, the difference between verbal, textual and visual traits diminishes since everything depends on each other to continue to make sense, as the above mentioned factors tried to indicate.

In face of this, I argue that it could be productive to think about new ways of distance to the phenomena described, to not take anything said about artworks or artists as evident, to look for the reference, for the causes, motivations and themes that have become part of the artworks (and thus «artworld») by having been continuously used as backdrops, origins of meaning and intentions. This is not to say that what curators and critics are creating is frivolous or irresponsible, it just means that they, in some cases, already belong to the work and can be considered accordingly. In the end, an emphatic concept of experience, one affording the psychological, phenomenological or ethical standpoint talked about at the beginning might after all be a preferable mode of reception to create the distance that aligns me at once with what I experience, without making me forget that this «I» could and should obstruct my becoming part of the work.

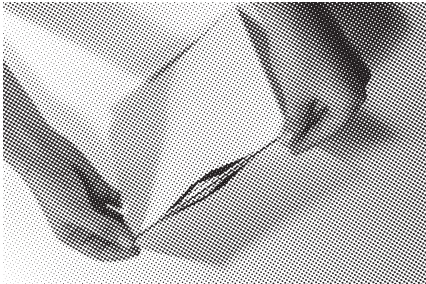
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reciprocal turn



issue # 2

From 1901 onward, English author Violet Paget recorded her thoughts and experiences in front of artworks which were later published as «Gallery Notes» under the pseudonym Vernon Lee. In these notes, she considers the kinds of responses received by art objects. Given this open and in-determined setting, the common situation of the museum visit itself becomes problematic: why are my reactions stronger today, weaker yesterday? How will my concentration affect the experience of looking, or, how will the artwork affect my concentration? In what way does my perceiving of a statue alter my perception of the other visitors around me? These questions hint to a psychological approach to aesthetic experience, hinging on self perception just as much as on the perception of «external» phenomena. Vernon Lee concludes the years worth of observation by asserting that regarding herself «[...] aesthetic responsiveness is an essentially active phenomenon, and one subject to every conceivable cause of fluctuation in our energy and variation in our moods, to the extent that

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And yet, the ever present psychological or phenomenological underlings might not be the critical vantage point of the editors of *reciprocal turn*. The problem does not seem to be the necessary implication of an I, a viewer, a viewer separating themselves from the aesthetic object.

I pointed to Martin Heidegger's *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerks* to speak of encountering the object «by itself». In the last issue, sort of mystic self-oblivion, a fusion of see and seen in order or the effects of one's own bodily presence. It would require a unadulterated by associations on account of a visible subject comes. Indeed, it seems difficult to imagine something like a gaze and judging aesthetic objects, in this case, psychological a detour to the premises and requirements of enjoying, reflect- perience in front of a painting or a sculpture can already ex- implied in the practice of Vernon Lee, even the immediate ex- able thing sitting in the gallery, waiting to be looked at. As is that discussions about art lead rather away from that market- (at all) invite the viewer to a full frontal examination, seeing The second edition of *reciprocal turn* asks if art objects (still or reversed within a few days.»¹

the judgment of pleasurable and dis- pleasurable passed upon the same work of art may be altered and even



Rather the object as the rightful center of attention has started to disappear behind talks about curatorial affordances, trends turned turns and artists' personas. With the result that, and I share this experience, one may feel estranged, standing between a mass of exhibits at the latest art fair, trying to come to terms with the artworks to no avail, and then consulting a text or listening to a talk just to find out that what seems to be the context and meaning has not much to do with the thing that spawned the questions in the first place. One possible solution to this dilemma might be to just pragmatically take all this at face value: objects become, in a kind of «interpretative displacement», the events surrounding them. Instead of dealing with problems of form and content enclosed in a tangible work, the person interested in art now also has to deal with statements about the content, with meaning taking the form of concepts more or less loosely applied to and expressed by the object as well as a series of themes and motivations ranging from political to art-historical to self-referential areas purporting to be necessary for the object to make «proper» sense. According to this

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etc. should not be taken seriously as intelligible and cognizable contributions making sense of the exhibited artworks. Consider that there is a clear difference between an aesthetic object and its interpretation, e.g. a painted figure and talking about the characteristics of this painted figure, belonging to a certain style, being employed for dramatic means etc. Now, this difference seems to fade when I want to interpret a statement someone made about an artwork since that in itself already seems to relate to the work on the same level as my interpretation of that statement. In other words, the statement already seems to take a distance. Whether or not it does depends on several factors: does it sound like similar statements made about similar artworks? Does it refer to themes that have been established as being expressed by the work? Does it, without further change, reproduce things the artists themselves have said about it at one occasion or another? Does it take the work prima facie to be long to a movement or a turn? What I am trying to delineate is that a circularity of meaning that is usually only ascribed to (especially of modern and contemporary) objects of art: referencing other works, evoking aesthetic ideals, insinuate traits of «isms», might just as well be found in many of the discourses around those artworks, which could subsequently be regarded as

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suggestion, this would have to be seen as the immediate material taking the place of the object itself—which then functions as the empty center around which everything else is gravitating. It would further mean that curators, artists and critics are not delivering an interpretation to be considered as immediately discursive and intelligible; whatever takes place around the object is in need to be made sense of, just as the artwork is by itself. Of course, some problems arise: what about «art events» or happenings which, in themselves, already take the form of a passing, intangible artwork? What would be the difference between my interpretation that claims to reflect those other «interpretations» surrounding the artwork? Would not my contribution become part of the work? How many artworks are there anyway, in that case? How could I even distinguish between artists and their works when a curatorial outline, discussing and explaining several works, belongs to several of them at once? In sum, what is the difference between the artwork and its critical reflection? Where did that vital distance between viewer and viewed disappear to? I would suggest that this distance, in order to be instantiated, has to be taken seriously. This means that some of the aspects around the empty centers of artworks, e.g. curatorial concepts, interviews with gallery owners, catalogue texts