

**The Aesthetical
Disillusionment and
the Apotheosis
Of
Art's Truth**

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As you work, the mood grows on you. There *are* certain images which suddenly get hold of me and I really want to do them. But it's true to say that the excitement and the possibilities are in the working and obviously can only come in working.

David Sylvester, *Interviews with Francis Bacon*

Seen or seeing? The painter is observing a place which, from moment to moment never ceases to change its content, its form, its face, its identity.

Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*

Today, there are a few questions that engage and evoke me, my art-practice as an artist, and my aesthetical-philosophical concerns such as: what are the main aesthetic and artistic features to encompass in twenty-first century art and visual culture? Has art today apostatized from its core traditional values, or is it finding again its apotheosis? Can art be irreducible to a delusional technological illustration and to a mere doctrinal political-aesthetic conceptualization?

My position as an artist is that, Fine Arts needs to depart from the pretentious roaring of rhetoric and cacophonous political-aesthetic discourses, which have been extremely overwhelming to visual arts. The term “arts”, for me in this inquiry indicates the realm of “Fine Arts”, as opposed to what Gianni Vattimo in his book *Art's Claim to Truth*, has termed “art-as-news” in his discussion of the work of Alfredo Jaar. I am strongly opposed to Vattimo's and Jaar's approach to fine arts. Jaar's proposition to fine arts as “art-news”, defines the domain of art as news-information aesthetic and visual documentary programs—propelling doctrinal-aesthetical issues that pulverize, debilitate, and abeyance or even arrest fine arts.

This means to shatter *fine* arts to self-negation. I question Jaar not for what he does, but because I doubt his practice to be *true* for what it promises—I find his art-as-news indubitably hollow because, it embodies and it sediments a strong doctrinal structure hidden in his actions. In February 25, 2009 as an MFA student, I had the chance to have Jaar in my studio as a visiting artist at “Parsons The New School For Design.” It was during that intimate conversation that I finally confirmed my previous doubts about Jaar’s notion of *truth* in art. His artistic position was very radical and doctrinal. He suggested to me that ‘we have to move along with the avant-garde structure of art and discard the traditional artistic values and vocabulary’. For him the realm of painting in general is dead, and ‘there is nothing else to explore’. Jaar’s optical vision was not attracted by the physicality of the painting as an object of experience, nor from its painterly qualities or forms—he suggested to me saying that, ‘I want to see something that I understand, something that can be seen’. This kind of attitude comes from a myopic proletarian artist with an extreme radical doctrinal-aesthetic. But I think, we have already past several of malicious *anti*-art doctrinal-theories by now, and in this particular junction of history, we are re-experiencing a different global condition where, the notion of [what is true in art] is debatable in many different fronts and in a lot more diversified artistic-aesthetic circles and cultures.

My ‘Contemporary Neo-Urban-Expression—Neo-Figure-Abstract” or [Act-Event] oil paintings deal with the very materiality of painting, i.e. with the surface and the facets of space creating their own language—bold lines that create tension, force and speed, forms that blend and blur. There is a palpable layer of what *there is*, scattered forms of things that dissolve and deteriorate or dissipate and reemerge as things through the visceral depletion of colors—they smell and have their presence as being there. My argument is to let painting be painting, to let it be real and honest in itself, for itself and to itself. As far as I am concerned, the art work itself *is*. It is that which is the truth and the origin of itself. It cannot be irreducible to any delusional conceptualization, serving as a demagoguery tool of doctrinal politics of aesthetics. My paintings’ aim is to penetrate into the very condition that I am trapped

in, in the very breach/rift and situation I am situated in my milieu, in the mode of how I experience and perceive the things that make my environment as my world of things. The painterly and performative action of my self-affirmation springs from a sober condition of an ecstatic joy of my visual breath. I paint the disclosed and concealed moments and the forms of things as they appear to my visualization—this is the *act-event* of my exterior condition internalized and materialized into my worldly-earthly presence. I will discuss the reality of my present work from the prism of three conditions: the aesthetic, the poetic-literary, and that of painting. It will be on the aesthetic domain that I will reject Jaar’s “art-news”. In regards to my paintings, I think that they are the offspring of a particular locality. In other worlds, *my artistic rapture* takes place in a locality that is enveloped in the presence of a situation. In this case, it is New York City. It is this city that my art has evolved and engaged itself as a form and also, let me say; my art is the prosopopoeia/manifestation of this milieu of technological shattering speed, vibrancy, animation, of emerging and dissolving realities that pass-by me and are connatural/build-in me.

The Aesthetics of Art or Delusional Aesthetics

In its irreplaceability, the work of art is no mere bearer of meaning – as if the meaning could be transferred to another bearer. Rather the meaning of the work of art lies in the fact that it is there.

Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful*

My artistic-aesthetic position is a corporeal or substantial stand. It is not a reactionary one. I profoundly feel that art is above the doctrinal politics of aesthetics and it cannot be a tool of doctrinal aestheticism, propelling fine arts to art-news-forecast and iPhone type of art. Fine Art is not a means for an end, because it is the “end-itself” embracing our culture and humanity as a whole. But most importantly, fine arts does not serve as a product of consumption, that which has an immediate

exchange monetary value as for example: design, architecture, media-tech-art, fashion, reality TV, advertisement, et cetera; nor does fine arts aim at any particular regimented political agenda, although, it has an absolute right (as it always does) to comment on and interpret various intellectual, socio-political, physical, human, exterior, interior, or optical phenomenon, etc., i.e. fine arts can't be lost in the *ossature* (in this sense *ossature* means the structure/arrangement that supports a building or the form of a body-part skeleton) labyrinth of a vicious marketing circle of doctrinal politics of aesthetics. This is the sort of truth that hurts, because fine arts in its everydayness finds itself intermingled with the exchange fluctuation of monetary value—fine arts is not stock market. The truth of “fine arts” is not to be found-located in Hollywood or technology, fashion industry or cosmetic consummation, panic-star-media-escape or musical-commercialism, etc. This is not that kind of hypothetical-truth that hurts, as Vattimo alludes about the truthfulness of Jaar's art-as-telecommunication-news.

What is Vattimo saying in regards to Jaar's aesthetical activism? Vattimo states: “If the whole historical life of humanity comes to be seen as a movement in the light of the art work, as an endless act of interpretation of poetry..., then it is no longer possible to isolate and describe the enjoyment of art in the same terms of aesthetics. Perhaps, though, it is the very notion of aesthetic enjoyment—in the narrow meaning in which the tradition attributes to this term—that we should renounce, in order to recover the possibility of more authentically understanding of the “truth” of art.” (160) It seems to me that Vattimo wants to be a rebellious aesthetician like Marinetti's Futurism or Tatlin's Constructivism in the early 20th century, reapplying the same militant formulas in a *digital* format, thus robotizing art as a mere high-tech illustrative act. The term to renounce means to overthrow something as decadent or degenerate or not enjoyable as art. To innovate something *pseudo*-authentic is to follow the path of a teleological progression of Modernity/Modernism, where the avant-garde tempo of authenticity marches into a utopian infinity. Do we need this kind dilettantism and techno-militant tempo in fine arts? May be Vattimo and Jaar have forgotten that, Heidegger himself, was

vehemently opposed to the notion of Modernity and its militant-technology. Vattimo's reaction is against the postmodern condition of his time, and that is fine, because I am not advocating or going against postmodernism here; but also, this is not the purpose of my inquiry either. In his own way, however, Vattimo tries to solicit Heidegger's and Gadamer's hermeneutical presence of art forms. I think that he misinterprets them—not by mistake, or as if he did not understand them; but rather, he twists their thoughts so as to make his case—Jaar's reportage-journalism of art-as-news phenomenon, which he claims to be the sole point of art's claim to truth. Talking about Jaar's *Rwanda Project, 1994-2000*, Vattimo asserts: "...Jaar puts on stage the very meaning of photography as a way informing and wakening public consciousness about bloody events...Understanding the truth of the art as news rather as the final revelation of human nature or of the world..." (164) For Vattimo, Jaar is the *messiah* of the everyday condition of suffer, blood, pain, and human truth around wherever and whenever it happened or happens—Jaar is on the pedestal of worldly justice—the one that telecommunicates it, not as a universal truth but as daily news. My humble suggestion to Jaar is to read or to thoroughly re-read (if he has), the New York Times bestseller book that describes the genocide in Rwanda in its most awakening and revealing moment of Philip Gourevitch, "*We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families*". To me, this is real news. This is the real art of earthly everydayness and of the human condition of truth and experience.

Now let's take a closer look at Jaar's work, *Requiem for Leipzig, 2005*. To me, this piece is a pastiche act of the past, which is not even of the everydayness of the present of art's claim to truth as Jaar wants us to believe. This entire piece is a nostalgic past of a church in Leipzig, Germany. Jaar works with the chandelier in the middle of the church. He lights on the chandelier and brings it up and down in the center for a number of times—there are few [disinterested] people, as Jaar in his February 25, 2009 lecture at "Parsons The New School For Design" explained. I think that this performance aims at recapturing the memories of a lost past and the oblivious time that does not go hand to hand with the hermeneutical theory of

Heidegger's and Gadamer's present experience of the art work. It is a pastiche type of postmodernism at best. It is a representation of a lost time and of a historical memory in a place that is full of events—it is not relevant to the Heideggerian *everydayness* that Vattimo and Jaar falsely claim. It is this engagement of everydayness that Heidegger claims as the inauthentic being in the “they”. *Jaar is in the presence of the past sentence of the “they” and he is lost in this inauthentic presence-at-hand.* Being authentic as Jaar wants to be, is to be lost in the beforehand enigmatic energy of *Dasein*—in its ecstatic-temporality or moments of freedom, reticence or solitude. The essential truth for Heidegger (*Being and Time*) is precisely found in the truth of *unconcealment* and *concealment* of *Dasein*, of what there is in the world of things. In Heidegger's point of view, we have to have both, the *disclosed* and the *covered up* world of being there-in-the-world-of-things, because “*Dasein*” is divided in between both. To be sure, the truth that Jaar is looking for is merely a truth, because Jaar walks in the zone of what is hypothetically-covered up and vaguely seen—he denies seeing the world that does not relate to the power of object-subject structure. Yet this is the zone where *Dasein* as being there in the world dwells, in its inmost authentic identity—*in between* and as one unity above subject-object relation. *Dasein* as *there-is* it is the world that comes even before subject, but also, according to Heidegger in *Being and Time* we see that: “a relation between subject and Object’—a procedure in which there lurks as much ‘truth’ as vacuity. But subject and Object do not coincide with *Dasein* and the world.” (87) This is not a transcendental Kantian idealism as one might wrongly estimate, but the Object-World-of the Things that surround us—this is the point of Heidegger.

The question that arises is this: where does Jaar's notion of truth really abide? It is on the subject or on the object? Because it seems to me that, Jaar has internalized the subject and thus his projects propel us to a sort of idealistic attitude. What does it mean for Jaar? It says that Jaar's projects have subscribed to the forces of aesthetic fetishism and political commitment. Theodor Adorno in *Aesthetic Theory* says that: “The relation of art and society has its locus in art itself...not in

immediate partisanship, in what...is called *commitment*'. (319) All the same, Jaar's projects exist only in the realm of partisanship commitment and doctrinal regimented political agenda—"not in art itself". To return back to Heidegger's position, being there in-the-world of the environment that I am talking about, is the world of the *openness of things* as things that are already there, out-site into the world of things—temporal-ecstatic and beforehand. The enigmatic notion of what truth is; it is to be located in-there alongside objects and not in any doctrinal political emotional-victimization of subject.

Zooming in Heidegger's world is important to understand that, for him the world of being there as a true condition of this worldly 'space' of things, is precisely to be found in the poetic language where the authentic existence resides. To be sure, Heidegger's state of mind is a *centripetal* one—he embraces the center radiation of being in the world of things and in their environment. On the other hand, Jaar's state of mind and actions are *centrifugal*, meaning that Jaar's activism is a postmodern news-forecast-art—situated in the limits of meanings, playing the moral-political figure-victim that doesn't have any interest and investment in the very core of being *as* being, or art as art but of being in the umbrella of a political and doctrinal news-reporting. Jaar is a reporter par excellence. Heidegger would understand this fact as "idle talk", "curiosity" and "ambiguity" or as a mode of inauthenticity of the-they-talking in the crowd dispersed in the-they.

In Heidegger's stance, inauthentic being (as in Jaar's work) evades life from its most raw fact: *finitude*. For Heidegger, if there is no Dasein (and Dasein is ultimate resoluteness), or if there is not what-there-is, there is simply no world of things as we know it. Because Dasein is being in the world, being with—Dasein is nobody in particular: everyone is another and yet, no one is oneself—we exist proximally in the spatial milieu of things. In other words, only Dasein is meaningful because there-is a world that we are already in, i.e. Dasein as that which is, is what there-is as all human and Dasein is the repetition of finitude as an anticipatory phenomenon—resoluteness is always moving towards temporality which itself leads to finitude, therefore to authentically. Heidegger states: "For the most part, everyday Dasein

covers up the ownmost possibility of its Being—that possibility which is non-relational and no to be outstripped. This factual tendency to cover up confirms our thesis that Dasein, as factual, is in the ‘untruth’ ”. (301) In other words, what Heidegger is indicating here is that, the notion of “idle talk” (as in Jaar’s works) as language in our everydayness, is not necessarily a language that uncovers the meaning of the milieu we dwell-in. The poetic expression is not just an aesthetic presentation of the world, but rather, it is that which unravels the world of things that we are *in* as that recourse of the epiphany we experience. The everyday language that Jaar’s work installs itself as a partisanship-commitment is nothing more than, a vague and confused [news-spectacle] far way from what he claims to be the truth that hurts.

My point of departure is to unravel and understand Jaar’s news activity and not to disregard it. And my position is that, Jurgen Habermas is a good guide for Jaar and vice versa. In his book, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas says: “To the degree that the institutional production of knowledge that is specialized according to cognitive, normative, and aesthetic validity claims penetrates to the level of everyday communication and replaces traditional knowledge...” (340) The idea of Habermas is to reach to a level of societal communicative action as that which will rationalize the structure of society. Habermas is opposed to institutional individualization and his aim is that through the *media of communicative action*, we could find societal integration. Artistically and aesthetically speaking, Jaar is much closer to Habermas than to Heidegger or Gadamer. Jaar’s reportage activism of art as news project, finds a better place in the doctrinal or dogmatic platform of Habermas, where the behavior and concepts of Jaar could be really utilized in the social communicative order, to reach a high level of political-aesthetical-architectural commitment of production. I have perpetuated in the philosophical allures, to define my aesthetic and artistic position refuting Jaar’s projects of art-as-news. Now I will turn the projector onto and into the condition of my own art of painting.

Painting, forms and things—Poetry and Literature

Color is the shattering of unity...Color is not zero meaning; it is excess meaning through instinctual drive...

Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language*

The artist is by status an “operator” of gestures: he seeks to produce an effect and at the same time seeks no such thing; the effects he produces he has not obligatorily sought out; they are reversed, inadvertent effects which turn back upon him and thereupon provoke certain modifications, deviations, mitigations of the line, of the stroke. Thus in gesture is abolished the distinction between cause and effect, motivation and goal, expression and persuasion.

Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms*

My paintings are first and foremost objects. They are present and have a presence—there is an animation of actions where colors and lines, forms and things emerge and create sensations. They are real and they smell of their oily surface, they are dry or soft, opaque and transparent, visceral and lost in disclosure or concealed in forms. The outcome of my actions that are performed by my hands or me as an individual, culminate or summon in the *very openness* of what *there is*. The surface is palpable or thick, glassy and matt, it drips, it ripples, it undulates, it swirls with curvilinear motions—it makes forms of things that in themselves are hidden to me as well. The play here takes place on a simple two-dimensional stretched canvas. This material is turned into a condition, into a thing, into a sensation of forms that dissipate to webs of experiences, mental sequences of a speed in progress, of time as then, now, and after—in *one unity*. This unity is “above” the polarization of object vs. subject domination and vice versa—this unity is the evanescence of a nascent or advent form that becomes an affect of ubiquitous

realities. These forms are discernible in our visual space and exist as things of a speechless language, and yet they are meant to deliver spasms.

There are few examples that I would like to annotate, but also, to cast some light on my paintings as to how the process of my work comes about. One example is Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach to form and artistic vision. In his book, *Primacy of Perception*, he states: "...painting celebrates no other enigma but that of vision...The painter's world is a visible world, nothing but visible... The painter, whatever he is, *while he is painting* practices a magical theory of vision...In fact they exist only in the threshold of profane vision..." (166) For Merleau-Ponty, the painter interrogates the world and creates his own idiosyncratic vision of things as forms, reducing the essence of the world and enabling the viewer to perceive or see the otherwise unseen things. This active reduction or distillation of the world of things, takes place only in the zone of painter's eye. What the painter does for the viewer is to open new worlds. Furthermore, he says: "Especially it makes us *see a space* where there is none". (172) I would have not agreed more with what Merleau-Ponty is suggesting here, which is to say, the "depth" that a painting enables us to forget ourselves, the "depth" that incites our sensuous being, a being that we never get to see but where a painting allows us to perceive and feel or touch a reality—to experience our own body as it perpetuates into the enigmatic world of forms *as* things in themselves. It is this crude or coarse zone that my own art of painting dwells and operates in.

For instance, *Disclosed in Space, 2009* reveals my anxiety and bodily perplexity while the forms of the things are created or as they are emerging—it is a continues struggle to walk on the threshold of the profane reality of the visible and invisible things, or in the realm of the enigmatic presence that "simultaneously" covers up and uncovers the appearance of things. This painting has its own reality, language and space. It has become that which was not, and yet, that which that has already been there in the world of things. But if, as I suggest, I thus unravel the nascent condition of this painterly thing as a thing; then, I would also say that, the materiality of this thing and I as the artist are the origin of each other—my painting is

the origin of me and I the initiation as the origin of my painting. This is a unity, no one can exist without the other—the painting is my breath and my breath has been transformed into an object that has become a sensation. First of all, the scale is big enough (bigger than human size); it has an imposing presence because the size of a human body feels immersed in the scale and energy of this painting. There is a deteriorated or dissolved human figure in the center of the painting—it is barely seen but *it is there*. It is as if it is calling for attention, to either become or reveal itself or distance it-self from the viewer. It is ambiguous in its *thingness*. This center mass or figure is living in the instance of a moment—a moment as we see it on the right side of the painting, where a massive and speed-like energetic abstract moving vague silhouette of greens, yellows, blacks and blues mixed into their own rushing rippled form, or it seems as if it is still moving towards something creating a tension with the center. It is the opening moment of the center figure-form with an exuberant color mass of reds and oranges that captures the attention—what is it? While the left area of the painting is revealed with the purples and reds intermingled with a nerving precarious curvilinear motion with the transparent rawness of the linen; the linen is naked, it is what one sees—a material in progress before becomes a thing.

The experiment is the end result because, the viewer sees me as me in my very naked emotional self-me-in-the-act of seeing into the world of things, and also, arresting the forms that are crying in space and ask me to be seen as things. To be sure, for the most part the form (s) remains irresolute; that is to say, it is open as a centripetal thing-object projection into the milieu of my presence in its horizontal prospective enigma. The voracious ecstatic speed of lines and forms in the intercourse of not yet seen, are multiplied with ripples and drips on canvas—these are corporeal or somatic forms and things. There are the bubble affects of ripples creating an ethereal color mass, some lacy and some are hard-edged lines or forms infused with the color. In this painting the trace of unseen spaces of realities have left their stain as to say that, we have been there and we are still here. The lines and the colors dance in the unrevealed melody of my vision and of my wonder into the world of unspoken space of what there is and what is willing to become—there must

be a [will] in order for things to exist and to be seen. In other words, one has to perceive and see my own presence in an environment such as New York City, as it embodies my presence and my visual experience or how it is ingrained in me; but also, as Adolph Gottlieb in his 1960 interview with David Sylvester, *Interviews with American Artists* portraits New York: "It's the pulse, not the look. I'm not involved with the external appearance of the city; it's the vibrations." (33) In this case, I would say that the appearance and essence of my work is shaped and transformed by the intensity, stroke, vibrancy, rhythm, the dazzling speed and the colorful precarious events and moments of New York City's life. This is the manner that I visualize forms in their emergence or disappearance. I would add that, it is not just the internalized condition, because there is also, the very raw condition of NY's presence as a total object or a unity—its energy and obscurity, its mental turbulence and noise where my being departs-demarcates.

Another example that I would like to outline the condition of my art is Heidegger's essay, *The Origin of the Work of Art*. Before reading this text, I perceived the condition of my painting from the prism of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological vision of things. Now I will cast some light on my work from a hermeneutical point of view, and especially that of Heidegger. His concern about the work of art is alluring when he asks, what is 'the truth' of this thing that we call art work if we claim it to be a thing?

But let's see what Heidegger defines to be true and how he works out this issue from an aesthetical point of view. He states that: "A thing...is that around which the properties have assembled" (655) Heidegger has a very *earthly approach* as what is that thing as a thing. In this case, in relation to painting there would be the colors and all its materials, like sound would be for music and wood, stone, iron or glass for sculpture. Thus the thing as a thing or *thingness* is that which connects everything in *one unity* of the thing that we finally see as a thing—beyond the subject-object power struggle. According to Heidegger's point of view, it is precisely this accidental/contingent web of assembling things that create the sensation of forms. He states: "In what sense the sight, hearing, and touch convey, in the

sensations of color, sound, roughness, hardness, things move us bodily, in the literal meaning of the world. The thing is the *aistheton*, that which is perceptible by sensations in the senses belonging to sensibility...Whatever this unity is conceived as sum or as totality or as form alters nothing in the standard character of this thing-concept...The thing itself must be allowed to remain in its self-containment". (657-8) In other words what Heidegger is implying, it is that, this "sensation" [*aistheton*] is the very origin of the thing or of the work of art. The only way for us to find the truth is that, it has to be located in a *centripetal* point: that is the work of art itself as it stands there in the world, opening up our world of things. We sense the truth because we are that truth—we sense the finitude of truth as an act of being there in the life of things—we call it our space and our world—it is all human.

In my painting, *The Shadow of Specter, 2009* the truth of the imposing contour-form, partly blurred and partly solid and hard-edge shadow is covered and unraveled—it is a confrontational lascivious or obscene form that keeps reoccurring in my perception of what a shadow is and what its form means. Is it mental or imaginary? Is it political or historical?

Samuel Beckett in his trilogy of *Malloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* elucidates the presence of a shadow, its form of finitude, and its form of human reality as a ubiquitous and immanent condition of how is pervading our sensations of that which is not yet seen. He describes: "Malone is there...He passes motionless...It was while watching him pass that I wondered if we cast a shadow. Impossible to say." (292) Here we are dealing with the aspect of finitude, disappearance, emergence, and the dissipation of a form, its character, its truth of what is or how it comes about. The same aspect applies to this painting. This painting has an imposing moment and that is implied in its scale—the viewer is immersed in it. At first, one sees a corporeal mass of a thing that is not concealed as yet, but there is an event that has happened and is willing to say what has happened—there is a nascent condition of an "advent" as well. It is an enigmatic sensation of a form belonging to an experience and human sensibility. It is a phantasm that keeps silently screaming and asking to be seen as an event in time.

This mass of specter occupies most of the painting, but is hidden, where the dark diminutive and murky colors of black, brown, red, umbra and a diminished-light of passive greens and vaguely pinks reveals an obscure ubiquitous condition. The body (here the notion of the body, implies any figural form, be it abstract or real) is distorted as an unknown form—[unnamable]. The violent-visceral and intense activity of the swoosh brush and smashed marks and gestures combined with dim colors, and the three stripes of linen on top of the main linen, blending with the colors of the whole painting, allude to a sequence and layering of facets and horizons of a presence; although, not revealed. The upper-left side is exposing a situation of a violent act of swooshed mass, of a precarious and schizophrenic lust, as that which screams the most out of the enigmatic condition of a deteriorated and disfigured presence of assembled lines and colors as one unity and form. The wet and dry, opaque and transparent dark earthly colors are blend like a lost swirl hidden in the shadow that hides an advent. The figure seems to have escaped the line of its own body, to have left its shadow behind as to show us that it still exists but somewhere else. The upper-right side of the painting is left naked in its rawness as a thing—after all it is better to be seen alive; the naked linen gives life to that evaporated and scattered specter. The raw material of linen as *thingness* keeps us in touch with the reality of our presence, it is here—I am here! This is the act of experience shattered as a sensation, where the material becomes a nascent form that goes beyond the object-subject relation. This instance surpasses our human condition and yet, it is our very existence.

In another painting of mine, *Scattered Instances, 2009* there is a similar condition and a situation that is perceived as an instance or a segment of time, a memory of experience, and a sequence that passes by us in our daily routine of visible and invisible things. At a closer look, on the left side and from top to bottom there is a massive bold and imperious mass of black-brown form. This faceless and voiceless but alive moving silhouette/shadow has dissipated and dissolved like swoosh of a semi-transparent and partly opaque sequencing the glossy and dripping surface. One can still see and feel my painterly traces of brushes and drips, the

spontaneous and precarious acts. The color and line intercourse and become a somatic unity—they intermingle in between and reemerge to various malleable or airy condition. One can touch the palpable oil color as it swims on the canvas swirling in its rhythm and transmuting into visceral or ecstatic wet lines. Think of riding in a subway-car (as I do in New York City). Think of the simultaneous speed and change of shapes and forms that disappear and dissolve and then, out of nowhere reemerge and disclose to other moments that deviate in front of your vision and environment. Think of things and people that come and go like they never existed in front of your “sight” or in front of you while you were there/here as the condition of your form. *Space and silence take form as texture on the canvas where the lines and colors synthesize a moment—you enter them and engage them and all that surrounds you, and then, what is there in the things to see as things?* For me, there are voracious colors and lines, corporeal forms and things, and sequences that scream at me, and yet not revealed in space, but they ask me to give them air as to breathe in space. This space is profoundly perceived on the right part of the painting, where a big and wide brush creates a red-fleshy curvilinear appearance, dissipating with the muddy light of fragmented greens on the lower part as an avid orange. The mood changes, and yet it speaks to the massive moving dark, diminutive and shattering bloc of the black—the linen on the upper part is still virgin and row, it gazes at you and is willing to say: I am the sensation and the physiognomy of an advent.

Gilles Deleuze in his book, *Francis Bacon, The Logic of Sensation*, is right and much more radical than any other aesthetician when he talks about Francis Bacon’s paintings, saying: “Why Bacon often explains that it is to avoid the *figurative*, *illustrative*, and *narrative* character...to break with representation, to disrupt narration, to escape illustration, to liberate the Figure: to stick to the fact.” (2-3) It precisely this particular condition that my recent paintings are evolved, to uncover the “fact” of things as they are in their raw advent condition. My paintings have departed from the figurative point and have dissipated to the core of what is there as true—its reality. The figures (the ones that are based on figures) have dissolved into

their primordial condition and in a state of ecstasy—they live in the spontaneous marks of my act, of my brush or squeezed tube of color on the linen, where my traces can be located.

As for example in my painting, *Emerging Figure, 2009* there are celestial traces of a figure that is escaping and yet reentering its condition and its line of departure, dispatching itself through its mass of blurring and dissolving of color as form—it is a thing embraced into a form, but it is not narrating or representing a particular thing. It has a thick density of brown-red-orange-red colors that create a moving carnal form that is speeding and walking on the glassy surface of the painting. There is a saturated or vivid yellow swirl on the lower right-side, that energizes that vaguely discernible bigger than an actual human scale figure. There is a walking flame where chaos and cacophony emerges in silence, where this form screams at us as if it needs attention or help. What has happened to this massive figure-form that has dissipated or what is about to emerge in front of us as we are immersed in its presence, or are we in the act of its past? May be in between acts? After all it is just a silhouette with a few recognizable human features—it has no character, no persona because the figure is anonymous. This mass has that presence which we feel, it is there as a thing that we know but have not seen as yet. The figure is dismantled but still stands in front of us, of our vision of what there is, of what it might become or of what it has been. There is a figure without anatomy. *It is where a condition is materialized as a form in between the very act of condition—of an advent.*

In *What is Philosophy?* Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, say: “What about the creator?...What is preserved—the thing or the work of art—is *a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects.*” (164) The work of art, therefore, is a being and rightly exists in itself surpassing our worldly span of things as things. To be clear, this is not to lapse into a rampant idealism or pure transcendentalism; but rather, it is to say, that the work of art is created from the breath of the artist, it exists in the mode of fascination-sensation for itself and in itself above the realms of objective and subjective understanding. The importance of the work of art, is that

this sensation which goes beyond the objective-subjective field is achieved when the material (colors, linen, stone, iron, wood, etc.) have become sensations and affects in themselves. That is the goal, where the presence of the material achieves a certain act of expressing the condition it finds itself to be. The artist is and must be a seer ahead of his act for him to be able to create a sensational materialized form, but not a transcendental ideal. Rather, a form that begins as an earthly condition and then dissipates into the web of our *sight* and the perception of things as forms. This form of artist's "sight caresses" all its surroundings, be it moment of human event/condition or that of a physical object, etc, i.e. the artistic "instinct" flirts and sexualizes with the condition of its presence in its own environment and locality.

For a moment I would like to switch my locus and direct it in the realm of literature and poetry. In *Complete Stories and Poems*, Edgar Allan Poe describes his observation of instances and emergences of what happens in the bliss of the crowd and anonymity in a city life, saying: "As he proceeded, the company grew more scattered...The stranger paused, and, for a moment, seemed lost in thought; then, with every mark of agitation...He refuses to be alone. *He is the man of the crowd.*" What Poe is capturing is the energy, it is the anonymity of the "they" as Heidegger would say, lost in the bliss of everydayness or in the routine of what life's form is. But is this visualizing walk with a stranger where Poe is creating a panoramic situation of the world? This is a stranger's affect, sensation, and surprise that we remember visualizing the space of this event. He is the passer-by or the dweller that shares the same space as we do, but we are immersed in our everydayness that we rarely look at the space around as space, above, beyond or behind. This has been a condition that my work deals with, the vibration, energy, pulse, instinct, precarious spontaneity, contingent and sporadic segments of what is there in presence—*there*, in New York City as I am the passer-by for others. We share the same space but we look at the environment differently as if we see other things from what others get to see. Isn't the same space that we move in or out? Do we ever have those shattering moments of that sight that we experience, but afraid to believe that a form-thing-reality exists without our understanding?

We see this affect, percept, and visual motion in *The Trial* of Kafka. The urban stranger emerging in a disillusioned, schizophrenic, and paranoiac presence—it is the arrest and interrogation and finally the death of Joseph. K that disturbs us: this event has created a shivering sensational and obscure affect in the manner we view the reality of things as things in the world we live in. This is the image we perceive in the voice of his death and at the same time, its rebirth in our imagination of what that shivering space must have looked like, and the way that he was eliminated or butchered—it is that inner scream and deep voice that has an emerging massive/figurative image in our perception of things. To be sure, Joseph. K remains valid for us as a fact of our condition of milieu. His situation is immersed in us while he is describing the dusty corridors and rooms of obscure events and people, during the course of finding out the reason of his investigation and interrogation. It is this void and obscure moment when K talks to the priest and the priest *disappears* and *reemerges* like he was never there talking to K. “But I can’t find my way alone in this darkness, said K...but K cried out in a loud voice, Please wait a moment...you must first see who I am, said the priest...That means that I belong to the Court.” (221-2) The time that this event is located is obscure and it creates a state of lost and angst—it is this shattering spatial sensation as an affect that pervades the inner and outer presence of K.—of us as well. This stands as an event in the enigmatic existence pertaining to the world of things.

The same condition of things as sensations of *what there is* and *becomes* is discernable and poetically elucidated as the [absolute reality of things] in *The Collected Poems of Alberto Caeiro*. In his poem, IX, Caeiro states: “And my thoughts are all sensations...” (31) And a bit further in XXXIX, Caeiro adds: “Things don’t have meaning: they only have existence / Things are the only hidden meaning of things.” (61) Not surprisingly, in *Selected Poems*, Fernando Pessoa thinks in the same vein as Caeiro, saying: “The mystery of things? / What Mystery? / If you’re in the sun and close your eyes / you begin not to know what the sun is / and you think about various warm things / but open the eyes and you see the sun / and you can no longer think about anything / because the light of the sun is truer than the thoughts...”

/ the light of the sun doesn't know what it does / and so it can err and is common and good..." (49) The common poetic as well as visual and perceptual features of Caeiro and Pessoa are the rejections of any metaphysical notion of reality of things. For them the world is in front of us, it looks and smiles at us and is immersed in the manner we see it as well. For Caeiro the world of my thought and actions is all sensation, because the meaning of things is found in the affect and perception of what there is. There is a voice of ubiquitous or pervasive silence in the things we see and they have their own way of revealing their form into our gaze.

Wallace Stevens, in *Collected Poems (The Idea of Order in Key West)* writes in a very similar mode saying: "She sang beyond the genius of the sea /...The sky acutest at its vanishing / She measured to the hour its solitude / She was the single artificer of the world, in which she sang..." (129) This voice is our voice that is meant to be a world for us and for itself. There is no meaning beyond from what we grasp and see in the things, because the meaning of this song of life is human, it is the maker of the world—meaning is to be found on the surface of the facets and horizons of what "there is" as "worldhood". Because our being is in the world—the artists are the ones that open up the world we see as the "things-in-the-world" are, and of the things that are already there in the world with us. In other words, we have to let the purposeful explanation go. We have to give up the *cause-effect* interpretation of things. The point is, to let something be seen by it-self and not to be interpreted as "propositional" (*cause-effect*) because worldhood and thingness are "tautological". It is this notion of *worldhood* as an existential presence expressed at its best in *The plague* of Albert Camus. Here we have the real reality of what the human world is and what it means to see life and things as they are, brute and raw—death, lingering above a town where the epidemic has spread its legs and is taking its toll. Tarrou is seeing that jubilation and human joy after a terrible death and suffer: "Thus the coming liberation had a twofold aspect, of happiness and tears". (275) It is this moment of solitude where silently each one is immersed in everyone's sorrow and joy, it is to be alive or not. It is to "hear" the presence and the voice of the others, because we make the reality of things as things—we in our act. It is this fear

and anxiety that is revealed in our actions. To be true and authentic is to be located or immersed in the reticence of *thingness* and *worldhood*. Truth and its freedom are to be found in the *unconcealed* condition of our reality.

Going back to my point of departure, which is to say, to my “work-world” of painting, I will penetrate to the core of my artistic style. What is my style? Do I have a style? Or technically speaking, what is the historical condition of my painting? My belief is that those who totally reject the past do not understand it—the past illuminates the present and the present determines the future. It is a cycle of life. To erase the future is like erasing a nation’s past or one’s family past. Ironically enough, the past pervades our presence because we are immersed in it. We are *it*. There is a consistent lineage of my art. It starts with a deep and heavy academic study in the country of my birth, Albania. However, the most significant marks or traces are: the first wave of Expressionism with Marc Chagall, Oskar Kokoschka, Max Beckmann, Emil Nolde, Ernst Kirchner, Franz Marc, Wassily Kandinsky, etc. Then, there is the second wave of it known as Neo-Expressionism with Francis Bacon, Sigmar Polke, Georg Baselitz, A.R. Penck, Jorg Immendorff, Markus Lupertz, Mimmo Paladino, Francesco Clemente, David Salle, etc. I had some sporadic flirtations with the “New Leipzig School of Art” (Neo Rausch, Tilo Baumgartel, Christoph Ruckharberle, Matthias Weischer, etc), but I soon demarcated from it. Perhaps, the reason for this delimitation is to be found in the notion that, space itself was not sufficient or adequate for my painterly actions—I needed something more than just a reconfiguration of “New Objectivity” blended with “Surrealist-Pop-Art” and “Social Realist” traces. Now at this point, I find myself aesthetically situated in the painterly zone of Jonathan Meese, Tal R, Elizabeth Neel, Will Fowler, Aaron Wexler, John Finneran, and few others. As I said earlier, my own work is a local event, and that is artistically located in the threshold of “Contemporary Neo-Act — Neo-Figure Abstract Event”. In other words, it is an “Act-Event Painting”.

In retrospect, I will describe the works of a few artists that have considerably helped to shape my artistic and painterly vocabulary. Firstly, there has been an early strong considerable interest in Kokoschka’s work, and for me precisely is his

sensitivity to color, the surface and the immediacy of imagery with loaded physiological and allegorical motifs. Perhaps, it was the appeal of playing with the condition of the figure (s) as for example in his painting, *Knight Errant, 1915*. Here is a central figure that almost occupies the whole surface of the painting. The man looks at you, and he is dressed in a sort of medieval silver color armor. It is highly allegoric. This figure, enigmatically lies on the ground and seems to be in wonder looking up with his hands in motion for help, in that cold and diminutive dark atmosphere of a gasping wind. There is a sense of sorrow and punishment—human condition in oblivion; this condition is similar to the traumatic logic of Kafka's, *The Trial* and Beckett's encapsulation of finitude regarding the human condition in *The Unnamable* (in his trilogy *Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*), or more erratically one can also see it, in Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* where the physiognomy of death and human trauma is unraveled in its oblivious condition. God is questioned where the condition human reality is asserted as viscous, oblivious, and traumatic.

Chagall has been another early inspiration to my painting and especially his dreamy sort of erratic compositional effect, where figures seem to fly—they are asleep-walking or seem to have a neo-primitive quality. Chagall's exuberant or vivid/saturated colors grasped my painterly attention too. For example, in *Green Violinist, 1923-4*, he depicts a central figure situated in the middle of the painting and on top of it seems to be a village. He is playing a violin—his face is green, and the dress purple with few geometric qualities around in a sort of gray background. Also, this fascination of expressive colors as form indicates my early interest in Kandinsky, Kirchner, Nolde and Marc as well. My attraction in Kandinsky's work lies especially in his earlier paintings such as *Improvisations*, evoking a precarious dynamism of a painterly "act" and *Compositions* focusing mostly on the relation of line, color and form. That led him to the series of four seasons. *In Painting No. 201, Winter (Panel for Edwin R. Campbell), 1914* where colors embraced a sense of theosophical spiritualization elevated to a mystical painting. In this painting the brush is loose, free and liberated like an erratic swirling and curvilinear kinetic spiral where colors become lines emerging into abstract conditions, and yet very familiar to us as forms

and/or things. It is also in Marc's painting that color becomes form, such as in *Large Bleu Horse, 1991* where three blue horses occupy the space letting the reds and warm nuances in the background evolve a dreamy realm.

In Nolde's masks pervades the notion of a hidden reality in the modern condition of humanity. For instance, in *Still Life with Masks, 1991* we are confronted with an obscure human reality of concealed emotion, where the truth is blurred. Nolde's colors are vivid-saturated and thickly engaged resulting into an intense and vigorous condition. There is also, an African (Mali) sort of figurative presentation of masks. With Kirchner, there is a profound urban reality of city's life and buzz, somehow even cacophonous and ecstatic in motion. In *The Street, 1907* we are confronted with a central figure (woman) straightly looking at us as if she wants to communicate something to us. There are bold oscillating forms—flat, thick, opaque, and palpable where line and color meet as one. One feels the vibration, aporia, buzz, intensity, precarious motion and ecstasy of an urban city life. *Kirchner's urban vibration has infiltrated in my actuality and presence in New York City, where my art flows, exhales, and arises as form-thinghood in the speed or bliss of NY's energy.* This urban dweller's condition and everydayness and ecstasy is well captured in Joyce's *Ulysses*, where one sees and visualized the streets and city's moments as for instance, with Mr. Bloom's mind and gaze entering and departing from one mode of being present to the other, from one street to the other, etc—crowded, quite, ecstatic.

In regards to Max Beckmann, I would say that, my interest in his paintings was primarily because of his compositional structure, bold lines and fragmented presences—his paintings to me at least, aim at a personal inner condition of reality rather than, capturing historical or political events as his peers like Otto Dix and George Grosz did. I was attracted by his early self-portraits finished with a bold wide brush and opaque color. In one of his latest period paintings, such as *Beginning, 1949* there is more fragmentation than his early works. In *Beginning* we are lost in memory and time where every part has some story to tell—but silence pervades the

crowded figures. This is a triptych where many figures are dispersed all around the composition with no spare space left around.

Similarly, I engaged with the work of Georg Baselitz. For instance, I admired *Last Dinner in Dresden, 1983* for his free shift of figure playing closely with the background—its brush and upside-down disarray of the visual perception. But also, I liked its symbolism where the color is asserting a palpable immediacy or painterly viscosity. With Jorg Immendorff, perhaps I was influenced by his crowded space of an anxious fragmented angularity, where there seems to be an influence of Kirchner's work. The visual field is distorted so as there seems to be many points of entrance. In the series of *Café Deutschland, 1977 & 1978* there seems to pervade an atmosphere of a precarious and cacophonous activity. Salle's work is similar to Immendorff's fragmentation, however, Salle is a postmodern painter and, it is precisely here where he diverges from Immendorff. My interest in Bacon's work has been primarily the figure that is not a figure and yet is a mass of depletion struggling to be and exist as a form—forms diverge and dissipate into a multiple condition of things as things into their inner state of mind. In regards to the paintings of Jonathan Meese and Elizabeth Neel, I would say that, I consider their work as a continuation of a tradition that I find myself to be immersed in—painting. Their paintings have been a strong point of reference for me.

As for my work, there are some parts that suggest my figurative past, so that so, that there are *forms* with a figural silhouette-shadow tendency that hide in their silence. It is a silence but bold and imposing, visceral and impulsive, which leads to a craving condition for rupture/drift or infractions and accepting, let me say, the ecstatic or precarious schizophrenia of a moment-summon that erupts in the heart of things that are forms *as* forms. There is no narration. My style is not a thing-*ism*. My style already exists as my idiosyncratic act while I perform and/or as I am immersed in the act of making. Between *me*, the *palette* and the *canvas*, there is experienced the threshold zone that, only in the [orgiastic] condition of color becoming forms and lines revealing the things as being there, can I speak of encapsulating my-self-in-the-moment of performing with my body, as it is immersed

on the surface of canvas. My paintings are *in-between* of what there is in the world of events and moments.

For instance, in *Finitude is Waiting*, 2009 there can be seen the seed of a nascent form vindicated in the silhouette that is build-up of a murky brown, luminous green, and a fading orange-yellow to almost a white light kind of ghostly mass; facing a structure of an unrecognized thing on the lower left side of the canvas. It is dry and thick in some parts dense, rippled and *undulate*. However, the present part is that the linen on the background informs us of its thinghood or thingness—it is what one sees. It is the sensation of an act demarcating its figural presence. It is as if the figure has left the figure or, as if the figure has obliterated its inner self and depleted or dissipated into the web of things—things in their finitude. What makes us feel present is the brushiness asserting a palpable immediacy, and also, a painterly viscosity and a bold gestural imposing act. The act is blurred and dissolved and the figure has left its trace of being dismantled—the material as an object stares at us asking what it has become? This is the perplexed urban dweller’s city condition or moment that seems to scream in silence. It is out of my control of things, and yet I perceive this bedazzlement in space and in its silence. I see this carnal/fleshy condition of sequences and discrete forms in their *in-between* existence dissolving in speed, which is produced by the daily “technological behavior”—the moments of intense dissonance. This is my New York City experience—my experience of instances.

In *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, Paul Virilio captures the moment of technological speed saying: “Technology introduces a phenomenon without precedent in the mediation of time...Dimensions vanish in the reduction of straightness...By introducing the subject into the hierarchy, of speeds (lower, higher), by destabilizing the instant, a contingent phenomenon, the standards are abrogated; the diversifying of speed also abrogates the sensation...” (105) It seems to me that technology produces a silhouette-form of speed that immerses us in it—in this technological speed of things we blend in the precarious moment of time and modern city’s (like NY) phosphorescence and effulgence of energy, which is to say,

it is continuously exploding in our vision and our somatic sensation of things that vanish and reemerge in front of our *sight*. Energy produces color and color becomes a sketch of our environment—we are in its interiority, but rarely in its exteriority so as to be able to breath and perceive the reality of things, and even if we do so, we still perceive the instances and moments that are left over from the unseen trace of speed. Going back to my painting that I was interrogating as a visual blast, I am also compelled to say that, what seems to be happening to the initial figure, it is the reality that the figure precariously and schizophrenically moves everywhere—it desires to pass through a dematerialized point from its own body and line, so that it can dissipate into the material condition of things as things: that is to say, there is an intense tension and movement which animates the whole body-figure. Its dissolvent enables it to escape its local form. The body, or the form or anything as a thing that seems to have a structure, gets dismantled and is rediscovered in its milieu as it emerges and opens up to the traces of things. Everything in my painting is a moment, my moments an instances or the bliss of things. My paintings emerge from the contingent object of my environment, from my experience of speed and of forms that gaze and look at me, as if they ask me to immerse my sight with them as one somatic form that senses their precarious locality.

Finally, my paintings do not swim into the infinite depths of a Kantian-formalist state of mind like a pure abstraction of transcendental ideas only, but it is quite the other opposite, it is the very earthly-worldly life and milieu that my paintings breathe and play. *I am* the centripetal radiation of my work, and I walk in what appears to be the reality of what I see, sense, perceive, and feel—it is the intuition and the instinct of not just a “event-moment” that erupts my artistic rush or my artistic orgasmic rift of the world of things as things, but most importantly, it is the bliss of an [advent], as that which marks the condition of my paintings. In my world of vision and objects everything is forms, lines and colors. Ultimately, the purpose of this essay was to present the most recent condition of my art in relation to philosophical inquiries, literary-poetical forms, and how my paintings follow a particular lineage and trace of thought. My work operates in the presence of events, of things as things, where

colors and lines “sexualize” on linen/canvas/material; the offspring of this unity is the thinghood of forms. I will end this discourse with one of my own poems, inspired from my daily New York City experience as the milieu in which I dwell and as that which is connatural/build-in me:

I am lost in the bliss and medley voice of the crowd: I am the flesh of its anonymity,
I am the landscape of other’s vision of life and the act of its demarcation.
I am a moving silhouette and a living form in the gasping wind of things,
I observe the instantaneous elation of people realizing that; I am the observed one.

I am walking in the streets of New York’s City Union Square hearing the sound
of things: rhythms—harmony—discontinuity—immanent moments—
instances—permanent forms dissolving and reemerging;
scattered forms and drifting masses of disclosed time,
concealing all things as things that never dwell anywhere,
but in the unseen trace and space of things.

Oh, it is nice to feel ecstatic. It is nice not to be alone and to be among
you, where anguish and mental bunkerization is gone.
I am still I, as long as I am the wondering and gazing eye.

Then I stop, I see, I walk, I touch, I perceive, I visualize horizons and facets of forms,
Silence; I see without thinking of things I see as they emerge in silence:
... it has its sound.
Space / forms / lines / and colors emanate and become visible as the flesh of things.

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