

OVERVIEW

The Loquela: a *Ritual of Influence, an Ode to Nostalgia* is an interdisciplinary project attempting to better map the area between book design, poetics, sound and architecture. It was completed during the interim January-May 2007. Inspired by (n)oulipo, three collaborators ranging in expertise created an installation based upon individualized constraints. Each artist worked according to their own set of rules, hoping to compliment and contrast the rules of the others. Though the outcome proves more spontaneous than predicted, it is also generative. Difficulty surfaced in the midst of the collaboration for reasons related to physical distance: two artists were in Los Angeles while the third was stationed in the Midwest. Due to this, ideas were difficult to relay, and the process was, at times, stifled due to spatial and rhetorical limitations. Overall, the results become part of an ongoing conversation of experimental book design and processes influenced by (n)oulipean thought, which investigate current literary strains as both defined sculptural objects and terrains for expansion. The Loquela is concerned with the overlap between the visual, aural and the psycho-social material of conflict, grief and shame. The politics of action vs. inaction that taint consciousness—both in public, pedestrian spheres as well as more intimate settings—were philosophical junctions when orchestrating this “book” which harbors both a malady and hope for the world—as it is now and unravels.

PROCESS

Text Constraints (Davis): appropriated excerpts only.

Authorship was continually questioned: how does one justify status and authority, highlight select voices while ignoring others, as well as confirm the validity of artistic intuition? Previously existing texts from notable writers/thinkers/current event figures were used to encapsulate a universal author instead of a solo perspective or ID, inspired by Mallarmé: *everyone is writing one book*. Text was NOT selected from those traditionally labeled as poets. Excerpts originate from the following sources, which were passed on to the architect who gravitated towards the Dalai Lama's words, being unaware of each sample's origin.

Hannah Arendt; Benjamin Barber; Roland Barthes; Samuel Beckett; Isaiah Berlin; Bertoldt Brecht; George W. Bush; Albert Camus; Noam Chomsky; Hélèn Cixous; Carl von Clausewitz; William Connolly; Robert Dahl; the Dalai Lama; Deleuze-Guattari; Jean Bethke Elshtain; Friedrich Engels; Michel Foucault; Sigmund Freud; Milton Friedman; Erich Fromm; Frank Gehry; Emma Goldman; Adolf Hitler; Hurricane Katrina rape victims; Luce Irigaray; Alice Jardine; Rem Koolhaas; Julia Kristeva; Peter Kropotkin; V. I. Lenin; John Locke; Rosa Luxemburg; Niccolò Machiavelli; Herbert Marcuse; Karl Marx; John Stuart Mill; Friedrich Nietzsche; Robert Nozick; Harold Pinter; Plato; Marcel Proust; John Rawls; Riverbend; Jean-Jacques Rousseau; Michael Sandel; Jean-Paul Sartre; Cindy Sheehan; Herbert Spencer; Henry David Thoreau; Sun Tzu; Lise Vogel.

Threads follow:

today, we are having this beautiful weather;
 we are enjoying this together at one place and at the same time.
 but the karma which gave us this opportunity may have been
 accumulated by us at different places.
 yet the result is that we are all experiencing
 this together at this moment and at this place.
 it is not necessary that on account of our having
 the same experience now we should have created
 the cause of this particular moment at one place jointly.

an immense sickness flooded over me suddenly
and the pen fell from my hand, spluttering ink.
what happened? did i have the nausea?

i would have wished to be born in a country
where the sovereign and the people could have only
a single and identical interest, so that all the movements
of the civil machine always tended to promote the common happiness.

turn now to the converse question-
for what ends would all men agree to cooperate?

one no longer loves one's knowledge enough when one has communicated it.

the principle is that a person may resist,
in self-defense, if others try to apply to him
an unreliable or unfair procedure of justice.

as disillusion with government grew,
politicians groped to articulate frustrations and discontents
that the reigning political agenda did not capture.

the receptivity of the great masses is very limited,
their intelligence is small,
but their power of forgetting is enormous.

the unprecedented horrors and miseries of this protracted war
are making the conditions of the masses intolerable
and increasing their indignation.

it is true that theories are only the images of the phenomena
of the exterior world in the human consciousness.

a being only considers himself independent when he stands on his own feet;
and he stands on his own feet when he owes his existence to himself.

it is a strange fact.

investment in human beings cannot be financed on the same terms
or with the same ease as investment in physical capital.

some of you, we all know, are poor, find it hard to live,
are sometimes, as it were, gasping for breath.

the question of the purpose of human life
has been raised countless times;
it has never yet received a satisfactory answer
and perhaps does not admit of one.

but, in political and philosophical theories,
as well as in persons,
success discloses faults and infirmities which
failure might have concealed from observation.

action, as distinguished from fabrication,
is never possible in isolation;
to be isolated is to be deprived of the capacity to act.

what holds true of thinking and feeling holds also true of willing.

things of this world are in so constant a flux,
that nothing remains long in the same state.

democracy on trial.

we must not be so hasty.
but what is this knowledge?

this is the pure form of servitude:
to exist as an instrument, as a thing.

to desire to acquire is truly something very natural and ordinary,
and always, when men do it who can, they will be lauded,
or not blamed; but when they cannot, and want to do it anyway,
here is the error and the blame.

it's about the relationship between your ideas and your body.
it both evacuates and charges.

in ancient times skillful warriors first made themselves invisible,
and then watched for vulnerability in their opponents.

in such a war, the human element
that might bring victory over fascism is lost.

today we live side by side without knowing one another.

we overlooked the fact that there are natures
of the sort we thought impossible,
natures in which these opposites are indeed combined.

to analyze the psychology of political violence
is not only extremely difficult, but also very dangerous.
we want to define the original position
so that we get the desired solution.

the modern ideal of the unambiguous agent is one of the costs
we pay for the demand that there be an ethical life without paradox.

perhaps the most obvious example of an inertial frame is the "ether"
on which newtonian physics was once thought to depend.

it means forever. it means that the subject is changed once
and for all and for the last time forever. if the subject is winter,
for instance, it'll be winter forever.

before one thing and another there hangs a curtain:
let us draw it up!

what seems here to be an about-face
may in fact be a clarification.

i can't see the future at this point,
or maybe i don't choose to see it.

what makes their babies less precious than ours?

that open wound that draws everything to itself-

in how many frozen bodies has your soul shriveled up?

it is at work everywhere,
functioning smoothly at times,
and at other times in fits and starts.

language possesses a transfinite element.

not only will you confess to acts contravening the law,
but you will seek to transform your desire,
your every desire, into discourse.

culture thus recurs as an edge:
in no matter what form.

i have a two-pronged strategy.

it's so convenient to blame the architect.

you must have had a vision.

thus the greatest degree of destruction
coincides with the greatest degree of affirmation.

defense is the stronger form of waging war.

it was time to be thinking of home.

Architectural Constraints (Ward): 3-D, non-linear, liberating form.

Tortoise Shell

The page as static object was suspended from the floor by a pipe.

Medium: mild steel.

Process: a digitized .jpg of handwriting of appropriated text was received. The handwriting was converted into shape with Adobe Illustrator and AutoCAD. Text was tested to resemble actual handwriting, then later using a tweaked, manipulated Lucida Console font then stretched horizontally and vertically. This already-established font was chosen because of its perceived wideness—a necessary characteristic so that the available CNC machine could identify letters and contours. The new (currently nameless) font derived from Lucida Console is a low resolution, pixelated form attempting to exploit the digital process. The font was modified so as to be tool-pathed with a CNC plasma cutter, and words were cut from .07 mild steel plates. There were two plates: one experimental, one final.

Shards

The page was liberated from steel shell confines with an explosive floor format.
Medium: rubber.

Continued Process: before text strips were cut from the steel plate (patches of words and phrases were cut from the plate so as to be welded into shell shape), a rubber negative was casted of the flat plate. The plate was then welded into the shell form, positioning text strips into shape. No LED illumination was chosen/desired because the steel shell is initially opaque and sturdy.

Rationale: the overall form is already penetrated with the plasma cutter, which can be equated with penetration of illumination (rupture/slice vs. light).

Skin

The page is formed as a flexible, malleable object.

Medium: latex.

Continued Process: multiple, thin layers of latex were painted onto the welded shell curvature, creating a negative skin of latex from the steel positive. The shell was then painted uniform grey. Latex documents the form of the shell and the text-to illuminate skin as exploitation, a device of elasticity.

Free-Form Puddles/Clouds

Ideally: to be suspended mid-air.

Realistically: placed on table/pedestal/floor.

Medium: polyester.

Continued Process: a combination of techniques that the architect has never used before. Embedded rubber text strips were positioned in polyester puddles, left to dry. Strips were then removed to illuminate the remaining text space. Puddles were sanded, polished until smooth.

Sound Constraints (Drake): remix via defined algorithm.

Through this collaborative process, I found that Oupeinopian ideas regarding constraints of procedure, form and presentation parallel the artistic practice of many composers. Since harmony was neutralized in the early to mid-Twentieth century, constraint-based compositional strategies have been a starting point for composers because of organizational needs (e.g. Schoenberg's twelve tone system). Those constraints, in turn, develop the synergy between concept and sonic representation.

With this piece, I was interested in the appropriation of audio samples (i.e. poets reading their work and of music of/for Marcel Duchamp), cutting samples and reorganizing to make 'new' work. I chose a method arguably aleatoric in nature—something that Ouxpo sects, in my opinion, may consider off limits.

An algorithm reorganizes fragments of audio samples around predetermined probabilities so that a sequence is never set. However, there is a statistical likelihood that a certain trajectory will always be maintained—that point 'b' will always be reached.

Constraints applied to compositional choices include: using two categories of culled sound samples from internet sources only: text (spoken words) and 'music.' Text originates from poets reading work, and the 'music' are works written by/for Marcel Duchamp: Oulipo member since 2006.

The algorithm reorganizes text in a way that creates a 'meta-poet' against the backdrop of piano music of Duchamp and Cage (et al.). Issues of authorship and ownership arise in light of the fact that this is a 'remix.' Specifically: are the generated poems mine, the algorithm's, or still rightfully owned by the original poet?