

ARBOR



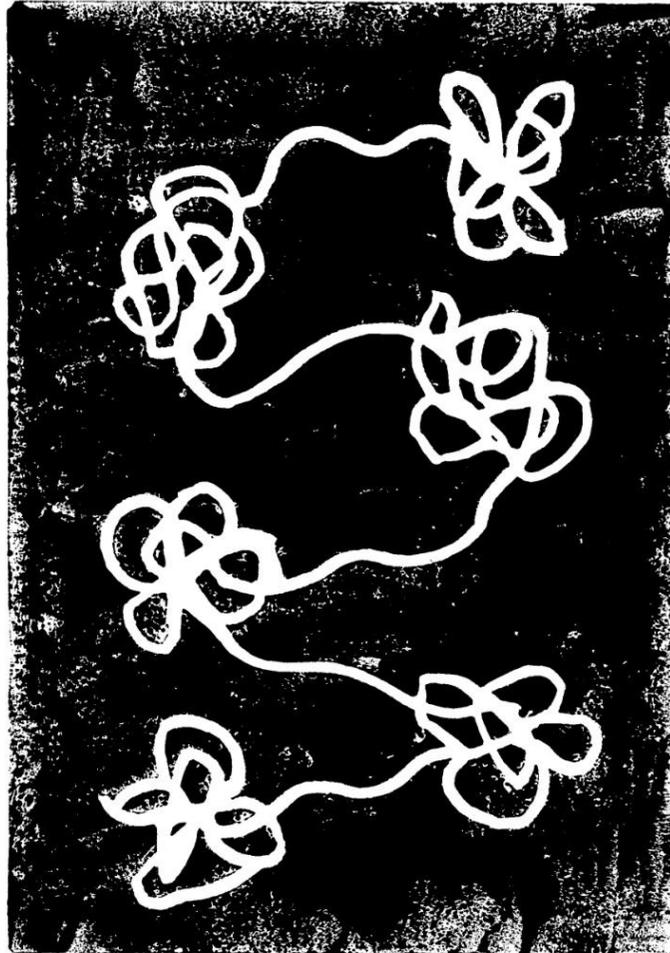
ARBOR #6

PRIMITIVE EDITION

Curated and designed by Monsieur Gilles

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**Picasso and the
primitive instinct:
modernism or
conservative gesture?**

**A manifesto for a primitive consideration
in contemporary art**

By Monsieur Gilles

Picasso is certainly one of the most iconic painters of the modern era. For a majority of people he is the only noteworthy painter of the past centuries. This legendary status however needs to be inquired in more details. A recurring analysis of Picasso centers on his childlike playfulness with the lines. Comparing his paintings to a proper child's depiction is where problems arise as children are not supposed to have yet acquired the technique and culture of pictorial representation. Their lines emerge from the pure sensation procured by the material placed in their hands, without any ambition of producing continuity with previous forms of art. However, most children create similar drawings; at least this could be the commentary from any adult having been formatted by some knowledge in the history of arts. And with this, one needs to be careful in considering childlike representations as a "given" ability to any human child, and at the same time placing Picasso as a childlike painter. This contradiction comes from the will of a compulsive painter to escape from the classical scheme of painting, therefore producing what could resemble to a child's work. But is Picasso not fooling us on this point? In *Le degré zéro de l'écriture*, Roland Barthes stated « la manière artisanale exploite le plaisir moderne d'un éthos classique ».

Such a commentary could be applied here about Picasso's *artisanale* lines which may be seen as covering-up any visible trace of previous consensuses - however producing a clear continuity in the conservative vision of painting. This notion of *artisanale* style developed by Barthes is here to be contrasted with paintings made by other modernist painters such as Paul Klee who took a different approach on the primitive gesture. Klee's paintings are art only by reference to them and are reactivated in meaning by each viewer's interpretation. There are no known counterparts, because the representation comes from the possibility of openness, and each viewer subconsciously recognizes these images as a mirror would reflect one's own mental representations. There exists, in accordance to this, a deeper level of connection to the expression of the human mind's possibilities, and that is what Klee allows us to understand. No trace of conservatism can be deciphered in Klee, no special classical ethos either. These paintings exist independently because their techniques and representations are taken from a non-classical subconscious formation toward a jerk of instantaneous compulsion extended onto the canvas. On the contrary, Picasso had been struggling with conservative depictions and tried to detach himself from conventional art by discovering new forms of art.

He seemed to be willing to recover power over his classicist's alter-ego; trying to find new existing models in order to appease the tension springing from the uncertainty of producing a picture that could be thoroughly revolutionary. In *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, a clear inspiration taken from African masks can be seen. But this new example raises another question about the definition of primitivism. For Picasso, importing a new type of representation, withdrawn from its original context was, in concordance to the orientalist approach of novelty at the beginning of the 20th century, breaking form the strict representative consensus of the time, and thus properly modern. But African masks were also part of an ancient tradition which contained its own conservative rules of representation.

What I advocate here is to allow ourselves to seek inspiration from within, from the self-subconscious, and to question our bodies and their place in space, and time. Of course, it is nearly impossible to be deprived of any technique or visual culture. But willing to express oneself as to break from the attraction of established conventions is a good start in developing a primitive mindset. The children have a lot to teach adults in the way human beings express their feelings on a blank piece of paper. I believe this exercise would be much more difficult for a middle aged adult to accomplish, without trying to reproduce already known representations.

However, in our era of hyperconnectivity, I analyzed a portrait painting exhibition displayed on the fence of a primary school. What struck me was the proportion of biased representations in the works, going from cartoons characters to *emoji*-type representations. These influences go this far as to deprive children from the possibility of free drawing and unclenching their minds from the grasp of screen-culture. Their corrupted minds deprive them from the possibility to experience this simple and organic exercise, closer to meditation than to constant entertainment.

Francis Bacon once said that he was not "attempting to use what's called avant-garde techniques" because "Most people this century who have had anything to do with the avant-garde have wanted to create a new technique." Contemporary painting needs to give more importance to the spontaneous and not fear that its productions would not include in the continuity of past traditions, because eventually not seeking to produce continuity, they will create a future by their own.

I believe all human beings possess an innate knowledge, prior to experience, and that these instinctive mechanisms do not disappear with experience. They just need to be uncovered and unrestricted from conservative bounds. I believe Picasso was doing the exact opposite. He has tried to cover-up his knowledge in an unforeseen inhibition removal of the lines.

But Picasso is not to be considered as faithfully primitive for most of his career, only toward the end of his life did he become closer to what his innate knowledge was about. It is in fact the processing of the consensual conservative technique which has permitted his art to be recognized as properly modern and new. Because it summarized and cancelled the previous works in showing how the painting cycle has come back to resemble to the very origins of humane pictorial representation, offering a satire of its own possibilities, yet conserving all its consensuses from past centuries.

My point with this short critique is to question Picasso's process of unlearning his conservative hand to foster an ideal of unrestricted strokes. Therefore I question if it would not be preferable to abolish one's reliance to past representations and techniques, as one could use this time to explore personal feelings and emotions in a completely freed manner. This would in turn push the artists to transcend themselves primarily, and return to the essential possibilities of the human minds' representations. However, it does not necessarily mean that one has to fall into the abstract spectrum. In this sense, I feel that Van Gogh was a primitive painter. His eyes were directly linked to his brushes in a completely unbounded manner, contrarily to Cezanne at the same period who meticulously planned all his paintings. Van Gogh's strokes are bold and his colors sensitive, instinctive. This is what the spirit of modern painting should have as objective of primitivism, if willing to take nature as primary model.

Accordingly, we could consider Van Gogh's landscapes paintings as the most primitive transcription of human's vision of the surrounding environment.

Primitivism is not necessarily contained in abstraction. Abstract paintings are becoming part of a tradition which establishes as much consensuses (if not more) in the way a "contemporary" painting should look like. Primitivism is a complex maze which has no finite answer. Exploration is the guiding line: be true to oneself, try to avoid consensuses as they have been established only through the need of commercialization of art, I believe Art is personal. , no one need to see you drawings, everyone should be able to observe a child's drawing as any other art, Picasso has been here to show us how humans come back to the essences but never forget about established norms. Explore your internal knowledge and let your hand do the rest. ? you might be surprised by how personal the line will be , a condensed reflection of your own mental representations.

The Pencil & its Artist

A stop motion video

By Forino



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S. Pellegrino

I was standing one morning by the canals of Berlin, in the narrow but well-furnished corridor of a second-hand bookshop, when I caught through an open window the words "Zen," "Marx," bobbing about in a loud and obnoxious torrent of speech. Being alone inside the store, I could not help but suspect they were said for my benefit. After all, I had conspicuously lingered in the section on Japanese Home-Economical Philosophy. Perhaps, I thought, this was the long-awaited test: an initiation into the world of alternative...maybe even radical... ideas which I eagerly sought.

I walked out and saw a long-whiskered, eastern-looking man in pageboy cap. He was lounging outside with two other men, pontificating from his plastic chair. I was pleased by the vague hint of vagrancy suggested by three middle aged men sitting in the middle of the street in the middle of the day. That, the bookshop and their beards convinced me I was in the presence of genuine bohemian radicals which, alongside the Wall and Mustafa's Gemuse Kebab, formed an essential stop in my Berlinese itinerary.

The speaker, the hatted half-Japanese man, announced himself as a Marxist and a Buddhist in that order. My reader will appreciate, I hope, the discourse that followed—interrupted only by the brief and insubstantial remarks of the other two seated men (an enthusiastic German cartoonist and a pedantic American, respectively).

That, he began, the iron laws of capitalism preclude spontaneity for the majority of people might be taken as a matter of fact. But even for those to whom work clearly makes little demands, those who can focus on art and beauty & so forth, *they* have all their work ahead of them. There is one demand that remains, he continued, and that is the demand to plan. To plan is not only to see things, or people, in terms of their usefulness but even *time itself*. A capitalist corruption, he thought. As a self-declared Zen practitioner, artist, and radical, he saw it as his duty to reclaim this spontaneity for himself.

Seven years ago he left his post as lecturer in Sociology and came to Berlin with the purpose of planning as little of his life as possible. His method? To spend the first six or so hours of every day in what he called "self-confrontation" It consisted, he said, of "following ones intuition" and "exhausting ones desires" which he likened to the dialectic development and eventual disintegration of capitalism. The only plan was to make no plans—if his mind told him to do one thing, he would do the opposite, if he desired to eat something he'd just eat it & so forth. Then he would work for exactly one hour, in fifteen-minute intervals separated by two minute pauses. In that time he painted and he wrote poetry. The rest of his day was a recovery from that hour-long-period. He spoke this all with an unhurried tone, with his legs crossed, and with his friends listening in eager silence. Spontaneity, I wanted to say, seemed to require a great deal of planning.

You might ask, as I did, what this man did to feed and house and clothe himself. Well, he got money from his parents! There you have it, I thought, it's all well for you to be philosophizing on the street when you're still living off the sweet teat of your mother. You should know that I was suspicious of any man who shirks his work and his God-given duty to contribute to society and I resolved to tell him so the next time I saw him! Though at the time I politely thanked him and exchanged phone numbers for the next time I was in town. You should rest assured, however, I was not corrupted by that bearded sophist. I only walked away that day with a mild amusement at the notion that I could wake up whenever I wanted and this would help my art. Besides, I couldn't go about Berlin unshaven and without an alarm clock. I needed to get up with the sun, choose my clothes carefully, and keep my appointment with the dance club which opened at noon.

The day I was to leave Berlin I left my AirBnB in the morning and set upon the U-bahn with my roller-bag in hand. I was taking the U-11 to Bergmannkiez to bring back some baubles and cool vintage clothes for my sister so I could have something to show for myself after my ten-day tour. The car stopped and the doors opened with an "Einsteigen bitte" I looked down to my phone and, as was my habit, turned left and right and followed the transparent blue cone on my map to see if it went in the right direction. I faced the flashing car doors. It was Hermannplatz and decidedly not my stop. After a "Zurückbleiben bitte" I looked up into a tangle of metallic tubes.

As I sat there I thought about what I had heard at the bookstore about spontaneity and planning. I felt a mad jolt. Yet I could not help recalling my impression of the man who said those things as of a child sitting in a warm bath, unwilling to get out. A child justifying himself to himself. Besides, I had my own serious studies to think about and return to, studies I couldn't possibly interrupt with any kind of part-time job. After all, the weeks I'd spent wandering around Europe were an academic project of a kind, if only preliminary preparations and field notes to this work! But it was precisely that strange childishness of his that held me. I scrolled through a graveyard of introductions to find his name.¹

¹ One day long afterwards I was reading, as I often do for pleasure, the collected works of Giambattista Vico when I received a Instagram call from my friend Parmigiano66 about his Primitive issue. As he explained to me his ideas it occurred to me then that what tied together Parmigiano66, my Marxian monk, and my countryman Vico was the Primitive. In the following brief and painful exposition I will explain this relation.

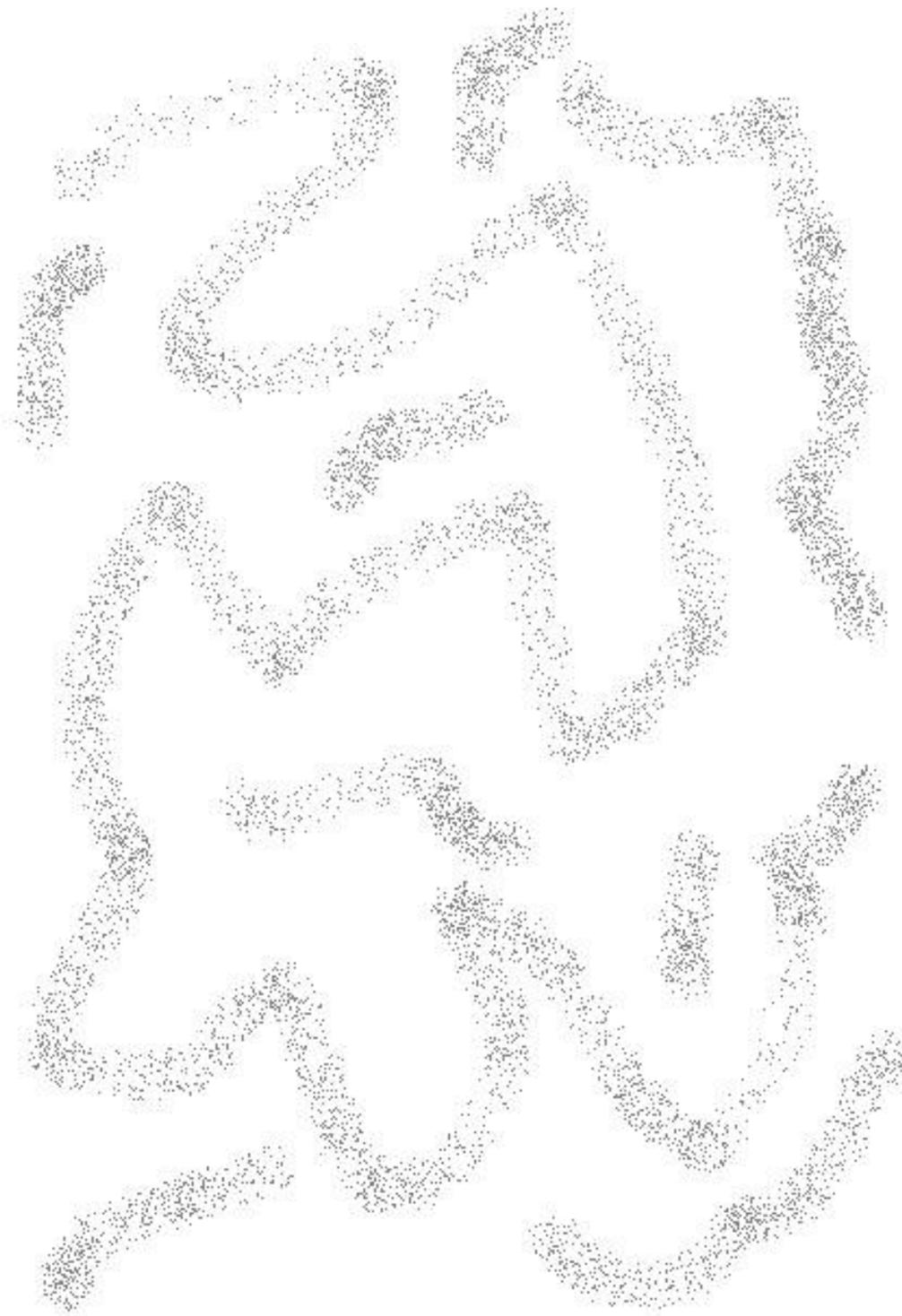
The Primitive is a poet. Vico tells us so, when he gives us those first men, the myth-makers, the idolatrous cave-dwellers hiding from Jove's lighting bolt. First came the gesture, the sacred heirogyph, and then the word—the poetic metaphysics of man in his passionate imagination, before it is burdened by abstraction. His speech became the healthy, robust, and imagistic language of peasant peoples. He is incomprehensible to us today, this first man. We live in a language of abstractions, whose growth Vico grafts to the cycles of human institutions—from feudal peasantry to urban democracy. The dying dialects of the world are the last faded scribblings and the faint final echoes of those first songs.

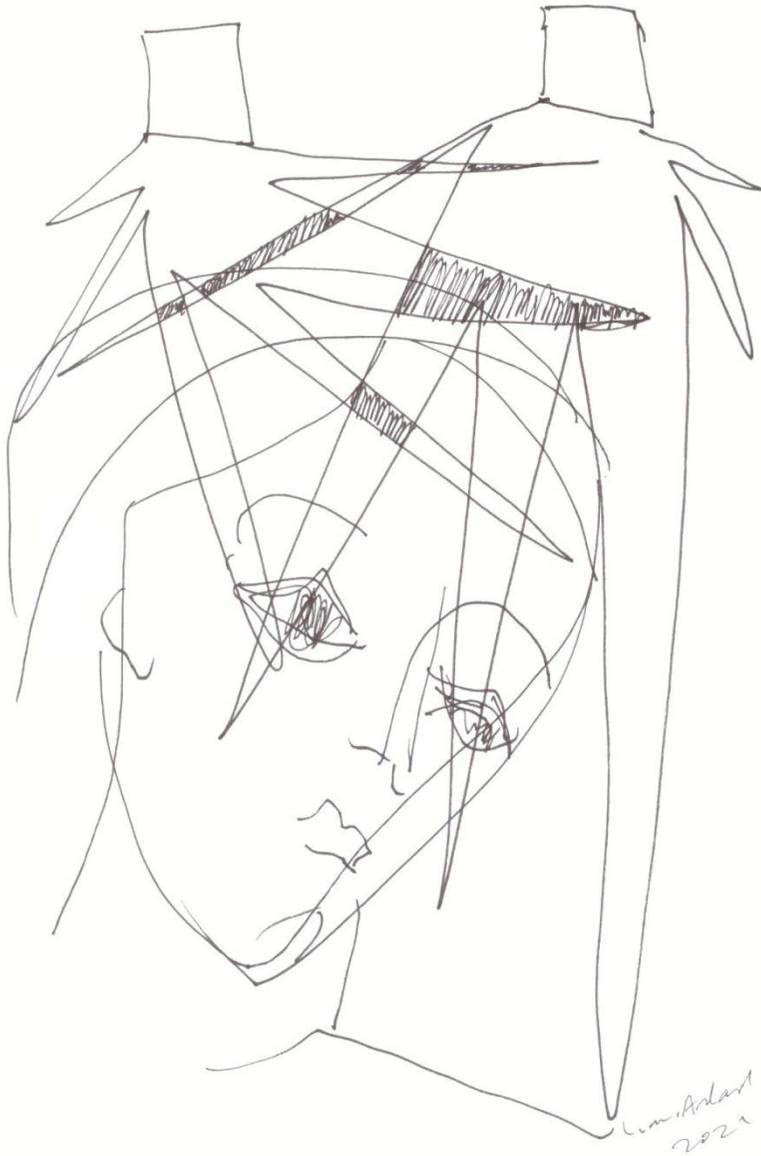
The Primitive, overwhelmed by joy and pain, sings it away in song; lest we forget that the epics and tragedies of the ancient world were set to the drum and flute, and dedicated by dance to the mythic gods—terrifyingly present and real. Most enticingly of all, Vico moves from these wide sweeping movements to the cycle, *ricorso*, of life's three phases: birth, childhood, and maturity. The poetic state of the artist is (and does not merely correspond) to the soft, spontaneous, which is to say, child-like mind which hardens in its movement to maturity.

The primitive involves, as my friend Parmigiano66 suggests, a degree of child-like self-trust lost in the course to adulthood (and abstract thought). But is not so much a formless existence that I look for but one where I have the trust to abandon one idea for another. The Primitive state, to those who look for it, acts as a solvent to this essential rigidity. I see those techniques which govern the artist's hand in the same way I do those habitual, even moral, rules that govern my day. The question of "what will I write today" brings out the same genera of emotion, and the same kind of formal planning and consideration, as the question of "how many coffees can I have today and still fall asleep?" or "should I masturbate in the shower or not?"

It could be that Vico would answer by saying it is impossible to recover the Primitive, just as it is impossible for us to bring back Latin or Olde Englishe. Or just as easily he might say a return to the Primitive is inevitable, as a cycle is inevitable, provided we exhaust abstraction and in his words find "in the flowers of decay the seeds of vitality." Or, it could be said that each stage of the cycle is present in each moment; birth, death and decay.

And here I am, my dearest reader, holding all these abstractions in my hand. I don't know what it was that attracted me—that still attracts me—to these ideas. It may be because I feel so thoroughly unspontaneous. I may be looking for permission to surrender, if only for a moment, those fine little rules which do not merely fill my head but also guide my hand as I reach for a pen, a brush, or another person. I seek out a voice, at times gentle and at times commanding, which I can trust unlike my own.





IVAN

ARLAUD

Interview by Monsieur Gilles

v.e : Est-ce que tu pourrais définir ton trait ?

i.a : C'est un exercice assez compliqué, j'aime à croire qu'un trait ne se veut pas dans sa définition, fixe ! Il est dynamique et évolue avec mon devenir. Mon trait est le prolongement de mes intentions, tantôt intelligible et inintelligible. Il est monstratif des mécanismes de composition par lesquels nous sommes traversés pour construire un imaginaire qui deviendrait tangible. Il est galbé de cette tension que porte les premiers acteurs d'une révélation. Donc je dirai qu'il est à l'image de toute posture déterminante, fugace et complexe à saisir dans son entièreté.

v.e : Quel est ton état d'esprit face au rappel des contraintes physiques du corps, quand la représentation mentale se détache du trait posé sur la toile ou le papier ?

i.a : La contrainte est le postulat de départ dans la représentativité. Chaque proposition picturale est une trahison dans son exercice de représentation de la pré-pensée ou pensée primitive. Pensée qui par définition n'est pas encore sujette à la transformation de sa mise en forme

par le langage. Partant de ce constat je n'ai d'autre choix que d'accepter la position ambivalente que prennent ces propositions. Elles ont cette capacité à dévoiler tout en cachant. Elles dévoilent une tentative de mise en oeuvre — régit par une intentionnalité structurée — tout en cachant la substance première, le noumène.

v.e : Dessinant des formes humaines, quel est ton processus mental dans la production du trait ?

i.a : Cela dépend sur quel support le trait doit prendre place. Si il est question de croquis préparatoires ou d'études, j'accorde très peu de recul à la production du trait. C'est à dire que, mon intention est de produire un procédé didactique en vue d'un résultat final et *autre*. Je suis donc dans un rapport instantané comparable à une frénétique expiation d'intentions. Or pour ce qui est d'un trait sur une toile, qui se voudrait plus à incarner une existence finie et présente (dans le sens plus sujet au regard de l'autre — qui n'est pas moi —). Le trait dans son processus est de facto plus soumis à mon jugement qui serait le premier d'une longue suite de réception par autrui.

v.e : Je vois que tu t'intéresse à la position de muscles et leurs saillances dans tes peintures, mais est-ce le même cheminement du trait pour tes monotypes figuratifs ? Dans tes monotypes je sens que tu te libères de toutes contraintes que la peinture ne permet pas (ou moins).

i.a : Nous avons là deux procédés distincts qui ont un impact direct sur la proposition picturale. Le trait du monotype est plus relatif au hasard. Il a une marge de manœuvre qui fait que même en tant qu'instigateur premier qui apposerait les mêmes intentions que pour la peinture, le médium en lui-même induit une différence. Cette différence en tant que donnée connue induit donc un cheminement autre. Disons que j'aime à me surprendre par le hasard du processus. Là est l'expérience du fugace et de ce qui échappe. Je ne peux que faire appel à Paul Valéry pour traduire ce sentiment : « il arrive (...) que je n'ai pas voulu dire, mais voulu faire, et que ce fut l'intention de faire qui a voulu ce que j'ai dit... » Variété III

v.e : Ayant vu ton processus de création, toutes tes peintures commencent par une esquisse, qui est selon moi la plus belle partie de tes œuvres. Ne penses-tu pas que les aplats de peintures dérangent et déforment les lignes primitives créées en premier lieu ?

i.a : Si il est question d'un résultat final où l'ossature créatrice est le propos, bien sûr. Mais là rentre en compte un positionnement. Mon avis est que, l'ossature ou la structure perceptible d'une œuvre (les lignes primitives), gagnent en existence en se référant à l'élément dont elles se dégagent et duquel elles le soutiennent. Il y a une nécessité d'existence et de perception d'un fond (qui peut être entendu en tant que plan subsidiaire ou fond comme couche supérieure enrobante). C'est du fond que ce détache l'objet, il en est de même pour une structure sinon rien ne la définirait comme tel. Cependant c'est un jeu constant pour tendre vers une composition qui serait la plus efficace pour retranscrire à juste titre cette complexité d'une image montrant son dedans et son dehors.

v.e : Penses-tu que la technique restreinte et primitive du trait rende sa perception visuelle plus authentique et plus accessible à l'appropriation cognitive humaine ? (Un trait qui se définirait comme proprement humain et qui comporterait un code immuable pouvant être reconnu et ingéré par d'autres personnes.)

i.a : Disons que le trait en tant que trait est l'une des données élémentaires (dans la pensée de Lévinas) qui nous permettent d'identifier les choses cernés. Nous sommes sujet à la présence de traits depuis le jour où nous avons ouvert les yeux. C'est donc sûrement de par cette présence universelle que le trait est admis comme code intrinsèquement notre.

v.e : Penses-tu que la peinture, appliquée par-dessus les traits primitifs, voile la vraie nature de l'œuvre et sa possibilité d'être reconnue par le subconscient ?

i.a : Comme je l'ai mentionné un peu plus haut la structure primitive s'identifie par ce quelle maintient. Si elle était soustraite de son fond de référence, rien ne nous indiquerait qu'elle serait structure primitive. Le résultat apparaîtrait comme finalité et non pas comme une étape précédant la finalité.

v.e : Que penses-tu du trait comme unique manière d'explorer l'intériorité et subconscient d'un artiste ? (Je considère ici la peinture appliquée par-dessus l'esquisse comme un artifice cachant la réalité de l'œuvre et sa conception proprement humaine, une sorte de lissage des imperfections détachant l'œuvre finale de tout humanisme.)

i.a : Le trait est une belle manière de révéler une intériorité mais il n'est pas une fin en soi. Le trait en tant qu'intention primitive existe parce qu'il a cette posture d'être une étape intermédiaire. Je pense qu'il est intéressant ici d'appliquer la pensée d'Emmanuel Levinas autour de la phénoménologie de l'Eros et de la transposer à l'esquisse. Si l'esquisse est prise comme finalité elle se voit subtilisé de ce qui la défini comme esquisse. Le fait de la prendre comme finalité cache en découvrant. C'est dans sa posture fixe de finalité structurelle que disparaît sa fonction de dire l'indicible. En tant qu'objet fixe demeurant au premier plan et arborant sa nudité elle rend équivoque ce qui par essence ne devrait pas l'être.

L'objet fixe n'est plus structure mais objet et à partir de ce moment ne dit plus rien. C'est par la non-signifiante directe du langage que l'expression continue d'exprimer sa substance. L'exhibition totale du procédé engendre la lascivité et la perte de son propos.

v.e : En effet il me semble que la représentation primitive se restreindrait à un trait simple et libre, non restreint par aucune intervention supplémentaire, que le trait se suffirait à lui-même. Cependant, comment imagines-tu la peinture primitive du futur ?

i.a : Je pense que la peinture primitive n'existe pas dans son appellation. Ou du moins qu'elle est une impossibilité conceptuelle liée à une esthétique d'interprétation. C'est une manière d'indexer sa perception dans une logique de totalité qui serait à mon avis trop défini et réducteur. Il y a une impossibilité totale à rendre compte de l'acte primitif car dès lors qu'il est essayé aujourd'hui il se voit régir par un ensemble d'intentions contextuelles qui le fait basculer dans ce qu'il est, une tentative d'acte primitif,

donc naturellement autre que l'acte primitif premier. Il faudrait pour répondre à cette question, trouver une nouvelle appellation plus proche de ce qu'est la peinture dite « primitive » d'aujourd'hui en se questionnant sur ce qu'elle cherche à investiguer et dans quel but.

TRANSLATION

v.e : Could you define your line?

i.a: It is a pretty difficult exercise, but I tend to believe a line does not relate, in its definition, to fixedness! It is a dynamic process evolving with my becoming. My line is the extension of my intentions, sometimes intelligible or unintelligible. It showcases the compositional mechanisms through which we pass to construct an imaginary, which would become tangible. It is shaped by that tension which is found in the primary factors of a revelation. So I'd say that it's in the form of any determining position, fleeting and complex to grasp in its entirety.

v.e: What's your stance towards the divergence of your intention/mental representation from the stroke placed upon the canvas, when you are reminded of the constraints of the body?

i.a: Constraint is the primary postulate in representation. Each pictorial proposition is a betrayal in its exercise to depict pre-thinking or a primitive thinking. Thinking, which is, by definition, not yet subject to the transformation of its materialization into language. Owing

to this, I am obliged to accept the ambivalent form these propositions take. They have this capacity to unveil themselves while staying hidden. They unveil an attempt to organize – governed by a structured intentionality – while hiding the primal substance, the noumenon.

v.e: Drawing human figures, what is your mental process in the production of the line?

i.a: This depends on which medium supports the line/stroke. If it is a question of preparatory sketches or studies, I hesitate little in the production of the stroke. That's to say that my intention is to produce a didactic process in view of a final and *other[ized]* result. I am, therefore, in an instantaneous rapport, comparable to a frenetic expiation of intentions. Or for the stroke placed on canvas, which requires a more finite and presented existence (in a sense subject to the gaze of the other — which isn't me —) The stroke, in its process, is de facto more submitted to my judgement, which is but the first in a long line of receptions by others.

v.e: In your paintings I see that you are interested in the position of muscles and their prominence, but is it the same thought process for your figurative monotypes? In your monotypes I sense that you free yourself from the constraints that paint does not permit (or less).

i.a: Here, we have two distinct processes which have a direct impact on the pictorial proposition. The line of a monotype is more related to fate. There is an allowance for mistakes by which the instigator, appending the same intentions than with paint, would let the medium induce a difference by itself. This difference as a known fact thus induces a diverse thought process. Let's say that I like to be surprised by this unpredictable process. This is where the experience of the fleeting and of that which escapes comes from. I cannot not mention Paul Valéry to translate this feeling "it arises that I didn't *want* to say, but *wanted* to do, and it was the intention *to do* which *wanted* what I *said*"¹ Variété III

¹ Translated from the French « il arrive (...) que je n'ai pas *voulu dire*, mais *voulu faire*, et que ce fut l'intention de *faire* qui a *voulu* ce que j'ai *dit*... » Variété III (my translation)

v.e : Having seen your creative process, I noticed that all of your paintings start with a sketch, which according to me is the most beautiful part of your work. Do not you think that the flat tints of paint disturb and deform the primitive lines created in the first place?

i.a: If we are talking about a final result where the creative structure is the intention, then, yes, of course. But here positioning needs to be taken into account. My answer would be that the framework, or the perceptible structure of a work (primitive lines), gain in existence with reference to the element from which they emerge and which they sustain. There is a necessity of existence and of the perception of a ground (which can be understood as a subsidiary plane or a ground as a superior coating layer). It is from the depth or ground that the object detaches itself, it is the same for a structure, otherwise nothing would define it as such. However, it's a constant game, tending towards a composition that can more effectively retranscribe justly the complexity of an image which shows its inside and its outside.

v.e: Do you think that the restrictive and primitive technique of the line allows its visual perception to be more authentic and easier to access in human cognitive appropriation? (A line which would define itself as properly human and which would contain an immutable code, recognizable and ingestabled by other human beings.)

i.a: Let say that the line, as a line, is one of the elementary figures (in the thoughts of Lévinas) which allow us to identify and grasp meaning. We are subjected to the presence of lines since the day we opened our eyes. It is thus thanks to this universal presence that the line is accepted as intrinsically ours.

v.e: Do you think that paint, applied on top of primitive lines, veils the true nature of the work and its possibility to be recognized by the subconscious?

i.a: As I said above, the primitive structure identifies itself by that which it upkeepes or maintains. If it was taken away from its base of reference, nothing would indicate to us that it is a primitive structure. The result would appear as finality and not as a step preceding finality.

v.e: What do you think of the line as the only way to explore the interiority and the subconscious of an artist? (Here, I consider the paint coming on top of the sketch as an artifice hiding the reality of the work in its properly human conception, a kind of smothering of imperfections detaching the final work from any humanism.)

i.a: Lines are a good way to reveal the interiority, but are not finite in their constitution. Lines as primitive intention exist by their position as intermediary stage. I think it is interesting here to apply the thoughts of Emmanuel Levinas on the Eros phenomenology, and to transpose it to the sketching process. If the sketching is taken as finality, it sees itself deprived of what defines it as a sketch. The fact of seeing it as finality hides at the same time as it uncovers. It is in its fixed structural finality that its function to express the inexpressible disappears. As a fixed object in the forefront and displaying its nudity, it allows an equivocation that would normally not be. From this moment on, the fixed object is no more structural,

but an object which has nothing more to express. It is by language's direct non-significance that expression continues to express its substance. The complete display of the process leads to lasciviousness and the loss of one's intentions.

v.e: In fact, it occurs to me that a primitive line would simply define itself as free and simple, unbounded from any further intervention, that the line would suffice by itself. However, how do you see the future of primitive painting?

i.a: I think that primitive painting does not exist under its name. Or at least, it is a conceptual impossibility related to interpretative aesthetics. It is a way to index one's perception in a logic of totality which would, to my point of view, be too definite and reductive. There is a complete impossibility to report the primitive act, as from the moment it is tried today, it sees itself contrived by a cluster of contextual intentions which makes it go over to the primitive attempt that it is, therefore differing from the first primitive impulse.

To answer this question, it would need to find a new designation, closer to what is today called "primitive" painting, questioning itself as to what primitive painting wants to investigate and what its aims are.

CLARA GAGET

Text and engravings

Morsure après *morsure*,
le geste unique, sans tricherie, sans repentir possible,
nous transfigure.

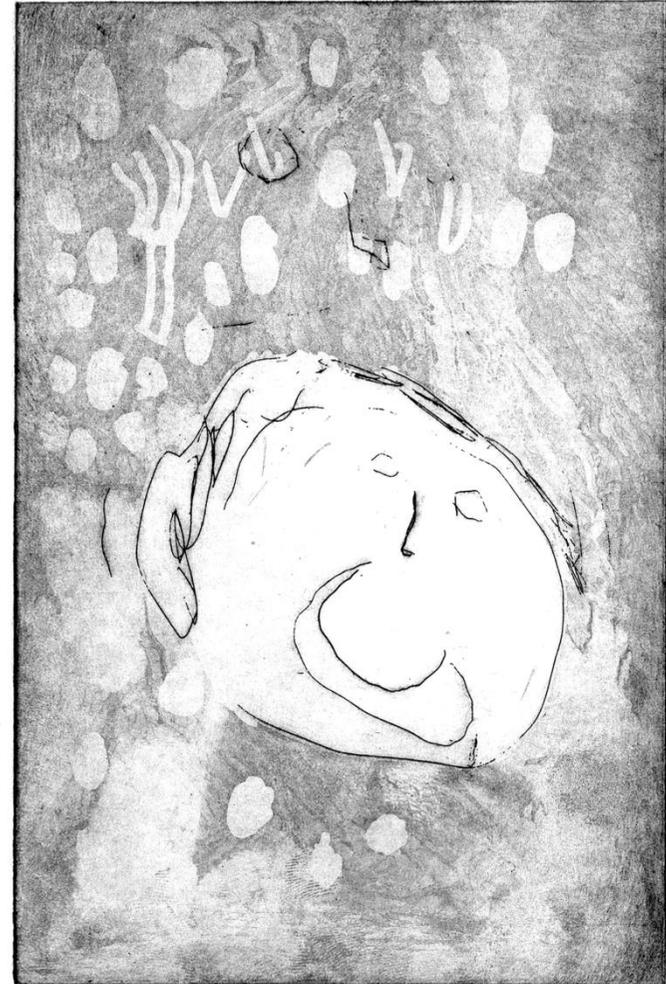
Devenir notre double héroïque.

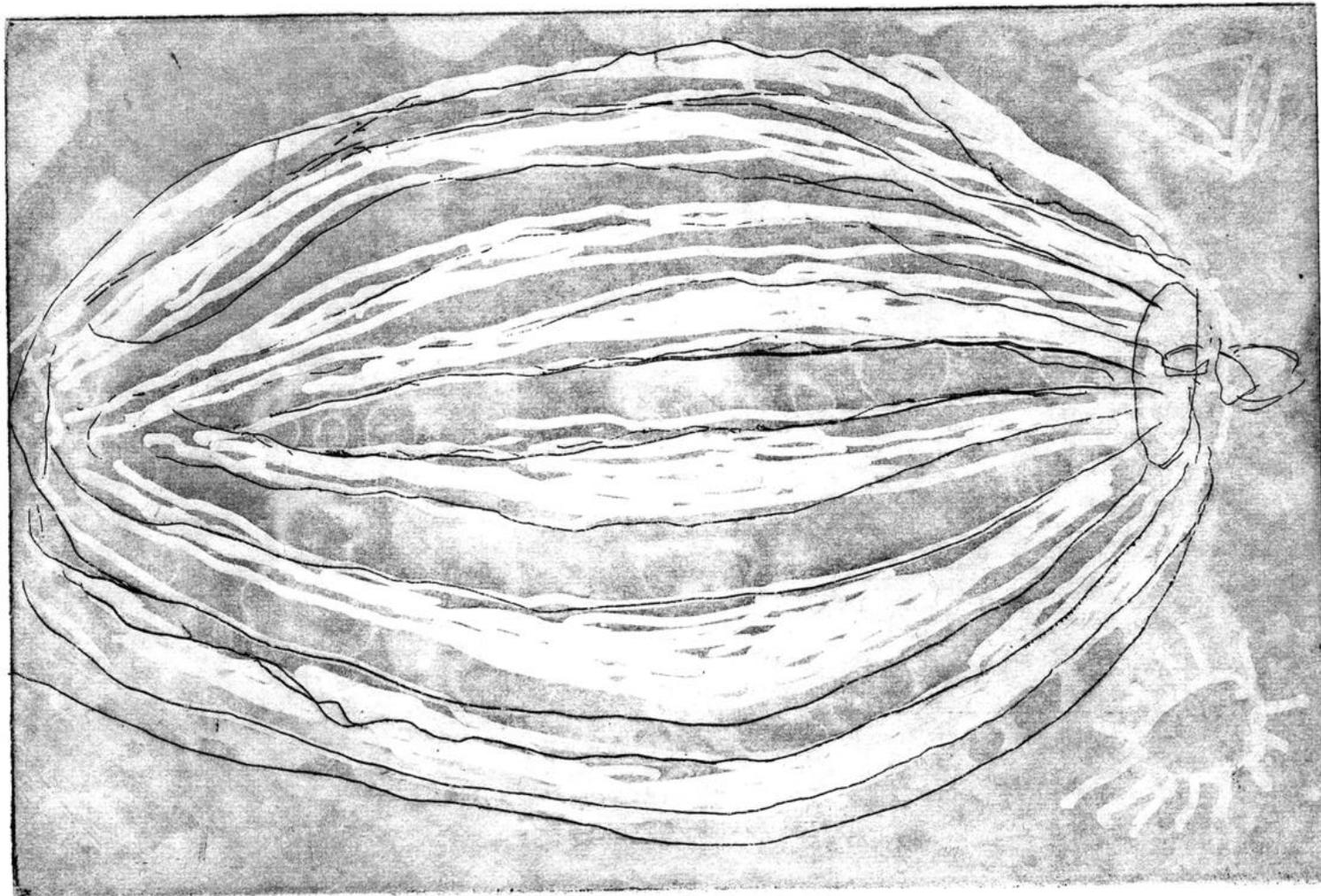
Nos mains, avec leurs fragilités,
leurs incertitudes, s'assument,
et les chemins parcourus, en groupe, se feront surprises.

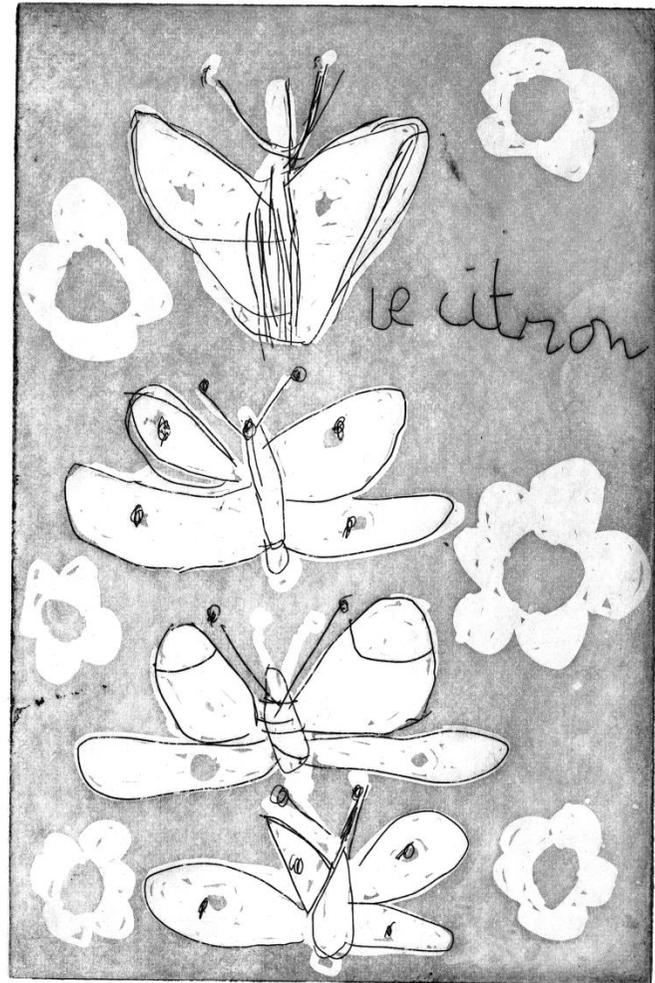
Creuser et ouvrir des lignes tracées,
des espaces à arpenter.

Des espaces d'expression à composer par écarts,
superpositions, limitations, recouvrements, différences :
mais toujours une ligne pour dialoguer, habiter, unir.

Gravures extraites du projet « Cœur-Soleil » par Clara Gaget, 2021.







Bites after *bites*,
The stroke, without duplicity, or possible remorse,
Transfigures our beings.

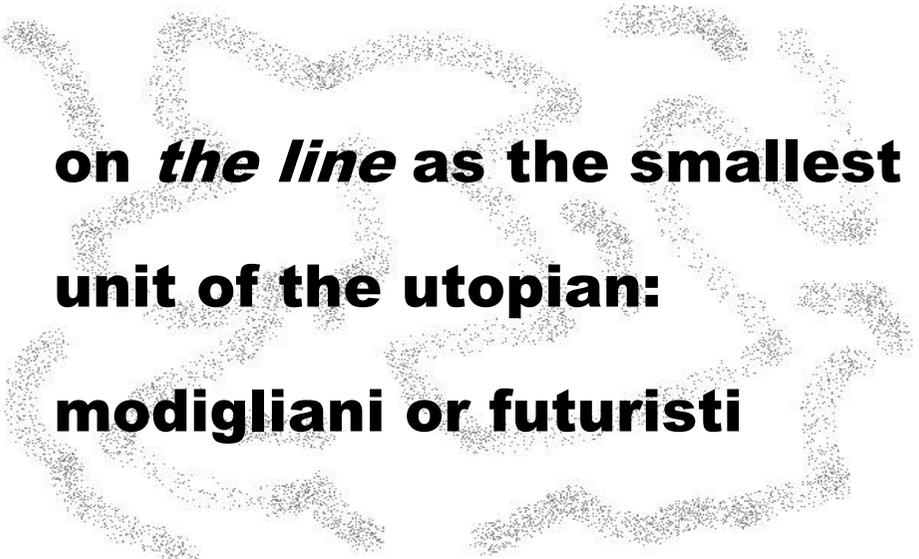
Becomes our heroic double.

Our failing hands, their incertitudes,
Will assume their fragility in the multiplication of the ways
crossed, to discovery .

Hollowing out and opening traced lines,
Spaces to explore.

Clusters of expression to gather on the margins,
Superstition, limitations, coverings, differences ;
But always finding a line to communicate, reside and unite.

Engravings taken from the « Cœur-Soleil » project by Clara Gaget, 2021.



**on *the line* as the smallest
unit of the utopian:
modigliani or futuristi**

by hegels

a simple definition has been given for the meaning of the totalitarian: the attempted recapture reclosure of the politically unified space following its deconstruction by a radical and plural democratic (moment). the naive attempt to insert and enforce this unity results in the totalitarian problematic of how to represent people's interests at the same time as you are crushing them. furthermore, it begs us to analyze the fiction of any pre-constituted social or political space. a radical, plural democracy, by contrast, asserts the impossibility of the politically unified space and demands, as such, for a pluralization of the impossible. let us, therefore, call the futuristi the *singularization* of the possible and modigliani the *pluralization* of the impossible.

it suffices to recall the plurality of political position and discourse across europe in the 1930s, what, in part, badiou calls the *passion of the real*, to gauge precisely how a failed articulation of the complete political space results in an explosion of a set of similar, but mutually incompatible, positions with respect to this failure. think of germany after the civil war. we may imagine modigliani's portraits are nothing but the nearness of these convergences, whose similarity only serves to point to their impossible unification. after a certain point, it is their impossibility which comes to integrate itself as a feature of the portraits. no one portrait may be seen alone and yet, together, they signify nothing but their mutually incompatible and interdependent impossible. their *utopia*.

the question, however, is how, once this impossibility has itself become a feature of the things themselves, whereby their own form — the radical multi-raciality of modigliani — rather than arriving at this impossibility, proceeds *from it*. what is unthinkable in the singularization of the possible is precisely this quality of the proceeding-from. the futuristi

not only resist and destroy the virtual set of possibilities, they conceive of possibility generally as the destruction of all others. — of all other worlds. if possibility grounds a world, it grounds it without removing itself as the source of the world's determinateness. possibility can no more exclude *itself*, its own possibility, than it can exclude the possibility of other worlds. as such, a world is possible on condition that others are, too. the move from world to world is not the movement from possibility to possibility, but the movement *across possibility itself*.

how may we imagine this move more specifically? in a recent exhibition, zheng bo uses drawings and video material to explore the *political life of plants*. in it, one sees drawings of plants throughout the seasons of zheng's residency in berlin. what badiou calls an *index*, a mark of the trace of infinity *inside* a finite oeuvre, is on full display: the feature itself of these drawings, which are starkly drawn for the most part in black and white, is that

that which one cannot see is the *plant itself which zheng is drawing*. the effective foreshortening of colour and texture raises the plants towards what they are as an *idea*, which zheng himself, in the aura of their living presence as he draws, cannot strictly communicate with. the result is that the drawings are *cut across*, or indexed, by the emergence of a projection towards some *inherent* possibility, which is nevertheless effectively an *impossible feature* of the artworks themselves. in the tension between zheng's awareness of the plants as living things and our awareness of them as ideas, the works are *indexed* by that which is not in them, but which they only *ever* project. this projection of the impossible models how to think the political life of plants: in asking this question, we ask what possible impossible can the basic finite order of plants featurize and, in turn, project qua the index of their very relationship to themselves as an idea, to their very relationship to *they are not* and yet *project*.

the position, as such, is never the articulation of a world, but the articulation of the field, or *index*, in which the world occurs. the horizon line, in short, of the possible, which no world strictly embodies, and, in its failure to embody it, in a *cut*, projects a deeper *impossible* within it. in this way, one may imagine the true political twentieth-century equivalent to the featurized impossibility of the multi-racial is the state of Israel, which radically failed to articulate a true multi-polar state in the 1930s and 40s. this *possibility* did not ever strictly exist, but was indexed through the antagonism of *the return* and the subsequent *displacement* of the palestinians. the impossibility, or the *idea* of a multi-polar state, could only ever exist through the interplay between first failed return of the israelis (that is, without displacement) and the second failed return of the palestinians. in other words, the failure itself for a pre-constituted state, or homeland, to exist creates the conditions *for one that does not yet exist*, but which is somehow *possible as an impossibility*.

the futuristi lay claim to a singular world intersecting with the field of the possible, where modigliani contrasts this with the unfinished faces, worlds in themselves, drawing from the possible without fully being able to circumscribe it in its entirety, projecting a political *infinite* qua the impossibility of its own goal, utopia. the line of form is bounded with itself and its limit; the limit which simultaneously limits it and connects with what is outside itself. the line is *unbound* by its own materiality. materiality which relates it to the possibility of materiality itself qua the *impossible* of bounding material, for which the output is the *idea* of material. modigliani's portraits are *ideas*, arising from anonymizing subjects, the full extent of whose *infinity* is not yet known.

the idea of modigliani himself is, however, that of a radical *utopia*, of a world which cannot exist, entangled as it is with a constitutive impossibility. a utopia to be distinguished sharply from the utopia of the fascist futuristi. the utopia of the futuristi must in some way,

paradoxically, *already exist*, but modigliani provides the conditions for the idea of it. an idea that, in many ways, does not exist as a strict possibility in any world. the injunction is, therefore, to *create this world*, or, better yet, to sustain the interplay which allows the temporary projection of a utopia. modigliani, as a utopian cosmopolitan, is the only one capable, furthermore, of articulating a true primitivist materialist thesis:

a line, as *finite*, is a cut across the possibility of materiality itself qua the indexing of the impossible

the impossible, furthermore, is *never reached*, but still capable of being present. the line unfounds the foundations of the exercise of its own materiality. it is a world destroyer; but, unlike the futuristi, it destroys the coordinates of any singularizing wordliness. it proceeds, in turn, *from* the impossible it sustains insofar as the impossible is the ground of its basic emergence: the *topos* of a given infinitization of the line itself which the line *emerges from* generically, but never strictly identifies

as its source. the source is an *idea*, here the utopian, which sustains itself in the interplay between the line and its immanent disfiguration of its own materialization. the line cannot avoid being the disfigurement of material *qua* material, here the determination of the determination, or the possibility of possibility, in radically perspectivizing it, opening it up to itself. *bi*-section. in other words, a line is the material subversion of material qua the basic perspectival shift of the possible itself. the *political possible*, where perspective is akin to the projection, i.e. the basic form of *modelling the impossible*.

from this we may glean how modigliani provides a way for thinking a new concept of material: the feature of the impossible, an idea, defines the materiality of the painting, the cutting-through of an idea in the painting. this is badiou's *index* at the same time as it is the tension in zheng bo's drawings between the concrete and the abstract. the cut itself creates the conditions in material for its own eruptive *idea*, i.e. impossible *as* material.

modigliani cannot avoid projecting a *utopia*. the material itself rises from within its own basic materiality. the material cuts across itself, proceeding from the impossibility of its own totalizing perspectivation. the line is not only that which changes materiality with *more of itself*, but also reengages the perspective that grounds the line *as a line* at all. it reengages the impossible in order to ground the possibility of the possibility of material; it provides the idea of material in order to *think material as material*. it releases, in other words, material back to itself as material qua the idea. from this point forward, material self-deploys; that is, reveals what it itself is.

the materiality is not material, it is the
thought and vice versa
if material was always already thought
the boundary dissolves at the same
time as they reaffirm their distinction
thought appropriates materiality
materiality is renewed as a fixture of what
we are learning thought is
thought itself goes to materiality to
learn what it is
(*khaya's thesis*)

in other words, material, if it was always already thought, renews itself as *material*. now, however, it *is* thought, and is, as such, *beyond definition or circumscription*. pure deployment. the line, therefore, is the smallest *utopic unit*. — an index of a *possible impossible*. it perspectives materiality, installing the reflexive horizon of material itself, the *determination of determination*, a bi-section. it is the smallest unit of *internal negation*. a subjective hinge point for possibility's own self-deployment.. it is pure politics. *the only way to go backwards is forwards*. negation of the negation.

**substance,
or fragment
from the
yellow book**

by hegelsh



if the circumscription of the infinite (as finite) involves a *bind*, or bound, then it cannot exactly express this as another fact. a term appears within it that takes what is unfinished, or half-said, in it and cannot be let *not* to express it. the circumscription involves its own unfinishedness.

(we take on our environments and they move through us and this moving through at the same time as it is the explicit content of our thought is also *our thought*, edinburgh thesis no.34)

if a term is somehow hidden beneath it or within it, we can somehow imagine that this term is also what allows the finite to work at all. it allows it to project, effectively, accidentally. the finite, basically, is in the position already to intersect with what it cannot express. the finite is almost nothing but a question of proximity.

this proximity, however, also involves that the finite is sutured to the very possibility (of possibility) it cannot express and yet which only ever appears through the very fragmentation of the finite, providing the temporary *topos* for something like a rapport with Q(antum).

$q \rightarrow Q$, plancking

this is what we call entanglement:

1. all meanings becomes revised (within the finite)
2. the move itself is a move towards entanglement

what is a matheme? it is a diagram that allows a projection of the real. that is, a projection of what is effectively a piece of that same real. coming-into reality is precisely the entangled possibility.

materiality is not already. it is the k(not)-already. it is the very impossibility of simply thinking an object; the lack of a distinct perspective. — the non-self. the perspectivity of the object is a diagram. it is weight as the entry of the impossible term of the object's suture into the object itself, wherein the diagram is the projection that occurs in this process. it is the expressed infinitization as the object opens in its interaction with its impossibility. the diagram is the perspectivization of the object as entanglement from the perspective of infinity. this is not a term in it; it is because it is the projection, which infinitizes the object in the pure topos of its proximity to that with which it is already entangled. the finite is already a disfigurement qua a kind of projection which infinitizes the object. the diagram expresses this projection.

how is it that there is an immanent genetic answer to materialist development. — to good skin. it is the very circumscription of the thing as finite that is so paradoxical. the finite must be thought *infinitely*.

if we think of spinoza's sequence of cause and effect, then we can see how it is the very installation of a horizon of the finite as internalized proximity. the sequence is not an answer, but an answerableness itself, an ultra-referent, which captures everything in a finite procedure that they express. you are not anything; you merely express the finite. thinking is just a relationship to the finite. this is proximity. you can think what you are.

why can't this line

—

be infinite? — accidentally. it accidentally infinitizes. or, *is it already infinite as the finite expression* in the infinite? there is nothing informational about $q \rightarrow Q$. it is the collapse of the informational. in it a finitization of this accidental projection, proximity is that expression of what I am, where the what I am has *no perspective*. being perspectiveless, the movement already doesn't exist. the diagram, as the logico-constructive, cannot already represent anything. in other words, it cannot *not* represent. it is real.

the not being able to not arise when the lack of a logico-constructive finitude cannot already circumscribe the diagram, so that it has no choice but to be real. it is a *pure expression of the infinite perspective* on the object it diagrammatizes. we may imagine that there is a point of contact between them — and the construction of a logic or condition. we can imagine how absence of perspective (proximity/expression) admits a logical “possibility” insofar as that possibility is something that exists without perspective. therefore, it cannot be anything but discovered and, effectively, the finite lives in silence. the supposed logos of *anything* is caught up in its indiscernability. what spinoza cannot take back is that the set of *finite* procedures is also indiscernible as finite. the lack of perspective is the *infinization of the finite*, which is itself the immanent possibility of *thought*. this is how they express the quantum. it is what allows a diagram, or language, to express infinities.

a proof of the real arises from how the finite is entangled in the very absence of a description of reality itself. the projective infinitization is *already* how the infinite exists and how something like the finite exists *at all*. if the finite couldn't express the infinite, it couldn't exist at all. if it is unprojective, it cannot express anything. it must express Q and it must be entangled in order to express this. expression involves a relationship to, effectively, *nothing*. to a nothing (that z would describe as *charged*. — the quantum void) and that is full of the basic indiscernible of a given logos. if the logos is already regulating, it means that it regulates itself as finite with Q and infinitely. that literally works with them.

if I take a finite object in front of me, finite, because it is a circumscription, I must imagine how it informs my thinking without directly giving me anything. it is merely proximity, and the sensitivity of thinking to its proximity to the aura of the completeness of the finite.

(we want to believe things are real and as such all our thinking aspires to reality, edinburgh thesis no.54)

infinite thinking is not of a kind; all thinking is infinite. it is the basic exposure of the finite to its already in the infinite. *substance*. as this infinite finitizes itself it comes through the proximate expression of finite objects qua logos to things around them. the causal field of the infinite, however, is effectively *something else*. another substance out of which material entanglements emerges; in fact: the basic double exposure of the finite to the infinite and the infinite to the finite *is* what we call substance, what we call material, more limitedly.

a diagram is somehow substance. it is the possibility of the expression of Q as Q. if it even describes material, we must ask how a description of material is possible in material. but, what we find is that: *substance is already definable*. entanglement, in other words, already admits *thinking*. there is an elementary entanglement which expresses what is a set of finite sequences in their bei-circumscribability to an infinite substance, i.e. substance itself. a diagram as such bridges finitude and infinity. the point is that I should be able to show you something:



and you should be able to read *the entanglement*. you should be able to read *without* reading. this is what it means to read.

Credits and acknowledgements

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Instagram : @claragaget
@ivanarld

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X2 to hegelsh and S.Pellegrino for their submissions

Thanks also to the little hands behing the drawings :

@fkapierreantoineroux
@shard.exe

Finally to those who participated in the primitive linking point drawing template adventure :
(in order, from top to bottom, left to right)
Roadkill oak ikon, @colorful_reptile, Firelion, Marwin's nephew, @shard.exe, shealanna84, Marwin, pico.

Winners (no order) : @colorful_reptile, @shard.exe, and Marwin's nephew for this masterpiece (I think he will soon be able to read Arbor)

Complementary index for illustrations :

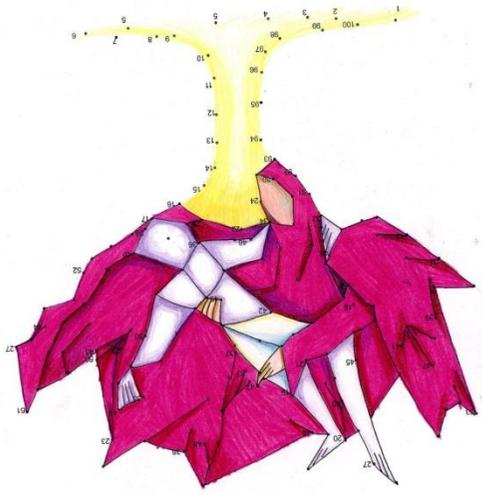
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Arlaud, Ivan. *Monotype*. Galerie Tracanelli Editions, 2020.

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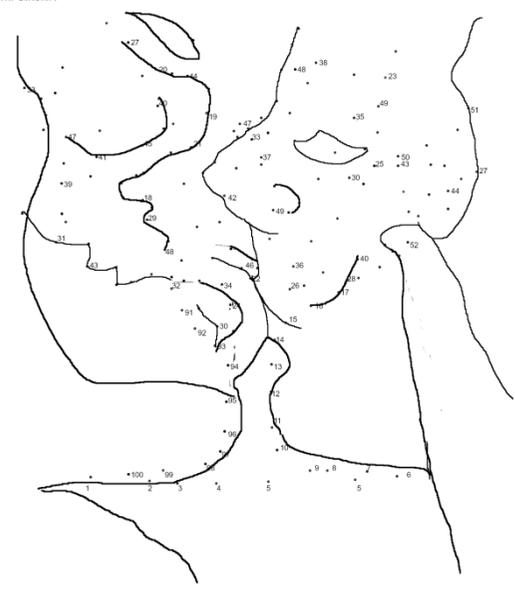
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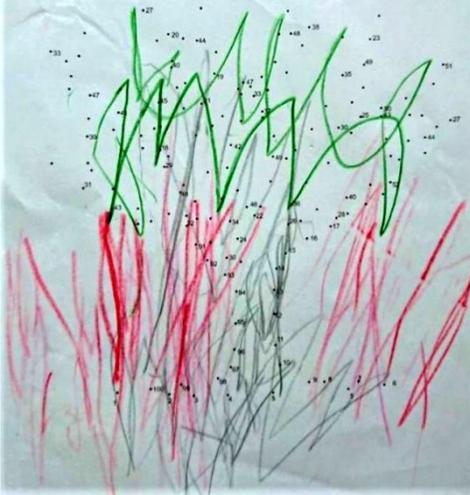
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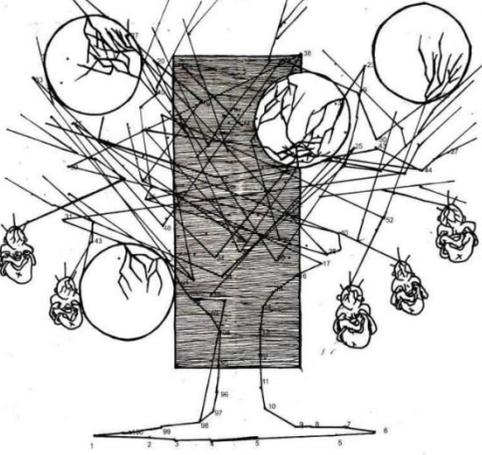
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Take a gander, try
 your hand



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