

Shadow of a Doubt



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On a shadow of a doubt

The expression 'beyond a shadow of a doubt' or, the more common expression, 'without a shadow of a doubt' originated in England in the 18th century. The expression 'shadow of a doubt' describes a situation in which the speaker is completely sure that something is right, with no possibility of ambiguity. The presence of the shadow in the expression 'without a shadow of a doubt' suggests the possibility that something that one is completely sure about still contains an option for difference. As doubt has its shadow, it creates an option of for ambivalence and ambiguity. The term 'shadow' is used to describe the notion of to doubt, due to the fundamental characteristics of the shadow in our allegoric perception. 'Shadow' carries the connotation of a dark, non-descriptive, lack of substance. One that is hard to grasp, a hint.

The terminology 'beyond a shadow of a doubt' creates the conditions in which one that is not convinced by an idea or a notion should not suffice with doubting that notion or idea, but rather go beyond the shadow of a doubt. The expression when used: "I am sure beyond the shadow of a doubt" describes a submissive and hypnotic state, with no possibility of for difference or contrast.

A shadow is a two-dimensional representation of the three-dimensional object. It omits a dimension from the world, and represents only its contours, without its volume and its details. A shadow can represent the essence of an object in varying magnitude, several times, in varying sharpness. Towards the end of the day the shadow lengthens, becomes more dominant clearer, blacker.

Doubt represents the middle ground between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Doubt is fundamental for evolution¹. The term 'doubt' as used in 'shadow of a doubt' represents a sense of contradiction to the truth that arises in the passage of information. But doubt can be more than a contradiction to the truth, a by-product engraved in the existence of things.

The shadow changes not only relative to the object that it's cast from, but also by the source of light and the object on which the shadow is cast upon. The state of a shadow is affected by more factors than the state of the object that creates it. Shadow has a negative connotation. For example, the use of the shadow as "He is only a shadow of who he once was" or

"He fell into the world of shadows" the lack of light, the darkness, the frightening unconscious intentions. Although shadow is an integral part of the existence of an object, it is separated from its subject. When one considers the declaration: "he is only a shadow of what he used to be", the former subject is present in language, although the semantics of the sentence points to the disappearance of the subject. So as one knows or believes something 'beyond a shadow of a doubt', one may be living in a fantasy of certainty. A situation of "blind"² faith.

The intensity of the phrase 'with a shadow of a doubt', is mediocre. It expresses a certain ambiguity in a person and not a negative doubt towards a notion or idea. 'Without a shadow of a doubt' points us toward the opposite direction. By following the shadow, we perceive the shape of an object through its contours of doubt.

What I hope to convey in this body of text is a state of mind/angle of processing within 'a shadow of a doubt'. Precisely then, I will demonstrate how one may attempt to invite and to accept the notion of ambivalence, uncertainty, and difference that is at the very root of the notion 'with a shadow of a doubt'. Asking whether it is possible to create space for doubt as a basic sense in our belief system, leading toward new ideas and matters of perception to arise from the empty place doubting creates in our psyche, this research attempts to shift our recognition of doubt from carrying negative connotations in society - as an expression of lack of trust - towards a source of creative, a potential.

'With a shadow of a doubt' comes to mind when something familiar contains within it what one may feel as a contradiction towards one's cognitions and observations, in other words: the unfamiliar. It is not easy to look at something familiar from a different angle due to the fact that we rely on our belief system, and on the world of ordinary things³. Even if we have doubts about something we are familiar with, we will prefer to put the doubt aside. Doubting requires re-scanning of our understanding and actionable proposals. By doubting one creates space to perceive an object's poetic, profound essence, not only the object itself.

² blind as not seeing nor the light nor the shadow.

³ The things that in their being enjoy existential stability -doubtless. The sea, for example, in many forms takes a existential stability in our perception. But as night falls, sitting in front of the sea becomes tense, the amount of information sinks to a minimal level, the amount of people fades, and the sea becomes larger, in the dark. The horizon line that depends on perspective only disappears completely.

¹ Evolution in the context of mutations, if a species evolves without a shadow of a doubt it will eventually extinct

Doubt as a method

Defamiliarization. When approaching a phenomenon that is registered with us as completely familiar¹, without a shadow of a doubt, as something we identify within a certain category, we stop examining it in depth or at all. As consciously recorded repetitive action can disappear from our perception. Viktor Shklovsky in his essay "Art as Technique" (1917) writes "If we start to examine the general laws of perception, we see that as perception becomes habitual, it becomes automatic"² Shklovsky articulates the notion that by repeating a certain action, we may stop attributing meaning to it, performing it by reflexes. We stop questioning, relating, interpreting. We place information within a frozen system. When we are familiar with something, we stop to interpret it. Our brain allows for better resources to be channeled so that energy is saved for new, unfamiliar things as they seem to be more important. In his essay, Shklovsky uses the poetic language to demonstrate the activity of awareness: "We see the object as though it were enveloped in a sack. We know what it is by its configuration, but we see only its silhouette"¹ In this case, the silhouette is the shadow of an object, and "The object, perceived thus in the manner of prose perception, fades and does not leave even a first impression; ultimately even the essence of what it was is forgotten".¹

It's interesting to consider defamiliarization in respect to what happens when one repeats the same word over and over again, as a tactic for defamiliarization - a phenomena named semantic satiation. Through its repetitiveness, the word loses its meaning while only its auditory representation stays floating in the air as sound. "The neural systems in the brain can be fatigued by repeated stimulation" explains David Balota, an American researcher and professor of psychology and neurology. The term semantic satiation was invented by Leon Jakobovits James a psychology professor in his 1962 doctoral dissertation; "when a brain cell fires, it takes more energy to fire the second time, and still more the third time, and finally the fourth time, it won't even respond unless you wait a few seconds"³. The former familiar in semantic satiation loses its meaning and clear connotation and becomes devoid of any body, by the shadow of the word itself, its side effect - the sound, the aspect of the word one is not aware of. Shklovsky describes the course of our day-to-day, the familiar routine activities as a

1 Later in the text I write against the notion of something completely familiar, for now..

2 Viktor Shklovsky "Art as Technique" (1917), 2.

3 Leon Jakobovits James, (1962) Doctoral dissertation at McGill University

hypnotic state⁴, as if existence strives to stay in the unconscious. This hypnosis that results from repetitiveness is violated when one encounter the unfamiliar. In 1895 "The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station" [fig1] was released. The film confronted the audience with an unfamiliar experience they were not prepared for. Stories are told of some who fainted at the cinema because their senses told them that a train is going to run over them. There was no separation between the screen and reality. So, against the hypnotic state, the artistic expression seeks to create modes of doubtful



[Fig 1] A frame from The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station (1895)

defamiliarization Shklovsky demonstrated well the inseparable connection between art and doubt: "And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known"¹. 'Shadow of a doubt' can be a tool for a new understandings of the arts and sciences. Throughout history, doubt has led to some of the most important discoveries - inventions that were achieved not out of a closed logical thinking process of cause and effect based on the familiar, but by the use of a skeptical imaginative interpretation system. Newton, for example, discovering gravity, looked not at the object itself - the ball, but at its performance. "And what if I threw the ball that it made a complete rotation around the earth?"

We can examine how the lack of doubt is problematic. For example in building a test system. In doing so one must build a consistent test machine, which uses a specific language. When we engage in a scientific activity one is always deciphering an incomplete. Testing the unfamiliar by the familiar. Art, unlike science, uses

4 In this context hypnosis is described as a state of not doubting

doubtful mediums⁵ to represent reality. Mediums that are more subject to interruption. Through an artistic experience, one needs to stretch the distance from the familiar. To create a failure in a direct link with an experience. In any case, it is not possible to represent the familiar accurately, and in any process of reflection, doubt will emerge. The following idea came into my mind: Science uses the familiar in order to discover the unfamiliar. Art uses the unfamiliar to discover the familiar.

Shadow play. An interrogation of the properties of shadows and doubts can be discuss through one of the first mediums which use the essence of the familiar through a defamiliarized physical medium. The shadow play [Fig2]. The first shadow play emerged around 2,000 years ago⁶. The story of how the medium came to life is interesting because as well as additional mediums that I will discuss, the shadow play deals with the notion that the motivation for representation starts from the inability to grasp the eternal. The story describes a Chinese ruler who experienced a death of a loved one, the loss made it difficult for him to continue to rule the empire. Longing and mourning dominated him. One of his ministers watched children play with dolls in the yard, the nature of the shadow emanating from the dolls captured his attention, and an idea of how to detach the ruler from his grief came to his mind. The minister created a shadow doll in the form of the ruler's loved one that passed away. He invited him to watch her - bringing her back to life.

I believe that the invention of shadow plays reflects the deepest capacity of art. It is, in fact, to create defamiliarization of reality in order to take a different point of view on it, to make one doubt. In this case, it is clear to the ruler that the same reflection, the same shadow of his love is not her, it is only a representation. But approximation was created. The ability to realize someone or something by their shadow allows re-experiencing the subject that has disappeared. The shadow of that person creates a new experience and new memories and new doubts. Returning to Shklovsky: "The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object: the object is not important"⁷ It is the

5 The mediums in which art essentially exists allow for as broad a creative framework as possible, and encourage unconventional use of the material.

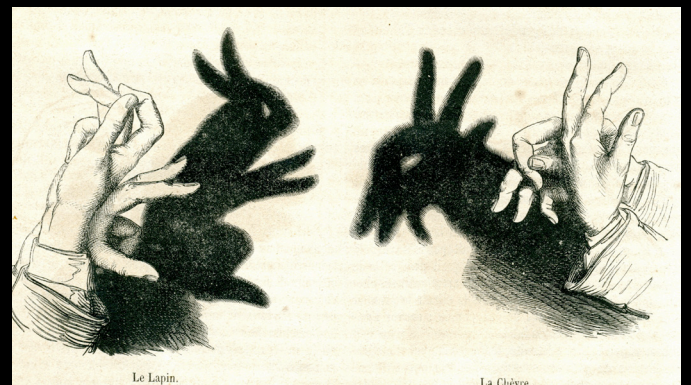
6 Although one can imagine the amount of shadow created in ancient caves in front of the fire

7 Viktor Shklovsky "Art as Technique" (1917). 2.

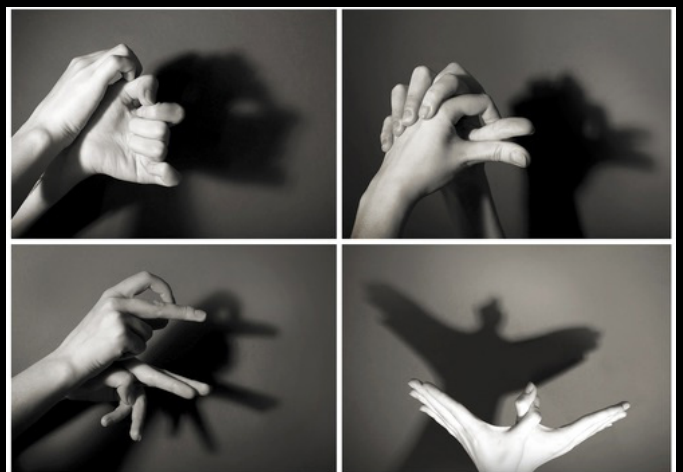
drainage of a basic need that every artistic medium contains within, the re-creation of the not eternal...for eternity. You remember the game[Fig 3+4] Put your hand in front of the light, and watch your hands losing their normal meaning, transforming into a completely different thing.



[Fig 2] Traditional Chinese shadow dolls with their own operator



[Fig 3] Illustration from a shadow play hand guide.



[Fig 4] Shadow play examples

The unfamiliar - vessel of a doubt

The doubtful moment is engraved in one's day-to-day experiences. For example, we are listening to a conversation in a language we don't understand and our name comes up. The people who talk, do not evoke a clear emotion, they only mention our name regularly, and talk to each other without considering our presence. Because of our familiarity with the structure of a conversation, with the dialect, we will implant a possible essence to such a conversation. Offer a possible interpretation that will complete the lack of understanding. We will create a momentary truth, a story with a beginning, middle, and end about what was said. Something that is not completely familiar with us will cast a possibility. We seem to know what we clearly don't.

The point I am trying to address is that if something follows a frame that is familiar but at the same time contains an unfamiliar aspect, then doubt will emerge. In such a situation we will complete the void out of our imagination; out of one self, not by following rules, just by the impossibility to handle an empty space.

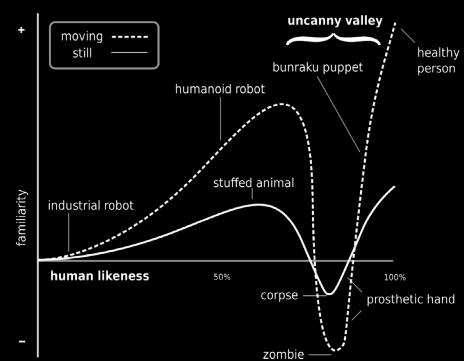
Strangely familiar. Our perception of the familiar and unfamiliar is largely based on the *unheimlich* (uncanny). In the art world the term is used often. To me, it describes only a small part of what appears in the state of encountering something that is familiar and foreign at the same time. The *unheimlich* is a psychoanalytic term, initiated in an era when the ability to imitate reality was limited, compared to the present period, when representation increases its level of familiarity. Today, the capabilities and tools available to us that create representation are a basic configuration of communication, and using representation prevails in almost all disciplines. Following our experience with the immediate and distant through contemporary mediums, for example, the internet, screens, the filters¹. The *unheimlich* has become a rare experience.

In "Das Unheimliche"², Freud describes the psychic biography of man, his inability to escape from the traumatic and terrible, from which he is anxious and to which he is drawn. The result is a feeling of uncomfortable alienation. The phenomenon often creates cognitive dissonance in the experiencing subject due to the paradoxical nature of being attracted and at the same time also rejected by the object. This cognitive

1 Referring to the visual filters on social networks
2 Sigmund Freud "Das Unheimliche" (1919)

dissonance leads to rejection of the object because the subject prefers not to deal with the phenomenon. I consider this dissonance, in terms of the 'shadow of a doubt'. The dissonance does not end solely in rejection. It is precisely rooted in the acceptance of doubt itself, in the expansion of consciousness towards an existential doubt.

The valley. Applying the psychoanalytic concept to art raises the notion of the "uncanny valley". A hypothesis from 1970 as articulated by Masahiro Mori³. The hypothesis comes from the field of computer graphics (VFX) and robotics and deals with a phenomenon that has become more and more common in the field.



[Fig 5] The uncanny valley

It seems that as the images created have become closer and closer to human formality, so does the rejection that people experience by them. The hypothesis presents a graph that places objects within two different parameters - familiarity and human Likeness, the graph shows that as something get closer to a human figure, it becomes less familiar [fig5]. That drastic drop in our acquaintance with something that seems very human but not entirely is the 'valley'. This became a problem in the animation industry with the prevalence of the use of 3D modeling software that creates models with an uncanny likeness to real humans. These films often create fear amongst their audiences.

In "The Weird and the Eerie" (2017) Mark Fisher criticizes the use of the notion *unheimlich* and how it is used as the strangely familiar. Fisher argues that by approaching the unfamiliar from the vantage point of the familiar, the *unheimlich* raises a similar reaction as does frizzling doubt⁴. "Perhaps the most important difference between the *unheimlich* on the one hand and the weird and the eerie on the other, is their treat-

3 Mori, M. "Bukimi no tani [the uncanny valley]" 1970

4 The kind of doubt that makes it not possible to act, the kind of doubt that splits us in asymmetric line to two parts that negotiating with each other and consequently traps us in apathy

ment of the strange. Freud's *unheimlich* is about the strange within the familiar, the strangely familiar, the familiar as strange"⁵. The *unheimlich* is a psychoanalytic term that attempts to interpret behavior while the weird and the eerie are a significant perceptual state. The *unheimlich* is trying to solve a "problem" in our perspective on the unfamiliar, as if there is something to heal.

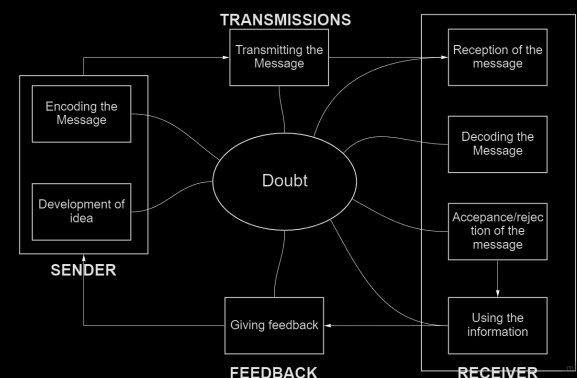
Both the notions of *unheimlich* and the weird and the eerie deal with the notion of the unfamiliar/strange but with a fundamental difference. "The folding of the weird and the eerie into the *unheimlich* is symptomatic of a secular retreat from the outside. The wider predilection for the *unheimlich* is commensurate with a compassion towards a certain kind of critique, which operates by always processing the outside through the gaps and impasses of the inside. The weird and the eerie make the opposite move"⁶. Fisher describe the strange as the embodiment of our lack of familiarity. The strange is the shadow of the familiar, it is the incarnation of lacking knowledge. The *unheimlich* takes it for granted that the familiar exists and that our perception starts from the familiar, treats the unfamiliar as a separate part of our perception, in the sense that the unfamiliar is less suitable than the familiar as if the unfamiliar is a by-product of the familiar. Although, these two exist equally. Fisher presents the problem in thinking of a familiar, what is familiar? familiar to whom? Raising the problem in our perception of the familiar - when something is missing do we still feel it? Do we continue to produce it in one way or another? As something does not exist at all, it is irrelevant to us, but when something is missing, the shadow of that lack exists. When something is missing, we are aware of the shadow. Fisher argues that there is a problem with thinking that one has an agency over what is familiar, in describing a situation, one can conclude that there is nothing that will hold the familiar because there is a subconscious system that "chooses" what becomes familiar to us and what not; what we know or whatnot; what we remember etc. Fisher discusses this idea by giving an example of our own memory structure: "Memory is already a story, and when there are gaps in memory, new stories must be confabulated to fill in the holes. But who is the author of these stories? The answer is that there is not so much an author as a confabulatory process without any "one" behind it. This process isn't a pathological deviation from the norm, but the

5 Mark Fisher, "The Weird and the Eerie" (2017) 6.
6 Mark Fisher, "The Weird and the Eerie" (2017) 7.

way in which identity ordinarily functions. However, this functioning is usually obscured and only comes into view when something goes wrong"⁷. Our sense of familiarity is very important for us, it dictates our life, the way we interact with the world, and the way we come to perceive it. But it also paralyzes us, limits us. Unfamiliar truths will raise resolute objections - negative doubts will emerge. We want to change and expand ourselves but at the base, we are tied to a nuclear truth and it will be very difficult for us to question it.

If I said earlier that doubt originates in the middle line between the familiar and the unfamiliar, I would like to expand this notion towards a far **corner of doubt**, and how in extreme cases, hallucinations or psychotic doubt take place. One may think that in this case doubt took over and became the familiar state of mind. The same effect raises the need to fill the void vacuum of perception. But, in a state of psychosis, there is a lack of doubt about the familiar and the unfamiliar. And one exists at a level in which there is no doubt. This is expressed in the two types of hallucinations - positive and negative "It was Freud who introduced the concept of negative hallucination, and, as with confabulation, the phenomenon illuminates the eerie qualities of the unconscious, its negative production. The unconscious, something which is itself a gap, invisibility, is also the producer of gaps that are not seen"⁸. In contrast to negative hallucinations, positive hallucinations describe a phenomenon that takes place when we recognize a need that needs to be fulfilled then we create an image, sound, etc. Our creation exists exclusively in the context of what is familiar to us... and not in the context of the larger familiar. This creates a contradiction between our familiar and the familiar of others, as in the allegory of the cave. But in negative hallucinations, something else happens. "In negative hallucination, objects and entities are typically registered but not seen. If, say, someone is in-

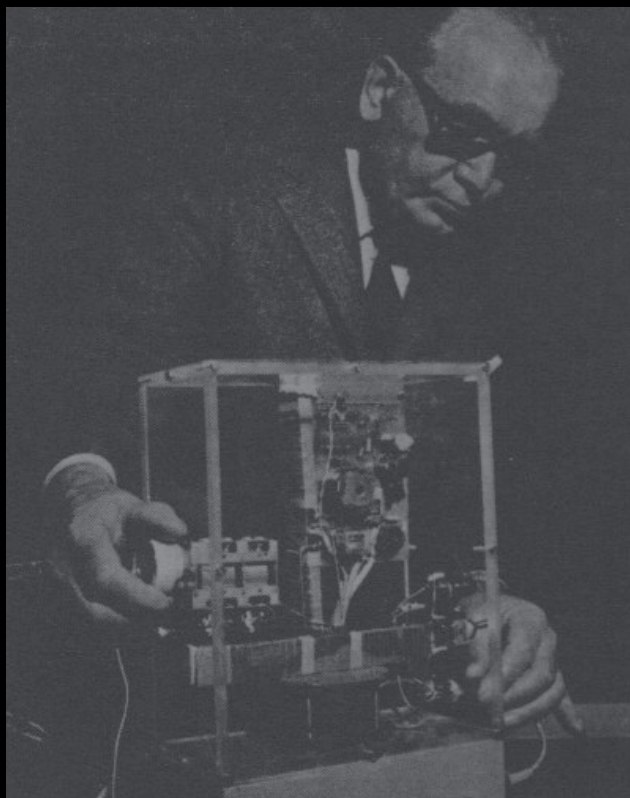
7 Mark Fisher, "The Weird and the Eerie" (2017) 31.
8 Mark Fisher, "The Weird and the Eerie" (2017) 32.



A graph showing the evolution of a message with the doubt as a process that can be found in each of the steps.

duced into not seeing a box lying on the floor, they will nevertheless swerve to avoid the box when they walk across the room, and what is more, they will produce a rationale, a little story, explaining why they have done so”⁹. Fisher demonstrates how the same phenomenon of negative hallucinations elevates within our unconscious - a stranger within us.

Here comes an interesting point. As I explained before, in the second chapter, the place of art lies in the defamiliarization while relying on the basis of familiarity. And yet Freud describes that the same defamiliarization creates an unpleasant feeling and rejection. There is some necessity here for an exactitude or a certain precision within the amount of our familiarity. If a thing becomes too familiar, it freezes and goes out of our course of understanding as Shklovsky discusses... If a thing is completely foreign, we will not succeed at all to grasp it, because it does not exist in our system of understanding...And if a thing is very close to our familiarity but does not completely meet our expectations it seems to us to be damaged, we will reject it. And if we find ourselves looking at its representation, that is to say, that its very existence is in the unfamiliar dimension, but it becomes its embodiment; a shadow of the world familiar to us that will gain a new angle, and consecutively will raise doubt.



[Fig 7] Konstantins Raudive with his device for capturing ghosts sounds
 9 Mark Fisher. "The Weird and the Eerie" (2017) 6.

The skeptical sound of doubt. There is a fundamental difference between the way we perceive sound and an image in the context of doubt. I will argue that sound is a more skeptical medium than an image. One example is the use of birds voice in "The Birds"(1963) by Alfred Hitchcock. Hitchcock uses an eerie quality that one tries to put the ambiguous into a framework of understanding. When things do not fall into our framework of understanding they create echo, a failed attempt to contain the existing and the missing at the same time. In this example, the effect takes place when the birds in the movie start to develop a behavior that we are not familiar with, but at the same time, we can recognize and understand the nature of such behavior. The birds sound remind one of a baby's cry. It is important to emphasize the sound in this example. The nature of the bird's sound is familiar in our memory but it will be harder to point out the unfamiliarity when applying it to an image of a bird. This makes it possible to extend the failure of understanding for a longer time.

Another interesting example of the unfamiliar and doubtful features of sound is the EVP¹⁰ Considering this phenomenon may help us to understand something about our comprehension between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Within the framework of understanding, we interpret noise, random sounds as voices in one's own language and try to place it in the category of the familiar. It will be much harder to see the spirits in this case within TV shows due to the stabil-



[Fig 8] A picture from the studio where "War of the Worlds" was recorded and

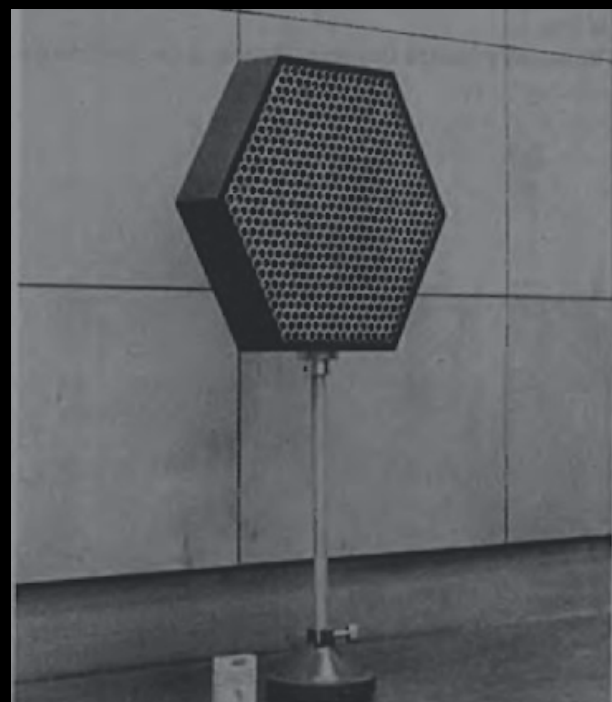
¹⁰ Electronic voice phenomena. The phenomenon is defined as short sentences or words communicated by spirits that present themselves through radio devices. The first to come up with the phenomenon was parapsychologist Konstantins Raudive in the 1970s.

ity of the visual medium¹¹. As with the screening of “The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station”, one of the first uses of radio made a complete confusion between real, familiar, and unreal, unfamiliar. This confusion was present when in 1938 the “War of the Worlds” by Herbert George Wells was broadcasted¹². The radio fiction play was based on a story by Orson Wells. The radio show announced, supposedly as a regular newscast, a Mars’s invasion of Earth, caused mass panic in the United States[fig8]. People were convinced by listening to the broadcast that they saw aliens in the sky¹³. The radio show took the story by Wells and changed the fictional names to places people could recognize.

The difference in the doubtfulness between sound and image can be found in our body as well - one can close one’s eyes in order to block an image, move one’s gaze, move in space in a number of ways that give much more control over what one sees, than that which one hears. The ears are susceptible to the sounds that surround them and cannot be distanced easily. The objects around are less effective at blocking sound. The world of sound is less controlled, the lack of control overpowers the inability to ignore sound and are constantly interpreting the sources of sound around us. An object is capable of producing a wide variety of sound moments, while the visual image is much more stable.

The shadow of sound. The doubtfulness that is inherent in sound led me to create two different works or study cases, examining how sound may create the ‘shadow of a doubt’. During my research, I came across directional speaker technology. A directional speaker is capable of transmitting sound in a narrow beam in space. If, for example, a standard speaker acts as a light bulb, the sound is scattered in every direction, the directional speaker is like a laser; the sound moves straight and is reflected when it hits objects in space. This allows for the movement of sound in space to take place quickly, without using a complex sound system. Also, contemporary sound technologies that are accessible to the public, do not in reality move sound. They create, through complicated calculations, the illusion that the sound generates from a source that

in reality it does not come from. Over the past year, I have developed a directional speaker and performed a number of times with it. The phenomenon of sound that does not come from a clear place, and can move very quickly from place to place casts doubt on our familiarity with linear sound systems, and in general with our familiarity with our senses. In the performances, I wear the speaker as a mask on my face[fig9]. During the performance, the audience is not sure where the sound is generated from in the space, but also one hears the space itself without seeing it. When the speaker is directed at a wall, one can hear



[Fig 9] The first parametric loudspeaker from Yoneyama, 1983. Below the ultrasonic-mask from a “Sculpt” Live Performance 2021.

11 It is interesting in this sense to examine the initial use of writing, essentially as a visual image. The text was used to preserve evidence of purchase, which could not have been done with words (sound) due to their transient nature (History of writing From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)
 12 The War of the Worlds (1938) radio drama From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
 13 This occasion will lead the future understanding the power that is embedded in one of the side effects of defamiliarizing that nowadays we call “fake news”.

the reflection of the sound coming from the wall and situates the wall in space. The directional speaker performance gives the power of sight without any need for light and the shadow. The performance creates a similar environment and technique in which bats navigate in pitch-black spaces. I performed with this set-up on two different occasions: “poly ability”¹⁴ (2021), multiple media performances, in collaboration with Leon Robbi and Tingyi Jiang made during two weeks residency program in cloud dance lab. and in “Sculpt”¹⁵ (2021)[fig10] with Tingyi Jiang in the exhibition “Nature Melancholy of the Anthropocene”. One question that led me through the process of creating the performance was what is the shadow of a sound.

In a different project that I have developed over the past year, I have researched the effect of knocking on the door on the audience. Like any tragic change in a narrative, knocks on the door symbolize the rapprochement of something foreign and unfamiliar. They represent an opening, entering, changing. They define our position: when we hear knocks on the door, we are of course, inside. We have the power to control

the continuation of the occurrence, will we choose to bring the foreign object into our home? There are several styles of door knocking. There is the urgent, the unexpected, the friendly, the angry, the unwanted, and the precious that even with the key in the chain chooses to announce his arrival. The possibility of forging the knocks on the door, with the help of a mechanical mechanism, allows direct emotional control. Every knock on the door and its intensity will change our heartbeat, the meaning of our sitting in a chair. Directly, it is unlike a drum a musical instrument that operates around the mechanisms of interpretation and conventions and penetrates the human being. As repetitiveness is created, noise becomes rhythm, the rhythm becomes music, and the music becomes familiar. I presented this work in the Group exhibition, “I hate it, where’s the after party”, Barbur Gallery (2021)¹⁶

14 Documentation of the performance “poly ability” <https://fucadkexhuy.wixsite.com/amospeled/featured-project>

15 Documentation of the performance “Sculpt” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4zt2TadLd8&feature=emb_logo

16 Documentation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzvJghoGRTw>

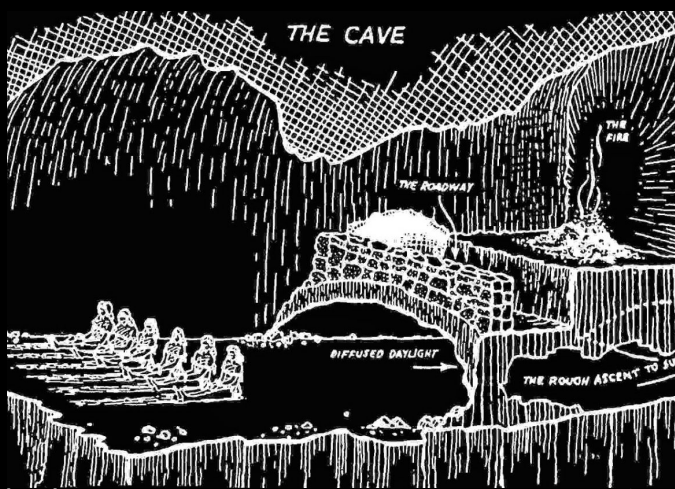


The effect of doubt on the familiar

Doubt in the allegory of the cave. Plato illustrated in The Allegory of the Cave¹ what resistance may arouse in the process of dealing with a new unfamiliar perspective and what danger is posed to those who want to voice an unaccustomed view point that may raise a doubt. The Allegory of the Cave describes a situation in which one challenges predominant perspectives. One that may understand, through the shadow of a doubt, that he has known only a shadow of existence, a one-dimensional representation.

In the Allegory several prisoners sit in front of a wall [fig11], shadows and echoes from the world are reflected in the cave. The prisoners are unaware of the three-dimensional qualities, hence they do not experience a shadow of a doubt "And suppose further that the prison had an echo which came from the other side, would they not be sure to fancy when one of the passers-by spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow? No question, he replied"². In one of the prisoners, a shadow of a doubt does wake, and he decides to break free from the cave. His way out is full of difficulties. The prisoner's eyes and ears are used to sensory existence at the cave level. His senses are accustomed to one-dimensional and stable information, and as I described earlier, the encounter with the unfamiliar and the acceptance create rejection and doubt, an action that makes acceptance difficult.

After a while, the prisoner is able to experience the outside world. The existence in the cave dimension becomes a memory. The prisoner develops a desire to release the other prisoners from the cave, to establish the discovery that the world he sees is not just his.



[Fig 11] The Allegory of the Cave shows the shadow as false. The shadows are the prisoners' reality, but are not accurate representations of the real world.

¹ Plato "The Republic" VII. ON SHADOWS AND REALITIES IN EDUCATION p.198

² Plato "The Republic" VII. ON SHADOWS AND REALITIES IN EDUCATION p.198

Back in the cave, he finds it hard to get used to the same darkness. The rest of the prisoners mock him and his eyes, he is cursed.

The poor vision of the prisoner when he returns to the cave produces an inability to communicate with the other prisoners. What was familiar has changed. The prisoner can choose to ignore the truth he has revealed but when we know there is another truth and we choose to deny it we become prisoners by an external force to prisoners who forbid themselves, an unbearable existential dimension. Here the shadow of a doubt becomes a tool. The prisoner must develop in the rest of the prisoners a shadow of a doubt, and not go against their truth, otherwise, their system of values will clash and he will create resistance to the unfamiliar within his group.

If the prisoner will try to use the unfamiliar to convince the rest of the prisoners of the real, the dissociation will not be resolved. As described in the Allegory of the Cave, the experience will end in a conflict and therefore a complete repression of the truth. The prisoner's struggle will be to find the common ground on which the prisoner group agrees on their view on shadows, and from there to evoke doubt. Doubt will cast itself as a shadow, and substance will be created from the imagination of the prisoner group. In this point in time, perhaps, the rest of the prisoners will experience an openness, and out of a personal desire to break free from their cables they will exit the cave.

The problematics in the familiar. For the most part, we function in a larger system, therefore we pursue a complete understanding and clear, familiar answers. We try to create a closed system outside the enigmas that make up the world, one that fulfils our need for the integrity and efficiency of information. We rely on the attempt to fully understand. We strive for familiar knowledge, it makes it easier or even possible to communicate. But doing this, we fall into the hands of hypnosis, of repetitiveness, stagnation. We lose the special and external view of reality, the same view used to create the poetic.

By looking at the shadow of an object one can draw different conclusions about the object itself - materiality, size, motion, etc. The information that comes from the shadow is more creative and imaginative, as I explained earlier - allows much more freedom. The need for the familiar is problematic because of the solitude of consciousness. This notion is demonstrated in the impossibility to perceive the same picture the

Taxidermy - the container of the doubt

other sees. We are not able to crack the coded communication with our environment through the use of words/objects/descriptions/notions. We must involve our feelings/abstract thoughts/imagination/doubt. Through emotional communication, we are destined to believe, in a slight act of foolishness, that the person in front of us, and with whom we trust our most inner feelings, understands us. But the person in front of us perceives the world imminently different from us. When we try to answer a question relying on familiar notions, the answer contains much more than an explanation or result. It is biased and is in reality an opinion, marking the difference between knowledges. Even with the rise in the abstraction of communication, when the greatest messages pass through a medium of letters only, we will not be able to detach from the depth of meaning and the simplification of language. The attempt to transcend the emotional world and receive information in a tabula rasa form is impossible.



Taxidermy¹ animals are an interesting example of a shadow of a doubt. Taxidermy exhibits as a container for doubt, reflecting internal life but also the stagnation, the shadow of life. Taxidermy is a representation and the lack of success in representation. Its exhibits what happens when the familiar becomes unfamiliar. Taxidermy does not try to bring an animal back to this life, it transfers the animal to a frozen medium, to a place where it represents itself as a statue.

My interest around taxidermy animals started while I was web surfing as a teenager. At that time, I was drawn to extreme content from a desire to learn boundaries and understand the deep impulses of human beings. On one of those inquiries, I came across a website of a taxidermy artist. What attracted me wasn't necessarily the taxidermy of animals, but rather the number of responses in the chat of people begging for their recently deceased loved ones: "Please contact me quickly my girl passed away yesterday and already buried tonight. I want to get service... I hope not too late May 14, 2015, at 12:48 pm"². The tremendous need for the eternity of the moment, the one that cannot digest the loss, drew me towards my own questions regarding the feelings that arise when one meets the deceased in the form of a taxidermy, with two glass eyes.

The idea that emerged of making the dead into an object seems to me to be completely absurd, the actual existence of the person's shadow in the physical space creates an impossibility of detaching one from memory and from grief. But at the same time, taxidermy does not allow for a romanticization of the past – but rather it creates the potential for new memories to construct. A new chapter in the two's relationship is created. During the research, the unfamiliar, lifeless taxidermy will slowly over time become 'itself'. I mean the taxidermy - the shadow - becomes real and not a mere representation.

1 The word taxidermy is derived from the Greek words taxis and derma. Taxis means "arrangement", and derma means "skin" (the dermis). The word taxidermy translates to "arrangement of skin". Taxidermy, Wikipedia
2 שירותים פולצ'ים, גיורא פולצ'ים, <https://puhlitz.wordpress.com/שירותים/>

[Fig 12] Pictures of the Taxidermy cat and excerpts from the process shared with me. Top picture Illustration of Schrödinger's cat

The taxidermy phenomenon itself began as a tool to provide the west with the existence of other animals at the distant corners of the earth. Traders would bring rare animal parts to markets. One could only imagine the animal body to which the part was attached. Full of curiosity many creative ideas arouse including unicorns. Taxidermy is offered for three main purposes - one is conservation for research purposes, the second is a showcase of hunting prey/status symbol, and the third is the inability to disconnect from a memory. The third reason is the most intriguing in the context of my research. Because in this case, we choose to change the familiar to us to a new unfamiliar object.

Similar to taxidermy, art, at its core, seeks to preserve a representation of the familiar, trying to offer eternal life to ever-changing perception. Painting [fig16] represents a moment from reality, focusing on the poetic qualities. Poetic qualities are in reality the failure of the representation - the defamiliarization. Of course, if we had seen this scene in reality, that is to say - the scene itself would have had an aesthetic dimension, but the painting is a freezing of the moment through the eyes of the artist. This is a really beautiful thing, it is a failed attempt to represent a real moment and the dissonance created in this attempt contains the aesthetic dimension. The experience of art is created rather from a distance from the familiar, in the space open for possibilities of interpretation. The painting is timeless, such a stagnation, which seems not to be subjected to change. It is the memory of a person who paints. It is an ongoing effort that can last much longer than the moment itself can contain. It is the recording of the attention a person gave to a scene while interrogating its minor details. For the most part - the painting we look at does not contain the source itself of what it represents, it is a shadow of reality, a shadow that becomes more important than the moment itself. This notion may be applied to a variety of artistic mediums. What taxidermy



[Fig 16] Henriette Ronner-Knip, Hide and Seek, mid 19th century

does is present this phenomenon above the surface. Schrödinger's Cat. I purchased a taxidermy cat[fig12] as a way to test myself on the doubt that arises from it. You may be asking what was my motivation to purchase a cat - well it's not an easy explanation. There is a wide variety of taxidermy animals on the market, but most of them are animals that do not relate to everyday life, people prefer to own a taxidermy animal of the kind that they are unfamiliar with. The taxidermy animal itself becomes an object and not a representation of personal memory - I can say the shadow of life. Shadow in this point of view creates an incompatibility with the source, confusion. Inaccurate representation of the familiar creates a certain rejection that can lead to doubting. Taxidermy of a pet is not uncommon, but it belongs to a specific person, as a basket of specific memories. It is related to the specific life of the pet and the memories it has created. If an unfamiliar taxidermy animal for instance a fox, mouse, an exotic bird can belong to everyone, pet taxidermy usually belongs to its owner.

Many taxidermy artists raise the difficulty involving taxidermizing a pet³. While an animal that is not associated with memory is more easily taxidermized, in the case of a pet, it is necessary to be precise to the familiar memory of the person who owned it. Every living creature that dies, that was appropriated to man, leaves behind memory shadows. The act of taxidermy freezes the possibility of heavy manipulation of memory. No matter how distorted our memory is, or we live in a delusional world, we cannot forget the color of our cat's fur when he rests on our screen saver on the cell phone.

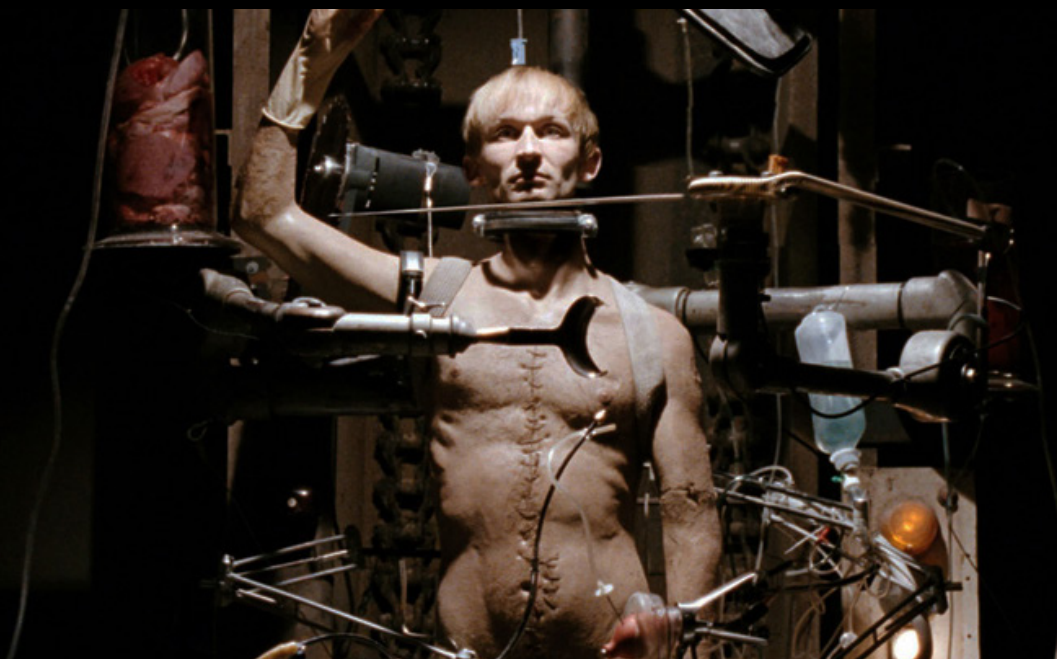
³ A TV series has been created around the theme of pet taxidermy "American Stuffers" (2012) The series brings up difficult moments. One can imagine reactions like: "This is the closest Pizzi has been to me since he passed away" "He smells almost the same" "I can finally sleep at night next to candy again" etc.



[Fig 13] AC Wilson's "Appear and disappear"

Taxidermy the internal. In AC Wilson's American artists working in sculpture "Appear and Disappear" [fig13] (2012) one can notice the precision created following the use of the taxidermy regarding the level of doubt in the artistic act. The image in the work is turned downwards, leaving us with only the possibility of imagining the image. The thought arises in me about the two-dimensional image, such as that which does not create any complicated shadow, next to the taxidermy exhibit. The exhibit is closer to the essence of the living than the two-dimensional image. If we examine the dimension of doubt from the same perspective... the taxidermy is more familiar to our system of understanding.

More extreme action and closer to the idea of a shadow of a doubt on the subject of taxidermy is human taxidermy. If death is the source of all fears of the unfamiliar and the doubt, the idea of self-taxation is deeply rooted within the system of managing the fear of death. Cases can be found regarding human preservation already in the 34th century BC, the mummies. Maintaining an individualistic identity after death allows for a principled emotional opening to the idea of the afterlife. The film "Taxidermia" (2006) directed by György Pálfi deals with the idea of self-taxation, presents an intriguing case of human taxidermy. The movie shows the act of self-taxidermy as a way to achieve immortality and immortality as artwork. The plot of the film presents three family stories by following three generations. In the film a character named Ayushka a devoted taxidermy artist takes care of his huge father, feeding him obsessively. The relationship



[Fig 14] A picture of the process of self-taxation and above a picture of the result similar to a sculpture from the classical period

between the father and son is more reminiscent of caring for a pet than a family. Alongside the endless eating, his father is busy feeding butter to his cats that are imprisoned next to him. The son returns home to find that fattened cats have escaped and eaten his father. Ayushka in despair taxidermy his father and the cats. At the end of the film, Ayushka taxidermies himself with a machine he has built for this purpose[fig14]. He removes the internal organs from his body and replaces his blood with a preservative material.

Of course, not by chance the result of the self-taxidermy looks similar to the statue "David" by Michelangelo. The film deals interestingly with the eternity of art, and the transformations of the representation on the original. In the process of self-taxidermy, Ayushka not only gains eternal life, but gives immortality far more meaning than he displayed while he was alive. Similar to a taxidermy animal, art is a tool for creating a moment of eternal life and observing the defective and the strange in a poetic way that sweeps the viewer into a race of interpretations and a variety of poetic emotions.

The film "Wiener-Dog" (2016) directed and written by Todd Solondz has an interesting use of taxidermy, a continuation of life and as a way of preserving an



[Fig 15] At the end of the film is presented as a work of art, as a final incarnation of life

object in an eternal way as a work of art. The film follows a dog that passes between people, and told from his point of view, the dog connects between different stories. The film progresses in chronological order between different ages - child, teenage, adult, old - and ends with the death of the dog in a car accident. The film's final scene is in a gallery when one of the side characters from the film taxidermy the dog and presents it as work of art[fig15], perpetuates its existence. The same dog on the wall, for us viewers of the film, presents his whole life story. With the many memories we shared with him, he contains a soul. But

to the ones who came to the gallery, it is just a representation of a dog. The three-hour performance "How to explain a picture to a dead hare" [fig17] by the German artist Joseph Beuys, serves as another example of defamiliarization by the use of taxidermy. In the performance, Beuys walks around with a dead hare in a room, curiously, whispering words to him. Coning across the work one does not doubt whether the animal is alive or dead, but rather it raises a doubt about life and death in general by using a feature of the unfamiliar.

In 2006 Jan Fabre a belgian multidisciplinary artist created "The Carnival of the Dead Street Dogs" [fig19]. His choice to use a familiar house pet is very important. If we are usually accustomed to taxidermy we have never seen it in reality. He brings into the gallery space precisely the familiar; the animals we are used to see in the home environment. An animal we do not know will raise the wonders of nature, and the representation of the taxidermy animal will remain a representation to some extent. But the choice to create a representation that is familiar touches each of us. In the same breath, he adds to the carnival the sound of claws scratching the glass. This is a sound that directly affects our physical condition. A survival instinct, leaving no room to escape from this scene.

We want to attach to ourselves in the most relevant ways the memory of the living - and to revive it. Taxidermy shows what happens when the familiar cannot continue to exist - in the inability to come to terms with immortality, one try's to reconstruct the essence of the familiar. The artist tries to emulate reality as he perceives it. Represents it, reflects it, delivers, digests, changes. But the basic pillars are reality. Of course, any attempt to reflect reality destroys it, and gives it a variety of interpretations and anomalies, manipulations.

Art, like taxidermy, works with a dead, frozen material, with its slight representation. Sometimes an imitation can surpass its influence on the origin. But, it is never the original. The actual material undergoes a process of transformation into a taxidermy animal - the symbol of the standstill. As classic taxidermy classic will most convincingly represent life, it will mark an unrepresented layer in reality and awaken it. The taxidermist, like an artist, at first observes the animal, collecting impressions, recalls the animal alive, then strips the animal of all its organs, leaving only the skin. This idea of representing the skin is similar to the work of the artist who reverberates the surface from a living idea⁴.

⁴the notion of the living idea is used in this context to emphasize the need to reflect the ever-evolving changing ideas, as they have their mutations and evolution in one's prescription.



[Fig 17] How to Explain Pictures to a Dead
Hare Joseph Beuys, 1965, Germany

Reflection

Now that the writing time is fading, and in fact should, as a result of a procedure coming to an end I wonder about a deeper insight into the subject under investigation but the subject itself becomes more and more uncomfortable.

It is no coincidence that the knowledge, or the location of the data I have accumulated around the subject, does not hold a more comprehensive outlook than it was before ...

In general, the act of writing feels like an attempt to distort reality in a certain direction, as if I had to know in advance what direction. And I let those distortion's lead me within their path. In what they expect at first glance.

I like the topics I wrote about, which is particularly important and not self-evident. I feel I have delved into the topics I have written about within their unique context, carrying through the writing my sensitivity to doubt.



[Fig 18] MY MOVEMENTS ARE ALONE LIKE STREETDOGS Jan Fabre



[Fig 19] "The Carnival of the Dead Streetdogs" Jan Fabre

From my experience over the past year creating work that would reflect my desire, I came across a window made out only of reflections, as the insect that innocently enters my room, turns back and forth, drawn to the writing lamp, hums a new song and then decides he needs to go home. But the window stops him, he sees the world outside of course but does not see the transparent window in his wisdom, and he repeatedly collides with the window and creates a sickening noise, larger than his body... until he despairs and sits on the non-existent window. His memory is from the mound in it, and he tries again to get out of the same window, over and over again, his fate is unknown to me, because at some point he stopped making noise, and it had disappeared from my mind, leaving only a shadow of experience.

That same doubtful window consists of a stinking bitter lack. It consists of the impossibility to produce something with artificial meaning...Stuck between a place trying to create something after, and in time. In all those attempts to create a work that will raise the existence of a shadow of a doubt, I missed that shadow of a doubt is simple sincerity, a shallow marking of an unmarked layer. Not to distort an information body to preach a false prophecy, these create an experience, a scene, familiar because all is familiar and unfamiliar.

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