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Do cease small stones
Do never love
Do work on the shape of a heart
Do melt electric
Do small fault
Do yester and cast
Do concrete chain
Do green chameleon Do spreading tent
Do silent of speech
Do metaphor
Do quote spelling
Do limit of day
Do dog Do that Do cat do Clave Do cast Do anything that comes to white
Do whirling
Do the lowest world
Do the small world
Do program
Do coffee Do splash Do John
Do young realize conviction of ways to be all
X
Do not becomer of evil shaft
Do not lighting of library
Do not changed from a spot
Do not cold genes
Do not not play
Do not aluminum stomach
Do not belly water
Do not only stand there
Do not remove the die
Do not fall wings
Do not superoxide water
Do not mental color
Do not soft world
Do not gray income
Do not was want
Do not deplete planet
Do not recall the people who may be called as any the whole when people believe in three

THE BROOKLYN RAIL





Portrait of Helen Marten, pencil on paper by Phong H. Bui.

HELEN MARTEN with Amanda Gluibizzi

As I was talking with London-based artist Helen Marten, my mind kept turning to Robert Smithson's assertion that his "sense of language is that it is matter and not ideas—i.e. 'printed matter.'" There are many ways to understand Smithson's statement, but one would be to take him seriously and to try to understand language as material, as stuff, as a medium with which a *visual* artist can create. Of the artists who use language in their work, Marten seems to me to be the one who comes the closest to using language in this manner: text is how she begins in the studio, how she understands her work once it is completed, how she implicates the viewer. It is also something, as she suggests in this interview, that might cast a shadow, if only we permit our imaginations to run along those lines.

Evidence of Theatre
Greene Naftali, New York
September 21–November 4, 2023

Marten's newest solo exhibition opened on both floors of Greene Naftali Gallery on September 21, 2023. Called *Evidence of Theatre*, it showcases all of the media deployed in her practice: sculpture, installation, architecture, drawing, video, sound, and indeed, language, in a book produced for the gallery and in a text crafted by the artist for the video, read by actor Gwendoline Christie. Marten gave me a preview of the show and conversed, gorgeously, about the allure of language and its simultaneous slipperiness and exactitude. She spoke with me via Zoom while seated before a cast concrete wall, her head positioned precisely below a dimple in the material.

AMANDA GLUIBIZZI (RAIL): You've just shipped everything, and you're coming to New York. How long do you think it will take you to install everything?

HELEN MARTEN (H. M.): It's a long install. The team has already been building for about three weeks. The exhibition is in both spaces: the ground floor and the eighth. The ground floor has a complex set

of intersecting walls that not only span in segments between one another but are also cut with enormous apertures such that you open up sight lines, one layer to top another, by virtue of their cutaways. Upstairs, there is also an intricate build, but it's composed of singular works rather than structures built as exhibition devices. The largest element is a three-dimensional sculpture that also houses an LED video wall for a new video, surrounded by a series of site-specific sculptural works for the floor. The first set of works left me in July, and it's been a race to get the next shipment out, but it's finally gone—all twenty-one works are enroute!

RAIL You've mentioned sightlines. Do you envision the viewer also being able to move through these structures or only to walk around them?

H. M. You can't physically move through them. They're very long, leaf-like walls: leaf as in that of a book, opening planes. The main architectural motif of the exhibition, both upstairs and downstairs, is the containment value of four walls and a roof. If you were looking in aerial-plan view at the footprint of the walls in the downstairs space, they would create four walls and a roof, diagrammatically similar to how you might draw a classic economical house. These walls are mobilized

in their entirety by the aperture because they can be hung in double-sided portions—paintings and sculptural wall panels back to back—but the cut-out windows trick a sense of more expanded, open space. You can see through the walls, but you can never see all of the works together. The retinal convention of an eyes-forward point of view where everything unfolds within a single viewpoint is denied. So even though there are many works of a different scale, elements can only be seen within a designed circuitry. The same happens upstairs, but in a much more restrained way, and the physical structure of the video again mimics these same schematic qualities of four walls and a roof. The classic fourth wall of theater is deliberately exposed; there is a punning of physical walls on top of metaphorical walls. The sculpture itself is a splayed wedge: on one side there is a huge, five-meter LED video wall; on the other side there are (in basic terms) exploded views of the "house": windows, a roof, decorative wallpaper, a ladder, beams, and then a gaping void in the middle between the two sides. You explicitly see the guts of the video screens; you see the debris of the build, leftover elements of "the cast" as though the structural legacy of production is visible. The theater inherent to the making is on show.

RAIL In the theater there is, presumably, some level of control. There's a director, there is an actor projecting, we sit somewhere... versus the home where we have to move through, we possess, so we have to mess it up and clean it up and do it again. It sounds like you're merging these two built elements for us.

H. M. One of the beginning points of inspiration for *Evidence of Theatre* was a book by the architect Bernard Tschumi, called *The Manhattan Transcripts*. It is a slender, but unbelievably poignant book of abstract architectural diagrams that explore the idea of space as a set of spatial transcripts, whereby incidental things like a tree or a trash can or a fence become complicit parts of an event. In the same way that theater is staged, the built landscape has an emotional tone. It has symptoms; because it has a rhythm, it has the possibility to interrupt or change how a daily action might occur. The book narrates volatile and extreme events, violent and sexual events—theoretical proposals of murder, or suicide for example, diagramming in convoluted and not necessarily legible terms how those sets of actions unfold. The gestures are cinematic and abstract, not in all cases total, but more like vignettes of civic action. I thought it was such a beautiful way of imagining a ludic space of chance and play, and how the written terms of simulation which describe how we exist in the built landscape are co-opted and changed by the architecture that we're around.

Inevitably, simply moving through the space of a park or down the street becomes part of an alternative form of critique that in its most husked-down version is a script. The subtext of theater is daily, global, infinite, obsessive. Each day holds billions of permutations. And I just imagined how fun, how melodramatic it would be to create an exhibition held by this experience of *performing* on two floors of a building where you might be spatially confused, where the qualities of the granular architecture would be similar but the imposed scenography, or setting of spaces would be very different. I liked the idea of the two levels of the exhibition behaving as a Möbius strip of activity where your participation in a viewing event on the ground floor might contribute a new form of terminal scripting to the content occurring on the eighth floor. I was thinking in a very wide way about theater because the new video is called *Writing A Play (dark blue orchard)* (2023) and within that action of programming language and image in a tethered format, how might physical form or the participation of looking become tangled with a similar reciprocity or



conflict. Everything is part of the meta-play of making an exhibition: we receive and translate and understand information whilst also living simultaneously as moving parts in a domestic explosion of theater, little people in little homes creating stages. All of those systems of looking and calibrating might be crammed into both “evidence” and “theater,” two loaded and polarizing bits of language: they can be both political and civic, but also incidental and scrappy, empirical or speculative. Evidence might be a bloody handprint, but it might also be dust, time, breath, sound. These kinds of micro and macro ways of looking at the social world are infinitely gymnastic; details can be Baroque, if you want them to be or elemental, if you want them to be.

RAIL And do you envision the viewer becoming an actor in the play? Or are we meant only to be spectators?

H. M. I’m not entirely sure yet. There is no directional script, per se, for the viewing audience. But I love the idea of different registers of participation: if you visited the exhibition alongside many people, your natural choreography of looking at things might be disturbed or interrupted, your individual privacies secrete onto one another. Individually governing self-awareness might be abandoned, you might sit there alone and casually pick your fingers or scratch your crotch and the translation of what you’re looking at becomes something very different, because your private register is more innate, more deeply unguarded. There are so many images of critique, of mirroring, or self-engagement so I do hope that bodies become like syntax, an underlying grammar that contributes to understanding the viewer is part of this set of potential transcripts—not necessarily that you individually have created a narrative or performed a role—but more like the Bernard Tschumi idea of portent, of abstract relationships between people and spaces. Theater encourages a mixture of fear and pleasure. The process is collective, but deeply subjective as well.

RAIL Theaters and galleries prescribe actions for us. We have certain ways that we feel we’re meant to behave in those spaces. It will be really interesting to see when those two are blended: are you thrown out

of your expectations of how to behave as a viewer? As you’re walking through a museum, you might walk with your hands behind your back. But if you sat in a theater with your hands behind your back, that would be incredibly uncomfortable. So even just something small, like an incidental gesture, could wind up creating critical self-awareness.

H. M. My friend takes her three-year-old daughter to exhibitions, and she continually looks with her hands behind her back. My friend calls it “gallery mode.” I think about this new blueprint of behavior that is assumed as soon as you move into a type of space where the tonal qualities of that space are imposed. Different spatial questions are asked of you as somebody receiving critical content. Your agency is there—to leave, to move, to disagree—but it’s also compromised by virtue of a set of known expectations.

There are a lot of mice in the exhibition, whether fleeting, or calligraphic inflections of mice in paintings, or quite literally cast aluminum mice that populate the top floor. I love the idea of the audience behaving like rats or mice. They are constant variables in a city, part of an abject, low level, streaming of anxiety. Mice make the

perfect analogy for bodies as units of currency, dumb moving vectors instead of translators or participants in a legible way. The pace of viewing between the two floors is very different—downstairs has many more works. The unfolding of imagery, of materiality, and of language in these spaces is not the same. I don’t have a preference which way round you would engage with the exhibitions, but I’m curious how it will feel. The atmospheric density changes. It’s almost like upstairs is more atomic and molecular: you’re aware of the sound, the sound is very specific, it’s very loud at points, very deep and bassy. The LED screen is a luminous wedge of light, you see it entirely in daylight. It’s a twenty-eight-minute video, so it will inevitably be seen sitting on a very long bench, whilst this enormous plane of light unfolds in close-proximity before you. Downstairs, there is an obsessive laminating of information. Motifs and ideas are rhythmic and repeated. The only way to get through it is to keep moving.

RAIL Each gallery, too, has its own approach. For the lower gallery, you’re in the city, you have to walk between buildings, and underneath the High Line, and you’re hearing things, you’re being brushed by people, and then you enter this quieter gallery space.



Whereas upstairs, of course, you go up eight floors in an old elevator with an attendant and then through a small hallway, and then out into this space that opens. They have almost a reversal of the way that the space presents itself: on the ground floor from huge to small, and then the eighth floor from small to so much bigger.

H. M. To even get to the eighth floor, you must ascend via a goods elevator, so you cannot get there without some kind of micro-exchange with the person operating. It's impossible to be anonymous entering that space, even if your exchange might only be composed of "Hello," or "How are you?" or "Thank you." Downstairs, the doors are open, you can be a simple particle of the streaming flow. There is a sense that your personality might be obfuscated in a different way. And I love when you're on the eighth floor, you have an incredible panoramic vista over the city, literally looking down on patched rooftops and clouds. The classic Manhattan skyline with its giant water containers, the glass, the reflectivity, it requires nothing to be performative and so much part of the narrative of large America, at least for me. Much of the sculptural work in the show also plays with that treacherous sense of scale. You think you might be looking at a roof, which then morphs graphically and becomes an expanded chess board; details that are initially interpreted as air conditioning vents newly become legible as chess pieces. So there is a strange space of rearrangement and referral, where translation is not immediate. Sculptures mirror one another in the sense that at their most elemental, they are equally sized rectangles. Each could be an approximation of a different scene of support that might be found within a domestic setting: a table, a roof, a game board, a sofa. All are networked forms with the offer of alternative semantic routes of exchange or collapse: bridges, beds, pillows, windows, lateral surfaces on which to lay down details that navigate how meaning is joined in pieces together.

RAIL You mentioned the sound of the video and I'm curious about that. In the trailer, we have a narrative that's being spoken, a voiceover. Does that continue throughout the twenty minutes? Or is there more of an aural component?

H. M. There's a voiceover by Gwendoline Christie, who is unbelievable. And there are thirty-six—I'm calling them tenets—there are thirty-six numbered sections of texts that Gwendoline repeats throughout. And from zero to twenty-eight minutes, you're cycling through a sequence of interrogative disquisitions. They are solipsistic and intimate, but abstract. Gwendoline begins each section with an ascending number, so you understand there is an imposed chronology. The voiceover always speaks in the first person, so she co-opts you into this relationship with her—the protagonist and listener. But the video itself in terms of its characters doesn't have a single narrative representative. There are qualities and animals. There is snow, there's mud, there's water, there's earth, there's asphalt. We move through different natural and built environments, dragged along by a text that doesn't have a fixed arc but speaks mournfully and actively about loss, about family, about desire, about the erotics of love and longing, about the material qualities of handling substance that suddenly shifts its personality. And then, alongside the voiceover, there is a composed soundtrack.

Beatrice Dillon and I worked very closely and had some incredibly rich conversations about how the sound would match or disappear against the framework of the spoken language. Beatrice used a generative sound composition program called physical modeling synthesis, whereby almost everything that we created, apart from the live clarinet and a live piano, was synthesized sound. You can construct the terms for those sounds to exist because the format is mathematical and algorithmic: the waveform is computational and follows certain equations to synthesize a type of instrument. For instance, you might want an emotional tone, say, I don't know, sadness. You could imagine in spatial terms what sadness might look like and create a tonal equivalent by setting out a synthesized "room," a blank, hard, empty space, perhaps. Maybe that room is a metal room: you create a metal room and then you adopt a beater, whose material characteristics you also define. And maybe your beater is made of wood, or it's made of paper, or it's a feather. You define the action of striking, the intensity, the speed, the rhythm. So you have your input variables and your output variables, alongside the wholly synthesized space into which you pour and "record" that

sound. Everything is generated and adopted, so sound is newly formed as a set of fluctuating qualities where you can sift between different generative terms. You can create incredibly non-organic and alien sounds, but in a delightfully empirical and controlled way.

I could say something cryptic and odd, like, okay, there's a dead deer lying on the snow, bleeding profusely into that snow and we need a sound that encapsulates the same kind of dendrite density of the blood's swell, the molecular feel of hot liquid moving through cold solid, the sadness and emotive motion of this blood leaking into the snow. And of course, the poignancy of an animal dying on white ground. How can we reflect all of this with the sound? Playing with these emotional switches in such a flexible, magical, and poetic way was so much fun. It blew my mind, this acoustic propagation, this true molecular flexibility. I had a very fixed idea that I wanted to replicate the feeling of a classical piano refrain. Something known that already harnessed an immediate human response. I had in mind one of the *Gymnopédie* pieces by Erik Satie, but I was thinking about Philip Corner's re-mixed versions, *Satie Slowly*, where these pieces of music are exploded and re-arsed in slowed down and economical terms. Every bar of the piano is like wading through mud or pain; its cleanliness relative to emotional intent is shocking. I loved the idea of trying to replicate that sense of deploying music for theatrical means. We took that Satie piece as a kind of a baseline script in a way. Beatrice re-wrote a short pianistic score, and we recorded some live piano with all its creaks and pedal density, mixing it alongside sounds created with the physical modeling synthesis tools.

RAIL Given how much control that you're able to exercise over something like the score, how was it then to work with a person to read the script? How much direction did you feel that you had to give Christie? Or did you just let her go?

H. M. It was really fun. We had an amazing day where we recorded for about eight hours. We did the whole thing in a day. She didn't want to take a break, so we just powered through with green tea and water. And I would give enigmatic and abstract direction like, "Speak like a debased toad," or "Talk to me as though your



Helen Marten, *Writing A Play* (dark blue orchard), 2023. Courtesy the artist and Greene Naftali, New York.

Helen Marten, *Writing A Play (dark blue orchard)*, 2023. Steel, aluminum; birds eye maple, tulip wood; maple, birch plywood; particle board; magnets; nylon inks; sand cast aluminum; cardboard; cast resin; cast; jesmonite; cast pewter; glazed ceramics; paper; stitched fabric; LED screens; CGI animation; sound, 111 x 203 x 191 inches. Courtesy the artist and Greene Naftali, New York. Photo: Eva Herzog.



mouth is full of blood.” We’d run through things over and over again. And every time Gwendoline would produce this magical and completely re-envisioned tone for the language she was projecting, where it really became her own new index, her own grammar and intent with wholly new poise. I would suggest a sense for it or adjectival guidance and that would become the loose scaffold, but she would do something completely liquid and nuanced. Her voice has a magnetic clarity and richness that brought the script into a wholly new set of meanings for me. The script was composed over a long time. Some is written by me, some is co-opted from other bits of writing, some is plagiarized, rewritten, some is inspired—it’s a kind of thieved and bricolaged collage. There is a refrain that is repeated over and again, a motif of seasonal or emotional shifting, which is taken from the book *Man, Play and Games* by Roger Caillois, the French philosopher and sociologist. Gwendoline’s professional ownership of the language of the script gave it a different poetry and intent. We sat in different rooms with a huge glass wall between us. And I remember just sitting watching her annotate the script with a pencil and thinking, “What is she writing? What is she annotating?” The intonation and grammatical order of her pronunciation was given effortless performativity: I just love that, again, it built into a sense of scripting. And of course, in a glib way it was the literalized debris of this *evidence of theatre* before that title even existed.

RAIL When you wrote it, did you hear it in her voice?

H. M. The only thing I knew was that I wanted a female voice. I was so intensely thrilled that Gwendoline agreed. The script was written before it had any sense of articulation in a vocal sense. It was written more like an internal set of stage directions, like a subconscious monologue. I knew of course there would always need to be the structural volume of a voice, but I hadn’t imagined the voice per se.

RAIL In your writing practice, do you find that it’s different to write for something that’s read silently in our own heads versus something that’s meant to be read aloud by someone else?

H. M. Not when I’m writing myself. I love reading other people’s writing aloud. And especially with plays or poetry, I find almost the only way I can concentrate

on them is to read them aloud. Something about the feeling of your own voice projecting out of you and that vibration, that rhythmic depth, is kind of hypnotic. Somehow it gives you access in a different way. I guess the process of writing is, to begin with, so hermetic that I don’t imagine it read aloud. I just do it.

RAIL And where do you write—do you write in your studio?

H. M. No, I try not to sit down in the studio because ironically, I have a historic mouse problem, and I’m pathologically afraid of mice. If I sit in the studio, I’m constantly kicking my feet around to frighten the potential mice. So I write at home.

RAIL I was noticing both in the texts you’ve written for this exhibition and in other texts that you are really interested in finding words within the words that you’ve chosen to use. For example, you zero in on the word “theatre” and the word “home,” and then you reveal that these words have words within them, “me” and “oh” and “there.” How are you conceptualizing those words? Are they sculptural elements that you can then pull apart and make into new sculptures? Are they collage? Or are they fully just words with letters and grammar?

H. M. A bit of all of those things. I feel like we’ve been contaminated by the idea of language having a fixed set of restrictive meanings. I love the idea of finding a pattern language where things can reflect or mirror one another. For instance, the exhibition was initially going to have two titles that were anagrams of one another, really forcing the idea of the two spaces existing in a Möbius strip construct, one a contingent part of another. But that became too convoluted, and the titles were such a linguistic stretch that it just didn’t work. I have a constant love-hate relationship with language, where somehow it is a grotesque palette of materiality in the same way that any other substance might be. It can be abused and manipulated and re-wired in a similar way. But the spatial questions that language asks are very different.

By virtue of us being haptic human beings who fiddle with, play with, and handle stuff all the time, we have a default index of understanding the world around us. We have a similar condition with language, but we

don’t always have the voice or the platform or the space or even the confidence to articulate in the same way. You might go through a day of being surrounded by hundreds of people but not actually say a single word, whereas optically and via touch it is near impossible to avoid being stuffed with information. I always love to find grammatical or linguistic patterns in the things I do. I start every work with text. I’m reading or making notes, maybe there’s a word that implies a certain beginning structure, or maybe there’s something truly physical in a sentence that gives me an implication of form, or parts bizarrely stacked together.

It’s interesting to imagine staggering and tripping over deliberately to perceive something, that a mark of intent which might, say, appear like “x” at eye-level becomes something wholly other when you’re lying on the floor. I like the gaps between things, especially gaps in language where there is generative possibility for entirely new and radical meaning. And what something becomes when it morphs into metaphor or slides into a joke or a punch line, or even a literal script where your creation of that authored awareness, that self-reflexive or tautological sense of speech has become overt. Fundamentally, I just really enjoy messing with meaning, crafting new possession or action in shifting quantities.

RAIL I’m reminded of Derrida writing about the idea that citations, first of all, are additive, that they exist to be added to, which feels to me very much like an additive sculpture. But also that they’re magic because they re-create, that the way that magic happens is through repetition and reversal. His example is abracadabra, which is both repetitive and also reversed. It’s wonderful to hear you talk about this in this way that seems so organic and natural.

H. M. I love things like that. The longest reversible word in the English language, I think, is a Joycean term “tattarrattat,” which he conceived as being the noise that would be heard when somebody knocked repetitively on a door and the door wasn’t answered. It’s like creating language with no explicit one-to-one correspondence, but instead a sonic inference that opens new possibilities between human insight, and all of its corroborating ideas of the mercantile, the miserable, the expectant, the proud. I just think that’s such a beautiful way to be seduced by the world. It’s this constant, elegiacal, deeply felt way of experiencing language. And so much fun. The beauty and humbling luxury of being an artist is like that, making a festive plea for newness in some discursive way.

RAIL In this way of playing with words, then how do you edit yourself? As a person who loves language myself, I would wonder how could you stop? Theater can also be threat. Theater can be heart. Where is that moment of editorial control for you?

H. M. That’s a great question: I don’t know. I think that part of the pleasure-pain principle of being any kind of creative producer, whether that’s writing, making movies, or music is the point of difference between capture and release, and where you as the author exert your thumbprint or obfuscate en route. How much scaffolding or how much debris you want to leave for your audience or your viewer or your listener to use as a guide for understanding what you’ve done is changeable. I think the most successful ideas give you both space and breadth for rediscovery, but also enough of an intent and belief in atomic honesty of that idea to give you some form of foothold within it.

I’ve been thinking for a long time about writing a text about the mutual qualities of a practice of creating that uses both images and words. The condition of making things *and* writing things. I was exploring this idea of

Installation view: Helen Marten: *Evidence of Theatre*, Greene Nafisi, New York, 2023. Courtesy the artist and Greene Nafisi, New York. Photo: Eva Herzog.



nets as one kind of concept, and *vectors* as another. With both language and material, there can be a brick-to-the-head moment of something being so clear, so obvious, so overt in its descriptive terms, that there's no question of not understanding what it is, where its intent lies. So that would be a vector, a straight-line route of communicating. It's expedient. It's like an arrow pointing and explaining: *you are here*. And you have the same thing in language where text might be clearly descriptive even if it's not factual language; there's no underlying current, no subtext, it just is what it is. Then there's an opposed method of communicating where the corruption of qualities, of syntax or more singular parts of language is odd and disruptive. Things are buried with other things atop and beneath. This method celebrates the idea that there's another, longer, weirder, more complicated shadow in operation, and that shadow doesn't stop, but rather combines and elongates, that in combination with multiple "othernesses," it deliberately does something completely unexpected. It's treacherous and belongs to a technique that traces a peripheral intent, that holds in its grasp many competing lines of thinking or wanting. This is the net. There is a sense of set parameters, but within it, hierarchies are a mess. Ideas are just about contained, but they are willfully osmotic. This is not the economy of the billboard that you understand from a distance. It's a magical re-wiring of deciphering or authoring where you are permitted clarity and restraint in varying quantities. There may even be a sense of deliberate withholding, where the very basic components of something can only be understood by being left alone. We shuffle around this planet mostly knowing that we can be both verbal and nonverbal in a matter of seconds, flip between the two.

RAIL Do you think that your writing or, frankly, any writing can be ekphrastic? Can writing or speech be the verbal or literary equivalent of an art object? Do they coexist in parallel? Or are they constantly bouncing off of each other?

H. M. I think they can absolutely exist in parallel. Imagining language to have a shadow in the same way that a twig or a stone or hands might have a shadow is such a beautiful and basic way of imagining content, but kind of radical. You know, to imagine that you might literally bump into something that was a spoken word. We speak about it enigmatically, so I'm interested in the literal analogue. For years before this show, I was

trying to imagine how you could make an exhibition that would be so maximal, so overwrought and disgusting in image terms, but with literally just a voiceover, and I was like, it's impossible. I don't know how to do this. To question the elastic or moral rearmament of spectacle without physicality. How we equip ourselves to instinctively understand context and content changes all the time. A minute cosmos intersects with a global one. It's a difficult abstraction.

RAIL I think the Duchampian concept of the *infra-thin* comes in here as well. When he thinks about how you could smell the cigarette on someone's breath as they speak to you, he's thinking about that as that moment of slippage, but we can also consider it a moment where a word could become totally palpable.

H. M. It's the most exquisitely beautiful concept, I almost can't bear it. It's so good. Maybe there's also something kind of skeuomorphic in it, you know, something exerting pretense in a very staged way, trying to be leather or trying to be woodgrain, imposing a weird psychological treachery on an object that is behaving just as you want it to, but it's absolutely not that thing, only a simulation. Roland Barthes said something similar, describing the stage being like the horizontal path of an optic pencil, a beautiful motif and very similar to the *infra-thin*, to the trace identity, to minute shades of change or difference. The stage as an optic pencil smashes through the presentation of a horizontal ledge and turns sensation and experience to notational debris. It literally marks the position of us as grubby eyeballs who watch and receive, as simple algorithmic identities: we eat, we shit, we fuck, and we program around new desires, new whims, but ultimately, we have a built-in index that needs to be kicked against to reframe an otherwise empirical or mathematical experiencing world.

RAIL Barthes also writes about the way that clothing might slightly separate itself off the body. There might be that slight moment of separation between your skin in the collar or right where your cuff separates somewhat from the wrist, and the wrist then becomes the most erotic part of the body, not because it's being tugged at, but rather because there is that separation. I think that Barthes and Duchamp are really interested too in the way that language might separate itself just in that moment. And then, there is an erotics of language there.

H. M. It's just so exquisite. This helps explain why the words *theater* and *evidence* are so loaded. Clothing is a foundational example of intuitive inflection against or with your body. In its most fundamental enclosing terms, it's not like you are performing it deliberately, this wearing of a garment, but rather it's part of the fundamental structural agenda of atomic material that is scattered, that pulls together upon a form that has a logic, and within which a physical shape can create a rhythm. We eroticize clothing by virtue of being mobile beings. We eroticize it with language and language's potential, its undoing. I love the idea of something known, like a shirt or a skirt or a pair of trousers, having a sense of also being a phantom landmark for something else. Within that, you can co-opt and recombine almost infinitely. Other people move in and out of the garment orbit. Bodies land and repossess. All of this is a simple representation of thresholds, how we disturb them and how we permeate.

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