

Sacking the Henwife

From *Sacking the Henwife* by Jane Sprague, 2007.
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Jane Sprague



and moving

mixing into thought

thought more swift
than brain's engineering.

automata

all

nationless unbordered bodies

brink of the new

already anticipated

entered into synch

collective's vast conscious

moving

//

from Sacking the Henwife

Artist Ed Ruscha writes Los Angeles. Or, he renders the city through art which often contains text. The language itself—its materiality—its potential as *object* forms the essential surfaces of Ruscha's work (which also typically uses images of and from the city), language that wryly connects, implicates, and invites critical thought about the city of L.A. His consistent use of Hollywood-esque colors immediately evokes the cultural mix of a kind of post-World War II Anti-Architecture of the city: turquoise; coral; cerulean; hot red; pale stucco; dusky mauves—the patina of Belushi's dirty Chateau Marmont; the flat-tempered color wheel annex of advertising companies; urban engineering cultural cocktails which use vision: Eye as portal into mind.

In the gallery space and museum space (more and more cultural capital space; last year: MOMA; MOCA; more), Ruscha's work sparks associative notes of derision, playful humor and the avant-garde chef's precise palate for the object itself as vehicle of (and for) transference. Launch point. So that it's not enough to regard him as mapping L.A. or even writing into (or) working into city. This is decidedly not the terrain of the *dérive*. Instead, the city drops into background. Ruscha's artist books, paintings and prints render the city inert as subject and catapult the viewer into some other less geographically fixed space where cultural detritus becomes / acts as / *is* that which defines us.

Borges' library nesting into and into its endless mirrored fact no nimble human charting the floors, shelves, bookend the archive in endlessness only thought collective –post

brain-locked. shared.

the ultimate anarcho plot—
not plotted—spinning into
space –bodiless building less
unhoused free
unbridled models making
unmaking working into themselves
some pure logic's pure reason
thinking enough for more
(and not taking up physical space)

post human primal numerically
ordered cells and all space
all time all loose
legible

find

this future less distance

world unimagined

here

written into text

Logic of Release

understood. Move among

no impulse to intervene

speaking up or finishing

no impulse

but travel

to some fixed distance

vantage point of loss

no need for completion—motion is all

swift clicks transport us

no media saturate

no cocktails no inebria

of knowledge nor mind

both all expansive

collected linger –archival

In his “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” Martin Luther King, Jr. writes of “the clouds” that begin to form in his daughter’s “mental sky.” While Ruscha enacts no writing into race, American Justice X, nor bears any trace of critical political engagement, he infiltrates the viewer’s “mental sky” in a process where the work itself functions to insert certain “clouds” of thought into our own (us here being the watcher, viewer, audience / participant; as in reader response theory, even the art object relies upon the unsaid contingent-agent; the spectator completes the spectacle) understanding of cultural spectacle (pop culture litanies; endless movie ads; endless salesmanship; endless selling selling selling; endless price point index; endless oil well drilling; endless arctic dripping dripping dripping; endless populace; our endlessness—imagined at its ultimate ((Day-Glo)) edge) which defines our current historio-cultural moment.

A shadow passed overhead, above, female form,
black limned, grey edge, bunned hair, phone to
head, pacing.

Suspended as she was and now gone—a girl
shape—in between being and thing- person- there-
not there- moving. Not person, anyway—shadow of
a girl, only.

Gertrude Stein loved to eat Alice's chronically good
cooking. Fueled, she wrote and wrote and wrote, the
apt hedgehog, ample and supplied by custards, pies,
pork...

Ulysses dull-deadly without Molly Bloom prop up
Joyce's gastronomical engine; the fox, his cunning
sharpened by blood sausage, home ointment for
splinters, easy over the transom midwifery. All and
all away, then—hidden as henwife needs must be.

Pry knowledge from sustenance, prop up the "I" in
processes of accretion and dissolve. What matters?
What.

no space for that in the art

no space for that in the poem

no place for that in the canon

articles of fact and dislocation

Distraction and its aftermath. A meander. To experience one mind at work—the intellect—channeling, moving, making idea legible on the page—the persistent attempt to keep up with thinking. Mind speed, god speed, hence. Automatic writing a bluff. That gap between mind moving—pen tries to catch up. Fails. Again and again.

“Fail. Fail better.” “On.” (Beckett)

Coalesce into non-objectness. Dropping the body, humans transformed into pure digital ether. A sequence of zeroes and ones. Not lined up not organized into hierarchical structures of knowledge or power. Essential aspects of being (human) slipped away—became unnecessary—became subservient to the less self-based economies of culture. Culture too slipped away lost its grip on the tactile world; once the object became written into text (and all permutations –archeological dig—developed and rendered algorithmically), the abyss of the museum widened. Art objects (human product) refused to adhere—not out of any salient consciousness but their particular and stolid objectness and some pure aspect of the viewing experience multiplied exponentially. The human mind force (now approaching ether) could never agree locked as it was in subtleties of thought, association—crucible of individual mind meeting the art object’s rationale or force upon the viewer’s rationale was too contentious. The changing people could not agree. How to catalogue?: How to render experience (thinking, what thinking made possible) digitally? How to render art into data? Some crucial aspect of the thing lost without the living mind, the blinking eye to bring its apparatuses of memory, knowledge, ignorance, wonder into play –that complex variable of individual up against individual product. Impasse.

silent secret ways—biology

ground level
maintenance

what one could not observe
catch cipher hold
things you wouldn’t admit
im/migrant epoxy

ideas traded by tongue ear practiced hand remember
eyes

once gone—lapse into ephemera // oxidant // vanish
into less than ether less than spirits

distant time laps at the edge of
certain sundry skills essential
out of country out of home out of object

anachrona and artemisia

no space in the poet for
daily (unless relegated to the safer island of
theory—and write it in French!)

the low brow

girl

Sacking the Henwife

biology of the

mess of the

cleaning of the

endless human
doorstep

ways of tending body hunger

no room for all that in
the poets house of logic

theory, avant garde plans for “the Googleization of
everything”

knowledge drops away
props of henwifery persist

potshard / thin black lines
every “How To” guide you’d never get

published

knowledge and tactics handed down in scores off
the tongue of the mother of the
article of invention
strategies for healing and care

Martin Puryear’s “Ladder for Booker T.
Washington.” Two girls in the lobby make the
gesture of casting a rod—invisible line (I can
only see one girl) she reels in the other—they pull
into smiling. Two now. Field of vision complete;
gesture-act resolved. They’re visibly happy.
They’ve done this before. On a dance floor, I think,
it’d be quite lovely.

In a post-human world authority became irrelevant. The physical world dropped away, or, more correctly: returned to itself. The kudzu vines and morning glory prospered, took back some places of earth. Some of what once was. Theirs. The machine itself, autonomous, running on sun—less and less blinded as clouds thinned more and more. More hot more better. The connections moved fast. The hotter the sun got, faster the flow of theory into theory, endless engagement with art and everyday life, “sacking the henwife” unnecessary now. Endless intercourse with everyday objects. Everyday life became relegated to the land of archival detritus, miasma, a closet not often cleaned but into which post humans kept filing elaborate “thing” lists of all they were glad to be rid of:

Lapse of erotic. Bodiless, then, we conceded to a necessary trade: bodiless, disembodied, we were no longer relevant for reproduction. However, there was a large contingent of people who attached themselves to the phenomenon of Eros and its parallels in the various discourses of philosophy, art and humanities. It was too much, some said, to let go of all that. It brought back the art viewing debate. At an impasse, no agreement in sight—it was decided: a split into factions was the only way out of the deadlocked negotiation. See entry for UTOPIA and the last 500 years of human planetary habitation.

Theology sidled up next to rubrics of thinking.
The idea of oneness extended: long histories,
social movements, migrations, economy, ecology,
collapse rose up into linked networks, narratives.
Overlapping, disjuncted. The physical body became
more and more hindrance. Consciousness lost
patience with the task of so much upkeep, so much
biology, so much cleaning and feeding and sleeping
and—

simples for warts;
doctrines of veterinary medicine, done on the
cheap—
how to lance a cat's abscess at home;
how to starve out a roach;
strategies for the darning of socks;
the taping of hems on the fly;
annals of social graces—sacked. though there was
a small conversation space for post human sport in
the
CATALOGUE
LIBRARY
ARCHIVE

libraries of manners and grace
there was no need for these false decorations—the
consciousness came to the brink of realization—
sacking the henwife—conceit of old hierarchical
structures—notions for organizing the world.
Unmasked, then—the thick blur which characterizes
our new sub-ether world—alkaline of the kudzu
extract dipped in the tip of the needle for injection
in the surgeon's hand, same fundamental property
of the quotidienne's sphere

potato to eyelid for burn more alkaloid in the
ointment of the dressing in the surgical ward same
logic, less leverage (depending). It was all one.