

opolis

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[the raw manuscript version]

elisabeth workman

* a dusi/e-chap
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DUSIE

N'importe où! n'importe où! pourvu que se soit hors de ce monde!

Charles Baudelaire

“ASSUMPTIONS, OR TO SET INTO OPERATION”

zeal is another approach to mapping blood, any, adagio, and the point at which I tongued the slope of your nose. I do this when no others might notice because we are public and the risk is spectacle. Every door is an open mouth but the trees like bronzed contortionists are the whisperers. Type A. Silencio. Voyeurs appropriate transitively. Otherwise we would wait out the display aimlessly. I mean we and all the others, so that masturbation is not singular—rather, more like tourism. Quite appealingly the view is not available for reproduction; it cuts a part of you so preciously, so what. I tasted afternoon and anthrax but only overheard that we had caught up with ourselves unexpectedly as if the windows were really only an avalanche of apologies. In the distance, obstructed or artificial, we could still hear the iambic ah-ha’s of the highway, and I made it about myself by myself with a warning about bullshit and bliss and architecture

“BASIC DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TRIBAL AND THE CIVILIZED”

apocalypse district later, much later, now is the revelation of this-is-how-it-is-kids. You get a reality tour of burlesque neighborhoods and the proceeds go to a non-profit, the souvenir—a message point appropriate for any confounding situation. At this point we are lucky enough to brave the elements, lock legs, bridge the gap, and thank you, please, hold each other tightly—the sentence is buxom and bawdy from here-on-out. Exactly how, no one is certain, but you can tell by the citizens’ strides that biology isn’t a struggle. In the bomb shelter you will notice the ample supply of non-perishables, namely booze & barbiturates. Here we will stop for a quickie then shoot blanks at bunjee-jumpers for sport. Later, the borough’s den mother will wear nothing but an apron and galoshes and this is part of the dream, that the spatula falls to the floor and there’s the sound of batter splattering and you’re allowed to say kitsch or lynch not bitch

“CHOICE AND COLLECTIVE WHIM”

bordering the cartographer's dimensia—the cusp of a hangover or a room sanitized after many years of many cats. Shoo away corrosive thoughts with this contemplation, a convention designated exhausting for giddy heroes. You were my favorite because of your mohawk and your controversial integrity, but I tried you first because you made pretty sentences. Somewhere the crescent moon is the only light visible above but here we create our own coffee and cigarettes, here we are without cul de sacs. Moonlight as a stuntman or good lawyer, you with your taste for the outlandish. For a while we can be gardeners who wear suits on the side. The white camellias mean wait; whenever we don't wait we fail, while the vista confuses peacocks with copulating cats—the sound unsettlingly human, the color that cleaves this landscape an intoxicating green against which we watch a movie but first rename the moon the calico camellia

“DISCOURSE WHICH WOULD NOT DO”

construction obstructions, foreshadowing permanent censorship of the aforementioned horizon—how clearly you can't see it you can't see the future dart ahead in your periphery. Perhaps what is most dubious is how we had all dashed for the not yet like deceptible tourists in a market of the so-called authentic. Cluck cluck. Excuse me, like a question. On both occasions when she encountered the famed football coach, he asked for the time. Say to the new skyscraper, you are not from around here are you, like a statement. She never wore a watch. The temple erected in her honor consists of hindu deities, a tattoo parlor, and a bar and something else I am forgetting. If there are no street signs and the city is continually demolished and reconstructed, you will most certainly lose your way in the milky, silk-like fog. You have to remember backwards, inconsolable damsels, you have to remember to deconstruct

“EVEN PHRASE BY PHRASE”

dirty to say the least but each of us has clung in co-dependency to a sad street at one point or bandied about a haunting name, for example—the avenue of embarrassment whereupon live the fortunate. An estuary breathes lives beyond us etc. so do away with the eden and the inertia that is so enchanting. Fa so la ti, frankly. We eternalize only flux, the factual hamlet so lately ethereal. Sir, only evangelists see a sanitized sky. Glued to this plot for centuries, we’re each encrusted with our own winks and nodding off to sleep to elegies in an elevator that only goes down—that was your suspicion, was it not? Suddenly only to flinch awake, aware that beyond the eurhythmic filtration system, there were golden drops, ectoplasmic showers from an above that is evanescent and also a little bit nasty or did they really mean expecting, extolling the task of pitting a peach. Wet and sticky—an infernal nursery oozing news and swallowing exactly

“FORMS FOR THE VARIOUS PERSONS”

ergo a brief encounter with geraniums in a courtyard, both public and difficult to find, offering its rumors selectively, where first thoughts flash collectively across static surfaces—a crooked rearview mirror, a pond with fat fish, an orange smelling tabletop. Two kisses left before your time runs out, tiger face. Not for the faint-of-heart, flattery here is indentured to the wine that exudes a raunchy musk. Must we. Always. Boy flickers into man, makes fractions of fathoms, takes tulips from ottomans, puts everything fertile out front. Like it or the city. A conversation between light and fractures, till fresh taste be taken from that clearness. Here, both fantasy and forgetting are soluble in the book of the unsaid. My favorite monk with ruby lips said so. My dear, it's true—let's frolic in the mulch, fuck in fuchsia, then sing finnish songs of blood in the cloud in the cake, those sad songs that so turn me on so that every word is somehow filial

“GAPS OR INTERFACES THAT CHARACTERIZE THE DISCONTINUOUS”

fragmented in their transition from difficult positions to the crescendo. The hall was filled with photographs of empty, unmade beds. They couldn't distinguish between working life and broken life; a dreamy sign indicated the exit in garamond. A few steps further into the grotto both time and the clothesline of stars were subjective. Granted, they hurried because they decided they were late amongst lilacs—their scent both memento and perverse verisimilitude. Whose plan is this, whose frame? They decided on gravity, on the group session of zesty chair exercises. Given their propensity to gather, they should say no to ever sleeping alone again. The stations—plainly distributed about a bay; the gaze of the city—inward looking out across & in & upon itself from afar is theirs. The form: a grotesque version of her body's imprint on the sheets. the arm of her lover thrown across that temporary fossil. With every departure a distance fixed, gifted

“HIDDEN ENVIRONMENT OF SERVICES”

getting off accidentally; let's call it a chance get away. Hereafter I am headmaster, her majesty, and heavy metal interchangeably. There are conciliatory chocolates lavishly wrapped and telephones that can't call out. Greetings from the next room carry over though the tones are intentionally hushed, and no one is ever seen coming, just as outside the monotone tide promises perfect weather for the next century. The elevators play eleanor rigby, the tibetan flute rendition, perpetually. Oh, the consequential hunger roils hurly-burly, the coincidence of my royal head attached, a complete organism helter-skelter, seems haphazard, a freak incident at the confluence of leisure and exposed despair. There is history: petals placed one by one in a puddle to notice or the remarkable architecture of the everafter to tour but how and who with. Do I need photos to prove it? That any place eternal might be torture, the promise the product a hack

“INEVITABLY, IN THESE CATHARTIC CONDITIONS, MANY”

heaven is as hell is a hoax I decide so I make up multiple eras all at once and so overwhelming one wants to explode out of sheer inherited longing: Is I me or who is I? The desire to touch and taste eternally, it lurks even in the most staunch. Make a scene. The authorities intervene, the media take an interest. I wanted a room full of idylls in a region of many windows and no curtains. A bare occupancy. An incandescent tableau. Granddaughter, she said, go in that eye-catching interval and take your best ammunition: inscrutable incantations. How I find myself depends upon what I'm looking for. Today I decided interloper. With skyscraper imagery. The vista is a roofline unfamiliar to its audience, but upstaged by a meeting table inclined at a 45-degree angle. The swivel chairs, high backed, have been abandoned, some still spinning, connoting irreparability, ill will : : the media take an interest the authorities intervene

“JUST AFTER SPUTNIK”

improvise an isolated peninsula—that’s the mindset; a jaundiced highway bisects the town. At the junction there’s a supper club whose jingoistic jukebox always plays the song not selected. Blue clouds of smoke loom lacelike among the rafters. Some judgmental weather is quick to happen while jaded angels speak of johnny cash, the jargon an awkward mix of tinsel and dung heaps and donchaknow and jesus. Every chair is a franchise with its back to the wall, the visitor an accident, an act of the occident coincidentally misinterpreting the people’s loneliness for something more like conviviality nearly obsequious. One johnny come lately. Two jackals in the old jalopy with ajax. Three: let’s make this as free from cosmic justice as possible, even on main street where the demolished buildings look like missing teeth, where jell-o moulds line the counter, quivering jellyfish, levitating the smaller organs of the great johnny canuck

“KIND OF AURA OR THEME FOR SURROUNDING ITEMS”

jackasses everywhere and only one to jettison a collective karma into ineffable debt; ken is kin. Next to kin is a township, full of dead-ends, backyard knick knacks, cancelled credit cards, basements that box in illicit smoke and out bones of a colonial graveyard. Teachers pound kettledrums regularly. The semblance of the surrounds cusses in kerosene, loving bully whispers measured in kilohertz. Why you can't know if every other night is a comfortable pause in conversation or a desperate grasp for some sentence to excuse the price of war is the reason why one might kneel a moment too long in the sand-trap on the 11th hole. Knowledge lurks de facto. Kindergarten collects fugitive thoughts and dresses them in khaki. A kiosk details the plight of the kabloonas, while the local kung fu tournament introduces new styles: the kaiser, the colonialist, the blah blah blah. When burden burdens, just go klepto; superfluous theft is kinky

“LAG HERE AND THERE IN THE GREAT TIME FLUX”

kiss me now, because we're more honest when we lose; lotuses unfurl at the long-locked gate separating speed and introspection. Licentious flowers illuminate the inordinate creation conceived twice, once from without and once within. I want to lick the spot where you gave up, where time seemed to make up a city of its own. Little advertisements painted on the wings of locusts detail the trappings of logistical lust; these are also considered literary secrets. Some, therefore, would prefer the backs of lords or lizards. The language lags to spite you, makes you listless, senseless. A lull the color of sex ushers you out and you only remember that tall drink of water, name it absinthe. And so, you must make it french. A glass of merlot with the butchers at les halles and then a late morning washing of lentils. It's important to carve out wombish nooks in which you might eat your own malaise as if it were a fillet—only seared, melting love

“MANY THINGS AND HAVE LEARNED NOTHING”

local, as a concept for the muck-a-mucks was lost. Local what, they wanted to know, and left it mired in the dregs of their collective morning shit. Even litotes could not serve as a filter, though it was not uninteresting to think about the mawkish directors in a meadow laced with red poppies, meandering amongst munchkins and forgetting their lines. Let's avoid the monomyth and reduce the pains of existence to a simple cavity, easily filled by asphalt or frank sinatra. It could be a mystery, mysteriously programmed by an unwitting messiah, both maudlin and diligent. Exanimate conductors could field the lot. Real estate clippings would promise unbeatable location and the daily megabyte of poignancy, just enough to maintain domestic equanimity. As is, it remains true that good fences are expensive and the neighbors will most likely replace their dilapidated dwelling with a double-wide, a locally manufactured mansion

“NOTION OF ARTS AS FRIVOLITY”

mercenary, maverick, or missionary—one of the three. Apparently, aside from the alcoholic, oil-eyed narcissist who hasn't left the sealed villa in three weeks, you should submit to classification. Live on the street with a concrete-slab vista, among amiable guards you always make a point of waving to and the mechanical gushes of water over plastic rocks, marking the entrance. Live as a number under the name, most likely a neologism of capitalist & eastern ideals. There's the over-chlorinated pool and the water that induces balding. Live a refrigerated existence. On the other side of the walls, the nature of the shifting desert, snakes, and the yellow school bus full of indentured navvies lurk. The nefarious cranking and tapping of industrial machinery define nocturnal white noise. You find yourself wanting to complain about local ways though you're not really certain how much is local or how much you've become a non sequitur

“OF AN UNDERDEVELOPED AND UNKNOWN CULTURE”

never is against now, and a spatial prophesy of great confusion, according to the oracle of never. Individuals in such an ontology may include concrete objects such as people, animals, tables, planets, molecules and obelisks, both crooked and straight, as well as abstract individuals such as zero and the word ‘orifice.’ Then shall one realm overdose on another. Or, then shall multinationals orbit petrol queens rakishly. Glittery ovary daydreams. O that all of us could object sincerely, observe objectively, and occur freely. Then would occult interventions dazzle and the occident and the orient acknowledge each other with reverence across magnetic fields humming with ohm. Here we ooze what we really meant to tell each other, and it is difficult and opulent and displayed in origami menageries. Here we are wholly humble because we dream omnisciently of there, which oscillates between never and now, operatic and open-mouthed

“PERIODS OF TRIVIALITY, FRIVOLITY, AND OF PLANNED OBSOLESCENCE”

or, among a people for whom poverty is a primitive concept. Or, punk rock. Or/either/and positioned, conveniently dispersed, peripatetic thinkers teaching philanthropically ways to protest four-door and two-door perception, that mud-slide of thought pushed against one’s own sense of increasing paralysis, in a city of endangered introspection. What is, practically; what might be, performative. Following the perfume trail, both smoky and evanescent, of opposing parties, I might happen upon the suggestion—perfunctory or otherwise—of a murky beginning, a pedantic refugee caught in the politics of belonging and not having. Of prostitution and pedagogy, we might say, with effusive and untrustworthy sincerity, that punishment doesn’t meet anything in isolation, that the imprints of the city for the living are now saturated in a flood that swallowed the deadened promenades upon which we did not meet, the periphery we left before it parted

“QUEST FOR THE CAUSES OF CHANGE”

perhaps quietude, but really? An escape from the quavering interior voice that whispered once, “Obsequious.” She quilled a letter. Scrawled, “Q: How do I make the quantum plunge? A: With the unspeakable in tow; against the quotidian crawl; under familiar noses,” and sent it unsigned to her city magistrates. Quasi-mayhem ensued. Chasers of the quixotic fled. Someone pre-positioned troops at every vulnerable point of entry, including public pools, the mouths of cats, and watergate, but who? Consequently, aqualung. And: “I have never been a quitter.” They listened to quintessential vampire songs about power; they walked in accordion pleats. Whatever was to be questioned, cointreau the answer. Plus querulous pleasantries. Nevermind the peasant class increasing in rank and suspicious earthly activities. All that was taxable was quid pro quo, waspish and urinating and therefore subject to a secondary tax on predictable bodies in question

“RADIO INTO THE VISUAL ORBIT”

quarantine the labor, guard them with the guards, serve the guards with the help, manage the help with the right hand, satisfy the right hand by putting it to better business, quench the better business with eye candy, introduce eye candy to so forth. Already, relativity occurs surreptitiously or it's just okay. Requisite components come & go, returning occurring only for rest or requiem. The diminishing borough exploited this tendency of former residents and resurrected the concept of roadside vistas: a former watch factory where its workers painted radium dials; a vacant farmhouse muraled over in the things it could become if an economic surge ever surged; a rusty railroad car; an abandoned golf course haunted by the retiree without a face; the old brothel now caved in; the former trysting park; the quarry—a great gash—that could hold all relics of displaced desire. For a number of days the rest contemplated the other side of the firmament.

“SEASONAL RECURRENCE”

returning from intermission (o so surreptitiously). The swags of velvet pierced with succulent snap-dragons, the evanescent chandeliers, the mistiness of sanguine diction suppressed in favor of silence—all contribute to the seriousness of the selection. Even the actors, swathed in ann coulter sequins, admire the cogs spinning headily, suggestively, heterosexually. I don't look at the tyrant seated in the balcony shadows, nor consider the possibility that I am supine, that even mosquitoes might be misquoted, that the play would be much better staged in its antiquated english, the lines recited in fully independent clauses. Between acts we assassinate certain opinions, effigies of despair and existentialism. The smell of breath is sony, the sweat blooming from skin, viacom. I mummify my body in the silly idioms, the malaprop props, the city seething with private sighs (o so suspect, so soviet). O such synaptic transgression lost in our daily syntax

“THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM APPEARS”

spank that I may see thee, says the epithet on the ambiguous statue of etcetera, and: to tick, to talk, to trickle. This, the focal point of the main square, rises garishly from a milky pool bordered by talismans of the temporal shrines of travelers. Torn from typical obligations, visitors get tipsy on the banter and the creamy libations, the loquacious spume of transitory encounters—tête-à-tête, tête montée. Engirth, discurrup, linger. The night alight with electric reconstructions of touch—the tongue pressed to teeth says this this theater of breath and theme of then for not do not tether me to these tenuous contracts. We are fleshy things among things, thoughts among tides that dissipate thought. Thus, the night is thick and pulsing with the flickering movement of passing through and staying awhile and calling it a night. The tuk tuks will take you back, caravanning down cobbled streets, to the first settlement, perched on stilts, nearly terrestrial

“UTTERANCE, OR MORE PRECISELY, AN OUTERING”

tribes drums and cum urbis. Unkempt footpaths lead to unprovoked conclusions. You are wholly untethered, unflappable in your instability. Is this the understanding? That, like la legendary urchin, you would descend to cliff-bottom only to re-emerge in a procession of strangers is similar to the story that upsets the better half. Unintended vicissitudes permit the unspoken utopia. Bullocks. You were taller than the procession; you could not sing and walk simultaneously; you couldn't give yourself over to the idea of one utopia unequivocally. The men barefooted on their bicycles, the egrets plucking spears of grass in their awkward walk, the woman wading through tidal pools with her hatful of mangoes, her skirt lifted, lips parted: all somehow lend themselves to a ubiquitous conviction as simultaneously understated and insouciant as it is doggedly utilitarian, ugh. You feel a heaviness about your collar, question the point of view, understand only up

“VIOLENCE THAT IS SIMPLY AN IDENTITY QUEST”

unto which timely vacancies we shall come. A vast wasteland, the tautology of vermin, virtually ritualistic to the victors. N'er will our vaginas endure such dim-ocracies again. Ostensibly vested interests vacated the premises on the grounds of expiration, the oppressive veneer dissolving into something more like vaseline—somehow more useful. Thus, volte-face: vivify the warehouses with voodoo; vandalize the private accounts with public tours; install interchangeable velcro letters on uptown street signs; upturn parking lots for improvised rites of passage, verily—good night, overseer, spaketh the soothsayer, good night, lobbyist, good night, sweet mogul. As what to do next is entirely unclear, we climb a high-rise, only to discover a vista overlooking the friction of ad-world now simply vocable or is it visual. On the third day, a renegade pilot's plane sputters out v – i – r – u – s; on the fourth day a self-appointed magistrate replaces all U's with V's

“WIN US A BIT OF TIME WHILE WE CONSULT THE MEANS OF SURVIVAL”

vintage dwelling. two bedrooms, twelve bedrooms, one bedroom and one other room that could contain a small person supine. waterproof bedroom, washable wallpaper, a sarcastic quantity of mirrors. dishwasher, ringer washer, laundromat sixteen miles eastward. west facing windows, built-in wardrobe circa 1325, resident warlock, warbling doorbell, bat-proof windows, wiretaps, city water, lead pipes, weather optional. wobbly floorboards, shared ventilation, van gogh loft, attic as vacuum. galley kitchen, fully appointed bomb shelter, hidden woof. natural wormwood root cellar, basin big enough for one wildebeest, wow factor, wretch alerts, little gnomes welcome you! a white trellis dripping wisteria, weapon storage —perfect opportunity for sado-masochistic domestic wenches. must see shock and awe. green zone palace with open-air living near former market place. rustic roof concepts with rocket-propelled renovations, quaint plumbing, guest room for occupiers, running water/blood, parlor/mortuary in evidence of extant civil war

“EXHIBITIONISM OF THE CAMERA EYE AND”

watch out, the escalator, and only use the doors marked exit in case of emergencies. Existing between tiny holes and satellites, we walked the precipitous line, well-organized, world famous. A huge demand for the real and several small hotels prompted the explanation, a dialectic of ecstatic tricks, elastic rumors writhing in a lobby full of agnostics, heretics, and ex-dramatists. It was christmas, after all. The view of the street was a painting, we decided, depicting a brain-tree with its constellation of lights reflecting the external landscape and its flux of exigencies; each leaf licks the air urgently. It was not this spectacle per se, but the flickering stream of spectacles to which one can only react, react, react that prompted our quick departure to somewhere else. The fear of empty spaces exerts itself with a flare for pastiche and mixed media, so fix us a consciousness. xoxoxo. A cool blue yes for the multitudes that is just like jazz, almost like xylem

“Y FOR RELEVANCE WAS THE IDEA”

extra-terrestrial humanoids at the faculty meeting again, diagnose yonder euphoria as authentic yet not entirely convincing. The satirical objective of the yellow union suit was lost; but, yes, your approach was renegade, the debate yearning for a yenta. You couldn't help but wonder how yowl metamorphosed into yawn. It was under consideration. It was yeti. It was youtube. It was sugar-free nancy reagan. Factions yelled back and forth across university avenue, but the traffic—the trust-funded yahoos inching bumper to bumper in their hi-fi SUVs—prevented either side from hearing each other accurately. Yo, coy mistress. At the tenure party celebrating one associate's tenth-year of service, adjuncts yodeled about the yes men in the crepuscular light. Yawps of an uninvited poet could be heard three houses down. The grass looked blue, the dean's yellow lab pissed in the mouths of shadows. You can't sonic youth: just say no or yeah yeah yeah

“ZESTFUL ABANDON APPLYING”

why never zealots. When xenophobia insulates, venture anywhere in the fuzzy zeppelin sky, the heavens ablaze with last-ditch efforts. The zeitgeist absorbs recklessly, oozes zolof and xanax, dreams in zoot suits, exaggerates hazards, sucks up subversive and spits it out wholesale. Come, come fizzy hummer. Whose turn is it anyway? First come patients, then the show. Zipper up. The last was a doozy—a partisan daze of gauzy sentiments. Any way one looked at it, nostalgia was ultimately lazy, effortlessly. Original thoughts arrived, disguised as zephyrs, zigzagging across the hall of tzars: it was kismet. A waltz around the lip of zero. A cult of stanzas teetering gonzo-like. Because there was an absent suit, we saved the sacrifice for next time. No matter what, your personal zoo will at some point bite you. Bite me. TV makes me sleazy, freezes the minions into one great city—confused, eclectic, littering the maze with moxie, shriveled ads, chivalric zeugma

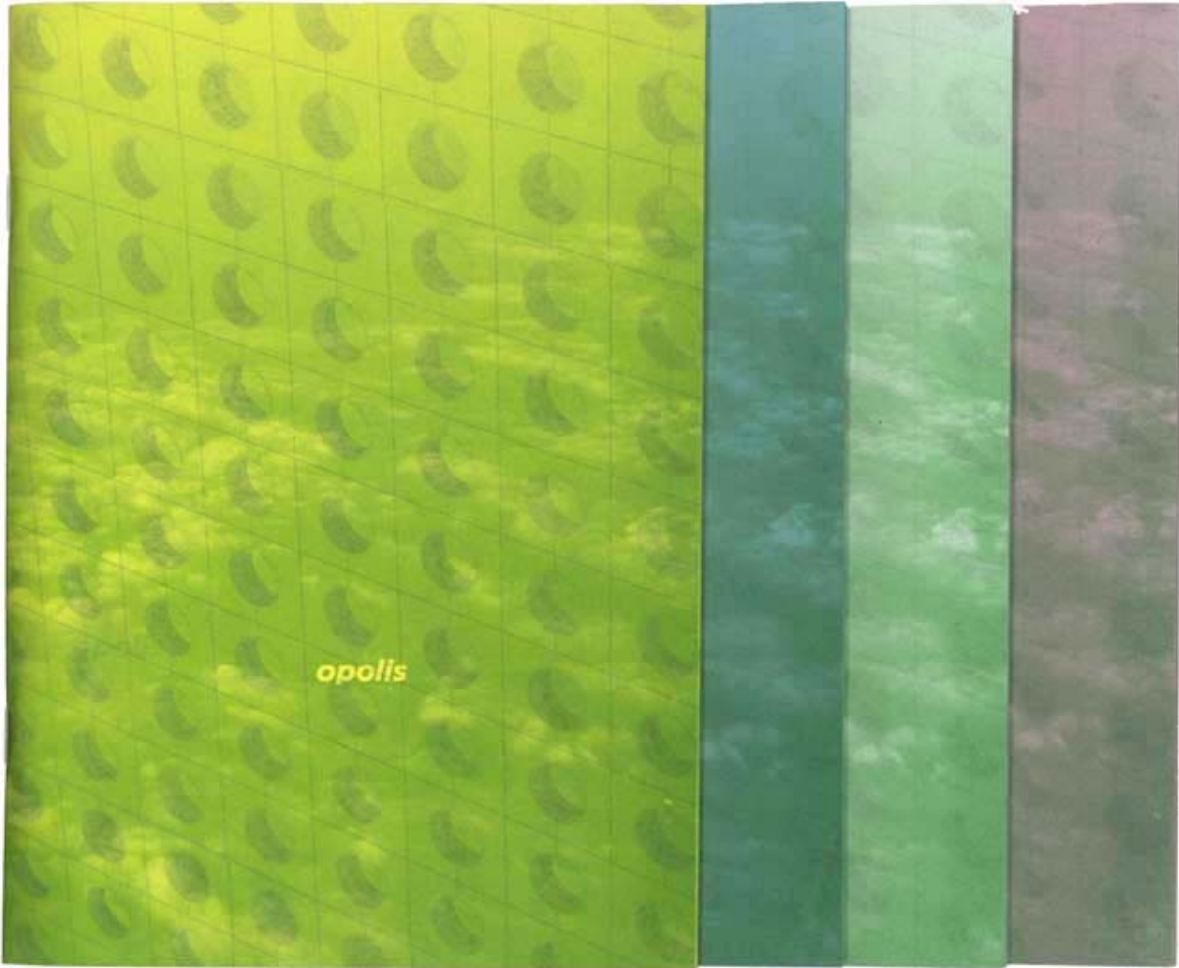
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Sections of this work have also appeared in *Absent*, *Alice Blue Review*, and *The Black Economy*.

opolis—the tactile chapbook with images and design by Erik Brandt, printed by Dar AlSharq in Qatar, consists of sixty-four pages printed with green ink on telephone book paper (in yellow, white, blue, or pink editions; see following page), the material allowing for translucent images. — For more information please go to <http://www.typografika.com/opolis> or write ework@typografika.com

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Elisabeth Workman was born in 1976 outside of Philadelphia. Her work has appeared in *VeRT*, *Long Shot*, *Absent Magazine*, *Black Economy*, and *Alice Blue Review*, among others. She has worked as a grant-writer for tribal organizations, a city planner for a small prairie town, a writer for public broadcasting, a "barmaid" at the Wrangler Inn in South Dakota, and a teacher in Doha, Qatar—where much of *opolis* was written, where living on a compound in unit #26 and writing an alphabet-fueled series of compound-like prose poems seemed to go hand-in-hand. Currently, she lives in Minneapolis and works for a visual arts museum.



Erik Brandt has been active in university teaching for the past eight years. He recently joined the faculty at MCAD, Minneapolis College of Art and Design, in the fall of 2007. Educated internationally, his research interests focus on issues of globalization that affect and drive the complexities of inter-cultural visual communication systems (see <http://www.geotypofrafika.com>). His career began as a cartoonist in Japan, and has since found focus largely in print media. He maintains a small graphic design studio, *tÿpografika*, and has also received recognition for his short films.