

ASHLEY HANS SCHEIRL *Exhibitionist Testicle Inject Jet*

23.03.2018 – 12.05.2018



Ashley Hans Scheirl (1) *Libidinal Detachment*, 2016 (2) installation view at documenta 14, EMST—National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, Greece, 2017 (3) *Intergalactic Dis_Count Elegance*, 2016

The left hand

Angela, Angela Scheirl, Angela Hans, Angel Hans, Zeze Hans, Ah, A A A A, Hans Scheirl, Hans, Hansi, Hansda, Hans von S/hit, Scheirl, Ashley Hans Scheirl was born in Salzburg (Austria), in 1956. She lives in Vienna. The work she did in the 1990s as part of London's underground dyke¹ scene contributed to the development of a conceptual practice that was constantly exchanging with the Viennese scene via the techniques of experimental cinema, painting, sculpture, actions in public space, performance and music, with all genres treated as equal. Indeed, in this artist's practice, these "disciplinary techniques" – to use Foucault's terminology, referring to the organisation of knowledge and practices in genres that are both distinct and isolated from each other– are brought together to function on the model of a lesbian, queer sexuality. This *transitioning* of one fine arts category towards another was accompanied during these years when the artist was moving between London, Vienna and New York by a metamorphosis of her/his own body, helped by the injection of testosterone. Her/his mutating name reflects this constant becoming which is never really static. Her/his recent self-expression in the use of painting, after multiple experiments with Super 8 and video cameras, encouraged Angela – now Hans — to transform her/his masculine look by a new phase of emancipation and to become Ashley, a painter who carefully cultivates her/his androgynous appearance.

"To give up monolithic ideas of 'self' and cultivate an open mind to the 'other,' we need to allow the intrapersonal other to exert agency.

An artwork that assertively performs itself as a lively dynamic of intrapersonal 'selves' mirrors the dynamic of viewership and thereby invites engagement in interagency.

Interagency includes intra-agency and always performs its relationship to death, loss, and becoming...."

This statement is taken from Hans Scheirl's notes about her/his series of paintings "Libidinal Economy" (2010), inspired by Jean-François Lyotard's book *Économie libidinale*,² published in 1974, but which s/he was no doubt advised to read only much later, in London, by Sue Golding *alias* Johnny de Philo, when the English translation came out. In his text "To Tremble the Ejaculate,"³ Johnny de Philo analyses *Dandy Dust*,⁴ the cult underground queer film made by Hans Scheirl and shown in many international festivals. In the subtext, De Philo returns to the theme of polymorphous perversion discussed in the French philosopher's

book, and to the cyborg portrayed by the American writer Donna Haraway.⁵ “I am Dandy Dust” expresses the desire to embody the constant metamorphosis of the body, in keeping with opportunities and encounters, like the grain of the Super 8 film or video pixels reacting to light and shadow. According to Johnny de Philo, this metonymic art, which takes the part for the whole – as in poetry a sail stands for the ship – is close to the abstraction of the capitalist economy. Money and the grain of the pixel, while representing and guaranteeing what exists, are by the same token the sign of what does not exist. In his paintings from 2016, *Neoliberal Musings* and *Rogue Economics*, or again in the permanent installation *Libidinal Economy – special effect*, made in 2017 for the new Erste Bank site in Vienna, the artist revives the reference to the Lyotard book, but from Ashley’s viewpoint, whereas before it was Hans who oversaw the elaboration of the painting.

This text, which accompanies Ashley Hans Scheirl’s 2018 Paris exhibition featuring the paintings from 2016, *Intergalactic Dis_Count Elegance* and *Glamour of Anal Narration*, provides an interesting opportunity to return via reading notes and quotations to this book which was a landmark of post-1968 French philosophy. *Économie libidinale* was contemporaneous with *Anti-Œdipe*,⁶ and both these classics of philosophy were attacked as early as 1977 for promoting an “ideology of desire” by the anti-Marxist Nouveaux Philosophes,⁷ whose influence quickly faded compared to the impact that the works by Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari and Lyotard still have today. In his book, Lyotard speaks in the first person plural, no doubt as a way of expressing the contradictory movement that runs through his text. The words “we libidinal economists” punctuate the text with arguments that run counter to Marx’s shocked rejection of the perversity of the polymorphous body under capitalism. Unlike the Nouveaux Philosophes, who pulled off a media coup in the short term so as to position themselves as keepers of the philosophical tradition, and against the Marxist heritage, Lyotard claimed for himself and for his confreres the position of an unorthodox economist transforming Freudian-Marxist philosophical practice from the outside and very much for the long term: “[...] the economy of desire is quite simply that of accountancy in libidinal matters; it is political economy, that is, capital, carried even into the sphere of passions, and with this economy of capital, necessarily and yet again, we have understood that it is piety that comes to take its course, the pulsional and passionate *dispositif* of religiosity, inasmuch as this is identified as the *force of lack*, capitalist religiosity, which is that of meaning engendering itself, *causa sui*.”⁸

Let us come back to the film for a moment in order to understand where the paintings come from. *Dandy Dust* is that *causa sua* creature which proliferates and cohabits with the virile duchesses and gay bishops. The whole film was shot in sets painted and sculpted by the artist. The film medium makes it possible to assemble a wide range of heterogeneous elements: backdrops, props, costumes, which are fused in the digital matter of the remastered image. The special effects are not hidden; on the contrary, they are encouraged to become the protagonists, on the same level as the bodies mobilised in the science fiction. In fact the medium, film itself, becomes the main character. For Hans Scheirl it is the grain of the pixel that is the star of the film. *Dandy Dust* is the story of the permanent conversion of the self in a post-gender world. “In dandyism, *jouissance* is instantiated on the universalization of trade and the concomitant destruction of every *eloquent* emotion, as Bataille says on the subject of Manet; this is the system’s ice incarnated in new sluts, completely stripped of all romanticism, of all nostalgia for an elsewhere, ‘pitiless Sages’, machines for calculating as accurately as possible the price of every demand issuing from the client which aims for an erotic manoeuvre not programmed in current consumption, cold machines whose calculable automatism, far from deceiving the dandy, rushes him towards the zenith of his *jouissance*.”⁹ As readers will have understood, the dandy is not just there in the grain of the film or the pixel of the video, it is also present in

the handling of the paintings, which have come out of fiction to join us in reality. "This is what we say: there is in every figurative-narrative organization a pole of immobilization, and we maintain that the intensities that can be procured from a tableau vivant, posing, postures from Sadean or erotic narratives in general [...] flash like electric arcs stretched between this pole of the victim's immobilization (the represented body) and a pole of agitation which plunges the body of what we will call the client, for obvious reasons, into the most extreme disorder."¹⁰ It is the beholder and the collector who are mobilised in the making of the painting, given the abstract regime into which the economy entered after it went off the gold standard, or the polymorphous character taken on by painting when figuration lost its hegemony. "In an abstract painting, an important displacement takes place: the picture represents nothing, it does not refer to a pole of immobilization situated in the domain of reference. The pole of immobilization is placed on the client body: this sort of picture demands the ligature of the partial pulsions that were in motion in figuration, the concentration of attention or equally the extreme pacification of the faculties, a putting into a state of dependency."¹¹ To put it another way, in the terms of Gilles Deleuze, in a disciplinary society, the individual uses a currency that is indexed to the gold standard; in the society of control that takes its place, the individual is adjacent to the credit machine, which is subject to floating exchanges. The beholder and the collector do not act, they do not use painting, they function in keeping with the programme of the artist, who uses them as if they were components. The painting *Golden Shower*, which opened the antechamber of the exhibition at the Neue Galerie in Kassel during documenta 14, is an unnatural marriage of references to the Danae seen by Gustav Klimt or Titian and *The Origin of the World* by Gustave Courbet. The golden shower supposed to embody the virile fertility of Zeus inundating Danae is subverted by a virile jet that spurts from between the legs of a trans Courbet. "What did Marx the prosecutor's left hand do while he was writing *Capital*?" asks Lyotard, to which Ashley replies: painting.

Pierre Bal-Blanc, Athens, February 2018

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1. "When I moved to London in 1987 my plan was to become a part of the lesbian subculture. First I learned a new word: 'dyke'. In my fetishistic interpretation it meant women who might wear leather and be butch with a working-class campness" Ashley Hans Scheirl
 2. Jean-François Lyotard, *Économie libidinale*, Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1974. Translation, *Libidinal Economy*, Athlone Press, London, 1993.
 3. Johnny de Philo, "To Tremble the Ejaculate," in Andrea B. Braidd (ed.), *Cyborg. Nets/z. Katalog zu / Catalogue on Dandy Dust (Hans Scheirl, 1998)*, Vienna, 1999.
 4. *Dandy Dust*, film by Hans Scheirl (Britain-Austria), 1998, 94 minutes.
 5. Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1984), New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 149-181.
 6. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie. L'Anti-Œdipe*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1972. Translation, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Anti-Oedipus*, London: Viking Penguin, 1977.
 7. The leading figure of the Nouveaux Philosophes was Bernard-Henri Lévy, who also published them.
 8. Jean-François Lyotard, *op. cit.* p. 5.
 9. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
 10. *Ibid.*, p. 244.
 11. *Idem.*

Most exhibited works at Loevenbruck gallery have been produced for documenta 14.

Institutional exhibitions programme:

Ashley Hans Scheirl

05.04.2018 – 21.06.2018 : Künstlerhaus, Graz, Austria

05.10.2018 – 25.11.2018 : Salzburger Kunstverein, Salzburg, Austria

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Gallery opening hours: Tues-Sat, 11am-7pm and by appointment