

“On the Limits of Exuberance: Return to Sender / Toward a Collective Author / Starts and Stoppages Not Standard, Becoming Standard, Already Standard,” *American Exuberance*, Miami: Rubell Family Collection, 2011, pp. 10-15

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KATHRYN ANDREWS

I think the NEA gave us money.

Great.

We rented 10,000 square feet and opened a museum, at least in name. We would show anything that walked in the door but you couldn't have your name on it.

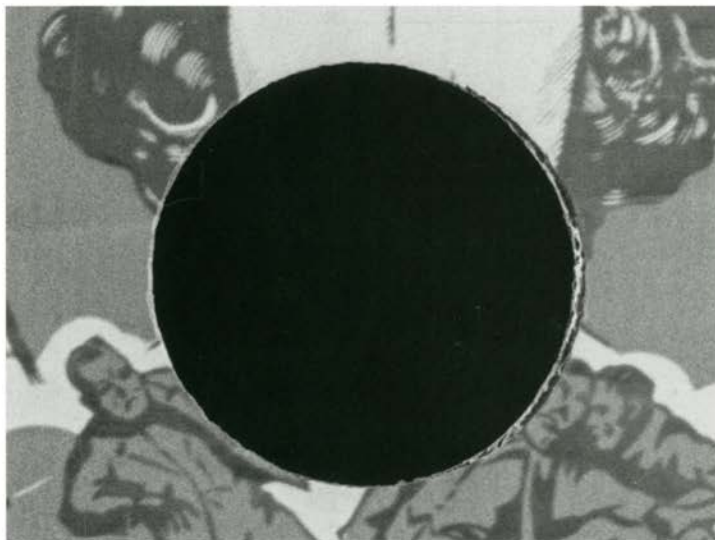
Nationalism restricts the exuberance when it is trying to be free, to get away from being pinpointed, confined, located.

It was exactly the opposite.

What happened was that none of the artists we knew wanted to exhibit there if their name wasn't associated with it and the people who did want to exhibit were all kinds of amateur artists who made a point of writing their name on their work.

That reminds me of Lozano's notes for her *Real Money Piece* — a jar, stuffed with bills of various denominations, that she would offer to her visitors.

An artwork whose value is quite literally handed to its audience, to make with it what they please. Free money — that's a cause for joy, right?



William E. Jones, *Killed*, 2009

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Frank Benson, *Human Statue (Jessie)*, 2011

Did you get a British lady telling you that this is a recording?

It reminds me of On Kawara.

Yes, it totally freaked me out. It's my nightmare. It's like the FBI.

I was just assembling a powerpoint on him and Tehching Hsieh and Lee Lozano.

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I'm thinking of Kawara's telegrams, or his recent Twitter activity, simply stating, "I am still alive."

This seems to define the antithesis of exuberance — though one could argue his is a hyperbolic account of "merely" existing.

Hsieh's project is related, though surely more extreme, or yes, excessive, in its self-discipline: I'm specifically thinking of his *Year Long Performance 1980-1981*, in which he punches a time clock every hour, on the hour, for an entire year. Is this excessive? I'd say so. Exuberant? I don't know.

Break in form. Lozano is the outlier here.

Maybe she's always the outlier. She was dealing with self-determined constriction too — not talking to women, dropping out of the art world, etc. — but there was always something spilling over the boundaries in her enactment of these works, something the tidy grid-ruled notebook paper she used couldn't contain or stabilize. Take her *No Grass Piece*. She attempted and failed to not smoke marijuana for a preordained amount of time. Her failure to abstain, and her account of it is, I think, a useful example.

How do you reconcile that idea with the artist's sole name being attached to the work?

Does it not describe an overflowing, an exceeding, a state of "ex"ness: excess, exit, execute? Enthusiasm. Joyful.

I don't know the answer to that because it's such a big question but early in my career I had an experience with a number of colleagues.

We started something called the Anonymous Museum.

We all knew lots of successful artists, some really successful, and we thought it would be an interesting mix of vernacular art and more conventionally recognized art.

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(Heads of state.

Through the hanging and re-hanging of works the museum creates a new identity for the artist. Differentiation between self and other dissolves through proximities. The need for differentiation becomes intensified as contexts blur where one thing starts and another begins.)

It remained open for a year. The closing was uneventful, a fade-out.

It was a kind of high-minded failure but it said something really interesting about the nature of art at least in our culture, and how much it's tied to the recognition of an individual expression and how unwilling people are to let go of that.

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Most of her friends didn't want to keep the money.

Perhaps it detached itself too easily from the art?

Bataille had a secret society in the 30s, *Acéphale*, or “headless,” whose symbol was a decapitated Vitruvian man; they were infamous for planning, but failing to execute, a human sacrifice: a ritual beheading that would unleash socially transformative energies, that would temporarily overthrow reason, that would provide a moment of true freedom for those who participated in it.

In that case, and perhaps in all others, the exuberance couldn't escape... being excessive joy, but not pure joy. A taunt.

A teat.

Having milked cows before, I would say that that focused white stream is definitely excessively spirited.

The etymology dictionary suggests that the partial root *-uberance*, or ‘fruitfulness,’ is related to *uber*, or ‘udder.’ It doesn't, of course, explain why.

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John Miller, *The Young and the Restless*, 2008

NOTES:

This idea is somewhat analogous to the paradox of the art object. If its purpose is to make a space for freedom, for individual expression and the experience of that, one must access this through a brick wall: “the artist” as a figure, a spectator, a signifier, a category lurks in the background, weighing down the whole thing.

I keep thinking about changing the word to “manic” and getting so close to something not in an especially friendly way.

You get in their head and they get in your head.

Territorial pissings, dissolution of a self.

If the author is what contains the work, what dominates it by conferring on it value (and what controls it through the promise of this value-by-association), what *fathers* it into the system, then exuberance might be the countermeasure that resists or exceeds all that. (Athena, leaping out from the head of Zeus.) Sovereignty is the suppression of exuberance; losing our heads (names) is its apotheosis.

An exuberance that breaks its text (appearance, sound, definition). An anti-utterance.

In the first scene of *Le Mepris*, Bardot asks Piccoli *est-ce que tu aimes mes cuisses*, my thighs, my lips?

A friend’s girlfriend is a voice actor in London. She recently recorded for a bank’s automated telephone voice system. Whenever my friend calls his bank, he hears his girlfriend presenting banking options to him.

Kathryn Andrews
October 2011