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zehro mehr

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I was on acid the first time I held a human skull in my hands. A friend's sofa-bed Avenue Beauregard facing the local prosecution office. Pieces of muscle tissue or stiffened hair were still adhering to the dried-out cranium, it seemed, hanging freely like vivid ivy vine. We were trying not to close our eyes. Nor to consider the spirited head too much. A serious dimming of the light would have inescapably sucked us back into the whooshing mystical washing machine. Looping our thoughts. Dicing our views again. Even a mere flicker would have pulled us under, numb and spiral-eyed. So we stayed wide awake. Pupils to the fullest. Lids duct-taped open. Scrutinizing the ceiling. Disentangling the intricate drawings of the suspicious plastered ceiling.

Whose face was this

Long story honey...

This shit won't stop staring at us just tell me

After a while P. ended up explaining everything about the beheaded necromantic object. The whys and wherefores, the do's and don'ts. The case unfolded. The trip dissolved. Side by side, ceremonially, P. and I finally dozed off.

_brain/camera

In *Daughters of the Dust* by Julie Dash, surely one of the most spellbinding movies out there, Nana, the matriarch of the Peazant family, represents the keeper and carrier of tradition on the island. She is elder (88) and wizened, rooted in her lifelong belief in magic and practice of ritualistic healing. To her eyes the living and the dead are inalienably connected. Spirituality being the key to community. Community the key to an inner, ancient sense of peace. She knows she must stay on the island. She must not go North, must not concede to mainland WASP culture. Yet when the time comes, when most members of the family prepare for departure, Nana's commitment materializes as blissful syncretism. Instead of obscuring the Christian bible the young plan to bring along, she ties carefully and tightly an amulet around it — a talisman she weaved with a section of her mother's hair. She calls this blessing a hand.

We are two people in one body. [The last] of the old and [the first] of the new.

She says. Or, in other words:

We are the daughters of these old dusty things Nana is carrying in a tin can!

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It's 2016. Three years after *Holes in the Walls* (a show at Fri Art Kunsthalle that to a certain extent drew many Fribourg people into the vortex). I'm at this space called WallRiss and it's snowing outside. Standing there in the tunnel between the two rooms I discover an unnerving sculpture by Kitty Kraus. The curatorial team (of the show *SUCS: Ramaya Tegegne, Tatiana Rihs & Maud Constantin*) swiftly enlightens me with the pieces of information needed to decipher the minimal, anxiety-inducing work. I'm not sure whether I wrap my head around it — but I like it.

_pen/keyboard

One of the artist books I think highly of is a short and simple publication by the peculiarly elusive German artist Kitty Kraus. The book is called *Lidschlag*. It contains an odd text, some sort of collage named *Blink of the eye (the uprising sun)... on pictures and other injuries to the nervous system*. Human adults blink an average of ten times a minute, it appears. Blinking creating darkness for nearly an hour a day. A year in a fast-lived life. More, perhaps, if slow. The plot of our visual experience thus comes to light: a flux of images (grazes), caesured (seized) by compulsive blinks (blanks) every six or so seconds — and sleep. The residue... the residue manifests itself as death. Why is it we close our eyes continually until we shut them for good? Is it a healing ritual? A coping mechanism? Is it nostalgia/sacrifice/faithful rejoicing or is it just pure and efficient lubrication and resting?

The viewer is in [the] framework, s/he is a prisoner, s/he is always in the picture. S/he has a shadow, which can always go eye-poppingly wrong. Every gaze is accompanied by the shadow of itself, by blindness.

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_word/flesh

Similarly to the process of Karin Borer, Kitty Kraus has made works out of men's suits — *black, navy, sometimes pin-striped or even white* — by cautiously disassembling them and placing the naked rectangular fabrics on the wall and floor. Undoing the seams (by hand), reversing the engineering, unfolding an anatomy so as to reconfigure the power dynamics at play in a system: acute demystification in the aim of revealing the limitlessness of the problem. (Schrödinger's cat had nine lives, after all, and maybe nothing was boxed in the first place.) Put differently, Karin Borer's (dés)assemblages deal with simulation, belonging and belief. The never-ending romance of a modernist grid of thought, upcycled iconoclastically (Isa Genzken?); the stroboscopic smokescreen of post-capitalist desire impeccably hypnotizing our egotic intellect (Thomas Julier?); the puzzling deconstruction of faithful objects and their methodical

cal reconversion into psycho-celestial dilemmas (Kraus?): here are some of the muscles involved when Borer's works are injected through the orbits.

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I'm on the phone with Monika Emmanuelle Kazi and we're discussing domesticity, trance states, Nestlé, reiki, *the Imposition of hands*, the Vatican, visual violence. The white cube's presumption of atheism is a forgery, we agree. It leads to severe misinterpretations. Ambiguity decays in a flash. Transforms into this, or that, and rots. Neatly packed in a slippery box — we're sure it's in there. Polysemy is jeopardized. Dust and syncretism are hardly understood. A hand's influence is barely perceived. Yet Monika Emmanuelle Kazi's symbols somehow resist. I ask myself whether it's agnostic animosity that's driving their tension; dilettante analysis of clinical hallucinations; pitiless censorship of the winking western ghosts; a celebration of daily life's eerie magical realism; the distant blessings involved in self-healing... foreseeably, no single answer comes to mind. Instead, a voice whispers, stoned and introspective, as if sung by the skeletal silhouette of an old, treasured friend. It's James Baldwin writing in his *Notes of a Native Son*:

All of my father's Biblical texts and songs, which I had decided were meaningless, were arranged before me at his death like empty bottles, waiting to hold the meaning which life would give them for me. This was his legacy: nothing is ever escaped.

The light dimming I recall a 1991 painting by Derek Jarman. On a tar-plastered canvas, a black- and-white photograph of the branches of an urban tree pierced by beams of winter sun is covered by a framed, redeeming text:

*Death is all things we see awoke
All we see asleep is sleep*