

# NEW VI/X **BAD** GOODS



DEAR BOSS III /

Let us bring you news of your protagonists, AW, JCHP, X the German door keeper and MJJ.

AW is wearing a blue art jacket and a tight, full colour transfer-printed wolf t-shirt. Seen from this new angle, the viewer will be aware that he also is wearing a single fingerless black glove on his right hand. It isn't evident whether this is a Michael Jackson/ Karl Lagerfeld tribute, a protection for his eczema, some ironic referencing of Alvin Stardust's black leather glove or that he's just arrived by bicycle having managed to lose the other.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFo1gEmCk-o>

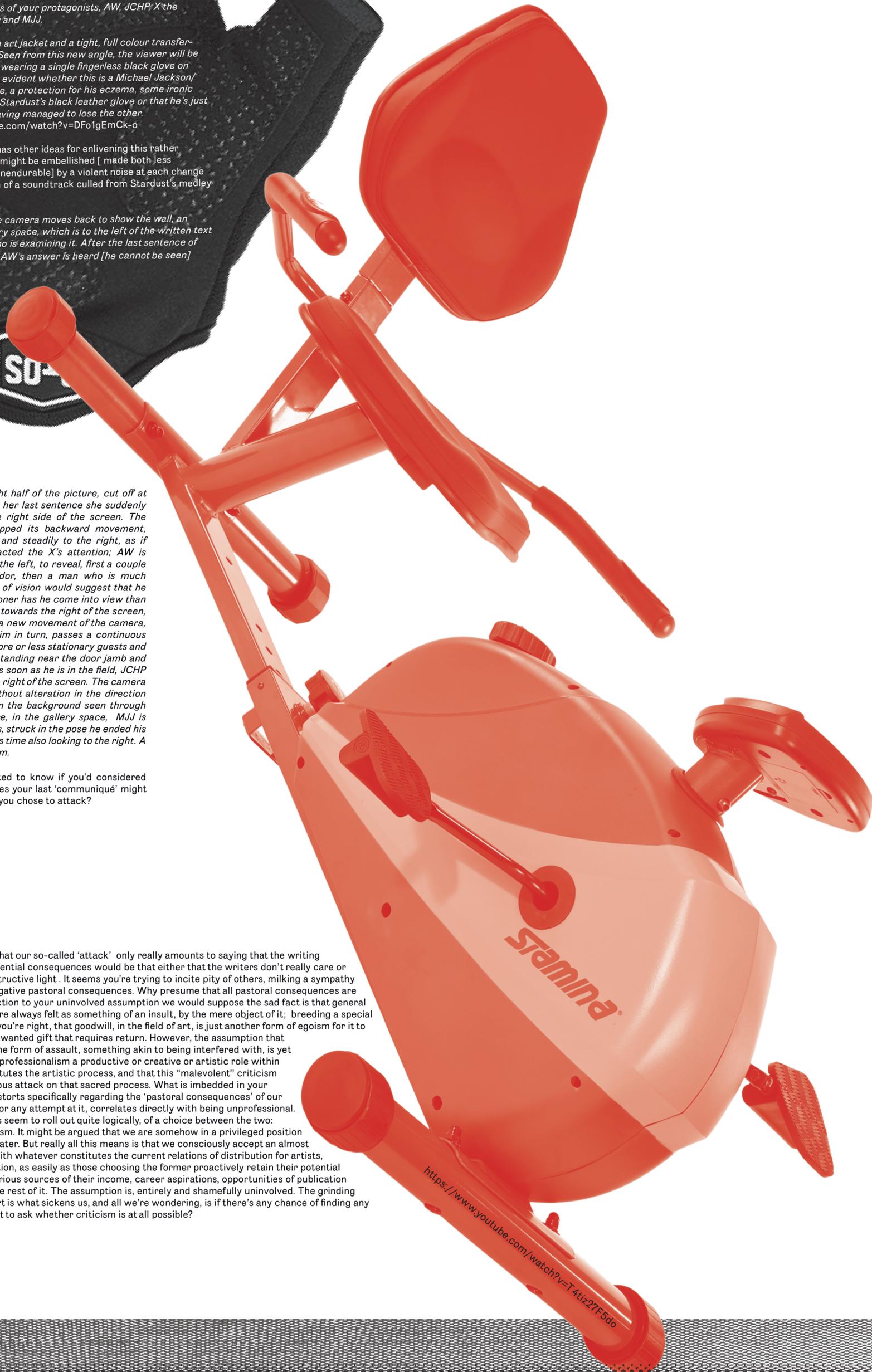
Unless the director has other ideas for enlivening this rather sombre sequence, it might be embellished [made both less tiresome and more unendurable] by a violent noise at each change of cut or the addition of a soundtrack culled from Stardust's medley linked above.

At the same time the camera moves back to show the wall, an opening onto a gallery space, which is to the left of the written text in part 1, and AW, who is examining it. After the last sentence of the preceding shot AW's answer is heard [he cannot be seen]

X now occupies the right half of the picture, cut off at the bust. After speaking her last sentence she suddenly turns round to face the right side of the screen. The camera, which has stopped its backward movement, begins to rotate slowly and steadily to the right, as if to show what has attracted the X's attention; AW is therefore eliminated on the left, to reveal, first a couple conversing in the corridor, then a man who is much nearer and whose angle of vision would suggest that he is looking at X. But no sooner has he come into view than he turns his head slowly towards the right of the screen, followed accordingly by a new movement of the camera, which then eliminates him in turn, passes a continuous movement over other, more or less stationary guests and finds JCHP once more, standing near the door jamb and looking at the camera. As soon as he is in the field, JCHP also turns his head to the right of the screen. The camera movement continues without alteration in the direction in which he is looking. In the background seen through the door jambs' aperture, in the gallery space, MJJ is seen standing motionless, struck in the pose he ended his lecture with although this time also looking to the right. A crowd gathers around him.

ART WRITER: I'm actually just interested to know if you'd considered the pastoral consequences your last 'communiqué' might have had for the writers you chose to attack?

JCHP: We would have thought that our so-called 'attack' only really amounts to saying that the writing isn't critical, and any potential consequences would be that either that the writers don't really care or would be taken in a constructive light. It seems you're trying to incite pity of others, milking a sympathy gland over potentially negative pastoral consequences. Why presume that all pastoral consequences are negative? In contradistinction to your uninvolved assumption we would suppose the sad fact is that general goodwill and platitudes are always felt as something of an insult, by the mere object of it; breeding a special brand of malice. Maybe you're right, that goodwill, in the field of art, is just another form of egoism for it to have such a result. An unwanted gift that requires return. However, the assumption that criticism constitutes some form of assault, something akin to being interfered with, is yet another rivet that allows professionalism a productive or creative or artistic role within whatever it is that constitutes the artistic process, and that this "malevolent" criticism constitutes some egregious attack on that sacred process. What is imbedded in your pompous, coterminous retorts specifically regarding the 'pastoral consequences' of our 'attack' is that criticism, or any attempt at it, correlates directly with being unprofessional. The consequences of this seem to roll out quite logically, of a choice between the two: professionalism or criticism. It might be argued that we are somehow in a privileged position to be able to choose the later. But really all this means is that we consciously accept an almost non-existent exchange with whatever constitutes the current relations of distribution for artists, opportunities of distribution, as easily as those choosing the former proactively retain their potential for exchange with the various sources of their income, career aspirations, opportunities of publication and exhibitionism, and the rest of it. The assumption is, entirely and shamefully uninvolved. The grinding of the old millstones of art is what sickens us, and all we're wondering, is if there's any chance of finding any grist for the mill. We want to ask whether criticism is at all possible?



JCHP continued: As stated, our texts in response to reviews amount to saying that there isn't much criticism in the reviews. We'd assume that if the reviewer read our text they'd either agree and develop their practice accordingly; or they'd disagree that criticism is important and not being engaged with and then what would they care about the opinion of a barely heard of art practice anyway?

In a more conciliatory tone you criticised our text for the potential effect it could have pastorally up on the writers we have 'attacked'. Admittedly, we hadn't thought there'd be any consequences but we will dutifully adapt the practice accordingly. Ha! Look! An example of criticism functioning successfully in the producing of improvements!

But the point is that their work, like our work is not critical, or if it is, it is only incidentally and intermittently. Maybe that doesn't matter and if that's the case why would their response be to care enough to have pastoral consequences? On the other hand we want to ask: is criticism possible within the context of art?

Is your sensitivity with regard to attempts to criticise or question the output of current art, in this instance writing our response to its inherent exhibitionism, due to an adherence to a grossly inflated appreciation of art's importance? Particularly an exaggerated, distended notion of its importance in being able to have an effect beyond the limits of its own scope?

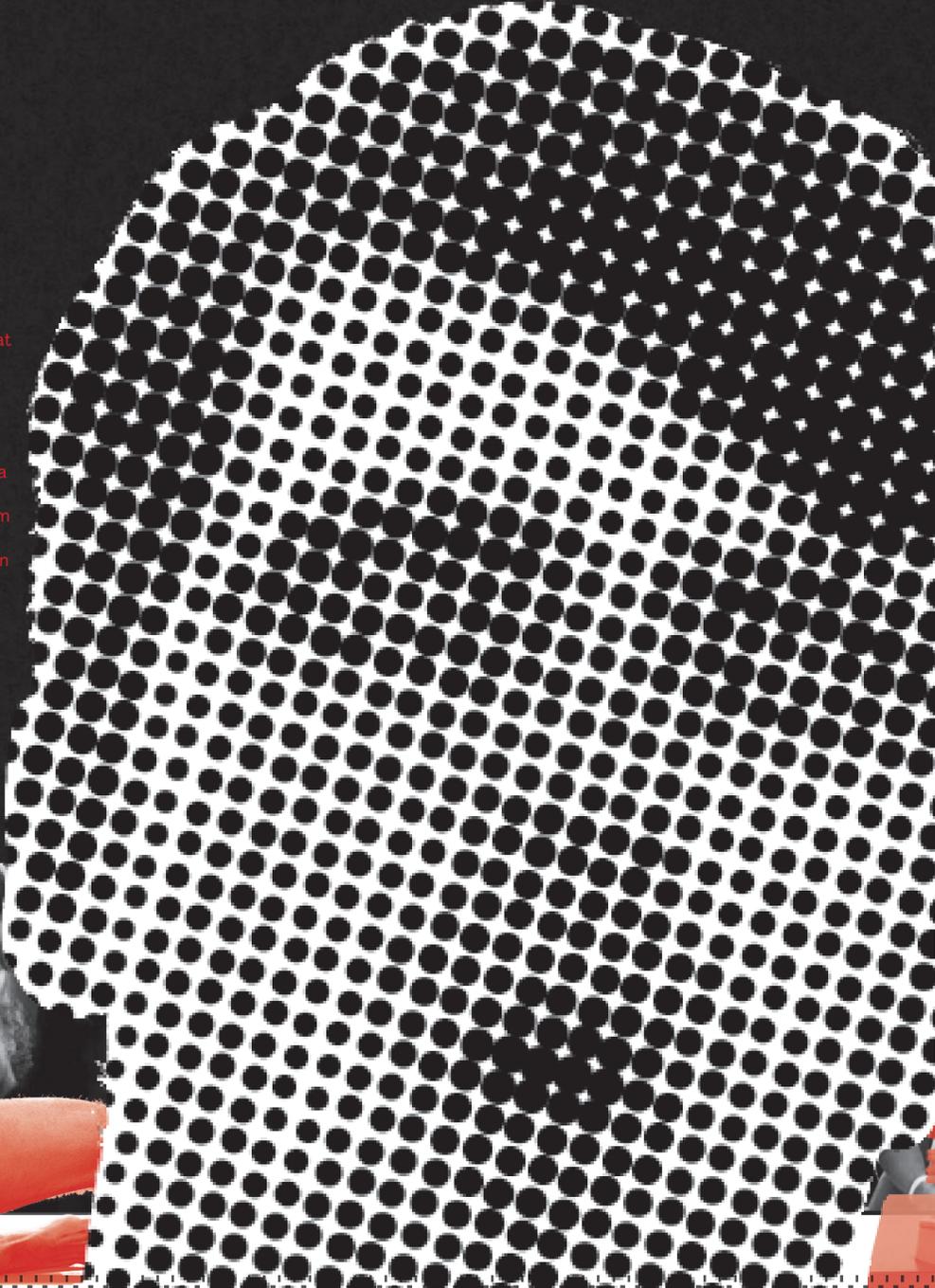
As we said our texts in response to reviewers' texts amount to saying that there doesn't seem to be much criticism in art reviews and you said earlier as much because of space offered by publications and the subsequent burden on your time outside of your paid job. But also because it is poorly remunerated and that it takes individuals to write reviews, not machines, you suggest that anyone stating that criticism is sparse, if not non-existent is performing an 'attack' on an already downtrodden group. We've never sold any of our work, we've only succeeded in giving it away. Maybe the cash/value ..... is the only form of criticism you understand. The recuperation of money generated through prospective sales would be significantly welcome to one half of our practice but if that potential income was contingent on the preclusion of any potential opportunity of delivering or receiving criticism regarding our work, we collectively wouldn't commit to the transaction. But presumably only half of our practice's collective decision to make that choice would be valid. To do anything that precluded criticism would invalidate any purpose in maintaining the practice in the first place which ultimately is one that wants to learn and improve. Without the potential of being criticised there would be no point in going on with the practice. Do you seriously hold that this is an antagonistic and unproductive place to attempt to maintain an art practice from?

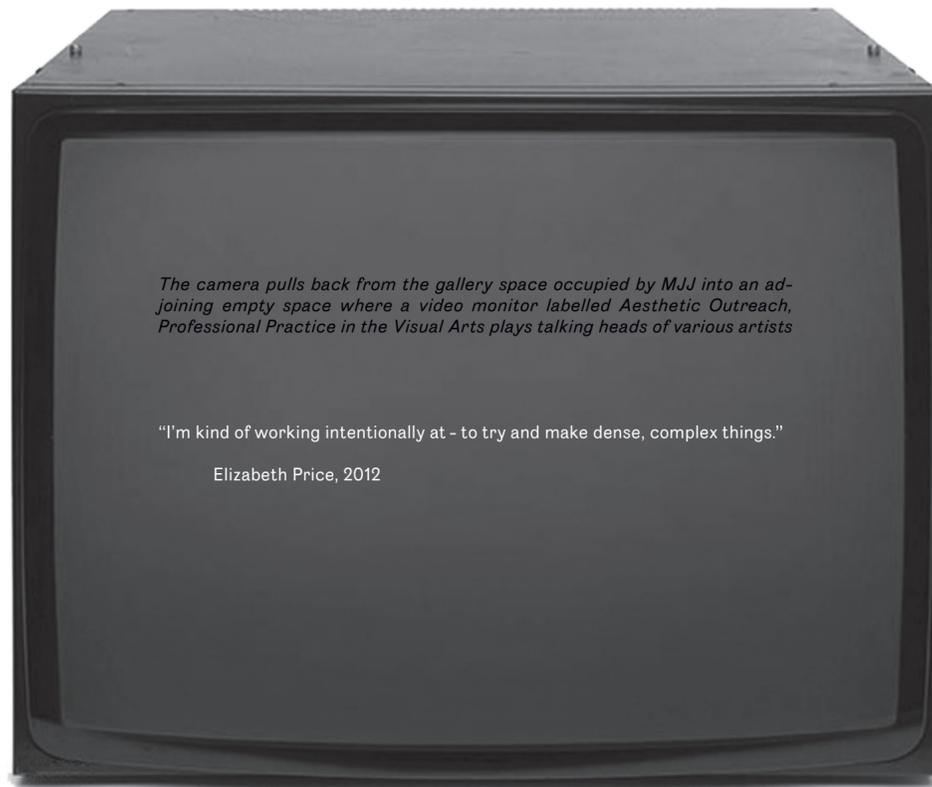
Is there the presumption operating in your entirely uninvolved approach to art as being above criticism? Does the notion of something being 'poorly done': 'poorly written', poorly conceived, painted etc., presume an inherent skewed approach to creative production? To affirm that 'that is poorly written' implies a heavy emphasis upon form, some inherited adaptation of christian perfection, at the expense of a meaningful attempt to assert an improvement. An aversion to progress by making errors. We read in your responses a commitment to art as incontrovertible argument, unassailable and immaculate.

JCHP: We've already stated that we are happy to accept that our texts pale in significance when compared to the wholly 'good' examples of art writing contained within the hallowed pages of Art Monthly or other examples of art magazines... Yes, ours is a mongrel writing produced by an exogamy. It doesn't have the incestuous purity that you so obviously crave, produced in your smugly hermetic milieu which is plainly cultish, where the editor serves as chief celebrant. And like all cults its primary interest is in its own interests, that is to say its survival and the triumph of its values - which is arthood. Art Monthly is little more than a deferential public relations machine operated by sycophants whose tongue can endure a duodenum 10 times a year, all cosily co-joined by mutual dependance and by an ingrown, canker-like jargon &c.



Whilst the preceding voice over continues, MJJ will be seen to slowly start to move between various poses. Each pose refers to a classical statue, for example, The Dying Gaul, the Farnese Hercules, the Discobolus of Myron, the Dancing Faun. Between each pose he removes an item of clothing, first his tie, then jacket &c. struggling with each item in an heroic manner as if to echo the sculpture of Laocoön with his sons. This is all accompanied by an appropriated syncopated drumming, played on a 1980's Boombox [Ghetto Blaster] placed next to MJJ, of a Senegalese bougarabou, the metal bracelets [Siwangs] of the drummer enriching the overall sound. By the end of the piece MJJ is left naked except for a pair of underpants holding, with increasing difficulty - a trembling of limbs is visible, the final pose of the Hermes of Praxiteles, his clothes draped over his left arm. The camera follows the crowd in a circular motion who've now surrounded him and have been clapping along, vigorously but unrhythmically to the backing track. The faces of the audience in various ecstatic and transfixed grimaces, gurning and as MJJ crumples to the ground under the evidently exhausting performance, the audience erupts into a more professionalized applause, the odd 'bravo' and 'encore' being heard amongst the tumultuous clapping. AW can be seen slightly distanced from the surrounding audience, eyes closed, swaying in time to some other inner rhythm, his features a mixture of internal pain and a wincing pleasure.





JCHP:

This might well constitute the most stultifying statement of intent uttered by any artist, although that shouldn't be taken too personally, as it might be read as a kind of dictum for the entire output of arthood. It certainly represents a device deployed by any number of writers of the exhibition reviews that we've inserted into this series of posters. It begs the question: why the reticence amongst the practitioners of current art to simplify with simple criticism? Do you hold this exhibition to be good or not? What constitutes good or otherwise in this specific context? We can't help suspect that the reason the critic and the artist cannot engage productively in criticism, compensating by putting their energy into producing, consciously and knowingly such 'dense, complex things', is that in order to genuinely engage in critical practice requires some form of acknowledgement that both the critic and artist know very little of what they are engaged in. Something they might acknowledge is that an admission such as this would only contribute to the fucking up of their career trajectory.

Would you admit a trait we can discern in your responses? It is implicit in each of your responses to our texts. What responses?! It is a trait prevalent in arthood and not least in the means of expression you so keenly represent and defend against poorly written diatribes. It is primarily caused by an overly enthusiastic adherence to the exhibition and the publication as the principal institutions for its model of production and distribution. It is the idea of the artwork or the text as fixed, or rather it is the fixed artwork or text as the significant object worthy of consideration; as constituting the artwork. The criteria of an artwork, in these terms, being itself as being fixed. Most likely being, to use your term, 'professionally' fixed. And 'fixed' in two senses: as being mended, resolved and completed, finite. For you, it appears it is the art professional who only has the requisite knowledge and understanding to rectify the artwork or the text into existence, into a state worthy of attention. Its status cannot be held to account. This position has no time for the likes of Samuel Richardson (another one who "hails" from the same area as you) repeatedly rewriting Clarissa in response to his readers and coterie's criticism. This attitude is of no interest here. Once the text is submitted or the work jpegged it is beyond reproach in its complete, confirmed, horrifically professionalised state. This is as far away from any residual notion of a public sphere as it is possible to get.

It is because of the kind of thoughts rehearsed in response to your responses that our current ongoing work is being arranged exactly as it is. We're engaged, the two of us together, in producing pencil drawings of various photographic subjects. The drawings themselves are produced somewhat indifferently or disinterestedly. They are produced by gridding up a given photograph and transferring the image over in pencil to a correspondingly gridded up sheet of paper. Alongside each drawing we are producing a box<sup>®</sup> of information associated with the drawing it corresponds to. The information contained in the boxes<sup>®</sup> is intended to debunk the potential status of the drawings from being received entirely as examples of the output of contemporary art, which they undoubtedly cannot fail to do. The content of each box<sup>®</sup> has been put together to exhaust and enervate the potential of what is meant by allocating the subject matter of the drawing, as an 'art object' the status of arthood.

What constitutes the status of arthood is an object subsumed into the relations of distribution of art, hamstrung by the likes of the gallery and the museum and their attendant publications, rendering the participating object wholly reliant on the institution's drip-feed of contingent opportunity structures. In order to bolster itself in these mean conditions and to try and reclaim some significant enough status for itself, the art object has co-opted, and exaggerated the aspect of its status most susceptible to meaningless platitudes. That it constitutes an ineffable object, somehow beyond ordinary comprehension and realisation. The purpose of the contents of each box<sup>®</sup>, corresponding to each drawing is to supply the requisite material necessary to undo this stated assumption and to present each drawing in a context at least closer to their genuine status - a status that constitutes a universal defining factor of all objects imbued with the status of being an example of the output of arthood - of an object produced by an agency defined by being devoid of clarity and validated intention. Constituting an object brought into existence by an artist who does not know exactly what it is they are doing and who is not in any clearly defined position to be able to justify what it is they do. The contents of the boxes<sup>®</sup> are intended to show that if it can indeed be accepted that the drawings do indeed constitute an example of art, that the term art is itself used almost entirely honorifically, and in actual fact means very little, if anything at all. That each drawing will constitute an example of arthood is to be accepted, on the basis of not wasting time. But celebration, or even satisfaction in the realisation of that status, will not be accepted.

At this last phrase, X has stood perfectly still, raising her eyes toward the camera. The camera has stopped moving back, though X is still continuing to walk forward, so that X has now reached the foreground, as if there were no longer any space between her and the lens. The shot immediately changes.

Reverse angle, showing a group of persons in the gallery. X is seen from behind, in exactly the same place and the same position as in the preceding shot, but she is holding a box. She is closest to the camera; the others are located at varying distances, forming a rather loose group, distributed between her and the camera. The characters are precisely the ones who were watching the post-lecture performance by MJJ. MJJ and AW are part of the group, as is X.

Some of the characters are standing, others are leaning against the gallery walls or even squatting on their haunches in the middle of the gallery. There could be a statue [ or a plinth] in the immediate vicinity. Everyone is motionless. X is looking at AW; MJJ is looking at X; others are looking at each other.

Then everyone, more or less together, turns towards X, as though toward someone who has just spoken. AW is the last to make this movement. X gradually begins to smile, a somewhat distant, rather ambiguous half-smile.

AW's voice starts, offscreen, and the heads turn one after the other toward X [whose face is still not seen, since her back is to the camera.] X's smile fades, or freezes. MJJ is the only one to remain turned toward AW.

AW: You're the one who responded to me, in the sudden silence, with an ironic phrase about the impausibility of my remark. [ a pause.] The others said nothing- Again I had the impression that no one understood your words, perhaps that I was the only one who heard them.

On the perhaps even the image has changed: close-up of MJJ's face, serious, rather tense.

Then follows a sequence of close-ups of the faces of the group. All faces are frozen, like those of people listening to something, straining to hear noises, somewhat tense but without anxiety. The photographs are taken full face or in profile. The poses are natural, but often the heads are somewhat bent; the only heads to be perfectly upright are those of MJJ [still full face] and AW in profile.

The transition of the preceding shots has a slow dissolve, one image gradually fading and the next gradually appearing.

MJJ and AW are standing next to each other. MJJ is looking at AW, but not insistently. AW is looking elsewhere. They do not talk to each other.

Dissolve, identical to the preceding one. The new image shows people in one of the galleries; slow, measured gestures; conversations inaudible [ no sound track] on account of background noise. Preferably one of the shots already used in one of the rapid sequences. Neither AW nor MJJ nor X is seen. This shot lasts a little longer than the first time.



Dissolve, identical to the preceding ones. The new image, somehow cleared of any consistency of all the previous imagery, represents an empty, bare bedroom furnished with nothing but a single bed, an exercise bike, Macbook, internet hub, a luxurious circular shagpile rug and rowing machine. This John Pawson inspired ascetic interior could be easily misunderstood as a property guardians temporary set up.

AW takes his early morning cultural warm down from the stresses of the night before, sat upon his exercise bike, the single gloved hand, the lycra shorts. Sweating profusely, grunting. His back to the uncurtained windows.

From the internet connected screen on his exercise bike can be heard a female voice:

Let's do this.. James in Walthamstow, I see you. Let's see what you've got today.. James that's 200 rides, Let's make this one count.. Do not give up now... Let's climb together... here we go! You are stronger than you know. In 3... 2... 1... Saddle! Great job peloton, you smashed it.

and the streamed music of Cliff Richard's *Wired for Sound*



AW is fixed in a foreground shot, a soigneur on his Tour de Ordure, a massager and greaser of the gears of arthhood. From this image of the exhausted AW, collapsed upon his bike, the camera produces an exceptionally slow Dolly Zoom, giving the effect of AW remaining consistently scaled in the foreground whilst the background becoming decompressed.

This retarded image of the collapsed protagonist lingers longer than should be reasonable, a single twitching still to the background soundtrack of Alvin Stardust singing My Sweet Deutsche Friend.

The credits roll incredibly slowly, there is no let up, the frog noises continue incessantly.