

MEMO
Matt's Gallery (office)
From Time to Time, or Since 365 Days Later

He answered the door, somehow, it must have worked. 'Excellent, you're on time, you found us ok?'

'Errr. Yeah, I made an appointment' She answered.

The visitor followed him inside to the left then entered the office with a series of large windows to the left. The space had a bank of continuous built-in cupboards to the right with a series of desks for the staff fitted neatly into the window side. Its aesthetic could best be described as unselfconsciously functional.

'Ok. Well it may not look like it at the moment but I can assure you the work is here, then again I suppose it's always been here, even before it was made from the beginning of the year before last' he said.

Turning the last sentence over in her mind, she replied after a brief pause, 'Is that significant then?'

Without answering he gestured to the overwhelming flood of countless kinds of various handouts, cards, flyers, and press releases poured into the multitude of boxes stuffed onto every available shelf, table, and floor space. He kicked one of them in playful acknowledgement scrawled on its side in thick black marker pen 'September'.

'I can't recall right now, you'll have to ask the artist that' he shrugged 'but what you do have to know is that the office is very much like a brain. It's very much a product of its own memory and experience'.

Without really taking it in, she surveyed the space 'In that case, it looks like it needs therapy' she thought to herself, 'I'm intrigued' she replied, her senses on alert, this was becoming almost like an interview, increasingly aware that looking at things was not always a one-way street.

Any feelings of self-consciousness she had were heightened by the presence of others whose workspace she'd signed up to enter when she initially made the appointment. But to her relief the staff were deep in conversation proof-reading the organisation's next release and the appropriate use of apostrophes. Feeling more like a stranger than a visitor, to be honest the office was somewhere she really didn't feel she should at all be. Though vaguely amusing, the brain analogy also made her feel a bit like she was being drawn into some kind of psychological game.

She listened intently. He went on to talk of the copious quantities of mail he'd received daily for years. 'It's relentless and sometimes it gets harder just to keep on top of things, to keep active, and even begin to make sense of it. Remember anything about mail art?' He added.

Instantly, returning the question with an answer that was itself a question. 'Mail art or *male art*? – Err, both were big in the 70s'. She chuckled to herself.

He laughed. 'Yeah, good point! Well, what you've come to see could be its logical conclusion. I'd better show you it. He stepped over to the row of built in double cupboards at the side of the office, he unlocked one and pulled the door open then unlocked another opening them both to reveal its contents with the doors fully aside like the inside covers of a book. 'You know, it's a good thing that the audience can sometimes find the art, rather than the art always having to finding the audience, I fucking hate marketing' he added. 'If nothing else it at least means that it can work under its own steam'.

'Hmmm' She spent some time surveying what had been presented to her like a mini theatre. 'What is this Robin, some sort of reification of the everyday then?' 'Mmmm. Is this a year then?' She questioned.

'Maybe, it is and it isn't. Anyway, you'll have to ask the artist, but you can see he isn't here' he answered. 'I know he's interested in Hogarth though, and how he worked'.

'Ahh. Yeah, ok, you mean the picture room at the Soane's museum?'

'Yeah, apparently the bulk of his work was from flogging prints of his painting then he got fed up with everyone ripping off his prints. So he lost business as well as quality control because people would make copies from copies and so on. He got so pissed off he went to parliament to begin what we now know as copyright law. He hated *culture jammers*'.

'But these are images of Design aren't they?' She added, smiling at the anachronism of the last sentence.

'Yeah, sure they're not art, they're how it's seen before it's been *seen*, it's packaging really I suppose. They are totally unique *drypoints* though, so they look like art don't they?'

He offered what looked like a gallery text handout, 'Look, perhaps you'd better read this, this is straight from the horse's mouth, it's written by the artist himself, you can take it away with you if you like and read it on the tube or something'.

'OK, Thanks!'

Briefly imagine for a moment the activity of art as a field, one huge field of territory stretching out to a horizon, and through the individual circumstances of our interest or curiosity we are sometimes charged with the impossible impulse of finding what we are looking for. There are no directions, no maps, just stuff, intuition and a vague idea that the right direction is out there.

But the field is not static, it is moving fast towards us, as one huge system of networks and production. In a work's attempt to find an audience, what we are looking for is also in another way attempting to find *us*. The work always needs us as a viewer to make sense of it to comprehend meaning and to export this meaning elsewhere and perhaps to return it back into the field.

On the face of it, this sounds something like a contradiction, and the work you have arranged to see is an affirmation of this; the specific location in time and place is temporal evidence that functions both for and against this system. As one of a brief sign amongst the tens of thousands in the field, the work as a self-conscious act aims to be the experience of the exhibition itself, one-to-one. The existence of any preview card is fleetingly ephemeral, and yet of course this is fundamentally tied to the work of the identity of its originator: their perception, profile, or understanding, and consequently to the condition of art in general. Through its sheer multiplicity and variable template, fixed entirely within its own timeframe, it is also the calling card of arts' general wider programme.

But, this is also a world where the discipline of *design* is truly put into practice; where its function is so closely wedded to its unruly aesthetic counterpart. In *design* terms the card conveys in a single glance how an exhibition might begin to be seen or decoded by the audience and more importantly, its cognoscenti. This is not to say *design* is mutually exclusive to art, on the contrary, as a carefully produced mechanism, its typology is testament to the very convention of taste itself that is so contingent upon how time is truly articulated. Through a matter of weeks at a time the whole production of art: its infinite rolling programme, co-exists into a co-ordinated expedition into the future that becomes a true articulation of the endless moment, and this is a sore attempt to find out whether the re-staging of it would be enough in order to begin to get a fix upon it.

'Rrrright' she then looked again into the space containing the installation as if it might be the contents of Leopold Bloom's kitchen drawer; trying to discern the significance between the artwork and the way out-of-date floppy discs, account files, as well as other general office ephemera fallen into obsolescence.

Then, pointing to one of the works, her memory recall slowly kicking in to gear. 'I think I saw this. Wow, it seems ages ago. What is this anyway, some sort of twisted karaoke exercise in arts marketing?'

'I definitely didn't see it, what did you think about it?' He enquired, ignoring the latter part of the question.

'Do you know, in my mind's eye, I can't remember that much about it. Though to be honest I don't really know what to think of this at all', she answered a bit flustered.

He turned and looked at her to explain the sequence of events, 'Well, you wanted to see some art, and not knowing whatsoever to expect you were interested, so you rang a special number then made an appointment, you came on time and now you are here to see it, and now I'm personally showing it to you – like I say, it's always been here, even before it was made from the beginning of the year before last'.

One of the office staff broke off their apostrophe debate. 'Sorry, I should have asked before. Would you like a drink at all – a cup of tea, coffee – there's green tea, normal tea, and we have just got some Lapsang Souchong?'

'Errrr. OK. Thanks', she replied looking at her watch, ' But I actually need to get back. I think I'm way out of time'.

'I hope you enjoyed it.' As an add-on to the convention, he handed her one of the thick marker pens used to write on the boxes. 'Before you go, you'll need to sign in and be added to the list of visitors'.

Perplexed, she followed the requested procedure, where on a white board fixed to the cupboard she added her name to the list of other appointments, and fixed it visible to all with today's date. 'This feels a bit more significant than a visitors book. Is it permanent?' She added.

'I suppose it all is as much as it can be, though it pretty much depends on how the brain works' he replied. 'But, that's a nice signature. Thanks for making it here, and it was nice to meet you. I'll see you out.'