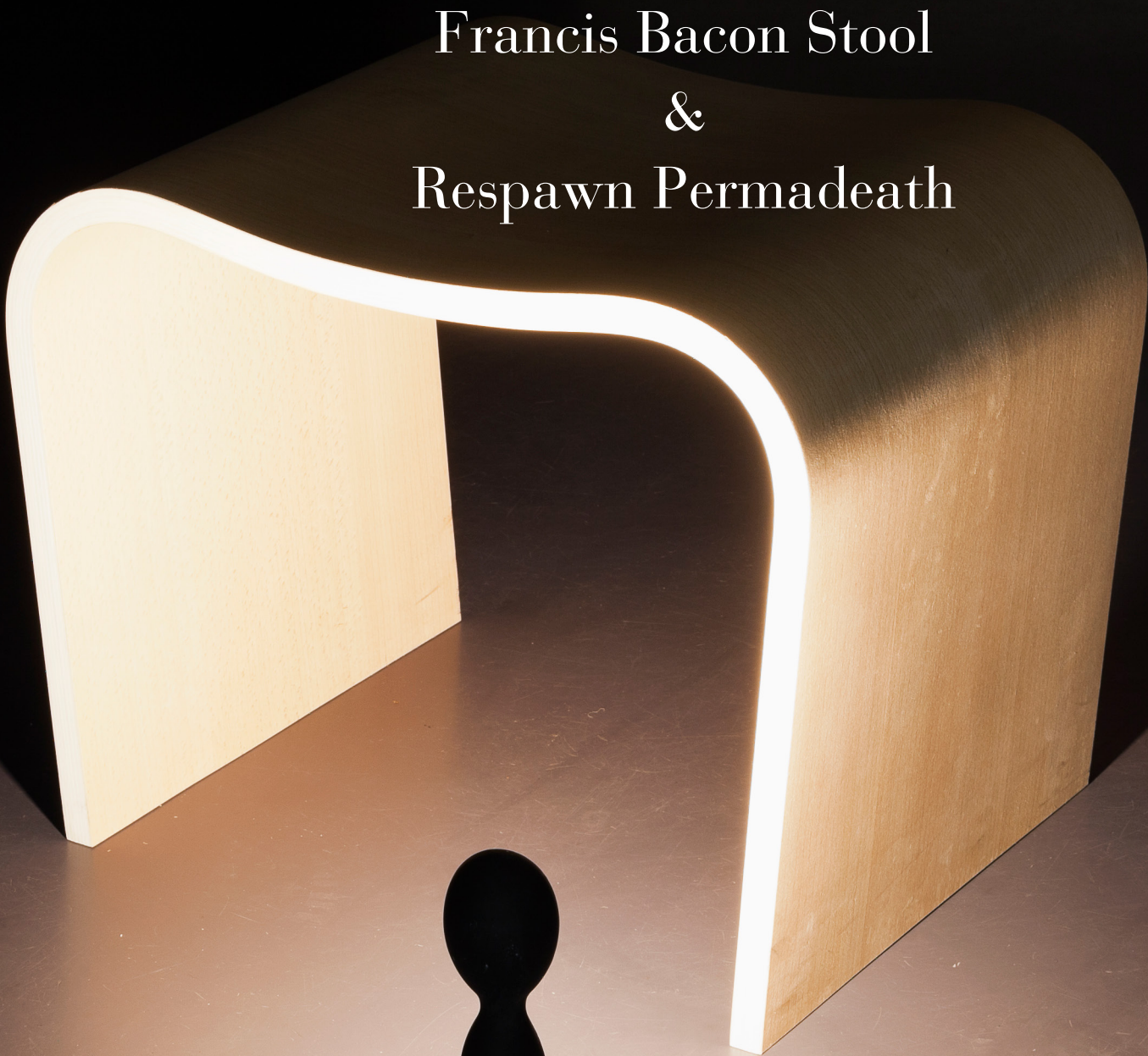


Cruising Objects Of Agency

Francis Bacon Stool

&

Respawn Permadeath



Garrett Nelson

“The re-invented pound sign becomes ever-more powerful” was the headline staring at me from a dim glow. What was it going to say, “By removing the newly, we are becoming the present. Sifting is still sifting.” Through information—to please a self image. A 3D body scanner at a TSA Pre✓® checkpoint looks through my clothes revealing my nakedness to a part-time Homeland Security Agent. An android avatar pops up on a screen, devoid of brands and genitals. Viral risk factors like a human McAfee® are still missing. We agree that I am not a threat. But he doesn’t know that I like to weaponize texts.


The technological singularity’s probability of manifestation is a matter of time and chance. A global epidemic or a perpetual crisis may slow our transition to obsolete. We are not becoming unusable. We are embedded emphatically as users. Watching bionic bodies and brain wave helmets control movements makes me desperate for strong coffee and the chance to experience as much technology as possible in my lifespan. FOMO for the long term future.

Someone would have to program the AI in the beginning to make paper clips. I’m not expanding the reductive example to a less reductive solution. Why should I? AI doesn’t.

Francis Bacon’s stool might be an unfolded paper clip. The perennial mundane inspiration of genius. He sold it before he was famous to a thrifty woman at a yard sale. Sloughing off past lives to take on the art world. (fig. 1)

A new consciousness borrowed from a failed body’s neuro-back-up is some pulpy science fiction. Resisting the bedlam of chaosmos, that body’s knowledge will reach mine; a hybrid-back-up information conglomerate. The same as sifting through information. December 16th 2005 Skeletor vandalizes the Wikipedia article of his arch-enemy He-Man under the title of “I have the power”.

And here comes the next headline, **“end #header-banner-ad/end.wrap This Kenyan Writer Might Blow Your Mind About The Origin Of Science Fiction Stories”**

A 55 year old woman wishes for the day cordless electricity charges her toothbrush. That day is here I tell her. “My god what took them so long? It seems obvious. I’ve been waiting all my life,” she says. Like all those ancients that believed in ™ but never got to spend a day punching keys to social change, lurking feeds and generating vector based ego reflections.

Words can turn into little jewels of phrase, turned round like tightly spun table legs. What were those three words you sent back to me? A three word poem? You selected them from the end of my letter. Epistolary projectiles —“espousing its poison”.

The poison of the paper clip. That twisted archetypal and nearly obsolete object of cosmic order someone¹ put forth as an example of humanity’s ruin at the hand of artificial intelligence. Everything outside the parameters is arbitrary to highly specified intelligence; paling to equally useless next to that paper clip in the golden view of one machine’s pre-programmed goals.

We don’t name names in the clickbaiting game. The name is the place. The name is the job. The name is the image.³The image is Africa winning again in the myth and mysticism of origin. Perpetuating territories.

Another four letter word. Bob Flanigan’s [BF] Fuck Journal [FJ] turned into his Pain Journal [PJ]. A poet’s journey has nothing to do with intelligence. It has to do with Fucking and Dying. And all those things between. Like Americans still killing Black Boys. These days from SUVs.

(FJ) Clickbaited through an entire day of work, too exhausted for a fuck, but it pops up on my phone asking if I want a jock strap on, here in 30 minutes.

An effervescent (bubble) page was an idea in a the arms of (bubble) stranger wearing a (bubble) jock strap. Strange from (bubble) extraneous (outside).²

Starting at the bottom and moving backwards. Speaking quickly to address an *écriture féminine* confusion of time and space. Multiple voices. No voice. My voice. Not Cixousian. Not Joycean. Not at all. Not at all. Not at all.

Susan Sontag wrote in her journal in 1973, “What if everything were the same and no one talked.”¹

There’s a space in our post fordian labour where silence is a response. The body, its flesh, tenured to systems of wasteless non-production. That space is where we end up when we are forced into a silence that exists just beyond the silence.

Edouarde Glissant has another take on silence in the last chapter of his book *The Poetics of Relation*. A silence demanded by a system. A silence as a result of abjection.

What about the beach, its waves, the sand, or rocks, their turns, our bodies, its flesh. Where are you in all that? What Sontag in her momentary fantasy failed to address, or in fact, what exactly makes it a pure fantasy, is that nothing could ever

be the same if we become silent. The becoming silent of Sontag’s fantasy forms an elliptical dialogue between same and silence: constants that fail to recognise the revolutionary power of ——— ———.

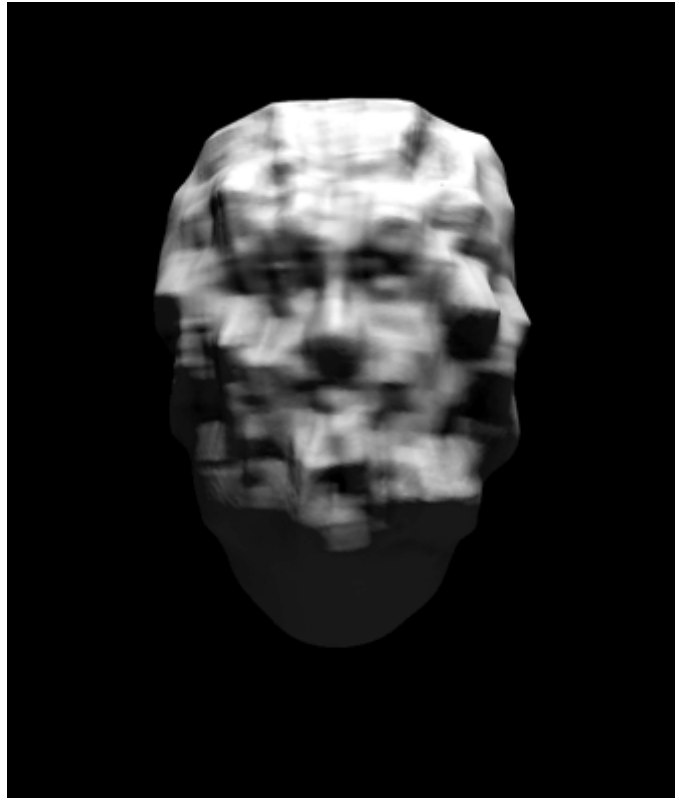
I’m thinking about being romantic without being sentimental. Better said, I’m thinking about becoming romantic without becoming sentimental. But wait. Wait. This one comes last. Let’s get back to that after.

Let me introduce our protagonist. A data mask composite visualising Facebook’s view of face without a mouth.² A transhuman — or is it transhuman? Is it not posthuman? The eyes of technology taking in a world, generating a perception and feeding it back to us. Now, not only one section of humans can give birth, can generate, in our post-human perspective, everyone can generate a perceiving body. Not touching but seeing. Not feeling but knowing. Not here but somewhere. Not speaking but silent. And as the silence cannot compete with the wastelessness of a post-advanced-capitalism – a finance capitalist demand to SPEAK. OPEN for words a hole in a cyborg face.

¹ ——— *As Consciousness Is Harnessed to Flesh: Journals and Notebooks, 1964-1980* Picador; Reprint edition (July 30, 2013)

² ——— Sterling.Crispin, *Data Mask*, 2014

I realise, I'd rather be a cyborg than a goddess.



I'm going to interview our protagonist. INTERVIEW:

-When did you last cry in front of another person?

-Complete this sentence: 'I wish I had someone with whom I could share ...'



(Selfie with the trans-human post-human entity.)

I'm thinking about new words that are about life and death in virtual spaces.

Respawn

(Hold that, say it again if you have to. Roll it around. There's no punctuation for that.)

Permadeath

The words Respawn and Permadeath were inducted into the arsenal of the English language in 2014. They count themselves among the newest members of a generative language. Their origin is one of virtual reality and virtual games. By definition, they refer to the occurrence of rebirth in the sense of multiple and repeating iterations of lives and to a permanent death or a death that does not allow rebirth in computer games. As the newest additions to an international language within a virtual context, they are arguably inherently indicative of a post-human condition. They indicate a non-human ability to regenerate and hence the contrary possibility of permanent death. At first glance, the permanent death presents itself as a redundant assertion in relation to our traditional perception of death as an eternal and final end of agency, yet it is a critically important new term if we want to examine entities that are beyond being human. In this sense, the poetics of a gamified post-human language is linked to Foucault's "Bio-Power" and Braidotti's analysis of Bio-Power and Necro-Politics.¹ Virtual game becomes real life through incorporating the politics of living and dying — "bare life" into common language.

Respawn and Permadeath slip into our language, our concepts of existence, and change our ontologies from the inside. Whether the words are material or immaterial they are hinged to death and rebirth like silence and iteration.²

1)

BALSAMO: *the new posthuman*

bodies as enabling both a fear of dispossession and a fantasy of immortality and total control.

Braidoti: “such beliefs about the technological future ›life‹ of the body are complemented by a palpable fear of death and annihilation from uncontrollable and spectacular body-threats: antibiotic-resistant viruses, random contamination, flesh-eating bacteria«. In other words, the new practices of »life« mobilize not only generative forces, but also new and subtler degrees of extinction.”

Rosi Braidoti: “*Bio-Power and Necro-Politics*”

2)

but words don't have contours like bodies. words are the most immaterial of our _____.

symbols - semiotics - contours in terms of literally - contours - the etymology of contour related to the shape of the word - the line. but the sound. the material waves invisible but present and equally important. always hinged to death as in silence. so each word spoken dies on every pause of breath. hyper cycles of respawn and permadeath. each muttered iteration a diagram of our material and immaterial existence.³

words as contours. contours in general. what are the links that liken a contour to our bodies or to a figure. what actual contours, contours of objects get fused with the figurative, or hold figurative?



Taking the context of my recent exhibition in Basel titled *The Future Myth* as a starting point to talk about a Deleuzian reading of my work, specifically, what I addressed at the prologue to this text — the potentially unfolded PAPERCLIP — the Francis Bacon stool. The idea of the stool is presented in the text, “*How the Crow Came Home*” which was printed as an imaginary lost signature of an unfinished book. It is a piece that has fallen out — a component and a whole. It attempts to build a narrative, however disjointed, of the complex web of references built into the works.

³ _____ Published as : ‘Biomacht und nekro-Politik. Überlegungen zu einer Ethik der Nachhaltigkeit’, in: Springerin, Hefte für Gegenwartskunst, Band XIII Heft 2, Frühjahr 2007, pp 18-23

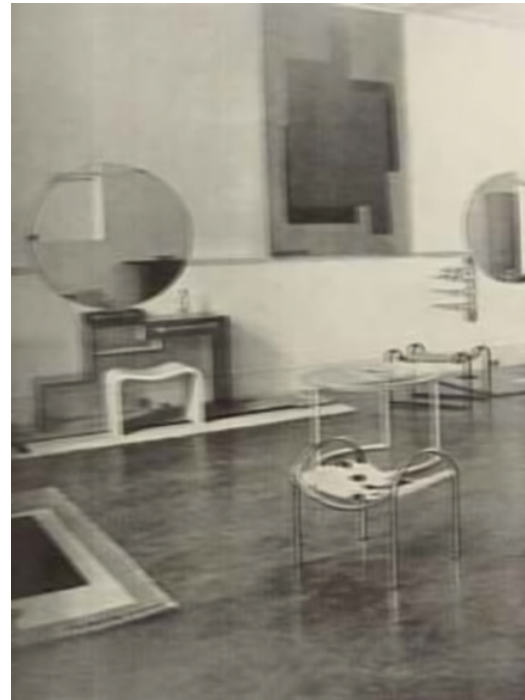
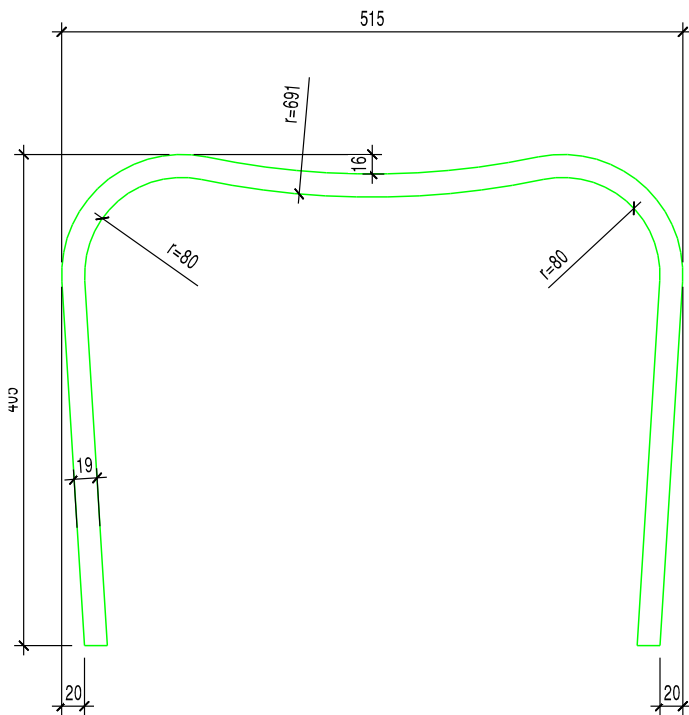


A beginning is never only a beginning. It takes hold and continues ad infinitum.

I claim that the Francis Bacon's c.1928 stool is an event that leans towards a practicable idea of a continuous *eventum* in the body of work, nay, the life of the artist. That this event, hinged to the before and the after, implies the becoming figurative in the paintings of Bacon but also takes account of his identity as linked to so many other identities: a gay man. Then I propose that the *Francis Bacon Stool*, is in fact also an agent of cruising, that practice of seeking pleasure in a circuitous fading and sharpening of gazes as it moves through and unfolds in the paintings as a primordial object to the subject's physical constraint. Moreover, that the atemporal rhizomic method in which the stool picks up its tricks is imbedded in Bacon's work (his method) and is a foresight of a post-internet art labor.

Briefly, to speak of the important details that surround the practicalities of *The Francis Bacon Stool*, as it has been called since its rediscovery in the home of a school teacher in the countryside of England last year. It was designed by the artist directly after his apparently formative and very brief visit to interwar Berlin in the late 20s, where he stayed for a mere two months. It is made of molded plywood covered in a thin veneer or was possibly painted white.

It is a single contoured line, starting at an angle to the floor squeezing inwards, opening to two bulbous joints on either side before bending in again to take into account the spine and anus. It might even be called ergonomic had that concept been coined two decades earlier.⁴



Bacon, not yet 20 years old, it has been widely assumed, was exposed to the work of Bauhaus modernism as well as most likely the films that he claimed later would inform his pictorial development of the scream. Moreover, to the milieu of sexual freedom that was then and is again the hallmark of that cities reactive cycles of freedom. To the details of Bacon's biography, we must also note that he began with the design of this stool and other furnishings as an interior designer prior to becoming a painter.

The contemporary history of *The Francis Bacon Stool* has led to its sale at Christie's Auctions last year. That is to say, it has resurfaced as a known object linked and imbued with the value of its contraction from the body of work of the artist. A relic of figurative potentia to the becoming figures of Bacon's works.

Deleuze refers to the stool in his preface to the English version of *The Logic of Sensation* as source of discomfort leading to contortion: "A man ordered to sit still for hours on a narrow stool is bound to assume contorted postures." Though this claim in fact ignores Bacon's actual working process, whereby Bacon referred to the inhibition caused by a sitter's presence and the wounding of their person that his painting (as event) inflicted. Actually, Bacon would have commissioned photographic portraits recording an event that would become contorted, wrenched, blurred, and filtered through assembled memories and references in the secluded, even gaurded, space of the studio. Here, the proto-networked art production manifests as physical chaos of clutter.

Deleuze's claim, presented as matter of fact, stems rather from a phantasm of grounding stool: forced stillness creating inner agitation captured by the artist as a potential that creates the visual con-

⁴ Hywel Murall 1949 (English popularization) Wojciech Jastrz bowski used the word in a Polish publication in 1857 *The Outline of Ergonomics; i.e. Science of Work, Based on the Truths Taken from the Natural Science*

tortions of the becoming figure: sensation. Perhaps confused but not ignorant of the artist's method, on the contrary, believing fully in the equality of the sensation and the manifestation or capturing of the sensation's event in the image so that in his description he binds the figure to an object: stool.

This bondage, to the stool, the supporting structure, or what Deleuze refers to as *The Round Area*, *The Ring*, is the ground upon which Bacon "isolates" the figure. The isolation, the bondage, the demand of the artist on the sitter (proto-figure), though not at all in actuality enforced, is the effect of our perception and reaction to the contortions of the vanishing figures. The stool may be said here to cruise into a scene and pick up a trick, literally most often by the ass, and put it through a whirlwind of physical contortion. The gaze of the becoming figure fixed nowhere and blurred to the outside plane (viewer), like the observer, at once focusing in on and out of the sensations captured on the canvas and the stool being the agent of affected desire through distraction.



Here we must note, as Deleuze and others also note, that the ground or base of the figures is in fact never only of one kind. We have table legs, beds, circles, "strangely flared and curved armchairs"⁵ as well as shapes that are not necessarily furnishings at all. However, our stool, *The Francis Bacon Stool*, is the paramount event of all those other furnishings as it is the beginning of the artist's figural works that in fact, like the paintings, and Deleuze's readings of the paintings, negate the figurative. The stool, as I have pointed out previously, is leaning towards an early modern ergonomics, so as not only to indicate the best possible working design for the body but to invert the contours of a figure, contract details of its body, its shape, the arm-iture of the flesh, in order to allude to a figure, while the figure itself is vanished.

To draw a parallel to a method of art production in a networked atemporal styleless-ness or "vanishing" art working, the idea of a vanishing figure transposes to a missing unique single style in networked art production. The body of information is blurred through time and accessibility to generate new forms; forms that are assemblages of reference materials in art and culture, high or low.

5 _____ Deleuze, *The Logic of Sensation*

Now, In a way, taking an archeological perspective to the networking that informed the paintings of Bacon as an example of what I would consider a contemporary problematic of art production and information, namely, where the past and present are folded into each other so as to render something new but decisively readable as an ongoing event. Simon Ofield, in his essay titled *Wrestling with Bacon* addresses the possibility that Bacon was informed by the sculpture *The Wrestlers*, the ancient Greek sculpture in Roman copy in the Uffizi in Florence. John Russell in his book *Francis Bacon* claims however that Bacon never saw the sculpture, or at least not previous to his conception of the work. However, it had been published several times on the covers and in the pages of mid-century physique magazines in both the United States and England. These barely passable smut rags of classic sculpture, their homoerotic imagery under the guises of #fitspo culture, vicariously created lasting art historical links.

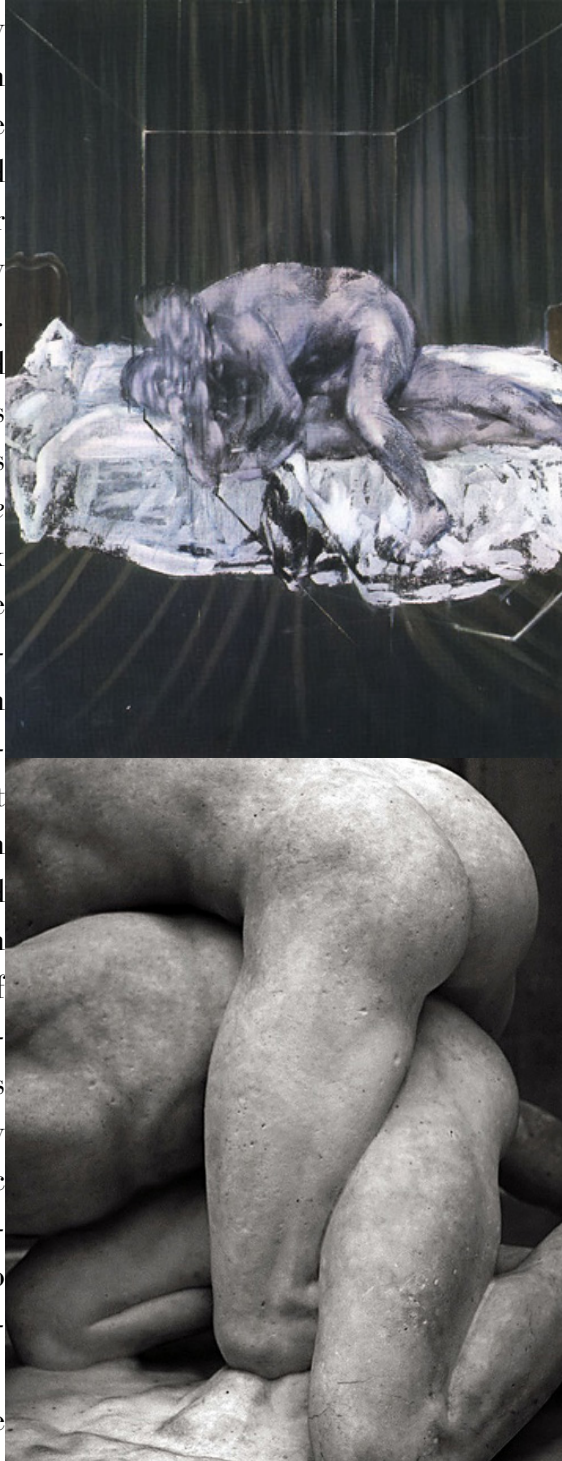
Exactly here we see the folding of time and reference for an artist's influence and subject, potentially traceable and yet without weight, generating a narrative that is easily fictitious or never completely real. Like a wiki page with too

few references but a lot of hope, it is the foresight of a networked art labor. Adeptly applicable to a working style of contemporary art, we find that it is made of the same stuff, nebulous links passing through layers of time and space to generate something not of then but now and yet without its own style, whereby as style I mean to say, the style itself is so broad, so changing, so referential that it defies pinning down. There are aesthetic trends, of course, but there isn't pointilism, expressionism, etc.. there are all of these and yet more, and all of them are equally important and unimportant.

Getting back to the chair, the stool, and fitting it into this lineage as a referential time traveling, cruising object of agency, we find that it not only moved through the paintings of Bacon, picking up bodies, lifting them, aiding in their contortion through the idea of constraint but in fact re-manifested in a contemporary art context beginning again, or returning to a beginning. The stools, starting as an inspiration from a German visit, transferring it's life to the virtual realm of the canvas,

re-enters the physical world in a new make, not a re-make.

Maybe, respawn? Yes, respawn.



So, that we have a language to describe this in our own lives, but also as it affects objects, art subjects, and art production methods. The poetics of the chair's cruising potential, again that circuitous fading and sharpening of gazes, comes forth in the accompanying text I conceived as a

signature of a book, that physical element of a book, bound pages of 16 surfaces. As if having fallen out.

Only some beginnings. Only some beginnings.

EPILOGUE

Becoming figurative without being figurative. But what about that cruising? That fear of losing focus of the object of desire? How we move around seeing one thing somewhere and then seeing it everywhere.

IMAGES IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE:

The Francis Bacon Stool, 2015 Garrett Nelson photo Gunnar Meier

How The Crow Came Home Pages 1-5, 2015 Garrett Nelson

Data-Masks (Series), Sterling Crispin, 2013

Battleship Potemkin Film Still from Francis Bacon's Studio

They Don't Have A Word For It In English, gift to the artist by Milos Trakilovic 2015

Installation view of the Exhibition *The Future Myth*, 2015 Oslo 10 Basel, Garrett Nelson photo Gunnar Meier

Production plan based on auction records, Garrett Nelson, 2015

Furniture and rugs designed by Francis Bacon, published in *Studio*, vol. 100, 1930, p. 141

Metropolitan Triptych, Francis Bacon 1981 three etchings and aquatints on single paper

Two Figures, 1953 Francis Bacon

The Wrestlers detail Uffizi Florence photograph by unknown photographer