
JACOB WREN is a writer and maker of eccentric performances. His recent books include «Unrehearsed Beauty, Families Are Formed Through Copulation» and «Revenge Fantasies of the Politically Dispossessed». He frequently writes about contemporary art.

SIMON BROWN was born amongst cows, grew up amongst trees and now lives amongst people, buildings and machines. His interest is sparked by the most banal aspects of life as well as by the most abstruse manifestations of its essence. He is also completing an MFA at Concordia University in Montreal, where he mostly writes things.

LORNA BAUER works primarily in photography, video, and installation. She received a Masters degree from the University of Toronto in 2009 and a Bachelor of Fine Arts (with distinction) from Concordia University in 2005. She has taken part in numerous group exhibitions and has recently presented her work as solo exhibitions at Gallery Les Territoires in Montreal and in the projection access space at the Art Gallery of Mississauga. Bauer lives and works in Montreal.

BE BUT COULD IF IS NOT WHAT

BY JACOB WREN

THREE

TEXTS

BY SIMON BROWN

JACOB WREN

1.

There is a natural pleasure to smashing stuff. From a childhood rock through the window of the house that won't let you play on it's lawn, to the splintering guitar catharsis at the end of a sweaty concert, it is the gesture that enacts blind anger, blind rebellion, and that by enacting it connects it, for a moment, to a feeling of liberation. Later you will be forced by your parents to apologize to the man whose window you so rudely smashed. New guitars will have to be bought to replace the old ones. But for a moment you tasted freedom.

2.

I took the title of the show («What Is Not But Could Be If») and arranged the seven words in alphabetical order («Be But Could If Is Not What»). Normally I avoid such language games but for some reason, in this instance, I was tempted. For a moment, I thought of it like the words had been smashed on the floor. That I had picked them up, put them back together. The sentence «Be But Could If Is Not What» exists on the verge of grammatical sense. The 'if' in the middle, like a pivot point, suggests a mathematical formula such as 'x = y if p = t'. (With this analogy one might correctly guess I know practically nothing about math.) If you stare at the alphabetized sentence for a moment, if you force it, it might break into two parts. A command: «Be but could», and a question: «Is not what?» And if you continue to force it, it might start to mean something like: what is the «not what» that is stopping you from fully being what you could. What is the barrier, what gets in your way, what is the «what» preventing humanity from fulfilling its promise? This genre of complex nonsense reminds me of some of the formulations of Heidegger, formulations that I also attempt to understand by staring at them, by attempting to surmise what they might mean through certain

grammatical leaps of faith. For me, such operations connect back to the pleasure of smashing things, of seeing them in fragments, of wanting to put them back together. In the act of putting things back together one can re-imagine them, can be startled by unexpected juxtapositions. New meanings continuously emerge. Meanings that otherwise might have never existed. Meanings where one is not quite sure if there is anything there, other than one's sublime effort to «force things». This also might be one definition of poetry.

3.

A vase, wine glasses, bottles and water glasses. These are the things being smashed. There are clichés around such actions, here deftly avoided. Having a vase thrown at your head in the heat of a lovers quarrel. Smashing a wine glass to celebrate a Jewish wedding. Sketchy bars in which beer bottles are thrown at the musicians. There is also the embarrassment of knocking something over accidentally. Glass and ceramic are sturdy enough for everyday use but not for acts of random force. Vessels made of glass are more elegant than vessels made of metal or plastic. The reason must have something to do with their fragility.

SIMON BROWN

«To break»

To cause to separate into pieces suddenly or violently. To precipitate the cause whereby something would be separated into pieces suddenly or violently. To encourage circumstances that would be conducive to sudden or violent separation. To indicate to an acquaintance that circumstances conducive to sudden or violent separation might be present in a given situation. To separate the cause whereby something would be separated suddenly or violently from the circumstances wherein that separation might take place. To indicate to an acquaintance the time and place where such a separation might occur. To not necessarily be physically present at the time and place where the separation occurs, but to ask the acquaintance to describe the circumstances that have made possible the aforementioned sudden or violent separation. To doubt the veracity of the acquaintance's account of what has occurred and what circumstances were present that would allow such a sudden or violent separation to occur. To however be certain that some sort of violent or sudden separation has occurred, and to keep the knowledge of this certainty a secret for later on, just in case.

«Making a picture might possibly be putting something back together again, in some sense»

We know, from experience or from what we have been told, that broken things can be put back together again. Not all broken things, but most of them all the same. Sometimes the things look like they did before they were broken, but often they do not. Sometimes the desire for the things to look the way they did before they were broken trumps the knowledge of the fact that they most probably will not look that way, which is to say they remain in a state

of being broken. Other times the awareness that they will look differently when put back together again can be accepted and on rare occasions the things that have been broken and put back together again can be seen as being more interesting or even more physically attractive in their present, repaired state. In the end, however, seeing the broken things as being more interesting or physically attractive in their present state is a moot point; the fact is, they are still broken.

«A picture of what appears to be an empty room»

Sometimes it is better to be alone in an empty room. Despite all the supposedly fascinating objects and allegedly interesting people that could be there with you, often just the empty room is better. If fascinating objects and interesting people do happen to be in the room, it is probably better to take the objects out and make the people leave, rudely if necessary. If the interesting people complain about being made to leave the room, you can hit them in the head with the fascinating objects, provided they are heavy and blunt enough. Then you can stand, sit, or lie alone in the empty room, at least until the interesting people return and the fascinating objects are put back in, both of which will probably happen sooner or later. Nevertheless, until then, it is better to be alone in the empty room.