



Jeremy Deller

*No Language, Just Sound, That's All We
Need To Know* 2009

procession as part of the Manchester
International Festival

Selfridges window display as part
of the Museum of Everything's 2011
'Exhibition #4'

control over art's value, he looked again at the overlooked and underappreciated 'relational' tendencies of certain artists and practices. 'Relational Aesthetics', he claimed, surpassed the old 'tasteful' dialogue between subject, object and context and defined a new limit for our encounters with art. But despite almost a century stretched between Duchamp's and Bourriaud's not dissimilar games, played with things and places, the order of things were changed only slightly. Bourriaud's promise of eventful turbulence resulted only in chatting *galleristi* fatally locked within art's 'world'. If his thesis helped at all it was in enabling us to recognise the relational aesthete as a type, a sophisticated member of a self-reflexive insider audience who exhausts art's established procedures only to wind up face-to-face in a *de luxe* edition of a Beckettian *dénouement*.

Thus art painted itself into ever tighter, more intricate corners; and yet during the same period, just beyond art's self-imposed parameters, the web began to provide an alternative model of the world, presenting us with a non-hierarchical model of inexhaustible exchange. On this continuous interface, with neither an inside nor an outside, everyone and everything have been deterritorialising apace – breaking down spatial, social and cultural walls – freely sharing miles of files in unprecedentedly generous and transparent ways. Given such a model, should we still concern ourselves with any Duchampian/Bourriaudian shift between context and object, or should we instead consider abandoning the very notion of context and contemplate instead the relinquishing of 'ismism' per se?

Rather than crave, contrive or compete to claim a contemporary paradigm – as Bourriaud repeatedly does – why not eschew context completely? One way to advance this aim is to follow Ryan Trecartin and other online televisualists such as LuckyPDF and Auto Italia, all enthusiastically cultivating the realm of online TV shows. These pioneers invoke props, stage-sets or mercurial blue- and green-screen technologies as an appropriate context for a deterritorialised, post-paradigmatic age. Once exploited by Warhol, the bargain-bin hyperreality of home-made TV is now linked through HD, 3G and YouTube to become the ideal medium for communicating the clatter of now to a generation less than ever constrained by roots and terrain, less than ever convinced by the gravitational limits imposed by authority.

Meanwhile James Brett, organiser of the nomadic Museum of Everything, has been hosting a popular exhibition of outsider art installed far from the art world and with purposeful incongruity in the basement of Selfridges luxury department store and the derelict Selfridge Hotel in London's Oxford Street. Meeting Brett you see straight away that he is far from burdened by endgames and cultural *ennui*, rather he is full of beans and jumping with enthusiasm for his pro-outsider, anti-mainstream thesis. You gain a strong sense that his overarching aim is to bust art loose from its established moorings and pry it out of its shell. The all-encompassing title of his project frames individual events that are abundantly and rambunctiously dismissive of the cool and sparse white-cube tradition. Brett grandly and provocatively declares outsider art to be the foundation of all the arts, and not some small, marginal place of uncertain respectability (he chooses the image of an outside 'privy') habitually misused as a corollary by which to legitimate and secure the cosy 'insider' art world. Not only is outsider art the foundation of our vast and complex culture cathedral but, according to Brett, it is the very origin of art. Cave art, he argues, is outsider art, and outsider art is correspondingly a kind of cave art – by which we must assume he means fundamental to daily life, shared at the heart of community, rather than a shadowy, cultic ritual.

Unlike some of the trends noted above, outsider art is not a promotion of context at the expense of objects and artists; quite the reverse, it is an art that is all object and no context. The outsider object is not so much displaced à la Duchamp, Surrealism, Haim Steinbach etc, as de-placed. Meanwhile, the subjective agency of the outsider artist is dispersed between an intense autonomy and a semi-conscious activity that amounts to a form of objectivity, manifest in the visual and procedural similarities discernible in a wide range of outsider works.

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