

Notes On Writing:
2+2 = > 4
By Apichaya Wanthiang
Bergen, Norway 2013

If for every thought in process you fill a jar with stones, and keep filling and forcing it in, the jar will break at one point and that is a good thing, isn't it?

All aesthetic judgments is really cultural evaluation
-S. Sontag

A to do list (note to myself-possibly helpful to you):

1. Read a lot- focus on canon writers-keep a list of book you should/ want to read in the future and which one you have read.
2. Find inspiring text by less known authors that according to you should be in the canon and find out why, be argumentative!
3. Write obsessively and without censoring yourselves.

4. Eliminate repetitions and keep note of them-they might turn out to be key to finding your voice.
5. Find a voice that is your own, let others read your work-take their critical remarks seriously.
6. Makes notes on hindsight, interesting thoughts, illuminations and random talk that catches your eyes and ears-anything and everything that you think might come in handy at some point.
7. Reread books and reread your own writing, as much as is needed for it to become clear- i.e. so you know/feel sure about following step
8. Reconsider your strategy or to do list at regular intervals.

Why do we need to write about art at all? How should writing on art be different than writing novels, articles, etc? Education through exemplary practices, how does it work?

Lets make a thinking exercise for I require you to accept some generalizations on my part. I would argue that art could be anything. Main characteristics I would ascribe to it are: it is either chosen or produced by men. It is remarkable just for being chosen or made-but what makes it exemplary-is its repercussions in reality and through history-very often on a subconscious educational level. The knowledge required through this kind of education through transference is not linear-but I am convinced- more effective and lasting over a longer period of time. Good writings about art can be based on the same premises: it can transfer stylistic and subjective knowledge that will affect the reader and affect the readers taste, judgments and production.

Artworks do not need writings to exist -it is as simple as that- however we do relate to art history and to art theory. With the coming of the Bologna Accord, artistic writings have been pushed towards an academic or university style of writing. Of major concern throughout discussions on this topic was: how can we judge if an art practice is valid- in relation to academic research-this validity showed itself through argumentation and writing and so we were asked to do the same.

I remember having a discussion with my professor at the art academy in Brussels five years ago. He asked if I could hand in my sketchbooks so they could be stored for research and administration. Also, if I could start some kind of 'art diary' to explain my process a little more. I felt that this would be an extremely wrong thing to do: I felt strongly that the final works in the exhibition space were already talking about their process and origin in a manner more fitting to their cause. We ended having a long discussion if this is a right way to 'represent' or validate art. Food for thought is still: how complicated this link is between art and education. Are art practices educational? In which way can writing on art contribute to art and further contribute to education or progress? What can writings on art teach art or vice versa?

Notes on writing

Few days ago I came across a man on the street. He was dressed in black and wore on his face a grimace that made me slightly uncomfortable. As I was walking home alone at three at night, I felt an extreme awareness of being followed. He was obviously drunk and was talking to himself, I wondered if he was addressing part of his tirade also to me. While dragging his numbed body along, he was throwing empty beer bottles left and right. I almost felt that the breaking of the glass left a mark in my womb. Usually the nights are still in Bergen, at least during weekdays: a certain silence covers the street and I feel like everything familiar becomes my companion, random encounters and random friends. At that specific moment, I was taken by angst and felt sure he was dangerous, although he gave me no reason for this conclusion.

I am writing you this in hope to detour what has been asked of me. We are used to certain parameters and they become restrictions as to how we see, write, make and love. Do you feel that I am jumping from one thing to the next? Writing about art should not only be a language locked up in a box of 'how to'. I cannot stress enough the importance of redrawing these prescriptions, to stress the meaningfulness of detour and minutiae details. It is in our attempt at redrawing these prescriptions that a greater good is passed on.

Last night I dreamt about being back home. Only people in the dream weren't attached anymore to the place I have ascribed to them. Instead they were floating through the air like filtered sun through high pine trees. The colors were pink and green and yellow and I thought how strange they have come to inhabit my paintings and where am I in all of this, I wonder.

How does one event relate to the next? How does writing about art relate to art? I am not sure what it should be, but it cannot be an illustration. It cannot be art's excuse. Maybe their connection can be more or less deduced to soil and what grows out of it. Only I would argue that art can be soil just as writing can be so too. This connection implies a chronological link: a thing that inspires and feeds the other. Like mother and daughter they are linked: sometimes we only get to know one and forget about the other. Like mother and daughter sometimes they become more empowered when the decisions made are independent from each other- when dependency is not linear or needed but more sought or chosen for.

What should writings on art do?

Writing about art can be used for a number of different purposes: to promote, to explain, to contextualize etc. I would like to propose that it should always try to do one thing- though many might disagree- that is to try to expand the borders of writing. Like art making: the work can talk about endless different subject matters but, it should aim while doing so to enlarge the scope of its field. I am here not arguing for 'the newer the better', but more or less that we makers or writers should calculate in the possibility of expansion by pushing at the outer edges of what we do. This expanding of the mediums border is the main factor contributing to education, evolution and history. No matter how small this contribution is.

Some exemplary practices through out history

Many were exemplary in educating and changing the course of writing- I will only mention two. Franz Kafka, in his way of writing reconsid-

-ered the format of a novel. Much has been written about him and his work, and I do not know enough to contest the theories proposed by figures like Walter Benjamin and pre-eminent psychoanalysts. I do however want to refer to the Kafka Effect, mentioned by Reda Bensmaïa, in his introduction to Deleuze and Guattari's book towards a minor Literature. Bensmaïa points to the Kafka Effect. The Kafka effect is according to Deleuze and Guattari related to a 'deterritorialization' and this follows the idea of a minor literature. A minor literature shows itself-if I have understood correctly -through the machine producing effects. Following Jana Evans Braziel's summation-the characteristics of a minor language is-a language that originates from a minority within a major language-the mother tongue. Minor Literature is inherently political, since it carries within its personal writing collective repercussions, and the underlying political narrative cannot but shine through. Thirdly, following previous point, it has collective value, since it is necessarily political even if others might not agree. It moves the topological center of a major literature and therefore it is 'deterritorializing'.

'The machine producing effects is not used metaphorically or symbolically but always in the most concrete sense. In his Dialogues with Claire Parinet, Deleuze makes it more precise: « Machine, machinism, machinic »: it is neither mechanical nor organic. The mechanical is a system of gradual connections between dependent terms. The machine, on the other hand, is a clustered « proximity » between independent terms (topological proximity is itself independent of distance or contiguity). A machine assemblage is defined by the displacement of a center of gravity onto an abstract line.'

Kafka's stories were about life, bureaucratic structures, repetition and I would argue beauty, for in their structure I see an argument for life. But my point is, and I see a likewise argument in Deleuze and Guattari's *Towards a Minor Literature*, is that what makes Kafka's writing exceptional is not necessarily his subject matter or the fact that it can be interpreted in many ways but that it demands to be

interpreted and considered as a whole: the love letters he wrote to Felice, the letters to his father and all the unfinished manuscripts. It should not be interpreted in a singular way, metaphorically, symbolically or allegorically. What really counts according to Deleuze and Guattari is the *gestus* that is generated in us the readers- that are the feelings instilled an generated within us-the subject he writes about are generating similar affects within us while reading. To touch upon a oversimplified point: many critics have deemed Kafkas writing devoid of politics or devoid of much reference to his jewish origins. Deleuze and Guattari argues however that through the use of a minor literature his writing cannot be but political and cannot but enlighten us-through affect- about society which he lived in. I wholeheartedly agree.

In the last chapter-what can the artist do in the world of today? -Albert Camus in his book *The Myth of Sisyphus* touched upon the core of what I am getting at:

‘He is not asked either to write about co-operatives or, conversely, to lull to sleep in himself the sufferings endured by others throughout history. And since you have asked me to speak personally, I am going to do so as simply as I can. Considered as artist, we perhaps have no need to interfere in the affairs of the world. But considered as men, yes. The miner who is exploited or shot down, the slaves in the camps, those in the colonies, the legions of persecuted throughout the world-they need all those who can speak to communicate their silence and to keep in touch with them. I have not written, day after day, fighting articles and texts, I have not taken part in the common struggle because I desire the world to be covered with Greek statues and masterpieces. The man who has such a desire does exist in me. Except that he has something better to do in trying to instill life into creatures of his imagination. But from my first articles to my latest book I have written so much, and perhaps too much, only because I cannot keep from being drawn towards everyday life, towards those, whomever they may be, who are humiliated and debased. They need to hope, (...) this does not mean, however, that we must sacrifice our artist’s nature to some social preaching or other.

I have said elsewhere why the artist was more than ever necessary. But if we intervene as men, that experience will have an effect upon our language. And if we are not artists in our language first of all, what sort of artists are we?’

1. Sontag Susan, *Reborn Early Diaries 1947-1963*, 2008, Penguin Books, London
2. Evans Brazier, Jana, Notes on ‘What is a minor literature’ from Kafka Towards a minor Language, <http://www.umass.edu/complit/aclanet/janadele.htm>
3. Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka Towards a Minor Literature*, 1986, The university of Minnesota Press, Minnesota, Bensmaïa Reda, Foreword The Kafka Effect.
4. Camus, Albert, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 1942, Librairie Gallimard, Gallimard