

Please

read

from the
text

we read
before.*

Neubarock A Work Cycle by Diana Sirianni

ISBN
978-3-942700-85-6

* Scores by Naama Ityel,
developed for the
workshop Collage as
an Attitude at the
Universität der Künste,
Berlin 2015-16

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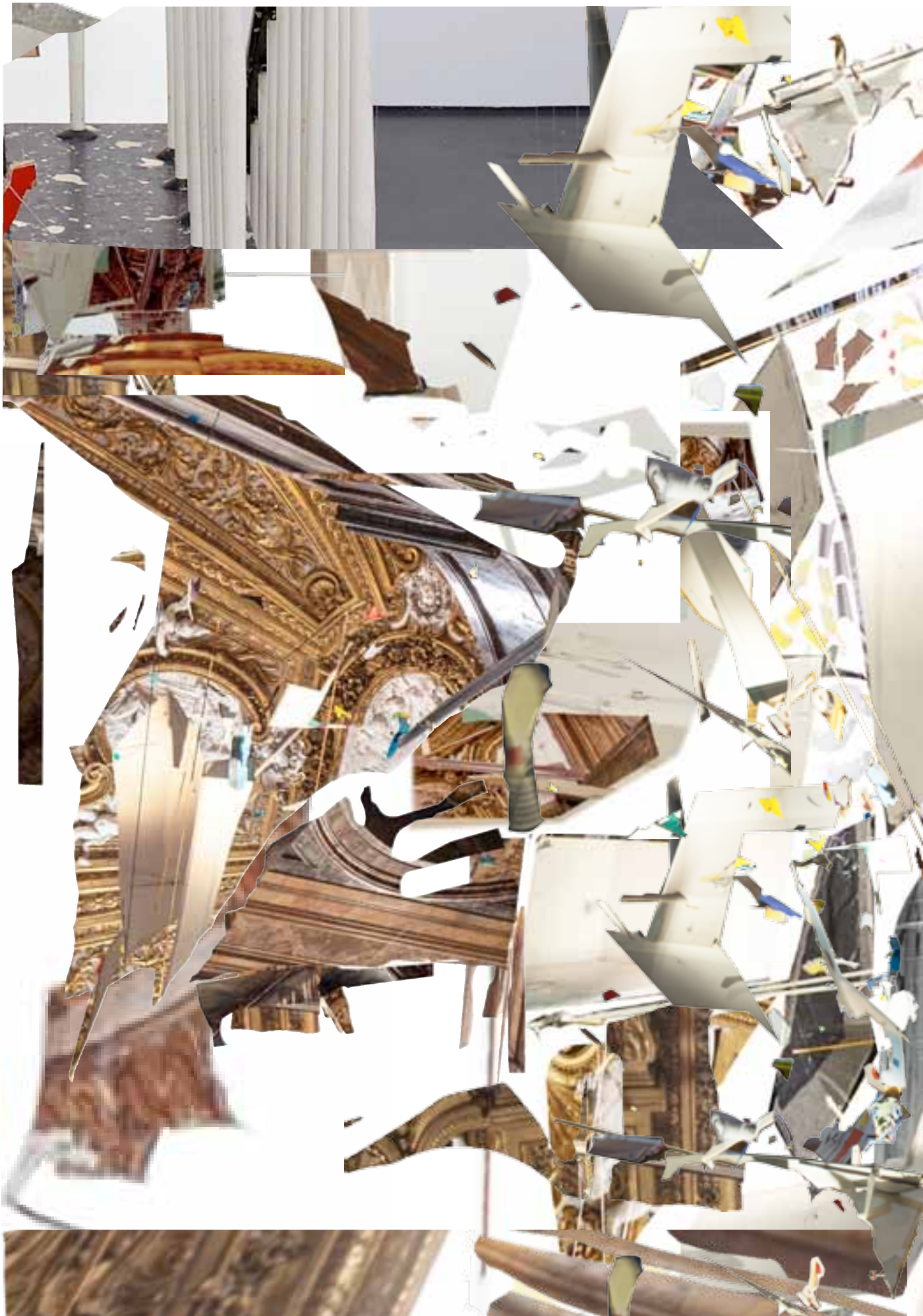
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Diana Sirianni Neubarock
A Work Cycle by Diana Sirianni
2014–2017







Neubarock

A Work Cycle by Diana Sirianni

2014 – 2017

Edited by Adela Yawitz

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to tear
to chip
to split
to cut¹

to support
to hook
to suspend
to spread
to hang

10

Diana Sirianni's Neubarock was a cycle of changing perspectives, of expansions and subsequent cuts, realignments and new positioning. This book follows the process the project took from the baroque space of a Roman church, through the clean-cut galleries and halls of the art world, and most recently — out to the street.

In parallel to the change in location and ever-expanding archive of materials Sirianni was working with, this move is also just that — a growing focus on movement, on action, both in making and perceiving the work. A perspective is connected to a body, and it is with our bodies that we walk through the streets, churches, and galleries where Sirianni's work is suspended around us. In the last video pieces, the artist's and the audience's movements are inscribed into the images as well.

to hinge
to mark
to expand
to dilute
to light

to remove
to simplify
to differ
to disarrange
to open

11

Like Sirianni's own process, this book is also made up of different layers, interruptions, and juxtapositions. It follows a non-accumulative process of work, which is rearranged for each piece, so it can also be read backwards, or sometimes sideways. The "Sources" pages collect the images, but the spatial arrangement is what gives them a form — a suspended, timed, and temporary form as it may be.

¹ All verbs are quoted from Richard Serra, Verb List, 1967–68.

stage 1

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COLLAGE AS AN ATTITUDE
An Paenhuysen

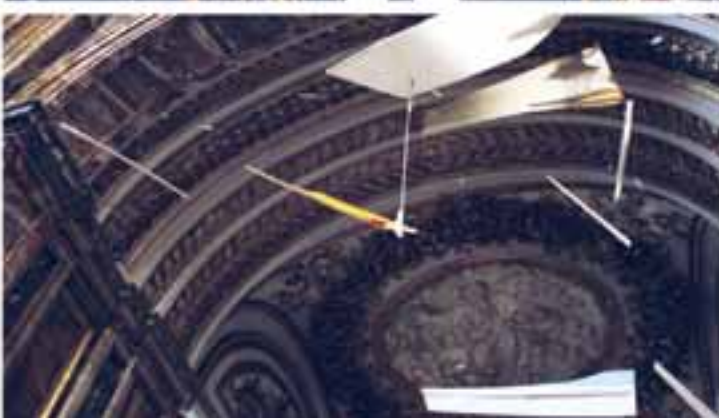
Collage is not just a technique, it's an attitude. Instead of formal structural thinking, take two structures and let them crash.

Collage is a natural distrust of anything that is considered standard or status quo.

Cappella Santacroce- Aldobrandini, Rome, May 15 – 24, 2014

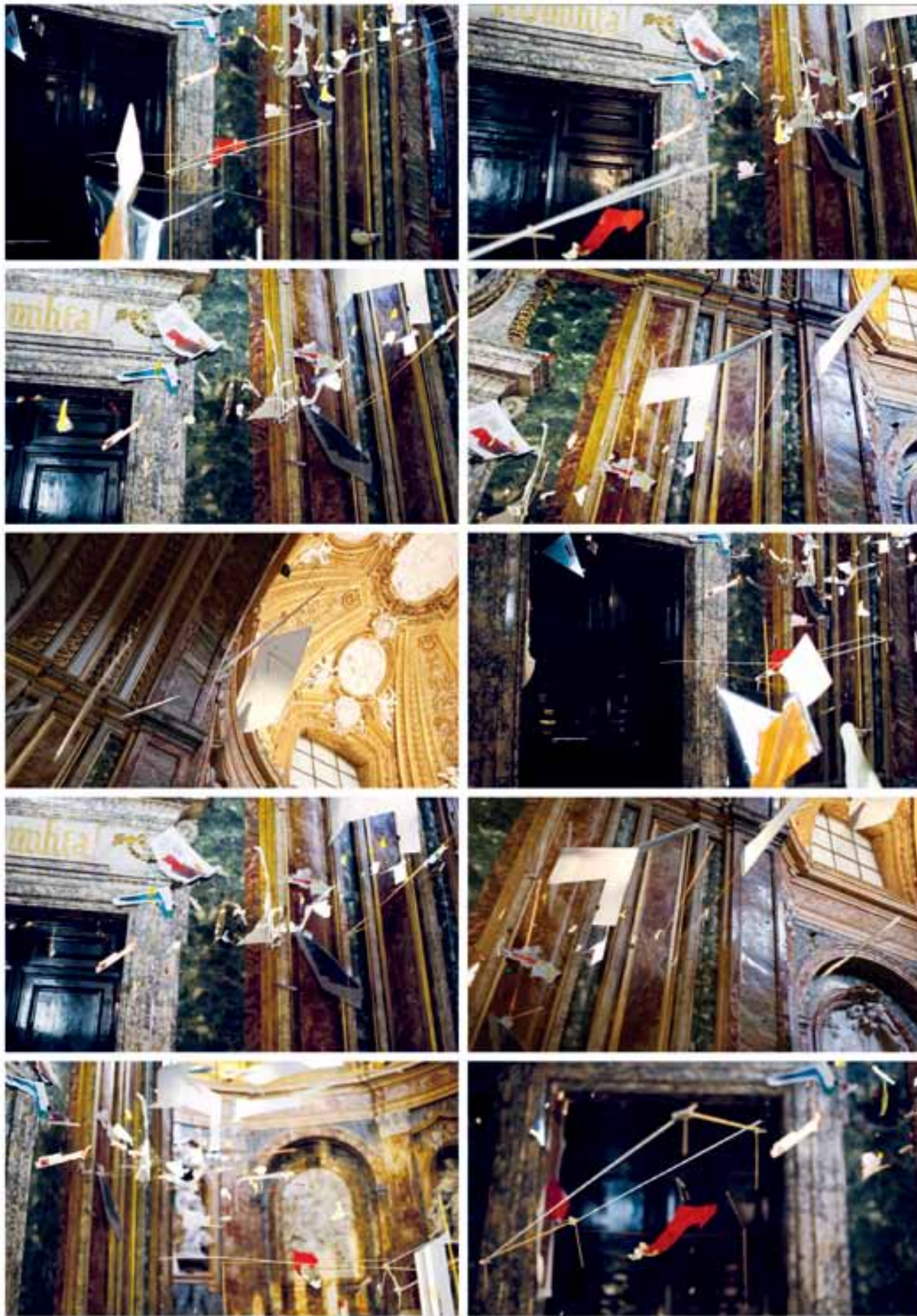


“Attitude” was created in the 1960s, before that there was “ideology.”



stage 1

17



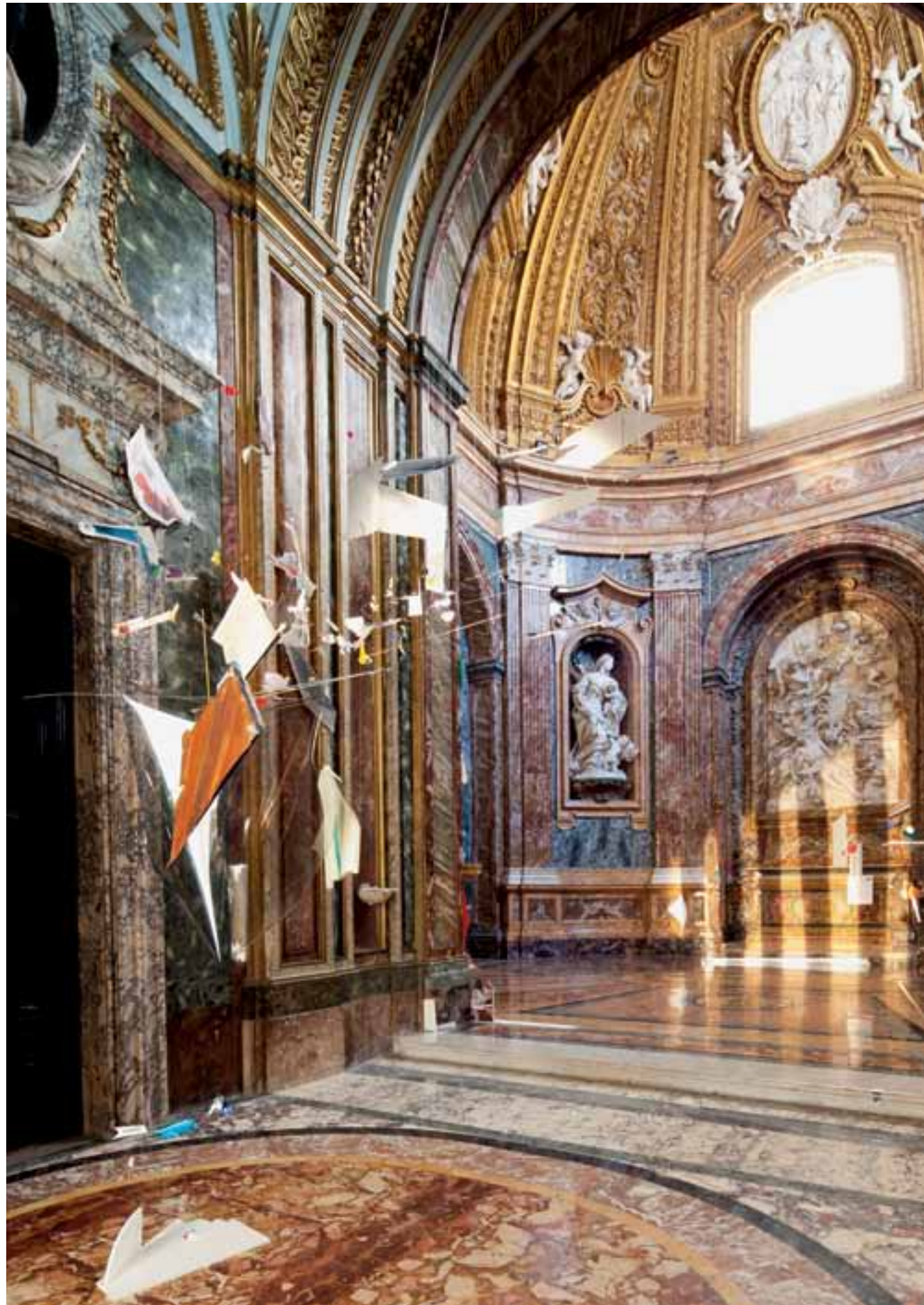
stage 1

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A collage is a whole that transcends its pasted fragments. It's an orchestration of the chaos of everyday.



THE STILL ARTWORK, IN MOTION.

Nina Mende

An ‘unfinished’ work, which “the author seems to hand [...] on to the performer more or less like the components of a construction kit”¹. That is how Umberto Eco, writing in *The Open Work* (1962), describes a type of artwork new at the time and specific to the arts of modernity: work that remains open, repeatedly, to new experiences and interpretations from different perspectives. As a literary man, Eco is referring here to texts as well, and points out Mallarmé’s unfinished book *Livre* as a forerunner of the open work. The book should thus be comprised of endlessly reconfigurable, loose pages of words and sentences, which can ceaselessly form new connections and contexts amongst them—a book with no beginning and no end. Indeed, not one book, but an endless multitude of them.

Such open works would prompt their audience to actively collaborate in their own production process. For Eco, these works are ‘in motion’; in other words, their meaning and form have not been definitively set by the artist. Instead of being depleted by any single finished iteration, each new interpretation or combination “offers us a complete and satisfying version of the work, but at the same time makes it incomplete for us, because it cannot simultaneously give all the other artistic solutions which the work may admit”².

Precisely this ambivalence lies at the heart of Diana Sirianni’s spatial collages. Each one of her installations is composed with precision, creating an astounding harmony despite its variety of materials, and yet faintly indicating that there may be an underlying whole, an all-encompassing secret structure. At the same time, the collages elude any reliable observation. Nowhere are they definitive: neither in any single space or current state, nor as consistent, firmly determined work. The work’s appearance and meaning is permanently in flux, changing along with the viewer’s movement through the room, his sense of space and her subjective associations; to a certain extent, the work is only created through the viewer’s perspective onto it.

¹ Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, Trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 4.

² Eco, *The Open Work*, 15.

Even each single work will never repeat itself in exactly the same way once it has been dismantled. Instead, images of past spatial installations are to be found anew in Sirianni's subsequent works — but only after they have been modified and deconstructed. In this way, an image of an image of an image are interweaved; a space is stacked within a space within a space; various layers of time and significance, as well as the architectures of different eras, form a new, incomplete and unstable whole. Indeed, not one whole, but an endless multitude of them.

Artworks that were open to multiple meanings emerged as early as the Baroque, according to Eco: already at that point art no longer adhered to any apparent meaning that the viewer could merely follow along. Art had become a mystery, a task to be deciphered. The world — and art and science along with it — were suddenly perceived as being in motion, and people were challenged to use their creative activity in order to encompass the dynamically transforming, equivocal forms of the Baroque³. People applied that challenge to their own bodies and minds, urging themselves to move just as dynamically as well. For Eco, the Baroque was therefore an especially “contemporary” era, which produced a surprising amount of references to his own day. Diana Sirianni also sees connections between our present moment and the Baroque: in its dynamism, theatricality and excess, in its conflation of genres into one Gesamtkunstwerk, in its illusionism and in its multiplication of perspectives. In this context, another important attribute of the Baroque is its frame of reference: not to the world as such, but to existing interpretations of the world. While other artistic epochs saw themselves as radically breaking with what came before them, the Baroque adopted the Renaissance's forms. Baroque, for instance, takes elements from Renaissance architecture and displays them in completely new ways, complicates and encrypts them, reshaping them into overloaded spatial entities. This is a principle that Sirianni also employs, as digitally altered image fragments from her earlier installations become sources for her new works, thus creating convoluted, riddling perspectives and ambivalent spaces.

The first physical encounter between baroque architecture and Diana Sirianni's spatial collages took place in 2014, at the Santacroce-Aldobrandini chapel in Rome. The chapel challenges any artwork presented in it to show its strengths against the space's opulent presence. Sirianni, however, avoided this challenge: instead of being pulled into the space with a spectacular illusion of light-flooded depth, as is common in baroque architecture, the viewer was initially confronted with a seemingly 2-dimensional surface.

3 Eco, The Open Work, 21.

Kunstverein Bregenz Magazin 4, November 6 – 27, 2014



However, the deeper one ventured into the church, the more the piece diverged into a whirling mass of digital image fragments, which offered perspectives into new, interweaving spatial dimensions. The Baroque reference system thus became a platform for the newly developed reference system of the Neubarock. Through Sirianni's staged image overload, the excess of harmonious formal elements and transcendental illusory tricks of the Baroque are revealed to be an overburdened system. Sirianni achieves this by instigating moments in which the Gesamtkunstwerk explodes and disintegrates into innumerable components and perspectives.

In Eco's view, this type of disorientation and ambiguity — such as Diana Sirianni creates in her artworks — is characteristic not only of the design principles of the Baroque, but is also pertinent for 20th century society. As he writes: "The former consciousness of a single, orderly and unchangeable universe can only exist in today's world as a backwards yearning: it is no longer ours"⁴. Sirianni plays precisely with this yearning, but also with the dread that in today's globalized and digitalized world it is now truly impossible to fulfill. Viewers of her work tread on unstable ground. Amongst these imploded, self-referential rooms and on shifting levels of space and time, the mind searches in vain for connections to reason, order, or structure.

Nonetheless, considering that Sirianni's work cycle Neubarock is a contiguous succession of spatial installations based on and referencing each other, it becomes clear that structure and a particular order do indeed play a central role in them. Primarily, the underlying principle of reproduction, change, repetition and circulation only takes on concrete meaning when it is followed along multiple stages in the work cycle. Bits and pieces of the initial baroque architecture — which were already interspersed with spatial fragments from Sirianni's digital image archive in the original piece — reappear in each following stage of the work cycle. Taking these foundational components into account and relating them to her perception of the exhibition space, the artist reacts to the particularities of the existing architecture, arranging the available image fragments, perspectives and dispositions in a completely new way. For a split second, Sirianni's structures might seem to satisfy that need for safety and orientation — only to collapse, in the next instant, as their instable perspectives fall back upon themselves.

Sirianni's collages feature digital images that have become handcrafted, tangible image-objects, which in turn construct new spaces. They thereby

4 Umberto Eco, "Zen und der Westen," in Das offene Kunstwerk (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), 214–215.

prompt substantial questions about the relation between 2-dimensionality and 3-dimensionality, reality and reproduction, memory and live experience. What might occur when an abstract, 2D design, with its digital images, moves from the computer screen to a materially palpable 3D construction in an exhibition space? And to what extent can a construction made up of reproduced image material unfold in a real space?

In her essay The Image-World (1995) Susan Sontag demonstrates how the inflated use of photography in documenting world events results in an erosion of reality. A displacement to a virtual, parallel world thus takes place, as people renounce the tangible world in favor of excessive consumption and mere reproduction of images⁵. When confronted with Sirianni's installations, the viewer experiences that her perceptions and movements in the space are more strongly influenced by this reproduced, constructed image-world than she had assumed was possible. Surely this cannot be fully accounted for by human perception's adaptation to receiving and interpreting virtual images and spaces as an extension — or even a replacement — of everyday reality. In Sirianni's spatial collages, reproduced images become both material and object, mixing with other materials, layering and overlapping, opposing or surrounding the viewer — it is this effect that makes interacting with them more than merely observing images. The work is thus not accessed primarily with intellectual means, but rather becomes a corporally experiential space, constructed of past and present impressions and spaces.

With her video pieces Clingy or You See What You Are, the artist retracts the viewer's physical experience in the space and places him in front of a screen instead. The view is predetermined by the still camera perspective, and the visible active space is reduced to a defined frame on a small stage. Now it is time that is being layered, stretched or condensed, not according to changes in physical perspective, but following the sequence of what happens within one given perspective. The artist is seen pasting image fragments on an abandoned shop window or directly onto a building, allowing them to overlap, complement or double each other, partially removing them as she goes. The glass reflects the shop's environment, passersby occasionally walk through the shot, and the nearby tram, car alarms and footsteps can all be heard. This time, however, the pasted, reproduced images are not based on past installations or architectures but are in fact replenished with images from the emerging film itself. They are still images of actions and situations that have only just happened. Through quick cuts and as though in a time lapse or a dream, diverse temporal layers mix, image

5 Susan Sontag, On Photography (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 153–180.

data overlaps, and saved memories multiply, only to later be erased. Sirianni uses this analog, laborious copy-paste method in combination with meticulous video editing to reconstruct the scene’s public spaces out of various layers of activities and moments — and then leaves it all to collapse and rebuild itself.

The viewer’s physical interaction with the video work is indeed confined, but Sirianni herself now steps in front of the camera. Her appearance is arranged in confusing cuts and practically imperceptible leaps in time, so that she herself becomes a pictorial reproduction. Despite their passive role, the viewers still experience the visual draw into Sirianni’s illusion of endlessly interlaced image-spaces. A significant amount of self-referential, reproduced image material circulates unstoppably in the films, as was true of her installations (and even somewhat faster), producing a condition between movement and stillness in both media.

While observing and strolling through Sirianni’s work, one might think of how Vilém Flusser described the “magical circle”⁶ of the photographic universe: encompassing all newly available imagery, only to surrender it into an endless, self-reproducing cycle. According to Flusser, this produces a contradictory state of both standstill and change, in which images inhabit their own space and time. Once they become disconnected from reality, they stand in for nothing but themselves; “[redundant] Photographs permanently displacing one another”⁷. Our reality is thus “magically restructured”⁸, as humans forget that they were the ones that had created images to begin with, in an attempt to situate themselves in the world. Images no longer give rise to understanding but to “hallucination.”⁹

In dreams, the mind also produces images as a way of processing and structuring past events — even if upon waking they seem to be incoherent, meaninglessly combined memories of impressions, feelings or experiences. Sirianni’s ‘magical circle’ of quotations of past events and states presents a type of variable memory, which assembles, overlaps and intensifies with every new piece. It calls forth how our own memories change over time, or are thoroughly mixed and alienated through the free, unconscious associations of dreams. Through the artist’s work, the seemingly objective, structured and documentary record of the archive is replaced by a product of human memory’s so-called weaknesses. Human memory’s subjectivity, selectivity, and dependence on the situation—in other words, its contemporaneity—produces a distorted image of the past instead of its precise documentation.

6 Vilém Flusser, Towards a Philosophy of Photography, trans. Anthony Mathews (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 64.

7 Flusser, Philosophy of Photography, 65.

8 Flusser, Philosophy of Photography, 10.

9 Ibid.

This image, in turn, becomes a completely new one when positioned in a concrete location, demonstrating the various perspectives upon one present moment, and how differently it may be interpreted and contained.

The body’s own presence, here and now, is what brings the whirling images in Sirianni’s work together. It holds the ‘permanent displacement’ that Flusser speaks of in place. Images do not degenerate into mere ‘hallucinations’ but serve as building blocks for a physical relation to the world, on the viewer’s own level of experience. It is in this moment of unity, of coming together, of reappropriation, in which all the memories, projections, questions and shattered images floating about are brought back together. In this way, Diana Sirianni’s installations and videos are perhaps centered upon the streaming chaos of the discontinuous world¹⁰ at a certain time and place — without, however, sacrificing the flair of movement to sudden stillness.

10 Eco, The Open Work, 207.



Recycling is like copy & paste.

History books are being rewritten all the time.



stage 2

34





Figge von Rosen Galerie, Cologne, November 14, 2014 – January 27, 2015

The Baroque is an exaggeration of the Renaissance. Its source is culture.

Nature is bad for culture. Anyone living in California knows that. There's no winter in California. Winter is the time when nature withdraws, birds stop singing and trees are sad looking.

It's also the moment when art comes about.

I read your letter out loud to my friend, who upon hearing your lamentation on the blue sky, recommended that I read Charles Baudelaire: "Dreams and fairy tales are children of the mist." You write in your letter about clouds, abstraction, and free thinking; Baudelaire talks about how England, Flanders and half of France are submerged in fog, while Venice bathes in lagoons, creating an idealism that makes one dream and imagine something beyond.

sources



Art starts at the surface of life. "You choose always for looks," said Sister Corita to her students, "That's what you're in an art class for."

Art appears where nobody expects it.



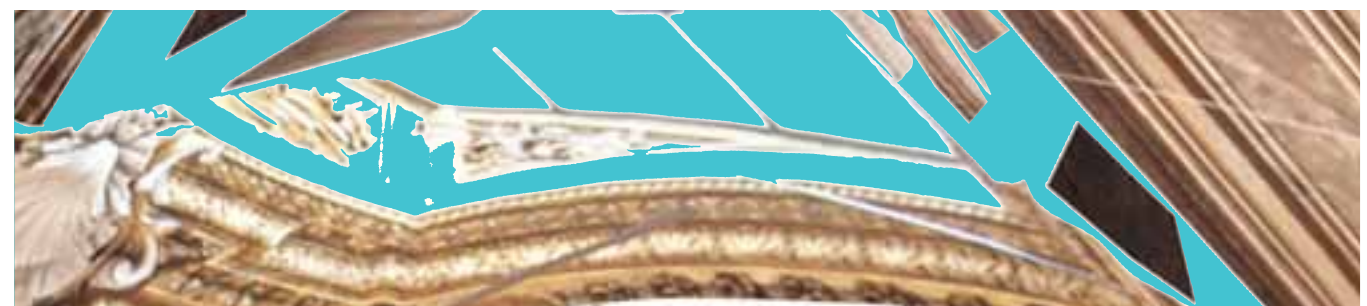
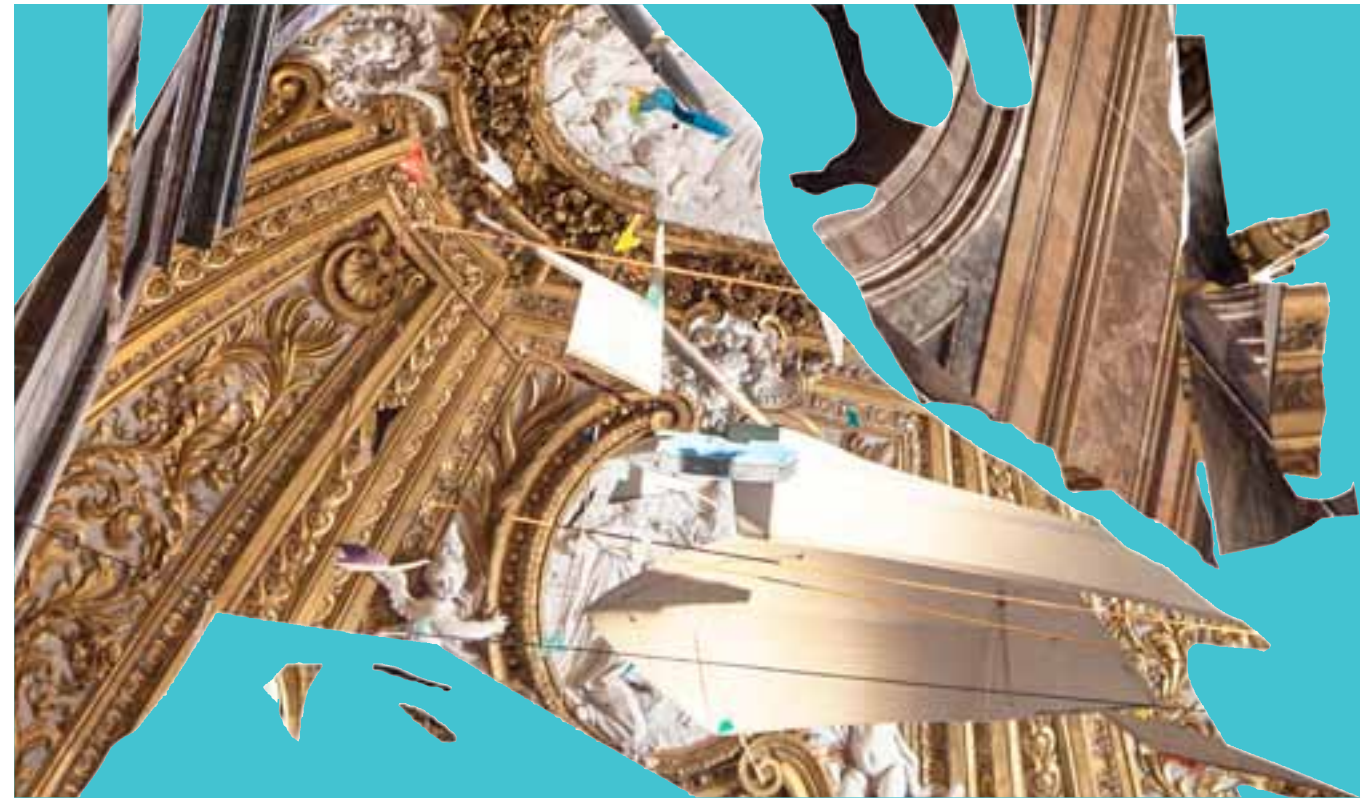
It's hard not to contradict yourself. You have to be smart enough to reconstruct the same things to say every day.





There are elements that constitute the invisible setting of culture, like the experience of light.







stage 3

46



stage 4

47



Art Cologne Fair: New Positions section, April 2015



The world is a stage.
When you fall, it's good to get back on your feet.





stage 4

51



stage 4

53



stage 5



54

A fantasy is pieced together from movie scenes. It's better not to hover over life in order to have an embodied experience.



55



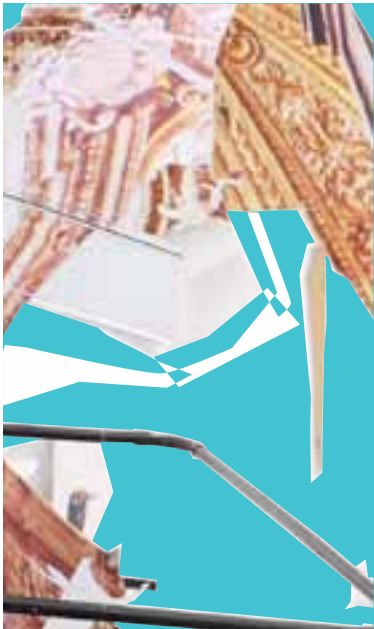
We are standing in front of the bookstore's shop window on Reichenbergstraße. I see Roland Barthes' "A Lover's Discourse". A few more books about love are on display. "How surprising!" I say. "It's Christmas," the artist responds with a bit of sarcasm in her voice.

Things that have no value but might acquire value in the future; things that had value in the past, but have lost their value; or things that have value at the moment, but you know are bound to lose their value in the future.

WHAT IS THE THING THAT IS LEADING YOU? *

Things are mute.

As time passed, the things became more fantastic, and their numbers grew.









Felix-Nussbaum-Haus, Osnabrück, June 14 – September 13, 2015

The most distinguished thing in technology that affects my field and life is the 3D printer. The world is getting complicated... and well... I am so looking forward to see what will come!

Suyin Jung

3D printing might sound futuristic, until you discover that it takes ten hours to print 30x30x8 cm object.



Berlin, September 15, 2015



Paris, November 11, 2015





awak



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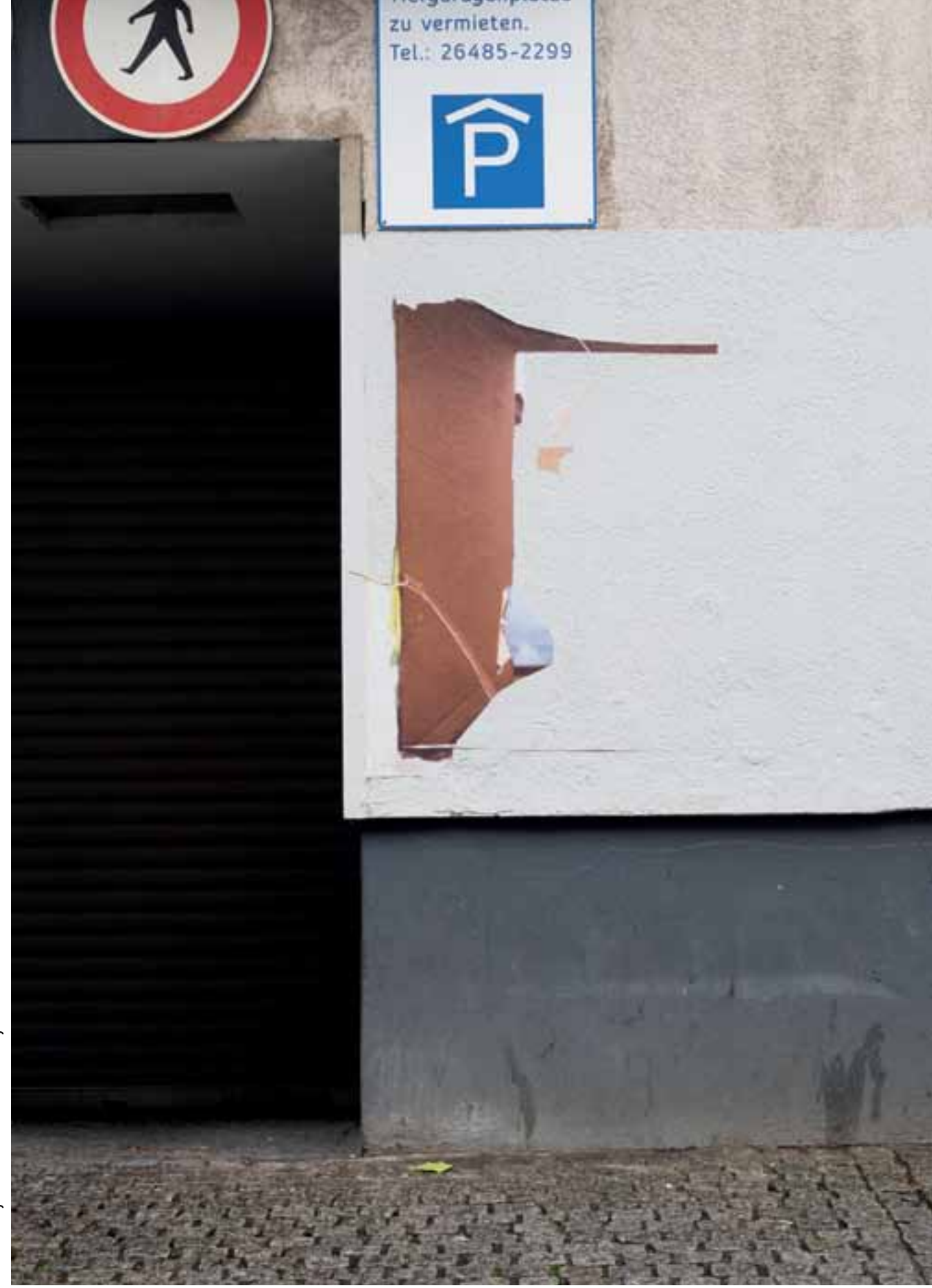
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SATURN



Besançon, June 11, 2017

Berlin, December 1, 2015





Berlin, January 21, 2016



Paris, November 11, 2015

B. prints stuff from the internet in order to read it on paper. He can't believe people still send emails saying to please not print the email. As if anybody still prints out stuff, B. says. Only he does, of course, because if you read online for 30 minutes, you're using up about 32 molecules of CO₂. If you do the same on paper it's only 28. Paper is also a renewable resource. When you decide to print something, you are aware that what you're doing has consequences. With online surfing it's so much harder to visualize.



Besançon, June 11, 2017



Rome, April 9, 2017

For the eye has this strange property: it rests only on beauty.

Virginia Woolf

After seeing beauty, it takes a few days for the bodily and spiritual experience to settle. It's called a "delayed reaction."

DO THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT YOU JUST DID. *

82

The sun moves and the poet writes something down.

Eileen Myles







stage 8

88



The same thing. Different sizes.

stage 8

90





Berlin, 15 September 2015

Should they stay or should they go?



Besançon, June 10, 2017



Impressum

Editor: Adela Yawitz
Graphic design: Tobias Wenig
Copyediting: Vanessa Adler
Texts: Nina Mende, An Paenhuysen, Adela Yawitz
Translation: Adela Yawitz
Reproduction Art works: Diana Sirianni
Exhibition views: Antonio Cama, Ulrike Dewitz,
Petra, Pechteyden, Stella von Rohden, Diana
Sirianni, Hadas Tapouchi, Simon Vogel
Image Processing: Diana Sirianni, Tobias Wenig
Printing, Binding: Balto Print
Typeface: Theinhardt
Paper: Westminster

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Published by

★ argobooks, Berlin
Choriner Straße 57
10435 Berlin
Deutschland / Germany
Phone +49 (0)30 41725631
www.argobooks.de

ISBN 978-3-942700-85-6
Printed in EU

96

Photo credits

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p. 20, 30, 34, 35, 38, 40–42, 46–50, 53–55, 57,
60–64, 66–71, 74, 75, 78, 80, 81, 92–95: Diana
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Kindly supported by

Fresh Window Gallery, New York
Patrick Heide Contemporary Art, London
Philipp von Rosen Gallery, Cologne
HBK Braunschweig
Ines and Jürgen Graf
Joseph Molitor
Ulrich Köstlin
as well as friends and colleagues.

* Scores by Naama Ityel, developed for
the workshop Collage as an Attitude at the
Universität der Künste, Berlin 2015–16

The objects look random, as though simply leftovers of what once was. Something casual, like clothes lying on a chair. I've been reading a lot of Walter Benjamin lately, and now I'm beginning to see the potential of revolutionary energy that appears in the "outmoded," in that which is obsolete.