

Hainley, Bruce, "Throwing Boring Overboard (First Glossary for AC)," *The Colour Out of Space*. New York: Michael Werner Gallery, 2009

Throwing Boring Overboard (First Glossary for AC)

ampersand The this & the that joined: positive space & negative; inside & outside; thing & representation of thing; flatness & dimensionality; figure & non-figuration; drawing & joinery; "face" & "ass"; et cetera & et cetera.

and Another thing: the graphic form of ampersands, both homemade as well as font-ed out (typographically pimped)—pelvic swerves, scimitar blades, lazy loops—could stand for the unconscious (yes, I know, you'd think that the inanimate would be incapable of sustaining any kind of consciousness, un- or not, but check out Proust and [closer to zones carried here] Richard Hawkins for some other possibilities) or at least the ghost shadowing many of the shapes and forms AC favors—whether the Ferengi barkeep, Quark, his forehead ridge or sensitive lobes, or the fine booty of Maria Carey, or the torso curves guitar's "body."

bass Brian Calvin showed me slides of AC's work before he arrived in graduate school: I remember some arrangements of little Fender amps, the sometimes peppermint-colored cables of which had been carefully valentined into a lacey outline of a heart on the floor. In early grad works, the artist used shimmering, "quilted" metallic and "burst" finishes/veneers associated with guitars—at some point, if I recall correctly, combined with plaster lumps. The suggestive rock-and-roll specifics of such shimmer—as much as any automotive and/or surf "finish fetish" nod to John McCracken or Billy Al Bengston—grace the paradoxically slick and humble leaning resined and airbrushed cardboard pieces as well as their sturdier cousins made out of aluminum, now souped-up in silkily glittering Day-Glo and fluorescents.

base How to think about the resonance of a wooden sculpture situated on a hot purple metal base by someone who, previously, literalized a big time problem of the contemporary artist by placing quasi-biomorphic (?), abstract-shaped sculptures on a shiny resined platform of a Mariah Carey or Shaggy D.A. poster? By such placement, the artist acknowledges a participation in and consciousness of the popular just as much as the bases literalize pop culture as our common ground, whether or not it's in any way stable. The finish of the purple, vehicular negligence, as much as its color, Prince-ish, and production, out-sourced, convey as much cultural resonance (automotive detailing, skateboarding design) as the shaped forms (Barbara Hepworth on *Hee Haw*) upon them.

cutout Consider the young sculptor who grows up seeing almost no sculpture (perhaps something—modern, moderne—in or in front of a bank)—except as it's pictured in a magazine or projected as a slide in the dark of an art history class. The negotiation of 2-D in relation to 3-D, picture in relation to thing-in-the-world, rules. One way to turn flat picture into spatialized thing is to fold the piece of paper, accordion-like, and stand it up or to cut it into two pieces and turn the planes so that they intersect at 90 degrees. Now I'll skip Clement Greenberg on David Smith and the pictorial, except to mention, possibly, picking up where he left off, "much that looked like *gaucherie* turns out to be a redefinition of elegance, economy and strength, and of their fusion in sculpture." Frequently in his work, AC not only games with such devices, not only puzzling through Noguchi-ish jigsaw moves but also through the trompe l'oeil of a verisimilar hole or declivity shadowing an actual hole cut through a surface. AC often returns 3-D situations to 2-D depictions on or next to the sculpture itself, like a...prop comic in reverse?

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deadpan

either/or Usually both/and.

formal No matter how stark the conflict—between silk-screened image and Day-Glo mark "on top" of it, between depicted negative space and actual negative space, between work on paper in contradistinction to and/or extension of sculpture—no matter how purposefully out-of-whack or "wrong," somehow an elegance. Thus something like Barbara Hepworth on *Hee Haw*.

gnarly Skateboarder carves out and carves up space and time. This is radically different—not necessarily better or worse, I guess—than nollieing and grinding "space" in a video game. Do I need to point out that AC is of the generation of the former and that the styles and flares and atmosphere of skateboarding he's Picasso'd?

hells yeah

interests Folks, there's no going back and benefits, I'm sure, that haven't even yet been gleaned will accrue, but at the moment some change should be noted between those whose interests formed before the advent of Google and those after. It used to be that you had to go on a hunch and a hunt to sort out the weird stuff that might satisfy some urge. Certain bands' records, which weren't played on the radio or available in any local shop, certain magazines (for me it was *Interview*) or comics, illicit literature, you name it (don't even get me started on the distances I had to travel as a teen to find some gay porn, when I was figuring out how to deal with *that*) had to be tracked down by whatever mysterious means necessary. Pour moi, this meant somehow getting on my own into center city Philadelphia—living fifty or so miles away, nowhere near a commuter train—to go to Third Street Jazz record shop as well as, walking around, happening upon Plage Tahiti (a post-Studio 54 hangover boutique in which I found *Interview* for sale, Richard Berstein still doing the covers); for AC, imagining how and when he would get to Austin, Texas. Once the item—45 LP or whatever—was found, gotten home, in the privacy of one's own room, it took on magical properties, pored over or listened to again and again. A life elsewhere. The labor, patience and waiting as much as the erotics involved in such a search—not to mention the sentimental education of the journey—organize drives differently than typing into Google whatever happens to be the tags of the daily scrap o'curiosity and having arrive, almost instantaneously, more information than anyone other than an idiot savant could sort through, all downloadable. I don't want to sound grumpy, but, at the moment, what Google produces looks a lot like passivity: instead of having to go *into the world*, to search and sort through and smell it all, the commodified world arrives, literally, at your fingertips. When actual pages, pictures, and posters, not downloaded, appear in AC's pieces, a person might feel the goose bumps of all of that difference.

jigsaw

kooky

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looser "I'm a loser [*sic*], baby, so why don't you kill me."

mask As much as AC's so-called biomorphism—is that what it is? where does abstraction or nonrepresentation stop and biomorphism start? what causes it to be recognized as such? in AC's shapes there remain as many riffs on and nods to the headstock, tuning pegs, frets, and resonantly named "nut" of a guitar as any body—reckons with the figure or his poster-sized works-on-paper with the face, the mask—its eyes merely holes to be filled in, its mouth closed or a bitter orifice mumbling communication—summons a more viable something to think about. Not the face but the stand in or occlusion of the facial. Richard Hawkins has noted the unhelpfulness of the "distinction between the figurative and abstract" but then goes on to invoke "sculpture's primarily figurative past, that is statues." So the question might not be the biomorphic, but, pace H. C. Westermann, about how a "body" or "figure" is or isn't ever there for anyone and what body you or I desire to appear if it does.

nautical Recall Long John Silver's, the *Treasure Island*-inspired fish 'n' chips fast food restaurant launched in 1969 with its franchised wharfside aesthetic—in which wood would also be "wood," knot holes not whole or holey but wholly decorative, just like the battening ropes adorning your dining experience. Their company motto: "Throw Boring Overboard."

outline Have you seen Puma's 917 Lo Popart kicks? It's as if Roy Lichtenstein drew, Ben-day dots, outlines, and all, a shoe that could be worn—by which I mean as if you could slip your foot into and wear an image. Things in the world don't have outlines; many images do. To see outlines in 3-D causes a seismic rumble, akin to how you might feel if you were to run into Homer Simpson while picking up some milk and jerky at the local mart. AC uses outlines to mark a boundary between dimensions and to create parameters—but also to break them down: am I encountering a thing or the cartoon of it and what if they exist simultaneously/

part-whole

Quark His lobes and their relation to his skull. Foreplay with a Ferengi involves stroking the lobes.

raw

signature You probably noticed the artist's signature or initials ("A. C.") goofily strutting on many of his recent sculptures, cooling them down. Signature style? The quintessential move, gesture and/or mark identifying someone as who they are or what he or she "owns"? Certainly it has more to do with that than with any commentary (yawn) on branding. To err on the side of the offbeat or kooky, consider that both his given and family name dissolve into redolent meaning. Aaron, Aaror, Error. Or err on the side of currying favor with bright colors and harlequin graphics. A stew of influences, perfectly seasoned, making one cry or sweat (the graphic "tears," those "drops" of perspiration), pleasurably. This is a bit too much, right? But—and here's the thing—in the pursuit of the wrong note, the odd or perverse, the color or mark or fillip that unsettles rather than settles (think of John Wesley's use of black outline; Vincent Fecteau's use of "urine" stains or off-color and vile textures), how to modulate the effect, to curry the right kind of wrong, to err on and on.

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trick

unhinge

volumetrics The question of volume in relation to skeletal perpendicularity.

weightlessness In 2006, AC participated in "Untitled (for H. C. Westermann)," an exhibition curated by Michael Rooks at the Contemporary Museum in Hawaii (custodians for much of Westermann's estate). Take the title of a gouache and Creatix on paper AC showed for a statement of homage and procedure, without marquetry, a way of reinventing what moves us: *Ostensibly Weightless Configuration Suspended in Space (Wagon Wheel)*.

X-acto

yoke

zero degree Basically, I confess: due to the exigencies of how an art catalogue is produced—if it is to be ready when the show opens, then it has to be produced months before, usually long ahead of when the artist's work is finished—I never saw the completed pieces I'm supposed to be thinking about re this text. Rather than fret over this, I'd like to set it up analogically, almost allegorically, to the situation. I've been looking at AC's work for over five years—since right before he first started graduate school (see above). It's been exciting to see not only the changes in his work but also the continuities. The shiny surface mottled and/or airbrushed with bright color. The shape that is rarely ever geometric, almost always wonky or odd, as if leftover, the human remains, something started from the scrap of something else. The artist, for all his burgeoning success, is still figuring things out. I am loath to "sum things up," and I question the ability and even the viability of seeing the entirety of "what he's up to." This is not false modesty. When I turn to AC's project, I see the work of an artist who wishes to make thrilling rather than pernicious the attempt to wrest from the global barrage something inappropriable, irreducible, and questioning, which acknowledges what comes before it, culturally, and from where it arrives, without merely desecrating it. By coordinating and discombobulating these concerns, he allows anyone who cares to broach the possibility that this oscillation between ways of meaning is...where we are?

Or not.

And so I'll bow out of this by asking: Is sculpture the most *written*—or, rather, for the writer, is sculpture the most like writing—because the medium of expression and the medium of analysis, not to mention the highfalutin tensions between its diegesis and semiosis, are the same and bound to a continuous dimension, i.e., the stuff of the world is and doubles for what the sculpture is and is made out of? Thus, to boomerang back, the words stick to their own, "about," if anything, only and always words, what I'm left to using if I'm to say anything about this to you.