
In the Meantime, Examples of the Same Lily
(A temporary androgyne for Lynda Benglis and Richard Tuttle)

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Royal College of Art for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract, Bibliography, and Other Paratexts

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Abstract

“I opened my mouth to say both Yes and No. A fly had time to go in and out of it.”¹

One way of imagining the concerns of this thesis would draw reference to the preposition. Prepositions are words that denote relative positions. Gertrude Stein favoured them over all other types of word.

This writing, itself positioned in a wider body of work, employs and reflects on gestures of appropriation and positioning familiar from the practice of collage, and common to curation, writing and magic as well as art-making practices.

In, for example, magical practices such as Temurah and Notarikon in the Kabbalah, or the narrative Pathworking rituals of contemporary Witchcraft, items of text and/or imagery are appropriated and reiterated in varying combination. This PhD project mimics these practices, here appropriating its constituent materials to the space of writing (and thereby to what magicians term the Astral Plane), there to move them around in order to become sensitive to their communications.

This results in the ravelling of a complex and somewhat nebulous body. What the nature of this body – that is, the body of the artwork – might be, becomes the fugal question around which this writing attempts to orient itself.² Confusion and intoxication inevitably result, and their Brownian dynamic is found more representative of the encounter with artworks that this writing seeks to address than linear approaches seeking resolution, conclusion or definition.

Constructions of division are necessarily tested throughout this undertaking. As an element of a ‘two-part submission’, this writing acknowledges the necessity to operate across an arbitrarily imposed writing/practice fissure, and finds it urgent to address the encounter with artworks not as an external commentary but as a work among, within, around, by, against, through and with works.

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