

2013

Concrete Shroud

Jake Reller

Western Washington University, jake.reller@wwu.edu

Mariah Tate Klemens

Western Washington University, mariahtate.klemens@wwu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cedar.wwu.edu/orwwu>

 Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#), [Biological and Physical Anthropology Commons](#), [Biology Commons](#), [Comparative Politics Commons](#), [Exercise Science Commons](#), [Forest Biology Commons](#), [Macroeconomics Commons](#), and the [Physical Sciences and Mathematics Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Reller, Jake and Klemens, Mariah Tate (2013) "Concrete Shroud," *Occam's Razor*: Vol. 3 , Article 9.

Available at: <https://cedar.wwu.edu/orwwu/vol3/iss1/9>

This Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Western Student Publications at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in Occam's Razor by an authorized editor of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact westerncedar@wwu.edu.

CONCRETE

Concrete shroud is an exhibition originating from a dialogue between the two artists, culminating in a series of lectures written by Mariah Tate Klemens and Jake Reller.

POTENTIALITIES OF EXISTENCE

JAKE RELLER

Mariah Tate Klemens, fundamentally minimalist in her program embraces simplicity, the mundane, as her prima materia. But this is a different alchemy: the masculine heroicness of Carl Andre's austere bricks and Richard Serra's grandiose sheet metal dissipate into materials less obsessed with Western industrialism, more interested in the humanity raw matter may prophesize. Steel is reimagined as pneuma as bricks crumble like Jericho to water. Lead melts, coalesces unto the floor as fat. But don't let her emphasis on humanity fool you into thinking she is passive, her work haunts the viewer with reverberations of death. Dissection, dismemberment; the violent surgery the cubists did to the picture plane, Klemens conceptualizes unto our biological processes themselves. All the while, Cronenberg with his diabolical corn syrup, lurks nearby.



Cover

Appx 3'x4'
bedsheet & wax

SHROUD

REFLECTIVITY OF THE VOID WITHIN THE LACK

MARIAH TATE KLEMENS

The Void is neither the presence of something nor the absence of nothing, a constructed non-space ideal for viewer's self-implication. Considering Yves Klein's notion of the "Void," I will explore Jake Reller's necessity to produce a viewer's obligation to self-reflect within his Voids by analyzing the large lithographic print, *Consuming the Lack*. Evoking a secular/spiritual duality similar to that of Klein, Reller's compositional construction exists between an illustrative narration of the flaws in humanity and a formal art display reflective of viewers' potential shortcomings.

Set near the bottom of a large, clean, thick white paper, an indecipherable breed of dog stands with an absent leg and open mouth displaying the moment before the dog begins to consume a deer appendage. With no reference to any other portion of the stag, *Consuming the Lack*, constructs



Consuming the Lack
22" x 30", Lithograph, 2012



Body of Water, Body of Fat

Dimensions variable
Plastic bags, 98.14 lbs of water,
15.9 lbs of Crisco

In *Cover*, which takes the form of an implied figure recumbent on the gallery floor, the artist has coated a commonplace bed sheet in paraffin wax, fixing the pliable material in time, an insect in resin. The rigidity of the work is only perceived, as time and heat will invariably melt the delicate forms. As though exhaling, the pieces seem to sigh under the weariness of external inputs, and thus becomes metaphoric for both the literal sleep in a bed, and the metaphoric expiration under a shroud. *Cover* becomes a memento mori of sorts, and there is

a poignant loss of the figure in time; it is as though the sleeper's spirit had already departed, but now even the memory, the trace of the sleeper, also fades.

If *Cover* allows the human form to be seen in its entirety, it is the exception and not the rule. As if the brilliant but foolhardy mad scientist played by Jeff Goldblum in the 1986 adaptation of *The Fly*, Klemens atomizes the body in her piece(s) *Body of Water, Body of Fat*, reassembling select elements in the white cube fascimile-transporter of the gallery. She renders us on the floor: in

heaping mounds, the average amount of water in our body (held in zip lock bags, like a transparent epidermis) and the average amount of fat in our bodies (here represented by ordinary Crisco). The fat she kisses to the ground, by transferring mouthfuls of the stuff from the store bought cardboard cylinder to the floor. These multiform references to the body, of consumption, regurgitation, kissing, etc, enable the piece to skirt a linear didactic reading and thereby elevate the action to the realm of the poetic. The Bodies are in effect multiple

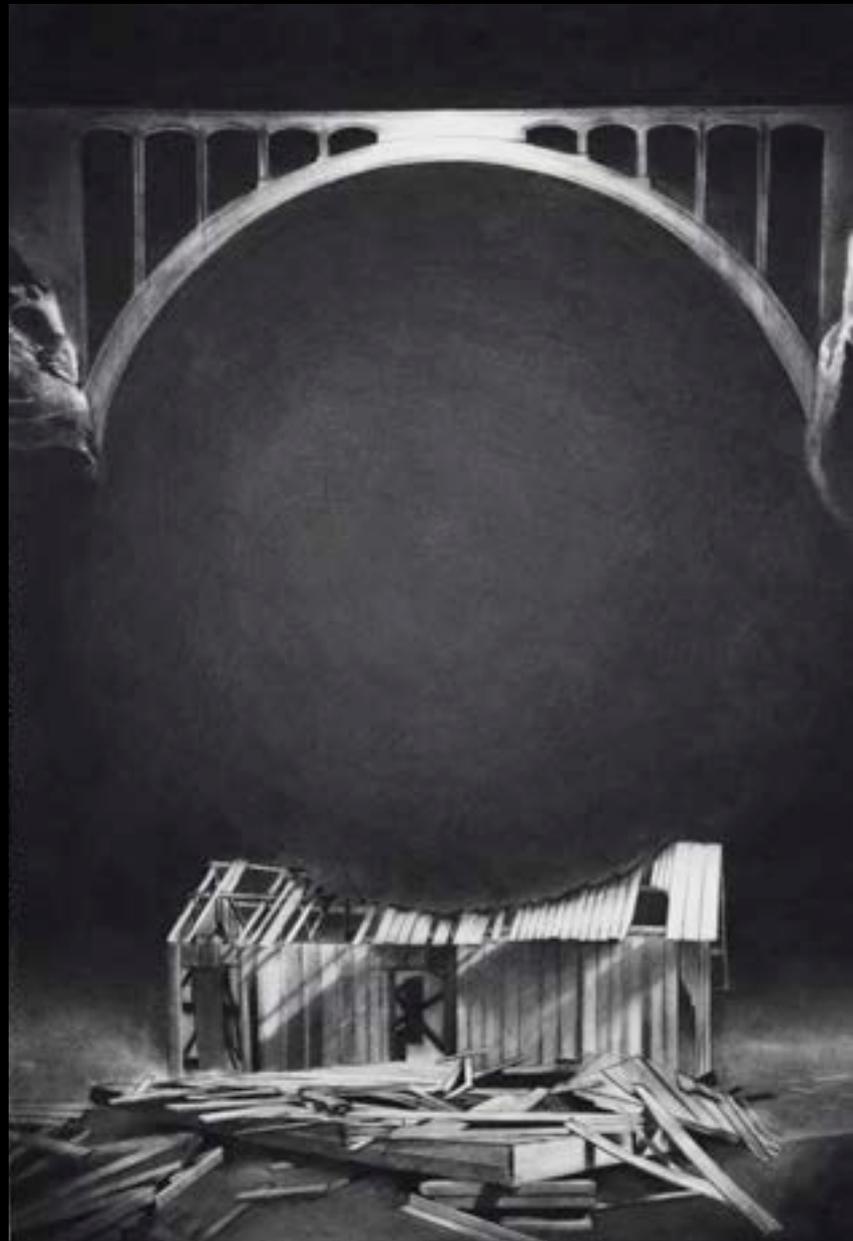
THE FLY



In David Cronenberg's 1986 adaptation of *The Fly*, an intrepid young scientist, Seth Brundle (played by Jeff Goldblum) slowly transforms into a monstrous fly after a freak teleportation accident.

a connection between the animals by highlighting the presence or the absence of a limb. The dog stands, propped only on three limbs, emaciated, on sparse ground. Bones protrude; ribs, shoulders, ankles, and vertebrae jut out of the dog, heightening the sharp, violent act that is expected to transpire. A soft sadness found within the eyes of the dog almost acknowledges the inability to become satisfied fully within the dogs consumption.

Structured within a space/non-space, viewers, similarly to Reller, interact with the dog as a mirror. The central figure becomes a kind of faltering hero. Unable to feel satisfied with one's current condition, Reller displays the human need to become 'whole.' An attempted action, as in the image of the dog nearly consuming the leg, explores the moment before the failure of transformation on the part of our protagonist. Set on a heroic scale, Reller tragically plays with hero/non-hero as an emblem for his faltering experiences and desires. As with many of Reller's other works, the necessity to explore the inadequacies of the human condition is referenced within the interaction between figures or objects: a simulacra of the viewer. The dog consumes the leg in order to fulfill the deficiency of the animal. Although it is known a dog eating a leg will not grow a new appendage, the desire to be whole overshadows logic, forcing an absurd action. All existing with a large white field, viewers become enveloped in boundlessness, forcing identification with the presumed failure of the hero.



Circular Ruins

28" x 40", Charcoal Drawing, 2013

perhaps infinite potentialities simultaneously coexisting, like Schrodinger's cat, the famous thought experiment concerning quantum superposition, which is both dead and alive until observed. Once we observe Klemens' work we must grapple with all of these actions at once, be confused and forced to reconcile our confusion.

In *14,400 Breaths or a Day of Rest* the artist inflated over 900 white balloons and hung them at mouths height from the ceiling. The number in the title roughly correlates to the amount of breaths one would take on a day of rest, i.e. a 24 hour resting heart rate. In addition to the previous motifs of water and fat, Klemens adds another element into her visual lexicon: air. Like *Cover*, Klemens' work evokes the philosophical Greek concept of *pneuma*, (the root of course we are familiar with, for it forms the base of the word "pneumatic") or wind, which in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, and the Greek New Testament is oft translated as soul or spirit. Like the departed spirit of *Cover* the artist's *pneuma*, her wind, quite literally, leaves her body in the making. Perhaps in one potentiality, one breath of respite is transported symbolically beneath the sheets of *Cover*, completing a conceptual loop. Herein lies the profound power of Klemens' program—the viewer is given metaphorical breathing room to reconcile disparate conceptual dilemmas into a meaningful diagram of human mortality. The artist gives the viewer the basic components, for now, water, fat and air, which may exist simultaneously as particle or wave, or in infinite combinations. ●



14,400 Breaths or A Day of Rest
Dimensions variable
Latex, breath

The boundless space references a secular spirituality found within the Void. Not necessarily tied to any sort of pious practice, Consuming the Lack's composition functions analogous to that of Yves Klein's blue monochromes. A limitless spiritual space, characterized by the physical reaction felt while observing the fully blue field, Klein, constructs what he describes as true "physical spaces". This blue, this Void, offers an opportunity to exist outside of representation, outside of form. For Klein, material realism does not exist to represent worldly images and reality, "but rather where art subverts the domain of representation and activates sensation to become experience." Reller moves between illustrative representation and material realism by displaying his simulacra within a Void. Consuming the Lack, acknowledges the desire of fulfillment with the tragedy of inadequacy. The Void places these sentiments within a true space, only set within the self. The Void constructs a physical sensation, a boundless awareness that illuminates a space worthy of reflection. Reller depicts the realm of the void within Consuming the Lack similar to the words of Klein himself,

the world is thus on the far side of an unsilvered mirror, there is an imaginary beyond, a beyond pure and insubstantial, and that is the dwelling place of Bachelard's beautiful phrase: 'First there is nothing, then there is a depth of nothingness, then a profundity of blue [the boundless Void]' ●



An image of Yves Klein's blue void

WORKS CITED

Vergne, Philippe. "Earth, Wind, and Fire or to Overcome the Paradox of Yves Klein, the Molecular Child Who Wrote to Fidel Castro On His Way to Disneyland." *Walker Magazine*. 30 AUG 2010: n. page. Web. 5 Apr. 2013. <<http://www.walkerart.org/magazine/2010/earth-wind-and-fire-or-to-overcome-the-parado>>.

Bolt, Barbara (2011). "Whose Joy?: Giotto, Yves Klein and Neon Blue", *The International Journal of the Image*. Volume 1, Number 1. <http://ontheimage.com/journal>, ISSN 2152-7857

Harrison, Charles. *Art In Theory: 1900-2000 An Anthology of Changing Ideas*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2011. 819. Print.