Interactions of Image

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Interactions of Image is an essay that connects practices of contemporary painting reliant on pre-existing images, with the more general experience of linking and conceptualizing myriads of daily encounters with Western visual culture. Is there a genuine experience of image? How do we make sense of reality through images rather than embodied experience? How do contemporary painters use pre-existing images to create new visions that point to this very particular encounter with the visible?

« Interactions of Image » est un article où les pratiques de peinture contemporaine dépendant d'images préexistantes rejoignent l'expérience de tracer des liens et de conceptualiser la multiplicité de rencontres quotidiennes avec la culture visuelle occidentale. Peut-on parler d'une expérience *vraie* de l'image? Comment donner sens à la réalité au travers des images plutôt que par le biais d'une expérience incarnée du monde? Comment les peintres contemporains utilisent-ils les images préexistantes afin de créer de nouvelles visions qui mettent en relief cette rencontre particulière avec le visible?

1. The Image Corral

> *May 17ᵗʰ 2011, 12am* ~ I am working on the final draft of this article. Having tried to clarify my relationship as a painter to the world of images in general, I realize many questions remain. The essay has taken the form of five chapters each approaching the encounter with the visual from a slightly different angle. I found it difficult to translate into words the visual process that takes place in the studio. Nevertheless, it was a useful effort in that it forced me to carefully consider the ideas that inform my work. ~

It is often not clear right away why a certain image is appealing to a visual hunter-gatherer. However, once that image joins others into a growing set of potential images, resonances emerge and that new context provides the nourishment from which a new narrative can begin to take shape. I often search for images to fill out a more or less specific idea, but that initial concept may shift as a response to my encounter with a particular sequence of images. I want to indulge in the pure experience of swimming through the image stream. And this experience should somehow be present in the nature of my painting. This designates a fragmentary background of ambiguity, of painting as material, giving rise to a constellation of more recognizable image-elements.

Aby Warburg thought of the art historian as a kind of diviner who could illuminate obscure connections and sympathies between images that do not necessarily conform to a linear or deterministic trajectory. He conceived of an ambitious project that would illuminate the legacy of classical aesthetics in the European visual culture of his time. From 1925 to his death in 1929, Warburg

worked on the *Mnemosyne Atlas*. This was a growing set of initially unrelated images arranged according to sympathies or principles of good company rather than visual similarity or iconography[10] that could serve as a kind of visual oracle for these lost connections—a remembrance of patterns, gestures, and iconographies connecting 20th century Germany with Greek sensibilities. German painter Gerhard Richter has also created an *Atlas* but for him the ambitions of such a compilation are not as clear as Warburg's. He considers them reference images that have come to fertilize his prolific painterly oeuvre. But Richter also exhibits his *Atlas* as a work in its own right, always in a different configuration that responds to the exhibition space and its own growing size.

"Do you know what was great?" [G. Richter] said in 1964. "Finding out that a stupid, ridiculous thing like copying a postcard could lead to a picture. And then the freedom to paint whatever you felt like. Stags, aircraft, kings, secretaries. Not having to invent anything anymore, forgetting everything you meant by painting – colour, composition, space – and all the things you previously knew and thought. Suddenly none of this was a prior necessity for art."[11] Richter claims indifference to the image content of his source material, since his primary objective is to investigate the nature of image making at the level of the medium (photography by other means). Nevertheless, the collection of images that constitutes his Atlas also expresses particular emotional and formal interests as well as it indicates an ongoing coming to

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[10] Martin Warnke and Claudia Brink (eds.), *Aby Warburg. Der Bilderatlas MNEMOSYNE* (2nd edition) (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2003). Quoted on MediaArtNet: www.mediaartnet.org/works/mnemosyne/images/7/ (accessed on July 4, 2011).

[11] Helmut Friedel and Ulrich Wilmes (eds.), *Atlas – Gerhard Richter* (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 1997), 7.

terms with the historical trauma of the Second World War. Here, a story is told through decontextualized images which relate to each other and begin to illuminate something of their curator's interests. There are many categories of images present: newspaper clippings, family photos, holiday pictures, pornography. As Helmut Friedel notes "everything but art images." Looking through the Atlas, I recognize many images that have been painted by Richter. Even though, in this printed version, the images have been roughly organized by content, it is difficult to prescribe a higher logic to a selection of pictures that already stretches back decades and still continues to grow. Organizing the atlas into categories of pictures proves reductive because it allows us to only consider juxtapositions between images of the same kind. Richter calls it an atlas, not because it contains the totality of information describing a particular discourse, but because the information it contains reveals its own mnemonic or associative territory. In this sense, Richter's project is more closely related to Warburg's than the encyclopedic breadth we normally expect from an atlas. Not all images become paintings. In fact, Richter acknowledges that it is almost by luck that a photograph may lead to a painted picture. The images that do make their way onto the canvas owe their significance to the pictures they happened to have been associated with inside the Atlas (by will or chance). For example, there is a poignant and disturbing arrangement of pornography paired with images of concentration camp victims. The collection becomes descriptive of its curator; an association easily transferred to the many personal blogs that display growing personal image archives that reflect each blogger's particular tastes and interests. Richter is careful to call his work *pictures* rather than *paintings*, perhaps in an effort to question the distinction between painting and photography: the real aim of his long career. That distinction can hardly be made now, when we see all images

flattened into digital image files. A Google image search of Richter's name confirms it: photographs of paintings of photographs, or to use Richter's nomenclature, *photography by other means*. The Internet is a collection of raw visual information: it represents a growing totality of images but lacks any particular organization or navigational map. Yet it could be argued that neither is necessary. It is up to us to chart our course as we navigate through the ever expanding sea of visual information. It is interesting to think about what sequence of search terms could yield a list of images that would correspond exactly to the contents of Richter's Atlas (assuming, of course, that the entire contents have been digitized in disparate segments by many contributors). What are the implications of a photograph that has been painted and then photographed and posted on the Web next to its 'original'? That totalizing search result could in a strange way extend Richter's Atlas into another unresolved visual relationship: between tactile media (painting, photography) and their digital correlates. Richter wanted his Atlas to resist easy categorization; he sought to achieve this by always showing it in a different configuration, according to the exigencies of various exhibition spaces and the ever-growing size of the collection. Would it be important or interesting for him to consider the added dimension of the Internet?

2. Choice

May 2nd 2011, 2pm ~ The Canadian federal election is unfolding today. My friends and the arts community in general seem optimistic that a conservative majority government can be avoided since opinion polls predict a great surge in popularity for

the New Democratic Party, upholding the left quadrant of the political spectrum. I already voted in the advance polls but now regret giving my vote to the middle of the road Liberal party. Students rally in voting mobs to encourage their peers and the public in general to go out and cast their vote ~

As I considered the theme of this issue of *SEACHANGE*, I thought of *choice* as both a timely and fertile topic, given the multitude of North African and Middle Eastern states whose people are now taking up arms against repressive regimes, with the hope of gaining choice in determining their lives. These events are perhaps made even more poignant by the approaching Canadian election when we expect a low voter turnout as a result of generational apathy or hopelessness vis-à-vis our democracy and its practical applications. The choice to not participate is sometimes met with reproachful reminders of those citizens of the world who have to put their bodies on the line in order to exercise the very rights we are here free to squander. Could it be possible that such remonstrance falls on deaf ears because our freedoms appear to not be in imminent danger (although examples abound) and that, in general, we experience global struggles as images only? What kind of image of the world appears before our northern North American eyes? How do images in general shape our consciousness and sense of embodiment? An artist who uses images as subject through a process of recontextualization needs to consider the selection of images as a source for painting and how these new images function to produce meaning.

The visual cannot be turned off: images enter our consciousness before we have the chance to filter them. This is what painter Francis Bacon tried to

capitalize on in his oeuvre, by creating images that "attack the nervous system" before the brain can introduce rationality and storytelling into our encounter with the visible. Sometimes we may wish we could erase an image from our mind or perhaps the entire two hours of a bad movie (and that we could regain that interval of time). But we have to see the image before we can decide if it was worth being looked at in the first place. What we have seen feeds our dreams. The artist operates here, in the interstice between the embodied experience of visuality, rationality, and nascent or latent narratives. Images produce more images and our world takes shape around the emergence, circulation and exchange of images of many kinds. The incredible abundance of visual information and the unprecedented access to information in general engendered by network technologies over recent years does seem to lead to confusion, to conflicting reports, to a stasis or an increased difficulty in making sometimes very basic choices. Philosopher Jean Baudrillard described such a state of affairs as a situation where history ceases to exist. In his 1994 book *The Illusion of the End*, Baudrillard looked forward to what was expected by many to be the end of the world: the year 2000. He wrote that, as we became more preoccupied with preserving life and information, as we rushed to record everything, to digitize and recreate our world within a sanitized hyper-reality, we were bound to enter a completely illusory world where history and endings would become obsolete concepts. We would remain suspended in a vaguely nostalgic stasis unable to move forward towards an always receding end. Baudrillard opens his book with a quote from Elias Canetti, expressing the realization that something happened in the world which put us on a trajectory different from what we thought we were charting:

> [A]s of a certain point, history was no longer real. Without noticing it, all mankind suddenly left reality; everything happening since then

was supposedly not true; but we supposedly didn't notice. Our task would now be to find that point, and as long as we didn't have it, we would be forced to abide in our own destruction.[12]

3. The World as Image

December 21st 1989, 1pm ~ It's an unusually warm and sunny Thursday afternoon. I am strolling with my grandparents along the generously wide central avenue of one of Bucharest's most popular parks. Once this pedestrian artery reaches the perimeter of the park, it extends into a well circulated boulevard that shoots straight through the center of the city, connecting several important squares. We are walking north, to the metro. Citizens are at leisure, children play ball and ride their bicycles. I notice people running. Toward us. Away from some yet to be determined calamity.

> *"He fell!"* someone shouts.
> *"What fell?"* we ask.
> *"Ceausescu!"* ~

By 1994, political changes resulting from the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the first Gulf war had already reshaped those parts of the world. Baudrillard suggests that these events may have constituted the disjuncture

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[12] Jean Baudrillard, *The Illusion of the End*, trans. Chris Turner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 1.

described by Canetti: a point where the coordinates of the world began to change around the terms of our engagement with images. The Gulf War was the first time we were introduced to what is now a routine of immediate news coverage of worldwide war and catastrophe. Although it had the appearance of truth or unedited coverage, it became more and more clear that real images can be easily manipulated through montage, fragmentation and especially recontextualization. As a young boy in 1989 Romania, I still remember the events that ushered in a new political system across several East European countries. Those moments were surprisingly similar to the sequence of uprisings that is now spreading across North Africa and the Middle East in their spontaneity and grass roots origins. The similarities continue for me at the level of images in which I see similarly jubilant young citizens congregating in great numbers, well aware that sooner or later they will have to face police or military repression. Although I was a body present in a country and city involved in armed conflict, I experienced the Romanian revolution as image. My embodied experiences included seeing tracers stream across the night sky accompanied by the sound of artillery. I also collected bullet shell casings from the street and later looked at the many buildings reduced to rubble or covered in holes. I only saw the *real* action on television.

The first changes to arrive to the country were in the form of pictures. Under the communist regime, we had very few images: books, magazines, cinema and limited television programming, but no commercial imagery in the sense and with the intensity which we now accept as normal. A majority of visual and other forms of culture were controlled by the state and focused on the cult of the communist party and its leader within a well established Soviet tradition. The revolution was, as it were, televized. A group of rebels took over the state television building and turned on the faucet of information. It is

interesting to note that many of those faces were film or theatre actors and directors. They were therefore both familiar to the national audience and already in the business of creating images. They spoke directly to the entire country and kept everyone abreast of developments. It was the first time that I had seen television programming uninterrupted 24/7. Here was a truly live (living even), unedited, uninterrupted transmission which carried all the projected weight of documentation, the urgency of history being broadcast in its very unfolding and the optimism of a new beginning. It was as though this visual stream kept the revolution alive. And so it went: the mock trial and summary execution of communist leader Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife were also transmitted en direct – the end of a hated regime authenticated through a newly open economy of images. Soon, the Western gates were flung open, the revolutionary broadcast replaced by European and American entertainment and commercial imagery. I remember The Simpsons, Dallas, 90210, Melrose Place, etc, etc. I watched it all insatiably—and how exciting it was!

Even as I was witnessing the events of late 1989, I had the sensation of not knowing exactly what was happening. There were several uprisings throughout the country, there were several groups, including the rebels, the army, the secret police, the unknown terrorists, the miners, etc. There were also many stories about what may have fuelled the fall of the regime. Some kind of grey eminence was thought to have acted in conjunction with the genuine spontaneous popular uprising to guarantee the dissolution of the Eastern bloc. American and/or Soviet interests possibly. What was certain was that communism was over and that the future was unknown. In retrospect, Canetti's statement of history no longer being real seems apt in describing that moment. My sense of history was informed by school books as a collection of dusty old stories chronicling Romania's long history of having

had to contend with a great range of invading armies while eventually trying to pull its various regions into the united country that exists today. The most recent chapter began with the glorious history of communism starting in 1944. Witnessing the end of this era in December 1989, I remember thinking that what was happening at the time would make its way into the history books. Yet, as events were unfolding, I had a sense of derangement as far as mundane reality was concerned. Lived events seemed almost fictional. When people started booing Ceausescu during his public address, he couldn't believe it either and grew completely inarticulate. Some years later, I remember seeing the first images of a plane crashing into the world trade center in 2001 and not knowing how to conceptualize them, the first suitable categorization being that they must be images from a new movie. Canetti's statement refers to history being real in the sense that it charts a retrospectively logical course that ends in and substantiates our current circumstances. Our attitude towards history is now more complex as we come to recognize that there are always multiple voices, that history is in need of constant revision, that it is even possible to select a personal narrative or the history you can best understand.

Baudrillard expands this type of experience into a new course of everyday reality whereby history will cease to be produced as meaning. The intensification of technology and the overwhelming amount of information and possible meanings available will lead, in his view, to an erasure of the slowness, distance and liberation that are necessary for real events to become conceptualized as history. It becomes difficult, if not impossible, to divine meaning from events, information or images as we experience them. Under these circumstances, choice becomes an essential instrument. How to filter information and how to extract meaning from a select and newly significant

set of items. History is a kind of archeology of choice; an interesting concept to apply to artistic practices that have images as subject matter. Of course, it is evident that personal technology such as cell phone cameras played a central part in the proliferation of images resulting from the events in the Middle East, just as Facebook is thought to have played a major role in the Egyptian uprising. This technology was not available during the Romanian revolution. Although it is perhaps true that technology erases the conditions for history to emerge in its traditional sense, it also becomes the origin of a new economy of image and information that can result in tangible action and creativity.

4. Portrait of an Image

> *May 1st 2011, 10pm* ~ CBC reports that American forces have killed Osama Bin Laden and that president Obama will give an unusual late night address. I am looking at an image of an empty podium emblazoned with the White House seal, placed right against the picture frame of the television. Behind extends an empty hallway with a red carpet running its length. There are also alternating doors and pillars diminishing towards a final closed door facing us. I am impressed with the power and expectation this image suggests and wonder whether the entire world is equally transfixed. I await the president's *apparition* ~

When thinking about painters who choose photographic images as their subject matter or major source of reference, Francis Bacon and Gerhard Richter are two names which keep reoccurring to mind. The decision to work

from images rather than directly from life is one that is transmitted through the finished works and becomes an essential part of their makeup. Bacon is famous for having preferred to realize portraits from photographs rather than live models, this strategy allowing him the liberty of distorting his subject's likeness to suit the demands of his pictorial project—in effect bending *history* to suits his own needs. At the 2009 centenary exhibition organized by New York's Metropolitan Museum, I was happy to note the inclusion of many photographs that the artist used in his practice: folded and held together with paper clips, stained from having spent time lying about on the studio floor, faces contorted and bodies ripped apart. Bacon amassed a vast collection of photographic material that informed his painted images, from newspaper clippings, to art reproductions and pictures taken by his friend, the photographer John Deakin. He consciously took advantage of charged imagery such as confined spaces, accidents, crime scenes, Nazi propaganda and concentration camp documentation, or Velazquez' portrait of pope Innocent X.

Like many painters today, I also have a visual reference archive which, although I would not position it as a work in its own right, continues to grow and inform my painting. I spend a lot of my time looking at images on the internet, on television, in books and magazines. From this archive, I try to produce new images that suggest the kind of encounter I described in relation to the events of 1989. The recognition of something real in an image, coupled with the inability to place its visual content within the coordinates of one's waking consciousness. Perhaps a place somewhere in-between the auratic credibility we still place on the image as an index of reality, and the awareness of how easily the visual can be manipulated. This process entails a hierarchy of choosing, from browsing to delineating a finite terrain of choices, to isolating

singular images and recontextualizing them in such a way that the viewer can continue this activity by choosing how to respond to, or conceptualize, the choice of visual fragments they are presented with.

My first painterly efforts were focused on working from life. It seemed to me that a truly worthy artistic effort had to result from the confrontation with real space and the experience of a lived moment: the presence of a model's body in the same space, my own presence within a landscape, the sensation of light, of a certain fleeting atmosphere. In 2005, I came into contact with the writings of Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard. In them, I recognized ideas and preoccupations I already had, but explored much more deeply and better articulated: how we conceive of the world is often a matter of negotiation and interpretation. It became important for me to address this alternative, and in some ways more important, reality. The understanding of tangible events or experiences is always negotiated through storytelling, and the story is often told through images. I changed my approach to painting by completely renouncing the type of life observation I had done before. I wanted my work to suggest the confusion I felt in regards to events I had experienced, to the stories people told each other that I couldn't accept as good reflections of the world I saw.

5. Choosing your words

> *May 4th 2011, 10pm* ~ Harper's magazine online posts an article from their December 2001 issue. *American Lucifer* by Bill Wasik. The author suggests that Bin Laden's physiognomy makes it difficult for us to reconcile his actions with the congenial features

arranged on his benign face. "A blessed child of the global economy, Osama bin Laden cast himself out of a contented lifestyle quite like the one we had desired and had, in large part, attained. Today contentment is denied us, disquieted as we are by the face of a confounding devil-our American Lucifer, fallen archangel of Western prosperity."[13] ~

Painting is a way for me to think about the experience of images, or about the encounter with a specific sequence of unrelated images that somehow become connected. Events such as I experienced in 1989 did not quite fit with my notion of reality and remain in many ways arcane, but have nonetheless become part of history and of my personal past. Creating new images that suggest this type of encounter with the visual necessitates a combination of chance discoveries and a specific selection of images that can express my painting vocabulary while remaining ambiguous enough to allow an unsuspecting viewer to be surprised and continue the chain of signification. Images do not simply constitute windows upon the world, vicarious engagements with a world outside our immediate physical location. Some of the images we see make a great impression on us while others are hardly noticed or move us in a way that only becomes apparent later. Visuality is, like history in a sense, perhaps different from what Canetti had in mind yet both are characterized by repetition, interruption and incongruity. In this case, association, latency, and unexpected connections between language and images become useful tools of investigation. A rhizome ethic very well exemplified by the operation of the Internet. Although a tremendous resource

[13] Bill Wasik, "American Lucifer – The Tormenting Face of Osama bin Laden" (*Harper's Magazine*, December 2001).

for finding specific information, this gigantic network is also a place where choosing can be completely suspended in favour of browsing. There is a strange satisfaction to be derived from an activity which liberates us from choosing, allowing us to only act in anticipation of being surprised over and over again by the next item. There is both pleasure and desperation in browsing, as it often follows the unsuccessful search for a specific item. I am looking for a means to work from the reality of images rather than in front of a real life figure or landscape. A kind of *plein air* painting of the contemporary visual terrain. The potential exists that I could end up using an image from any number of sources, whether digital or analog, moving or still, but I generally try not to stage my own source images and this means that I have to somehow find the visual fragments that can fulfill my vision.

Where the hunt for digital images is concerned, I have yet to find a purely visual search engine. If one wants to browse for images, one often has to look inside preselected sets such as various library image archives, Flicker and Facebook image sets, or any number of other curated collections of images (image blogs constitute a very popular example). *GazoPa* is a visual image search engine that, in spite of being quite basic, attempts to search visuals based on some aspect of their image content. You upload an image and then you are presented with images that are percentually more or less similar to the original. This service allows me to travel through images in a way similar to navigating text hyperlinks but it lacks the possibility of refining my inquiry. A good feature offered by GazoPa is the option to draw a sketch of the item you are looking for. The visual search engine of the future would have to be more sophisticated; say I click on the sweater of a specific man in a group photo. I would then be taken to a selection of other images of men in sweaters. Or images that are somehow related to the specific pattern on this particular

man's sweater. Or images that display an identical or closely related colour palette. Perhaps even images where there is a person assuming a similar pose, or images with a very similar formal composition. I would also be able to indicate specific parameters for my search, focusing on one or more of the specific aspects I proposed.

Amazon has a crowd sourcing digital marketplace where humans can complete simple but dull tasks in exchange for a nominal monetary reward (cents per assignment). The *Amazon Mechanical Turk* is named after an 18th century chess playing automaton, *the Turk*, invented by Wolfgang von Kempelen. After having toured Europe defeating many chess champions, it became apparent that the 'automaton' was in fact a container hiding its operator: a human chess master. Dubbed *artificial artificial-intelligence*, Amazon's service permits computer scientists to harness human intelligence for the purpose of completing tasks presently outside of the computer's scope. Many available activities depend on skills that humans are particularly adept at, such as visual recognition and description: the very skills necessary in building a visual search engine of the type I am imagining. For example, one would be presented with a sequence of images containing a variety of fruit (perhaps growing in the wild, in a market context, and already processed into a meal) and the word *banana*. The human assistant's task would be to isolate only the bananas from everything else that is not a banana in the assigned image set. This information would accrete into a system comparable to face recognition algorithms. Computer enabled visual searching will undoubtedly be perfected very soon, as is made visible by existing research in the area of nearest neighbor search algorithms.

For now, however, the search for images remains to be negotiated largely through the structures of language. Search terms are necessary to lead us

toward the visual specifics we seek. But what is the right combination of words or pass phrase? This is difficult to determine since our visual-numeric hunting range is perpetually changing and images will often appear amongst the results of a search in accordance with the word combination attached to them, rather than what they in fact depict. This incongruence between labeling and content means that collecting useful images becomes more about finding than searching. For painters like myself, it is important to recognize the potential future use of an image we have come across on an unrelated search. The vastness of the internet as a picture source becomes akin to the complex nature of lived consciousness where we can only focus on a fairly narrow spectrum of activities and information related to work, leisure, and creativity.

Mark Tansey is an American painter who grapples with the properties of language and its relation to the visual. His work consists of enigmatic pictures, rendered in a variety of monochromatic palettes which always involve one or several realistically depicted figures engaged in activities related to some kind of search, investigation or quest. His paintings are as relevant to my consideration of the topic as is his methodology. I was fascinated to learn that Tansey begins his picture making process at the level of language with a kind of word association game. In the late 1980s he began creating tables of words or mind maps of sorts which resemble word game boards. *Untitled* from 1986 is an 11" by 17" sheet of white paper empty in the middle but bordered with questions neatly contained in rectangular boxes and huddled by categories. They are W5 type questions that very clearly organize the conceptual and formal space the artist wishes to address in his painting. *What is the theme? Where is this? How is time compressed or extended? What is the*

title? What problems does the language cause for figure and narrative?[14] The centre of the page remains blank perhaps as a space for thought expecting to be occupied by more questions or words that are looking to better articulate their questions thorough images.

Where Tansey begins with words that can then inform images, I am searching for images that can help me express visually my encounter with images. For example, I am looking for a picture of a person calling with their hands cupped around their mouth. *Man calling with hands cupped around his mouth* produced a few promising visuals, many of them originating from royalty free image archives where pictures are labeled in this sometimes very specific manner. *Yodelling* and *Holler* led me to some pictures that were more candid although still not exactly what I was looking for. It often happens that I will not find an image that matches my pictorial needs. This means that I have to either create the pose from disparate fragments or in other ways modify an image I already have. This type of bricolage is akin to the effort of conceptualizing experienced events which somehow do not yet fit into our reality, just like the futile effort of trying to identify some mysterious pattern of hereditary evil on a particular face.

The search for images is primarily electronic but books, magazines, film and video, as well as my own recording of images I encounter in daily life, also contribute to my source imagery. I have a growing collection of images, many of which I have used, many more awaiting the fulfillment of their visual potential as recontextualized pictorial components. The search is always on, but for painting to emerge, further and more conscious decisions are necessary. If we are to agree with Baudrillard, we are now operating in an

[14] Judi Freeman, *Mark Tansey* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1993) 20.

environment where there is so much information available that it becomes impossible to choose or make meaning. This is where the painter of the contemporary visual operates: a space where the very confusion of the coordinates of reality serves as the background for visual investigation.

Bogdan Luca is a Toronto-based artist. Having worked in the commercial arts sector for a decade, Luca turned his full attention to painting in 2003 by enrolling in the drawing and painting program at OCAD University. After graduating with honours, he pursued a Masters of Visual Studies at the University of Toronto, completing his degree requirements in 2010 with a thesis exhibition entitled *Unmoorings*. That body of work proposed that the realm of the visual is not an unquestionable and universally recognizable index of reality. Rather, it is the beginning for negotiating individual experiences of shared events from which a communal sense of the real emerges. Luca's work continues to be informed by the relationship between physical experience and the world as image. Luca has shown his work in Toronto, New York, and Florence, Italy. He is currently a drawing and painting instructor at OCAD University in Toronto.

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