



OBJECTS TO MOVE THE ASSEMBLAGE POINT AND OTHER TOOLS

SYDNEY HERMANT ON ERICA STOCKING

Erica Stocking, *Objects to Move the Assemblage Point and Other Tools*, 2006.

Photo: Courtesy the Artist

"The sense of mystery," wrote Odilon Redon, who had learned the secret from Da Vinci, "comes from remaining always in the equivocal, with double and triple perspectives, or inklings of perspectives (images within images)—forms that take shape and come into being according to the state of mind of the spectator. All things more suggestive just because they do appear."¹

A gesture is nothing more than a deliberate act undertaken for the power that comes from making a decision.²

THE COLPORTAGE PHENOMENON OF SPACE

The objects installed in Artspeak's window by Erica Stocking are of a temporal and cumulative nature, and provide the foundation for several levels of performing acts. Act I features objects found by Stocking as she rode empty-pocketed on her bicycle that form a personal narrative or map. Most, but not all, of the objects have been collected by the artist, some by people close to her, some mementos of a perfect day: a shiny lock rendered that way through urban nature's own polishing (a gravel pile); a shell emptied of its former (turtle) tenant; a winged piece of wood resembling a medieval prosthetic for an owl; sticks mounted like swords, above which hovers the motherstick; a seaweed ball as *shoppe* sign; a tire hub; broken glass balls; an apothecary bottle possibly containing a potion (possibly poison); a dirty, mismatched yet complete deck of cards; and batteries held together by a big blue elastic, among other treasures. The performative act leading up to the object gives it its power.³ Energy before form. The

performative act here could be an enchantment given the talismanic ethos on display. Carlos Castaneda's term the Magical Pass could be loosely translated into artspeak as a trippy thought or a psychotropic moment where what we think we know of reality meets another possibility. For the flaneur this Magical Pass is partly the result of happenstance, a tool to "extract what you need in order to embrace the stupendous quality of ordinary reality" and to "direct energy (in order to) make it easier to be in two places at once."⁴

THE ASSEMBLAGE POINT

Act II constitutes the placing and staging of the objects behind glass, as if in a shop window. This is the Assemblage Point, another coupling of words to impart an installation or ground upon which disjointed objects come together with help from the artist. In Castanedian terms, or energetically speaking, the Assemblage Point is the point where human experience and reality are constructed. In this instance, both happily embody the term. By shop window I mean the kind of window that at first glance might read as "drug front" or "special person's store," or... "art." The theatrical context is first provided by the exhibition invitation: it is an image of a set of sorts wherein a paused shield, made from a garbage pail lid by Collin Johanson rests beside a walking stick made by David Lehman, which in turn rests against a plinth upon which sits a foam head wearing a rock hat made by Kara Uzelman. If Act I is a collective chain of events, each object in Artspeak's window becomes an eventual fragment in Act II, lending the objects their own talismanic qualities. Each point in between the objects is an energetic exchange.

Stocking, who began working at the Crystal Ark⁵ around the time she began this project, explains the talismanic quality of her assemblage. Spirituality, she says, is a conflict: "It is the energy that goes back and forth and has to be negotiated." It is not surprising then that her own "colportage phenomenon of space" is barely inside Artspeak's space and is activated at the periphery in a "storefront" window by her friends, peers, and the world. Where we portage this energy is also the Assemblage Point. Stocking's *Objects to Move the Assemblage Point and Other Tools* couples inversely with her recent installation *Hotel Room* at the Lobby Gallery only a few blocks away and joined fugitively by Blood Alley. Together they form a lobby/store/church alcove/hotel room, which skim the gallery spaces proper. Stocking stresses Castaneda's importance of seeing, in that the eyes see abstractly. Goethe believed that "thinking and perceiving were interpenetrating" and were much wrapped up in Bildung, "self-transformation."⁶ Rudolph Steiner's life's work in Anthroposophy furthers Goethe's notion of perception and imagination by adding that the spiritual and moral dimension of light was much more vital at that time and needed to find an answer to the question: "How far is it possible to prove that in human thinking real spirit is the agent?"⁷ Some, Castaneda believed, can see the luminous shells, the egg shaped light energy that surrounds an individual. This shell meeting the Eagle's Emanations (the energy without) is the Assemblage Point.⁸

OCULIST WITNESS

"The colportage phenomenon of space is the flaneur's basic experience...."⁹ And what of the

passerby, the window viewer? As for Stocking's role as a catalyst, communicating with an idea by placing objects in the window, her motto remains "it's ok if it doesn't," if it does nothing, if the passerby can glean nothing of it's original narrative function. Stocking's take on the flaneur pivots upon this exchange, even if created by the passerby in her absence. "The space winks at the flaneur. What do you think may have gone on here? Of course, it has yet to be explained how this phenomenon is associated with colportage."¹⁰

¹ Walter Benjamin on the colportage phenomenon of space. "The Arcades Project," citing Raymond Escholiers, *Art & Métiers* (Graphic No. 47, June 1 1935): 7.

² Carlos Castaneda interviewed by Keith Thompson, 1994. www.lib.gornet.ru/KASTANEDA/kast94.txt

³ In conversation with Erika Stocking.

⁴ Carlos Castaneda interviewed by Keith Thompson, 1994. www.lib.gornet.ru/KASTANEDA/kast94.txt

⁵ The Crystal Ark is a gem and crystal store.

⁶ Arthur Zajonc, *Catching the Light; The Entwined History of Light and Mind* (NY: Bantam Books, 1993): 204.

⁷ www.rsarchive.org/Books/GA004/TPOF/pofint.html

⁸ In conversation with Erica Stocking.

⁹ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge MA and London UK: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press): 418.

¹⁰ *Ibid*: 419.

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