

WHY DID YOU AGREE TO DO THIS?

NOLAN SIMON BUFFY GAIN

N: Why are we doing why do we.. Well I'm not just someone who makes paintings. We've had the funky text collaboration for a while. So when the opportunity came along, I was interested. I read a lot of interviews, so. • What do you get out of them that's so special? • Fantasizing myself into the scenario, like a casual comparing of sensibilities. • I liked it because the 'in conversation' form whether it's a panel or like a discussion presumes this idealized space for discourse. • It can't help but fall short. • I like the idea of fantasizing yourself into a situation, though. Or that I've fantasized myself into this situation, given the history here and given the way desire seems to work on me, it's plausible. I'm trying to have a clearer emotional stake in writing. Who do you fantasize yourself as, the interviewer or the, well I guess it's hard sometimes to tell who's doing who. • Wait do you feel like we have clear emotional stakes? • Clearly stakes, but not clear stakes. There's some desire and some complexity in that. Not romantic stakes, though. You've known me for years, and in a few different contexts. And the longevity is cool. • Sometimes it's better to have [redacted] first and then become friends. Like it gets rid of something, or establishes something, or does some sort of work. • That's true especially lately, as I'm less alienated from the experience of sex.



N: *Why me?*

N: *Yeah.*

B: *[inaudible]*

N: *[yelling] Pigeons.*

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N: I like when they bite me, because they do it so carefully.

B: How do you .. how do you make the paint paint? It looks hard. • Make the paint paint? • Noun version of paint, verb version of paint. • What? • It looks hard. • Uh? • Like physically hard. • Oh. Some of it is hard. I scrape it off with this razor blade. • Oh. Is that a body? • Yeah. • Your body? • Yeah. • Naked? • Yeah. • And that's a palm tree? • Yeah. • It's like a refrigerator science experiment or something. • Kind of. • Looks like burning celluloid. • Sure • Is that an eye? • No it's a mouth dripping with milk. • So what's this one? I kind of read a crotch or a breast in the gesture, but— • A throat. • No nipple on the throat. • People have said they read the thumb as a nipple. • I see a shoe, a foot. • Detail-y kind of fussy work. • This is canvas and gesso, and that's? • Linen and PVA. It's used in book making. And I've been experimenting with using it as a gesso. Kind of letting the linen texture and color show through—and there's a reference, one that I'm trying to induce, to traditional technique. Contemporary image logic in a traditional environment. • It's good for flesh. •

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I've gotten into the idea idea of representing bodies at rest in a more basically political sense. • When you let forms fall, fold, wrinkle, and bruise as they play together or rest or shimmer or hint towards illicit sex, I do think that's seductive. • ~~I don't know where you're trying to lead me.~~ I guess I'm also talking about valorizing ways of collectively creating spaces, or occupying places that aren't caught up in productive or reproductive labor. • I feel like collective stuff beyond career 'networks' or the traditional family. Past your youth, it begins unravelling. • We don't valorize anything except as it aligns with production and consumption. • It's something that scares me. I worry about becoming isolated as I slip into a kind of uselessness, into the like margins of society. I can't remember where I heard this, but it rang pretty true for me personally, that queerness is oriented towards death. Queerness as a form of exquisite parasitism. Sometimes, I just get so lonely.

B: I'm reading you something: 'At the heart of this romantic dialectic, thought is rooted in the body. The body conceived of as a dynamic spaciality. At the most fundamental level of his creation, he maintains that thought has a geometric origin. All thought is the knotting together of a space and a gesture, the gestural unfolding of a space, even. The maxim of life that corresponds to this might be set out as follows: unfold the space that does justice to your body. Chatelet's love of partying obeyed this maxim. It's more ascetic than it might appear, for the construction of a space of pleasure is at least as much of a duty as a passive assent.' It's Badiou, talking about Chatelet. • What's the cover art? • Sam Lewitt, Fluid Employment. • Oh cool! Sam and I were in occupy together. • Well that makes sense, it's an Urbanomics book. The writing scene in Detroit— • There are actually a fair amount of writers in Detroit. • Well, cost of living is low. Good place to write a book. • Not art writers as much. • Doesn't that kind of piggy-back off of the commercial art world though, and less the like ritual and practice of art? • Yeah, not much of that here. • Is that good? • I think it's bad. • Really? • I think it's bad. • Well, money is good. Need money to eat. • But also, I think feeling like people are looking at what you're doing is. Feeling seen, or what's the word? Feeling acknowledged. There isn't any, so recently, well actually, maybe we should go to this today. One of my friends put together—at The Cave—a show with a bunch of artists from Chicago and Detroit. • But there's a stripping

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out and monetization or collapsing into commodity of every other center of meaning or site of joy. Like you said one nice thing about the commercial art market is that sense of validation that comes from selling. Everything gets abstracted back into like capital. Even as an artist where like you're trying to reach for other value systems and you're in a somewhat okay position to activate those systems, you still get something extra out of it as work, out of selling work, and getting paid for your work. Out of competing as an individual in the marketplace. • Do you think we're getting to a place where we don't have access to free awe? • Is there a way out of the enforced individualism? •

Collectives? • Walled gardens. Rich white people LARPing as revolutionaries, like.. chill out dude you're not punk. Sure you're whipping a woman while your wife watches in front of a crowd of other skills, and that's fun, but it doesn't mean you're fighting the good fight. • Most collectives I know of are a bunch of crust punk kids like, six kids that built out a loft. If there weren't any walled gardens, I wonder if, would we have the tools, were we to, I mean if there was some kind of change, how would we start some kind of better, if there weren't these other ideas kind of floating out there ready to be scaled

up. • Or are they just like forever separate vestibules where one is always already a writhing Cronenberg monster of rich white straights congratulating itself for writhing. I'm playing more pessimist that I actually am. I believe possibility inheres in walled gardens. It's just important to know what they're built on top of.

B: Also should we like establish boundaries or anything?

N: What do you mean?

B: I mean..

N: Yes, I remember.

N: You can touch it. • The big wax tongue? • Yeah, you can touch it. • Oh my god it feels amazing. • It's foam rubber. • [shrieking] Is that art? • Yeah. • I stepped in it. I'm supposed to step on the art, right? • Yeah. It's a long unfolding performance piece. • I'm part of it, then. I wonder terrified. • Are you in this? • [continues popping the floor poppers] • Ugh these older het dudes, just leave me hanging oddly. ~~And hey it's not like I'm hot shit. Like if you're trying to make notches in your bedpost, I'm an odd target.~~ • This is all about [redacted] happiness • Yay! I've not



had that experience in my queer community. I'm still here. • Things will be weird for a bit, but it resolves. • That's a kind of—I had this period where I just started everything, just to see what I liked. I started working on these triple penetration paintings. Oh my god! Are those from real images. • Its yeah, it's taken from a porn. • It's kind of beautiful but at a certain point, it's like what are you saying when you bring that into the gallery, boy. • This is a super lovely show, I'm so glad I got to see it before it got taken down. • Yeah it's great.

N: I've been wanting to bring the process closer,

but I'm still using found images and not trusting myself to make my own images. I've been kind of curious whether people are making big shifts because of the election. I was apprehensive about this stuff before the election, but now I'm like maybe I need to reconsider what I'm doing. • I've landed firmly in team reconsider. I was enamored, you know, with this really bloodless, kind of distanced way of writing, that among other things, tries to flatten subjectivity. I got there because it can do astounding things, and I had a few art-crushes on writers that wrote this way. But a lot of it was because I didn't feel comfortable letting my own voice

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slip out. • Yeah I can totally see that. • But, ugh okay, digression taking that literally for a second and anticipating transcribing later, bleh to hearing my own voice. Like, I don't feel super femme, as I'm like wandering how many people it around the world in my person-body. But when I read my poems, or hear my voice, or see pictures of myself, I'm like oh—that seems like a woman. During exposure therapy, I used this recorder actually, we'd like talk about what happened and I was supposed to listen to it later. And omg last weekend, I went to [REDACTED] and the reason I was [REDACTED]

in therapy was and I ran into someone who was involved. Which was weird and intense. And I had forgotten, but she has the same given name as me. • For a week, I felt like I'd been folded in two. • Uh huh. • But in the therapy it was crazy too, because I was trying to process the psychological trauma stuff but also a newfound voice dysphoria. With the up-speak and all the likes, it's like, yeah. Ha! There it is again • This blew my mind and I want to look into it more, but I read the original definition of like, like in old english, the original definition was a synonym with the word body. Right, like if you go all the way back. The similarity definition, is a corporeal similarity. • Whenever I'm using like a lot in a sentence I'm just bringing everybody's bodies to bear. • Inserting your body into the sentence. • Going back to what you said, yeah I definitely have been feeling rawer and more afraid and that has knocked me a little off course, in terms of thinking writing super sterile, well structured things was the way to go.

Looking to get a little more skin in the game.

Do you have any new tattoos? • I've got the avocado in the hand one and my brothers signature • I have this thing on my arm. Then I have the words, and the birds, and the fucking asshole on my back from when I was a teenager. • I think I might get another one. kunst = kapital • What's kunst? I know what capital is. • Art • I see. I thought it might mean pussy is capital • Fill it with tattoos. • Fill it with cunts! • I used to want to get one every time something horrible happened, but realized I couldn't afford to keep it up. I want another one, Egon Schiele has these kind of wrecked looking flowers I like. • Maybe popular for the wrong reasons, but still good • Not a nude, not on my naked self, that'd be redundant, but— • You should totally get a wonky boob like slightly off on your boob.

B: Doubling-down.

Uh, how much gin is in this? Just so I don't put myself under the table. • Like two fingers. • You can see it swirling. • Oh that's so good. Let me see if I can get it. • It kind of stopped. Do you want me to stir?



Ohh it started up again. • Wait wait wait wait. Is that a goose? Is that one of them long legged chickens? They're absurd. They need jorts. • Are you looking up long legged chicken in jorts? • First I'm looking up long legged chicken, because I want relevant results. • wow. wow. wow. • I might be sleepy. I might be ready for sleep. Is that okay? • Yeah. • Oh yeah, long legged chicken in jorts. Here we go. • Ahh haha, close. • In boxing shorts. The rest are chicks in jorts. Human chicks. You should put a variety of chickens in your backyard. • [REDACTED] has chickens. • Oh my god, does she have americaunas? • I don't know, you'd have to ask her. • If she doesn't she should get some. They lay colorful eggs. And I think they are good in cold weather as well. Okay, I'm gonna pass out and cuddle your cats. If you want me to sleep on the couch that's also fine. If that's necessary. • I don't think it's necessary. • Okay, goodnight. • Yeah. Okay, I told [REDACTED] I would call her before I went to bed so I'm gonna do that and then come occupy the other half of the bed.

Hi! What? What? What? What? • Yeah, I slept okay, except I woke up with a hangover headache so I drank like six glasses of water then I had to pee a

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bunch because of all the water so I slept well except for self inflicted interruptions. • There's a big sauna near here that I've been trying to go to. It has like private rooms with a hot tub and a sauna. • We should go. • I'll call • We can shvitz it off.

[talking about New York plans, pragmatics, cat health issues and interim cat care..]

N: How do you feel about things thus far? • Um. • Have you thought about it? • I think good. I'll have to go back through and make things more coherent. I think it's interesting. My queerness, differences in gender will be partially elided, so our voices might merge somewhat. I like the kind of forced out, or half baked, or like heavily mediated ideas that come from the space of a conversation between friends. • It's a faster, hotter way of coming up with stuff. • But then on the other hand, it's super parasitic to present it after the fact. Like you're performing this thing in order to reap some sort of benefit down the line. Publicity, there it is. But for the most part there's a mutuality between the talkers and the listeners. We get to use the text to access a kind of empathy or intimacy, to play along in real time, to get those warmed over thoughts, if they creep in. The talkers get to roleplay as important people. • It's a cool form. • I think in conversation your ideas, they're unconditionally associated with your self and your body in a way that isn't true of many other forms of writing. It resists that fucking spent-ass 'author is dead' thing, which does in the end, hold a bit of water in poems or novels or treatises. It's kind of like ironic I guess, but I think the interview—which arose in that enlightenment time period—ends up undermining the whole enlightenment/Habermas conception of the subject in public. The subject stripped down to the most minimal physical vessel subtended by pure reason, just a vehicle for ideas. Inevitably in conversation, you're more in your body, with its vocal tics, desires and inclinations, gestures and habits. Your whole self responds to the whole situation, whether you intend to or not. I think selfie art kind of does similar work in undermining that supposed separation of work and creator. • I guess that's what is happening here. We're taking a selfie together. (It's a warm gesture, I hope you know.)

[Background noise in restaurant.. Inaudible.]

B: [Shrieking] My body is a vessel for shame!

N: Decadence is crucial.

[Talking about LA and sprawl, house prices.. Fixing houses, fixing iphones, youtube tutorials. Nothing too catchy.]

I have to trick myself into reading my hard books by sending myself on a trip and only packing my hard books. Otherwise I'll just read sci-fi novels all year. • I've read like maybe 40 novels in my life. I only read the hard books, so I never read. I mean I read other stuff. Nonfiction, theory. Or things my partners give me. • Oh, I totally learn best, and write best when I get to do it through a partner or another person.

*Buffy Cain in conversation with Nolan Simon
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