

# ABSTRACT JOURNALISM

Eternal

ZWISCHEN ZAUBER UND DOGMA, UND GEGEN BEIDE

Genuflection

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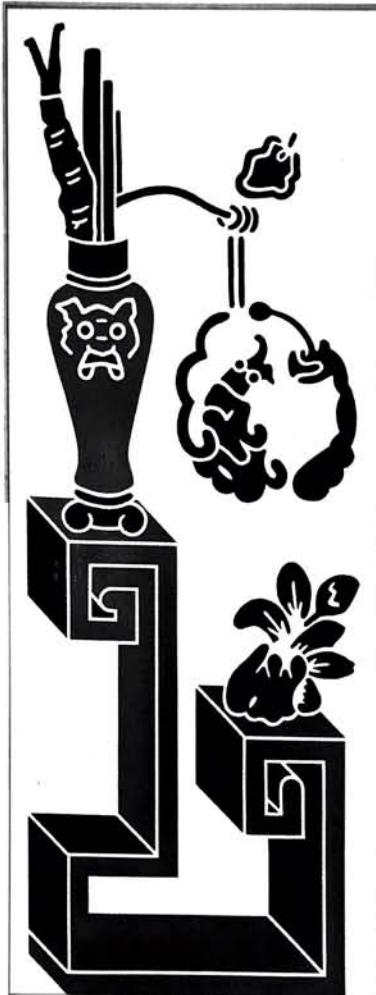
bstract Journalism\* is an art-making methodology involving rigorous investigation and lateral digression in the discussion of cultural situations.

Oscillating between the approaches of editorial and reportage, while invoking the prestige of journalistic integrity, Abstract Journalism proceeds through divergence, either slight or dramatic, from the original topic or field of enquiry. This divergence is intentional, and comes from the belief that indirectness and allegory are more effective than fact and didacticism in describing a cultural situation, and elaborating its attendant concerns.

The correspondent and superficially incommeasurable factors of credible research and ambiguous expression posit Abstract Journalism as an emotive appeal within a rational structure. The resulting presentations, in deference to the communicative imperative, follow convention - painting, sculpture, installation, publication - so as best to be legible within existing and expected formal languages of art reception.

Abstract Journalism is not concerned with the abstract image, nor the abstract concept; rather, in combining and reflecting upon both visual and semantic systems, it goes about *abstracting a form from its context*. This is done in order to reassess, realign, and reconfigure the form's relationship to meaning, purpose, and possibility. From a web of indexes, references iconic or arcane, and the weight of a primary source with oft but a tenuous link to its allegorical ersatz, a condition emerges, at once passive and active, poised between contemplation and distraction. Faced with Abstract Journalism's oblique semantic reconstruction, one takes on a drifting lucidity: the state of being "lost in connotation".

As an arm of journalistic pursuit, in dealing with cultural histories, confronting both complex realities and this communicative imperative, Abstract Journalism necessitates a gesture of narrativisation; the investigation carries with it an implied function - the telling of a story. In the journalistic mechanism, reduction reigns, and complexity must be distilled to a punchline, a grim and brutal compromise endemic to reconnaissance. This vulgar brevity quickly fades when considered against the true breadth of the circumstance it purports to detail; a punchline could never compete, could barely even garnish, its real-world referent. Abstract Journalism's foil for such oppressive refinement is this application of allegory, where confusion is conflation, and indirectness expansive. Formal descriptive directness is necessarily a denial of the heterogeneous, and wanting in its bluntness; in opposition, its allegory is at once subtle, bold: an echo and an arrow.



Asiatische Adlernase [01]

Enamel on canvas, artist frame / 253x103cm / 2012  
Taiwanese Tea in Germany: Ritual Transposition and the beautiful but impossible Union of East and West.

Ambiguity must not be mistaken for indifference: engagement is the currency of this enquiry. Under Abstract Journalism's provisional structure, the work is interminably linked with the real world, a manifest ambassador for subjective account. An ultra-specific image, object, text or situation, is encountered, immediately announcing itself as the goal of research, a loaded symbol arrived at by an uncertain meander. It strikes one as absolute, in an appeal to both intellect and passion. Such perspectives are never purely cerebral. The distillation inherent in this allegorical détournement is a reflective fantasy, through which both desire and a propositional reordering course.

In the privileging of existing forms, Abstract Journalism is as much about recognising ephemeral significance within the cultural landscape as it is an exposition of that environmental experience, a rumination on the nature of bearing witness. That

which comes into view at the peak of connotation's flux, in this realm of contemplation and distraction, is invariably quotidian. It is the nature of the process preceding this vision that grants it a contextual aura. In this way, the most banal of forms can stand in for the most grandiose of constructions, formidably encumbered - an arbitrary transition into ennobled vernacular.

Such is the method through which Abstract Journalism engages the vernacular to describe the lived structure of cultural history, where to feel is to know. To aestheticise the result is to embrace hyperbole: comical in its exaggeration, frugal in its prescription, and intuitive in its logic. It seeks a certain nuanced form, layered enough to reflect the psychic intricacy of human experience. And concurrently, its output must be reconcilable with the dominant modes of "common knowledge" - accessible, digestible, resonant, and dynamic enough to cross context, to correspond to the prosaic in all its sprawling richness. In this will to convey, it is an attempt to stabilise a horizon; in its affected singularity, one of many possible horizons, chosen as a platform upon which a fabric of tradition, articulation, perception and impermanence might rest.

Journalistic integrity is based on the principles of truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness and public accountability. These principles are of no concern to Abstract Journalism. Abstract Journalism's rampant sophistry cannot hope, and does not offer, to provide answers, but serves instead to free us of the question. The question, vague and ubiquitous, is about cultural histories: it might regard the way in which narratives, grand and small, are digested, made use of, in the everyday; how traditions take shape, and transform over time; the legibility of objects and the refraction of meaning; the vocabulary of social interaction; where glory fades and what takes its place; the ongoing negotiation with history and place, and how sense is made within it; and the desire, in all cultural structures, implicit at the intersection of exchange.

In all cases, the catalyst is certain, the research sincere, and the outcome obtuse. Over time, with variations of scope, fluctuations of intent, and a consistency never held to account, the picture of Abstract Journalism will unfold as an extended act of pointed equivocation [...]

"END"

\*Abstract Journalism is imagined as a framework for facing and contemplating the contradictions embedded in a research-related art practice. It is a discussion undertaken in the full knowledge that the elements at play will not be reconciled or rationalised. All of the processes described here, in isolation or in combinations, can be readily applied to many existing art methodologies, both historical and current; the motive is not to identify a radiant novelty, but rather to impose an idealistic retrospective harmony and the impression of foresight. The most one might hope to gain from this futile mitigated enterprise is the fleeting pleasure of some evocative eloquence.



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