

**The artist as medium:
it is hard to paint before painting**

Jean-Louis Andral

Jean-Pierre Bertrand is taking over the first floor of the Château Grimaldi for three months. And, in doing so – perhaps because this is also the Musée Picasso – he has decided to show only one particular aspect of his work, the one which, as he puts it, comes under the sign of touch, thus leaving aside, as if on pause, his practice with video. And yet this exhibition was itself constructed by a process of editing, forming a sequence from room to room, with pauses to punctuate the ensemble and link the works that are consubstantially brought together.

This title, which was Bertrand's choice, also refers to a unity and oneness of substance – as in the definition by the Council of Nicaea – which phreatically irrigates all his work.

By extension, "consubstantial" means "is one with, in total intimacy." Intimacy being etymologically a superlative, this adverb encourages us to enter as deeply as we can into the pieces set out on the walls, just as the paintings, in their materiality (height, width, thickness), enter into a volume. Here, it is a matter of space, of a space to be traversed just as light passes through the layers, beginning with the Plexiglas, then the paper, which is itself placed on a ground that makes apparent the process of impregnation. It is also a matter of intimately penetrating these surfaces which are held in by the transparent matter which also functions like a kind of airlock between two spaces, that of the room beyond the wall and that of the colour applied to the paper. It is a flat frontier, a mirror that we must cross, drawn in by the field of colour that it contains; a filter – or philtre? – which, having been pressed onto and bonded with the paper that is steeped in them, holds back and liberates the sensuality of these mediums and of these organic mineral, vegetal and animal substances (salt, lemon, honey).

What we are given to see is thus a coloured, coagulant substance that, as its maker wished, defines a plasmic expanse, a surface, therefore, but also a volume. For the pieces are envisaged as objects that take up a part of the wall, which they project before them, and that look out onto the space in front of them. The latter is indeed present in the reflections on the Plexiglas, reflections of the here and now, in the exhibition space, which itself becomes constitutive of the work, as is the time of its elaboration. The paper, which is steeped in those organic binding agents that are honey and lemon, undergoes an ageing process that is beyond the artist's control.

What we have here is a game, an obsessive, ritualistic game played in order to bring before us the phenomenon. In his text here, Jean-Pierre Bertrand notes that "The medium, in medieval Latin, has the meaning of a 'substance, a milieu in which a phenomenon occurs.'" And, he continues, "Mediums are factors, means of access to the body of appearing, but also for playing with it." And it would seem that this very game, serious like the games of childhood, brings into play a secret. That what is at play here, in what we see, is a bit of hot water, salt crystals, nectar of lemon and honey, and that this visual palpitation is the work of a *medium of materialisation* – Jean-Pierre Bertrand – who says that he lends his fluids for the appearance of a form, in that single, same substance that ultimately we must name, and whose silent manifestness today is recalled by the exhibition at the Musée Picasso: *painting*.

The Robinson Paradox or "How no text will never ever best the letter"

Jacques Soullou

1

Invitation cards can be a source of fruitful misunderstandings, which is one of their great charms. It is as if they were inviting us not to see – or, rather, to only half see. Witness the card sent by a municipality in southern France asking for the "honour of your presence" at the exhibition *54 lettres bleues ne viendront pas à bout du verbe* (54 blue letters will never get the better of the word). And there were indeed fifty-four letters in blue argon neon in the installation dating from 1998 that Jean-Pierre Bertrand showed again in June 2003 at the Galerie des Ramparts. But, by overstressing the figure "54," this accountant-like precision made the assumption that we already knew about the key role of that number in his work, and quite simply sacrificed the letter to the spirit.

Just as Magritte's painting *This is Not a Pipe* literally states its own meaning, i.e., that "this" (demonstrative pronoun) "is not a pipe," thus troubling the viewer because the "this" also refers to the representation of a pipe just above the words, which thus designate both themselves and, at the same time, "something else" (and just as, obviously, it is because there is a representation of a pipe that "this" works), so the "fifty-four" is *part of the utterance* "fifty-four blue letters will never get the better of the word," which thus indexes itself through a part of itself which stands for the whole *when taken as a figure*: the fifty-four letters in the utterance are in effect the ones that form the installation. Insofar as it is meaningful only in a relation of utterance, the installation does *not* say that there are 54 letters, but "fifty-four letters," which is the expression form, whereas "54" is the contents form: I can check that there are 54 blue neon letters laid out in the space by

counting them. And this very misunderstanding takes me to the heart of a body of work in which the letter is as important as the sentence, the figure as important as the number, and the word as significant as the light. How does this immeasurable jump from word to light occur, and what role is played by numbers in the articulation of the two? This is one of the mysteries that intrigues Jean-Pierre Bertrand.¹ What I see is not the utterance but the contents: 54 letters. It is indeed easy to check that the installation contains ten *es*, one *p*, etc., like the utterance, but that doesn't prove anything. There is no proof that the word has been made light, and that the installation is indeed the incarnation of the utterance around which Jean-Pierre Bertrand has organised what he calls his "vision."

At the same time, the "misunderstanding" of the invitation card points to the paradoxical nature of the entity "fifty-four" which is at one moment a thing – 54 neon letters laid out in columns in a gallery – and at another a word having no connection to any precise place: "fifty-four letters." Two series, then: the signifying series, embodied by the blue letters – a series that is immediately given as a whole – and the signified series, one facet of which is the utterance "fifty-four letters will never get the better

1. Number is always with the word, all the more so because we belong to a Judeo-Christian civilisation in which the collusion between letter and number is all-pervasive, as attested (to take only one example) by the Ancient Greeks' use of the twenty-four letters of the alphabet as figures, interspersing simply three supplementary signs, leaving twenty-seven characters (54/2) capable of expressing all the numbers up to 999. We will see that what Bertrand is trying to do is precisely to bring number over to the side of light.

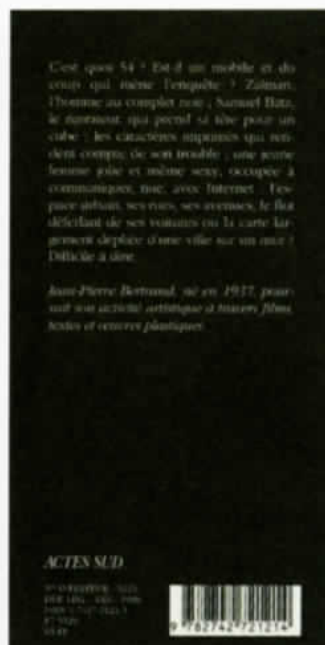
of the word." For it is in effect possible to derive a whole host of sentences from this cloud of letters and these are not literally "exhausted" (another meaning of "venir à bout de") by the utterance "fifty-four letters" (for a start, there are all those sentences in which I change the order of the words, for example: "of the word fifty-four blue letters will never get the better"). Lévi-Strauss emphasised the founding mismatch between the fact that "from his origin, man possesses a full set of signifiers" and the difficulty he has in attaching to them a signified that is "given as such, yet without being known." From this Gilles Deleuze deduced "Robinson's Paradox," which makes it possible to formulate the "a minima conditions of a structure in general" (*Logic of Sense* – "Eighth Series of Structure"), namely: 1. The presence of two series of the kind I have just mentioned; 2. The presence, in these two series, of "terms that exist only through their relationship with each other." (And isn't there something of this "Robinsonade" in the spectator's first encounter with these fifty-four letters that are apparently devoid of meaning, with no hint that they will ever add up to any meaning, while giving the feeling that they may generate an infinite number of phrases?)

2

So, *Robinson*. What has fascinated Jean-Pierre Bertrand all these years about Defoe's character is not so much the hero of the adventures described in the novel, a kind of Adam backtracking from the lapsed world to a lost paradise, as represented in the book by the discovery of the garden of Eden (the "planted garden"

episode, which so struck Bertrand, and to which I shall return below), as the set of singularities that constitute a number of nodes around which there develops a "story" that is shared by Defoe's book and Bertrand's art. "54" is the central, umbilical singularity from which Bertrand derived a whole set of singular points, such as: $5 + 4$; $4 + 5$ (9); 1, 4, 5, 9; 27 (54/2); $8 + 1$ (9), etc. As Defoe's character himself admits, he is affected by a number of those pre-personal singularities that can take the form of sayings he comes across at random in the Bible, and which, he thinks, are applicable to the situation on his island, or by convergences of temporal series from which singular points may emerge. Robinson calls this converging of series from which meaning emerges "concurrence": "My ink, as I observed, had been gone some time, all but a very little, which I eked out with water, a little and a little, till it was so pale, it scarce left any appearance of black upon the paper. As long as it lasted I made use of it to minute down the days of the month on which any remarkable thing happened to me; and first, by casting up times past, I remembered that there was a strange concurrence of days in the various providences which befell me, and which, if I had been superstitiously inclined to observe days as fatal or fortunate, I might have had reason to have looked upon with a great deal of curiosity."²

This text, taken from Robinson's journal, follows a passage in which he describes the difficulty he experienced in reckoning up the number of days that had passed since his arrival on the island (a date which, we may note, coincides historically with Huyghens' invention of the first perfectly isochronous clock, which, as Koyré put it, inaugurated "the world of precision": "I found at the end of my account I had lost a day or two in my reckoning," writes Robinson³. At this moment, too, he realises that he will soon be running out of ink and so decides to note only the most remarkable events in his life, a decision which reminds him that he had in the past observed a strange concurrence between the key events in his life, involving a certain return of the "same": "First, I had observed that the same day that I broke away from my father and friends and ran away to Hull, in order to go to sea, the same day afterwards I was taken by the Sallee man-of-war, and made a slave; the same day of the year that I escaped out of the wreck of that ship in Yarmouth Roads, that same day-year afterwards I made my escape from Sallee in a boat; the same day of the year I was born on - viz. the 30th of September, that same day I had my life so miraculously saved twenty-six years after, when I was



2. Bertrand referred to the French edition of *Robinson Crusoe* (Paris, Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959, p. 133). He quotes this text in the piece entitled *Le 55^e Jour*, which follows *Les 54 Jours de Robinson Crusoe*.

3. *Ibid.*



cast on shore in this island; so that my wicked life and my solitary life began both on a day." Robinson later observes that, "And thus I left the island, the 19th of December, as I found by the ship's account, in the year 1686, after I had been upon it eight-and-twenty years, two months, and nineteen days; being delivered from this second captivity the same day of the month that I first made my escape in the long-boat from among the Moors of Salée."

We may note that if this return of the "same" breaks down into two series (a benign one and a malign one), then these do not run parallel to one another but crisscross (*sich kreuzen*⁴), forming a chiasmus at a point designated here by the name of the Moorish port of Salée. As for the mis-reckoning of the days, we have further proof of this in the fact that, according to Defoe's calculations, Robinson remains on the island either twenty-seven or twenty-eight years, and that therefore the age at which he leaves it is either 54 or 55. Washed up on the island on 30 September 1659, Robinson only leaves it twenty-seven years later, on 19 December 1686. He is 27 in 1659, and is therefore 54 when he leaves the island.

Robinson Crusoe is therefore a book of the law, in that what is expressed through the events in the hero's life is a kind of chronological concurrence, reflected in elementary form in the fact that exactly half his age when he leaves the island corresponds to the date of his arrival. This concurrence between the days and years marks a precession of the symbolical order (numbers) over that of "lived experience," to which Robinson refuses to attach any importance. "54" is the number of passages Bertrand has sampled from Robinson's journal. It is a shore (limit) number, as is its half, "27," which marks the other shore, the other articulation.

Between them lies the island. The encounter with this number "54" is due more to coincidence (chance) than to deliberate intention.

The literary text and the "54 days" piece form a bloc which is not static: it is taken up by a becoming that moves between the two parts, tearing pieces from each. The limits of this bloc extend beyond this "54 days" piece, since later pieces attach themselves to it, making it move further and faster, even, as with *La Totalité des citrons* (The Totality of Lemons).

Concurrence appears in the wake of repetition, which expresses the return of the "same." Concurrence contains the notions of convergence and encounter but, beyond that, the idea must be linked to those of default and *play* (in the mechanical sense). The "concurrent day" was the name we used to give to the day (or days) that needed to be added to the calendar year from time to time to make it converge with the solar year, thus restoring a cosmic unity of time that had slipped away with the repetition of the years, and ensuring a regular repetition of the cycle. Concurrence occurs because there is play (movement): play in the cycles of the planets, in the reckoning of days, in the relation between reflection and reflected object. Concurrence occurs between repetition and convergence. In the play between them.

3

The point is not to understand (psycho-) analytically how, at some point in his life, Jean-Pierre Bertrand came to identify with Defoe's character and empathise with Robinson Crusoe. Rather, it is to see how his work found a way of prolonging its own dynamic curve through proximity to the pre-personal singularities found in the novel.

What is disconcerting about Jean-Pierre Bertrand's arithmetic is that it adds together words and things. *La Totalité des citrons*, a magnificent and enigmatic installation dating from 1976, is his little treatise on this. In this paradoxical arithmetic,⁵ redolent of Lewis Carroll, "8" can equal "9" insofar as "9" designates a thing – a whole lemon placed on an octagonal mirror – whose reflection produces an "8." This "8" is a paradoxical entity, at once thing and figure, a cardinal number (the totality of lemons) and an ordinal one (the 9th is reflected in an "8", thus referring to the cardinal), both symbolic and imaginary. This heterodox arithmetic capable of adding up entities from different but contiguous worlds, is at

4. Defoe presents Crusoe as a name of Germanic origin (*Kreuzner*), whose radical, *Kreuz*, meaning "cross," is shared with many other compound words including *Kreuzbild* (crucifix), *Kreuzung* (crossing) and *Fensterkreuz* (window casement). Formally speaking, the cross and the window can indeed be associated. In French, the *croisée* of a window is where the cross and the frame meet. Given the way the novel informs Bertrand's work, it is possible to say that the two cross over. Crusoe, name of the crossover.

5. Bertrand has spoken of the "arithmetic of passion."



the heart of Bertrand's work. Its heterodoxy is what keeps him from getting bogged down in a mysticism of numbers which some might easily be tempted to bring in here. With Bertrand figures are never purely arithmetical entities. Take "54," which can be split down the middle into two halves – 4 and 5, reassembled again as $5 + 4$ or $5/4$. Like Alice, Bertrand went through the looking glass a long time ago.

4

The *primal scene* presents a "symmetry" between an event that belongs to the arrangement of one of Bertrand's first pieces, entitled *Les 54 Jours de Robinson Crusoe* (The 54 Days of Robinson Crusoe), and another event that occurs in the book *Robinson Crusoe*, and that the system integrates as a piece in a number of modes that I will now proceed to examine.

The first of these events concerns a book, the second a boat. The boat belongs to the text of the book *Robinson Crusoe*, and the book, as an object, to the arrangement. The symmetry resides in the way these two objects are encountered within these different contexts: the book entitled *Robinson Crusoe* is something Bertrand simply came across one day; it had been "washed up" on a bedroom window sill. In the same way, Robinson discovered a boat near the shore of his island. Both objects were on the frontier between two spaces. The three segments that form these "54 days" are the bedroom, the window and the "world." It is in relation to the dimensions of the former that the latter is, so to speak, calibrated. It will be noted that we find ourselves here in a classical canonical space (to which, in literary terms, the book *Robinson Crusoe* also belongs). The boat is itself on the edge of a

closed space, the island, and of an indefinitely open one, the ocean. By virtue of the tools and documents that it contains, it can be likened to a window: it is through this calibrator that the old world will gradually take over the island. Boat and window are both filters.

Further, the mixed bag of objects that Crusoe finds in the novel in the form of texts are like a store.

The second parallel that interests us is between the book *Robinson Crusoe*, considered as a found object and placed on the window sill, open, and the passage in the book, the text, describing the hero opening a Bible. But this opening/openness is significant only insofar as it occurs within a certain dimension of chance, which we will encounter frequently here.

The only moment in the novel where the hero discovers this Bible in its role as the Book of the Law, saying something that applies to him in his unprecedented situation, is effectively the day when he opens the book at random and reads a phrase that states the law governing his condition on the island: "These words were very apt to my case." *Les 54 Jours de Robinson Crusoe* appear to have to do with a *law of formation*, whose most elementary motif can be placed in relation to the various passages from the novel. The book *Robinson Crusoe* found open one day on the window sill, and reappropriated in that very mode of appearance, would thus have been opened and put back fifty-four times in succession, and photographed the same number of times, within the frame of the window. Opened *at random*, and not *by chance*.

That the discovery of this book left open on the edge of a window, which of course is not any old window, should be linked in Bertrand's memory with the context of a decisive event in his own life, is a hypothesis that is certainly not invalidated by a number

of allusions he has made in conversation. But the more or less traumatic nature of this event is less important here than the fact that, if this encounter (with the book on the window sill in a given moment and place) is the index of a real event, then it also marks the place at which it eludes us. The real remains beyond that which is articulated with the place of this encounter in the form of the fifty-four repetitive photos reproducing its frame/context.⁶ For Bertrand and for Robinson, the real both comes towards us and recedes in a kind of return of the "same," a certain concurrence of signs. If *Robinson Crusoe* is the book of the law of this series of 54 days, it is this primarily as the object to which is applied an utterance *ordering* that it be opened at random fifty-four times.

The means whereby this law is applied – that is to say, the watchword (*mot d'ordre*) – is even more important than its object: it is the body which randomly divides the book into two halves, like opening a window. The window here is indicated analogically, for one thing through this dividing action, for another in what it uncovers, i.e., two "halves" that are of interest less as written pages than as luminous surfaces, closer to glass than to paper.

6. On the relation of the encounter to the real, Jacques Lacan noted that "what is repeated is something that arises as if at random," *Séminaire XI*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1973, p. 54.

Les 54 Jours de Robinson Crusoe is a piece with an exemplary structure. It comprises two series: a photographic one (the book *Robinson Crusoe* left open on the sill of a window that opens onto a field in the middle of which stands an apple tree), and a textual one (excerpts from Robinson's journal, to which Bertrand has made a number of syntactical corrections). These two series, each of which comprises fifty-four elements (photos and texts) exist in a bipartite relationship: for each photograph there is a text. However, at first reading, one of the two series seems to dictate the order of succession in the other. The chronological order of the excerpts from the journal naturally seems to dictate the order of the photos.

However, when spread out over a duration of fifty-four days, the photographs capture only one, very specific kind of event: the successive openings of the book at random pages, leaving, depending on the days, more pages on the left than on the right, or vice versa, thus virtually locating the time of reading *more or less before or after* the corresponding chronology of days in the journal. In relation to the chronology according to which they were taken, and whose order is not at all preserved in the final result, the series of photographs thus seems totally scattered and literally buried beneath the chronology of days. Thus, the series of fifty-four photos, of the window and tree, is distributed and applied, one for one, following the series of days in the journal, but in relation to (concurrently with) the progressive filling of the left part of the book to the detriment of the right, in a fictional recreation of the time of reading made after the fact.

The order proceeds from neither of the two series, but merely from the play of the "middle" of the book which, like a hinge, distributes each photograph within the chronology by virtue of the way it opens, coupling in this way a photo with an episode in the journal. It is on this abstract bar of the middle (of the medium) that the order of the piece is founded; on the play of the body that randomly opens it, as it would with the casement of a window. The opposing notions of order and disorder that seemed to apply, respectively, to the textual and photographic series, no longer hold. The only thing that counts is this oscillation, this inclination of the central hinge. And ultimately this is not really surprising if we bear in mind that the law of composition for this piece was founded in part on a stochastic motif: if there is a link between that passage in the novel where Robinson opens (as if) by chance the Book of the Law and comes across those words that he interprets as stating the law governing his circumstances on the island, and this piece entitled *Les 54 Jours de Robinson Crusoe* in which Bertrand proceeded in accordance with this rule of randomly opening the book fifty-four times in succession, it is precisely because this central hinge determines the way one series applies to the other. The elements that constitute both series are in fact equally scattered (in the manner of the letters of the 1998 installation, *54 lettres*), even before the pendular oscillation of this hinge comes into play (I describe this hinge as abstract because there is not, strictly speaking, one hinge but a multitude of them, a new one every time I open the book⁷).

Whenever I open a book blind, I associate a given "opening figure" (which indicates how far I have got with my reading of the journal) with a given unit of the 54 days. But I do so only virtually, for the following figure can then challenge this association and, for example, take the place of the preceding figure. The history of each figure and the event associated with it (in relation to which "54" represents the global event) are in an unstable balance between what has just happened and what is going to happen. In the course of the progression, the series "remembers" what happened before, and does so with increasing precision, in that the element of indeterminacy in each photo-day pairing or, if you like, the probability of its cancellation, will gradually decrease, because the number of pairings virtually established is higher each time. It is clear that there is the highest number of possible combinations between the first figure of the open book (chronologically speaking, of course) and one of the fifty-four days (1/54), but it is just as

true that the 54th figure can, in theory, call into question any of the previous pairings and thus skew the preceding positions, even though it seems that its only option is to combine with the last free space. But the probability of such a final rearranging is much slighter than at the beginning of the sequence, though more than negligible, insofar as it is the eye that must decide if a given opening figure corresponds to a reading time further back or forward in the series of days in the journal. Thus the play of the book is searching for stability, for a balance which is regulated by the couple of the two forces that are (blind) body and eye.

6

Whereas the window, serving as a frame, seems static in *Les 54 Jours*, its play being indicated in advance analogically by that of the book that it frames, it comes centre-stage in the piece entitled *Le Jeu de la fenêtre et des 9 pommes* (The Set/Game/Play of the Window and the 9 Apples). Indeed, it is no coincidence if the correlative of this entrance is drawing, assuming that we agree to see the world-window-room sequence as the system that regulates the inscription of drawing in the classical register. The window is the place where light passes and is converted into drawing, the nature and possibility of this conversion and its capture depending on the amplitude allowed to the opening – in other words, to the dividing of the window. When wide open, it would offer only the direct spectacle of the external object, for example the tray on which nine apples have been placed. The window only plays its role fully if it is open to a certain degree, which can be related to the angle formed by the two parts in relation to the centre, or to the angle of the two side hinges. In both cases, the window goes through variations (declensions).

When the play of the declension is right, reflections of the central tray appear on each of the glass panels, divided in two. This brings us back to our two series, whose correspondence is regulated by the play, not of one but of two hinges (we will see that in fact this duality can immediately be reduced, if one brings into play what puts these two hinges into movement). These two series are formed, on the one hand, by the reflections of the nine apples in the panes – which should be compared to the fragments of the journal in *Les 54 Jours* – and on the other by the nine apples themselves which, like the book before, invariably reappear in the centre in the guise of a unity.

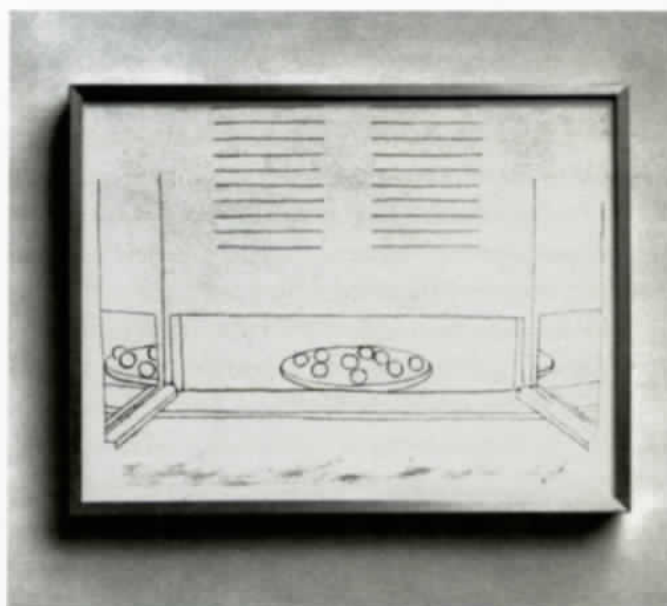
Les 54 Jours and *Le Jeu de la fenêtre* do not overlap exactly, however. Between them there seems to have occurred a double translation, which we could describe as metonymic. The first substitutes the nine apples for the apple tree that was in the background of the *54 Jours*. The second substitutes the book *Robinson*

7. The book would not have been opened randomly if Bertrand had put the first day of photography opposite the first day of the journal, and so on up to 54. The progression from left to right would then have occurred either in an order that was totally planned, or in absolute chaos. But then, as we have seen, chance is a factor for order.

Crusoe with a sentence that, without being exactly a translation, does copy the style of the hero's journal: "Oct. 26, I went to the window and opened it." The drawing is the preterite of the photograph. This drawn sentence is, if I can put it this way, partly erased. In *Les 54 Jours* a very particular element has also been erased from the journal excerpts, namely the personal pronoun "I." This lack, which affected the syntax of the fragments (reflections) of the journal, is something we find in *Le Jeu de la fenêtre*, where it is always present on the level of the subject, not the speaking subject but the watching subject.

With the appearance of this sentence we discover a still hidden dimension of the *54 Jours*, which is that of the event. If this is effectively produced by the interaction between bodies, its effects go beyond this. As Gilles Deleuze wrote in his fine study of the event in *Logic of Sense*, this "overhangs its own accomplishment." In other words, there is an "eternal truth" of the event which, however, always seems divided between what has just happened and what is going to happen, "always escaping in both directions." This, we may note in passing, can be seen to recall the aspect of the construction of the *54 Jours* emphasised earlier. This dimension of the event is very much manifest in the way that Bertrand relates the production of his pieces, which he experiences more as an encounter with something that already existed, and to which the work then gives form, than as a process of *working on*.

The single hinge becomes one with the movement of the body opening and dividing the window in two, just as, previously, it opened and divided the book. It is across this body and, more precisely, the hinge of its two halves, which, as we know, are never symmetrical, that the abstract line going from one piece to another is to be found. The body is always associated with breaks and divisions. Here again, opening and dividing occur (seemingly) at random. It is (seemingly) at random that the reflections are distributed over each. In this movement, the blind body does not only divide the window, but also the gaze, because once the window is open we see, on the one side, the tray with nine apples and, on the other, the two reflections. This oscillation echoes, on the imaginary level, the play of the two halves of the window around their hinges. But the gaze is not only accosted by this oscillation between the central unit and its two reflections, it is accosted also by a median default that defines the contents of this oscillation: however much the body and the eyes for which it is the support may try to find the optimal point of equilibrium, the two reflections, when added, will never reproduce the sum indicated at the centre of each drawing: the sum will produce sometimes 7, sometimes 8 reflections, but never 9. Infinite concurrence.



LE JEU DE LA FENÊTRE ET DES 9 POMMES, 1977 / COLLECTION PARTICULIÈRE

This uneven division produced by the body, or the imaginary, is observed from a central flaw that is itself only the effect of what, on a symbolic level, determines the transferred sentence: "Oct. 26, I went to the window and opened it." It is in accordance with this symbolic scanning that the imaginary oscillates around an axis that passes through the median plane of a blind body, arousing the fantasy of a point of equilibrium where this oscillation would cease. The body-eye pairing are engaged in the pursuit of an impossible equilibrium.

The imaginary level consists of that image of central unity which is precisely that of the total unity of the body, a specular double in which, within the ellipse formed by the tray, are gathered its partial objects, figured forth here by apples (which, later, will be replaced by lemons or strawberries).

With Jean-Pierre Bertrand, the "9," as a singularity, will always be seen as the figure of that imaginary corporeal unity, both in the form of a sum of units ($1 + 1 + 1$, etc.) and as the reflection of their sum (cf. *La Totalité des citrons*). But this total image only has a function and value as a likeness insofar as it marks the pole of an imaginary oscillation that goes from the unifying capture to its fragmentation. The symbolic level, in other words, the level of language, is situated at the hinge point of these two imaginary sides, and it is insofar as it emerges that is triggered this oscillation that can never close in around the flaw that it brings about.

The (imaginary) place where the two sides would coincide is a blind spot. It is also, paradoxically, the point where the gaze and desire are at their most intense. But in reaching this point, desire would annul itself by ending the imaginary oscillation that is the very engine of its reproduction.

That this imaginary oscillation is related to desire and the gaze is something that can be shown here by following some of the ideas in a letter that Bertrand wrote to me in March 1978: "And yet, on the 54th day of the journal, Crusoe is more or less at the centre of the island, with a chain of mountains to the north and to the south (ENTRE-BETWEEN-ZWISCHEN). I never wrote the story of the "planted garden." I did talk about it, but I never wrote it, as if that discovery, or rather that STOP (*arrêt*), should not be written, that this time which is silenced (???) or this time, period (the time for the eyes to see around them) should not be marked; that this time that remains suspended between the 54th day and the 55th – 'THE CONCURRENT DAY' –, that this time would never cease to be in the presence of the absence of its inscription."

This text helps us to understand how the imaginary and the symbolical are articulated within these two pieces, *Les 54 Jours de Robinson Crusoe* and *Le Jeu de la fenêtre et des 9 pommes*, and in their appendix *Le 55e jour*, which is a kind of concurrent (competing) piece.

The planted garden referred to by Bertrand is an allusion to the passage in the novel where Robinson tells us that, on arriving at the centre of the island (this notation has an obvious symbolic value if one bears in mind the trope of the "play of the window"), he discovers a kind of natural orchard where the profusion of fruit and layout of the trees irresistibly brings to mind a "planted garden." There, among others, Robinson finds lemon trees, whose fruit he proceeds to taste.

For Bertrand, the "planted garden" constitutes the truly umbilical moment of Robinson's exploration of the island. This singularity, this "sur-insular" singularity, if I can put it like that, is, through the hints in his letter, presented as the extreme point where desire coincides in a felicitous encounter with its object, or, if you like, finds its fullness, marking the moment where difference is annulled – sexual difference first of all, but also that difference which is one with the interlacing and play of reference between signs that is the base of any discursive chain. "Beyond his course, Crusoe [...] would find the lost paradise, the place that looks like an orchard ('looked like a planted garden' in Defoe's text) [...], a paradise regained that would do away with the duality of sex."

Bertrand does however emphasise that he never wrote of that moment of the "planted garden." It remains to be seen of course, whether this "time for the eyes to see around them" could actually be written, being the time whose irruption or, in other words, whose coming into presence (and not "in the presence of the absence of its inscription," as he puts it in his letter, in an interpolated formula that designates the very movement of that which

eludes and differs), would therefore signify the non-distinctness of the elements, or their dispersion, whereas what writing presupposes is their interlacing. Throughout this analysis, readers should bear in mind that the word in Bertrand's title, "jeu," can be understood to mean both "play" (in the sense of movement) and "set." In France we speak of a "jeu de clés," which is not a game of keys but an ensemble.

The primary division is specular (on the imaginary level, it precedes sexual division): it is the cleavage instituted by the mirror (imaged by the pane/window, book or door), solicited by the symbolic which, in this context, is supported by the transferred sentence, made possible by writing, and doubly linked to an economy of death and desire. Once again, and although Bertrand made this remark with reference to *La Totalité des citrons*, in which there is a real mirror, his letter designated very precisely the structuring significance of this cleavage: "The mirror immediately teaches us that, from now on, all our ideas, our deep convictions, everything we make, will be positioned in relation to this duplication."

"Indeed, there is something whose absence can always be observed in a picture—which is not the case in perception. This is the central field, where the separating power of the eye is exercised to the maximum in vision. In every picture, this central field cannot but be absent and replaced by a hole—a reflection, in short, of the pupil behind which is situated the gaze. Consequently, and in as much as the picture enters into a relation to desire, the place of a central screen is always marked, which is precisely that by which, in front of the picture, I am elided as subject of the geometrical plane."⁸

This motif of the central flaw, which is similar to a kind of optical concurrence, is found in the piece entitled *Prises de vue dans deux lieux qui se ressemblent* (Photos Taken in Two Similar Places), 1987-1988. To return to familiar territory, we need only replace the two photos in this piece with the two halves of the window in *Jeu de la fenêtre et des 9 pommes*.

In the repetition of that same sentence which prompts the random opening and division of the window, never at the same angle, the reflections converge on a unity with which they never coincide, by either superposition or summation. With each new opening, they are concurrent in the (French) sense of competing with each other. Only desire can compete with such an indefinitely open cycle which continues to reproduce a central lack. But desire itself does not go all the way (*jusqu'à concurrence*) up to that which would end the game. It makes this up to one of the poles of its own play. It is neither on one side nor on the other; it is in the *concurrence* (competition) of the two.

8. Jacques Lacan, *Séminaire XI*, op. cit., p. 100.

Thus the days recorded in the journal seem to converge on this umbilical point of the island which, as we have seen, was out of the game or play (*hors jeu* – offside) as a singularity around which the gaze revolves as it would around the concurrent place *par excellence*, that whose mere presence would put an end to *concurrence* (competition). We can now understand the deeper significance of the “planted garden” episode in relation to Bertrand’s work as a whole. “And what if, beyond his course, Crusoe [...] found the lost paradise: the place that looks like a planted garden.” This meaning is allegorical. The letter expounds the essential articulation of this body of work by allegory. It also gives it a mythical extension but, behind the images (the voyage or the garden) we will find the presence of intensities, instead of getting caught up in the play of a facile mystique. Far from marking an end point, or forming an impassable “blank,” the “planted garden” constitutes the point, the pass, that swallows up the play of the entire structure. But in this swallowing (the metaphor is deliberately oral), only the structural level is dissolved, liquefied, and the objects themselves are restored (like so many liquid elements) to their “primitive energy.” They go from being images to being so many intensive singularities. The light itself is returned to its value as energy, causing it to resonate in sympathy with other energy flows, such as lemon juice or salt.

The lemon carries all the allegorical weight of this pass. It is its figure (cipher): “And there, the man Crusoe picks the lemon from the tree and drinks it, which regenerates his body.” It is the point of inflexion or conversion *par excellence*. The allegorical significance of Robinson drinking this juice marks the conversion of a structural body – caught up in the play of the duality of sexes, of castration, of desire and death – into a glorious body, the point of intersection and support of the material sympathies and connections between flux (light, juice, salt, sperm) and matter (paper, flesh). In the context of this “mythology,” the apple tree which, as we will recall, appears in the background of the *54 Jours*, and

which is also the key prop in that very famous episode in *Genesis*, and the apple tree of the “planted garden,” are one and the same thing: in this conversion/swallowing-up we return to the point of origin of the story. Here we see that the conversion is grammatical as well, in that if, as Bertrand emphasises, Crusoe finds the spring close by to the “planted garden” that is “beyond his course,” then that course/source is, both in French and in English, the duplicated anagram of Crusoe.

The episode of the “planted garden” should also remind us of the centrality of the notion of place throughout Bertrand’s work, where it is offered through a vision, from the book placed on the window sill in *Les 54 Jours* to the fifty-four neon letters, via all those hangings carried out under the effect of what I shall henceforth refer to as “rection,” meaning here the instantaneous inter-organisation of the elements. In an interview with Doris von Drathen, Bertrand allows that “Perhaps I am looking for a place. A place that does not exist, that we do not know, but that we carry around with us all the time. A place that we maybe come to the day we die, when it opens to us. Perhaps this is the place that we knew before we were born, and that we return to when we die.”⁹ Peter Sloterdijk speaks of these entities, these “media or persons” as “intimate complements” that function as “invisible companion.”¹⁰ In the interview, Bertrand relates this place, which is also a non-place insofar as I cannot assign it a precise spatial location, to the phenomenon of the instantaneous loss and recovery of consciousness, whose mechanical *analogon* could be the camera shutter, on which subject he concludes with the axiom: “No shutter, no image.”

9. In *Kunstforum International*, February–April 1996, pp. 288–299.

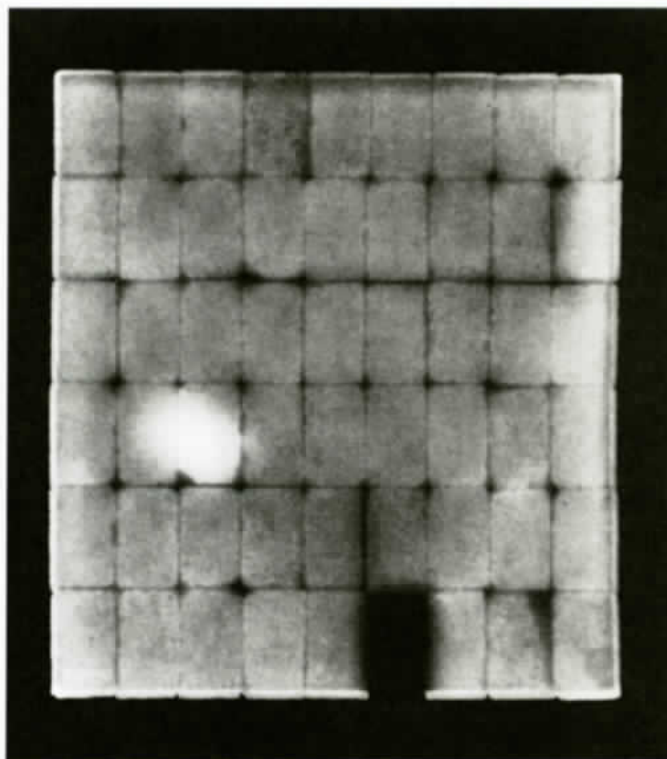
10. Cf. *Bulles, Sphères, I*, Pauvert, 2002. Sloterdijk sees the placenta as the primal intimate companion.

Le Jeu de la fenêtre et des 9 pommes is a little symbolic machine that we come upon again in the series of *Photogrammes aux 54 sucres* (Photographs with 54 Pieces of Sugar). For each photogram, a piece of sugar was removed from its niche and placed, at random, on the surface formed by the fifty-three other pieces – Black where it was (- 1), white where it is (+ 1). A switching on either side of the grey median level, past/present.

These photograms, also called "rayograms," are obtained, as we know, by exposing the objects in direct contact with sensitive paper. The object acts as the negative: the more opaque it is, the whiter the contact image will be, and vice versa. These fifty-four photograms are each like radiographic plates: the most absorbent part is white (where one piece of sugar stands on another) – skeleton: the intermediate, horizontal surface is grey – tissue; the part left vacant is black – cavities, orifices.

Each rayogram is a contact image of the moving body, as if laid out flat, broken down into discrete units that exactly fill the space of projection and exposure to light – fifty-four lumps of sugar; fifty-four partial objects.

The drawings that form *Le Jeu de la fenêtre*, and those that form the two series *Jeu avec une porte et jeu avec deux portes...* were, like the photograms, obtained by the direct transcription of the image projected inside the light cone of a photographic enlarger (oculo-graphic rather than photo-chemical transcription). The room, whether it extends to the full dimensions of the architectural volume, or whether it is reduced to this light cone, is like a matrix within which these traces – whether graphic, luminous or impregnated, in the strict sense of the word – are inscribed like so many indexes, in Peirce's sense, that is to say, representations that have a "dynamical (including spatial) connection both with the individual object, on the one hand, and with the senses or memory of the person for whom it serves as a sign, on the other hand." If the indexical is never seen in its pure state but is always enveloped in the play of structure (the *Jeu de la fenêtre* series considered independently of the material conditions of its inscription, which bring it closer to the index, or photograms seen in terms of the switching movement between black and white, present and absent, + 1 and - 1, etc.), it nonetheless constitutes the prelude to a breakdown of the game threatened with dissolution from within. When, in Bertrand's work, this indicial component dominates the structural component, then the specifically elementary, material and molecular part of his pieces develops by and for itself. As long as the body at work had the envelope of the room (whether architectural and/or optical) as its space of reference and as the limit of its performance, it acted in a register dominated by the structural component, in the



sense that the very product of that space can appear only in the form of a series of calibrated, discrete representations, amenable to the play of structure. And so the opening towards the elementary, towards which everything in his work seems to be tending, could only be fully achieved at the cost of abandoning the chamber as reference space. If the gaze belongs to the register of the symbolic and the structural, then to the same extent light defines the indicial and molecular register.

10

La Totalité des citrons, which, as I have said, constitutes a paradoxical and heterodox little arithmetical treatise, and as such is highly characteristic of Bertrand's work, is the symbolic machine *par excellence*, and its workings thus warrant closer examination. It was first presented in 1976 at the chapel of Saint-Louis de la Salpêtrière.

Bertrand describes what could be called the revelation of this piece within the octagonal space of the chapel: "And I saw a mirror that was the same shape as the central (octagonal) slab. Eight unripe half-lemons were placed on it and a ripe lemon stood roughly in the centre. Each of these half-lemons formed a whole lemon when joined with its image and the whole lemon plus its image formed an eight."

The corresponding passage in his letter – "my body takes an unripe lemon and is immediately surprised and horrified to see only half of it in its hand" – makes it fairly clear that the division

of each of these lemons that have not yet reached ripeness is experienced as something cruel and sacrificial (in which body and break become one), which can be ended only by the specular suture of each half on the surface of the mirror – the eye is replete from the sight of these eight units reflected in the duplicated erection of the whole lemon. “My wound existed before me, I was born to embody it” (Joë Bousquet).

Contrary to what happened in *Le Jeu de la fenêtre*, the reflection here has a unifying function. It is constituted by three moments, the third of which is formed by the reflection of the two others: 1. The specular suture that reproduces in the imaginary the unity of each half-lemon, thus engendering an imaginary series of eight units (8 “0”s); 2. The specular duplication of the unit embodied by the whole lemon (“0”) which, from the imaginary point of view, appears in the form of a “8”; 3. The juxtaposition or the face-to-face – and not the addition – of the preceding two (8 and 8).

This third moment is the only one to attain imaginary plenitude which, as the letter also says, has a certain innocence to it, in that this vision of equilibrium produced by the switching between “8” and “8” seems to rule out (of the game) any difference or any flaw that would break into this immaculate closure.

It is only when I raise this series of reflections to the power of the symbolic – as it happens, to the power of “0” and then of “8,” that the “rection” of the reflection in the other occurs, producing their “imaginary equation.” The symbolic is the true fixed point of this specular switching. This is fully operative when I count eight reflections, in other words, when the symbol is substituted for that which is the pure interaction between bodies (halves reflected in the mirror). The “8” can be expressed in the form of an incorporeal transformation articulated as follows: “The reflections of eight halves laid out on the octagonal mirror, forming eight imaginary unities, have their substitute or symbolic equivalent in the reflection of the one whole lemon which looms up as a ‘8’”. Or:

$1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 8$ (symbolic series)

/ (mirror)

$0 + 0 + 0 + 0 + 0 + 0 + 0 + 0 = 8$ (imaginary series)

The communication between these two series, which are intelligible only in relation to Bertrand’s imaginary arithmetic, in which we go from the things themselves or from the imaginary to the signs or symbols of these things, is ensured by this paradoxical agency of which Deleuze has said that “It circulates without end in both series [...] It is a two-sided entity, equally present in the signifying series and the signified series. It is the mirror” (*Logic of Sense*).

JEAN-PIERRE BERTRAND LA TOTALITÉ DES CITRONS

*Chapelle de la Salpêtrière, bd de l'Hôpital, Paris
pendant l'exposition Freud
ouverture le vendredi 12 mars à 18 h*

From the symbolic point of view, the yellow, whole lemon is in effect not only an “8” (it is this only on the imaginary level) but also a ninth of the series. It is in this ninth that the symbolic expression “8” which subsumes the series of imaginary wholes that are the reflected halves suddenly switches. What the mirror sutures on the imaginary level, and what produces this effect of plenitude, reopens on the symbolic level when the images are raised to the power of signifiers: 1, 8, 9.

We can say that “the 9 is the reflection of the 8” only if we note the paradoxical status of this ninth unity which is located at some moments on the side of the imaginary (“8”), and at others on the side of the symbolic (“the ninth”). The ambiguity occurs between the “8” of the half-lemons and the imaginary “8” formed by the ninth. The first is cardinal, the second is an ordinal reflection¹¹. But to consider only this ninth, there is also an ambiguity between its position as the “ninth,” which it derives from the symbolic order, and its imaginary status as an “8.” It is the symbolic order, whose “past” merges with the succession of numbers, that imposes the word “ninth” with regard to the only lemon that is really whole, inasmuch as the reflections of the halves can do nothing on their own, except be designated by this symbol “8” which, as soon as it appears, leaves us no choice as to the name of what remains. Conversely, this “ninth” is needed to liberate the possibility of the “8” which, once it appears, allows the “8/8” switching effect to occur. It is an effect in the strong sense of the word, in that it does not result in an equilibrium but leads to its own indefinite production. This imaginary “8” follows the “9”; it is indeed 9 minus 1. $8 = 9 (-1)$.

11. Note that “cardinal” comes from “cardo,” meaning “hinge” or “pivot”: the hinge belongs to a whole paradigmatic sequence of related words.

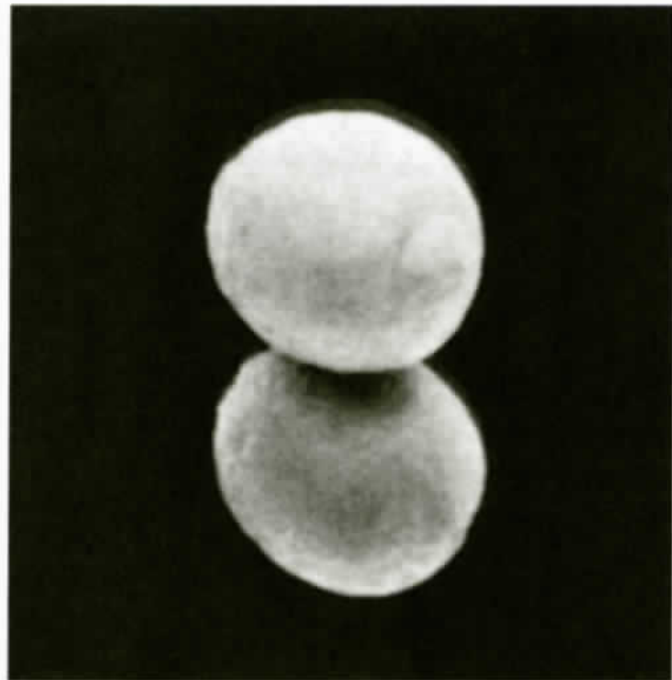
The paradoxical agency takes up position between the "8" and the "9", between the imaginary and the symbolic, provoking the unbroken movement of one into the other. It cannot, however, be specularised. Its symbol is "- 1": the imaginary fullness is evident in the failure to appear of this "- 1" which arises between "8" and "9". "- 1" because the ninth is not the reflection or double (or image) of the eight others ("of the 8 of the others," we should say) by an effect of addition ($8 + 1$), but through juxtaposition: 8 and 9; on the imaginary side, the "9" produces an "8" by doubling itself ($8 = \text{the } 9^{\text{th}} \times 2 \dots$). The paradoxical agent is "not in place," is always an excess in one series and a lack in the other.

There is no way in which "- 1" can be reflected by the mirror. This is why the mirror creates a feeling of fullness, thanks to the imaginary suture, which at the same time brings forth on the symbolic level the "presence" of a lack around which the play of signifiers is organised and from which the imaginary derives its substance. However, the symbolic is only efficient to the extent that the imaginary backs it up – with the "ninth" that is reflected as an "8." The whole piece can be seen as a kind of seesaw mechanism: imaginary/symbolic, cardinal (the eight lemons)/ordinal (the ninth), etc. A vertiginous game in which the seesaw is constantly switching from equilibrium to disparity to equilibrium, and so on.

That which formed two separate moments in *Le Jeu de la fenêtre* – the fragmentation of the tray into two reflections on one hand, and the central frame taking on the unifying function, appears here in the form of a single moment where the central flaw marking the imaginary in *Le Jeu de la fenêtre* returns on the symbolic level through the play (set) of the written symbols. For if the eight half-lemons can in effect be placed in relation to the tray with the nine apples (as objects that are incomplete and attain imaginary oneness outside themselves), we can in contrast see that it is only possible to compare the whole lemon with this same tray (as the wholes of the respective pieces) once we have accounted for all the objects laid out on the mirror so that we can then name "a ninth," whose reflection is that of the unity of the added halves, as a symbol. Hence, perhaps, the piece's title: *La Totalité des citrons...*

11

A good part of Bertrand's work eludes the play of interpretations hitherto considered appropriate. This is because the pieces examined here are essentially about structure. If there is nothing surprising about the interest shown in the figure, given the importance in his work of the number as figure, several signs – starting with that paradoxical agency – have let us glimpse the possibility of a vanishing line that exists within the structural dimension.



Within this structural register, the notions of flaw and lack, to which we can add those of the break, divergence from equilibrium and the blind spot, themselves stand as structural variables whose economy is regulated by the play of the imaginary and/or the symbolic. Desire appeared itself to be subject to this structural play and, in accordance with this double allegiance, to lack and difference (beginning – Jean-Pierre Bertrand's letter makes this clear enough – with sexual difference).

The large ensemble of pieces that escape this horizon manifest certain particularities that are absent from the earlier works. One could sum up their general profile by stressing the "elemental" character of their structure. Or, to use what is now a classic distinction, the order in which we are moving here is not molar but molecular, bringing into play very different recording procedures. It will no longer be a question of recording the effects of the play of a structure, but of a production. If the body intervenes here, it is not as a "structural totality" – the body articulated in two halves playing around an axis – or as a blind medium term, but as a surface for recording a multiplicity of circuits, among which sight is in competition (*concurrence*) with taste, touch and smell. Subjects here no longer play the role of support offering purchase to a play of structure; they do not elicit syntactical-type effects (seesaw or hinge effect) but effects that are "sensitive."

The body here is neither structural nor phenomenal; one can make a reading of it based on the unity/fragmentation opposition. It now coincides with a dimension that is, strictly speaking, the obverse of the structure, the point at which it switches into the elemental and the productive, substituting for the earlier syntactical

sequences that regulated a certain structural identity (balance/divergence from balance, vertical/horizontal, etc.) sequences of production along which energies form a chain (light, juice, salt), materials (paper or flesh), operations (casting, impregnating, suspending). Contrary to what happened in the structural register where it was subject to the play of presence or absence, here we find something that is in the order of a subject only residually, as what is left from a productive sequence that can take the following programmatic form: impregnate (meaning also to fecundate) a piece of paper with lemon juice, roll it up into a ball, slip it into the left pocket then unfold it... Instead of images, of specular-type relations, there is something that is in the order of energy, of

production, and on which it is impossible to articulate a structural play. Desire here is no longer subject to the order of a specular game shaping a central flaw.

That such a play should have switched does not mean that the objects it used as supports have disappeared – on the contrary: they reappear, but governed by a very different, “intensive” and not structural economy. In this obverse zone, the lemon, for example, no longer appears as the element in a symbolic or imaginary seesawing motion, but rather as a transitional store of energy or exchanger of energy flows, for example of light and juice (juice appearing as the conversion of flux into light). This intensive function is well in evidence in the piece consisting of a tin whose inside has been

painted black and holds a lemon, itself also painted black. As if two black bodies were nested, conserving at the very heart of this nest (the flesh of the lemon) the total amount of radiation they have absorbed.

The book, too, reappears on this other side, not in the form of a "solid" fitted with a hinge on which a blind play is articulated (cf. *Les 54 Jours*), but rather as a soft, supple, unarticulated/inarticulable thing whose body, via the hand, does not simply record presence or test its structure, but the friable, layered feel produced by a piling-up of sheets of paper which, impregnated with lemon juice, have become crumpled, parchment-like. What the hand records is a certain, absolutely singular pleasure. Neither hinge, nor play nor switch – another version of the book in this other economy: the compactness, the gravity and the seriousness of the thing closed in on itself, full, offering no purchase to any structural combination. Hence this *Rouleau à papier miel et acrylique argent* (Paper roll with honey and silver acrylic, 1978), sealed at both ends by the lead-coloured acrylic material, where we find the leaf-like, impregnation and closure – a triple determination, certainly already present in some earlier pieces, but which now achieves full expression through an intelligence that does not have to do with the symbolic order, but with prehension and weighing. Here the object exists only insofar it may communicate to me from its fullness, in contact with the prehension of its smooth envelope (honey paper roll). Or it offers itself to me in the form of a fullness, thanks to which I feel the sensation of my own weight, as if it was "full of reflection": like the tin box full of salt equal (*à concurrence*) not to its volume but to the amount of salt that "needs" to be accumulated (by the slow sedimentation of layers at the bottom of the tin box) to communicate to it that fullness liable to reflect the organic sensation of its own weight when one climbs up and walks on it.

Or again, there is this rewriting of Robinson's journal on fifty-four sheets using a brush dipped in lemon juice, the sheets then being suspended (and not hung) on the wall, like "sympathetic" calligraphy (the sympathy between the juice and light, flesh and paper). Thus, the *suspense* itself, previously interpreted as an effect of structure, re-emerges here on the level of sensation, on the level of a space that is not extensive (hanging and covering the wall) but intensive: the sheet suspended, that is to say, detached and in airy contact with the wall (Bertrand is particularly insistent on this "way of hanging").

Just as the lexicon of the structural register seems formed by "hard" terms: hinge, break, switch, articulate, hang, etc., so in the same way the lexicon of its obverse is constituted by "soft" terms: impregnate, crumple, caress, suspend, etc. Just as, as we



have seen, the play of structure unfolds extensively (play of the door, of the window, of the book, etc.), so, to the same extent, its obverse coincides with an intensive dimension.

Thus, by loading, filling, the body affirms its power to affect: impregnate, coat, fill, etc. But, by the same token, it is affected in accordance with the relations of movement and rest, of speed and slowness, and even of intensities that vary in keeping with the pieces and their location in space. For example, the sensation of resistance given by the tin box filled with salt, defines an affect whose coordinates are weight and rest – likewise the sealed roll coated with honey, except that here there is a supplementary, tactile and thermal dimension, of smoothness and cold. On the contrary, we have seen that the "book," composed of sheets steeped in lemon juice (or raspberry) has different affective co-ordinates in terms of movement and intensity: the passing or sliding of the hand on the edge of the book (which we will oppose to the opening-hinge of the book of 54 days). To this can be added an auditory dimension in the excess or the noise produced by the contact between the sheets coated with lemon juice and silver paper, and a visual one, given that the light is defined not as a vector of geometrical optics, as it appeared in *La Totalité des citrons* or *Les*

Menhirs – in other words, not as a point of light/straight line, but as a point of irradiation, shimmering (the molecular combination of light and shadow). The drawings in pencil, some of the honey-lemon paper pieces, and even some of the “memory boxes,” about which I shall say more later, show this virtue that non-geometrical light has of being impossible to focus, offering no point of access where the eye might manage to “focus” (see the photograph entitled *Le Miroir au sel* – Salt Mirror).

As with a piece like the one entitled *3 x 3 x 54 boîtes* (1992),¹² the *Mixed Mediums*¹³ are devices for impregnating or loading. This process occurs in two parts: the time of impregnation, of loading strictly speaking, during which Bertrand coats the paper with honey or another medium, and a time of “instantaneous setting,” which is also a time of revelation, of vision, during which he places a sheet of Plexiglas on the impregnated paper. This immediately adheres, but in an uneven way, leaving unattached portions here and there, sometimes bringing to the whole surface a kind of

watered effect with veins of metallic colour. As in an X-ray, the irregular movements of the brush are revealed, with their specific pressure (cf. *Etrog no. 1*). The arrangement consists in a sensitive surface that records an inscription or information conveyed by the impregnating movement of the hand. Here we are dealing with a “mnemothèque,” that is to say, literally a “memory box” or, to reuse the title of a famous article by Freud, a “magic writing pad,” with the simple nuance that the sensitive surface is not reused here for a new inscription. Each entity encloses and makes apparent, in the form of silver veins that correspond to the points of contact between the impressed surface and the plaque, a unique, individual passage.

These *Mixed Mediums* are like so many volumes or blocks inside which there lie traces of an unexchangeable individuality whose duration will have coincided with the time of impregnation of the support (Bertrand calls them “crimes”).

It is interesting to compare these pieces to the sugar photograms. For in both we find a sensitive surface for inscription which comes into action in contact with or at the interface between two films, and which refers not only to a material type of effect (form of contents) but also to a “mnemotechnical” one (form of expression), as if the work was conjugated: black where the sugar was, white where it is.

12. 75 kg of sea salt in 486 (9 x 54) tins, piled up. 75 kg is the weight of a man given in the technical specifications of lifts.

13. These *Mixed Mediums*, many of which date from the 1990, were presented at the 1999 Venice Biennale, where Jean-Pierre Bertrand was given the French Pavilion.

From a dynamic point of view, the sequence of the *Mixed Mediums* breaks down into a long period followed by a short one, exactly like the *54 Jours de Robinson Crusoe*: the long duration of the shots (*prises de vue*) of the book placed on the window sill, and the "instantaneous gelling (*prise*)" of the series of the last photograph which matches each excerpt from Robinson's journal with one of the days of the photography. This instantaneous gelling, which can pair together either paper coated with honey and a sheet of Plexiglas, or two series, as in *Les 54 Jours*, is what I call "rection," in the same way as grammarians speak of the "rection" of a verb.

Theorem: given two ensembles formed either by discrete units in the manner of *La Totalité* or *Les 54 Jours*, or by two layers of matter, in the manner of the *Mixed Mediums*, which ensembles can also comprise a series of units (eight lemon halves, for example), in the case of the former, and in the case of the latter, a single element (the ninth lemon of *La Totalité*), rection is the incorporeal process by which two ensembles, these two series, inter-communicate. A moment in the strict sense of the word when things pass into words or switch into numbers. But rection is not fusion; the two ensembles do not disappear dialectically in favour of a third. Rrection is the moment of vision, as Bertrand says, of ravishment, when from the contiguity of two heterogeneous entities an order arises, a meaning. Rrection is the moment when one goes instantaneously round to the other side of the mirror and enters a paradoxical world of words and things: things and numbers are all on the same level but do not intermix (the ninth lemon whose reflection produces an "8" is a paradoxical entity, at once word and figure, ordinal and cardinal, as is "54").

Bertrand's quasi-obsessive attention to the correct placing of his hanging or to the arrangement of his pieces, his care over "details" that might seem insignificant, has a very direct link to rection, which absolutely cannot occur if all the elements are not in place at the same moment. This is the case with *Etrog en 54* (1999), held by the Musée National d'Art Moderne, with its singular points: 1, 4, 5, 5-4. The two ensembles are clearly present: bloc of the fifty-four (6 x 9) frames hanging on the wall, with their plasma-like acrylic substance in greenish yellow, and the deconstructed bloc of the six lemons (5 + 1) arranged on shelves, with six frames (1,4,1) identical to the ones on the wall. Each of the elements is assigned a precise place. If only one element is not in position, then the meaning, which is related here to rolling/unrolling, no longer operates. Everything looks static, but everything is moving.

Or, more exactly, is rolling. With *Etrog en 54*,¹⁴ we have gone over from the stable world of the *liber*, which Robinson still inhabited, with its piling-up of sheets and its hinge, to the more fluid one of the *volumen*, of the rolled thing, in the manner of the Torah, which is read by sliding the rolls of text or parchment in both directions, back and forth. The seesawing movement, the play of the central division following the axis of the body, is inoperative here. There is no hinge as in the book, but a lateral sliding. The lemons function as centres of energy but also as cylinders upon which a translation may be effected.

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Everything here brings us back to the central question, which is "how to express sensation." We would tend to want to exclude from this sensorial problematic the pieces that are strongly informed by arithmetic, as if numbers and affect were antithetical. But that would be a mistake. Numbers and their combination, which Bertrand exploits almost to the point of dizziness (as in the *Développement de 10 cubes* "in which each of the numbers from 1 to 54 on each of the sides is replaced with 1"), and the extreme sophistication of the hangings, which warrants a study in itself, are subjected to the central objective expressed by Bertrand with that image of the quest for a place that would also be a non-place in that it is not an object in the psychological sense,¹⁵ something that one could detach from oneself, but that he prefers to call an "intimate companion" or "guide," one whose figure, or *secret writing*, is "54."

Tokyo, December 2003

14. "Etrog" is Hebrew for citron, a kind of large lemon.

15. "The great characteristic of the psychological object is its capacity to be lost or – but that comes down to the same thing – its ability to be replaced," Peter Sloterdijk, *op. cit.*

In the Studio

Jeanette Zwingerberger

He had arranged to meet me one evening in November outside a house in Rue Bellot. We cross the courtyard of a rundown old building and come to his studio. The glass roof reflects the twilight. This is the best time of day. I am wrapped up in several pullovers. It's cold. In this out-of-the-way place, which was probably once a mechanics' workshop, I make out boards on trestles which no doubt serve as tables, crates piled-up like coffins, a jumble of bits of paper and empty frames. A number of large paintings hang on the walls. Suddenly I am aware of a big red monochrome. It's huge – 1.6 by 2.8 metres: bigger than a man, but two arms can match its width. This slab hogs the space, for its prominent body hides something that happened and that, in some unsettling way, is still happening. Suddenly, everyday reality recedes. I no longer see the chair and boxes. My attention is monopolised by this thing that is looking at me. Beside it, a greenish-yellow monochrome in a sticky, unidentifiable substance which exudes a fascinating, vital magnetism. Short, imperturbable pulsations run through the viscous material, a genuine form of life which compels its creator to continue his task, to cross Paris, to shut himself away here.

On the floor, near a crate, I find three plates with salt paper and wiped traces of red. I can feel the grease of my skin under my fingertips, the saliva in my mouth. These presences reveal an anthropometric relation through the fluxes of corporeal humours, never in representation, but on the level of the senses, almost suspended in direct sensation.

He explains how he unrolls the paper on the floor. The arrangement is worked out in advance, and then he gets himself in the right physical condition so that what is set off can then come into being. He coats the paper with either salt, lemon juice or honey mixed with acrylic paint. Often, these materials are arranged by kingdom: mineral for the salt, vegetable for the lemon. Honey belongs to the animal. They evoke whitish lymph, yellowish serum and red haemoglobin. He takes the paper – this infra-thin, neutral material which has to do with books and with writing, and which is so easily torn. He covers it with a mixture of hot water and salt which penetrates the pores of the fibre. The water evaporates, the salt becomes encrusted. Then he stretches the paper like a skin to dry it. By the alchemy of matter, the paper changes state. It becomes cold. The pristine salt paper and the lemon paper are left to the intimacy of light. Then he presses this parchment-like layer of material against a sheet of Plexiglas, like a biologist capturing a drop of blood between two plates of glass. In places, the

"painting" is crushed against the transparent surface, constituting a "full imprint"; elsewhere, a more limpid surface brings to the fore the lucidity of the paper. Light traverses the Plexiglas, then moves around within the pictorial layer, then bounces back out from the back. The spectator is projected into this gestating landscape whose alterity is maintained only by the surface. Thus the Plexiglas functions as a cornea, the eye's transparent tunic which puts this gaping ectoplasm at a distance. Sticky points evoke constellations, disparate, moving splashes, diffuse traces that seem to relate to each other. A contingent field is created and fuses behind the sheet of glass. An evolving substance lives inside the matter while remaining a surface in concretion at the same time. These sensitive emulsions are like reversible plates from which an immanent flux emerges, an oscillating trace, an agglutination, a transparency. There is a telluric manifestness, raised up vertically. In the isolation of the frame, it switches towards the intimacy of a breathing planarity. But this mutable formlessness has none of the heaviness of "base materials" or the repulsiveness or attractiveness of dirt and disgust, even if the painter does tell me about his fascination with the butcher's trade. It exudes a sensuality of touch, and the closeness of the scarred mass is offset by its playful lightness. This allusive composite evokes a fantasy geography and its flexible state partakes of transubstantiation. "And yet the red acrylic colour doesn't change. There is no air." For him, this is the first constant. In contrast, the paper with the salt changes with the light. The time of the salt sends us back to the origins of the work.

The eye dwells on coagulating blots, penetrates liquid sensations, is caught by thick yet diaphanous paste. The gaze leaves the defined forms, drawn by the attraction of the energy: tissue of flesh and repellent surface. This is not cracks in the wall evoking battles, as described by Leonardo da Vinci, but the world becoming absent and turning into a piece of life, embodied.

Elzbieta Bozena Trzesniewska, Jean-Pierre Bertrand
and *La Cuisine des anges*

Iris Grünacker-Janowitz

After years spent doing research on that very particular category of museum and gallery-goers described by Marcel Duchamp as "victims of aesthetic shocks"¹ and, since the publication of Graziella Margherini's essay on the "Stendhal Syndrome,"² also known as "victims of art," I was in the process of rereading the proofs of my own book on this subject, *Kunst kann ins Auge gehn*,³ in early April 1994 when I came across an article in the Parisian daily newspaper *Infomatin*⁴ about a "Miracle at the Paris Museum of Modern Art."

"B.C.," the man or, maybe, woman, who wrote the article, referred to a "Polish tourist who... suffered a malaise brought on by looking at works of art." Her name was "Elzbieta Bozena Trzesniewska" and she was "born in Czestochowa in 1940." The journalist quoted at length from the sole witness to the event, a guard at the museum that he/she referred to as "Maurice Berger."

"Madame Trzesniewska arrived at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris on 11 January, just after it opened. Without leaving her coat or handbag at the cloakroom, she proceeded with determined steps to the Salle Wilson, where there was a temporary exhibition of work by Jean-Pierre Bertrand⁵. Manifestly moved, Madame Trzesniewska walked up to a work entitled *La*

Boîte de cirage de Varsovie.⁶ Stopping only a few centimetres away from this piece, Madame Trzesniewska sneezed repeatedly. I only had time to take a few steps towards her – so as to watch her more attentively – when with my own eyes I beheld a true miracle! Before I witnessed it, I thought that such events existed only in the Bible or in certain Old Master paintings like *The Ecstasy of Saint Paul*, painted by Poussin, or *La Cuisine des anges*, which, as we are all aware, is by Bartolomé Estebán Murillo. I know that wonderful painting off by heart because, in the course of the twenty-seven years I spent working at the Louvre, most of the time I was on duty looking after the Spanish painting rooms in the Pavillon de Flore, and *La Cuisine des anges* has always been my favourite painting there. But let's get back to Madame Trzesniewska! When that poor Polish woman had stopped sneezing, she put her hands together in the same way as Saint James does in Murillo's painting! When she raised her eyes to the heavens, a milky halo of pale light appeared around her smiling face. Her knees bent and her two feet lifted off the ground! After that, it was all over in a matter of seconds. Madame Trzesniewska sneezed one last time and fell backwards, landing with a bump on the resin floor of the Salle Wilson. Terrified, in a panic, I didn't dare touch the body lying

1. Marcel Duchamp, *Statement at the Western Round Table on Modern Art*, San Francisco, 1949, in Bonnie Clearwater, *West Coast Duchamp*, Miami Beach, 1991, p. 107.

2. Graziella Margherini, *La Sindrome di Stendhal*, Florence, 1989.

3. Iris Grünacker-Janowitz, *Kunst kann ins Auge gehn*, Munich, 1995.

4. B. C. "Miracle au musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris", *Infomatin*, Paris, 2 March 1994.

5. Cf. catalogue *Jean-Pierre Bertrand*, 9 December 1993 – 30 January 1994, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, 1993.

6. This work comprises a series of black-and-white photographs showing fragments of words such as "czarny" and "schwarz", as printed on a tin of black polish made in Poland by SKOUMOW in the 1960s.

at my feet. But, without a moment's delay, I ran as fast as I could to the nearest telephone and called the firemen. A quarter of an hour later, their ambulance was hurrying Madame Trzesniewska to the Hôtel-Dieu hospital."

When I contacted the Hôtel-Dieu about Madame Trzesniewska, in mid-April 1994, the head doctor of that institution, Doctor Jacob, told me that she was still in hospital, and in his ward, and had not yet regained consciousness.

I was intrigued, and came up to Paris. There I met Monsieur Berger, who confirmed his statements, as reported in *Informatin*, point by point, and also mentioned that a security camera had recorded the whole incident, which he kept referring to as a "miracle."

So I asked for permission to see the recording. After attentively watching these video images and checking out *La Cuisine des anges* at the Louvre, I was in a position to observe that, like an echo, or like one of those recurrent *Pathosformeln* that Aby Warburg found so interesting, the position of Saint James' limbs in Murillo's painting and that of Elzbieta Bozena Trzesniewska's own limbs were in effect virtually identical. And, what's more, I realised that the Spanish Saint's painted face and the face of Elzbieta Bozena Trzesniewska recorded on video both expressed the same smiling beatitude and the same timeless felicity.

That same day I went to the Hôtel-Dieu.

Madame Trzesniewska was still there. According to Doctor Jacob and several nurses, she was still in a coma, and on her strangely calm, smooth face I found the same smile of beatitude that had struck me in the video I viewed that same morning at the Paris Museum of Modern Art.

During the fortnight during which I was able to make daily visits to Madame Trzesniewska at the Hôtel-Dieu, her state remained unchanged. She slept peacefully, twenty-four hours a day. "Is she eventually going to wake up?" I asked Doctor Jacob, repeatedly. Each time he replied with a frown and a shrug of the shoulders.

Needing to get back to the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and to my courses on Ernst Mach and his two major books, *Erkenntnis und Irrtum* and *Die Analyse der Empfindungen und das Verhältnis des Physischen zum Psychischen*,⁷ I was forced to terminate my regular observation of Madame Trzesniewska on 4 May 1994.

In mid-July that same year, Jacqueline Drouet, one of the nurses at the Hôtel-Dieu, informed me that Elzbieta Bozena Trzesniewska had regained consciousness on the night of 13-14 July.

What happened on the morning of 14 July 1994?

According to Jacqueline Drouet,⁸ "as soon as she woke up," Elzbieta Bozena Trzesniewska asked her for "karta papieru" (i.e., paper) and "olówek" (a pencil), and began dashing down large numbers of miscellaneous Polish words.

Madame Trzesniewska spoke to no-one, but for weeks and weeks just wrote and rewrote these same words, tirelessly changing their order.

According to Jacqueline Drouet, Elzbieta Bozena Trzesniewska did not stop her writing until the end of January 1995.

Conveying to Madame Drouet that she had finished, she gave her three sheets on which she had noted her "MESOSTICHES I, II, III in homage to Jean-Pierre Bertrand."⁹

And, having given these sheets to Madame Drouet, she got out of bed, dressed and left the Hôtel-Dieu. No one tried to stop her.

After a short sojourn in Poland, Elzbieta Bozena Trzesniewska travelled to Sicily where she now works as a chambermaid in a hotel near Taormina called "IL GRANDE ALBERGO TRE CITRONI." I am told that on her days off she spends hours wandering among the lemon trees that grow around the foothills of Etna.

7. Iris Grünacker-Janowitz, *Ernst Mach*, Vienna, 2002.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 108-109.

9. As far as we know, these Mesostiches constitute the only existing inventory of keywords for deciphering the work of J.-P. Bertrand. They were decoded then translated and published with annotations and commentary in my book on Ernst Mach, *ibid.*, pp. 378-432.

**Consubstantially,
or the unique moment**

Jean-Pierre Bertrand

In the catalogue for the 1999 Venice Biennale, at the bottom of the pages and beneath the illustrations showing my works, there were thirty-three annotations detailing different aspects of what I call the medium: for example, "water as medium," "brilliance as medium" and "coagulation as medium." I noticed recently that "as medium" was repeated thirty-three times: "say 33" said the doctor to his patient, no doubt because of the air that is pushed out from the bronchial tubes to articulate the rolled *rs* in the French *trente-trois*. In any case, the expelled air, and therefore breath, the *pneuma*, are mediums. The medium, in medieval Latin, has the meaning of a "substance, a milieu in which a phenomenon occurs." The medium is the contrary of the concept; the concept is not a medium, the medium attests only the idea. Mediums are factors, means of access to the body of appearing, but also for playing with it. The medium is a kind of naked reality that is separate from the others; the concrete put to the test. All my works are nourished by these mediums both in their elaboration, in their underlying motivation and in their definitive form. Most of them, in fact, mention their mode of production, and the mediums-ingredients that constitute them, in their titles: salt paper, lemon paper. From a more abstract point of view, appearance and simulation are mediums, proofs to be penetrated, beyond their appearance.

To come back to this number "33," duplication and reflection are mediums that in turn engender inversion and reversal. Before actually studying the mirror at La Salpêtrière, which is analysed at length elsewhere, we might raise the question of the identity attaching to an object, in this case a fruit, when laid flat on a mirror whose specific characteristic is to invert the form and take away its cast shadow. So, what happens to the lemon in question here, a lemon without a shadow? Both image and object, it becomes detached from the field of the real. The yellow lemon that is more or less at the centre of the mirror is just as much "cast" onto its image as its images supports it, the lemon placed on top. The mirror as pool of water at the centre of the chapel stood in relation to the exhibition of photos organised by the Goethe Institut in the adjacent chapels, in this place that witnessed the work of Charcot. I have always been fascinated by research into hysteria, and the phenomena is subjacent in many of my works. Hysteria is a submerged medium, a high-frequency medium.

This exhibition is not a retrospective, but it does have a retrospective character insofar as I have introduced a number of older works, which remain as vividly present for me as the recent ones. The past is not in itself a medium; only the present is – the instantaneousness of the present in that ambiguity between past and future. However, what I call “old times” are a medium, if and when they rise to the surface of time, and are in a sense overprinted on the nowness of the present. Memory is a medium if lived in this way. I am talking about time here, not about duration. Duration is not a medium. Whereas testimony is. What I am doing now in speaking, is testifying to something for which my work is only a kind of substitute, the material cast shadow of something that is outside the material. And I am not talking about the invisible. The invisible is always there, one need only see it, that’s all. A name, a verb, the letter, the raw reality of the word are mediums, heard or read in urban space or in books, which thus act as stimuli that set off or reactivate the machine, by reinvigorating the creative function. I have often found myself just waiting for a word. It is the same for speech, the tone and intonation of a voice: hubbub, brouhaha and thunder are mediums. Noise is not a medium, it is only noise. Sentences formed with fifty-four letters, I see them at the same time as I hear them. They echo in my head and I have no need to look for them. The number “54” is a medium, a limit, or rather, a threshold in the numbers from 1 to 100: the age at which Robinson Crusoe leaves his island where, according to the dates, he has lived for twenty-seven years, just as he was twenty-seven when washed ashore there. Except that Defoe-Crusoe reckons with twenty-eight years. Error is a medium as is a Freudian slip, the false tone with which an actor speaks his lines, or dissonance in music.

But let us get back to the number "54," the only number whose difference from its reverse is the sum of its two integers.

In the Hebrew tradition, letters are associated with numbers. If "54" corresponds to "you will always be moving," then its reverse, "45," asks the question, "who, what?" and the sum of the two is the number of *ad co*, i.e., "this far." Are we always "this far"? I don't know, and that's not the issue here. There are several manifestations of the number "54" in this exhibition. In the non-order of a set of fifty-four-times-two thin volumes (13 x 19 x 0.7 cm) paired, one on top of the other, and containing lemon and salt papers of varying ages, often damaged by damp, and nine immaculate salt papers, together with honey papers with red acrylic. Volume, thickness and dampness but also saltiness, acidity and sugariness are mediums. The physical properties of acrylic, coloured plasmic matter and coagulation are mediums.

Surface is not a medium: however, flatness, backgrounds and extent are mediums. The combination or proximity of two identical or different bodies stimulates a new medium: in *SALTAN'RED* (a contraction of *SALT AND RED*), the proximity of two ensembles of nine panels, one of them comprising fifty-four plywood frames stamped with red, the other fifty-four transparent Plexiglas frames through which we see the wall, in relation to four flat mirrors whose hollowed centre is filled with sea salt (in this hollowed-out part with no reflection, each grain of salt could be the hypothetical centre of the mirror). Plexiglas is a medium, a big, aqueous cornea, and serves as a filter; sometimes slightly smoked, stuck against the acrylic honey paper, it sets up a very particular luminous vibration which may seem to us to come directly from the acrylic honey paper, through the transparent Plexiglas. Paper in itself is not a medium, unless it is not sized, in which case it has the capacity of becoming impregnated or suffused. In particular, it plays a role as a filter with the Y. G. (yellow green) volumes, by absorption of the Flemish medium that makes it transparent. Photographic paper is a medium when it reveals an image whose object is outside the frame of photography. I am thinking both of the photograms of the six-times-nine lumps of sugar placed directly on the paper and of the two-times-eight photographs on either side of the opening of the tin of polish from Warsaw, running through the word "black" in English, German, Polish and Russian, with each of the volumes framing the image in turn becoming both object and image. At the same time, two mediums can create a third by simple antinomy, as for example with the tin enclosure closed by two soldered lids containing sea salt whose volume is greater than would be that of the container when empty. The third medium here is the weight of a person who, when walking on the box, would hear not the slightest resonance. The box is completely full; volume and mass are one.

At the origins of my artistic activity there were, at the same time, the awareness of the error of reckoning of the years twenty-seven/twenty-eight, and the approach to a tin with a lid (21 x 23 x 12 cm) whose interior was painted black and contained a hollow lemon that had become empty, also painted with the same black gloss paint. I said that the space contained in that tin was bigger than all the space beyond the space of the tin. The box was mute, but one only had to take it in one's hands to hear something rolling around and hitting the edges. It thus ceased to be a space suspended between it and the rest.

I would now like to come back to one of the works presented here which is kept at the Musée d'Art in Toulon. Its title is *BABELBOMB*. A long, narrow horizontal volume, a kind of battery comprising four papers ending in a rectangular form with a graphite projectile penetrating the thickness of an

ensemble comprising five papers: four papers with honey and graphite, one with salt. The papers are like so many palimpsests washed with warm water, both text and flesh hanging on the wall. It reminds me of Giotto's *Kiss of Judas*, in which the eye of Christ, seen in profile, is like a pure diamond fixing and seeming to penetrate the tumescent mass of Judas' forehead. A while ago, while preparing this exhibition, I noticed that the title of the work could be broken down into two names, of five and four letters, that it was formed by five identical letters and four different letters, and that when you added up the numbers of their position in the alphabet, the total was 54. In one room there will be both works, the second stemming from the first: the nine letters of its title in light. The letter in light, as shown here, is a strong medium.

I must have enumerated quite a lot of mediums by now, and the list is not exhaustive. In the large formats called *M. M.* (Mixed Mediums), the paper does not adhere to the Plexiglas; it is flesh-paper tattooed with marks in graphite, stamped or rather hand-dabbed with impacts of acrylic, or strewn with bits of bronze, incised with scarifications broken up by the adhesive papers blotched with gold acrylic. The acts of touching, of marking with the tips of the fingers, of feeding in order to revive the flesh of the paper with honey dissolved in hot water are mediums, as is the act of painting plywood surfaces with Y.G. to make apparent the paper soaked in Flemish medium which is transparent where it adheres to the Plexiglas. Adherence is a medium, it and coagulant are mediums of power but also of sensuality.

I wanted my work in this exhibition to be seen under the sign of touch, of the body, of course, but also the body of touch, in opposition to the video work I also do, which is apprehended in a different way but whose editing-type process can be found here in the distribution of different proposed works in the rooms, treated as so many specific places. Editing simultaneously brings into play the two mediums of fragmentation and unfolding in which, in markedly different orders, non-order approves its contrary, and a finished ensemble simulates its own deconstruction.

The last exhibition room in the Musée Picasso, the spacious, luminous Salle Dor de la Souchère, warranted a different intention. I did not want to lay out large-format pieces that would have delimited, broken up or framed the space. These formats are edged with an angle iron, but with no right angles, both framing the exterior and becoming one with what it surrounds. The steel angle iron is a medium that is very attentive to the measurements one gives it, in particular its thickness and the width of its frontal side. In the centre of this room, we are at the intersection of two large walls that face each other, as one pivots towards one or the other. Intersection is a medium that has fed a fair number of my older works. The two walls are like two expanses, two unfoldings from one corner to another. On one, a sentence of fifty-four letters in neon with bluish gas: "son ciel sera plus grand que le plafond peint en bleu de sa chambre" (His sky will be bigger than the blue-painted ceiling of his room); on the other, an ordered ensemble of four rows of small volumes in couples whose form is identical to that of the couples in the unordered ensemble of 54 x 2 mentioned before. For the first time, I am using acrylic honey papers in every colour, apart from those of the red acrylic honey papers, which in fact do not appear in this ensemble, combined with virgin salt papers and lemon papers of different ages, some of which – those that have browned most over the years – are indistinct from the acrylic honey papers whose colouring is equivalent. It is difficult to say which medium guided me here. Perhaps that very old memory, something buried that happened once, and that is manifested here by the presence of its

radiance, the only way of saying, of testifying. No doubt, too, a state of childhood, of discovery of the world, for which every colour is an icon: blue the sky, green the fields, the grass, pink the skin and the perfume of women, brown the earth in spring, yellow the harvests... the salt papers and the lemon papers – a text written in time –, honey paper under the unguent of coloured, coagulating matter – soft and sweet. The same childhood state for the sentence with fifty-four letters, bedroom, ceiling, space. The thing reveals itself outside the image, by the same process as the photographic process.

The small volumes do not address us; they face the whole space that spreads out in front of them and do not see us. At night, no doubt, they recharge themselves so as to discharge their waves of ions by daylight. The number "54," which most often multiplies the same in six rows of nine, is absent here. Here only the salt papers repeat themselves eight times.

"Consubstantially"... It is not so much that my works together form a single substance, more that all are nourished by that substance. The essence of being is what defines being, the nature of being is manifested in an "existent" that is constantly being. The future is already engendered and the thing resonates in us at a frequency which may be high or low. You do not need to have read and studied what has been written about my work. To communicate with it, you need only be free of intentions, and let what lives within each one of us come to the surface. The one and only, the same substance.