

Beyond Gestures

What Art Can Learn from Poetry

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ABSTRACT

In 1897, the French poet Stéphane Mallarmé published a ground breaking text entitled *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (1897), which opened the space and realm of action of poetic creation. The artist Delphine Chapuis-Schmitz takes this radical gesture as a starting point to explore the joint process of liberation and incorporation that such disruptive gestures have both generated and been engulfed in within in the 20th century. In order to find a viable alternative to the neutralisation of the radical gesture in our contemporary global media societies, Chapuis-Schmitz conveys the re-reading of Mallarmé's 'dice throw' by the Belgium poet turned visual artist Marcel Broodthaers. Through Broodthaers, a path can be found towards another understanding of gestures, that leads away from the banalization of the disruptive to an empowerment of the reader. Such empowerment is to bring a welcomed proliferation of readings as situated re-enactments of the original text, thereby proposing alternatives to the dominant narratives, and outlining a hopeful emancipatory horizon for our collective future.

KEY WORDS

Disruption, gestures, resistance, poetry, reading, re-reading.

PROLOGUE¹

They gestured towards us they gestured
 towards the sky, realizing it had fallen on their heads – the clouds
 still lingering in the far, not much of a threat yet.
 With all best intentions they gestured, intending to tell us something, they gestured
 and knew they were yet to be
 born, those who would
 one day, maybe
 be able to decipher the patterns.

This happened a world ago.

Others have followed since then, and
 forgetting the inconspicuous promise
 they now gesture without noticing the time has passed when new paths could thereby
 open wide. They gesture, and keep
 gesturing from all sides, blinded.

Some say gestures have to be forgotten so that they can be done again – and so I've forgotten
 everything, and we're forgetting everything, every small part of the past – resolutely delegating our
 present memories to bits and pieces no one is in a position to make sense of anymore. Will
 somebody someday be able to recollect the morsels? Don't we rather want to start re-inventing
 viable alternatives in our present time? Looking forward – right now – at what has been in the past
 might appear as a good move to begin with.

Opening one of the books left over on the shelves, I start to follow the black blurred lines: evidently
 crossed out, their length, their position on the page unwaveringly breaking the grid, simultaneously
 building one of a new kind, recounting the story of the forgotten *Schiff*, the ship le navire le *naufnage*,
 the wreck-

-age

leads me to a by gone world.

MALLARMÉ'S SEMINAL GESTURE

In 1897, at the eve of his death and a new century to come, Mallarmé published *Un Coup de Dé
 Jamais N'Abolira Le Hasard*, a poetic milestone widely acknowledged as marking the beginning of a

¹ Since this piece of writing appears in an academic journal – as the layout will testify to the expert in the field – let me state from the beginning that it does not meet the usual standards of an academic paper – nor does it intend to. My aim here is to articulate the way I read some of the stories of our past, to question their connections, and their relevance for our present times. I would like to thank Gabriel Gee for inviting this nonconforming proposition to be part of the present issue of *Intervalla*.

new era for poetry.² With this long poem written as a journey, not only did Mallarmé break with the then usual way of displaying verses on a page, he also opened up a whole new space of possibilities: escaping stiff layout and typography, the verses became dynamic lines, living forms spreading on the blank page, and making a space out of it. The newly discovered territory has been subsequently explored in many directions, giving way to the various forms of visual poetry – from Apollinaire’s calligrams to Gomringer’s *konkrete Poesie*, and, more recently, Holmquist’s square words, to name but a few. In a nutshell, Mallarmé’s liberation of the structure of the poem then led, together with the “pursuits of free verse and the prose poem”³, to a radically new conception of what poetry could – and still can be.

The *Coup* resonates up to our present times. The original wreck initiated new practices, which in turn cemented new assumptions, some of which are or have been explicitly stated at some point, others having come to be implicitly shared with no one consciously paying attention to it. Either way, taken together, they contribute to shape anew the field of poetry and its many guises as we know it today.

In a sense, every poet experimenting with language belongs to the *Coup*’s lineage, be s.he aware of it – or not. It is the fate of radical gestures to become incorporated to the new perspective they bring about: just as the space of possibilities they open up, they become themselves taken for granted, and we promptly forget the *Kraft* they implied at the time they were carried through. Think of inertia: Wikipedia tells us that it is “the resistance of any physical object to any change in its state of motion; this includes changes to its speed, direction, or *state of rest*.” (my emphasis) Not only do physical objects demonstrate a tendency to inertia, but the implicit system of beliefs underlying our assumptions does as well. The magnitude of a gesture unsettling such beliefs then depends on the distance between the assumptions they reveal, and the core of our belief system: the deeper the expectations are anchored, the bigger the impact of the gesture, and the greater the force needed to fulfil the change of perspective. But no matter how great the gesture, it will always end up as an essential part of the new set of beliefs it contributed to establish. Following this course, Mallarmé’s poem “has become an integral part of the poetological vocabulary of the 20th century”⁴.

As a matter of fact, and as O’Doherty noted in his seminal essay *Inside the White Cube*, a gesture “depends for its effects on the context of ideas it changes and joins”⁵. To say it otherwise: gestures do not make much sense in and for themselves, they cannot be read independently of the context they emerge from, and of the related expectations they turn upside down. From this perspective, Mallarmé’s *coup* was no single shot. Besides the experiments with free verse and prose poems, and the “music heard at concerts”⁶, we can hear its impact resonate in the direct aftermath

² Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un Coup de Dés Jamais N’Abolira Le Hasard* (Paris: La Nouvelle Revue Française, 1897).

³ Preface to Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un Coup de Dés Jamais N’Abolira le Hasard*.

⁴ See the presentation of the exhibition *Un coup de dés. Writing turned image. An Alphabet of Pensive language*, which took place in 2008 at the Generali Foundation in Vienna: <http://foundation.generali.at/en/info/archive/2009-2007/exhibitions/un-coup-de-des-writing-turned-image-an-alphabet-of-pensive-language.html> (last consulted August 2017).

⁵ Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, Expanded Ed. (University of California Press, (1976) 1999) 70.

⁶ See Mallarmé’s Preface, *Un Coup de Dés Jamais N’Abolira le Hasard*.

of Nietzsche's vibrant announcement: "Gott ist tot!"⁷ The impact of God's death was of such magnitude that it affected each of the various fields shaping our cultures and societies, making it possible to free ourselves from the inherited assumptions that were so deeply taken for granted at the time, that nobody was even aware of them as being assumptions. This liberating process was no easy thing, it required time, energy, and numerous steps, more or less blaring, to be fully fulfilled. The *Coup* can be read as one of them. If there is no supreme instance governing the way we relate to the world as knowing and acting subjects, nor any supreme standards for truth and goodness to be found in the skies, then why should we abide by the inherited rules governing the display of verses? Indeed.

EXHAUSTING DISRUPTIONS

In the forward direction, Mallarmé's gesture can be read as a prefiguration of the kind of gestures Duchamp accomplished a couple of years later – and remains celebrated for up to now. Just as the freeing of verse led to a new way of doing poetry, it has been extensively shown that the *Fountain* led to a new conception of what could be art at all, or that the hanging of 1200 bags of charcoal from the ceiling of the Surrealist exhibition, which took place in 1938 in Paris, have opened up new ways of dealing with the gallery space. Breaking with the then usual expectations as to how a space has to function in order to function as a gallery space – namely: offering its walls for hanging framed images and its floor for setting up plinths – was surely no small achievement by then.⁸

Just as it is the case with the *Coup de dé*, the disruptive character of Duchamp's gestures has been accompanied by a liberating effect: it opened up the various spaces of possibilities explored by artists throughout the twentieth century – as every introduction to contemporary art testifies. Note further that Duchamp's many and brilliant breakages occurred on all fronts: they concerned not only the kind of objects counting as works of art, and the functioning of a space as a gallery space, as already mentioned, but also how to do art, how to conceive of artistic labor, of the figure of the artist, and, as has been most recently shown, of the kind of activities that count as art.⁹ In this sense, one can say that the series of gestures accomplished by Duchamp made room for a whole new paradigm: taken as a whole, they led to a complete reset of the body of assumptions defining the field of art.

Now remember that once carried through, such gestures become incorporated to the new body of assumptions they bring about. Duchamp's gestures are no exception on this count: the kind of gestures he remains famous for, disrupting and liberating at once, have become part of our shared expectations; the achievement of such gestures has come to be *expected*.¹⁰ Moreover, as O'Doherty already hinted at, disruptive gestures are not *per se* artistic¹¹. This appreciation has gained its full

⁷ This statement is from the aphorism 125 of Friedrich Nietzsche: *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, first published in 1882 with a second edition in 1887.

⁸ For a detailed analysis, see for instance "Context as Content", the third chapter of O'Doherty's previously mentioned essay: *Inside the White Cube*.

⁹ See on this last point Elena Filipovic, *The Apparently Marginal Activities of Marcel Duchamp* (The MIT Press, 2016).

¹⁰ Even though they haven't yet solidified in common beliefs: the *urinoir* might still appear as a blasphemy to some laypersons...

¹¹ Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, 70.

relevance when Silicon Valley's visionaries started appropriating creative practices from the field of art, and calling for disruption in a way that has been extended to every area of our globalized economy. More recently, disruption has been further extended to the political domain – think of France, where the political landscape has been completely redesigned after the election of the new president, or of the United States, where presidential communication now occurs through outrageous tweets and obvious lies defended by fierce counselors.

Disruptive gestures are thus pervading every aspect of our lives, and the impact of gestures *à la Duchamp* stretched to their point of collapse. Far from their initial intention, producing such gestures has become a way to entertain and feed the hunger for systematic novelty inscribed in the pool of our presently shared assumptions shaping the expectations collectively addressed not only to artists, but also to managers of all kinds – and, in a new and unanticipated way, to actors in the political arena.

In other words, the present context is such that it deprives Duchampian gestures of the possibility to operate as genuine challenges. How can you break up with a framework that awaits and entertains disruption as a way to maintain and expand itself? How can you disrupt in a context that demands of you to do so? When it is commonly expected that you break up with whatever there is to break up, the frame you find yourself acting in surely can't be affected. Finally, the impact of Duchamp's gestures has reached not only its point of completion, but also of exhaustion. Time has come to acknowledge the blatant truth of this unescapable fact.

READING ANEW

However, the line just outlined is fortunately not the only one leading to the multifaceted present we are living in. I suggest we now turn to an alternative one, and follow it where it takes us to.

1969 saw a revival of Mallarmé's *Coup*, less blasting perhaps, but with long lasting consequences as well. A poet turned artist, Marcel Broodthaers, produced an image of the initial poem by blocking its lines, by blackening them blunt and plain, and this rewriting put into light the at once disruptive and liberating force of the original verses. I remember the first times I myself came across them, when the words inhabiting the page as a space of a new kind, evolving as if for the first time, appeared in a blinding evidence, and I myself reduced them, I must admit, to the gesture they deploy. As might often be the case, I took the gesture for the poem, thereby missing the more subtle relevance of the latter. It took many more tries to venture beyond this first sight. Past gestures can indeed function as an easy trap: becoming "obvious *post facto*"¹², they present the double advantage of being at once easy to grasp, and of giving the impression to thereby successfully master a challenging insight. Venturing past this rewarding first step is trying, but it is worth it: the hidden paths might appear intricate from afar, they also unveil as more sophisticated once you come closer to them.

Broodthaers' gesture was no simple repetition of Mallarmé's breakthrough: it made it possible for us to forget the original poem, and then remember it, by making plainly visible the hidden story it entails. In other words: Broodthaers' image does not only revive the force of

¹² Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space.*, 69.

Mallarmé's gesture, it also shows that the poem contains much more than this gesture, and cannot be reduced to it. Through their peculiar *showing*, the words have something to say. Spreading verses on the page is no end by itself, but a way for the poem to tell a specific story, waiting for us to engage with.

I must confess that I myself never really finished reading the initial text. In contrast to the once-and-for-all character of gestures – which concerns their execution as well as their reception: once you've grasped a gesture as such, you've done the job – the reading of a poem is a never-ending story. The deciphering of the words, their interpreting and giving sense, the recreation of their stories, are all acts that can be undertaken again and again. In each new context, in each new situation, they will appear in a new light. The text will indeed never come to a final reading since it “consists of multiple writings, issuing from several cultures and entering into dialogue with each other, into parody, into contestation”¹³ – as Barthes noted, interestingly, one year before Broodthaers turned Mallarmé's poem into an iconic image.

If the poem, being itself a multiplicity, thus cannot be reduced to a final form – neither the gesture underlying it, nor the shape of its letters, nor an original intention, if there is any such thing, will do the job here – the role of reader then becomes crucial: as Barthes further notes, the unifying of the multiplicity lies precisely in the hand of the reader who “is the very space in which are inscribed, without any being lost, all the citations a writing consists of; the unity of a text is not in its origin, it is in its destination.”¹⁴

In other words, the meaning of a text lies beyond any of the elements playing a role for its emergence, and beyond all of them taken together as well: it lies, so Barthes, in the reader. But when Barthes sees the last as an atemporal ideal with no body nor history,¹⁵ I would rather argue that each one of us engaging with the text participates in the (re)creation of its meaning. It is *in* and *through* our repeated endeavor that the meaning of the text can be actualized for each of the times being – as a potential to be enacted over and over again. The death of the author as a far-reaching consequence of God's dismissal has thus relieved us, readers, of the illusion of a single definite meaning to be recovered, and, as Donna Haraway has more recently taught us, “with no available original dream of a common language (...) the play of a text has no finally privileged reading”¹⁶.

Unfolding up to the present time, the various interpretations of Mallarmé's poem are a good example for this kind of endless play, where, in the perspective inherited from Barthes and briefly outlined here, each new attempt can be no more – and no less – than a tentative enactment of the text, adding a new layer to its sedimentary meaning.¹⁷ Next to the numerous interpretations

¹³ Roland Barthes, *The Death of the Author*, 1968.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ This at least in the aforementioned article. The subsequent essay *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973) shifts the focus and deals precisely with the qualitative dimension of reading as an experience.

¹⁶ Donna J. Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century”, in Donna J. Haraway: *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991) 176.

¹⁷ From this point of view, claims at final interpretations can appear as dubious aims. See for instance the recension of Quentin Meillassoux's book *Le Nombre et la sirène* (Paris: Fayard, 2011), published in *Le Nouvel Observateur* under the title “Mallarmé finally decoded”:

<http://bibliobs.nouvelobs.com/essais/20110928.OBS1316/le-coup-de-des-enfin-decode.html>

philosophers, theorists, literary critics and historians have been offering,¹⁸ Broodthaers' transposition of Mallarmé's poem to the field of visual art is decisive in that it has further paved the way for readings of the poem by visual artists. Several variations of the *Coup* have thus been proposed by artists in the past few years.¹⁹ In 2008 Michael Maranda re-enacted the original poems *together with* Broodthaers' transposition by superimposing the three versions on the cover: his own reading in black, and the two previous versions in red. He highlighted the fact that the image has left a profound imprint on the original poem, making it impossible to separate the two.²⁰ Jeremy Bennequin's "*Omâge*", dating from 2014, reveals for its part the possibility of a reverse reading of the poem by turning the verses upside down.²¹ My favorite reading is a wave version by Sammy Engrammer, where the poem is transcribed as audio frequencies displayed at the original position of the verses, making them literally resonate up to our present times.²²

All these versions attempt at reading the poem anew by re-enacting selected aspects of it, and thereby place it among new associative fields. They furthermore shed a new light on Broodthaers' transposition in so far as they make it appear *a posteriori* as a fundamental registration of the essential linkage between the two fields of art and poetry.²³ Right now, we are interestingly experiencing a new step in this evolution, where practices of writing akin to poetry and literature increasingly pervade the artistic field. As a most recent exhibition at the *Centre d'Art Contemporain* in Geneva attempts at showing: "the art of our time appears to be deeply and intimately rooted in words".²⁴ The renewed interest of artists for experimenting in and with language takes different shapes, ranging from "poetry readings and recitals in museums, (to) performances centered on the importance of the text and its recitation, videos where poetic language takes on a role that rivals the visual component"²⁵... – all of which, taken together, might be a chance to tip the scales: once we

¹⁸ , Paul Valéry, "Le Coup de Dés", in *Variétés II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1929), Maurice Blanchot, *Le livre à venir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959); Jacques Scherer, "*Le Livre*" de Mallarmé (Paris: Gallimard, 1978); Jean-Paul Sartre, *Mallarmé, or the Poet of Nothingness*, translated by Ernest Sturm, (The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park-London, 1988); Jacques Derrida. *La dissemination* (Paris: Seuil, 1972). For a comprehensive list of secondary literature on the *Coup de dés*, see Jean-Marc Lemelin, "Dieu ne joue pas aux dés, mais Mallarmé..." (2015): <http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~lemelin/des.pdf>

¹⁹ I am thankful to Christoph Schifferli for having drawn my attention to these works. Note that they all have in common to be close copies of Mallarmé's original poem. Next to the ones referred to above, let me also mention Michalis Pichler's *Un Coup de Dés Jamais N'abolira le Hasard (SCULPTURE)*, Berlin: "greatest hits" (2008), Cerith Wyn Evans, *Delay* (Antwerpen/Köln, De Singel/Walther König, 2009), and Rodney Graham, *Poème: "Au Tatouneur"*, Bruxelles (Gevaert Editions, 2011).

²⁰ In the body of the book, Maranda brings Broodthaers' gesture a step further by producing "a meditation on 'les blancs'. Instead of the black band of censorship, however, the place of the text is replaced with the absence of ink. Surrounding these literal 'blancs' is a cream colored ink wash, imitating the paper stock of the original edition." See Michael Maranda, *Un Coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira le Hasard, Livre*, Parasitic Ventures Press, 2008, URL: <http://parasiticventurespress.com/books/?p=207>

²¹ Voir Jérémie Bennequin, *Le Hasard n'abolira jamais un Coup de Dés, OMAGE*, Éditions de la Librairie Yvon Lambert, 2014.

²² Sammy Engrammer, *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (Onde / Wave. Editions Laura Delamonade, n.pl. 2010).

²³ This aspect has been developed in the exhibition *Un Coup de Dés: Writing Turned Image, an Alphabet of Pensive Language*, curated by Sabine Folie and held at the Generali Foundation in 2008, and in the eponymous exhibition catalogue.

²⁴ See the exhibition text available on the website of the Centre d'Art Contemporain: URL:

<http://www.centre.ch/en/from-concrete-to-liquid-to-spoken-worlds-to-the-word> (last consulted July 30th, 2017).

²⁵ *Ibid.* The issue number 46 of Mousse magazine dated December 2014/January 2015 and dedicated to "Artists' Words" also gives a comprehensive overview of the variety and liveliness of artists' writings in recent times – together with more

have acknowledged that gestures of the Duchampian kind have become obsolete forms of resistance, poetry and the experimenting with language can appear as a promising way to develop genuine alternatives to the invasive logic of disruption we find ourselves living in.²⁶

READING OVER AND OVER AGAIN

Similarly to gestures, texts cannot be read independently of the context in which their meaning is performed. Each text is to be read in and for the situation the readers find themselves in, which means that, as readers, we are not only liberated of a final interpretation to uncover, but also facing a new responsibility: we have to be up to the task of performing anew, in the world we are living in, the meaning a text invites us to engage with. Since a “text is always already enmeshed in contending practices and hopes”²⁷, it remains in our hands to choose which practices and hopes we want to rely on in order to keep a text alive, and grasp the resonance it might have in and for the present time.

Right now, we are amid the process of adapting to the various shifts the recent explosion of digital technologies imply for our economies, for our societies, and for our cultures. From an optimistic perspective, we can assert that we still oscillate between two poles: a “democracy of believers” on the one hand, dominated by post-truths and alternative facts, and “a democracy of knowledge”²⁸ on the other, where each individual would be able to navigate autonomously and responsively in the flow of information, opinions, and delusional claims currently mixed together. In other words: we are in a crucial position where it remains possible to shift direction – or so I want to believe. But how are we to invent gestures of a new kind which will enable us to truly disrupt the worst course history is presently at risk to take? And which role can artists play in this turning point?

The various re-readings of Broodthaers’ transposition recently carried out, as well as the more general interest for poetry from contemporary artists, appear to me as significant moves on this count. Matters of language never being purely linguistic, engaging with creative ways of using words in the way poets and artists do is a serious game, which goes hand in hand with the exploration of alternative forms of life. Moreover, the tendency to appropriate and re-read past gestures from the point of view of our present times testifies to the awareness of a growing number of artists for the task of remembering anew our common past. If amnesia is indeed the fallout of disruption, remembering the stories shaping our communities is then more urgent than ever. Against all attempts at erasing or at replacing our memories with alternative facts that aim at dividing us further, and at setting us up against each other, reading and remembering are becoming acts of resistance, yes, political acts even, which confront us to the ancient question: which form do we want to give to our living together as human beings?

In the now historical time when the new president of the United States of America was still a candidate, a black woman named Johary Idusuyi demonstrated that we already live in a time when reading poetry in public has become a threat to some – and most obviously to the couple of red cap

historical pieces dating back to the 1970s – thus giving a comprehensive illustration of the growing permeability of the artistic field to poetry.

²⁶ See also the issue n°103 of *Texte zur Kunst*, entitled “Poesie/Poetry” and published in Sept. 2016: it takes as its topic the present significance of poetry as criticism.

²⁷ Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature*, 124.

²⁸ I borrow these expressions from Gerald Bronner, *La Démocratie des crédules*, (Paris: PUF, 2013).

supporters sitting behind her on the tribune at a rally, who asked her to put away the book she had taken out of her purse, and started reading in a manifest gesture, as a spontaneous act of resistance against the candidate's aggressive calls for exclusion.²⁹ The kind of attention required by reading, the effort, time, and devotion it implies, is rightly perceived as threatening the dominant narratives propped up by advocates of hate and terror from all sides – and interestingly enough, the book held high by Johary Idusuyi is *Citizen: An American Lyric*, where poet Claudia Rankine³⁰ explores the many ways black people are treated *differently* by their fellow citizen, or to say it bluntly, the various faces of ordinary racism. In the way of doing so, the poet brings into light many hidden assumptions I myself as a white person was not aware of until reading the book – a real perspective change.

Overcoming every form of domination from one group over others is certainly a true challenge of our times, for which the developing of alternative narratives, of new ways of writing, of reading, and of dealing with language in general, is a decisive tool. From this perspective, however, further pursuing “the subversive potential of language – both in its dimension as a critique of ideology and in its (...) disruptive power”³¹ is only a first step in the process. The potential of language to *undermine* the need for disruption, by carefully developing and exploring alternative worlds in our highly disrupted times, will bring us much further in the long run. We can hope that it is precisely this kind of awareness and working with language that is starting to infiltrate the artistic field, as hinted at in this paper. No doubt we are still a long way before poetic acts of resistance can give way to a new set of commonly shared assumptions – but this might be a meaningful goal to work towards. So let's settle for the journey, and keep up with the tasks of writing, and reading, and re-reading, and again, and again – in order to reinvent future ways of living together.

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²⁹ See the video on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvWVTPu4A7Q>

As well as the interview of Johary Idusuyi by Rachel Maddow:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qd5Ug9JtYHQ>

I am thankful to Nienke Terpsma for having shared these links in the framework of a symposium on *Publishing as Resistance*, held at the 2016 edition of Volumes, the independent art publishing fair in Zurich.

³⁰ Claudia Rankine, *Citizen. An American Lyric* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2015).

³¹ This quote is taken from the exhibition text *Un Coup de Dés. Writing Turned Image. An Alphabet of Pensive Language*, see the link mentioned above.

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BIOGRAPHY

Delphine Chapuis Schmitz (born in 1979 in Boulogne-Billancourt, France, living in Zurich, Switzerland) is an artist exploring ways of making sense and the poetic potentials of language(s) through her lectures, installations, and (online) publications. She is a lecturer at the MA in Transdisciplinary Studies at Zurich University of the Arts. She completed a Master Degree in Fine Arts at the Zurich University of the Arts in 2012 after having obtained a PhD in Philosophy at the University Paris 1-Panthéon Sorbonne in 2006. Her work has been shown at various venues including Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museum Haus Konstruktiv, Zürich; Corner College, Zürich; Milieu, Bern; Fondazione Ratti, Como. A Cahier d'Artiste „Delphine Chapuis Schmitz“ was published in 2015 by ProHelvetia/Edizioni Periferia, with a text by Chus Martinez.

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