

*CODA*...(Literary & Literary Critical Term) a concluding part of a literary work, esp a summary at the end of a novel of further developments in the lives of the characters

1753, from L. *cauda* 'tail of an animal'

Dear H,

My head is in another place right now, but last night I tore myself away–PhD draft in hand for re-reading on the train–to attend *Non-happening after Ad Reinhardt* at Raven Row in London. It is preformed by Pierre Leguillon (1969-) and at the end Seth Siegelaud (1942-)–a 'Conceptual art pioneer' and dealer from 1960s New York art scene, personal friend of Ad Reinhardt (1918-1967)–joined PL for discussion.

It is a popular occasion. The room is crowded. I notice the gallerists turning people away at the door. Rows of seats face the wall. When I arrive they are all taken and people stand or sit on the stairs. Amongst the centre of the chairs is a slide projector balanced on a stand pointing toward a black square painted on the wall with the legend *Non-happening*. We are later told the black square is the size of one of AR's paintings.

At 7pm, or there about, PL stands and tells us he will start with a preamble. Reading from an A4 paper, he tells us about what he was doing. He describes his talk as cutting through: cutting through into another space and then cutting through again and again and so on. Thinking back, the operation of the slide show also works with the logic of the cut. The concatenation of images we were about to watch, are cut through: cut into black, cut to a slide, cut back to black and so on. I took notes as he spoke and I will try and report what he said.

He talked about AR having an archive of 10,000 slides, though for the performance last night we are only shown 350. The entire collection was made throughout his life when on family holidays for performance-lectures in the 1960s. These are now held in the *Ad Reinhardt Foundation* in New York. He told us that the slides do not tell a story of a past history. He talked of the way AR likes them to be viewed: a latent image from one slide, cancelled into black, imprints upon the next and in this way makes a synthesis as the slides *project* forward. This is the logic of the *Aufhebung* I think. And also in another way for a viewer today; with slide technology itself being so dated and the quality of the colour being very particular to that technology, a fleeting nostalgia is evoked, and then cancelled out, by the present situation in the gallery, but is raised up to provide a another image all together.

In his talk PL gives a description of AR the painter: what he did, how he worked and some

context to the slides in his life. He was by nature retiring, primarily considered an abstract painter and in the 1960s known by his peers as the *Black Monk*. PL talked about a triangle: at one point the black monochromes; at another his cartoon work, the satirical comic strips and illustrations he made for *Art News* magazine and the leftwing paper *PM*; and at the other point the slides. Something like this I imagine . . .

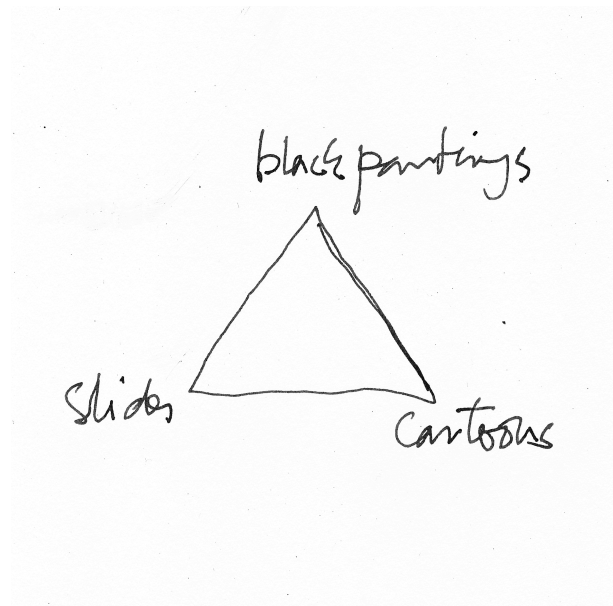


Fig. 33                      My image of AR's diagram

Before finishing his preamble, PL talks about the slides we are about to see. Taken from places all over the world though in part a geographic and historic tour, the prime importance lies in the formality of the compositions and a flattening of all depth. AR is reconstructing history through the grid. It is as if by showing the slides according to the logic of their internal formal shapes the accumulation of knowledge becomes abstract. He likens it to the printing process that AR worked with: first pasting different layers as collage then flattening them to one surface. These slides of abstract shapes, with the sides of buildings as triangles, windows as grids, circles, etc., are systematic in their repetition. The images on the slides are as flat and as symmetrical as possible, showing the *all-overness* of the surface. This *all-overness* of the image-as surface skin-reminds me of your experience in the F studios under Euan Uglow's eye . . . with reference to the rectangle and proportion. EU even titles some of his paintings according to particular forms, *Pyramid*, for example. Like EU, AR sees through the grid. And it is through the rigorous adherence to the grid that PL makes a claim for the elision of AR's subjectivity. I even wondered if he is perhaps erased by it.

I find the emerging question of subjectivity interesting, for throughout the evening it flashes and dances. The first tell tale signal is a Freudian slip that occurs in the concluding remarks of PL's preamble. PL used 'I' when he meant AR—a collapse of AR into 'I'—much laughter. Another sign is the merging of speech and action. During the talk PL recounts a joke from the 60s: while in a restaurant and talking of AR's slides, *he (PL) slides across the floor* in front of the audience. This sort of slippage happens in different ways throughout the performance: what aims at *diagram(me)* is *diagram/me/*. The choice and arrangement of the 350 slides PL tells us is his decision . . . (clearly his desire) . . . and he cuts this stark sequence of repeated grids and shapes by the last image. After a succession of bottoms (of ruins), is a witty shot (as if the bottoms are not witty enough) apparently taken by his daughter with a small Japanese camera given to her by her father: it is AR's head poking out from the top of a headless statue.

Best . . .