

were coming to this program, and I was interested that in an interview with your former student Matt Mullican you both recall having had little contact with the so-called 'local' L.A. art community, and I find that this relationship between local and international could be interesting. But also when you were starting out in National City you were getting exposure to some kind of international idea of 'art world' through magazines. I am wondering if you could say something about this dynamic, or even priority, of international over local, which seems to be something that you developed quite early in your career: this idea of an art world. How can we be aware of that through media?

Baldessari: Well, I think now that it's a lot easier. Back then every art magazine I could find I would subscribe to. I was really in some ways self-taught, post-university. I didn't meet a real artist until I was thirty-four. The teachers I had were really teachers first, and then what we call 'Sunday painters'. Then I took a summer course at UCLA with a very prominent artist in Los Angeles at the time, and he said the magic words: 'You should be an artist.' Nobody ever told me that. I said 'oh, okay'. Before that it was just something I thought I did and I would support myself teaching. He said 'you should be an artist' and that's all I needed to hear. That's why I feel so strongly that students should be around real artists. I don't think being international is an issue anymore, because of the Internet and travel and everything. We all have the same information. What I had to do so laboriously with magazines you can do on the Internet so easily.

I look up blankly, kind of out the window. I have been standing in the bookshop far too long and have to get going; outlasted by some young men in salary suits scrutinizing comic books a few aisles away. Or should I say grown men; reading comic books all day. The automatic doors open as I approach them.

I want to be early. I was late again last time and had to wince theatrically when I apologized, as I had observed others doing. It felt demeaning. And I had had to run through the humidity and got sweaty. It reduces professionalism.

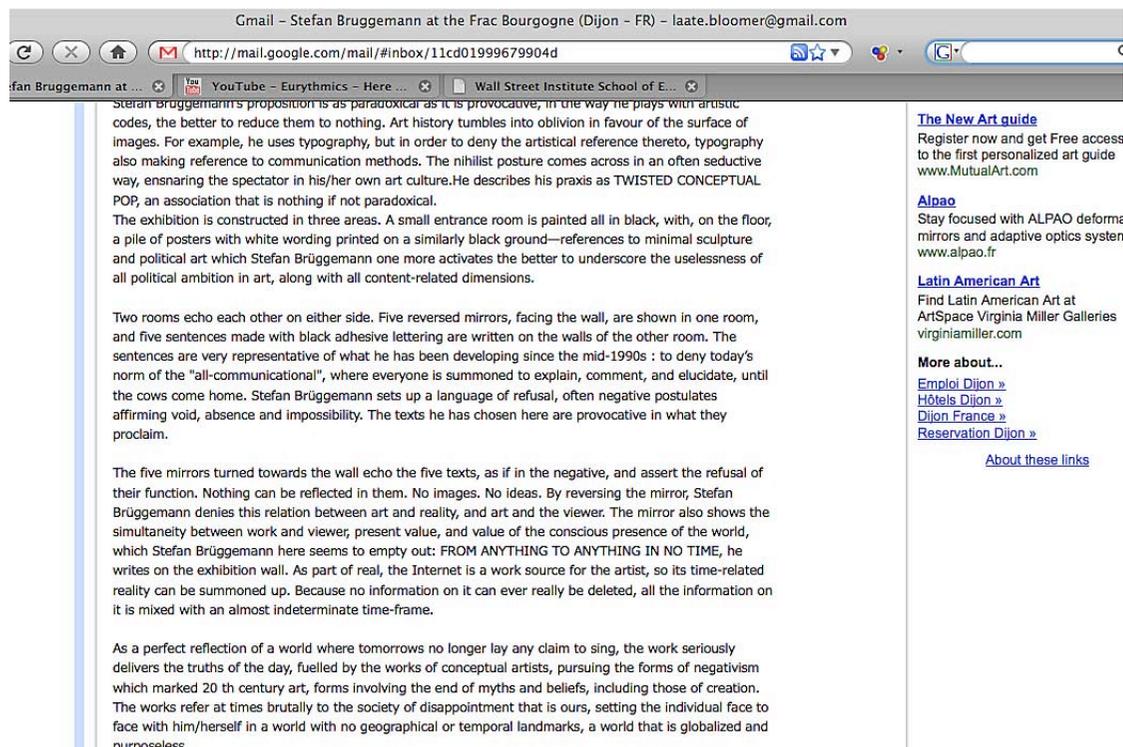
Title: The autumn is authority here and dictates its diminishing daytimes to senses that have been trained to understand them as a call to returned order (matriculation, melancholy).

After nearly a month and a half of doing not much I finally have a new job; I won't say what it is unless I have to. It is not something I was exactly trained to do; nothing six years of college had necessarily prepared me for. This initial interval was spent reading and lazing about, grasping for some significance of my activities to the carrying-on of art making; wan gestures, the desiccated relics of a corpse. I could open up a magazine and point out a dozen people I know personally – hell I could point myself out in some of these magazines – but there is hardly anyone here who would care. Some sort of numb alarm is going off; how quickly it feels that I've fallen out of the loop.

My inbox was pretty much empty those first few weeks. Now I get messages from work. Some people (my mother) tell me that it's okay, this isn't *nothing*, it's settling in time. I don't argue, although I don't pretend to endorse this view. *Nothing is nothing*, if you're not doing something. Impatiently, I expend the energy pointing out to her that some of my ex-classmates are already so busy *doing what they want to do* that my new job is more blow than coup; she reminds me that at least I am staying healthy, aren't I, which was part of the motive behind this move, wasn't it. To be away from that *stuff*.

I am sitting there with my student (“Tom” he wants me to call him) and we are talking about Vancouver, I told him I had just moved from there. He doesn’t mind if I tell him the truth, all he really wants to do is talk, he doesn’t even respond when I try to correct him. He wants to know about Vancouver: are there many blondes? His pale skin appears waxen under the fluorescent bulbs, peeled-cucumberish and uniform from his stark hairline to his exquisitely small hands; gesticulating in a tight radius close to his edge of the table, his fingers nimble but tucked inward. My eyes on a large watch sliding at his wrist with his nervous delight: Tom’s dream is to visit Moscow, where every woman is blonde. I encourage him to visit there. He can’t, he tells me, his smile unwaning. He works for his father’s department store. His smile falters for a moment but returns with the question, so how am I going to get married to one? I shrug, I like Tom, this is an easy job. I guess there’s always the Internet. Yea yea yea yea he agrees almost epileptically.

We leave the room five minutes late, I am usually lenient on the time limit, I feel a little sorry for the students. Chatting with the receptionist at the front counter is a collegial type I haven’t yet met, but he smiles wide and introduces himself. Jason; he has been here for over a year. I know Tom well, he says as he motions a fist to Tom’s padded shoulder. I slip behind the desk to fill in my time sheet and ask the woman if I can check the computer for a second. Jason entertains the two others.



I need a drink.

Another American has shown up, he has cropped corn color hair and he wears a black t-shirt tucked into black jeans. I sign out of my account and shift to the front with the others; I shake Matt’s hand and he says cool, cool. I rest my backpack on the bench by the door while I put on my jacket. Hey, we’re going to get something to eat, you want to come out with us, Jason asks. I think why not, well for a little while I say, I’m not that hungry; as we all leave through

the sliding door Jason says openly and pats me on the back, don't worry, Tom pays for everything when we go out with him.

Excuse me, waiter, can I have another, Jason holds up his glass, you want one, he asks me. I rattle the seven ice cubes in my glass, why not. Tom looks clammy but content in the corner; he has been for the last forty-five minutes somewhat outside of the conversation. Since I'm not paying I'm feeling hospitable: hey Matt why don't you have a drink; I'll just have a ginger ale, he turns nodding to the waiter. Jason, who's already had two, spurs on: yeah, Matt, why don't you have a drink; as if he's airing dirty laundry. Matt drums his fingers on the table; 'cause I'd be *in the spot-light losing my religion*, he sings. Matt's a Mormon, Jason elucidates, he never drinks. Ah ha, I say, Utah? Kentucky brother, Matt nods enthusiastically, I came here for mission work a year and a half ago for six months and then went back to the States, but I was back on a plane two months later, I fuckin' missed it so much and my friends, and then I started to teach - what's great is I can do both, his earnest eyebrows raised. Teachin n preachin, Jason's grin is strained by the cigarette being lit in his mouth; he draws a tremendous lungful. Aside from his gelled hair, tartan shirt and dockers he has the features of a cowboy. I am wondering if Matt does both at the same time.

So how did you end up here, Matt asks me. Yeah, how, I wonder. You know the story, just graduated, hanging around, have a huge debt getting bigger; you're supposed to be able to make good money in a short time doing this, I respond. Oh, what did you study? I have become quite reluctant to answer this question; it cost me a class some weeks ago. Bankers: money laundering investigations department; seven in the morning, I wanted to start the standard way one would begin the first class: ascertain their level; but they were only interested in finding out my personal details; they smiled the whole time. A couple of days later my boss had a sit-down with me; he wanted to figure out why they had cancelled the class. Well, what did they say, I asked. Nothing specific, he said, just that they would prefer someone else. I thought back: almost late, out of breath, sticky forehead; could the way I had taken off my sweater in their stuffy office really have offended them so much? Or the sweater itself? I mentioned everything I thought relevant. My boss eyed me like he was trying to guess my name. The mystery went unresolved, I was sent off with the advice that I should just lie when it came to personal details. Art, I tell Matt, who nods; Jason says, cool like paintings and stuff. Sort of, I say; it's the shortest version of *large format conceptual photography* I can think of. Did you go to university, I quickly ask him. I dropped out, Jason confides, he sighs: yeah, I dropped out to be a writer, I started traveling around - oh really I say suddenly intrigued, he doesn't hear me goes on: writing and travel broaden your ass if not your mind and I like to write standing up - but that isn't free of course; you know, you aren't a professional unless you're actually in print - otherwise there's no difference - and you can take working on a shrimp trawler only so long; anyway so I started doing this, I was in Korea and I almost got married. Basically he's a full time drinker, Matt summarizes with a smirk. But I've gotten better, Jason cautions to the ashtray. Tom wants to go, the air conditioning is freezing.

I am agitated but unable to say anything smart. But communism isn't even entering the discussion, I blurt hotly. Show me one example where it hasn't gone completely wrong and resulted in a dictator, Jason holds up a finger, the other hand gripping his glass on the bar, there isn't one; capitalism arises naturally, and look what happens when you try to repress

democracy. How did we get to this? Jason comes up with all these numbers and I am just pure drunk conviction. I don't know what I am talking about. I can't trace the thread back. It leads back to George Bush. (Ah, I remember: Jason tells us of a recent whale watching trip he had taken with a visiting friend on which they had noticed the flag fluttering on the ship; Jason confesses, I asked my friend, are we traitors, these were our enemies in the second World War, and here we are. The expression on his face expects some sort of grave acknowledgement on my part – Matt's head bobs tentatively but graduates in fervor, his blue eyes sparkling like the brown Coke in his glass.) I shake my head, I am sick of these two. Isn't that right Bobbie, Jason holds up his drink to the bartender, a Jamaican who apparently agrees with everything said to him (yeah, mon). I search for sadness in Bobbie's indifferent attitude for a moment, finding nothing, and than shake my head dumbly, I just don't agree. Well that's alright, Jason entitles, feeling the compassionate victor, and turning his glass to me; there's three things you're not supposed to talk about when you're drinking: Politics, Religion, and something else I forget what right now, Jason reconciles. I have an infuriated feeling inside. Matt leaves, I wait several minutes before I do as well, queasy at the prospect of walking home with him. Tom left hours ago. I try to slip out without being noticed by anyone while Jason talks steadily at tired Bobbie.

Outside the door I turn the opposite direction from my apartment. I am staggering through the inky night, I am fending off tunnel inertias, to scan left and right, searching for that *stuff*, that *familiar stuff*.

#### Brit-Pack Bad Girl Funds Uganda Library

Tracey Emin has been known in Britain since the mid-1990s at least as much for her offbeat public persona as for her controversial artworks. In recent years, while she has gained considerable art-world respect—her show representing the UK at last year's Venice Biennale, for example, was generally well-received—she has also made an effort to put to bed once and for all her reputation as a boozy rabble-rouser. To that end, she has devoted time, effort, art and money to various philanthropic endeavors, particularly causes related to AIDS in Africa and elsewhere. For last February's (Red) Auction, a Valentine's Day sale at Sotheby's New York organized by Damien Hirst and Bono to raise funds for the United Nations HIV/AIDS relief effort, Emin donated one of her neon sculptures, *I Promise to Love You* (2007), which shot above its \$80,000 high estimate to sell for \$220,000, contributing to the evening's staggering \$42.6-million total. Over the years, Emin has worked quietly and often anonymously in various capacities for large organizations such as the Terrence Higgins Trust and the Elton John AIDS Foundation.



Tracey Emin and students in Uganda.

A chance meeting last year brought the artist in contact with PEAS (Promoting Equality in African Schools [www.peas.org.uk]), a relatively small organization committed to building schools in Africa, and she asked to become involved in one of its long-term projects. Fascinated by Uganda's tumultuous history, Emin focused on Kikandwa, an impoverished village on the outskirts of Kampala, the capital, and decided to fund a library there, the village's first, which opened this past February. Architect Ben Siee of the British firm Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios donated the design for the Tracey Emin Library, which is in harmony with local architectural traditions. The main rooms encompass 2,000 square feet, with shelf space for about 3,000 books, donations of which Emin is now organizing, plus areas for study, and someday, perhaps, computer terminals. There is also a circular outdoor reading area built around a tree. The library is currently accessible only to students of the nearby Forest High School, but plans are being considered to open it to the general public.

Emin told *A.I.A.*, that the endeavor is personal, which explains why she consented to use her name on the project and to emblazon it on the side of the building. She hadn't read a book until she was 17, and has since come to regard education as key to everything. "In this area of Africa, paper is hard to come by," she said. "Books are an absolute luxury." Funding such a luxury by auctioning another—art—seems a worthy exchange.

—David Ebony

Lie-bray-Ree, Lie-bray-Ree, I implore, my mouth warping hideously. My head pounds, I can hear my heart in my ears, the buzzing fluorescent bulbs are like a drill in my eye, stomach watery fish sex. A dark and sadistic mood has overtaken teacher today: *we're going to continue doing this until you get it right.*