

The Conspiracy of Art

The illusion of desire has been lost in the ambient pornography and contemporary art has lost the desire of illusion. In porn, nothing is left to desire. After the orgies and the liberation of all desires, we have moved into the *transsexual*, the transparency of sex, with signs and images erasing all its secrets and ambiguity. Transsexual, in the sense that it now has nothing to do with the illusion of desire, only with the hyperreality of the image.

The same is true for art, which has also lost the desire for illusion, and instead raises everything to aesthetic banality, becoming *transaesthetic*. For art, the orgy of modernity consisted in the heady deconstruction of the object and of representation. During that period, the aesthetic illusion remained very powerful, just as the illusion of desire was for sex. The energy of sexual difference, which moved through all the figures of desire, corresponded, in art, to the energy of dissociation from reality (cubism, abstraction, expressionism). Both, however, corresponded to the will to crack the secret of desire and the secret of the object. Up until the disappearance of these two powerful configurations—the scene of desire, the scene of illusion—in favor of the same transsexual, transaesthetic obscenity, the obscenity of visibility, the relentless transparency of all things. In reality, there is no longer any pornography, since it is virtually everywhere. The essence of pornography permeates all visual and televisual techniques.

Maybe we are just acting out the comedy of art, just as other societies acted out the comedy of ideology, just as Italian society (though it is not alone) keeps acting out the comedy of power, just as we keep acting out the comedy of porn in the obscene advertising pictures of women's bodies. Perpetual striptease, fantasies of exposed organs, sexual blackmail: if all this were true, it would indeed be unbearable. Fortunately, it is all too obvious to be true. The transparency is too good to be true. As for art, it is too superficial to be truly null and void. There must be some underlying mystery. Like for anamorphosis: there must be an angle from which all of this useless excess of sex and signs becomes meaningful, but, for the time being, we can only experience it with ironic indifference. In this unreality of porn, in this insignificance of art, is there a negative enigma, a mysterious thread, or, who knows, an ironic form of our destiny? If everything becomes too obvious to be true, maybe there still is a chance for illusion. What lies hidden behind this falsely transparent world? Another kind of intelligence or a terminal lobotomy? (Modern) art managed to be a part of the accursed share, a kind of dramatic alternative to reality, by translating the rush of unreality in reality. But what could art possibly mean in a world that has already become hyperrealist, cool, transparent, marketable? What can porn mean in a world made pornographic beforehand? All it can do is make a final, paradoxical wink—the wink of reality laughing at itself in its most hyperrealist form, of sex laughing at itself in its most exhibitionist form, of art laughing at itself and at its own disappearance in its most artificial form, irony. In any case, the dictatorship of images is an ironic dictatorship. Yet this irony itself is no longer part of the accursed share. It now belongs to insider trading, the shameful and hidden complicity binding the artist who uses his or her aura of derision

against the bewildered and doubtful masses. Irony is also part of the conspiracy of art.

As long as art was making use of its own disappearance and the disappearance of its object, it still was a major enterprise. But art trying to recycle itself indefinitely by storming reality? The majority of contemporary art has attempted to do precisely that by confiscating banality, waste and mediocrity as values and ideologies. These countless installations and performances are merely compromising with the state of things, and with all the past forms of art history. Raising originality, banality and nullity to the level of values or even to perverse aesthetic pleasure. Of course, all of this mediocrity claims to transcend itself by moving art to a second, ironic level. But it is just as empty and insignificant on the second as the first level. The passage to the aesthetic level salvages nothing; on the contrary, it is mediocrity squared. It claims to be null—"I am null! I am null!"—*and it truly is null.*

Therein lies all the duplicity of contemporary art: asserting *nullity*, insignificance, meaninglessness, striving for nullity when already null and void. Striving for emptiness when already empty. Claiming superficiality in superficial terms. Nullity, however, is a secret quality that cannot be claimed by just anyone. Insignificance—real insignificance, the victorious challenge to meaning, the shedding of sense, the art of the disappearance of meaning—is the rare quality of a few exceptional works that never strive for it. There is an initiatory form of Nothingness, or an initiatory form of Evil. And then there are the inside traders, the counterfeiters of nullity, the snobs of nullity, of all those who prostitute Nothingness to value, who prostitute Evil for useful ends. The counterfeiters must not be allowed free reign. When Nothing surfaces in signs, when Nothingness emerges at the very heart of the sign system, that is

the fundamental event of art. The poetic operation is to make Nothingness rise from the power of signs—not banality or indifference toward reality but radical illusion. Warhol is thus truly null, in the sense that he reintroduces nothingness into the heart of the image. He turns nullity and insignificance into an event that he changes into a fatal strategy of the image.

Other artists only have a commercial strategy of nullity, one to which they give a marketable form, the sentimental form of commodity, as Baudelaire said. They hide behind their own nullity and behind the metastases of the discourse on art, which generously promotes this nullity as a value (within the art market as well, obviously). In a way, it is worse than nothing, because it means nothing and it nonetheless exists, providing itself with all the right reasons to exist. This paranoia in collusion with art means that there is no longer any possible critical judgment, and only an amiable, necessarily genial sharing of nullity. Therein lies the conspiracy of art and its primal scene, transmitted by all of the openings, hangings, exhibitions, restorations, collections, donations and speculations, and that cannot be undone in any known universe, since it has hidden itself from thought behind the mystification of images.

The flip side of this duplicity is, through the bluff on nullity, to force people *a contrario* to give it all some importance and credit under the pretext that there is no way it could be so null, that it must be hiding something. Contemporary art makes use of this uncertainty, of the impossibility of grounding aesthetic value judgments and speculates on the guilt of those who do not understand it or who have not realized that there is nothing to understand. Another case of insider trading. In the end, one might also think that these people, who are held in respect by art, really got

it since their very bewilderment betrays an intuitive intelligence. They realize that they've been made victims of an abuse of power, that they have been denied access to the rules of the game and manipulated behind their backs. In other words, art has become involved (not only from the financial point of view of the art market, but in the very management of aesthetic values) in the general process of insider trading. Art is not alone: politics, economics, the news all benefit from the same complicity and ironic resignation from their "consumers."

"Our admiration for painting results from a long process of adaptation that has taken place over centuries and for reasons that often have nothing to do with art or the mind. Painting created its receiver. It is basically a conventional relationship" (Gombrowitz to Dubuffet). The only question is: How can such a machine continue to operate in the midst of critical disillusion and commercial frenzy? And if it does, how long will this conjuring act last? One hundred, two hundred years? Will art have the right to a second, interminable existence, like the secret services that, as we know, haven't had any secrets to steal or exchange for some time but who still continue to flourish in the utter superstition of their usefulness, perpetuating their own myth.

have to deal with it, but it is now in the process of annexing all possibilities for the moment, including the possibilities of art, since with the multiplicity of artists working today, even if they are not working with computers or digital images, etc. if they redo what has been done, if they remix past forms, it amounts to the same. They don't need computers: this indefinite combination, which is no longer art per se, happens in the mind.

1996

No Nostalgia for Old Aesthetic Values

Geneviève Breerette: *On May 20, 1996, you published in the Libération newspaper a column called "The Conspiracy of Art," in which you repeatedly state that contemporary art is null, really null. What works, what exhibitions inspired your statements?*

Jean Baudrillard: The misunderstanding, which I am not trying to avoid, is that art, basically, is not my problem. I am not aiming for art or artists personally. Art interests me as an object, from an anthropological point of view: the object, before any promotion of its aesthetic value, and what happens after. We are almost lucky to live at a time when aesthetic value, like others by the way, is foundering. It's a unique situation.

I do not want to bury art. When I speak of the death of the real, it does not mean that this table here does not exist; that's foolish. But it's always understood that way. I can't help it. What happens when you no longer have a system of representation to picture this table? What happens when you no longer have a system of values suitable for judgment, for aesthetic pleasure? Art does not have the privilege of escaping this provocation, this curiosity. But it would deserve a special treatment, because it claims to escape banality the most and that it has the monopoly on a certain sublime, on tran-

scendent value. I really object to that. I say that you should be able to apply the same critique to art as to everything else.

You name no artists, other than Andy Warhol whom you happen to praise, which leads one to think that your statements are not as reactionary as has been said.

If I use Warhol as a point of reference, it is because he is outside the limits of art. I treat him differently from an almost anthropological perspective on the image. I do not return to him aesthetically. And then, I am in no position to say, "this one is bad, this one isn't."

You still take the liberty of saying that almost all contemporary art is null...

But I do not put myself in a position of truth. Everyone makes his or her own choices. If what I say is worthless, just let it drop, that's all.

The article was written a little hastily. I should not have started like that. I should have said that there is a hint of nullity in contemporary art. Is it null, or isn't it? What is nullity? My article is perfectly contradictory. On the one hand, I use nullity as null or nothing, and on the other, I say: nullity is a tremendous singularity. That is a critique that could have been made.

My text reflects a mood, an obsession with something, something more. That we have moved from art as such to a sort of trans-aestheticization of banality... It comes from Duchamp, okay. I have nothing against Duchamp, it is a fantastic and dramatic turn.

But he did set in motion a process in which everyone is now implicated, including us. What I mean is that in daily life, we have this "readymadness" or this trans-aestheticization of everything

which means that there is no longer any illusion to speak of. This collapsing of banality into art and art into banality, or this respective game, complicit and all... Well, from complicity to conspiracy... We are all compromised. I am not denying it. I certainly have no nostalgia for old aesthetic values.

What is art for you?

Art is a form. A form is something that does not exactly have a history, but a destiny. Art had a destiny. Today, art has fallen into value, and unfortunately at a time when values have suffered. Values: aesthetic value, commercial value... values can be negotiated, bought and sold, exchanged. Forms, as forms, cannot be exchanged for something else, they can only be exchanged among themselves, and the aesthetic illusion comes at that price. For example, in abstraction, when the object is deconstructed, when the world and reality are deconstructed, there is still a way to exchange the object in itself symbolically. But abstraction later became merely a pseudo-analytical procedure for decomposing reality, not deconstructing it. Something has fallen apart, perhaps through the sole effect of repetition.

Did you see the exhibition "L'Informe" at the Centre Pompidou that deals with this problem by means of superb works?

No. Art can still have a strong power of illusion. But the great aesthetic illusion has become disillusion, concerted analytical disillusion, which can be performed brilliantly—that is not the problem, except that after a while it runs on empty. Art can become a sort of sociological, socio-historical or political witness. It then

becomes a function, a sort of mirror of what the world has in fact become, of what will become of it, including its virtual involvement. We may have reached farther into the truth of the world and of the object. Yet art, of course, has never been a question of truth but of illusion.

Don't you find that there are artists who do well despite this?

I could say they do too well...

You think this is the time to say that?

My concern is not the misery of the world. I don't want to be cynical, but we are not going to protect art. The more cultural protectionism we enact, the more waste we have, the more false successes, false promotions there are. It puts us in the marketing realm of culture...

To put it naively, the pretension of art shocks me. And it is hard to escape, it did not happen overnight. Art was turned into something pretentious with the will to transcend the world, to give an exceptional, sublime form to things. Art has become an argument for mental prowess.

The mental racket run by art and the discourse on art is considerable. I do not want anyone to make me say that art is finished, dead. That is not true. Art does not die because there is no more art, it dies because there is too much. The excess of reality disheartens me as does the excess of art when it imposes itself as reality.

1996

La Commedia dell'Arte

Catherine Francblin: *I wanted to do this interview with you because —after the shock of reading your article, I believed it should be placed in the more global perspective of your thought. It seems to me that you are only interested in art to the extent that you find in it behaviors and functions that add to your critique of Western culture.*

Jean Baudrillard: True, art is on the periphery for me. I don't really identify with it. I would even say that I have the same negative prejudice towards art as I do towards culture in general. To that extent, art has no special privilege in relation to other systems of values. Art is still considered to be an unimaginable resource. I protest this idyllic view.

My point of view is anthropological. From this perspective, art no longer seems to have a vital function; it is afflicted by the same fate that extinguishes value, by the same loss of transcendence. Art has not escaped this tendency to effectuate everything, this drive to make everything totally visible to which the West has arrived. But hypervisibility is a way to extinguish sight. I consume this art visually, I can even take a certain pleasure in it, but it does not provide me either illusion or truth. Now that the object of painting has been called into question, then the subject of painting, it

Ideas or concepts are all reversible. Good can always be turned into evil, truth into falsehood, etc. But in the materiality of language, each fragment uses up its energy, and there is nothing left save a form of intensity. It is something more radical, more primitive than aesthetics. In the 1970s, Roger Caillois wrote an article in which he called Picasso the great liquidator of all aesthetic values. He claimed that after Picasso, no one could conceive of anything more than a circulation of objects, of fetishes, independent of the circulation of functional objects. One could say, in fact, that the aesthetic world is the world of fetishizing. In the economic realm, money must circulate in any manner it can, otherwise there is no value. The same law governs aesthetic objects: there have to be more and more in order for an aesthetic universe to exist. Objects now only have this superstitious function leading to a de facto disappearance of form through an excess of formalization, in other words through an excess use of all forms. There is no worse enemy to form than the availability of all forms.

You seem nostalgic for a primitive state ... one that, in reality, certainly never existed...

Of course, and that is why I am not a conservative: I do not aspire to regress to a real object. That would mean cultivating reactionary nostalgia. I know this object does not exist, no more than truth does, I maintain the desire for it through a glance that is a sort of absolute, a divine judgment, in relationship to which all other objects appear in their insignificance.

This nostalgia is fundamental. It is lacking in all kinds of creations today. It is a form of mental strategy governing the correct use of nothingness or the void.

Too Much is Too Much

Sylvère Lotringer: *The Conspiracy of Art elicited pretty strong reactions among the art world. It was taken as a full-fledged attack on contemporary art. "Consternation is spreading through the cultural community," a critic commented, wondering whether this was "an abrupt wake-up call or simply a lack of manners."*

Jean Baudrillard: *The Conspiracy of Art* positioned me as an enemy of art. But you know that I have no vested interest in art while all these people make their living from the idea. For me art is not privileged. With writing, it is possible to critique from the inside, to do a truly *critical* critique. But it is out of the question in a world like the art world, because of the complicity of reciprocal praise. That is what I wanted to denounce: passivity and servility as a form of conspiracy. The idea of art's collusion. Its unabashed complicity with the state of things.

What's surprising really is that the art world was so shocked. What you thought of art was pretty clear from the start. In The Consumer Society (1970) you already stated explicitly that the humor of Pop Art had nothing subversive about it, its "cool smile no different from commercial complicity. In For a Critique of the Political Economy

of the Sign (1972) you pointed out that art has an ambiguous status, half-way between a terrorist critique and a de facto cultural integration. You explicitly stated then that contemporary art was nothing but "the art of collusion," merely pretending to subvert an order that was in fact its own. In *The Conspiracy of Art* you simply took this judgment a bit further by addressing the art world directly, challenging it to answer in kind. And your timing was right: the global inflation of art is reaching truly pataphysical heights. Art today is in denial of its own reality.

Some have criticized me for being "mean" with art. But artistry is growing stronger everywhere and find it intolerable. It does not even dare match political cynicism. The convivial, the interactive elements are all offered for consumption like sacrament.

Do you think it is more prevalent in art than in politics?

No, this is not only true of the art world. Politicians in France no longer know who they are, and intellectuals don't know either. There is no space between them capable of creating some tension, some intensity. So it's a drift into the void, each one trying to replace the other, to reenergize the political machine. Intellectuals are trying to save politics, but they are not playing the game, and taking it to an extreme. Le Pen does not work with representation as they do. He works with appearance, and he has all the tobaccoists on his side. So politicians are right to be scared. Without realizing it, without even pushing for it, Le Pen has acknowledged the breakdown of rational democratic representation. And he has taken over its space, which is left fallow. He will have demonstrated that power is no longer representative, that it no longer has any

legitimacy. And I think they have indeed locked themselves in a senseless situation. Politicians are handed the dirty work the way handling money was delegated to the Jews. They deal with the accursed share. They do the dirty work of managing power. We entrust power to the most despicable people. And it's the same thing for artists. They have to administrate banality, the leftovers of everyday life, exorcising abjection, the unwanted part. Art is trying to manage a domain where imagination no longer exists. Someone has to take responsibility for the excess fiction. With a few exceptions, a few singularities like Francis Bacon, art no longer confronts evil, only the transparency of evil. And representation stops having any meaning. All you have here is the spectacle of the inanity of representation. And yet it keeps going on. Why? The politician's task is to skim off the squalid part of power and people are right to scorn them. The gratification of art is that clowns are now dealing with the abject.

In The Conspiracy of Art you dismissed art's claim for exceptionalism. By now it is no different from everything else. It's all about values, careers, accumulation, consumerism on a huge scale—and everybody there is aware of it. So one can't have it both ways. The art world should drop the pretence and own up to it. Your outburst indeed was a wake-up call. Also a reminder that art was supposed to be something else.

Yes. Art is about inventing another scene; inventing something other than reality. For art, reality is nothing. I wouldn't call classical art figurative. It was like a desire for seduction—it was a song. The purpose of art is to invent a whole other scene. So it is something quite different. At bottom, art never concerned itself with the

question of reality in its right form. And that lasted until the 19th century. Then, a fabulous adventure began. Art turned to reality in order to deconstruct it. It never addressed it before, even if some of the art that was produced at the time was just as mediocre as in contemporary art. After that art made it its goal to free reality—because everything was done in the name of liberation. Freeing art, freeing reality. But when both managed to free themselves at the same time, they cancelled each other out. It was the same with desire and revolution: in 1968 the desire for revolution and the revolution of desire ended up canceling each other out. It was the same kind of “collusion.”

This brings us back to the famous statement you made in The Conspiracy of Art: “It claims to be null, and it’s really null.”

Art has become a terminal, an image-feedback to reality or hyper-reality. And putting together reality and image adds up to a *sum zero equation*. That is what I meant. Artists always believe that I am casting judgment on their work and that I am telling them: “This is not good.” So there is a real misunderstanding there. Art may also be null on the aesthetic level, but this is not really the problem, simply an insider’s question. In any case, artists cannot grasp the internal strategy. And it is without hope, I am convinced. There are exceptions of course, but it is total misunderstanding.

It is not that art is null, but that it invalidates itself as art.

There is a mutual annulment of art and reality. Before, they used to potentialize each other, now they cancel each other out. It is the deterring effect of radical critique. Duchamp’s act was not

conceptual; it was a real challenge. It was pure terrorism. Afterwards it became conceptual. Practically everything that is done today is readymade. Duchamp signals the end of the aesthetic principle. Now the system devours and surrounds you. And yet it still left a mark. Sequels coming from before this “revolution”—as it has been called—still are being assimilated in the integral reality that art now is a part of.

There is no way out of art, and no way of objecting to it. Now the system does everything, recycling itself endlessly just like fashion.

The circuit is complete, and we have achieved *integral reality* in that sense. However hard you try, you can’t escape it. That’s what I said in Venice in 2003: contemporary art is... purely contemporary. It is contemporary of itself. It closed this circle.

Was there anything in Venice that could have changed your mind, any idea?

Today ideas are everywhere. I only find interesting what is not really art, unidentified objects I call “strange attractors.” Actually I saw something at the Israeli pavilion, characters shaped like spermatology, a kind of monstrous bio. It was inexplicable, beautiful, almost joyous, although kind of tiny. It was a biological theater of cruelty.

Only what is not art can still be art.

We have reached a critical threshold, a critical mass. Let’s assume—it’s a hypothesis—that something disappeared with

Duchamp and Warhol. Whatever happened afterwards therefore came after it was gone. So much for a history of art... But the same analysis could be applied to philosophy. Philosophy has disappeared. Something happened afterwards, but it was nothing like a mutation. Today, everything is aestheticized, as everyone knows. To a certain extent everything, even this so-called ordinary reality, can be seen in the light of art. We are living in the transaesthetic, we're in a giant museum.

This is not exactly the museum without walls Andre Malraux had in mind. No wonder art history has recently achieved a new visibility. The more blurred the boundaries, the more necessary it becomes to keep everything in its proper place.

According to art history, for them, first there was classical art and then modern art... But these kinds of distinctions are not really in line with contemporary art. Modern art projected itself into the future: it was the avant-garde. The avant-garde was alright. They dreamed it and it worked. Deconstruction has a transcendent dimension. Now the avant-garde does not work anymore because the system is always two revolutions ahead of us. And intellectuals are trying their best to save the empire of meaning. They are completely off-base. No one is drawing any conclusions from all of this. Politicians are *out*, and so are intellectuals, even though they resist a bit more. As for art, it has definitively gone beyond its end. We are no longer in a modern perspective of prevision, of rationalization. It is becoming exponential.

We can still hope that it will turn around, reverse itself, cancel out.

Yes, we should really engage in an extreme logic. We have that option. But there could be some uncontrolled abreactions.

As happened after you published The Conspiracy of Art. Is this kind of acting out always violent?

Singularity does not need to be violent; it needs to be other, out-of-bounds, invent new rules for itself. Today it can only take violent forms.

It's some kind of terrorism.

Well yes, I protested. But you cannot sustain that position systematically. Some writers have done it, but it's rather tiring. And then being indignant is a bit sentimental, a little pathetic. Indignation is a very weak rehashing, a residue of acts left unperformed. You can't go that far, so you act out—and that is the terrorist act. In any case, I set myself up as a terrorist, as you well know.

What are you really indignant about?

Money is obscene, but it's not all the financial and banking scandals that bug me most. I find all that very interesting, of course. I am an analyst of corruption. Like Mandeville, I believe corruption is the vital force of society. What I find most degrading really are discourses. The discourses of justification, of repentance. The people who use those kinds of arguments are completely dishonorable. For instance they said some really stupid things about what happened to the old folks, the deaths, the heat wave. In short, they alleged that people today are living too long. The latest poll, meticulously

orchestrated, topped it all. They found that a vast proportion of the elderly who died *were mentally diminished*. I found that truly disgraceful. Not only did they die because they lived too long, but they were declared mentally incompetent as well. So they weren't really human. People who say those things should be shot. What you get to read in the papers today makes your blood boil.

People think you're cynical. It's true you rarely get as indignant as in The Conspiracy of Art.

I am usually rather irresponsible and amoral. In terms of practical life, I have a very strong immunity. At least one has to maintain that. It's more than just temper; there is an energy involved. But it constantly needs to be restaured.

It may be a form of intolerance, in the medical sense of the word.

Yes, a rejection.

Still, it must have required some effort on your part to get there.

No, I never made any effort. Something just happens and I follow through. But what brings this out? An object, signs, some kind of rhetoric... I never wonder at one point whether I should find an alternative, go to the other side. No, I would never do that, it would be absurd. I remain at the limit, in a borderline state really. That's why I like Ballard, these kinds of people. Writing science-fiction would be too easy in a sense. They just stand at that point before it falls to the other side, becomes something else. Things end up organizing and disorganizing themselves on their own. It works

like a machine. Oh yes, at one point I made a special effort to break with the history of ideas, with my contemporaries, whether I liked them or not. I tried to empty out. And that must have required some work on my part. It did demand some energy.

For Roland Barthes, the energy seemed to have come from boredom, from a refusal of what was too obvious. A kind of nausea with received ideas.

That's true, absolutely. For me, it came from a kind of indifference. An indifference that was no longer subjective. A sort of desert form, not a landscape or something found in nature, let alone from culture—an unidentified object. It would be the same thing in terms of passion: some kind of apathy, an apathetic form...

Is that the kind of apathy the Marquis de Sade cultivated, the insensitivity of the amoral man, the 18th century libertine...

A stoic form, in fact. Differentiating between what concerns you and what does not, including in your own life. Refusing to account for what we're being made to be responsible for. Refusal of that kind is strategic, a kind of tactical indifference. This is true of photography, but it also for the concept. Finding the complicity that exists between the object and the objective (here technique comes into play) which gives the subject every reason to disappear, to empty itself out as a *medium*. Between object and "objective" [*an objectif is the French for lense*], interesting things will necessarily happen.

Is singularity still possible in art?

Art is dealing with deconstructed elements, waste in terms of form, and artists are working with that. But it is something very weak. For most of them there is no singularity because the model comes first. Singularity, meaning form, has not disappeared, however. It is everywhere.

But not necessarily in art.

No, in the world as it is. In fact, it has a fantastic singularity. Technology has changed everything. What I love about the Japanese is that they made technology a point of honor, a challenge. And they met it, they won. When you transform a material into a challenge, it becomes something altogether different. You find a dual form, a dual relationship. Everything is there.

The form you keep referring to isn't in an object, but in a kind of agonistic logic.

That's right. I don't use form in an aesthetic sense. For me, form has nothing to do with focusing positively on something, nothing to do with the presence of an object. Form rather has to do with challenge, seduction, reversibility. With language, it is the anagrams, arriving at signifying to a maximum, but signifying nothing. And it's true for the image as well. But this you can't prove it. Something comes out, but it's not what is being produced. When I take photographs, they are pictures of the end of the image. After that you can't control it, it's recouped one way or another. In the photographic act, you have to leave this kind of void around, of instantaneity, a subject/object dual relation. You don't find that anywhere now in photography, only a preparation,

a manipulation, a multi-media hybrid mixing. There is form whenever a reversal occurs and everything canceling out by excess. Georges Bataille's notion of economy already was about that. Lack isn't the real problem, it is surplus. And surplus, as you know, you can't get rid of it.

It's the question of obesity.

Yes. The question of obesity was raised in Venice and I said: "There is too much of art. But this is not only true for art: *there is too much of too much*. And that may well be a form. Francesco Bonami, the head of the Venice Biennale, didn't agree and we did a little scene together about it. "How can there be too much?" said Bonami. "You can never have enough of a good thing." And I countered, "And obesity? You don't think there's a pathology in there, do you?" "The more body, the better it is," he replied. Well, no, that's not true. A body has a form, it has measurements, a symbolic space, an initiatory form. Form is all of that. I believe a limit does exist. But you can only say it from the outside, if you are talking in terms of form, not of art. You can do the same kind of analysis with information, consumer habits, everything that is part of a linear process of production and accumulation. More is *not* better. So everything is moving towards this kind of reversal. It's inescapable.