

**An email conversation between artists Christopher LG Hill and Zac St Clair on the occasion of their exhibitions - *Do Sumn'* and *I trust everything has a purpose* at TCB Art Inc., January 2015.**

On Sun, Nov 2, 2014 at 12:11 PM, Christopher L G Hill wrote:

Hey Zac,

Hope install is going well. Feel free to take time to respond to this after everything has settled re Uni.

Here is a start on dialogue for the TCB shows. I am happy to open it up as much as possible, even into some email chain thing. And of course towards discussion of your show / ideas / etc. But to make a start here are some interception between vandalism and art.

Nairy Baghramian's out door work, and some blogs <http://art-damaged.tumblr.com/> <http://greatartinuglyrooms.tumblr.com/>

I think what interests me is the limits of freedom in vandalism, obviously it opens up private property to be displaced and become the plaything of the vandal. But also it is a violation of space, visual attack. This is also true of the rehousing of artwork through sale to private and public collections, the dead artists work hangs on the purple feature wall, etc. Or true of the ethics of graffiti, which are always swaying with legal challenges and gentrification as the changing face of oppression/'state'. Houses, cars, vans, what is okay to tag on? Tagging art work is not okay, but is it sometimes? I don't want people to tag/deface my work, but it often happens (well not tagging, but people stepping on the work, kicking it, etc., with little disdain). All open thoughts, that I don't have exact answers too, but would be interested to discuss, and open up the discussion to others (Nick Selenitsch had a work tagged recently, Lisa Radford (while a member of DAMP) had a work that was allowed to be tagged as part of a institutional show somewhere. What do you think? Or should we have a different discussion that is more encompassing of both of our shows?

Best,

Chris



On Thursday, 6 November 2014, 10:38, Zac St. Clair wrote:

Hi Chris,

Thank you! Assessment is all done now. Think it went well.

I think this is a great idea, I am more than happy to discuss vandalism and art. When I can I'll insert some ideas that are more specific to my show, it will be interesting to see where the crossovers are.

I'm sorry if my responses are a bit fragmented, sometimes I forget what I'm talking about.

I find the ethics of vandalism really interesting to think about. It's also very confusing, determining what is and isn't acceptable to vandalise. Or in what situations is it acceptable? When thinking about the ethics of anything its interesting to think about intentionality and sincerity. For example, the elderly woman who attempted to restore a painting of Jesus in a Spanish church. Is this vandalism? She wasn't attempting to vandalise this piece, she was trying to fix it.



This is something that I find really interesting, the difference between doing something intentionally wrong and attempting to do something the right way but failing. Which is I guess the difference between being dumb and being intentionally dumb. Is it possible to choose to be dumb? Or can you be intentionally dumb without being ironic? I don't really have any answers at the moment, but I am sceptical about logic behind choosing to be dumb.

Here is an article by Kenneth Goldsmith about being dumb:  
<http://www.theawl.com/2013/07/being-dumb>

He terms this choosing to be dumb as smart dumb, which is neither smart or dumb but somewhere in the middle. I feel kind of awkward about it, to me it seems he is describing a strategy for maintaining a level of uncool or un-palatability. What do you think?

The original idea for my show was inspired by an affirmation card that Tash gave to me.

I found the phrase really interesting "I trust everything has a purpose". I felt that there was some doubt behind it, why doesn't the card believe everything has a purpose. To me the word trust implies an awareness that the statement isn't entirely true. I trust everything has a purpose, but there is probably some things that don't. So with this in mind I wanted to kind of let go and trust that no matter what I did everything had a purpose. I wanted set up an arrangement of animated objects in the space, some just flailing on the floor, some going in circles, some standing still, with the hope that these objects would find their purpose in the space. I haven't made work in this way for a long time, so am still not sure if it is still going to work in this way or not, or whether I can apply this idea to the kind of things I'm painting at the moment.

Back to vandalism. How do you feel when someone vandalises your work? Please tell me if I am making a huge assumption here but I feel a strong sense of care in the objects you choose to show. Maybe its because I have a strong attachment to objects but I feel I share an empathetic connection to your objects, especially when they're placed on the floor. I feel like they're in such a vulnerable state when placed on the floor. I can't help but feel that you would be really disappointed if someone vandalised your work.

Something else that came to mind was the Monash Councils recent push to fine their residents who let their nature strip grow longer than 30cm came to mind thinking about the limits of freedom. Is the overgrown nature strip an act of vandalism? And if so who is the vandal? The grass? Or the owner? Is nature a vandal? I found this case confusing because I always thought that nature strips were technically council property. Therefore shouldn't the nature strip be the council's responsibility? (Sorry going too off topic)

Another thought. Can you vandalise something immaterial, like a piece of music? A film? Or an idea / thought?

Cory Arcangel talking about software crackers who essentially insert a tag into the software.

<http://youtu.be/ZzHq7PzQWEE?t=33m36s>

I know I probably didn't answer anything and probably asked too many questions. Just thought I'd send some quick thoughts.

Zac.

On Fri, Nov 7, 2014 at 10:17 AM, Christopher L G Hill wrote:

Hey Zac,

Yes these are all answering the questions, I guess with the title 'do somn' based of this track by Konshens (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9RjoNZ9tJs>) there is a provocation to do something, but yes in general I do not want people to vandalise my work in the least. Also I think there are moments where the rupture of vandalising artwork can have a life of it's own as a creative act, probably not in reaction to something that is already engaged with this dialog, i.e. this show in particular. I'm thinking here of the 2008 San Paulo Biennale:

(<http://centrefortheaestheticrevolution.blogspot.com.au/2008/11/empty-floor-in-sao-paulo-bienal-atacked.html>) where out of protest the curator left floor od the museum empty them 50 graffers tagged the empty space (I think there is a better article on this somewhere, will email that when I find it)... And back to Konshens and 'do sumn' maybe this relates to what you were talking about in relation to your work. Maybe. I think the ideas around impetus and doing, not doing or erasure are definitely present in our practices, in graffiti, and as social action within a personal political and group political practice. And the consciousness is imbued in this as well of course.

Sorry, these are more open ends, but I think they are entangling to become a solid chain eventually.

Best,  
Chris



On Tuesday, 2 December 2014, 17:06, Zac St. Clair wrote:

Hi Chris,

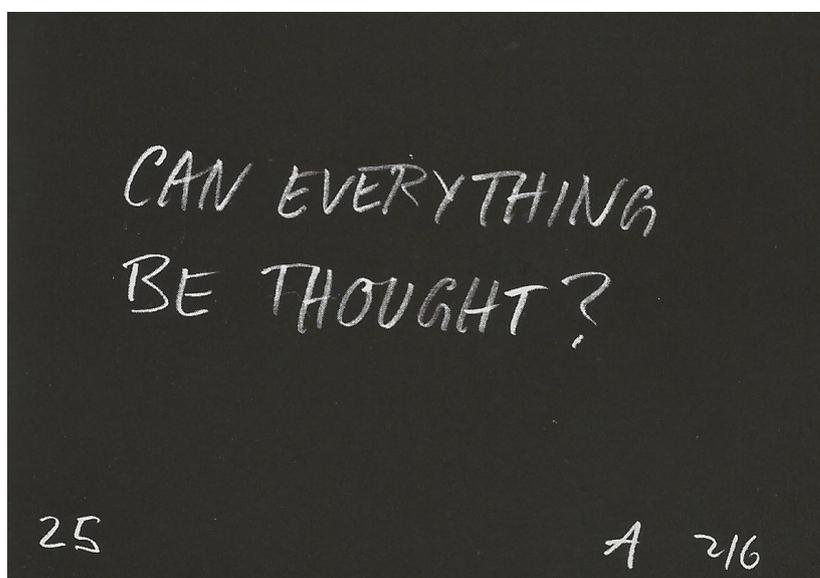
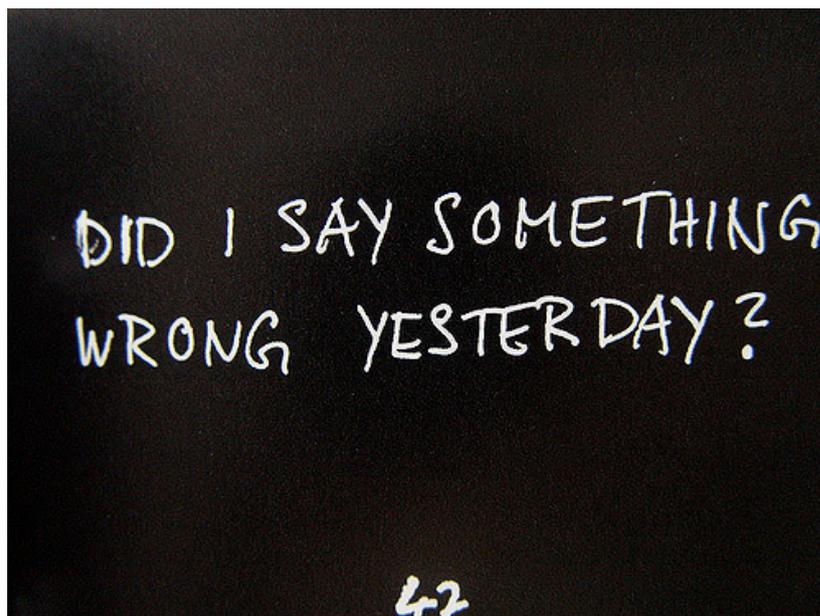
Sorry again for the delay, have a lot more time to focus on the ideas for this show.

I really enjoy open-ended conversations. I feel a lot of the time I find myself more interested in asking questions rather than seeking answers or solutions. Problems are interesting enough on their own. Perhaps another link between our two practices is problems? This might be a bit too vague. I really enjoy asking sincere questions in a really dumb tone. Do you think that there is also a link here to vandalism? Do you think that graffiti can ask sincere questions in a dumb tone? Is vandalism a dumb act?

I have a twitter account dedicated to asking these kinds of questions.  
[https://twitter.com/philosoph\\_quest](https://twitter.com/philosoph_quest)

I also attempted to ask questions in this way on yahoo answers. Yahoo answers felt really awkward to me though. Maybe it was because when I ask questions on twitter they're not directed at anyone in particular and go unanswered, where as the whole point yahoo answers is to find answers to your questions. I also think it's a lot easier to appear as if you're being a troll on yahoo when you ask a dumb questions, I didn't want to be a troll.

I guess my interest in this dumb, vague philosophical gesturing is to see how easily things can become doubtful. If I ask a seemingly simple question about something that I think I know the answer too in a dumb rhetorical way, which makes it difficult or impossible to answer, then how can I be certain of my answer in the first place?



Above are some questions from Peter Fischli and David Weiss' book "will happiness find me?"

Do you ever consider yourself to be a vandal?



What do you think about your install at Gertrude in 2012? Do you see your wall painting functioning as a visual attack on the others works? Are you tagging these other artworks? When I first saw this I thought that wall painting formed that shape of Australia, then I saw your initials C H. Is it either or both of these?

Sorry if this is all over the place.

Zac :)

**On Fri, Dec 5, 2014 at 10:31 AM, Christopher L G Hill wrote:**

Hey Zac,

I am interested in the idea that ignorance is or blind faith is bliss/#blessed. That free dumb is just another word for nothing left to loose. That tone and delivery with an unabashed direct immediacy can be insightful or intelligent. Or for that case the rigger or the academic, or the practiced isn't the only or most important intelligence. Embracing dumbness too, but also not thinking things are dumb if they aren't fleshed out or full. Ignorant style ([Urban Vampires TPK](#)) and other graffiti forms in response to technical styles engage these issues. As does the polemic of creation and destruction throughout the trajectory of vandalism / graffiti.

## [ZK Crew Buss tagging](#)



### ZK Crew Buss tagging

View  
on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

Preview by Yahoo

Also was thinking of the relationship with your sky writing paintings, tagging clouds, etc. thought this could be a good crossover if I could have one of them in my show? If you don't mind?

In regards to vandalism I see it as a reaction against institutional violence even though it has a violence of it's own, in relation to these two essays I read yesterday, particularly the first one, in relation to violence, but the second one has a bit about friendship that I think is relevant to both our practices. And probably more what the relationship between my amorphous graffiti works and the works by others on top are about.

## [Revolution in Reverse | The Anarchist Library](#)

### Revolution in Reverse | The Anarchist Library

Revolution in Reverse (or, on the conflict between political ontologies of violence and political ontologies of the imagination)

View on [theanarchistlibrary.org](http://theanarchistlibrary.org)

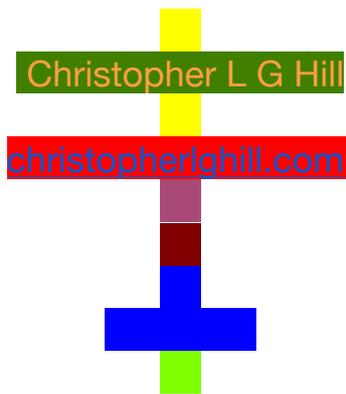
Preview by Yahoo

<http://soundenvironments.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/agamben-what-is-and-apparatus.pdf>

More about the work at Gertrude you mentioned; it is no representational (as will the works at TCB) but it is fine if people see things in it. There is a bit about language in the Graeber article about the controlling nature language, which perhaps articulates it, better than I can with words. But this is what interests me with graffiti that it becomes about more than what the words represent, transcending language at points. The formal relationship between the square of the canvas and the painting on the wall is one of challenging each other but not in opposition.

Hopefully that confuses things more, or less. Think I might include the bus tagging video in the show maybe?

PS The Fishly and Wise quotes reminded me of this, PPS enjoying your twitter!



**On Mon, Dec 8, 2014 at 11:18 PM, Zac St. Clair wrote:**

Hi Chris,

I was actually thinking about the connection between my cloud paintings and what you were talking about. I would love for you to use one of my cloud paintings! I'll send a follow up email with ones I still have left and you can choose which one you would like to use.

I really, really enjoyed watching the zk crew bus tagging video. I loved watching them tag a bus in such a short amount of time, then to see the bus drive away from them. I think I see a strong connection between the zk crews tagging process and my interest in the immediate, half baked idea. Also, thinking about urban vampires and zk crew I feel like that they are tagging something that inevitably departs from the taggers is really significant for me.

Have you ever done any tagging in Melbourne?

The Agamben apparatus text was great! Haven't got around to reading the friend one yet. B

The save the planet kill yourself image reminded me of this group.  
<http://www.vhemt.org/>

I'm thinking about putting in this video I made of some gameplay of the new alien isolation game. The footage is of the character looking down at her feet awkwardly attempting to put a sandal on, but just ends up being kicked around. I think games are funny now because generally you're able to interact with the mundane things a lot more in games than what you used to be, almost every object in games now has the ability to be pushed and kicked around. But a lot of these objects don't really seem to have a purpose or function other than just being there. Thought this was a nice connection between me wanting to trust that everything has a purpose.

I'm also thinking about making another video that is just text, the text will describe ideas for objects. I'm not quite sure yet. This idea came to me because I have been writing lots of lists of things that I may potentially make for the show. A lot of the objects I think of I have no idea how to make, e.g. plastic cup made out of ice. I thought that a video describing all of these 'impossible' objects may be better.

The more I think about it the less I want to make and put into the space. Originally I was thinking of having all of these animated objects in the space moving around and bumping into one another. I think I'm more interested in the idea of two or more objects becoming entangled within one another. However I think I will apply the 'things bumping into one another' idea to the text video by animating the text, making the words bump into one another and jumble around. I guess I think this video will operate as an extension of the cloud paintings in a way, by using the same kind of vague language / turning words into objects. But it will be different because in the cloud paintings the language used is very illusive / vague, the language in the video will be a lot more rigid, be able to be read more easily (I think). Sorry about all of the blah, blah, blah, I'm just thinking (typing?) out loud.

Apart from the two videos I'm thinking about making some kind of concrete slab or tablet with a bunch of objects embedded into the slab. I still have no idea how this is going to work or how I'm going to make it, so will keep you updated.

Perhaps the strongest link between us is the potential of things. The potential for language to transcend its restrictions and the potential for objects to transcend their intended functionality. I was really interested in Agamben's argument against 'correct usage' of an apparatus. I think I agree with Agamben but I also think it's funny or amusing to attempt to find correct uses for apparatuses. Although maybe correct use is the wrong term, maybe 'alternate' suits more. I think I like alternate because it doesn't assume 'correct usage', it's just an alternative to what has been intended. I've pasted a quote from the Agamben text along with a Robert Nelson quote that I felt was relevant:

*Here lies the vanity of the well-meaning discourse on technology, which asserts that the problem with apparatuses can be reduced to the question of their correct use. Those who make such claims seem to ignore a simple fact: If a certain process of subjectification (or, in this case, de-subjectification) corresponds to every apparatus, then it is impossible for the subject of an apparatus to use it "in the right way." Those who continue to promote similar arguments are, for their part, the product of the media apparatus in which they are captured.*

- Agamben, apparatus

*Language defines sitting but so do chairs. Few manufactured items are as morally prescriptive as a chair. A chair defines your posture and largely determines how you sit. It affords space for a certain range of positions and makes others uncomfortable. Before it is sat upon, the chair bespeaks the attitude of the person to be seated: it asserts a predetermined disposition of sitting. You might be grateful or resentful. It depends on whether the design of the chair matches your intentions. A chair might serve you somewhat patronizingly. Your choices have been envisaged. The design of the chair has foreseen your desires and will satisfy them as the designer knows best. Your interpretation of the chair begins with this consciousness. The will of the designer is expressed as a prescription for your posture. The chair is sent into the world to teach you how to sit.*

- Robert Nelson, instruments of contentment

Sorry again (sorry to say sorry so often) for the lateness of this email. Beginning to realise how tricky it can be managing art, work and life post art school.

Anyway hope you are well :)

Zac