

Necessary Recklessness

by Madeleine Hatz

I may well look like a well behaved girl, thrifty and orderly....but once I step into the studio there is unbridled spilling, boundless trashing, and wasting of gallons of materials. Fine clothing gets ruined, expensive ingredients disappear into unidentifiable mixtures. Often when I leave the studio after concentrated work, I discover inexplicable bruises on my body. In art there is no room for consideration for one's comfort, no consideration ..

for the place

for the time

for the surroundings and its dwellers

for decency

for security

The "space" of concentration, which the studio constitutes in a mental sense (Blanchot would call it "l'espace litteraire") is actually more a moment than a place. Certain acts need to be executed terribly fast, at the breaking point, in the tension between frustration, reticence and...act. This type of event can only take place in the right instance, after deliberate and careful preparations, and yet in a sort of extreme clumsiness, recklessness. The notions of care and consideration mark the feminine, the daily "work of woman". It is my nature, it resides in my spine and reaches out into my fingertips. It is my femininity, my sensuality and ultimately my energy. Paradoxically the combination of these two extremes is what I need:

Excessive care and its opposite, brutal recklessness.

Edward Munch talked about being disturbed by surrounding family and people who demanded "so much consideration", which was devastating for his painting practice. He treated his own canvases with total brutality, exposing them to the elements and to trampling feet. He claimed that the paintings thus acquired "character". But does this really show in the paintings, or is this something that is necessary for the relationship between the artist and his work? What is it that unconditionally demands recklessness? The demand comes from the poetic work itself. Kafka states that writing comes as a reward, as payment for having served diabolical forces. Blanchot talks about Kafka's faithfulness to what he terms "the demands of the work". The work that Blanchot describes in "L'Espace Litteraire" is the poetic work, and thus it is art as well as literature.

What is it then that happens in the mental and physical space of mine, where acts often are executed in a flash and without consideration of decency. The answer lies in the connection between the space and the act. It is as though the space became an act, and transversely as though the act was a space. In other words, it is a situation. In a general sense, a situation is the placing of a subject, an acting individual in a place under certain premises. For me these premises are all the preparations, gathering of materials and information, and arranging them in the studio space. The recklessness consists in the total concentration on that exact moment, in time and space that this situation constitutes. From this point I have a

perspective, an angle of vision and a possibility of action. A perspective is precisely this: an axis along which the field of vision can be organized. To paint for me is to succeed in localizing myself in such a manner that I become a point of absolute stillness, so that everything else is put in motion in relation to this point. It is as though the perspective is reversed and I am placed myself at the vanishing point. In this way the visible can pass through me and movement can occur. A natural gravitation field is thereby provided for thoughts, feelings, and perception of the time we live in. How can this situation be achieved?

I have learned what influences me: discipline, geometry/architecture, ritual. Ritual and discipline are connected to controlled violence and controlled tempo (violent speed, extreme stillness). Geometry/architecture are a structuring that relate to the physical space. The necessary recklessness can also be termed a necessary boundlessness: the point is to achieve a situation of boundlessness. From this place a genuine relation to the time we live in can be reached. If art is to be a mirror of contemporaneity, (and/or a game played with it) then consideration of esthetics, taste and decency constitute a hindrance for truth. If at the end of the day in the studio, one looks back and confronts the view of something amazingly "beautiful", it is clear that this has happened in spite of all and by paradox. It is most mandatory to give up all consideration of end result when working, only thus can results be achieved. Instead one is focused on the moment in the space when time disappears and the act executes itself.

In legal contexts, the term "recklessness" describes the mental state an individual is in when committing criminal acts: there is no reckoning of the consequences. To have the courage at all to be an artist, it might help not to "reckon". The alternative spelling "wrecklessness" alludes to direct destruction (as in ship wreck).

Acts of great courage, protest actions carried out in climate of repression, for example home made fake crude oil spilled out on a sidewalk, fountains turning blood red....such things require recklessness in relation to one's safety and comfort. In the end everything in art, as in life is paradoxical. Things, works of art are created through destruction. The explosive simultaneously contains stillness. The most grandiose and magnificent chaos is preceded by careful calculations and planning. The thoughts of the absent-minded professor are not scattered but on the contrary the professor is absorbed by a focused train of thought. The inconsiderate artist is considering only one thing which for the moment absorbs all consideration. The reckless woman spilling out a whole barrel of paint on the white floor is taking care of ONE, one exact moment, one precise act, will, vision.

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