

On Constance¹

By Nathan Baker

“In a tour de force of office supply physics, researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles, have shown that it is possible to produce X-rays by simply unrolling Scotch tape.

“Next step: nuclear fusion.

“‘We’re going to do that,’ said Seth J. Putterman, a professor of physics at U.C.L.A. ‘I think it will work.’”²

I think it will work. I think it will work.

I think it will work. I think it will work.

But who knows?

I don't even know how we'd be able to qualify whether or not it works. What criteria can we employ to determine its success? To what must it comply? For starters, what the fuck is it?

Cognitive dissonance is a discomfort caused by holding conflicting cognitions (like ideas, beliefs, values, or emotional reactions) simultaneously. In a state of dissonance, people may feel surprise, dread, guilt, anger, or embarrassment.³

“I have not only improved my recall of names and faces, but I can mesmerize a group at cocktail parties.”

—A. G. Edwards⁴

It is not abstract because it is not an abstraction of anything.

“Just a few years ago, conventional wisdom said that accurate control was nearly impossible and the best you could hope for was rough control with pneumatic controllers. Soon afterward, the first electronic controllers came out and, with a fair amount of tuning, very accurate control could be obtained, or so it was said.

“But it was difficult to accept this. Soon, this had become accepted wisdom, and then new systems came out that also eliminated the extensive tuning with self-tuned system. Many people didn’t trust them and turned that off, in order to maintain the status quo.”⁵

I think the Nazis invented it; that blue is like, the perfect blue.

Like the color of the Adriatic Sea after a summer thunderstorm – definitely too blue to be Baltic.

“James Gleick claims that the mondegreen is a distinctly modern phenomenon. Although people have no doubt misconstrued song lyrics for as long as songs have been sung, without improved communication and the standardization of language that accompanies it, there would have been no way to recognize and discuss this shared experience.”⁶

It is abstract because it is an obscuration of the materials used in its making.

Kevin Trudeau wants you to understand one thing about yourself: that before you listen to the first **Mega Memory™** tape YOU CAN IMPROVE YOUR MEMORY BY 500% OR

MORE!

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—*College Student*⁷

Repetition.

How can I implement this process into making something figurative? Is it too speculative to claim that the materials themselves can represent a certain type of figuration? That materials can “pwn” gestures or dictate them in a way that gives them a type of autonomous agency, like a figure rendered in oil? What is the dynamic between painter/material/object/index?

I’m just going to pull on this thing and see what happens.

Do you really think that’s a good idea?

Material + Gesture ≠ Painting

If a painting is a collection of marks and gestures that operate in concert toward a particular purpose, what happens when the purpose is removed or not present to begin with?

Let’s talk about etymology.

“The cravat originated in the 1630s; like most men’s fashions between the seventeenth century and World War I, it was of military origin. In the reign of Louis XIII of France, Croatian mercenaries were enlisted into a regiment supporting the King and Cardinal Richelieu against the Duke of Guise and the

Queen Mother, Marie de' Medici. The traditional Croat military kit aroused Parisian curiosity about the unusual, picturesque scarves distinctively knotted at the Croats' necks. The sartorial word *cravat* derives from the French [ed. pardon the pronunciation, I don't speak French] *cravate*, a corrupt French pronunciation of *Croate*.”⁸

I don't know, but there's only one way to find out!

Gesture + Material + Intent = ~Figuration

Leon Festinger was the American social psychologist responsible for the development of the theory of cognitive dissonance, social comparison theory, and the discovery of the role of propinquity in the formation of social ties as well as other contributions to the study of social networks. Early in his career, Festinger explored the various forms that social groups can take and showed, together with Stanley Schachter and Kurt Back, “how norms are clearer, more firmly held and easier to enforce the more dense a social network is.”⁹

It is self-indexical because the materials serve as a record of their own gestural implementation.

Mark-making in context of an evolving idea of digital gesture is really confusing.

Is there such a thing as an inherent gesture? For example, if I am painting an entire canvas with one color with only that goal in mind (read: pragmatic effort to cover a defined plane with color), are the resulting brush strokes (visible in a monochromatic field) *inherent* gestures to the process of painting that canvas or are they gestural *by-products* of that process? If a gesture is made with an implement (paint brush, pencil, camera, shotgun, etc.) can that gesture be considered “pure” and autonomous from the

tool that was essential to its making? Or, is it a *representational* gesture that serves as an indexical marker of the act as a whole?

But what happens to the cassette tape's magnetic memory if the cassette player gets hungry?

There's a sale on conventional oranges at Whole Foods®.

I thought you decided to eat strictly locally grown organic produce, like at least step 4 or some shit?

I did, but they're oranges—how much better could the organic ones actually be? And what does “conventional” mean anyway? Wouldn't it make sense to assume that “conventional” refers to the most basic, traditional form of doing something? And that said, wouldn't the most traditional form of growing an orange be to plant a tree and let the environment take care of the rest? Wouldn't that be an “organic” way of producing an orange?

You're not making sense, but I don't think you mean to.

Gladly, the cross-eyed bear.

Notes

1. Lake Constance (German: *Bodensee*), situated at 47° 39' 0' N, 9° 19' 0' E, near the Alps and bordering Germany, Switzerland and Austria

2. Chang, Kenneth, "Scotch Tape Unleashes X-ray Power," *New York Times*, October 23, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/28/science/28xray.html>.
3. "Cognitive dissonance," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitive_dissonance.
4. Trudeau, Kevin, *Kevin Trudeau's Mega Memory*, (Niles, IL: Nightingale-Conant, 1991).
5. "Can you give examples of cognitive dissonance?," Askville by Amazon, <http://askville.amazon.com/give-examples-cognitive-dissonance/AnswerViewer.do?requestId=567138>.
6. "Mondegreen," Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mondegreen>.
7. Trudeau, Kevin, *Kevin Trudeau's Mega Memory*, (Niles, IL: Nightingale-Conant, 1991).
8. "Cravat," Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cravat>.
9. "Leon Festinger," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leon_Festinger.