



‘amatext’

MARTÍ SALES

It began with the ending of Brossa’s poem: the box of crayons. With the crayon he drew a line and he’s been following it all his life, like someone displaying what we do, where we are headed and where we originally hail from. And now search him out. You search for him, see if you can find him. You’re on his heels, yes, hurry, he just turned the corner, run, go, follow him, he went up those stairs and he’s on the roof, look, he’s here, he has to be around here somewhere, open your eyes wide, feel around the space, rummage around until you find him...

Careful, he’s getting under your eyelid! He’s wandering about in the false ceiling of the collective imagination, he tears up tickets in museums, he bows behind a canvas by Dubuffet, he sweeps Miró’s yard and plays dominos with Heiner Goebbels. He brings Val del Omar’s grandmother her lunchbox. He is the one singing with Lorca, he eats his fill with Lezama Lima and every morning, at the break of dawn, he exercises with J. V. Foix. Then he passes the broom over the engrams and, very thoroughly, spends millennia blowing up their crumbs. They’ve thrown him into the Pacific Ocean from an aircraft carrier and apparently mainland beaches are now

six kilometers wider. He has ten passports, sixty-three noses, twenty-six wives, seven hundred and three children and two satellites where, at night, he inscribes himself —his studio, in the dark, is the orb eye of the mountain. He paints up a tree, like Tarzan the fugitive. Don’t let him out of your sight, he’s in reach now, he’s that shadow, he’s the silhouette up there on that branch. Can you see that finger pointing at the moon, feeling the concrete slab, aiming at the stage, scratching his nose? Can you see the encrusted finger that dances and digs in his brain? A fleeting glimpse — just phosphenes. Rub your eyes and claim the traits of Argus. Rub your eyes and see the layers and layers and the trails made by colours, the sinking depths, the signs, the dictionaries and the paths that go from one dimension to the next: the amatext that spreads like ink on a slanted desktop, like the seeds of a dried, squashed flower swept away by the wind. It spreads like fog, like clouds and sunlight; it migrates. And it never stops spinning, like a dog biting its own tail, like a world biting its own world. It moves, it never takes root, it connects, it invades, it floods, it never stops moving. Space and time are Russian dolls thrown

into a colourless universe in order to stain it; his nineteen seventies Barcelona contains a Mexico drenched in pigments and bulgingly wide, which in turn contains Grand Street's explosive NYC, which in turn contains the twisted stains and lights of India, which in turn contain the public works of end-of-the-century Barcelona, and so on. It's all completely intertwined. In his bathroom nests Joan Ponç's sun-bird, and a plate of ham by Pruna hangs in his kitchen, filling up as you slice the meat off the leg. Undoubtedly amatext's strokes inspired Gaudí when he designed the Pedrera's balconies, just like it's obvious that Petrarch copied Josep Pedrals. The Sagrada Familia brings immediately to mind Amat's Agbar Tower of Sea Urchins: past, present and future merge together –being and not-being, in Cirlot's words— so let's just face up to it and take the plunge. Pitcher-posters, horn-videos, poem-theaters? The hand is the brain. Whatever device necessary, as long as painting's the medium—he conceives his projects painting, he's a head with legs, he has fingernails on his brain and he pulls the whole out of the parts: he is a body without qualities. He does painting in movement because he is interested in everything that is alive and fleeting: film frames, letters, dancers, actors... A multidisciplinary digging of wells—a researcher in a lab coat, probe and stethoscope, who transforms, multiplies and dissolves into other liquids to create magma. If Rothko used a lever to expand the horizon, amatext incorporates its own and others' strokes in order to take its discourse away from a closed format, to make it essentially permeable and to allow it to generate an exhaustive vocabulary, something that mutates just like a language—a language with its loanwords and barbarisms, with its neologisms, its Academy and its ten-volume Alcover-Moll dictionary, with its own standards and dialects, with its monosyllables and palindromes, curse-words, tongue twisters, euphemisms, phrases and hapaxes.



These images belong to his 2010 diaries and are interspersed throughout pages and pages scribbled to the point of unintelligibility: the overlapping strokes destroy any possible depiction of living experience and prevent the transcription of the present; instead, they create a different present made by overlapping pigments and distorted calligraphies, skin flaps of the self. Sealed houses and parallel pianos arise in the blank letterless spaces, streptococci and adhesive tape—doors, messages and first-hand accounts from a brimming mind. These are improvised diaries, Zush style, just like the cocktails that James Bond preferred: shaken, not stirred—in other words: crazy, not delirious. A fishing net with hooks thrown into the world—identity is a net that fishes you, Paul Celan said—the coiled line of amatext, that mutant grammar built on a single stroke that flees and accompanies, that searches and stretches, that walks away as if for only a moment, and proves that a whole universe can fit inside a box of crayons: you only have to stretch the line ||

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[Translated from the Catalan by Mara Faye Lethem]