



***WOMAN
TWIGS
BALL***





This is a registration of a talk given in the context of the 2 day workshop The Negative Line: Artistic Practice and the Diagrammatic that took place in an AV studio. A white table with apple green legs is positioned in front of the windows and blue-screen blue curtains, to the right of the table is a dark blue, hi-gloss mobile display unit with a 35mm slide projector placed on top of it. Chairs and audience members are scattered throughout the room. I enter and sit behind the white table with apple green legs and begin reading:

All things swept away –

This is immensity.

Poem number 152 by Emily Dickinson

Poem number 657

I dwell in possibility

And another:

Disappearance – enhances

When Emily Dickinson hosted guests at her home in Amherst, Massachusetts in the mid to late 19th Century she preferred to do so in a particular manner, rather than sitting together in one room she favoured to host from a distance; the guest in one location, Dickinson in another. For example, while she might sit in the parlour the guest would be invited to take a seat in the drawing room.

“If you will stay in the next room, and open the folding doors a few inches I’ll come down and make music for you”’.

Using the architecture as both a way to intensify the point of appearing to a public and simultaneously diminish it, in that by distorting this system of relations, or a normative understanding of communication, Dickinson initiates a specific and subjective protocol. The space and the elements that construct it – the doors, the windows, the furniture, the stairs and the way in which light hovers through these spaces, catching, blinding and warping – become not only the vessel in which the intersections of private and public or visible and invisible meet and touch and turn away, but also a space of transformation. This precise mode of address used by Dickinson enacts a transformation that must have been felt by *all 3 parties*, effecting a change to Dickinson as self, guest as other and the domestic as space.

The doors, walls and windows with flickering curtains become costumes, parts of a theatre, and the relationship between revealing and concealing is massively disrupted. Or rather, one could say, it becomes irrelevant to attempt to understand *a* and *b* as having such and such a relationship, rather one perceives an interplay of relations crucially effected by the surroundings. The domestic dwelling becomes a space for suspended, suspenseful discourse.

Dickinson is at once a magician, at once a dancer.

Surely, there is nothing like being choreographed in such a peculiar manner the first time you call on someone at their home simply to pass some time together?

Disappearance – enhances.

As Diana Fuss has written, Dickinson, through her use of and demand placed upon both poetic and physical space, acted as a director.

Oh! Miss Dickinson has a wonderful eye for time!

This eye for time was manifested on the page via the use of the dash and in rooms via the use of the screen. Both become visible markers or keys for a pause, but a pause that is placed with an acute awareness of its power. Seeing time – she controlled time as if space, through various physical gestures that remained invisible – hovering – but perceivable. Through this *seeing time* she was able to show it to her guest and later her readers through her precise use of and conflicting relationship with address.

I guess I believe it is she there, sitting in that other room, playing the piano to me.

This is the process of viewing: one often likes to hide.

In the first pages of *My Emily Dickinson* by Susan Howe, Howe writes:

“As poetry changes itself it changes the poet’s life. Subversion attracted [her]. In both prose and poetry she explored the implications of breaking the law, just short of breaking off communication with a reader.”²

If the diagram and even the diagrammatic seem to have a strong relationship with communicating, with modes of address, what manner of address do they suggest? If the diagram has a relationship to exposure, or entering the state of being exposed what does it show? One thing I would suggest it shows is that perhaps this emphasis on exposure also brings up a problem of unspecified circulation, circulation in and of itself.

By saying the ‘problem of unspecified circulation’, I suggest that forms of diagramming can be easily co-opted by and into a normativised understanding of what sharing space could be – this co-option reduces the idea of sharing space to ‘giver-receiver’ ‘host-guest’ ‘provider-user’ etc. This allows the moment of exposing, or the thing that is exposed to be lifted out and away from its surrounding, from the half folded doors that were used to assist its density and variation of exposure, from its sense of pause or trepidation, from the very specific frustration that produced the desire to communicate or address in this mode in the first place.

This could be a problem of aesthetics, but equally a problem that relates to an emphasis on action over movement.

Letter number 280.

I should have liked to see you before you became improbable.

I found you were gone, by accident, as I find Systems are, or Seasons of the year, and obtain no cause – but suppose it is a treason of Progress – that dissolves as it goes.

Could we dissolve progress?

This is not to say that I believe that directionality or clarity should be destroyed or removed, that there are not ways to reshape and counter use the diagram, but sometimes, often, many times – this specificness, this object and frustration and object is disregarded when such co-option takes place. And then what, what of transformation?

In 1971 Tania Mouraud made a work called *Can I be anything which I say I possess?*

The constellation that Dickinson proposes in her insistence on instigating her subjective protocol elaborates on and incites a very different kind of circulation, demanding a recalibration of intensities, visibilities, a kind of scattering, a kind of risking, a kind of generosity. Confronting this subjective logic with something like a public realm *in* space and *through* time, Dickinson defies any kind of scripted rhythm; through subjecting subjectivity to such space, a contingency is made.

At this point, when we are disorientated by roles and voice and positions, and things like implication, perception, movement and action all jostle for attention through the full intensity of theatricality and obliqueness, at this point, perhaps, this could be agency, this could be an agency that exists beyond you, beyond the work.

Like the accidentally gone systems or seasons *The Negative Line* could be a weather pattern, a kind of hot wind, that shudders, that ignites and also settles from time to time, often, many times, always, in that it activates the necessity for a movement beyond an agency pre-inscribed or pre-scripted into a work.

It might be the differentiation between movement and action.

The Negative Line could be the point when one uses a mask, and just as one disappears, one is transformed through this gesture of masking, however, what we meet when faced by the mask is not simply a mask but also a face and a facing.

The Negative Line might also be about the process of making an image – or one could say – *The Negative Line* is a mode of address.

This is not say it means everything or it means nothing, but it might be about saying: there is little confidence in *The Positive Line*.

Back to Susan Howe:

“Perception of an object means loosing and losing it. Quest ends in failure, no victory and sham questor. One answer undoes the other and fiction is real. Trust absence, allegory, and mystery. No Titles, no number, this would force order. No manufactured print, no outside editor. Conventional punctuation was abolished to add Dashes which drew liberty of interruption inside the structure of each poem. Hush of hesitation of breath and for breathing. Empirical domain of revolution and revaluation where words are in danger, dissolving, ...only Mutability certain.”³

Though we are danger, I am, as I implicate you, of appearing to create a kind of opacity that encompasses everything, this is in fact not the case, this is an open display for particular viewership.

This is a wilful instigation of specification.

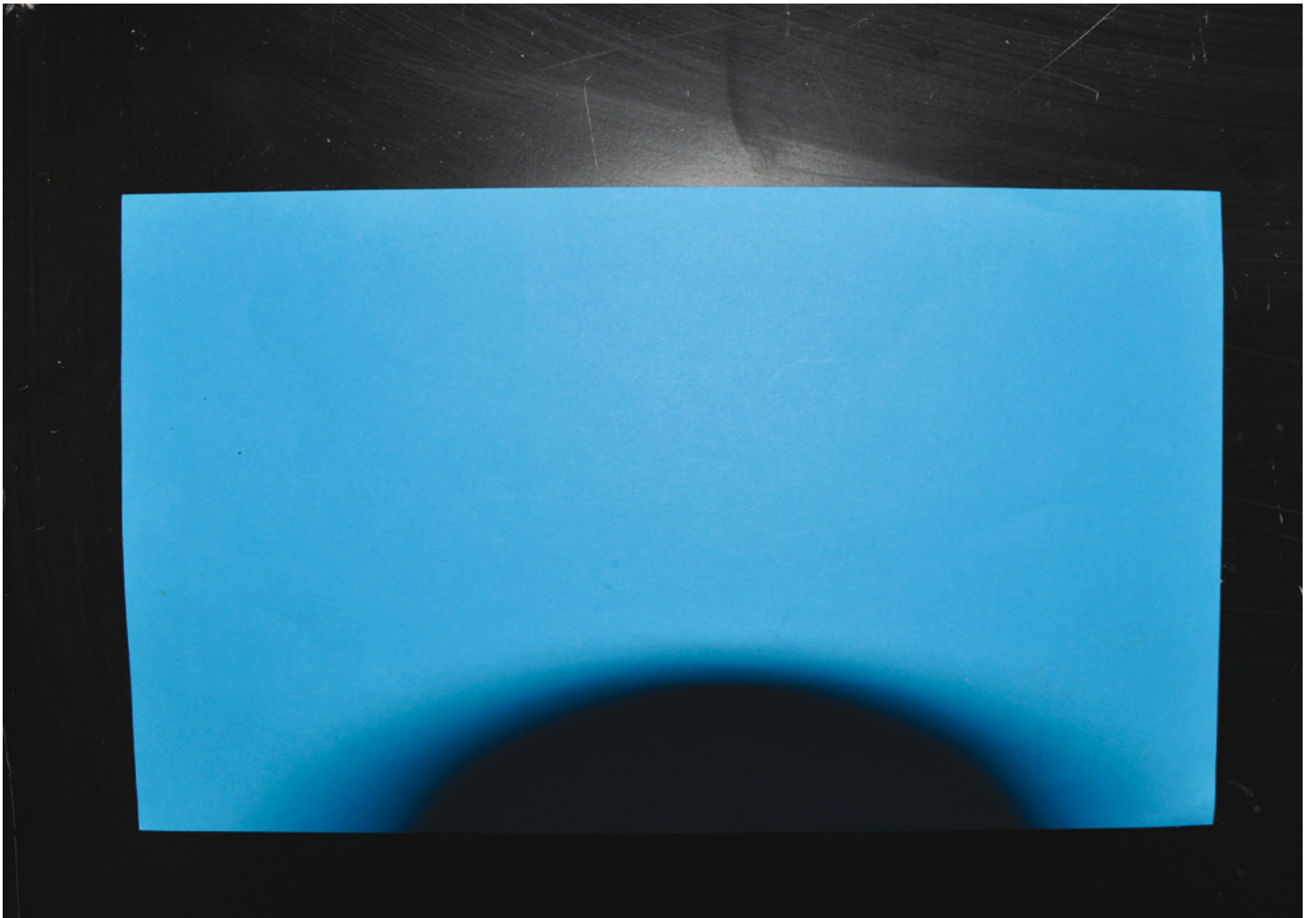
Prose fragment number 30

Did you ever read one of her Poems backwards, because the plunge from the front overturned you?
I sometimes (often, many times) have – A something overtakes the Mind.

1. *A Sense of an Interior: Four Writers and the Rooms that Shaped them*, Diana Fuss, Routledge, 2004.

2. *My Emily Dickinson*, Susan Howe, North Atlantic Books, 1985.

3. Ibid.



Stand up from table and remove papers from it, place them on the window sill, move to the right of the table and slowly begin tipping it up, until it is vertical and resembles my physical dimensions. Walk around the now upright table to the mobile display unit, wheel it around so that the tabletop can become a projection screen, turn the 35mm slide projector on and project image, reach into the shelf of the mobile display unit, take out a piece of beige A3 paper with blue words printed on it, hold it in front of my face, the words describe the image projected onto the table and read: 150gr., Arctic off-set, *Sky Blue with The Shadow of My Head*.
*See *There are people watching expecting to hear absolute silence*, Özlem Altın, Tent., 2006.



