

DEAR X ,



*I must answer your request for a contribution with a simple 'no'. However, as my refusal seems germane to your theme, I am compelled to addend the simple NO with a complicated one.*

*First, the simple no: I promised myself I would not answer any requests for writing for a whole year. While struggling to complete a commissioned catalogue essay I had the familiar experience of multiple obligations and preoccupations colliding rather than coalescing. I longed to experience writing something that really needed to be written. I thought it best to get out of the habit of not being able to say no and start seriously reconsidering the timeframe in which my own work is generated. In fact it seems worth reconsidering across the board (and here I mean for everybody) why urgency in terms of production increasingly seems to overshadow urgency in terms of expression. This leads me to the complicated part of my no.*

*With this double nay-saying, it's as if I'm trying to fill multiple holes at once. Putting it that way immediately brings to mind the expression "a finger in every pie" which sounds dirty, and messy. This could send me on a somewhat sexual tangent sooner than I had expected. What I was about to bring up was not sex, but rather the rather un-sexy promiscuity of artists. A promiscuousness, a willingness, a perpetual yes-saying, seems to define artists, or even create them. Like most of today's artists I often practice by invitation rather than, say, by the independent pursuit of work that doesn't need venues or deadlines to ensure its completion, lend it shape, parameters or purpose.*

*There is some ongoing discussion between my partner and myself about this issue of making art for deadlines, essentially filling requests, for example, finishing work for a show or sending something off to an art fair at the last minute. It only occurs to me now that it's somewhat ironic to be arguing with a self-proclaimed just-in-timer about the problematic influence of deadlines on art production. He often seems to be insinuating that this kind of behavior of artists presupposes that a higher value is placed on the artist than the work itself and that as long as the work is delivered on time, the dealer, or whoever, has to deal with it, so to speak, no matter what, disallowing the chance for any party to stand back in judgment where he or she might possibly say, well this doesn't exactly work. Of course dealers, curators et al. are putting their trust in artists to give only work that works but who's to say a certain quality of judgment isn't lost in the heat of the last-moment. I am reminded of Jan Verwoert referring to "a hasty project culture", now let's see what did he say exactly...let me look it up. Oh, he asks how to "strengthen the autonomy of the artist in the face of the new set of*

What is this?

This is a response to an invitation, a letter "addressed to no one in particular, but specific to each of you for reasons I trust you understand. I suppose I am merely asking you to write as a (Wo)man of the Crowd, a community that can still act, not because it is entitled to do so by the institutions of power, but by virtue of an unconditional exuberant politics of dedication."

And so what I am "writing" for them, or rather, what we are distributing here, is simply a repurposed text. This letter to a curator was originally published in an art catalogue for a museum survey show whose fundamentally dubious premise was couched in the more promising theme of "just in time" —borrowed directly, it seems, from Dexter Sinister's persistent concern with re-evaluating modes of production and distribution.

dependencies created through the hasty culture of project-making.” So what I was originally planning to tell you very directly was No I can’t write for your catalogue because I have promised myself I wouldn’t take on any new writing deadlines for a year because I’m working on a self-assigned project and I don’t want to continually be distracted from it. I am of course continually distracted from it enough as it is, it seems like I work on it less than anything else, in fact, just because I let everybody else’s urgency trump my own. As I write this I happen to also be in the process of making some works very specifically for an art fair, very admittedly just-in-time, if you will. The pieces I’m making continue the theme of “structures that fit my opening”, a phrase that speaks quite directly to the question of the necessary, of forms that fill entryways, needs, desires etc.

You were in my dream last night. I was looking at you from behind and you were bent over doing something so that I could see that you had a tattoo on your lower back. (Upon waking up I immediately recalled overhearing a conversation between two very beachy California businessmen. They were talking about drinking wine on the beach with their girlfriends at sunset, no kidding, and one of them made reference to the lower back tattoo, using a slang word that surprised me because I never thought of a tattoo as performing any sexual function. The term had something to do with a mandala or target to focus on whilst one was sexually engaged in the tattooed individual from the rear. I have been racking my brains to think of that slang term but I’m still drawing a blank.) Anyway, my dream. The tattoo on your lower back was quite large. It was a still life—of sorts—a pitcher, fruits, vegetables, a half-filled glass, among other consumables. It was, in short, the view into a refrigerator. You know when you’re kind of hungry but not really and you feel you want something but you don’t have anything specific in mind and you just go to the fridge by some unstoppable compulsion and you open it up and stand there gazing, half conscious, not really looking, just wanting but not exactly wanting anything you’re seeing? Well, exactly that was what you had tattooed above your ass. (That was your “cum catcher” your “tramp stamp”, your “fuck form”.) She’s a genius, I thought. Extraordinarily inspired, I realized the only way to overcome the embarrassment of my old tattoos was to go out right then and there and get a new one. Then I woke up.

• Maurizio Cattelan was once quoted as saying: “If I didn’t have any shows, and there wasn’t any interest, I wouldn’t do anything.”

Right now I don’t want to write anything new, and yet, I sort of have, but this doesn’t count, or does it?

Sincerely,  
Frances