

JUST
Guzzling
the
conclusion
of
the
womb
is
a
flotsam
and
jetsam
for
how
the
times
float
and
are
thrown

just guzzling

Gabriel Curtin

aggregate in the mouth of the conclusion

Burt sometimes

inside the well and the womb is a flotsam

and jetsam for how the times float, and

are thrown

Abba Kotlarzyk

none of it

Declan Furber Gillick

after mayakovsky's epic poem

vladimir ilyich lenin

just guzzling – to whet the sight

for gabriel alexander curtin

Ender Başkan

just guzzling
Gabriel Curtin

There's this line by Vladimir Mayakovsky in his poem about Lenin:

*Just Guzzling,
snoozing
and pocketing pelf,*

*Capitalism
got lazy and feeble. ^[1]*

I am immensely privileged to live and labour on unceded Arrernte Country where much of this exhibition was produced. The additional texts were written on unceded Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country and the exhibition itself is presented on unceded Gadigal Country.

We make the world through work and the sovereign Countries that comprise this continent are where work of all kinds starts: art-work, friend-work, love-work. Part of the ongoing violence of settler-colonial occupation is the forcible forgetting of this. Without the lands upon which we perform our various labours, nothing can begin. I pay my respects to the Traditional Owners of the Countries we labour and relate on and acknowledge their ongoing care and resistance. My solidarity extends to all those fighting for self-determination and justice.

βρε

Vre Books Chapbook 001
Designed by Lukas Penney
Edition of 210

I like the line mostly because it's so sonically satisfying. Guzzling. Pelf. And I like the phrase 'just guzzling' because 'just' is a contronym. It can express the simplicity of something or it can relate to 'justice', allowing us to imagine, for a moment, a *just* guzzling. I take Mayakovsky's guzzling to mean consumption for pleasure, consumption to no end. I get the sense painting-work, art-work generally, is often taken the same way. When you zoom out, fiddling with tubes of plastic made easily available via an invisibilised web of land, logistics and labour solo in a studio is a fraught enterprise. So is staring at the result of that fiddling in a bright room. It's also deeply serious, funny too and moving. Unlike the capitalist's guzzle, who hoards in order to consume, the artist consumes in order to make something, though it's difficult to say what's on the other

end of it. It's a slender difference, not substantial enough to switch Mayakovsky's 'just' to an expression of justice alone. Feebleness then, embalmed in the act of painting, is the spiritual, bodily, social poverty of decadence.

Amongst this decadence the crafting of a poem or the emergence of a painting are understood as reliant on a labour distinct from that which mops the café floor, reverses the distillery's forklift or responds to the on-call mortician's pager. Which is to say, poem-work, painting-work, art-work, are seen as practices of leisure and excess—luxury goods, not essential sustenance. In the absence of the social logic of work a 'defensive crouch' emerges (as Declan Fry via Chimamanda Ngozi might have it)^[2]; artwork characterised most fervently by its impulse to acknowledge

its shortcomings before the audience can detect them. It's a self-aware, and so a shameful, guzzle—a white upper lip betraying the child who denies they drained the milk carton.

To elude this, some say painting, poetry, is a moral authority and therefore not guzzling. I say I don't believe painting is capable of moral instruction. Antigone Kefala says that Robert Hughes says of Frank Auerbach's work:

“It reminds us that painting may still connect us to the *whole body of the world*, being more than just a conduit for debate about novelty, cultural signs, and stylistic relations [...] Like all paintings good or bad, it is coded... But the clear purpose of its codes is to clarify Auerbach's struggle, not to “express himself” but to stabilise and define the terms of his relation to the real, resistant and experienced world.”^[3]

This *body of the world* is made through a sort of common labour. It's not just the hours I spend cleaning out the fridge or you spend sponging your sills that comprise it. The oily droplets misting their way to my nostril if I nicked this wooden desk with my key do too. As well as the birds I found splayed a metre apart at the base of a transistor box

on a walk earlier. One galah, one crow, heads opposite, wings outstretched, perfectly mirroring the other so they seemed to be a discoloured Rorschach or encircled by an invisible line extending from their wingtips. Their little scalps were both pointing towards what would be the circle's centre so if it were to spin, this circle, slowly at first, gathering momentum with each rotation, the birds would flash pink and black on its outer rim, pink, black, pink, black, until merging into a single ashen disc, blurred beneath the gentle buzz of the transistor box. That's a kind of common labour, a coincidence ushering an image into being.

These eight paintings aren't replicating or reminding me of something happening elsewhere. They're doing it currently and did it right up to getting here, reliant on a series of transfusions beginning before the linen was even bought or prepped. These transfusions are perhaps best expressed in the latency coded in each painting, the kind of latency that catches up and overtakes itself. Something in the world glimmers, wants to be painted. But painting is slow, a physical process lacking the speed jazz pianists enjoy when hitting notes in the same instant they conceive them. Instead, the thing

that shone is elongated, stretched out while it's mulled on during the work week, at the football match or during knock-off drinks, and, eventually, when the schedule is otherwise clear, in the studio, where it endures the sluggish procedure of being rendered in paint. At some point, the mulling and the stretching and the painting take over, subsuming the original glimmer and replacing it, as if the world persists only in desiring, tributing and becoming itself.

When a three year old runs a pencil across a page and thinks ‘volcano’, it's a tributary action. The lines produced are a volcano, even if they don't look like it. While encountered beforehand, the volcano erupts both during and after the marks are made. There's an encounter, an association, then another encounter and the equation repeats. In this way, these eight paintings are versions of the three year old's process, an elaborate *drawing through* the aesthetic jetsam of cultural inheritance.

Along with latency, held in each painting is decision, indecision, fatigue, ineptitude and love. Brilliance is there too. And distance. An accorded distance—I step towards and away from the canvas, receding and approaching

as a mark is made then inspected then added to or erased then inspected again.

I like it when these hesitations are visible. I like it when paintings solicit the question of how they were made, bringing into immediate relief the tools and techniques their formation required. It's a powerful how to contend with, a discreet but sprawling fissure through which the *body of the world* is glimpsed and all that might contain within it: how materials influence one another, make demands, misbehave—countless exchanges suspended in the trembling map of impulse and doubt indexed in the painting's surface.

Completeness, then, is a slow down not a stop.

The slowed down painting needs to be a good neighbour, since it was good neighbours that brought it to life in the first place. It doesn't need to do this in order to reflect something back to us or remind us of some forsaken part of our nature, but to more fully play an active part in the energies that it emerged from and which emanate from it. It's about reciprocity. In doing so, the understanding of art-work may begin to delicately shift from faux-specificity to a portion of a worldly common labour.

aggregate in the mouth of the conclusion
Beth sometimes

This common labour isn't just guzzling.
It becomes so when a split is made,
when we imagine its mysterious and
sensual residue as separate from the rest
of the world's lumbering operations.

I encounter a volcano, perhaps on
a page a three year old shows me.
It erupts into a miscellany of other
images, suspicions and affections,
informing and informed by their
successors and antecedents: nicks in the
real, resistant and experienced world,
perfuming the air—unruly and unjust.

i've been thinking of editing an outtake track
of the sounds my venerable colleague makes
in the midst of recording sample words for an archive
for her least spoken but true language (*akarre akityerre*)

throaty arcs of recognition, grunts, snorts & guzzles
coughing forth pith and aggregate
torque and torrent
too many lil talks that woman
she's the final say

i spend long hours watching her lurching shapes roll by in the software
listening to her move between herself
and an example of herself
in her language
and an example of her language
me, nervous arbiter,
carving out what linguists call 'tokens'
attending to a future listenership
who i imagine as electric eared, bright eyed, world builders
rescuing a vocabulary that is anti extraction
a grassy plain of association
labour that we can all safely agree is worthwhile

but in this sub archive
i'm listening for the moments *before* decisions are made
gutturals, umms, unexploitables

and images sing in
from all the passing time that has constituted our wrestle
all stored in my one small house
(although there are a thousand more

[1] Vladimir Mayakovsky, "Vladimir Ilyich Lenin," in *Lenin150* (New Delhi: LeftWordBooks, 2020), 35.

[2] Declan Fry, "Questions of privilege, mythology and identity," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2021,
<https://www.smh.com.au/culture/books/questions-of-privilege-mythology-and-identity-20201218-p56oue.html>

[3] Antigone Kefala, *Late Journals* (Melbourne: Giramondo, 2022), 88-89.

inside the well and the womb is a flotsam and jetsam
for how the times float, and are thrown

Abbrn Kotlarczyk

pre amble

The soul is the *clinamen* of the body. It is how it falls, and what makes it fall in with other bodies. The soul is its gravity. This tendency for certain bodies to fall in with others is what constitutes a world. [1]

part one ~ just guzzling

The word guzzle is a transitive verb: it requires an object in order to be granted entry into the family of legitimated syntax.

{gather}

To guzzle is an act that is wholly relational: it is reliant on a noun, a *thing*, in order to be / it is not feasible to guzzle without a vessel with which to guzzle.

The *trans-* in transitive is a prefix denoting movement ~ between ~ things.

a gulp gulp
post route to
a guzzle
desirous shemozzle
suspended
by a gargle
splendid vapours
replete inside
a muzzle

Paul B. Preciado comes to us from the crossing, from their apartment on Uranus, being the house that homes the ontological experience of gender fluidity. Preciado notes that “the *ancien régime* (political, sexual, racial) criminalizes all practices of crossing. But whenever the passage is possible, the map of a new society begins to be outlined, with new forms of production and reproduction of life.” [2]

alive in our shared,
slightly bigger house)
reedy louvres
tackle humping
roach antennae puppetry
cream tokens clipping a win

the urgency to collate
among the sludge of obliterating choice
things you’ve seen,
spilled and redacted, spilled, redacted
an archive of inbetweens & fierce commitment

liquids, wetlands, petrol,
colostrum, cocacola, coles express
i’m.....*feeling* it at the bowser

part two ~ bad residue

I pause to consider Mayakovsky’s “lazy and feeble” Capitalism [3] / I pop a pill and let its chemtrails fuzz away in my tracheal chamber, while our world’s largest pharma companies earn a thousand bucks profit every second.

Preciado has a lot to say about big pharma, I think, as I submit to daily hosting a cocktail of probiotics, herbal supplements, multivitamins, prednisolone and esomeprazole in my throat.

*a whomp whomp
rearranges a glut
a gobble
intransigent
gargarism i'm
befuddled*

These pills, some small and round, others long and angular, feel to be taking their time to wiggle down in me, now that covid has disrupted my stomach’s ability to perform its primary function with any sort of ease. There is mounting research to suggest that at this point my mitochondria has become stressed, to the point of an entire system deceleration. *The cellular furnace has become cooled.* I try to reposition my thinking—a forced antidote, really, to my body’s frustrating will to cease its usual rates of production—to see what can be learnt from this slower rate of metabolic conversion.

{grasp}

Recently, I’ve come to think of my throat as a little shelf, itself a crossing: a threshold where substances and psychologies are held in states of abeyance prior to gravitational progression, despite backfire; held in states of suspension towards eventual ingestion. Lately I’ve been thinking of my throat as a tiny, internal apartment capable of expressing a need to hold and delay the subsuming of a raft of metabolic rifts—rifts that reflect the flotsam and jetsam of how the times float, and are thrown.

{grip}

*a thump thump
of thrift
a lumpen
esophagi
pounding into
plurality
{the soul at work}
insisting*

part three ~ the kind of labour that most know itself as...

aesthetics comes before art [...] a collective sensuality that is the possibility of difference itself [4]

Moments of crossing into signification—I go to Lawrence Weiner declaring that “art[...]is so important to life that[...]it should exist in an almost Platonic state, helping people to understand their relationship to the objects in their world” [5] — become moments of deft consciousness; moments akin to the pause of the hour that Albert Camus describes of Sisyphus having pushed his rock, finally, to the summit.

flotsam

~~~~~

*discarded objects that float*

*jetsam*

~~~~~

to discard in order not to sink

To guzzle is to swallow greedily, where to gargle is to suspend in the throat—a liquid state kept in motion by a stream of air pushing up from the lungs. Could a more just and equitable guzzling be a swill that pauses to take in the dimensions

of the mouth en route to the lower chambers; an initial suspension employing the pneuma (the breath, the soul) to search these conditions of operation, becoming some ideal consortium of a holistic practice borrowing from the gargle, en route to a less greedy, more conscious swallowing? A garzzle? Is it here that we might embrace the propensity to fall into each other?

{grab}

Could the moment we suspend an object in the mouth—having plucked it from conveyor belt towards belly—be a moment of consciousness through which to think of the guzzle as a verb converting nouns in the direction of a collective nourishment?

*the mouth a fipple
a slit in
to holly viaduct
welcoming
to offering—
bitter herbs, sugars, hot nectar of bain-marie, positive/negative elementals
(toxins to varying degrees), starch, elicits & carbs, magnesium & iron ore,
pollinators, pollutants, dirt-encrusted daikon, dichondra, colostrum & caudal
alleviates—*

the throat, like the painting, a coaxial home to endless WIP

part four ~ love bank

While we can choose to be frivolous in the grandeur of the guzzle as verb, we can never excise ourselves from the material reality of the entangled fact of it as noun / the guzzle as liberatory potential employed with the power to carry the conditions of our daily lives towards a crossing / a condition of attuning to the rift in order to soften and surpass it. Long and steady mouthfuls of clean drinking water slowly cycling down, do help.

We might read the guzzle as a desired state of equanimity between conditions of floating and sinking, rendering it a hug-in, a woven matrix or a cosy blanket; a weft and warp; a soft landing place for the organs of imagination to lay, desiring themselves into being, in being held there.

what is the difference between a discarded object that floats, and an object discarded in order to avoid sinking?

what are the verbs that guide our lives?

- [1] Jason Smith, "Preface: Soul on Strike," in Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2019), 9.
- [2] Paul B. Preciado, *An Apartment on Uranus* (London: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2016), 41.
- [3] Vladimir Mayakovsky, "Vladimir Ilyich Lenin," in *Lenin150* (New Delhi: LeftWordBooks, 2020), 35.
- [4] Snack Syndicate, "Bread and Roses," *un Magazine*, 2020, 14.2, <https://unprojects.org.au/article/bread-and-roses/>.
- [5] Randy Kennedy, "Language as Sculpture, Words as Clay," *The New York Times*, October 21, 2007, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/21/arts/design/21kenn.html?_r=2&oref=slogin&oref=slogin.

none of it
Declan Furber Gillick

mid twenty-twenty so I've taken up skipping
I'm awkward with it the cable's too long thwack the cable
thwack too much cable hits then drags
along the chipboard panel floor of the bungalow I rent

I look at my computer screen through the whirring length
flames lick up city walls
pour out of cars like
seaweed forests grown too big
for the inside of a
sunken vessel

I'm learning to shift my weight
one foot to the other
and back again while I skip
whenever the cable
catches
on my foot
a deep anger rips through me
I swear and growl
once I even kick my office chair
which is also my dining chair
writing chair
phone call chair
crying chair

over the phone camilo relays to me what he told jamaal
look it's like the west has been cruisin' along
at one fifty in a limo
burning fuel
popping bottles of champagne
doing lines off a couple of strippers' chests
ok?
that's the growth mindset of the west

and it's been like that your whole life
but now the limo's blown a tyre
and it's starting to buckle
and wobble
and pretty soon
we're gonna careen off into that bollard
party's over brass
jamaal is a twenty-five-year-old koori social worker
just saddled with his first mortgage

outside my rented bungalow is bushland
turned upside down for gold
then burnt through
in a small wetland beside my landlord's property
there are contaminants from an upstream plant
where gold was processed

I heard settlers
discovered the gold
when local jaara people threw it at them
didn't have much use for it
not strong enough to make anything durable
too heavy to lug around

I visit the abandoned plant
lie down on the dusty gravel
pull myself under the locked gate
rust-splashed monuments tower
against the torn-out hillside
pools of grease-grey water hover
in the empty cold

people have painted graffiti on the walls of the yard

on my computer screen
I saw
over and over
george floyd die
it was like he died for weeks

I saw a woman standing in an ash-covered street
weight shifting one foot to the other
swinging her arms
balled up fist
slamming into open palm
it ain't ours
none of it
the interviewer asked why the community
- looters, protesters, rioters -
burned down parts of its own neighbourhood
a target icon pokes out ghostly white
above a blackened storefront
it ain't none of it ours anyway
ain't none of it our motherfuckin neighbourhood no more

after mayakovsky's epic poem
vladimir ilyich lenin

just guzzling — to whet the sight
for gabriel alexander curtin

Ender Başkan

you can still visit lenin's embalmed body today
a 98 and a half year wake
they say it might have to be privatised soon
costs swell, techniques improve, hes getting better with age
you can still read mayakovsky's poem though, free
and i read it and feel good, a tonic
on two levels, poetic and historic
since damn, i think, poetry can move us
and people together can move the world, inspire
and no matter what we think of lenin
reading mayakovsky's poem is a revelation
he loves lenin, he inflates lenin and he cuts him down, inflates and
cuts down, not out of spite for lenin but for those who see the
leader as a singular, exceptional figure to be enclosed in a glass
sarcophagus. mayakovsky might love lenin but only because he loves
the revolution more.

on lenin, franco bifo berardi says '...a guy called vladimir lenin that
i dont like so much. i find him too severe and sort of, not ironical
enough for my taste, came to the fore saying that communism is the
potency of the state against capitalism. the conclusion has been very
bad because the state is not the friend of human freedom and is not
a friend of the possibilities that are inscribed in the present...'

i think mayakovsky knew this too, and his poem conjured for us a
more ironical lenin. who can know what this poem meant to the
fate of the revolution and world history. yet as he read the poem
in the bolshoi theatre broadcast across the soviet union in 1930, he
was trying to reroute something in the world through poem, he was

trying to make lenin guzzle a bit, make us guzzle, make lenin human again, since a rational strategic stern lenin is not us, and lenin is us, we are not morally pure, and from time to time we must guzzle, that is to say – drink up! dance! blow your nose! blow shit up!

in gabriel's paintings i see this process of building up and cutting down, building up and cutting down, the artist himself performing the act on his work, so that it shakes and quakes, so to draw out a move from us, to make an injunction, to seize collectivity from the jaws of restraint. and if there is a job for me, as writer, it is to jumble the usual cagey encounter here with art, to scramble lingua francas, ironies and moral signatures, and to beg you to search for the possibilities that are inscribed in this present, inside and outside this moment, this show.

the following are excerpts from mayakovsky's poem^[1]

they'll rig up an aura round any head:
the very idea –

I abhor it,
that such a halo
poetry-bred
should hide
Lenin's real, huge,
human forehead.

I'm anxious lest rituals,
mausoleums
and processions,

the honeyed incense
of homage and publicity

should
obscure
Lenin's essential
simplicity...

With friends
he'd be
the very soul
of kindness,

with enemies
he'd be
as hard as
any steel.

He, too,
had illnesses
and weaknesses to fight
and hobbies
just the same as we have, reader.

For me
it's billiards, say,
to whet the sight;
for him it's chess –
more useful
for a leader.

And turning
face about from chess
to living foes,
yesterday's dumb pawns
he led

to a war of classes
until a human, working-class dictatorship
arose
to checkmate Capital
and crush its prison-castle.

We
and he
had the same ideals to cherish.

Then why is it,
no kin of his,
I would gladly perish
so that
he might draw
a single breath?

‘Capitalism
in his early years
wasn’t so bad –
a business-like fellow.
Worked like the blazes –
none of those fears
that his snowy cravat
would soil
and turn yellow.

∩ 9 Feudal tights
felt too tight for the youngster;
forged on
no worse
than we do these days;
raised revolutions
and
with gusto
joined
his voice
in the Marseillaise.

Machines
he
spawned from his own smart head
and put new slaves
to their service:

million-strong broods
of workers
spread
all over
the world’s surface.
Whole kingdoms
and counties
he swallowed at a time
with their crowns and eagles
and suchlike ornaments,
fattening up
like biblical kine,
licking
his chops,
his tongue-parliament.
But weaker
with years
his limb-steel became,
he swelled up
with leisure and pleasure,
gaining in bulk
and weight
the same
as his won beloved ledger.
He built himself palaces
ne’er seen before
Artists –
hordes of ‘em –
went through their chores.
Floors – a l’Empire,
ceilings – Rococo
walls –
Louis XIV,
Quatorze...

'But finally
 he too
 outgrew himself
 living
 off the blood and sweat
 of the people.
 Just guzzling,
 snoozing
 and pocketing pelf,
 Capitalism
 got lazy and feeble.
 All blubber,
 he sprawled
 in History's way.
 No getting over or past him.
 So snug
 in his world-wide bed
 the one way out
 was to blast him.

I'm extraordinarily grateful to Abbra, Beth, Ender and Declan for the gusto and emotional conviction with which they approached writing for this exhibition. I'm sure our collective conversation will continue far past this show's closing date. Thanks to Lukas for typesetting and designing the texts into a beautiful chapbook. Thanks to Aaron and Isadora for the reminder that things are most always multiplicitous and for opening up painting again, or delivering me back to it, during a rejuvenating walk last year. Thanks to my comrades at Watch This Space ARI for their efforts in forming an abundant, radical, lively community: Vito, Declan, Eremaya, Bridget, Hannah, Charlie, Dave, Kumalie, Beth, Stone, Emily, James, Mia, Britt, Jorgen, Roni, Anna, Ahmed, Haneen, Carmen and Alex. Thanks to Julian, Petria, Sara, Georgia, Hannah and Rory at Chapman and Bailey Alice Springs. Thanks to the Capital reading group: Anna, Effy, Sam, Declan, Violet, Jorgen, Hannah, Kit, Ace, Nic, Meret, Lara and Mindy. It's a pleasure to think and read and learn alongside you all and to summon a different world together, a world to which this show is in incalculable debt. Thanks to Martina Capurso and Sara Maiorino for the photographs. Thanks to Elliat, Sanchia and Lee for searching for beds. Thanks to Dom, Lil, Brody, Keturah and Sausage for the meals, love and support. Thanks to Beth for your enthusiasm for these paintings in all their different stages and for your sensitive, formidable mind. Your wild exuberance for art and its social gravity is a gift I'm not sure I'll ever be able to return.

[1] Vladimir Mayakovsky, "Vladimir Ilyich Lenin," in *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin: A Poem*, trans. Dorian Rottenberg (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1967).

βρε

Endor Dasikan

Declan Kuber Gillick

Abbro Kotlorzyk

Beth Sometime

Gabriel Curtis