

# Aaron Angell & Jack Bilbo

A child sees things close up. Yet what is, but should not be, too close to the eyes can be the source of profound disturbance. The mother's breast is ocular, it can be demanding; an imprisoning visual sphere. To nurture is to be made vulnerable to being consumed in return.

Jack Bilbo's drawings accord to this same infant perspectivalism. Body parts loom and stare back, his revenge is in rearrangement. To reorder the components within the view you know and find great comfort in, but which is also the source of confounding dependence, as if it were the entire world, is to live out a utopic ideal.

Growing up is having things further away pointed out to you. Now the most plastic of things seem also to be those things whose relation to one another seems most improbable. The more things are identified by constant touching, the more the sight of their relation to their surroundings independent of animation appears bizarre.

Perhaps this has to do with age. The independent adult eye is secluded in itself, imprisoned by sight because of this consciousness of the far away. When touching those things that are strewn across the habitual pathways of everyday life one does not see, but reaches out into a visual world belonging to a time when sight and touch were much better accommodated with another. At various moments in modernism's history we have been able to glimpse into this lost world, but it seems impossible to sustain. To see in this way is to delve into substreams of culture and history.

To see in this way is to confront the pathos of scale. Miniaturisation effects a sense of loss for the time when all things worth attention were seen impossibly close up, while the world through which adults trod, seemed impossibly at a distance and giant.

Aaron Angell's work explores growth without changing scales: growth contained within strict idioms, and retained by certain persistent constraints of its molecular vocabulary. Like mould, like mildew, like imaginary worlds, its potency is its resistance to incorporate the mechanisms of translation into itself. For this, what grows must grow without conversion, without up-scaling, without maxing out. Yet we live in a world built precisely on abstract extensions of scale in which huge leaps between incompatibles are normalised, smoothed over and ignored. Once these leaps were predominantly in terms of speed, concerning everything from railways to computer processors, in the last thirty years it has been in depth and texture of information. The extent to which things have got faster in recent years might as well be an illusion, compared to the quantum leaps made in density.

Scale is treated with utter derision as information is converted, compressed and unzipped, shared between files via physical as well as coded transubstantiation. Scale is exploited and abused as debts are collateralised, sold on as derivatives, optioned and sold again whereby cashable profit glacés over breaches of credulity.

And of course these two examples are inextricable from one another. This is kind of the essence of folkishness, to refuse to incorporate institutionalised, mechanised and yet implausible changes in scale into the materials of its culture (think of the hostility levelled at Bob Dylan when he first 'plugged in'). I am not arguing for smallness though, or against mechanisation, but for consistency, and for the leaps of faith that most effect our lives to be traceable to at least some organisation of which we are a part. To bring down the fungible to the level of the fungal.

Upscaling and downscaling is an integral part of cultural imagination, and so is the transformations of the votive object and the ritual. To think cosmologically, to read tea leaves, to break bread, is to live a cultural life, to leave things to fate and be smote by the consequences is also; but an adult world controlled according to a refusal of the vulnerability that scale necessarily increases is to kill off meaningful life.

Privilege is a kind of counter to this meaning, if privilege is the folkishness of money. Privilege extorts from the macro, from the adult world, the same experience of sentiment and absorption as the child with whom I began, but the consequences are always also sacrilegious and perverse. Thus Aaron's work stands as a related yet entirely hostile counter to the work of certain artists who with astonishing self-entitlement, grab at the world with all the same presumptions intact as the baby at the breast. These artists sustain the permanent cultural malnourishment and hunger of neo-liberal politics: localism only the flipside to global anonymity, the 'homemade' the flipside to mass starvation. Let this be a message.

Thomas Morgan Evans, 2013