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Orpheus in the artworld—the consensus of jumbled intentionalities in contemporary practice

We are always ‘becoming-artist,’ approximating the behavior of contemporary artist-roles, subjectivities, and practices in order to participate in, and be validated by, the artworld. Becoming-artist recognizes the collective action of contemporary art practice, a single shared work comprising interchangeable intentions and roles. Following Nietzsche, why must there be an intention behind a fiction? Why not many, or none?; why now?; why not later, or never? This paper will consider the critique of subjectivity from Nietzsche and Deleuze & Guattari to evaluate the intentional failures of Kippenberger and Herold, the indeterminacy of Oliveros, Cage, and Eno, and the production procedures of other contemporary artists that send meaning awry. It will propose intentionality as one tactic amongst many that are consensually validated in the making and consumption of contemporary art.

Like Orpheus we descend into the hell that is the contemporary artworld hoping to retrieve meanings, intentionalities, but return empty handed. It makes no difference whether or not we look back, for in its intense preoccupation with its own presentness the artworld is like Rilke’s Eurydice “So...full with her vast death,/that was so new, she comprehended nothing.” This zombie bride, led out of Hell by Hermes, has no idea what’s going on. When Hermes despairingly tells her “He has turned round” all she has to say is “Who?” With a slight variation in the German—“sie nichts begriff” and “begriff sie nichts”—this phrase “she comprehended nothing” is used twice by Rilke towards the end of the poem. I’m on the brink of pushing an analogy past the limit, but I really appreciate this image of a milieu, the institution of art if you like, so focused on its own being, so full of its own vast death, as to constitute a form of absolute incomprehension. This isn’t to say that I see it as monolithic, or that I devalue it, or mock it, or that at times I haven’t thrived there myself, but more to suggest that its functional mode is one of willed self-incomprehension and thus of incomprehensibility.

Although at its core the artworld functions as old-fashioned speculative capitalism, creating the semblance of value through structured scarcity and the fetishisation of artistic personality, technical finish, gesture, and signature style, as well as inflating monetary values through price fixing and monopolization of product distribution, there is no easy way for galleries to control the meaning of artwork they sell and to guarantee its price levels indefinitely. The numerous forces at play are very unpredictable and it remains a fiercely competitive business. Furthermore, there are many fringe practices, entities, galleries, spokespeople, not to mention the mass of represented and unrepresented artists, that ensure a high level of indeterminacy to the field.

Intentionality is good for business as it helps to differentiate between products that may otherwise be all but indistinguishable, to prevent them collapsing back into the morass of all the artwork being made everywhere at any one time. As dealers need to flesh out the product they are selling it’s commercially beneficial for artists to be able to point from their finished work back towards a realm of motivations that might add intellectual or emotional purpose, conceptual acuity, or a sense of historical relevance that helps to distinguish their work from that of their contemporaries. On the front desk of almost every New York gallery you’ll find a press release that provides a bio of the exhibiting artist and an outline of their intentions. Usually deadpan in style and dry in scholarship, these photocopied handouts are anachronistic as the information could easily be accessed on a smartphone. But these ghostly

texts, whose brief relevance (at most a month) licenses their critical laxity and stylistic poverty, limp bravely onwards with attempts at articulating artists' intentions. Often a desperate comedy ensues. Taken from the Independent Art Fair last month, this is from reputable Los Angeles gallery David Kordansky on a prominent German artist—"The warm conceptualism of Andrea Büttner[']s...research-driven, multimedia practice radically embraces, if not redeems the disesteemed and overlooked...Drawing parallels between everyday devotional exercises, whether creative, religious, or political, professional or hobbyist, she presents signs of poverty, inelegance, littleness, and itineracy and related feelings of embarrassment and shame as positive, if not heroic. Simultaneously material and cerebral, expressive and minimal, hot and cool, her aesthetic ethos critically upends the significance of such binary distinctions."

It's not entirely meaningless. We glean that Büttner is interested in aligning everyday practices and using a minimalist approach to embrace undervalued aesthetic properties, perhaps like the "dainty and dumpy" ones that J.L. Austin once invited us to reconsider. But its main purpose is to add value to work that in this case was really sufficiently captivating just as it came, unencumbered by such commentary. Yet the press release's prolixity and shotgun approach to conceptualization—blast away and you're sure to hit something—reveals the real condition of contemporary art making, that we are mostly fumbling about, relying on hunches, involved in continuous contact with materials to elicit occasional rays of light, at best as 19C adventurer Richard Burton described himself—"a blaze of light without a focus."

Claims of intentionality become less tenable in this studio setting where few of us work in ways that are conducive to the sort of deductive reasoning that links a made object to a motivating idea. In reality we spend a lot of time just moving things around, furniture, cups of tea, objects, pots, paint, paper, computers, heaters, the dull stuff of keeping alive and keeping going. In a more interesting and engaged manner we become absorbed in materials, experts at using them, to the extent of knowing exactly how a particular pen behaves on a particular sheet of Japanese paper, how a wash of cadmium red will appear if it's over or under a wash of cobalt blue, how the sharpness of a video will be affected by the choice of projector or flat screen tv or how it's compressed in the editing program, how the colors of a decal will be modified by the temperature of a kiln firing, and so on and on, endlessly. These absorptions are fundamental to practices and constitute a realm of conceptual as well as somatic engagement by artists. We understand that they mean something, but it can be very difficult to articulate what that is, in part because we are prompted by properties of the materials themselves and not simply manipulating them to conform to our ideas. We lose and find ourselves in drawing out the potentialities of the materials.

This is an area where intention is slippery, because of the materials' own properties, what in his *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno articulated as the materials' resistance to being formed. Here is a reversal of the notion that the artwork's properties conform to the subject's, the artist's, cognitive capabilities. For Adorno the subject-artist becomes enmeshed in the artwork during its making as the material retains the imprint of what has been done to it. In an argument that could as well be a critique of today's art market, we are asked to read the work from the inside, not least to counter the commodification that reduces objects to commercial products retaining a shadow of their original potential. That reading is in any case demanded by a process where "The violence done to the material imitates the violence that issued from the material and that endures in its resistance to form," (p50) Adorno there in the hermetic, often paratactic style that makes reading *Aesthetic Theory* something of an Olympic sport. He writes that the most profound social experiences result from the working processes and materials of an artwork rather than from its themes, referring to Proust's account of a dying

man absorbed by a patch of yellow in an image of a Vermeer painting as one such experience “It is as labor, and not as communication, that the subject in art comes into its own.” (p57)

If in that first instance intention is elusive because of the resistance of materials to their transformation there is a second possibility of evasion in the way that materials offer no resistance at all but rather issue a summons to us for which we cannot fully account. Recent narratives of material summons that have interested artists include Jane Bennett’s discussion of “vibrant matter” that enchants the susceptible viewer, and Mario Perniola’s reconfiguration of the desirous commodity as the newly-libinuous artwork: “It is the installation that feels the visitor, welcomes him touches him, feels him up, stretches out to him, makes him enter into it, penetrates him, possesses him, overwhelms him. One does not go to exhibitions to see and enjoy art, but to be seen and enjoyed by art.” (*The Sex Appeal of the Inorganic*)

If we had intentions in the first place, these are altered by the force of materials. In the second place, when really engaged in the work in the studio we are always so intoxicated with ideas and the possibilities of form intertwined with materials that the subject behind those intentions dissolves. This intoxication contradicts the recourse to subjectivity in accounts of authorship that tend to drive scholarship and marketplace (in spite of artist collectives, BMPT...). In modernity intoxication has always been a function of cultural resistance to institutions, authority, and commerce. Through Baudelaire, Nietzsche, the Surrealists, or Benjamin, the concept has been central to oppositional practices manifested as a dissolution of subjectivity, an immersion in non-utilitarian sense experience, in collective engagement.

Nietzsche’s understanding of intoxication shifts significantly across his publications to match his critical objectives. Even so, most of the time it serves to destabilize definitions of subjectivity and to articulate a fuller engagement with the world. The attack on modernity is extended in *The Birth of Tragedy* through Nietzsche’s identification of Euripides with “bourgeois mediocrity” and the depiction of “mundane commonplace, everyday life,” the result of his writing plays made intelligible to the greatest possible audience. Euripides’ “realistic counterfeits” and “inartistic naturalism,” are so described by Nietzsche as if he were talking about 19C department store commodities reading and mirroring the needs of customers. The familiar dynamic of the Dionysian/Apollonian struggle in *The Birth of Tragedy* results in the conception of the Dionysian consciousness as an engulfing force in a state of constant transformation enacted on the structure of individuality where there results a failure to grasp the distinction between subject and environment. What remains is a figure that relates to themselves as an artistic entity amongst others: “Man is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art.” There is a shift in “Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life” by taking intoxication as a dynamic force capable of undermining educational institutions which exploit the young for economic advantage “[...] the words ‘factory’, ‘labour market’, ‘supply’, ‘making profitable’...come unbidden to the lips when one wishes to describe the most recent generation of men of learning.”

The optimism for change evaporates with the middle period texts like *Human all too Human* as Nietzsche initiates a critique of religious and cultural mystifications through which he attempts to define good and bad intoxications. Here a viable ecstatic state can’t be a Dionysian one that suddenly overwhelms us in self-forgetting but rather one that slowly wins us over, as if unawares. Even this kind of benign intoxication is disallowed in later texts like *Beyond Good and Evil* where Nietzsche challenges an entrenched Christianity with an intoxication that licenses all kinds of actions, including the most violent and immoral. In Nietzsche’s last work, *Twilight of the Idols*, the optimism revives with intoxication enabling a different degree of dissolving subjectivity into the world of phenomena and actions. There’s a reconciliation of the early antagonists into a kind of Dionysian Apollo, intoxicated but alert,

with a detached dreamlike consciousness as a form of agency. Nietzsche's criticism is of the subject, the "I" forced in on the world as a vain fantasy that we have developed by imagining that we are the cause of things happening. Aesthetic intoxication enables us to halt this split between subject and world and surrender to a state of becoming where our engagement acts on things making them "swollen, crammed, strong, supercharged with energy" (Nietzsche, 1998, 47).

This new Dionysian figure "...adopts every skin, every emotion: he is constantly transforming himself." (Nietzsche, 1998, 48). This is now an uprooted "I", drifting alongside other entities in the world as something to be contemplated. We now look at ourselves contemplating that world that we neither created nor mastered, a state of contemplation that describes Nietzsche's concept of the world as an aesthetic phenomenon in which hierarchies dissolve and roles of maker and made interchange. In a new kind of relationship this ongoing process of transformation doesn't differentiate between art and material.

Nietzsche's explanation in *Twilight of the Idols* that the aesthetic encounter entails the greatest possible self-interest, such that we configure the world artistically as a reflection of our own powers, could as well be a cue for Bataille's complete surrender of personal experience—biographical, erotic, and intellectual—to the state of rapture, for which investment he expects to get the highest possible return. If these feelings could be articulated they would appear, Bataille said, as a "languorous demented wave of sound and the expression of wild joy—a joy so untamed, however, that listening to it there would be no way of knowing if it came from my laughing or dying" (Bataille, 1992, 88).

This may be close to the Nietzsche that interested Deleuze who in a 1967 interview said "What is clear for Nietzsche is that society cannot be an ultimate authority. The ultimate authority is creation, it is art: or rather, art represents the absence and the impossibility of an ultimate authority...Nietzsche says that under the huge earth-shattering events are tiny silent events, which he likens to the creation of new worlds: there once again you see the presence of the poetic under the historical." (Deleuze, 1967 interview, *Desert Islands*)

[“Yes, but a bizarre individualism, in which modern consciousness undoubtedly recognizes itself to some degree. Because in Nietzsche, this individualism is accompanied by a lively critique of the notions of ‘self’ and ‘I.’ For Nietzsche there is a kind of dissolution of the self. The reaction against oppressive structures is no longer done, for him, in the name of a ‘self’ or an ‘I.’ On the contrary, it is as though the ‘self’ and the ‘I’ were accomplices of those structures.”]

I argue that these realizations, a continuity of modes of becoming, are ones that artists work with whether or not they wish to. It might seem obvious enough to ask "Well, what about Lawrence Weiner or Joseph Kosuth, surely they work in a deliberated logical manner with clear parameters and few variables?" Yet for a show in New York's Castelli Gallery in 1993, which was titled "The Thing in Itself is Found in Its Truth Through the Loss of Its Immediacy" (which as far as I can tell is quoted from a 1987 Slavoj Žižek article on Hegel), Kosuth juxtaposed text, photo, and cartoon selections retrieved somewhat by happenstance from a range of news media. The connections between these selections make me think of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome—"any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be" (*A Thousand Plateaus*, p7)—rather than of Hegel, although Kosuth, if that attribution is accurate, must have been interested in Žižek's argument about the essence of the meaning of a text, its truth, lying not in its immediacy but rather in the delayed readings of the text that accumulate across time. In either case however, indeterminacy is ushered in as the connections thrown out by Kosuth's images and texts

cannot be confined to their small ensembles, nor really to any particular moment in time, to any immediacy that for the brief month of its display it may have possessed.

The reduced form of Weiner's language drawings derive from his early acceptance that the work could exist regardless of whether or not it gets made. His operating statement includes:

1. The artist may construct the piece.
2. The piece may be fabricated.
3. The piece need not be built.

These works can be spoken, written, or left unmade. The range of their references, language forms, and locations enables a wide array of associations to be drawn. Moreover, the works have over the years become increasingly ludic, even flamboyant. Their process of production is also surprisingly open. Some of them are free to be used by anyone, others cost a lot of money but their owners are free to make them into wall works in any number of ways they see fit. Even at the heart of conceptual language practices are found aleatory modes of generating work and indeterminacy in modes of execution. The purported intentions of these practices cannot remain moored for long as the implications of the works reach across any attempt at containment.

The deflection of intentions, of subjectivity, enabled by the comportment of engaging with the world as an aesthetic phenomenon, by the indistinguishability of artist from work, towards which Nietzsche painstakingly works his way, is fundamental to artists' practices. I'll look at just one artist to see how this is realized. Martin Kippenberger's career covered an extremely wide and discontinuous range of approaches including music, installation, photography, posters, sculpture, paintings, etc, that relished stylistic and semantic discontinuity, technical unevenness, parody, homages to old masters, self-abasing but plaintive self-portraiture. The only consistency lay in constant variation. That we might be lured into ascribing as many different playful intentions as there are different bodies of work, or attribute to all of Kippenberger's work the intention of mischievously subverting values might be more apt if the work itself wasn't so visually interesting and often moving. It seems as if Kippenberger is determined to remain intoxicated with the world. This is more than just a concept as Kippenberger died of liver failure having stuck with his excessive drinking—to keep a blur between him and people, he said—in spite of warnings it would soon kill him.

One's first response is laughter at the outrageously bad painting, bad technically as well as in terms of inappropriate representations, and then there is so much of it. We are impressed by the gall of putting all this out there, as if Kippenberger couldn't care less what people thought of it. It's as if painting is a kind of comedy club performance, or at the very least a facet of a commitment to a wildly engaged social life. Then we laugh again at the titles, the visual and verbal jokes that mark so much of his work. The *Prize Paintings*, presumably to flatten the hierarchy of art competitions that exist from hobby clubs all the way up to biennales; *Dialogue with the Young*, after being badly beaten up in a club; *Heil Hitler, you fetishists*, for a harmless looking and casually-made painting of an open window; *8 Pictures to think about whether we can keep this up* for a series of slapdash paintings that mock his own manic productivity; *War Wicked* for the image of Santa atop a tank; *Martin, Into the Corner, You Should be Ashamed of Yourself* for a series of lifesize Kippenberger self-portrait sculptures always stood against the wall...a seemingly interminable inventiveness.

This absurd titling, the ham-fisted brushwork and ridiculous configurations are effective at deflecting estimations of value based on the most obvious forms of signature technique or intellect, identifiable that is with a subject-artist applying themselves diligently. It also successfully disengages with the kind of ontological mystifications that surround a

considerable amount of art making and interpretation. Nietzsche has a good go at this in the section called “From the Souls of Artists and Writers” in *Human all too Human* where, with a sense of humor Kippenberger would appreciate, he warns of artist necromancers resuscitating old ideas as if they were hanging around the graves of loved ones. Artists are loth to give up their allure of profundity, Nietzsche says, as they claim to be sustaining human values when they really can’t bear to give up the tawdry belief systems that prop up their work and its populist success. These sorts of mythical anachronisms stop us from an effective critical enquiry into how these works really arose in the first place. “We still almost feel (for example in a Greek temple such as that at Paestum) that a god must one morning have playfully constructed his dwelling out of these tremendous weights: at other times that a stone suddenly acquired by magic a soul that is now trying to speak out of it.” (#145, *Human all too Human*)

As an example of becoming-artist, Kippenberger is the ceaselessly manic clown operator. When he discusses his work and its context he sounds like a stand-up comic with his head in a washing machine filled with the artworld’s dirty laundry. He hardly speculates on the meaning of his own work but continually and humorously evaluates the standing and implication of the work of his peers, yet always obliquely—“Simply to hang a painting on the wall and say that it’s art is dreadful. The whole network is important! Even dear ‘dining,’ from mozzarella and tomato on to spaghetini. And in addition, there are strict rules of fashion, like: Tiramisu instead of mousse au chocolat.” (*I Had A Vision*, San Francisco Museum of Art, 1991, Koetter/Kippenberger interview, p21 Through all this logorrhea Kippenberger speculates ceaselessly on the conditions for present-day artistic achievement, on keeping production going in relation to family commitments, to finance, to studio assistants, to travel and working in different countries. He’s like a restless troubadour figuring out in dispersed and rhizomatic practice that an artist must continually be becoming one, never stopping to develop or improve on a signature oeuvre, but centrifugally pouring out new work and ideas into the world. What at first seems excessively subjective turns out to be advocacy of a fragmentation or dissolution of subjectivity with the artist always at the threshold of becoming a nonsense maker, a gibberish speaker. It is with this that Deleuze and Guattari engage in their concept “becoming-animal,” an explanation for what art does—“Singing or composing, painting, writing have no other aim: to unleash these becomings.” (MP, p272). Kippenberger is an entity between things, one that moves across thresholds of producer and marketplace, object and audience, always reassembling them into facets of a practice.

Qualities of indiscernibility, of camouflage, or dissolving are the mark of becoming-animal no less than Kippenberger’s becoming-artist. His work is a feint from the task of accounting for intentions, and as a diversion he hides in the bar and party milieu of the artworld, gathering information and putting out false messages that he couldn’t care less about studio discipline and career. He moves around the globe as if part of various gangs comprising family, assistants, collectors, artists. Assistants contribute greatly to his studio production and he collects other artists’ work and sometimes incorporates it into his own. For D&G becoming-animal is always characterized by pack behavior, by the formation of multiplicities: “...what interest us are modes of expansion, propagation, occupation, contagion, peopling...”. From Kippenberger: “...I used to take things of others and build them into my own sculptures, objects, books...my assistants...work on ‘my view,’ controlled, but with their own means and talents. I realize that it is more and more important to be clear about the context of my work, and living. It’s a crucial task of the artist to develop networks for that, and not only to establish the relation, but make it visual, manifest it, inextinguishably.” (p20)

We are conditioned to see contemporary art as comprising innumerable individualized practices. It is the model of subjectivity and individual enterprise that drives the various marketplaces, including education. (It's a challenge for art colleges to accept collaborative teams—two for the price of one—or even to know how to evaluate their work.) Now more artists than ever are essentially working on common projects with overlapping aesthetic parameters, while claiming privileges of individuality. These enterprises really only boil down to a handful, tacitly held in common, sharing critical discourses and procedures, and respectively with near-identical handling of materials. Effectively the work is made by undeclared collectives, most of which would achieve extraordinary results, radically extending the boundaries for studio practice and its affects if they could drop their illusion of self-determination to actively collaborate. In this way it's possible that definitions of both artist and work might be remade, perhaps approaching that “anonymity of a murmur” which Foucault imagined could be the productive disappearance of what he called the “author function” with its fix on authenticity, originality, self-expression, and biography.

Artists, Nietzsche later says, are completely aware of the inflexible laws determining their experimentation “the free ordering, placing, disposing, forming in the moment of ‘inspiration’” as he puts it. These laws are much more of a straightjacket than any determining concept that circumscribes an artist's activity. The work itself is consensual, bound by fixed rules that are shared across a community and which predetermine which tools will make which marks and what concepts will be allowed to circulate.

That better intentions can always be found to strengthen an already-existing artwork suggests that the artist can never get it right the first time. The accruing of new intentions, postproduction, might suggest a reservoir of unconscious thoughts that only reach the surface when the artwork is subjected to an audience, to scrutiny and discussion. The artist's comment “Yes, I didn't realize that at the time” proposes a subterranean pool of motivations in which viewers haphazardly fish.

There's a lot that goes wrong in this process but I don't really see anything avoidable about it in the long term. There are constantly temporary initiatives that interrupt its flow—Artists' spaces, FAAN, the labor of love that comprises solitary art production, the mutuality that is part of most art scenes—but they run parallel to the main game, they complement and render it a bit more tolerable, rather than offer an entirely alternative option.

Before we look for examples to improve the prospect I'd say that this openness to consensual intentionality makes meaning and drives morphologies of art. We could broaden the realm of contemporary art practice to include actions that are inadvertently art-like, while provocative aesthetically but we would most likely be outside the kind of consensuality of intention that derives meaning for the artworld. Whistling down the street, flyposting, walking in the city, cooking, for example. I'm thinking here of Deleuze and Guattari's “Refrain” chapter from *1,000 Plateaus* and of De Certeau's categories of practicing everyday life. There are already examples from Fluxus of artists working in this way. We might turn to other creatures, or even to future, as yet nonexistent, species, to imagine aesthetic initiatives unlike our own, unbound by art institutions and yet vital for life. I'm thinking here of the bower bird or of Olaf Stapledon's *Star Maker* artist engineers, the arachnid/nautilus hybrid whose telepathy and constructions of artificial planet are aesthetic expressions. Again, we don't know how its structures mean something to the bower bird and only work from resemblance to structures in our species to recognize qualities in them. [becoming-animal]

I'll end this by discussing another couple of blocks in the road for claims to intentionality that are developed in interestingly ways through experimental music. A composer's withdrawal from full control over the components or the performance of their work, as happens with some of John Cage's procedures, seems to concede authorship and intention to other agents. Where, on the other hand, a composer revises the prior meaning and status of their work, as with Cornelius Cardew, does this double authorship and intention, or does it enact a mutual invalidation?

Cage's move towards silence is a renunciation of mastery. Mastery is propped up by intentionality and Cage's deferral to the traffic sounds outside his apartment as the kind of silence he best liked—they didn't tell him what to think and feel, he would say—is a definitive renunciation. The drive behind Cage's so called Silent Work, 4'33", seems to have been to have as few intentions as possible. The piece's apparent antagonism towards conventional performances of concert music has receded with 4'33" becoming a genuinely populist work (see YouTube). Cage cited Robert Rauschenberg's white paintings of 1950 as a provocation for 4'33", describing them as "airports for dust and shadows." This transposes to 4'33" as a ground of silence for incidental noises, but does this count sufficiently as non-intentionality? And if we agree that the most significant sound work from the late 20th century is one that proposes an evacuation of intention then what remains to be done?

Cardew attempts to answer this first through collective work and then through radical political engagement. Cardew described his 1960s work as "school of Cage" under whose influence he wrote the seven sections, or paragraphs as he called them, of *The Great Learning* between March 1968 and August 1969, a work that takes about 7 hours to perform. This was a decade after he worked as Stockhausen's primary interpreter and draftsman of his scores. Pulling together experienced and novice musicians from different music spheres Cardew drew musicians into the Scratch Orchestra to play their own compositions alongside *The Great Learning*. This score is written in such a way as to ensure inconsistency, variability, and even impossibility in its performance.

Cardew's work enabling amateur performers was always meant politically but in the mid-70s he committed a form of professional suicide by becoming a Maoist and denouncing his early compositions as romantic juvenilia. The Scratch Orchestra split apart as a result. It can't have helped that in 1974 he gave a radio talk where he denounced Stockhausen's music as "a part of the cultural superstructure of the largest-scale system of human oppression and exploitation the world has ever known: imperialism," (*Stockhausen Serves Imperialism*, ubuclassics, 2004, p47).

From the Scratch Orchestra Draft Constitution published in *The Musical Times* in June 1969 there's the clear sense that to remain inventive and relevant the group must continually solicit, even demand of its members, unsanctioned, unpredictable ideas. One of the more interesting and inadvertently Deleuzian sections requires members to initiate "research projects" that ensure "the cultural expansion," as Cardew puts it, of the orchestra.

"The universe is regarded from the viewpoint of travel. This means that an infinite number of research vectors are regarded as hypothetically travelling. Travels may be undertaken in many dimensions, e.g. temporal, spatial, intellectual, spiritual, emotional... For instance, if your research vector is the Tiger, you could be involved in time (since the tiger represents an evolving species), space (a trip to the zoo), intellect (the tiger's biology), spirit (the symbolic values acquired by the tiger) and emotion (your subjective relation to the animal)."

(http://www.kim-cohen.com/Assets/CourseAssets/Texts/Cardew_Scratch%20Constitution.pdf)

What does it mean to allow many intentions to be activated through a work? What use is the concept of “intentionality” when so many tendrils issue from a particular work? We could try to trace them, of course, but perhaps that’s less likely to yield meaning (and have we a right to expect meaning from something so open, from any work?) than confusion. Where intention is explicit at the start, like Cardew supporter John Tilbury’s revisionist Maoist appraisal of a musician’s responsibilities—“to study the works of the great revolutionary leaders, primarily Marx, Lenin and Mao Tsetung, in order to attack and expose the cultural superstructure of imperialism, with particular reference to music in England, and to evolve music and music-making which would serve the working and oppressed people of England” (ibid. p28) the results either have only shortcomings in relation to their declared goal (hear Cardew’s Maoist piano pieces) or have unanticipated potentiality, like the best work, that is not encompassed by that goal. Either way intention seems to fail, other than as a provocation, a stimulus, a commitment that the work exceeds, for if the work matches or fails the intention then we are left with a poor experience, a literal encounter, a disappointment, a redundancy where intent and image become oxymoronic partners.

I’d like to end on a happy/sad note with this image of Peter Lloyd Lewis and his painting *Cry*, made in the 80s as a celebration of the paradoxes available through camp aesthetics—the entire painting is made of glitter. Before Peter died a couple of years ago, he asked for this to be the image on his funeral service card. His last laugh (he was a very funny man) was that everything about the event, the readings, the music, the image should make people cry. Here’s a work, or image of a work, that’s been repurposed. Its initial lack of meaning suddenly honed through irony into the sharpest kind of intention, yet one you only see if you get the joke, and of course when they’re made into a joke there we can’t take things like intentionality too seriously.