



Dear Siblings,

please enjoy the use of  
my ~~apartment~~ apartment I have left  
a table, two shelves, a bed, and a  
lamp for your utilization.

Regards,

Matt Goetz

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"The chief danger to philosophy is narrowness in the selection of evidence."  
- A. N. WHITEHEAD

"The world is a strange place, and nothing but radical speculation gives us the hope of coming up with any candidates for the truth"  
- ERNEST NAGEL

"The metaphysicians of Tlön are not looking for truth or even an approximation to it: they are after a kind of amazement."  
- J. L. BORGES

*This is my table.*  
Was my table. Is a thing shit can be put on, work can be done on. Is a piece of wood shaped into a flat surface. Was assembled by someone, something (*Ikea*). Once grew out of the ground. Is now decorated by a series of marks, grooves, scrapings, ebbings, in coal-black acrylic paint, the burnt bodies of trees encased in plastic.

I didn't put the marks there but we would believe a person did, people, maybe: the subletters in my Berlin room over the Christmas holidays. Maybe they put them there. Maybe the table put them there.

The black paint, I did that. At least, I contrived to put the black paint on, to make the table look nice, sleek and clean, and the black paint agreed to go on, agreed to dry. The table agreed to hold on to it. For a while at least.

This while is where the trouble comes in, you see.

Because I didn't put the paint on thick enough, or the paint didn't

go on thick enough, or the table didn't hold on to it well enough and so, when I got back from my Christmas holiday in Saskatoon, the surface of the desk was all scratched up.

And it wasn't my fault, I wasn't even there. And my subletters didn't mean to do it, they were just trying to use the table, to put some shit on the table, to do some work (which is the only thing we tend to believe tables are for). But it looks kind of nice, and there's a certain poetical logic to it.

As if the table was recording something, or expressing something. Was it?

And if so, why? Why would the table scratch the paint like that?

Perhaps the table was making a painting. A gestural study. The marks record the movements of the subject matter, the subletters. A subtle texture here, a scratch there, a rub, a jiggled ass cheek, a shoved mug, the drag of a laptop. It's pretty, I think, and I want to give credit where it's due.

viiiiviiiii

*Can a table make a painting?*  
When we paint we enlist the aid of objects. Our agency makes this relatively simple. We derive pigments from objects, we bind them into other objects, we apply them to surfaces which we know will comply willingly with our wish to make the paint stick.

We think of these as all things we choose, things we do. We think in terms of a causilinear timeline. But what if objects "think" teleologically?

What if the clay made itself suitable for use as a pigment by its own will? Precisely so man could paint early landscapes, of a land bottomed by clay.

Or if lapis lazuli always longed to be ground into fine powder, to escape the darkness of its stone enclosures, to be mined, and made to represent the bluest of skies and vastest of oceans.

It would be no more surprising than the wealthy patron buying their favourite artist some brushes in the knowledge they will then

be invited to sit for a rendering.

What if tables don't think at all, but by my virtue of existing advocate certain values, certain types of change, certain events.

I think the table made a painting. Why can't a table make a painting? A mass-produced urinal signed by a pseudonymous artist can be a fountain. Why can't a layer of paint which divides a table from a fingernail have the fact of its scratching divided equally in intentionality between the two sides?

Why can't we go a step further, take up a veil of ignorance and say: I make the leap of faith every day that other minds like mine exist in other brains like mine. Why stop that faith there? Why can't a table have a sort of mind? And even if it doesn't, why deny its agency any less? I couldn't scratch the paint on a table without the paint being on the table.

*Let's go to the paint, to the table. What is the table saying about the subletters?*

fig 2. likely painting tools utilized by table.





a The inner portion of the painting's bottom left-hand corner has two notable features (removed, as they are, from the act of painting itself): a pool of graphite and two ringed remnants of a sweating cup. The table here allies with other objects to give the painting a sort of mixed-media, collage element. The doodling of a restless pencil (*object i*), the setting down of a cup (*object ii*) after a spilling drink. These are the ways we engage with objects, often unconsciously, even as we attend the subjective work which brings us to the table's top. The table here reminds us of the inescapability of objecthood.

b This passage eluded my critical gaze until I noticed the sticky remnants of a pooled liquid. The wide swath of paint removed here seems to be an effect achieved through the addition of a further medium — tea. The table has used the mild corrosive qualities of the liquid to great effect, using a heavy object (a tea pot? (*object iii*)) to create an interesting swath, carved by the careless spilling of a liquid essential to our survival. It seems a bleak comment on a number of themes which attend object-human interaction: apathy, chaos, squander, our inability to clean-up after ourselves.

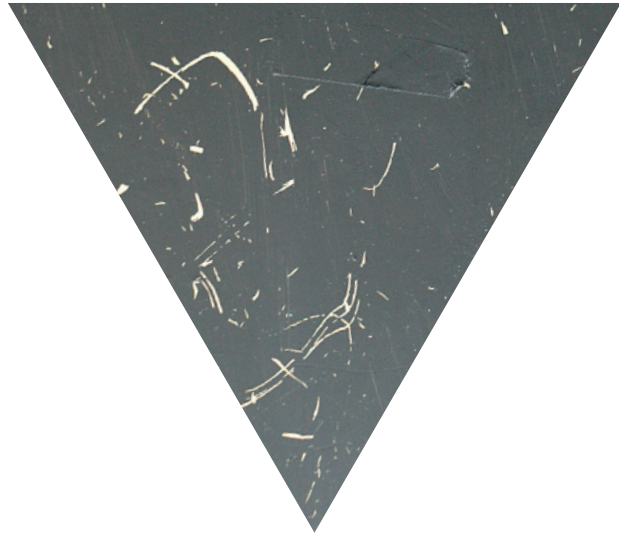
c Clearly the most obvious mark-making to decipher. The long, vertical, to and fro scratches in the central part of the table can only be portrait of one thing: the feet of a laptop being settled into position, slid to the proper viewing distance, pushed (in haste, or angst?) away from the attendant human. These are the most violent marks — perhaps because they represent moments when the humans were least attendant to their immediate reality, the reality of the table, and were instead turned within their own subjective gaze, their anthropocentric world, the collective mind of the Internet.



b



c

e

e This simple, random pattern is produced (I suspect) by the small, rare movements of a table lamp bottom (*object iv*). The least comital of any area of the painting, it leads one to question the table's interest in, or use for, functional lighting. Perhaps the table simply didn't feel any rapport with the lamp itself, as an entity. This seems one of the most enigmatic passages of the painting — moreso for the drowned piece of tape.

f

f The corner of the table is scratched directionally and synchronously. A group of objects moved in tandem before, it seems, sliding off the table's edge, likely into an open palm. It is likely this occurred by use of a specialized medium: coins or keys (*object v*), objects abstracted by humans into symbols of wealth and property, object-subject hybrids whose valuations come and go, are treasured while they last and (often) leave scars.

g

g This gentle patina attends a corner which tables typically offer as armrest. I would suggest it emerged from repeated rubbings against a semi-coarse sweated arm. Perhaps the most loving gesture the table has recorded — it reminds us that our engagements with objects can be comfortable, as well as utile. The gentleness evident in the table's approach to this part of the painting perhaps indicates

a reciprocal fondness on the table's behalf: note the bottom edge where the table has removed the greatest amount of paint of any passage — perhaps in an effort to more closely engage the subletters' arms?



The bottom line is these objects and their manipulations contain information. Data. Philosophers have a problem they call emergence. When does a bundle of constituent parts achieve a functioning higher than mere physicality? When does data, information, reach consciousness? This remains an open question.

Clearly the table is not going to write this text. But I would not be writing this text without the information furnished me by the table, you see?

These ideas have a long lineage. From the religious animism of early civilization to the emergent monadism of Leibniz, the idea of mindful objects only truly becomes derailed with Kant's limiting insistence that subjective, human phenomenal experience is the only corridor to epistemic knowledge. The true nature of objects, he says, the thing-in-itself, is unknowable.

Some thinkers now suggest

we make a leap of faith beyond this boundary, in the interest of re-animating the massive, non-human segment of reality. They speculate on what the world outside of our heads might be like — a reality where objects have power, shaping us as we shape them, allying with us to constitute bigger subjects, bigger objects. To constitute a now which contains a version of the past and an emergent future.

A table is, we say, a manufactured thing. It is the product of objects bent to human will.

Perhaps it is time we embrace an *object-oriented aesthetics*, one where objects express a subjective interest, beyond the intention of human designers or abstract modes of production.

One where we can see ourselves as objects just like the rest, designed by tables in the same fashion we design tables. One where we recognize the alliances, the relationships which occur between objects, between subjects,

to produce all that is produced.

I have made explicit an agency which may exist implicitly already. I gave the table a thin palette of flaky black paint and introduced a pair of objects to the table's attention.

I don't know why, exactly, the table used its paint in the way it did. But I suspect it might be a work of beauty, one which may record deep truths about its subject (the subletters) and the subjective vision of the table which has so poignantly explored them.

Some people believe all objects have consciousness to a degree which attends their constituent data. That matter contains mind or, at least, experience.

Some people believe other minds like ours exist, produced by brains just like ours.

I have never seen either sort of minds.

But some people believe things.

Maybe the subletters have nothing to apologize for.

FURTHER

READING

See A. N. Whitehead, Bruno Latour & The Actor-Network Theorists, Graham Harman & the speculative realists. See *Gaia Theory and Deep Ecology* (a bit hippie-ish, but still). See also the object drawings of Tim Knowles and the installations of Jason Dodge.

THE SUBLETTERS

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Printed on some crummy paper  
from some crummy mill.

<http://www.mattgoerzen.com>

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Berlin.

<http://www.markandkyoko.com>

Thanks Sebastian Hoffman, R. O. Fitzpatrick, Doin Thangs Productions, Jason Harvey & Mikhail Wassmer.

First edition, \_\_ of \_\_ copies.

hey matt!

Thanks for letting us stay in your great room! we felt really at home & have mates lovely.

Hope you had a good christmas & new year's back home.

Sorry the paint on the desk got pretty scratched.

We are now at Alogou AKR (16 Alogou Str.)  
at end of March - come say hi any time!

Thanks again,  
Jessica & Louie.

