



Fig. 1—Jackson Pollock. Blue Poles 1952. © Pollock-Krasner Foundation/ARS. The drip-painting combined with the print (the blue poles) make a similar statement: there is an uncontrollable element in both techniques. Relinquishing the gestural proximity in favour of appropriation at a different level (Pollock's possible reaction to Namuth's photo session).

In Jackson Pollock's later paintings, as is well known, he abandoned the brush in an act of partial surrender to the forces of gravity, the viscosity of paint and the texture of the surface. His paintings were floored and then raised upright. Relinquishing the gestural aesthetics of brushstrokes in favour of the forces of physics, paradoxically did not remove the artist from the work, but made way for his claims of being identical with it: speaking for environmental painting, he was that environment, and thus nature itself. The blue poles print on his drip-painting brings another layer.

George Brecht said about Jackson Pollock (Kaprow, 1958): "With the huge canvas placed on the floor, making it difficult for the artist to see the whole or any extended section of the 'parts,' Pollock could truthfully say that he was "in" his work. Here the direct application of an automatic approach to the act makes it clear that this is not the old craft of painting, but... [only] happens to use paint as one of its materials." The contingency of the material, the indication of automation, the grounding to the floor, are aspects that would later lead Brecht to [the event score-card](#) (1963).

However, Pollock's relinquishing the gesture and for the emotive appropriation of the work—it would appear from Julia Robinson's doctoral dissertation (2008)—we also find as one of the tenets of Aristotile's natural philosophy, in [De anima](#)'s propositions on the 'first mover': gesture is but a mani-festation of something that comes before it. In relation to the first mover it is a secondary motion. What sets the gesture in motion, accordingly is emotion. It is in the same sense as Michel Serres stated: [et pourtant la terre s'émeut](#) (and yet, earth is moved [[Galileo](#) yet it moves]).



Fig. 2—Jackson Pollock, 1950, Photograph by Hans Namuth Courtesy Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona © 1991 Hans Namuth Estate. «Later, as Namuth photographed and filmed the artist at work, framing him as the subject of representation, Pollock made another famous announcement: 'I am not a phony. You are a phony!' he exclaimed, over and over again, to the photographer. Like the eight blue poles that would emerge soon thereafter, this repetition is meaningful." (Julia Robinson 2008, p. 34).

He evokes a world in a state of alert, where events are not determined by causal chains, but in a state of readiness for what is announced (but not causally). In sum: if we give attention to the physical forces in Jackson Pollock's painting, we cannot neglect the emotional appropriation that takes place, by giving up the gestural focus conveyed by the more controlled brush strokes in classical painting. Here, the medium is not the message, as the message is invoked by the introduction of a rupture/distance between the body and the media. The principle is the same in the Brecht-event.

By being removed from the body's skilled repertoire, Brecht's event score-cards leads to an artistic appropriation of language: moving art-discourse—art history and aesthetic theory—to an artistic parcours in, with and through art. Resulting in an artistic appropriation of language. An interesting comparison to artistic research, in its current form, is relevant on more than one account

(to the extent that we consider Fluxus as one of its grandparents, along with e.g. Marcel Duchamp). Comparison Bjørn Blikstad's cards for the *Level Up!* exhibition—as an optical event—does warrant a comparison to George Brecht's event score-cards, featuring the events of Blikstad's own exhibition: as alchemical emblems (bifocal image-text compounds), in an exhibition proliferating optical devices (bordering the self, cf, keynote by [Nicolas Bourriaud](#)).

This comparison might be considered forced/wanton—if considered outside the framework of the exhibit—but in view of the strange echo with Brecht's statement on Pollock above, it cannot be overlooked: "The witness, which always will be within a different dimension of existence to the symbol, transforms the either/or because the witness itself cannot be transformed and reduced into it. It cannot be represented fully. We cannot live inside our own mediation. The terrible thing is that we already know this." In [Blikstad's work](#), the art-work is strongly tied to the gestural.

The gestural vehicle is wood-carving: in Blikstad's work it serves as an intermedium between his background as a furniture designer and his PhD project in artistic research. Though tethered to this intermedium, it holds and is held by tortured relationship between design and art. [Staying with the trouble](#) affords the possibility of hosting the influx of alchemy, with its store of images and text fragments; whereby it features as the stowaway of art-history and art-commissions. That is, the structure of commissions that holds artistic production into our time (including his PhD work).

Arguably, Blikstad grapples with a similar problem as Pollock, be it from the opposite end: here the identification with the gestural level of skill is as tight as possible, in an experimental attempt to examine how the anthropomorphisms that result from making, might be caught up at a point by the random/contingencies—which in Fluxus (and [Duchamp](#)) was incorporated as sensory chance-methods—with affordance *beyond* [pareidolia](#). Driving craft to the point where the connection to the gestural deconstructs, where art becomes an *optical instrument* to look beyond *things human*.

That is, to the world with its quivers and stirrings (Michel Serres above). Staying with the Pollock-Brecht connections—underscored by Julia Robinson (2008/[2009](#))—the question is what effect this experimental approach might have on the appropriation of language: judging by 4 magazines issued by Blikstad featuring his reflections in the project *Level up!* the experiment results in a kind of disappropriation of language, in which writing becomes a vessel (like wood-carving) and a host (and hostage) to a mediumistic stream of insights on the outer rim of what can be humanly held.

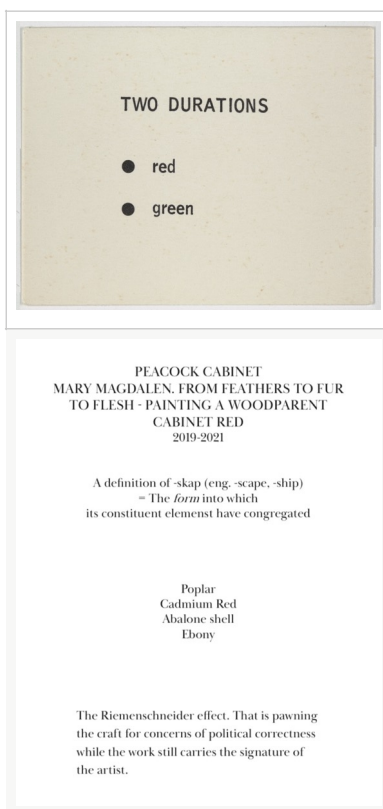


Fig. 3—Above, George Brecht (event score card from *Water Yam*, 1963). Below, Bjørn Blikstad (event card at exhibit *Level up!*, 2023).

Returning to the exhibit *Level up!*—hosted at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts—the compound of his cards and his work is more likely to be held by song than by discourse: harking back by two Michael Maier's *Atalanta fugiens* in which emblems are formed by image-text compounds, that are convertible by the intermedium of song. Blikstad's work is clearly closer to Walter Benjamin's [The Origin of the German tragic drama](#) than to American analytical philosophy (and likely to solicit a similar kind of controversy). An attempt at a contemporary harvest/redemption.

In sum, the two aspects of Blikstad's work—the wood-carvings and the magazines—should be taken as one piece: similar to the print and drip combined by Pollock in his *Blue poles*. The wood-carvings and the magazine is a similar combination: exploring the same artistic proposition, from two different vantage points. Combined works. The combined elements are linked to the same proposition, but without repeating. Clearly, the artistic proposition is not the same in Pollock's and Blikstad's work: rather, they are each other's obverse (or, *other*). Hence the interest.

Because what might be indicated by the two works—when tentatively compared, as here—is a statement on the inversely proportional relation between control and appropriation. That is, it holds the potential of hatching insights on the relation between control and alienation: technology and disruption (which is no small achievement by [Bernard Stiegler](#)'s standards, if the cost of control is disruption, and the companion of technology is alienation). Why do we need art? And why do we need bimodal/queer theory?