

David Sherry *Regulations for irrational procedures*

David Sherry
*Regulations for irrational
procedures*, 2007
installation shot
courtesy Mother's Tankstation



If I eat at a restaurant, then it follows I pay for the meal. To conclude that if I pay for the meal, then I must have eaten that meal, however, is a non sequitur. In *Great meals I never had* (all works 2007), David Sherry documents in two tense paragraphs his attempts to situate himself at recently vacated tables, order the bill, and pay for the departed occupant's alimentary remnants. He finally succeeds, paying £10.50 for the fish; "I'd paid for nothing, and it felt good."

Regulations for irrational procedures draws on both the logical and comedic aspects of the non sequitur as the collapsing point from which to explore a similar set of social fallacies, casual impossibilities and alternative realities that seem to hover just above our own. A row of drawings formed the majority of the exhibition; each set out in shaky, single lines on graph and note paper, informally they sketch glimpses into this parallel universe: miniaturised wildlife for case displays, fields of cheese, a fried egg half-balanced on the heel of a stiletto. *Man with two willies* depicts a messily bearded man, with red tubing extruding from various parts of his naked body, facing us earnestly, his arms held out limp. In the scribbled text alongside, he describes the testing he is going through because of his extraordinary condition; the majority of the text is spent on an ordinary complaint to do with his examiners' "asking questions about how I feel and I say fine and they say how fine? And this infuriates me and I say think of the last time you felt fine and that's how I felt until you wanted fine explained."

These works, in their varying degrees of offhand surrealism, present the horrific and the plain silly as cohabiters of the same mundane potentiality: not just charting the abnormal, but daytime-televising it. It's as if a slew of BBC Three producers, giddy from the possibilities suggested by their first experience

on acid, set forth and made a series of askew domestic DIY shows, how-to cooking programs and documentaries, as we channel-surf among these moments presented as being as everyday as any episode of *Gardener's World*.

The sound work *Levitational masters* features eight people giving testimonial accounts of their experiences of levitating, from conversational tips to traumatic confessionals. We hear the artist give his own method for achieving levitation: meditating on the image of an onion, removing layers until nothing remains. He remains cautional, however, insisting that levitation instigates a "radical change in the perception of reality." It is when we ourselves are looking at *Meditate on the onion*, a simple, black-line outline drawing of the bulbous vegetable, that the performativity of Sherry's suggestions takes body.

We are willed to accept Sherry's narrative authority in his texts – that they actually document completed performances, such as in *Great meals*, or with the text document *No rolo*, in which Sherry narrates a plan to buy all the available Rolo sweets from a shop, shortly followed by a 'partner in crime' who swoops in to demand Rolos from the hapless shopkeepers. This particular piece is complemented on the facing wall by a photo of the eighteen packs of Rolos in question, bundled like a stick of cartoon dynamite, as if verification that the sting took place. A series of commodities like the Rolo, plastic bottles, or cheese recur as leitmotifs connecting the sculpture, video, and sound works to the drawings, and the drawings begin to act as documents in themselves of possible performances and potential realities. *Regulations for irrational procedures* features a blue pen drawing of a large, shapely nose, a crooked crescent shape hooking out from the front with the written caption, "finger nail stuck onto the

tip of my nose with tape." In a performance accompanying the opening of the exhibition, the artist spent the evening with exactly that, making a humorous suggestion into a social elephant in the corner – when you find yourself wondering why you feel it would be rude to stare at, much less bring up in conversation, the purposefully placed bit of keratin.

At a glance, the drawings also suggest that a regular presenter on this alternate-reality TV would be David Shrigley, whose prioritisation of the informal gesture over craft in his prolific drawings has brought attention to the kind of practice formerly reserved for 'outsider art' and drawings by celebrities. While similarly accessible and absurd, Sherry's layers of performance go a step further to imbue this imaginary territory with the threat of its realisation. You could envisage Sherry's daytime programming starting with a comedy sketch show with Shrigley, followed by *Ready steady cook* hosted by an early Raymond Pettibon, the evening news by an uneasy Dan Perjovschi, and a talk show on social etiquette brought to you by Andy Kaufman. In *Regulations*, Sherry uses elements involved in our social constructions to enact an ongoing relay between the playfully imagined and the embodied real, to create a space where it could be considered that levitation is "eminently do-able."

Chris Fite-Wassilak is a writer and curator currently based in London; he and David Beattie are co-curating the Lighthouse caravan cinema, to take place on London's Brick Lane in June this year, as part of the wider *House projects* series of exhibitions (www.houseprojects.net)

These pages are a visual/verbal response to discussions between writer Chris Fite-Wassilak and artist Cliona Harmey in response to David Sherry's recent show. In the second in a series of ongoing collaborations, Fite-Wassilak invited Harmey to respond to the review on the previous page.

TRANSACTIONAL OBJECTS chosen as catalysts for work after viewing "regulations for irrational procedures"

One can define transactional objects in terms of an optimistic concurrency model, or by specifying their place in transactions in terms of a pessimistic two-phase locking protocol. You may even apply a relational framework if you so desire.

100

With most transactions you need to define an interface for the start, commit and abort of transactions. Transactions may abort whenever an unexpected exception arises.

My own approach was a conservative two-phase pick and pay as opposed to Sherry's less predictable but more exciting:

pick (max) and pay

pick (nil) and pay (+)

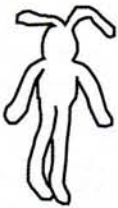


fig1

pet toy
bought in
Eurprice, Wexford

properties
hue: blue
facial features: none

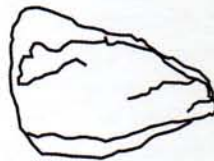


fig2

lump of pyrite
free gift with
'Treasures of the World' magazine

properties
density: 5
cleavage: none

This mineral can take many forms, from a glint on the pavement, to large clumps which can resemble a bunch of grapes, kidneys or stalactites. Polished, it can be used as a mirror. When struck with another piece of pyrite it can emit sparks. Commonly known as 'Fools Gold', it shares this name with one of Elvis's favourite sandwiches.

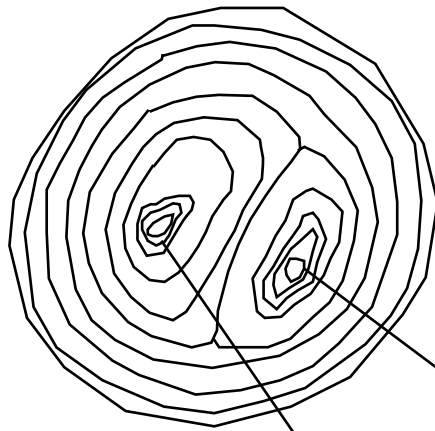


fig 3

onion
local shop

properties
edible

With its spherical shape and concentric rings, it is believed by some to symbolize eternal life. Its link to the visionary can be traced to Rameses IV, who was mummified with an onion in each eyesocket.



the space
between two beings using
onion model

X

artist might be here

Y

some encroachment
across boundary

as seen from above

