

SHORT MEMORY OF THE MUSÉE PRÉCAIRE ALBINET, PLUS A COMMENTARY

A text by
Tiphaine Samoyault

COMMENTARY

I don't much like writing workshops. I don't really believe in writing as a therapy, let alone as a remedy for the disintegration of social bond. Texts produced in this context sometimes have the beauty of their circumstances, the accepted risk of their public reading and the advent of a singularity in a group setting. But they give a false idea of writing; they do not say anything about the solitude, the everyday struggle, the personal effort and the struggle with language.

If, in spite of all that, I have accepted Christophe Fiat's invitation to come and lead a writing workshop at the *Musée Précaire Albinet*, the main reason is that I know he thinks the way I do. We have never spoken about it, but there is no romanticism in his conception of writing. For him, it is an inner necessity that becomes a profession, with its rights and duties, and the rights and duties of society towards it. I have accepted, too, because Thomas Hirschhorn does not come to the places where he works with a mission as a saviour. His

approach is personal, artistic, and ephemeral. He presents it as an act more than as an action. One could criticise him for this: the suburbs where he works know perfectly well what acts are: they commit them; they feel their effects. They no doubt find it harder to recognise the justification of an action. At least he doesn't try to wrap up his work in moral righteousness by proclaiming that he helps "people" out of their difficulties. He may believe that art protects, that it offers something extra, and can help. But most of all he knows that life helps art.

Wherever they are, art and writing devour life, more than they let life devour them. It's kind of horrible when you think about it, but that's the way it is.

MEMORY

It was a Thursday in April. I arrived at midday. First I noticed women busy at a snack bar that they ran themselves. Then I saw a Malevich tea service. The museum guard. I saw children. I ate a *mafé*.

I was uneasy. Colonialist, voyeur, literary missionary, junketing writer, bourgeois—I felt out of place. I was in that place because I have a function. I accepted it because I remembered a time when it made my heart race when I met a "writer", and that it hardly mattered who they actually were. Just a writer: someone who was not a man or a woman or a child or a worker or a politician or a writer, or anything. Out of piety towards that memory, today, maybe I too would be "a writer" for someone.

I don't want to describe the group that gathered around me that afternoon. There would be too many determinations in the image, and they would no doubt fail to convey the extreme fragility of the bond that was created. And immediately severed.

It all happens at the speed of myth.

I didn't really propose any rules, but asked them

to think about a word: *inside*. Adjective or not. Adjective or noun. Seeing them laugh, move around and write, I knew I had nothing to say. Out of habit, I reacted to provocation. I was there. No part of me was elsewhere; I was absolutely there. At the same I knew I would never be there. They would not let me meld in.

I write to change life, to break down identities, to give up property of every kind. In return, you have to let me blend in, make me believe that I could be, if only for a moment, you, them, with you, with them. Inside.

In order not to be afraid, I need to keep changing my location and to be inside in each one.

The texts that they then read were beautiful because they expressed the opposite. Inside was actual prison or the prison within us. Only the outside is the dwelling, desired for itself and for what one may find in it. The idea of a room of one's own is completely out of place. Private life is the invention of the few who do not live here.

So, these shacks where we are now, what do they enclose?

So these shacks will be destroyed, and they will be there, and I will be somewhere else: inside.

Tiphaine Samoyault is a writer. She lives in Paris (France). Invited by Christophe Fiat and Manuel Joseph, she directed a writing workshop and a discussion during the "Malevitch week" of Thomas Hirschhorn's Musée Précaire Albinet.