

A PARLAY

Conversations on a sculpture

by Amelia Crouch



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ABCDEFGHIJKLM

When I first looked I read 'A to M.'
Half way through the alphabet,
half way through a set of letters
(the particles of language)

ATOM BODY

My body is made of atoms,
as well as the world is.
These words (written) are made of atoms,
as well as the world is.

Lines become symbols; we forget they are lines.
Sounds become symbols; we forget they are sounds.

SAY - THIS - OUT - LOUD

These words are vibrating atoms,
from ear to synapse to sense.
Information imparts
and d i s s i p a t e s

WAS LIGHT

This sculpture turns on one little word
not 'is' but 'was,'
a transformation.
Matter into energy
& object into meaning[s]

WHAT ART IS ABOUT

I like to watch the artist's brain move.
(TURNING; RE-TURNING)
That, to me, is what art's about.
(TURNING; RE-TURNING)

There are moments of clarity,
little bits you understand.
(TURNING, now BLURRING)
You get a glimpse of what's going on
(BLURRING; RE-TURNING)
but big areas remain blurred.

A PARLAY FOULEST
AURALLY APES OFT
FATALLY A POSEUR
PRATFALL SEA YOU
SURLY OAF PALATE
OR FATALLY PAUSE
OUR FAT APES ALLY
A REFUSAL TO PLAY
ALEATORY FLAP US
A FALSER OUTPLAY
A PAROLES FAULTY
PLAY RUSE AFLOAT
FALSE AURAL TYPO
AURAL FEATS PLOY
ORATES A PLAYFUL

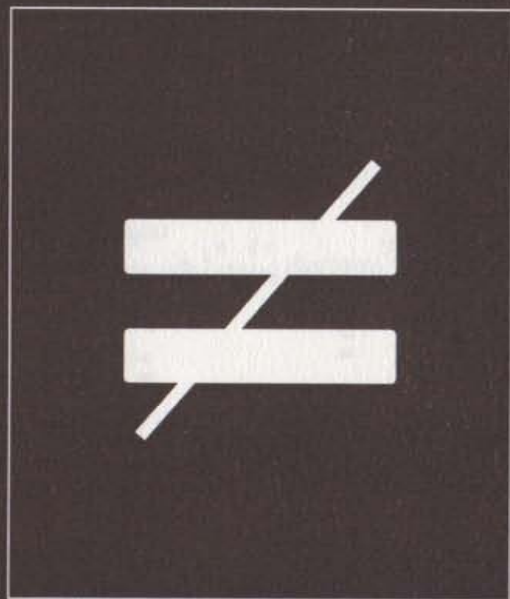
A LOT OF MODERN ART MEANS NOTHING TO PEOPLE

What I enjoy is language,
putting concepts into easy language.
I like writing nicely,
I take pride in what I write.

There's a lot of pretentious nonsense,
people say things they don't really understand.
When things get obscure,
they haven't been thought through properly
or someone has a bad point.

AH

HA



The words that she uses are the language of science, they are words we don't necessarily associate with art and how we talk about art.

I HAVE MY SUSPICIONS THAT SHE HAS MISCONCEPTIONS
 THE ARTIST DOES NOT UNDERSTAND SCIENCE
 BUT SHE IS PLAYING AND I VALUE THAT

THE EDITOR

Y/Starting with letters,
 #80 Made purposefully illegible.
 ≡ That frustrates me.

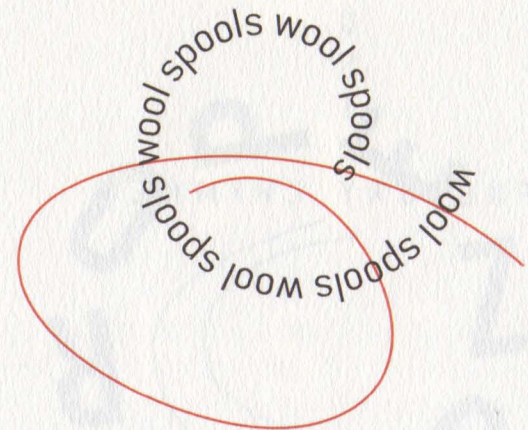
8/19 It's as if it's the artist's secret,
 it's over exclusive

19 they say: Ha
 more fool you

you cannot understand possibly

PRINTING PRESS

ANALOG(UE)YS

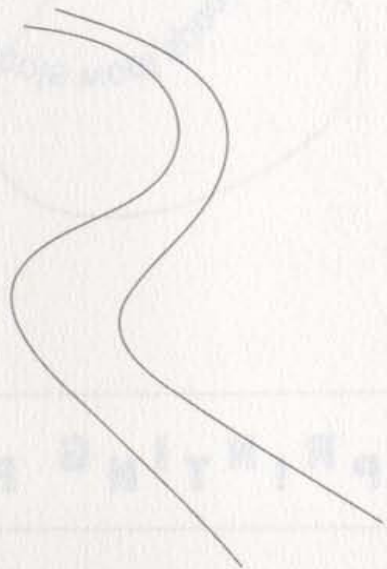


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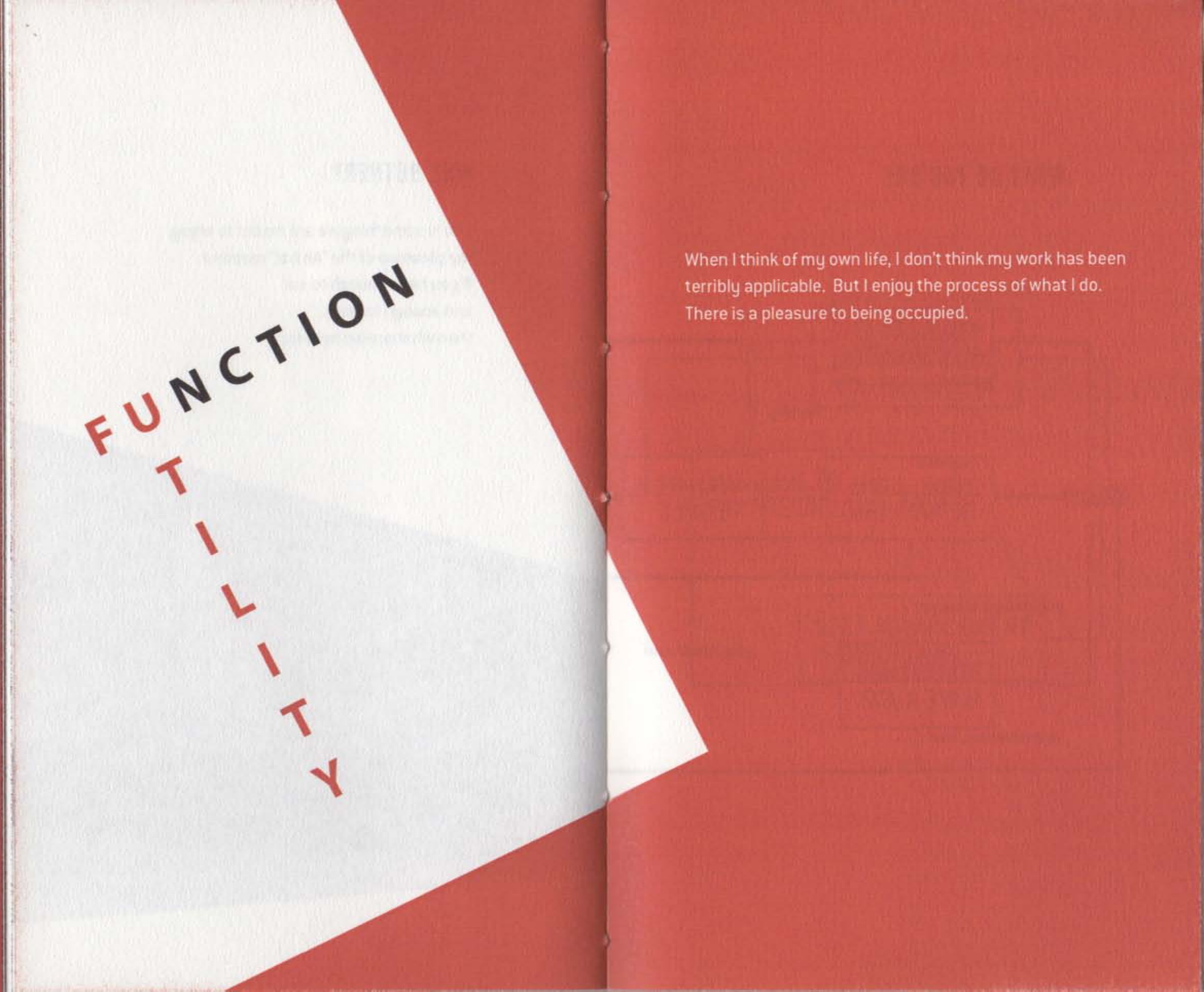
M

OT

WHY BOTHER?

Life is something we are meant to enjoy;
the pleasure of the "Ah ha!" moment.

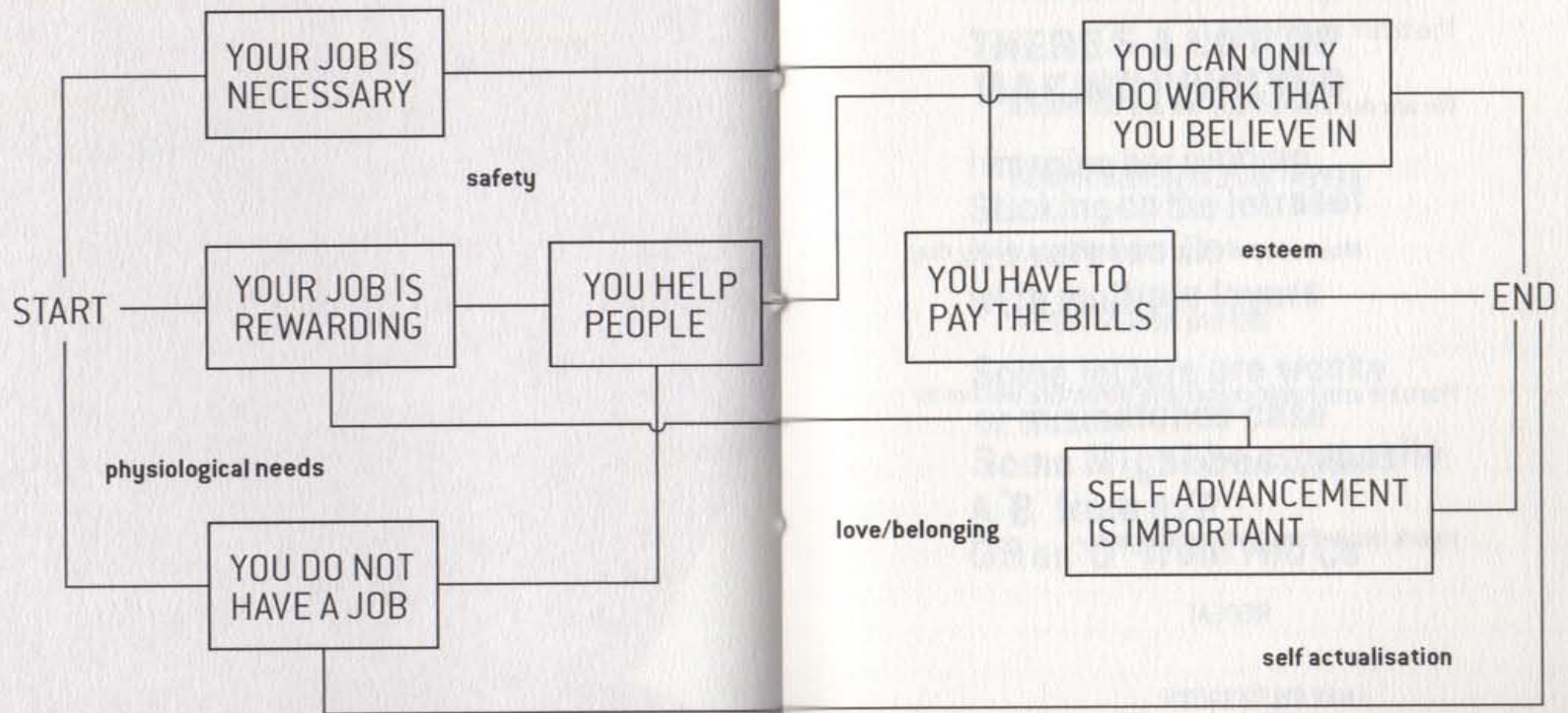
If you have enough to eat
and enough to drink,
then what are we here for?



FUNCTION UTILITY

When I think of my own life, I don't think my work has been terribly applicable. But I enjoy the process of what I do. There is a pleasure to being occupied.

WHAT DO YOU DO?



MASSEUSE

I just work with my hands and a body.
The off white makes me think 'bony.'
The black against white, of medical books.
The BODY and the TEXT.

We are our stories and we are our habits.

REPEAT REPEAT REPEAT REPEAT

Most of us do the same things every day.

REPEAT REPEAT REPEAT

Posture and habit create the structure we live in.

REPEAT REPEAT

I work back through those layers,

REPEAT

I use my forearms
to roll accross my client's skin.
Bone meets bone.

THERE'S A LOT OF MAKING INVOLVED

I imagine her rubbing
Sticking on the letraset
It's very tactile
with multiple layers

Some letters are wonky
or mismatched case
Some Might be composite
A `B` from R/P
OR an `O` from Two Cs

DUNCE

I wasn't very good at school
so it reminds me of a dunces cap.
Or perhaps some sort of abacus,
with numbers adding and spiralling.

I won art prizes
but didn't take them as being of value.
Teachers were giving me negative feedback
and that was all I heard

TROPHY

It reminds me of a trophy,
something like an Oscar.
Those bits at the bottom
what you'd hold on to.
Hold it almost like you've been rewarded it

PARTICIPATION

- ☐ The best art is interactive
 - ☐ A call to action
 - ☐ It elicits a response
 - ☐ You do something and something happens
- So there's proof you've engaged with it

RESPONSE

Everyone who sees this work
would have a different view.
It's a shame they couldn't be logged,
I would be keen to read them

What is this book?

The content of this book comes from a series of conversations I held with individuals at Leeds Art Gallery, based upon and departing from the sculpture 'Atom Body Was Light' by Liliane Lijn. The book is a three pronged experiment. Firstly I was interested to discover the range of responses that might be elicited by a single artwork and how people's interpretation was shaped by other aspects of their life. Secondly I wanted license to play with responses, to combine and manipulate them in various ways. Most of the words in this book are not mine, but my voice comes to the fore in the selection, editing and sequencing of content. Thirdly I sought to explore ways of presenting text visually, with a nod to concrete poetry. The relationship between the visual and the verbal is an ongoing interest in my work, and graphically presenting words spoken about a visual artwork provided an interesting challenge.

Lijn's artwork was chosen as a starting point because it intrigued me. 'Atom Body Was Light' is not an 'easy' work in the sense that it can't be immediately grasped as being something in particular. It can be interpreted in many ways. Plus it resonates formally and conceptually with my aim of exploring visual ways of presenting text.

I chose not to reproduce an image of Lijn's work in this publication because I hope that the book stands apart as an object in its own right. However you can easily find an image of the sculpture by searching for it online if you wish to do so.

I will leave it up to the reader to decide whether my three aims work together to produce a coherent outcome, or if they are awkward book-fellows. Certainly my conception of the project has shifted over the course of making it. What began as a project about 'value' and about whether people's conception of the value of art related to their broader value systems, now seems to be more about meaning and utility. I initially searched for conversation partners from a range of professions and backgrounds, but people are complex and job-role is a crude way to categorise. So only a trace of these professions remains in this final book.

It could be that speaking about 'value' in a general sense is too nebulous and if this book stands up for anything, I hope it advocates for the importance and enjoyment of engaging with specific works of art. Artworks are interlocutors; they want us to talk to them. This, in my opinion, is where the value of art begins.

Amelia Crouch

Thank you

Thank you to everyone who gave their time and shared their thoughts with me. This book can't do justice to the richness of our conversations: Josephine Borg, Alastair Brett, Sarah Brett, Sarah Brown, John Cossham, Rachael Fox, Simon Groves, Tom Hartquist, Phill Hopkins, Chris Hoy, Jason Old, Garance Rawinsky, Dave Taylor, Jason Thorne, Arianna Viol, Kate Williams.

Thank you to Leeds Inspired for funding the project, to Leeds Art Gallery and the Henry Moore Institute for providing access to the sculpture and particularly to Curator Sarah Brown for her support.

Thank you to Liliane Lijn and Riflemaker for allowing me to reproduce an image of 'Atom Body Was Light' in my publicity. Thank you also to Lijn for producing an artwork that provided inspiration for this project in the first place.



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