

↳ PARTY \* \* \*  
CONTEMPORARY



BOOKS  
AND  
TOOLS

AND  
HOOKS  
AND  
STOOLS  
AND  
OR

A drawing of a pencil pointing downwards, with a vertical line extending from its tip, positioned to the left of the text 'AND HOOKS AND STOOLS AND OR'.

ADHOCRACY VOL. I



 PARTY ENTRANCE


 *NAILHOOK*. FOUND NAIL, RESIN, SCREW, PHANOS

 *POWER TOOL*. PHOTOGRAPH IN ARTIST'S FRAME, PHANOS

 BOOKS FROM PERSONAL COLLECTION

 *TRANSFERENCE*. DRAWINGS ON SILK, ARTIST'S BOOKS WITH IMPRINTS ON WAX PAPER, NATALIE

 *MULTIPURPOSE DEVICE*. PLASTER, NATALIE

 SPEARMINT, TOMATO, EGGPLANT, CAULIFLOWER, BROCCOLI, PEPPER, MELON, CUCUMBER

 A POTTER'S STOOL. MASTER POTTER ANDREAS CHARALAMBOUS LENDS US THE STOOL HE USED IN THE 50'S WHILE LEARNING THE CRAFT

 A BLACKSMITH'S COMPANIONS. MASTER BLACKSMITH PHANOS PAPASSAVAS LENDS US TOOLS HE MAKES IN ORDER TO CREATE OTHER OBJECTS

 *HEAVY-DUTY*. CAST LEAD, PHANOS

 *VERTICAL BOOK*. FRAMED ARTIST'S BOOK, NATALIE

 *FROM THE GUIDE LINES SERIES*. SYNTHETIC ALABASTER, BRONZE , PHANOS

 *A NOOK IN THE ORDINARY*. VIDEO LOOP, NATALIE

 *ON STRIKE*. SCISSORS, SPRAYPAINTED UNFIRED CLAY, NATALIE

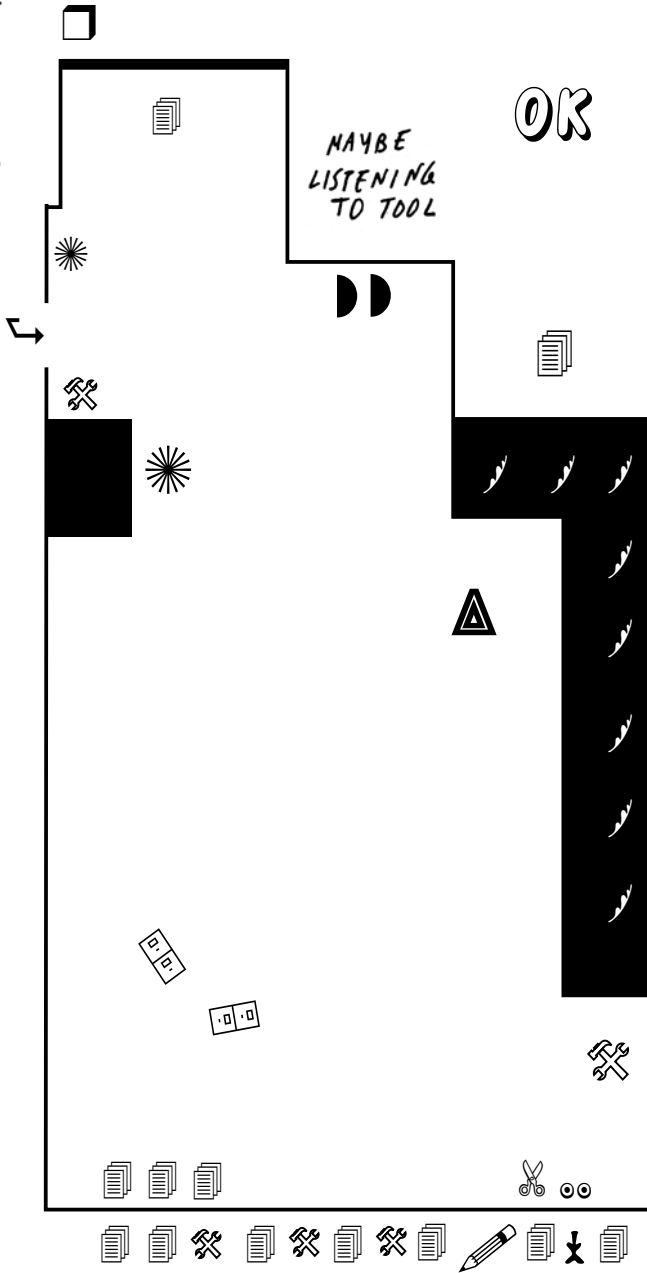
 *WRITER'S BLOCK*. PENCIL, WOOD, ROCK, NATALIE

 MR. ANDREA'S DIY WIRE CLAY CUTTER

 *ASSISTED STOOLS*. FOUND STOOLS, STAINLESS STEEL, COATED STEEL, PHANOS

 *GHOSTED*. NEON, PHANOS

BOOKS  
AND  
TOOLS  
AND  
HOOKS  
AND  
STOOLS



MAYBE  
LISTENING  
TO TOOL

OK

AND  
MAKING  
SOMETHING  
OUT OF NOTHING  
USING THE LOGS  
FROM OUR HOME'S  
OLD ROOF



Let's begin with first appearances and quickly move to ontological structures, that is, the conditions that enable things to appear as such. Entering the Party, we are faced with very many things. (I use "things" in the most formal way possible—a tool is a thing, an artwork is a thing, an indeterminate distance is a thing, an analogy is a thing, anxiety is a thing, etc.) What sort of things are they? Books, tools, plants, and artworks. Books: guides, indexes, enchiridia, lists, manuals, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, reference books, books about tools. Tools: a blacksmith's tools, of various shapes and sizes, he created in order to create other objects, a wooden structure to support books and tools. Plants: spearmint, tomatoes (etc.) planted in the built basin. Artworks: a looped video, a framed diary, a neon light, etc. {One could stop me here and point out that everything in the Party is an artwork, the books and the tools included, by virtue of the fact that they are exhibited in an art space. Do hold on to this thought, but keep it suspended for a moment.}

We therefore have an array of things that fall under a few ontological categories (in other words, these things are not of the same kind, their type of "being" is not the same, they exist in different ways): natural organisms, artworks, and tools. Let's look at these different kinds of being and say a few provisional things about them, so as to open up the interpretive space.

Natural organisms (plants) have an autonomous essence, they exhibit purposeful movement whose telos is their own welfare, even though they partake in dynamic eco-systems in which members interact with other members and hence exhibit some other-directedness (a leaf adjusts its position so as to face in the direction of natural light). Their essence is a structure mostly pre-determined by a priori mechanisms, but there is some limited potential for ad hoc adjustments.

Artworks have a very recalcitrant type of being: they are hard to define. Perhaps via negativa might help: they do not occur naturally, rather they are created by others (human beings). They have no obvious telos or use (contrasted with plants and tools), and despite the fact that their meaning is open and largely dependent on others (interpreters), and despite the fact that they are conceived in a context of contingency and potentiality, they retain some self-referential essence, a part of its structure being self-enclosed and singular actuality.

Tools: on this, I follow Martin Heidegger who argues in *Being and Time* that "[tools are] essentially 'something in-order-to....' A totality of [tools] is constituted by various ways of the 'in-order-to', such as serviceability, conduciveness, usability, manipulability. In the 'in-order-to' as a structure there lies an assignment or reference of something to something." (97) Let's unpack this. There are several ways in which tools operate: tools are about serviceability (they are in the service of an overarching projected aim/operation); they are conducive to a task (that is, they enable the task to progress, rather than hinder it); tools are manipulable (that is, they have to be able to be handled in a skilful, controlled manner). These concomitant operations are further reduced to a main structure, which we call the "in-order-to". This means that what makes a tool what it is, is the fact that its being is attached to a particular telos, which lies outside its material presence, attached to a pragmatic goal. There is no tool outside purposeful usage; the tool is what it is by virtue of the fact that it can be used by a user in order to do something: the tool is only a tool insofar as it is used in order to execute a task, and the moment we stop using it and behold it, its being is modified. Further reducing the 'in-order-to' structure to its components, we discover the character of assignment or reference of something to something: in essence, the being of a tool the way it is assigned to a task, the way it refers to other materials that partake in the activity. For example, the hammer as a tool refers to the nail that will be purposefully hit, the pen refers to paper and sentences, etc.

Where does this leave the being of the tool, compared to the being of natural organisms and artworks? The tool has no autonomy (like a plant), its movement being heteronomous, its telos lying outside itself. The tool is always directed at something else, and so its essence is subjugated to this other-directedness. It is a combination of determined potentiality, as well indeterminate potentiality that can be ad hoc determined. Determined potentiality: a hammer is pre-determined in the kind of activity it will be used for, based on its shape, material, and general understanding of "accepted practice". There are, in other words, some rules. We are expected to use a hammer in a particular way, and sometimes if someone uses a hammer in an unexpected way, we laugh ("Phanos is crazy, he is using a hammer to mark the page number!", "Natalie is crazy, she is using a book to brush her teeth!") But pre-established rules do not exhaust a tool's toolness. It is OK, and in fact vaguely expected, that someone will use a particular tool in a new, creative way, without it being "too crazy".

What is the world of tools, then? Is there a general structure? The world of tools is a referential whole of purposeful potential, that is a mixture of determinate and indeterminate potentiality: a mixture of a priori and ad hoc decisions. But despite the fact that the world of tools is a world of potentiality and other-directedness, each tool still retains its appropriateness, meaning that each tool has an essence connected to it. The tool's predetermined potentiality means that not every tool can be used as anything whatsoever and for whatever purpose. Praxis is a priori delimited. And insofar as the tool-world is governed by appropriateness, this means that it is also a somewhat "closed system" that has inherent properties, i.e. qualities that define its character. Each tool has a proprium.

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Adhocracy is an organizational model that lacks official structure and hierarchy. It is interesting to see not just how this structure is contrasted to Bureaucracy, but rather what it does to the tool-world and whether it demands a modified understanding of toolness. Adhocracy is about adaptability, problem-solving, and ad hoc improvisation that activates open systems (or: opens up pre-existing closed systems). Grima argues that "rather than the closed object, the maximum expression of design today is the process—the activation of open systems, tools that shape society by enabling self-organization."

Adhocracy is not as straightforward as it sounds, and it can be analysed from several perspectives, but one character that strikes me as quite fundamental is its logic of appropriation. In itself, appropriation is politically neutral: it can be conducive to bad politics (e.g. capitalism), but also to good politics (e.g. ecological upcycling). But beyond the political, it is important to reflect on what adhococratic appropriation is and does to tools, how it—perhaps—radicalizes their being. Adhocracy is governed by a techno-optimism that shifts focus from the actual and the a priori determined (fixed rules, fixed roles), to the potential and the indeterminate. The individual tool no longer has a fixed position in a hierarchy; the individual no longer relates with other individuals in pre-determined way, its reference no longer being finite, but rather infinite.

Adhocracy radicalizes tools in a devastating way. Firstly, it reduces all beings into tools: humans, plants, artworks alike. It strips them off of any actuality and of any relative autonomy, and reduces their value to that of usefulness for the sake of purposeful activity. In other words, it appropriates everything and turns them into potential tools. Secondly, it further reduces these tools into hyper tools: the ultimate measure of success becomes the extent to which each tool is appropriable. The ideal tool is versatile: appropriate for everything. But is this reduction what's happening in The Party? Is this what happens when art becomes adhococratic? I think not.

Let's go back to The Party. The very space used to be an old butcher's shop, appropriated and transformed into a gallery—the space unexpectedly released to artistic potential. The books apposed, say the Safety And Health Requirements Manual or the Microsoft MS-DOS User's Guide, books that are nothing more and nothing less than tools with a specific function, tools that refer to rules and programmatic actions, are released from their closed referential system by the artist's appropriating act. These books are revealed as tools of a peculiar kind, but they are also revealed as something else, as objects of peculiar textuality. The blacksmith's tools: created ad hoc for the purpose of creating other tools. The artist's appropriation reveals these tools, whose function is not immediately obvious, as "negatives" of other tools to which they inversely refer. But also as perplexing, useless-looking objects. And what about the plants? Plants appropriated, that is, planted in the basin for the purposes of this exhibition. Are they reduced to tools, too? Again, yes and no. Yes, because they have been appropriated and handled. No, because while we can look at the plant through the eyes of toolness, by positioning the plant within the horizon of toolness we see that our act remains inappropriate and inadequate to grasp their being, and hence reveals something inappropriable.

When Adhocracy becomes an artistic practice, something peculiar happens: it is Adhocracy itself that becomes appropriated and transformed. Artistic adhocracy does not reduce all things to tools, and does not even reduce tools themselves to hypertools. Appropriation here is not governed by efficiency or problem-solving, but rather, dare I say, by the extent to which the inappropriable aspects of each thing can be contextually revealed.

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*on until July 13 2018, Tue-Fri 17:00 - 20:00* **PARTY**