

Bennie Allain - *Neck Uh the Wood*

with assistance from Jared Klok

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ODD Gallery

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Guy wondered, what could he find or do to better himself, in the way of living well, or making better doo with the ways he was already living. He decided that in order to do that, in order to figure out a way to live more, better, he'd better do the things over again, play the things back - pause em', rewind em', and *TUNE IN*. The proverbial lather rinse repeat of the mind. These things he decided he needed to ponder were things he remembered having happened once before; things, for better or for worse, that latched on to his hippocampus like a poorly trained little pup digging its fresh baby ivories into Guy's private memory chamber. These happenings of the past jeopardized their own reality through the practice of remembering them - as the product of remembering is altered each time the tale is told, the myth is murmured or the fable is flapped. But, the one dear truth of these past happenings is: they had, in fact, happened... Well, most likely, anyway. So, he sat his arse back down at the kitchen table, and poured himself another mug of that sweet sweet steaming hot black gold - exactly the way his daddy used to make it - two scoops of stevia and a hearty dash of heavy cream, to get his veritable head in the the hypothetical game of trying to remember what exactly had *happened*. He resigned himself to the infinitely lonely task of remembering, stared the Titaness smack in her furrowed brow, and said to himself *well if that's the way it's gotta be then that's the way it's gotta be*, and set his psyche to playing life back on itself.

Cicero rose late in the afternoon, not feeling his finest, after the gluttonous celebration of yesterdays eve. *Oof, life is hard*, thought poor Cicero dully through the cloud of his pounding hangover. *Might I fain this illness of the days once more* he wished into his sideonian purple pillow, but alas, poor Cicero reluctantly recalled that he most certainly could not. Today, of all days, marked the beginning of the chariot races and he, bound by the Counsel of Rome, was scheduled to deliver the opening address. Beyond his shuttered windows Cicero could hear the cajoling of prized mares and the rousing of men, an audible mosaic of man and beast. *You fool* he thought to himself, *just because you're in Rome, must you entertain each and every whim of your most gluttonous desires?* Cicero was a man of great stature, a noble statesman was he; and it is in part because of this, yet also in spite of it, that what Cicero was truly, at his inner most core, was a self-indulgent lush: a simple curmudgeon crippled now by his own indulgences. He needed to get himself down to the Circus with haste, and as habit transpired, Cicero did as he always did in this state: he walked his mind, by memory, to where he needed to be.

Memories are made of things that have happened in the past
Things that have happened in the past make memories

Memories are flawed in their rememberings Like an echo chamber of experience
turned over in our silly little pea brains

Cicero went through the mental motions of the steps he would soon make, passed the fresco'd hallways he would traverse, down the marble steps he would descend, under the stone archways he would pass through - all in an effort to comfort his self and reassure his clouded mind that he could, in fact, make it to the Circus on time. In this way, Cicero was predicting the future, while simultaneously envisioning the past: suspending his psyche on a draw bridge over the present. As his present self locked hands with the self of his past and the self of his future, Cicero realized: *my domus exists in three states; first the palace of the present, then the palace of the future, followed by the palace of the past. The palace of the present is connected to now, to living, while the palace of the future is bound to the imagination, and the palace of the past to memory. There exists a colossal space, the footage of these physical world walls that is contained within only a small olive pit nestled somewhere deep within my brain. Could I use this space within my psyche to store experiences, memories, images, as if they were the grain, wine, and robes of my physical world? What else could possibly be stored within this colossal mental territory I have both the joy and burden of possessing?*

Cicero was still lazily bound to the belief system that he was an extraordinary man, but he was, in fact, far from it: the colossal territory existed in every mind, the floor plan and layout of each dependant upon the experience lived by the pea brain obtaining in. This theory would later become commonly know as the *memory palace*: a still practiced mnemonic strategy to better remember information through the visualization of familiar space.

Guy naturally, is a stand in for the artist(s).
Cicero... Well, Cicero is Cicero but he's only here to teach us one way of remembering.

History was always written by the winners
The winners have always written history

Guy is still sitting at the kitchen table. He's gotten up from time to time to enact some minor unrelated task. The phone's rung once or twice, and the water has boiled again, despite his forgetting to pour it over the fresh Nabob grounds, it is in fact still hot. He rubbernecks through his own domestic portal into the sitting room at a life time full of belongings: a collection of oddities from his inner most squirrel boy, then gets up to retrieve his note book. No river of seemingly substantial thought begins to flow onto the page, but instead the occasional pairing of words hammer their way into his mind and out through the ball point. Stinking Dog. Candy Shop. Butterfly. Moth. Sixteen Fishermen. Tell your fortune for a nickel. And glancing down at this series of scribbles, he decides to stop taking this task too seriously and says to himself, *well if that's the way it's gotta be then that's the way it's gotta be.* Δ

It's difficult to write a text to support Bennie Allain's work. Not because it's un-supportable, but because his themes and aesthetic are driven home, ten fold, by the work itself. Memory, personal experience, family history, mis-remembering are part of every artist's work in some capacity or another, whether explicit or inherent, they are the universal themes of *making* simply because: the artist is a person(s) with a lived experience. What's different in the case of Bennie's work? In a lot of ways: nothing but confidence. Bennie has a practice that unabashedly fishes from the waters of his life time of listening to stories: he's developed a language of his own that marries the visual to the linguistic and stares the lonely practice of remembrance in its ugly mug and screams *NONSENSE!* He creates a world so cramped with memory, experience, pun, innuendo, fable, fiction, character and failure that deeply, what you are seeing is what you are getting: there is no shrouded meaning here. You are to feel at ease experiencing this hodgepodge of compositions, sit with this stinking dog, laugh at this potato god, and wonder what the blue winged plague doctor might see in your future.

Bennie Allain and Jared Klok have been working collaboratively over the past few years on a number of projects ranging from film making, to installation, and musical performances, as well as co-founding (with Ueli Kunzi) the Bunkhouse Bananas DCHA Senior Rec League hockey team.

This text was written by Amy Ball, after several visits with Bennie and Jared, over the duration of their local residency at the Macaulay House, while working towards this exhibition.

Amy Ball is an artist based in Dawson City, who writes both narrative and persuasive stories and essays as part of her art practice. She currently works out of the Jimmy's Place studio collective.