

Lands End, Ruth Claxton, Spike Island, Bristol
12 March 2009

This is a loose talk, a response – really thoughts stimulated by my visit to *Lands End*, by my hearing Ruth talk about the exhibition here recently and by my reading and looking at the catalogue. Contingency plays a role – as it always should, in that folded into what I say are things that fluttered across my path over the past couple of weeks, as I mused on the exhibition and took it into my field of vision. So, what follows are some paragraphs a la my favourite muse Walter Benjamin and his book *One Way Street*, each with headings and each more or much less obviously connected to the work in the neighbouring room. I should also note that the images too rub against the argument at tangents. In short, these following words circle around my fascinations, much as one might traverse this show, and hope to be at the very least suggestive. If any individual thought bores you, another will quickly replace it.

Cambio Wechsel

Aesthetics and politics are alike. Both are – or really should be and maybe too often are not – the imaginative construction of alternative realities. It is not simply science fiction that undertakes this task as a cultural act: All art is the imagination of other realities. Just as all politics has an eye on the future and what might be or could be or should be, art enacts or embodies or makes available to experience such altered reality. The ways in which a poetics of alternative reality is established in *Lands End* are various: through the play with scale, through adornment, or what might be termed montage, through the materials and their histories, through the connotations of the figurines and the hoops on which they stand, through its games with the viewers and stances, conscious or not, vis-à-vis art's histories. All this and more, I'll touch on.

Big Me Up

At the beginning of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the heroine finds herself in a hall of doors, the tiniest one of which can be opened by a gold key. Through the opening, no bigger than a rat-hole, she glimpses a delightful garden of flowers and fountains. But it is inaccessible to someone of Alice's dimensions and she wishes she 'could shut like a telescope'. Her wish granted, after succumbing to the injunction to 'DRINK ME', Alice finds herself, frustratingly, now no longer able to reach the tiny key lying on the table. Alice is a book that appeals to children not least because of its play with scale, which is something dear to the child, whose toys are tiny or overlarge and whose own dimensions change slowly even as they exist in a world too big for them temporarily. But art too bases its appeal on such coquetting with scale. Is the most evocative of art that which, turning cognition sublime, makes us feel tiny in the painted presence of raging nature, or, conversely, vast and lumbering, all too human in the face of the fragile temporariness of art. Sometimes reflected in it we catch uncommon and unflattering glimpses of our own selves, our underchins or bald spots.

Bull in a China Shop

Lands End casts us into the unavoidable position of the viewer. It is supremely aware that this is what it does, for it reflects us back on its surfaces, draws us actively through its mazes, appeals to us to look, and makes this so much more possible by masking the object of looking and allowing us to peer, unembarrassed, at what might be possible selves. But at the same time, allowed to lean in and examine, we are also so aware of our own positioning, of our place of standing, of our precariousness and the objects' vulnerability, should we stumble or fall in too far.

Reality Show

The frame in *Lands End* is expanded – in many ways. Literally in that there are many frames – the room is a frame. Each hooped metal platform is a frame. Metaphorically the frame is expanded: this is art as walk through, art as stop and stare and move on, art as double-back and cross through and realise that each other viewer views you too within the frame of this artwork. And there is no frame here too. The work could go on forever, could be supplemented and shifted, reclustered and reposed without end. It is a vision of infinity, amplified by the mirrorings and reflective surfaces inside the metal bands that cut in here and there.

Through the Looking Glass

Mirrors uncrack spaces and overcome boundaries. They disorientate. We are right to distrust the mirror, and all the more so, as it claims to be nothing but truthful reflection of what is. Its images appear to us as if there were no gap (in space, in meaning, in appearance) between the object and its reflected image. Walter Benjamin took this seriously – as part of a quest actualised in modernism's self-conscious attitude to representation and its insistence on fragmenting the illusory and idealised coherence of the visual and literary field. Benjamin writes about the mirror's movement of endless duplication. There can be no resting point of reflection. Mirroring is the eternal return of the image. In the arcades, notes Benjamin, mirrors were deployed to expand space into infinity, defying boundaries. When two mirrors face each other, we get as close as we might to infinity. Benjamin wrote of Paris as the city of mirrors: its reflective surfaces opened up the city into a million glittering fragments and its inhabitants picks their way, disoriented, through them. In particular, notes Benjamin, the nineteenth century metropolis becomes a hall of mirrors for women. Benjamin registers that the large shop fronts of the department stores in Second Empire Paris are eyes constantly directed at females as they pass by. And the eyes of other passers-by are hanging mirrors. Women see themselves more than elsewhere in Paris, the city with an excess of mirrors. Before any man catches a glimpse of them, they have already seen themselves reflected ten times. The peculiar beauty of Parisian women originates with this plethora of reflecting surfaces, which also stimulate a modern pleasure in watching. Even their own eyes peruse and judge their own appearance. They are objects for themselves. When they catch a glimpse of themselves in mirrors, sometimes they might confuse their own contours with the rigid bodies of shop-window mannequins. The mirrors in *Lands End* bounce around on their surfaces severed selves, figurines and art watchers alike. Of course, this is an experience for us the viewers. I cannot speak – or see - for the figurines, who may indeed be refusing to look out or back at us, refusing thereby the auratic moment of appeal – commodity appeal, sexual appeal - through the eyes, the look, the wink, the come on. Of course, it might also be that these eyes are barred because eyes are or were windows of the soul, and these figurines are, as we all are now, soulless.

Catch Me If You Can.....

We cannot quite orient our vision in this environment. As such we see seeing itself. As with the anamorphic portrait, that interference on the picture's surface, which forces into vision the planes of the viewer and the planes of the painting, *Lands End*, in its bouncing of images off surfaces and its revelation suddenly of underneath, of corners and niches, or topsides and undersides, realises the contingency of vision, which is always in motion.

Look No Hands

The composition of *Lands End* includes a staging of the mode of display, in much the same way as is achieved by department stores, where those same figurines would once have beckoned to potential purchasers from the shelves. The consumer/art viewer is led through

and invited to linger but also move on, until the encounter concludes with a purchase or an epiphany.

I♥It

Lands End has much about it that is Romantic, in many senses. For the Romantic aesthetic, is fragmentary, incomplete, associative. For Novalis, one of the great theorists of Romantic aesthetics, the fairy tale was the truly poetic work and of it he said: 'A fairy tale is truly like a dream image - without coherence - an ensemble of wondrous things and incidents.' While I was thinking about *Lands End* I came across a fairy tale written by Goethe in 1807 or 8. It is called the *New Melusina* and it insisted to me that it had something to do with this work. The fairy tale is about a beautiful and wealthy princess who meets and tries to love a man, who happens to be a fairly good-for-nothing bourgeois individualist with little wealth or personality. The princess needs a man who does not ask too many questions because she has a secret. She comes from another realm. It is the realm of dwarfs. This perfectly miniature race is growing with each generation smaller and so the princess is charged to find a man from the realm of the big people, to mix his genes with hers and so to bear offspring that will be of a larger stature again - in order to stop the race from disappearing entirely, quite literally. The princess adopts an illusorily large - or normal - form, depending on your perspective. And this is indeed the rub, for it is all about perspective. The man she meets - who should be her saviour, turns out to only want her endless wealth and he discovers her secret. He has had to carry with him on long journeys and without the company of the princess a casket. Peering into it one day he realises that this is the Princess's palace. In it she moves around tiny amidst beautiful and perfect miniature furniture. Having found out the secret the man allows himself to be shrunk and to exist inside the casket. But he feels dissatisfaction with his new stature, with the small world in which he moves and eventually he forces his own expansion once more, abandoning that world. Are these figures happy in their world? Are they alone on their plinths because they can find no-one to share their scaled down universe? Is that why they have grown over their faces tantalising décor, to make their worlds replete for themselves, while it remains simply fragmentary, wistful and poetic for us?

+ and -

If fairy tales are the realm of dreams, fragments, wishes, the perhaps it is instructive to turn to one by Hans Christian Andersen. Andersen wrote a story called *The Shepherdess and the Chimney Sweep* in 1845. It is about:

A delightful little china shepherdess on the table top under the mirror. The little shepherdess wore golden shoes, and looped up her gown fetchingly with a red rose. Her hat was gold, and even her crook was gold. She was simply charming!

Close by her stood a little chimney-sweep, as black as coal, but made of porcelain too. He was as clean and tidy as anyone can be, because you see he was only an ornamental chimney-sweep. If the china-makers had wanted to, they could just as easily have turned him out as a prince, for he had a jaunty way of holding his ladder, and his cheeks were as pink as a girl's. That was a mistake, don't you think? He should have been dabbed with a pinch or two of soot.

He and the shepherdess stood quite close together. They had both been put on the table where they stood and, having been placed there, they had become engaged because they suited each other exactly. Both were young, both were made of the same porcelain, and neither could stand a shock.

The shepherdess is betrothed to a frightening figure carved on a black cabinet called General-Headquarters-Hindquarters-Gives-Orders-Front-and-Rear-Sergeant-Billygoat-Legs. A Chinaman with a nodding head has insisted upon it. He is chief ornament and his word goes in this realm of decorative household objects. Andersen's fairy tale brings the

inanimate to life, as do fairy tales and animations so often. But in this magic parallel world of the sitting room, the passions that course through the tiny figures are at least as stirring as our own. The shepherdess and the chimney sweep decide to elope. Suddenly animate but quite fixed objects turn mobile, scuttle off their mantelpiece and seek hiding places in the sitting room. But the sitting room is too small to hide in. A bigger world needs to be sought. And so the chimney sweep utilizes the skill that he was destined to perform. They escape through the chimney.

Overhead was the starry sky, and spread before them were all the housetops in the town. They looked out on the big wide world. The poor shepherdess had never thought it would be like that. She flung her little head against the chimney-sweep, and sobbed so many tears that the guilt washed off her sash.

This is too much,' she said. 'I can't bear it. The wide world is too big. Oh! If I only were back on my table under the mirror. I'll never be happy until I stand there again, just as before. I followed you faithfully out into the world, and if you love me the least bit you'll take me right home.

The chimney-sweep tried to persuade her that it wasn't sensible to go back. He talked to her about the old Chinaman, and of General-Headquarters-Hindquarters-Gives-Orders-Front-and-Rear-Sergeant-Billygoat-Legs, but she sobbed so hard and kissed her chimney-sweep so much that he had to do as she said, though he thought it was the wrong thing to do.

And so they return. It is a parable at this point of the fear of freedom. A glimpse of the wide world displays only its vastness to a small figurine. It is a question again, of how the body fits into the world, how the world fits around the body and what is right and ease and what causes disease. Is it too much to think of that glimpse of a world from above and the hopes and fears it raises as somehow connected to the broadened horizons that liberal and national political movements proposed in Denmark as elsewhere at the time of Andersen's writing and which scared him and enthused in equal measure? The world presses in on art, even if art can then try to wall it out again. It is not that inanimate objects are made live in Andersen, but rather perfected renditions of humans are cast as objects. It is a subtle shift, but one that allows for the stories to be allegories of our better selves, or, recast as small and so, only in that way, different to us, we are able more objectively to oversee this miniaturised society and to judge this world and what is right and what is wrong in it.¹ That is what W.H. Auden thought of Andersen, at least.

What happens to the shepherdess, when she returns to her shelf? She need not marry the General, because the Chinaman, in attempting to chase after the errant pair had slipped and broken and while his family had glued him back together again, a rivet through his neck meant he no longer had the ability to nod. He can no longer assent to the request of the General to wed the shepherdess. The true couple is able to stay together forever or rather, concludes Andersen, until they fell down and broke to pieces. Why do these shepherdesses lack their chimney sweeps? Why have they lost their domestic environment? Are they alone in the big wide world, the one they thought they wanted to enter? Perhaps on finding themselves there, they simply had to cover their eyes with whatever came to hand.

Livin' Lovin' Doll

There is a strain of fantastic literature that likes to imagine the woman transformed into a tiny doll. Tolstoy's story, told in a letter to his wife's younger sister, is exemplary. I quote from it:

You know those porcelain dolls with bare cold shoulders, and necks and arms bent

¹ See W. H. Auden, 'Grimm and Andersen', in his *Forewords and Afterwords*, selected by Edward Mendelson, New York: Random House, 1973, p. 204.

forward, but made of the same lump of porcelain as the body. They have black painted hair arranged in large waves, the paint of which gets rubbed off at the top, and protruding porcelain eyes that are too wide and are also painted black at the corners, and the stiff porcelain folds of their skirts are made of the same one piece of porcelain as the rest. And Sonya was like that!

I touched her arm - she was smooth, pleasant to feel, and cold porcelain. I thought I was asleep and gave myself a shake, but she remained like that and stood before me immovable. I said: Are you porcelain? And without opening her mouth (which remained as it was, with curved lips painted bright red) she replied: Yes, I am porcelain. A shiver ran down my back. I looked at her legs; they also were porcelain and (you can imagine my horror) fixed on a porcelain stand, made of one piece with herself, representing the ground and painted green to depict grass. By her left leg, a little above and at the back of the knee, there was a porcelain column, coloured brown and probably representing the stump of a tree. This too was in one piece with her. I understood that without this stump she could not remain erect, and I became very sad, as you who loved her can imagine. I still did not believe my senses, and began to call her. She could not move without that stump and its base, and only rocked a little - together with the base - to fall in my direction.

This porcelain wife is made of the same material as sauce-boats. Her body is somewhat battered - a bit of the fold of her chemise is broken off and the paint is rubbed off here and there. The narrator - who is Tolstoy, for it is his fantasy about his wife, who is pregnant, - continues.

My fingers made no impression on her cold porcelain body, and what surprised me yet more was that she had become as light as an empty flask. And suddenly, she seemed to shrink and became quite small, smaller than the palm of my hand, although she still looked just the same. I seized a pillow, put her in a corner of it, pressed down another corner with my fist and placed her there, then I took her nightcap, folded it in four, and covered her up to the head with it. She lay there still just the same. Then I extinguished the candle and placed her under my beard. Suddenly I heard her voice from the corner of the pillow: 'Leva, why have I become porcelain?' I did not know what to reply. She said again: 'Does it make any difference that I am porcelain?' I did not want to grieve her, and said it did not matter. I felt her again in the dark - she was still as before, cold and porcelain. And her stomach was the same as when she was alive, protruding upwards - rather unnatural for a porcelain doll. Then I experienced a strange feeling. I suddenly felt it pleasant that she should be as she was, and ceased to be surprised - it all seemed natural. I took her out, passed her from one hand to the other, and tucked her under my head. She liked it all. We fell asleep.

This doll does not bemoan her state, miniaturized and incapacitated. Her husband prefers it. He likes to carry her in his pocket. He orders a leather box lined with raspberry-coloured velvet. But at the close of the story she falls from the table and a leg breaks off above the knee. The punchline of the story:

Alexey says that it can be mended with a cement made of the white of eggs. If such a recipe is known in Moscow, please send it to me.

I'd like to think of these augmented figures as retorts to this thinking, as armoured, self-contained figurines, whose condition is clear to themselves and opaque to us. Perhaps they might constitute an insurgent revolutionary army one day.

Philosophy of Furniture

Enlightenment upsets the household arrangements which spirit carries out in the house of faith, by bringing in the goods and furnishings belonging to the world of Here and Now. [Hegel; *Phenomenology of Spirit*]

Taking the P***

Marcel Duchamp was co-editor of a magazine called *The Blind Man*. In the issue of May 1917 he published an anonymous letter – probably written by himself and the Dadaist Beatrice Wood – in support of his much pilloried readymade *Fountain*, which had originated as a porcelain urinal. The letter was written apparently by a blind reader, who had not been able to see the controversial object, but nonetheless expressed ‘blind solidarity’. John Roberts in his recent book *The Intangibilities of Form*, points out the importance of this gesture: the blind see the readymade rather than the seeing being blinded by the readymade’s refusal to return the spectator’s gaze, that is to say to provide aesthetic pleasure. *Fountain*, he states, does not want to be seen by the seeing, because they see blindly. The blind see differently and in good faith. Roberts takes the notion of blindness further – we are all blind in the face of *Fountain*, for we cannot see it. We can only see its substitutes, its photograph, its myth, which grows with each passing year. Indeed even in 1916 two of Duchamp’s readymades on display at the Bourgeois Gallery in New York, *In Advance of the Broken Arm* and *Traveller’s Folding Item* were mistaken for ordinary objects and so unseen. Roberts writes: ‘The readymade blinded at birth gradually makes its way into the light’. The art object can move from its material presence to its immaterial, imagined status without any loss of visibility, at least of the kind that matters. Do these figurines continue that play with blinding and insight, readymadeness and remaking? If the readymades here cannot see, is blindness being elevated as a, or the, principle of aesthetic experience?

Ornament and Crime

Decoration here is a supplement as well as the thing itself. Is it structurally something like Hegel’s negation of the negation, here the decoration of the decoration. That which was decorated or ornamented suddenly shows itself to be possibly none such, for it can be further embellished, thereby making us wonder what ornament is at all and where it starts. What is necessary in these objects and what is enhancement? Is that not the question that has been posed again and again by art, as it seeks to divide itself conceptually from art. Ornament is crime, said Adolf Loos, in relation to primitive desire for tattoos and bold colours in his treatise which sounds the battle-cry against the late-19th century penchant for amassing useless, decorative objects. He favoured the sleek unadorned lines of modern functionalist architecture. Modernism contains a multitude of references to furnishings, fashions, tidying-up and clutter. Modernism and modernity appear at the close of a period of bourgeois expansion which had involved the production and accumulation of commodities for kitting out the private interior and establishing the practical ideology of the home and family. As critical discourse, strands in Modernism denounced the ornament as feminizing, fake, inauthentic, primitive, luxurious and decadent. Rejecting naturalistic appearances, Futurists, Cubists, Constructivists sniffed out the Kantian *Ding-an-sich*. These movements had their design counterparts: De Stijl, Bauhaus, Le Corbusier and others likewise spoke a language of absolutes, purity, necessity and clean lines for their pared-down ought-objects, devoid of ‘any superfluous elements’², definitely designed *not* to adorn dusty Victorian drawing-room mausoleums.

What then of the ornamenting of the ornament? Is it a self-consciousness wrestling back for art of this field of beauty, useless pleasure, sheer aesthetic indulgence? Or is it a playful reference to a return to an art before modernism, in the Renaissance, when ostentatious use of lustrous materials – gold, or even more so, ultramarine – both embodied and signified the wealth of the commissioning patrons. These laid-on materials enhanced the beauty of

² From an INKhUK paper, setting out the position of the Constructivists. Quoted in Lodder and in Fer, Batchelor, Wood.

the artwork and reflected back the power of the patron. In *Lands End* the laid-on materials are not demanded by patrons. Nor are they any more valuable than the Royal Doulton mass-produced figurines they gild. In any case, we are confronted with ornaments that are further adorned. That which was mass-produced, kitsch, in other words, becomes unique, art in other words.

What sort of change do the additions to the eyes of the figurines in *Lands End* bring about? Perhaps rather than disable them, as the rivet does the Chinama, changing the whole distribution of power in the sitting room, they enable them to be for themselves and not for us, to turn inwards, to propose an interiority of the figurines that we could only wish for to enjoy in such undisturbed a manner. The adornments blind the figures. Or they give them an expanded field of vision – one in which they see a beauty denied to us – sparkly, ribbony, sequined, seeing something in front of their noses, the thing we might be most likely to overlook. Perhaps these embellishments are the virtual reality headsets of the future – that see into the future, or the past or are looking at us right now in this room. Perhaps it is a vision of seeing itself – or seeing art, which is perhaps one of the times when we are compelled to see the thing right in front of our nose and to look, to look actively and properly and closely and with conscious intent.

Repetition, Repetition, Repetition

An epigram by Kierkegaard concentrates on the utterly iterative power of the mirror. It reflects a continually repeated sameness into the middle class interior, and thereby destroys the fantasies of the *Privatmann*, of individual autonomy. The ever-same monotony of bourgeois existence is mirrored endlessly in these frames. The notion of private is exposed as fake, with the same citizens pouring the same cups of tea from same dinner services in same plush dining rooms, heavy with the weight of supposedly individual traces – cases covered in monograms.

Dawn of the Dead

Adorno made frequent reference to the *Dingwelt*, the thing-world, a dialectical zone where people may succumb to objectivity. Lukács developed the term reification to specify the particular quality of thingness and self-becoming-a-thing amongst the mounting piles of commodity-junk. Walter Benjamin, motivated by a surrealist-tinged love of flea-markets, obsolete technologies and outmoded detritus, amassed excerpts and reflections on 19th and 20th century clutter. His archaeology of modernity trawled through the junk of the 19th century, in order to locate the ambivalent nature of objects – their encoded oppressiveness and their submerged dreams. Objects in the interior, deposits of material culture might, these materialists insist, be the most socially symptomatic and legible, and, though truly in need of cashing in or redemption, definitely not to be disdainfully ignored.³ Kitsch, despite its, or because of its, cheap, mass-production and its occasional phoney aristocratic pretensions, or its gilding with emotional overloads, enables investigation of social desire, a psychoanalysis of things, as utopian antidote to the reification of people. An illustration of this: In his early 1930s study of Kierkegaard, Adorno notes how, in *Diary of a Seducer*, the objects in a room turn ersatz. Adorno describes how in the age of industrial mass production the self is taken over by commodities..., but the alienness of belongings turns into an expression of what is lost but most craved – the lamp as flower – a piece of organic life, with tints of the orient, signalling the home of desire, the room a ship, the window frames a blue ocean – a glimpse of eternity.⁴ Objects occupy, that is, preserve, the space of our most desperate longings. Such

³ Kitsch was interpreted in its broadest sense: throwaway culture and overwrought interior fittings. The important aspect was simply the fact of mass-reproduction.

⁴ See Benjamin, >Das Interieur, die Spur< G.S.V.1 p290-p291

a take on clutter and its clues was animated by a power-defying pursuit of the 'exotic of the everyday'⁵ and a fixation on such protagonists of the urban wastelands as rag-pickers, fictional detectives, and the rather more interiorized figure of the collector who carries out what Benjamin terms 'a form of practical remembering'.⁶ Of course, all these figures - at least in their theoretical forms - transmute the objects they come across - the rag-picker re-values things outcast from commodity circulation, the detective reads them for forensic clues to human existence and activity, the collector tries to strip things of their commodity character, conferring on them a lover's value and releasing them from the 'drudgery of being useful'.⁷ And materialist theorists, how do they execute Kracauer's 'trick', the transformation of the things they redeem: a redemption which is dialectical, in that it preserves, annuls and raises to a higher level? When Benjamin noted in the 'Collector' file of his *Arcades Project*, a study of 19th century consumer capitalism: 'Failed material: that is the lifting of the commodity into the state of allegory'⁸, he was indicating that theoretical investigation of material culture offered the only starting point for the necessary release from its reifying clutches.

Adorno, Benjamin, Bloch, Kracauer, Franz Hessel all focus in on the thing-world, the phantasmagoric, frozen world of commodity-forms which beset people, only then to be chucked, through technical change and economic stimulus, onto the junkheap of the outmoded. It is kitsch which is most rapidly used up, as befits the push-pull product-tempo of economic turnaround: who remembers, for example, the poems of Eddie Guest or the sadistic-imperialist words of popular parlour sing-alongs, the *Indian Love Lyrics*, two of Greenberg's 1939 examples of kitsch? Benjamin picked up on the extraordinary power of the soon-to-be-outmoded, not just in terms of how much sentiment people invest in the cheap objects of their environment, but also in terms of the relationship between all that stuff and art, in truth the most interesting avant-garde art. It is evident that Benjamin's list of Surrealist muses, which includes stars of stage, screen, billboard advertisements, illustrated magazines, has not survived much better than Greenberg's instances of a failure in taste: 'Luna, the Countess Geschwitz, Kate Greenaway, Mors, Cleo de Merode, Dulcinea, Hedda Gabler, Libido, Friederike Kempner, Baby Cadum, Angelika Kaufmann'.⁹ No deep-freezer of tradition preserves it, and yet the Marxist modernists insist it has been most absorbent, the site of fantastic projections, and therefore social and political meaning. And not just meaning, but stimulation for an urban poetry, a lyricism of the transformed everyday. For Benjamin, modernist culture emerges out of this kitsch, picked up off the streets and cut out of the screens, not animated by so-called eternal values of art or the high-minded quest for a purity of form and abstracted truth. Benjamin's modernism breeds off the mass-consumable detritus borne of and condemned to short life by capitalism. Produced by it, modernism nibbles away at capitalism's pretensions, from within, like the proletariat, commodity-producers of clotted labour - a zombie-repressed always returning. Greenberg had recognized that industrial Western culture spawns simultaneously the avant-garde and kitsch, but his response was not generous.¹⁰ Benjamin thought, in contrast, not that the two evoked a slaying to the death, but that they were symbiotic.

⁵ Kracauer, cited in Frisby >Fragmente der Moderne< p118.

⁶ See Walter Benjamin, G.S.V.1 p271

⁷ 1935 expose Paris, die Hauptstadt des XIX Jahrhunderts p53.

⁸ See Benjamin, G.S.V.1 p274, H2, 6.

⁹ See >Pariser Passagen< <1> p1006. Greenaway was an illustrator of children's books and a name associated with a Victorian style of children's clothes; Baby Cadum was a figure from Cadum's soap, Libido - life instinct of Freud.

¹⁰ From >Avant-Garde and Kitsch<, quoted in >Art In Theory<, edited by Paul Wood and Charles Harrison.

The Six Million Dollar Woman

The art historian T.J. Clark has discussed Jackson Pollock's 1950 exhibition of drip paintings at the Betty Parsons Gallery in terms of scale. The paintings displayed were either gi-normous or tiny. There was no middle-size. For Clark, the show as a whole makes clear that the big and the small have meaning as qualities only in their relation to each other. Furthermore, the paintings 'instinct with their time', as he puts it. The time with which they resonate is the time of space exploration - setting out into the vast cosmos beyond human scale - and nuclear weaponry - the smallest reaction of particles that can cause vast and dramatic change. The endlessness of detail in the drips, the vast mural-size, the absence of human figures - all this suggests cosmic space. Then again in the ahuman, micro-details of splashes and splats something explosive is dramatised. If we were to ask how *Lands End* instincts with its time, what might we say, along these lines. It too plays with scale - with the details set against the greatness of the structure. We could see this as a social arrangement - a fragmented society of atomised individuals, each gyrating in their own separate spheres, yet each repeating the same fundamental activities, for all their superficial differences. Is that peculiar to our moment? More specifically some reviewers have spoken of the figures with their adornments as genetically modified or mutated. Is this a vision of cosmetically adjusted celebrities? Or more hi-tech than that - a vision of Frankenstein science hybrids grown in laboratories? Does it begin with a little enhancement and end with full body prosthesis? Are these future cyber-selves to be picked off the shelf or from catalogues? Is this a poetic vision of that burgeoning research field variously called bionics, biomimetics, biognosis, biomimicry or bionical creativity engineering - advanced technologies imitating synthetically the processes of nature to replicate - or more likely - enhance natural functions.

Animal, Vegetable, Mineral

Royal Doulton figurines are often made of bone china, a technique developed in order to reduce the importation of Porcelain from China, which was heavily taxed at the end of the 18th century, as well as supply a growing middle class market. Bone china is made of animal bone, first processed to remove the meat that clings to it. This is taken off for pet food. The glue that adheres to the bone is removed too. The stripped bone is heated to 1000 C to burn off any remaining organic material and sterilise it. What remains, the bone ash, is ground finely. The expulsion of the organic leaving solely the inorganic then, ironically, is moulded into an imitation of life. Or should all that be in the past tense - because until last year most of Royal Doulton's wares are manufactured in the Far East and Indonesia. And last month the group that owns the Royal Doulton brand, Waterford-Wedgwood, crashed as a result of financial turmoil. If these ones that have been rescued as art can stay on their display plinths, then they might yet become some of the few survivors.