

## **SUMMER LETTER 2007**

### **ROXANE ZARGHAM**

The visual theme and conceptual methodology that I am most interested in investigating throughout the next year is what can broadly be defined as “the in-between.” The gray area provides a range of possibility between point A and point B. In this transitory state, an object or form is neither one thing or another. The middle thus provides a dense breathing ground for mutation, evolution, process and flux. Whether it be in graphic design, video, fashion or architecture, some of the most provocative pieces are to me those that revel in their lack of identity by living on that edge or in that void. This approach to creating work appeals to me because it can be applied to time, space and form.

Last year I made a photographic book that particularly struck a nerve in me and made me realize my interest in hybrids and malleable forms, especially when created using the body. I spliced my image with that of recognizable figures (actors, writers, artists) to create new personas, which I called “Monsters.” This kind of self-inflicted grafting references the works of artists such as Cindy Sherman who live in a state of flux by constantly changing their identities. Orlan, an artist belonging to the Carnal Art movement, considers herself as a work in progress. She documents her surgically transformed body at every stage in her art. The way I’d like to draw from these sources is to think about change over time and how that has and can be applied to my body of work.

Another way in which I am thinking of the “in-between” is in terms of the language that it engenders. Prefixes such as demi-, mid-, quasi-, pseudo- and trans-, or even words like other and neither, immediately give more strength to this over-arching concept and can possibly allow me to continue my research in different directions. For example demi- makes me think of centaurs and fantastical creatures that are supernatural hybrids, while trans- harks back to my interests in bodily modifications, identity and different states of being.

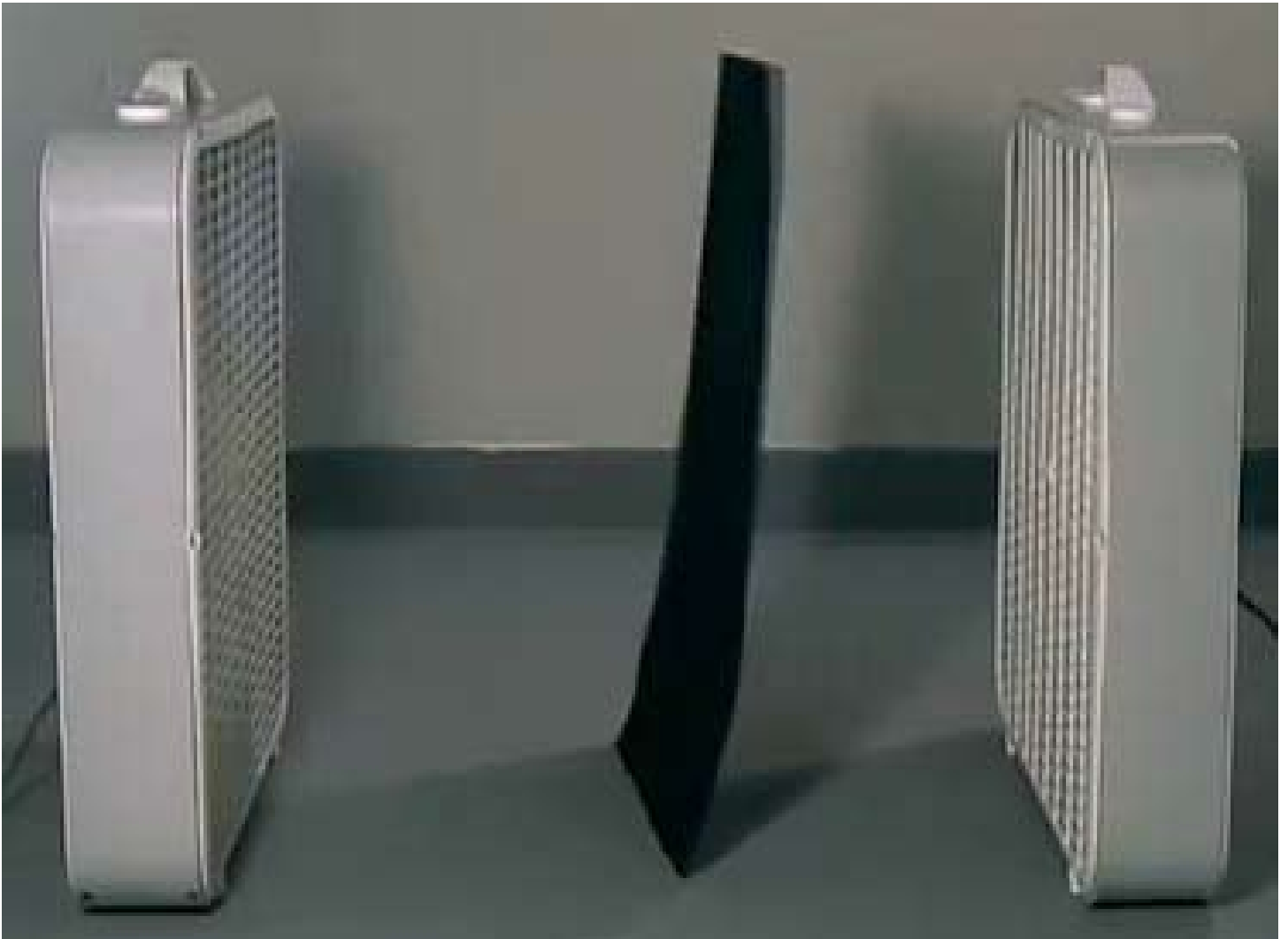
In terms of using “the in-between” as a way to investigate time and space, I mainly reference artist Bas Jan Ader. To me he literally “let’s go” (by falling from trees, roofs, hills) of his work and surrenders his control. In the past my work has always been very directed and controlled and I want to be able to find a middle ground where it can generate itself yet still have a clear direction. Throughout the year, I hope to continue developing this visual and conceptual methodology in order to create a body of work that is relevant to my interests and allows me to continually change over the course of the next year.



**“BROKEN FALL (ORGANIC)”**  
**BAS JAN ADER**  
**PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILM, 1971**

Bas Jan Ader’s work can be understood as an experience arising out of resignation. He confronts us with the point of no return, the point of letting go. Risk and failure is inherent in his series, making it all the more palpable.

This work spurred my fascination with performances that clearly expose accidents, involuntary results and unnatural states. When I create performance work, I look for these moments of tension and vulnerability.



**"OH THIS COULD GO ON FOREVER"  
JEAN ALEXANDER FRATER  
PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO, 2005**

This video is as mesmerizing as it is irritating for its simplicity. A black piece of paper is placed between two identical fans turned on to blow air at the same speed. The paper is stuck in the middle for as long as forever but never has the same

form at any given time. The little dance that it does for us is a really great visual manifestation of the state of flux and the idea of the "in-between" that I am interested in.



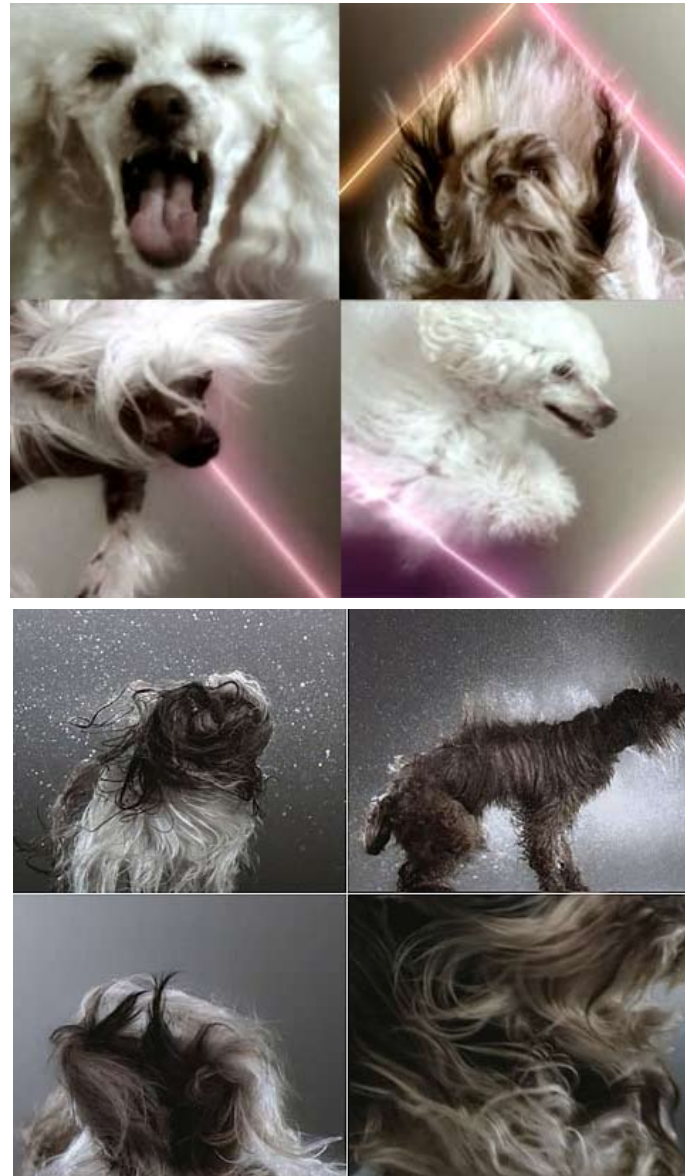
**"THROUGH THE WIND"**  
**ANINA SCHENKER**  
**PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO, 2003**

Anina Schenker shows images of herself as her face is pulled in all directions by 180km/hr winds. I find this kind of imagery incredible and rather hilarious. I love what happens to her body and the lack of control that she has over her

facial expressions. Her body of work explores this theme further for example when she films herself in sub-zero temperatures as we watch icicles form and the changes in her face over an hour of exposure.



**"BLACK MOUNTAIN" AND "THE PASSIONS"**  
**BILL VIOLA**  
**VIDEO, 2000**



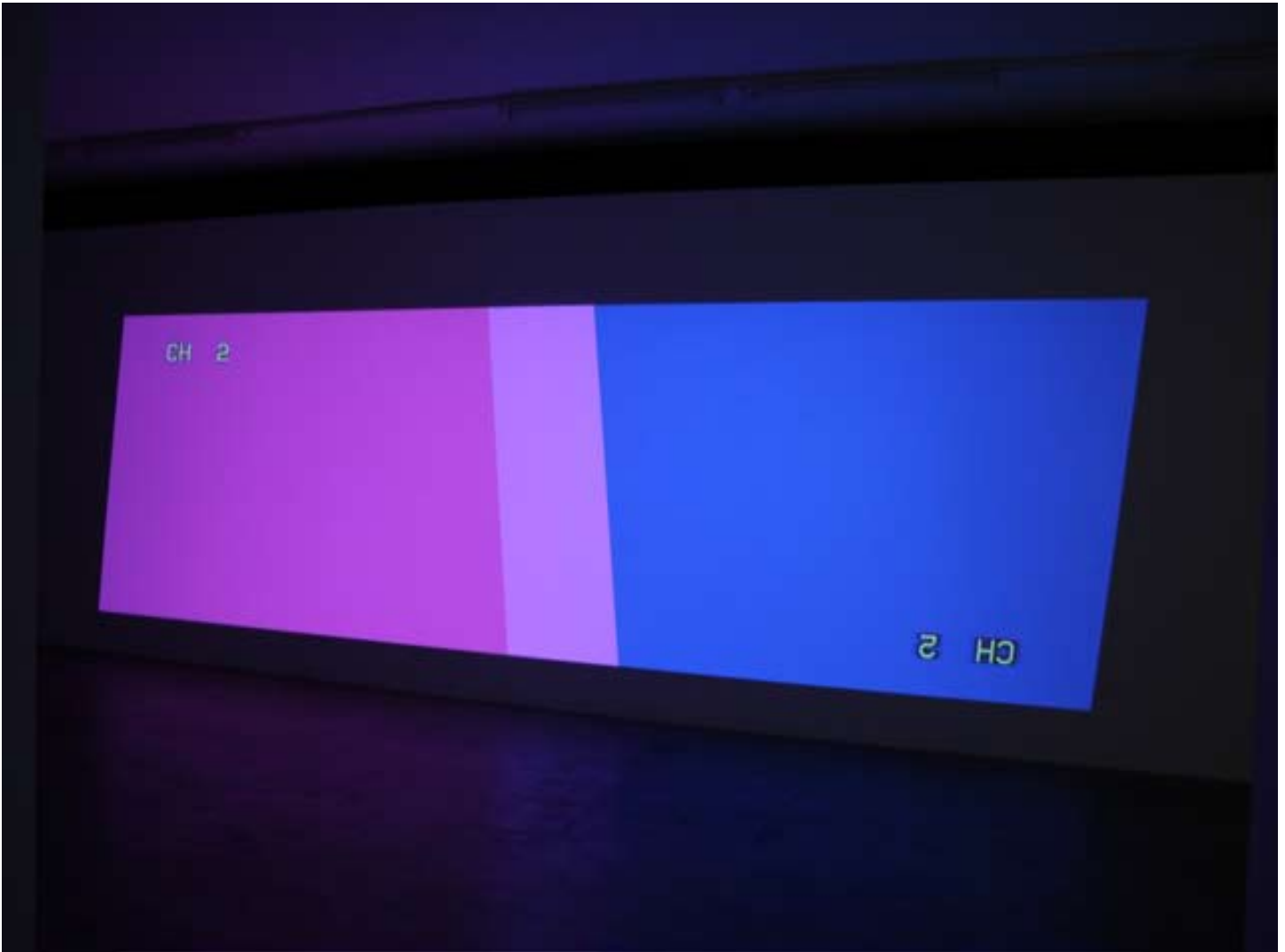
**"BIRDS"**  
**PLEIX**  
**MUSIC VIDEO, 2006**

The video work of Bill Viola is an endless source of inspiration for me. Slowing down time to an almost imperceptible speed, when a second lasts a minute, he creates large scale videos that depict the effects of intense emotions. While it clearly referenced Viola's work, the Pleix music video made me incredibly happy as it still created these amazing images of dogs in mid-air.



**“ME KISSING VINOODH (PASSIONATELY)”**  
**INEZ VAN LAMSWERDE**  
**C-PRINT ON PLEXIGLASS, 1999**

When you're kissing someone (passionately) you certainly hope that the other person is truly there. In this image there's something incredibly powerful in the simple gesture of erasing a half. Somehow now the act of kissing gets suspended mid-way and becomes both sweet and sour.



**"TWO KEYSTONED PROJECTORS"  
CORY ARCANGEL  
PROJECTION, 2007, MOMA NEW YORK.**

Although this piece is a quite literal visual translation of "the in-between," it demonstrates how simply it can be done. As in the video piece "Oh, This Could Go on Forever" by Jean Alexander Frater, a simple and arrogant gesture, here using light and default technology, is enough. This is an

example where to me brute and minimal use of mirroring, symmetry and asymmetry play to create a piece that is unexpected and simply beautiful.



**"SOLO-PARA-ADULTOS.COM"**  
**LEO VAN MUNSTER**  
**WEB SITE, 2005**

When I came across this Web site, it struck me as a brilliant and funny way of displaying an image. Everytime you refresh the Web page, a new pornographic image is loaded into the browser window. However the image is displaced in each

division, never fully revealing itself, unless one has a lot of time and a love for scroll bars. As obnoxious as it is brilliant, I like the idea of conveying information through "bits and pieces," much like a non-linear novel or film.



**“CINDY SHERMAN”  
PHOTOGRAPHY**

There is no doubt that Cindy Sherman continually lives in an “in-between” state. Her identity is completely elusive. She is never fully the person that she is embodying, and she is never fully herself.



**"THE DRUMMER"**  
**LORETTA LUX**  
**2000**

Loretta Lux creates surreal images of children that are bizarrely adult-like. The settings, colors and faces combine to create very subtle and disturbing scenes. The portraits of these children seem frozen in time and freakishly robotic.



**"BLUR"**  
**DILLER SCOFIDIO + RENFRO**  
**MEDIA PAVILION. SWISS EXPO 2002.**

Diller and Scofido created an unnatural cloud in the middle of a lake for the 2002 Swiss Expo. The skin of the "building," a cloud, conceal the structure within it. From above, this installation almost looks like a storm-formation.

The cloud started to move and behave depending on the external conditions and was therefore never static and always elusive without ever leaving the structure of the building.

**LYNN, GREG. "ANIMATE FORM" AFTERALL BOOKS, MAY 2006.**

I am less interested in the proliferation of "blobby" models and "shwooshy organic" end-result structures in architecture that this book points towards. It is the time-based way of thinking of space, the intelligent materials and the sequential process of architecture that Greg Lynn discusses that is relevant to me as a conceptual methodology that can be applied to my work within design.

**VERWOERT, JAN. "BAS JAN ADER: IN SEARCH OF THE MIRACULOUS." AFTERALL BOOKS, MAY 2006.**

AND  
**DAALDER, RENE. "HERE IS ALWAYS SOMEWHERE ELSE. THE LIFE OF BAS JAN ADER." DOCUMENTARY, 2007.**

In this book Jan Verwoert discusses the underlying themes of Bas Jan Ader's art. In his small body of work, shown in its entirety in "Here is Always Somewhere Else. The Life of Bas Jan Ader.," and especially in his performance series "Broken Fall," the artist exposes his vulnerability and honest, albeit predicted, failures. Lack of control and danger are approaches that I hope to inherit from Bas Jan Ader.

**KAFKA, FRANZ. "THE METAMORPHOSIS." WRITTEN IN 1915.**

The thought of morphing into an insect never quite settled in my stomach. Becoming something else and loosing your identity are fascinating themes that many artists explore. Kafka's style of writing emphasizes the incomprehensibility, boredom and eternal languish of the transformation by his use of long sentences, often more than a page long. I am most interested in the styles and ways of recording moments of metamorphosis and capturing out-of-body experiences and absurd states of being.

**SCHWARTZ, HILLEL. "THE CULTURE OF THE COPY" ZONE BOOKS, 1998.**

The chapters that are most interesting and inspiring to me in this book discuss topics such as second natures, bipolar disorders, twins, clones and facsimiles.

**KWINTER, SANFORD. "ARCHITECTURES OF TIME" THE MIT PRESS, SEPTEMBER 2002.**

This dense book discusses the relationships between history, space, time and ontological understanding. The main idea that I take with me from this book is that there can be a way of looking at history as a non-linear series of events. He describes us as being in an infinite state of flux where repetition is a constant and where perfection and definition are trivial.

**"TWO FACED: THE CHANGING FACE OF PORTRAITURE." SYSTEMS DESIGN, APRIL 2007.**

This is one of my favorite new books about self-portraits and mirror-images.

**VIOLA, BILL. "REASONS FOR KNOCKING AT AN EMPTY HOUSE" THE MIT PRESS, DECEMBER 1995.**

The publication of Bill Viola's sketchbooks from 1973 to 1994 gave an insight to his daily notes, activities, thoughts, and some bad ideas. The ubiquitous published journals of artists and celebrities are completely useless when they are edited and copy checked. I prefer the unorganized and completely honest musings of Bill Viola. Amidst his beautiful writing and gorgeous descriptions, his unfinished works or unrealized ideas allow me to truly understand his way of thinking.

**CARSON, ANNE. "DECREATION" KNOPF, SEPTEMBER 2005.**

I'll never know if I read this book in its entirety because there is no beginning or end. Non-linear format of a collection of poems, essays, operas and thoughts never allows for a continuous flow to be played out. There's a nonchalance and messiness to this book that is very endearing. I am very attracted to Anne Carson's method of "bits and pieces."

**THE FILMS OF DAVID LYNCH**

While doing a year-long study on David Lynch's complete body of work, I realized that all this films collided into a sort of otherworld. All the films have recurring characters, colors, objects and lines that start to form a new film on its own. I can remember being confused as to which film I was watching, it could have been any or all of them. Having a body of work, here a series of films, that creates its own vernacular and world in which someone can get lost in is pretty impressive.