

Directions for Use

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Function: *Necessity*

“The history of science and thought gives pride of place to mathematics, cosmology, and physics—noble sciences, rigorous sciences, sciences of the necessary, all close to philosophy: one can observe in their history the almost uninterrupted emergence of truth and pure reason. The other disciplines, however—those, for example, that concern living beings, languages, or economic facts—are considered too tinged with empirical thought, too exposed to the vagaries of chance or imagery, to age-old traditions and external events, for it to be supposed that their history could be anything other than irregular. At most, they are expected to provide evidence of a state of mind, an intellectual fashion, a mixture of archaism and bold conjecture, of intuition and blindness.” —Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*¹

“This is true: a critical and systematic and typological history of framing seems possible and necessary. But the angle in general, the quadrangle in particular will not be just one of its objects amongst others. Everything that is written here is valid for the logic of parergonal bordering in general, but the privilege of cadre (frame), though it seems more fortunate in the Latin than in the Germanic languages, is not fortuitous.” —Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*²

While support seems to encompass the most ordinary of activities, its discourse appears to be lacking; this project arose from the resulting solitude of this practice, and forms the necessity for the creation of a bibliography of support.

Cities filled with scaffoldings and building sites own no books about them in their libraries. The history of framing is impossible to find, and when we find mention of it, it is only in fragments, few and far between, in out-of-print catalogues and forgotten essays. Exhibitions of anything imaginable are made while the apparatus of exhibition-making remains largely unchallenged. Classification systems impose categories ordering and curbing our thinking while the containers for knowledge, glaring at us in the face, are so integrated they have become invisible. During the rise and fall of the welfare state and its all-encompassing state supports, we did witness

¹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, translated by Alan Sheridan; Foreword to the English edition, p. IX, Pantheon Books, 1970. Originally published as *Les Mots et les Choses*, Éditions Gallimard, 1966.

² Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, translated by Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod, Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1987, pp. 77–78. Originally published as *La Vérité en Peinture*, Flammarion, 1978.

political subjects being flattened into standard categories of needs to be managed, and while applying for grants we forget to ask how funding systems, subsidies, and copyrights change the production of culture. Then, turning to our friends we ask, how can there be no philosophy of friendship that includes women? And everybody knows you can't see the wood for the trees.

While there is apparently no lack of evidence for instances of support, applications of it, resources devoted to it, and expertise in it, its discourse is still largely unaccounted for: nobody to qualify it, legitimise it, inspire us through it. Absent from libraries as a subject, it is not discussed in theory or philosophy; it is neglected as a practice and ignored as a subject. In other words, those engaged in it (and there are many of us) do not have support to guide them in their practice. There is a technical and a physical vocabulary that may belong to the natural sciences, but the deeper voice of support is marginalised to afterthoughts and details, technicalities, exceptional moments of weakness and embarrassing situations. It is shunned and obscured by surrounding disciplines, their dominating concerns and their authorised and exclusive categories of thought—economy, law, art, architecture. Support is derided and discarded by authority, and depoliticised by the mechanisms of it. With no territory fit for inhabitation, the practice of support is coerced into appropriating the gaps and interstices in others, and thus is driven to fragmentation, to intractability, to the borders of the scientific and the shores of the political; support is banished into the shadows of a background that it articulates ... and disappears into.

Support Structures represents an effort to draft and construct a supporting structure for the creation of support's discourse, to house other forms of support structures, and to revive, not a subject in the taxonomic sense, but a particular way of engaging in and with subjects in a desire towards emancipation. The proposition is for a territory to be supportive in, to, with, and through. But in order to do so, we must rid ourselves of a few notions: for example, that what forms a valid subject must be constituted by an object of concern, belong to a specific discipline or reside in a distinct set of entities; support is not a formal knowledge in this sense, but a type of relationship between things, and therefore needs to be read comparatively, rather than symptomatically, across disciplines and regardless of their singular frontiers. Support, with other forms of relationships (like participation, for instance), does not correspond to how knowledge is classified nor does it fit into any of its subdivisions, especially seen that, after all, subjects like literature and politics are recent categories;³ yet it designates something specifically, that should be allowed to create and own a type of knowledge on its own terms. For the purposes of this project, this means

3 "... which can be applied to medieval culture, or even classical culture, only by a retrospective hypothesis, and by an interplay of formal analogies or semantic resemblances; but neither literature, not politics, nor philosophy and the sciences articulated the field of discourse in the seventeenth or eighteenth century as they did in the nineteenth century." Michel Foucault, 'The Unities of Discourse', in *The Archeology of Knowledge*, p. 22.

abandoning some the great divisions that are now familiar to us all (and being able to speak of physical, quantifiable forces in parallel to emotional ones), and gathering successions of seemingly dispersed events according to one of their specific qualities, rather than their nature. This is a necessary undertaking in order to focus on a form of relation, itself an activity — that of supporting — yet traditionally considered both part and subsequent to, the objects it is concerned with. This shift allows us to address what seems to be a disregarded aspect of how and why things appear as they do: what supports, or doesn't support them, and what they in turn support or allow, and through these questions to privilege how support forms political imaginations.

While support might designate the most diverse things, there are, however, similarities in how it appears and works, which are fundamental to relationships between things and objects, knowledge and politics. Furthermore, the fact that support appears as subsequent yet transforms the perception of things, and is so unlikely to offer a subject of research, are exactly the reasons why it has been neglected and needs to be uncovered. What constitutes support is always specific and equalising, and cannot work productively, in the ways described in this book, through a top-down approach; top-down support attempts to flatten difference and corresponds more appropriately to the work of management. There are, however, different things that may be called support, that do not operate as described: these might function as forms of marketing, self-promotion, or welfare in disguise, and are, therefore, not included here. This book, accordingly, only contains a collection of support structures which qualify the relationship of support in the terms described.

Initiating a research project from the position of support makes the question of methodology key to its development. Would it be possible to follow this simple premise of support, as one would follow Ariadne's thread, leading the way through questions of strategy and structure, as an operational process? Could this open an appropriate format for such a project, that could both be implicated in its subject and implicate a public in a productive way, as a participant, or even as a supporter?

What are then, the iterations and gestures of support, the methods, positions, tactics, and the techniques suggested by supporting, that could be both relevant and useable towards cultural production and spatial practice today? And what might possibly be the consequences of such an endeavour; critical collaborative positionings, equalising processes, collective action, re-inventions of models of articulation, organisation and display, actively politicised subjects, re-appropriation of labour processes, re-evaluated means over ends and ... supportive subjects? Can one possibly argue that these models of renewed engagement in the environment aren't both important and relevant, and able to act as enormous carriers of enthusiasm? This is not an offer, however, for a complete guide or all-encompassing methodology for how to act and work together towards change. Far from it, the potential here might be for renewed vocabularies and possibilities for critically intervening in cultural and spatial environments, foregrounding relationships, and through this maybe find a way to stimulate the politics of our relationship to political, cultural, economical, and spatial context.

Support invites us to rethink our relative positions in the world, to reveal their latent or possible political alliances and resistances to people, concepts, ideas or projects, institutions and organisations, with our full critical faculties, but through the conditions of active participation and intervention in an affirmative politics. Support cannot be understood outside its positively active connotation: not positive in terms of a greater good and ethics, but in terms of articulating explicitly what one is for, and positioning oneself as such in the world and in work.

To think through support calls for opening up and reconsidering systems of production and their unspoken rules and ideologies, and provoking their reformulation to happen anew through an ongoing obligation or requirement to address in relationships what is being supported, through what means, and by whom. The complex ramifications of support structures and systems, when exposed, undo simple binary oppositions and work on the inherent relational level between forces. Or to quote Hannah Arendt: “What I propose, therefore, is very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing.”⁴

⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Prologue, p. 5, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.

Function: *Requirements*

“Corporality of speech, the voice is located at the articulation of body and discourse, and it is in this interspace that listening’s back and forth movement might be made: ‘To listen to someone, to hear his voice, requires on the listener’s part an attention open to the interspace of body and discourse, and which contracts neither at the impression of the voice nor at the expression of the discourse. And what such listening offers is precisely what the speaking subject doesn’t say’.” —Denis Vasse, quoted by Roland Barthes⁵

Everything starts from this intuition: that what I define as support structures can release potential, and that support is not to be reduced to a reactive, symptomatic, and redeeming gesture, but that through its uttering we may be able to hear the unspoken, the unsatisfied, the late and the latent, the in-process, the pre-thought, the not-yet manifest, the undeveloped, the unrecognised, the delayed, the unanswered, the unavailable, the not-deliverable, the discarded, the over-looked, the neglected, the hidden, the forgotten, the un-named, the un-paid, the missing, the longing, the invisible, the unseen, the behind-the-scene, the disappeared, the concealed, the unwanted, the dormant.

In order to follow this fragile lead in almost complete darkness, the unequivocal alternative is to not think about support, but—tautologically perhaps—be supportive to it, and think ‘in support’. There can be no discourse on support, only discourse in support. This choice, taken without reservations, entails a rejection of survey, investigation, and analytical study (the study of a subject from a hypothetical outside which positions work on and about its subject but can never speak with it) for the performance of its primary proposition (‘I support’), and can only talk in action through the voice of support.

Hence the impossibility of describing or even explaining support, but the need to expose its operation and propose a structure, a support structure for the formation of its discourse. Here, this is articulated as a manual for support, which offers parallel modes of entry into a field; these entrances are by no means exhaustive and do not attempt to trace boundaries, but are to use for access and orientation. This is the proposal for a discursive site for the exercise of support to take place, and a register where its manifestations can be accounted for, forming the beginning of a bibliography of support structures.

⁵ Roland Barthes, ‘Listening’, in *The Responsibility of Forms*, translated by Richard Howard, New York: Hill and Wang, 1985.

Operation: *Features*

Support Structures is a manual for the exercise of support, and is constituted by collection of entries, accompanied by some introductory and explanatory texts ('Function', 'Operation', 'Features', 'Structures', 'Modes', 'Entries'). *Support Structures* works much like support itself, and therefore these Directions for Use are for the work of support in general as well as for using this book.

Support can occur in the interstices of cultural structures or society, in its ad-hoc formations and

encounters. The entry into the activity of support is already the entry of the subject: it is inevitably also a work of mediation. Defining a relationship such as support aims at a different category towards action—it is concerned with how the political is staged and performed, the inherent ideology of frames and display, organisational forms and appropriation, and their inter-dependencies.

Operating in a work of articulation, the work of support does so linguistically through a grammar, offering some parameters, attributes, and methodologies for how to operate in support.⁶ In the murkiness proper to its territory, some features of support are manifest. These are not to be understood as features in a formal sense, and do not have a common external appearance; they do not trace a silhouette or any possible portrait. They are to be taken in the machinic sense (literally, like a feature in technological equipment) as distinctive characteristics of operation, particular modalities that serve to distinguish them from others of similar types both in activity and tactic: they feature in the work of support. In the practice of everyday life, support structures seem to encompass several of these operational features, more or less self-evident and taken for granted, but usually shrouded by the dominant discourses in their specific situation.

6 Some references have been important to think with, more than important: crucial. They originate from the scarce literature found that was relevant to the subject of support. Made all the more precious and pivotal by its meagerness, they are used here as the text's framework. These are to be considered as the extended family of *Support Structures*: firstly and mostly, Derrida's 'Parergon', then Jean-Claude Lebensztejn's *Amneves*, Didi-Huberman's 'Pan',

and Daniel Arasse's 'Détail'. Nothing would have happened though, without Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, the structure of which has been used as a base to write through.

Support's first operational feature is its proximity. No support can take place outside a close encounter, getting entangled in a situation and becoming implicated in it. A desire emerges, an offer opens; they are expressed in different ways, emitted or projected without or before being fully formed. It is not a word but a call, a longing; it cannot rely on intellectual awareness or abstract information, but requires a proximity and intimacy (one needs to recognise that it is a call and not just noise). This unarticulated moment is one of an intimate, un-named knowledge; someone is listening, someone hears something. This sound that can be made out is already an address (it is heard), but an open one, a discernment; not a judgment nor yet an emotion, but a sudden, initial erasure of distance demanding a decision which cannot in any way be impartial.

But this intimacy entails some violence as well, the violence of support: providing support and being supportive implies not only being in contact, but being right up against the subject of concern, and taking it on-board, making common cause with it. To work in support also means working towards the hypothetical disappearance of a lack, of the need for support, which are the basis for this intimacy in the first place: once more, against it. How does one become intimate with the problem? What is the distance of proximity that support proposes?

This is so close, it is almost too close to see, making it difficult to make out any contours or edges, which appear blurry and soft. Very different from the distant glance, this filling of vision almost prevents it: it obliterates the field (I am consumed by it), and through it, the feeling of an intimacy is expressed. To be this close is never objective, nor impartial; it develops implication, too close to be innocent and too messy to be clear. The work of support is not melancholic, which would be another way to measure distance; it cannot be unengaged, nor without a politics.

"The specific political distinction, to which political actions and notions can be reduced, is the distinction between friend and enemy."⁷ The implication of support is that of the politics of friendship, for to give or receive support is an allegiance, and establishes who and what one can count on, and "if the political is to exist, one must know who everyone is, who is a friend and who is an enemy,"⁸ and this knowing is not in the mode of theoretical knowledge, but in one of a practical identification."⁹ With this possibility being acknowledged comes a responsibility, a commitment: this is what is here called proximity.

7 *The Politics of Friendship*, Jacques Derrida, London: Verso, 2005, p. 85. Translated by Georges Collins from *Politiques de l'Amitié*, Éditions Calixte, Paris, 1994.

8 "The figure of the enemy would then be helpful — precisely as a figure — because of the features which allow it to be identified as such, still identical to what has been determined under this name. An identifiable enemy — that is, one who

is reliable to the point of treachery, and thereby familiar. One's fellow man, in sum, who could almost be loved as oneself: he is acknowledged and recognised against the backdrop of a common history. This adversary would remain a neighbour, even if he were an evil neighbour against whom war would have to be waged." *The Politics of Friendship*, *ibid.*, p. 69.

9 Jacques Derrida on Carl Schmitt, *ibid.*, p. 116.

“Responsible for myself before the other, I am first of all and also responsible for the other before the other. [...] The aporetic question what can ‘to give in the name, to give to the name of the other’ mean could translate into the question of the decision, the event, the exception, sovereignty, and so on. To give in the name of, to give to the name of, the other is what frees responsibility from knowledge [...] For yet again, one must certainly know, one must know it, knowledge is necessary if one is to assume responsibility, but the decisive or deciding moment of responsibility supposes a leap by which an act takes off, ceasing in that instant to follow the consequences of what is—that is, of that which can be determined by science or consciousness—and thereby frees itself (this is what is called freedom), by the act of its act, of what is therefore heterogeneous to it, that is, knowledge. In sum, decision is unconscious—insane as it may seem it involves the unconscious and nevertheless remains responsible.”¹⁰

The deciding moment of responsibility is crucial because it throws the relationship into the public realm, the space of ‘words and deeds’. Supporting is a political relationship, of approval and encouragement, not dissimilar to that of being a friend: embracing or at least being actively interested in, and concerned for, the success of a particular project, undertaking, or venture, which has, inevitably, precedence (even in opposition). This encompasses Montaigne’s perfect friend, but also the friend of the museum, party supporters, football supporters, and the implied positionings that any activity in culture entails. Richter understood this and propounded that the artist’s duty was to be actively political, opposing war and supporting the revolution. If friendship is the principle of the political, support is part of its actualisation.

¹⁰ Jacques Derrida explaining Carl Schmitt, *ibid.*, p. 69.

Features: *Against*

*in opposition with, antagonistic towards,
in anticipation of, touching, in physical contact with*

Manifestations of support occur and come up, appear in configurations few and far between, where and when necessary, always in relationship to forms of organisations and society. Something or someone is supported, while something or someone is supporting, sometimes reciprocally. The activity, the work we are concerned with here is a verb, and therefore connective, relational; it takes place between entities which are themselves localisable. Supporting occurs right next to these objects, additionally to them, and therefore additionally to works already done, to actions previously taken, on the very edge of their being and functionality. Support is right against them, but does not fall either in or out. It remains, needs to remain, with its work, on the periphery, on a permeable edge working within from without: the site of production of the work is the border (and Kant links the beautiful with the bounded).

According to the logic of the parergon, support works much like an “hors-d’oeuvre: an accessory object, foreign and secondary, supplementary, next to, left-over which must not become primary object. Philosophical discourse has always been against the parergon. But what about the against.”¹¹

This definition is useful for us not to refer to where the parergon might be found, but to where its work takes place; this is the crucial task of positioning, in terms of where to speak from, which circumstances and context to embrace. Intrinsic to the labour of support, its place is not as much a set of geographical coordinates as a set of border conditions: social, political, economical, spatial. These are always specific, but also specifically chosen and addressed. Support sits right against the object, in an uncomfortable proximity, so close that it touches. Against functions here in its own paradoxical position, in physical contact, typically so as to be supported or collide with, but also in an opposition which is competitive, jurisdictional, and resistant. Being up against is stating a relationship in contrast (conceptual, visual, political), over and over again as its origin implies.¹² This is a position of active antagonism that only disappears when it does not touch anymore, either through its destruction or, just as

11 [“Objet accessoire, étranger, secondaire, supplement, à côté, reste (left over) ce qui ne doit pas devenir objet principal. Le discours philosophique aura toujours été contre le parergon. Mais qu’en aura-t’il été du contre.”] *La Vérité en Peinture* [*The Truth in Painting*], Jacques Derrida, Flammarion, 1978, p. 63. Translation by author.

12 From Middle English: again + -s (adverbial genitive) + -t probably by association with superlatives (as in amongst).

"It is called up and gathered together as a supplement from the lack—a certain 'internal' indetermination—in the very thing that it comes to frame. This lack, which cannot be determined, localised, situated, arrested inside or outside before the framing, is simultaneously—still using concepts which belong, precisely, to the classical logic of the frame, here to Kant's discourse—both product and production of the frame."¹⁶

Trapped in its logic as a supplement, the parergon works in support, appears as external and yet speaks from within the work, in and to its very core, through the work's inherent, unspoken, lack-of-being.

16 *La Vérité en Peinture [The Truth in Painting]*, Jacques Derrida, Flammarion, 1978, p. 83. Translation by author.

Features: *Temporary*

short-term, passing, provisional, makeshift, acting, standing-in, caretaking

The irresolvable paradox of support is that it relies on appearing temporary in order to sustain and perpetuate the inherent, naïve hope or belief that what is being supported will eventually be able to support itself; support is geared towards the independence of the object of concern, and is a process towards its own obsolescence and disappearance. One cannot deny that such a paradoxical undertaking defines something of an ideal movement, a utopian longing: the exercise of support is the process of investment towards a knowledge, but beyond it, towards a developing will for emancipation.

Scaffolding and other forms of support appear as temporary even though they might be there for a very long time, as if a state of need could only be comprehended as momentary and passing, like illness, which is something one (hopefully) recovers from. While holding something together in order to allow it to support itself, making it whole again¹⁷ (which would appear to be its very *raison d'être*), the presence of support also prolongs the moment of crisis, and carries it through time. The hypothetical moment of need and its particular tragedy is played out implicitly in the very fact that support is there, perpetually reminding us of it.

Support continuously reveals the occurrence of a point of jeopardy, and how it caused a rupture in the autonomy of the object; it exposes the now inherently incomplete state of the supported object, as well as its own somewhat inappropriate and fragile nature. In this way, support appears as unessential, in order to maintain the object's illusion of autonomy, its movement towards independence, the longing for completeness. "Scaffolding looks temporary because the appearance of the scaffolding is not the same as that of the order [...] It is very close to perception itself, the moment we see it, we separate it from the building, and then we reconnect it to the building. And we do that so that we keep a clear distinction in our head, between what is the building and what is the support. We read it as temporary, which is one way of trying to undercut its value. All this goes back to the fantasy of the object as freestanding. What (support) does is unconsciously remind us of the muddle of the world which we don't like, and what we are trying to preserve is the ideologic, the purity in the sense of its autonomy, its ideality."¹⁸

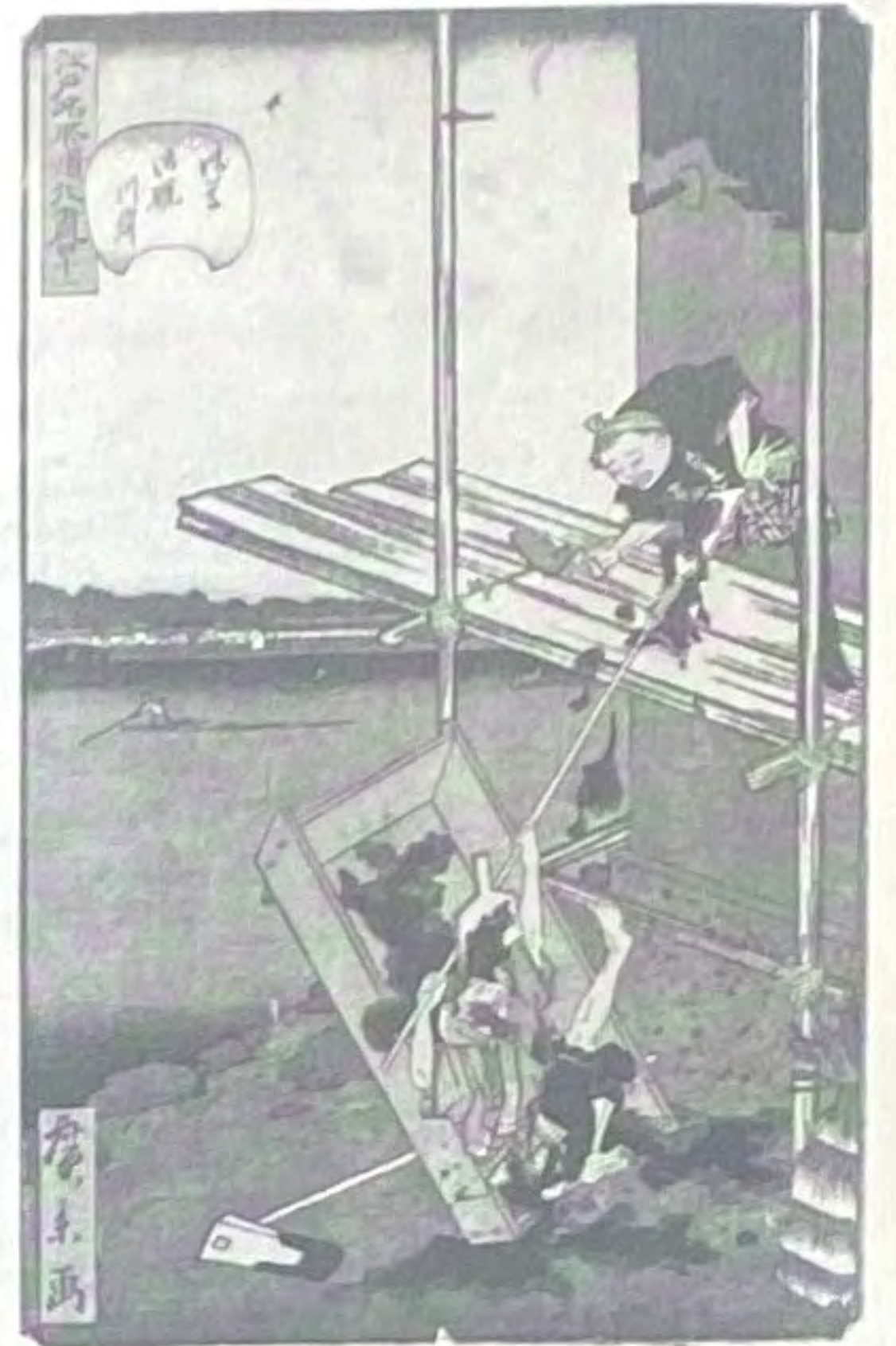
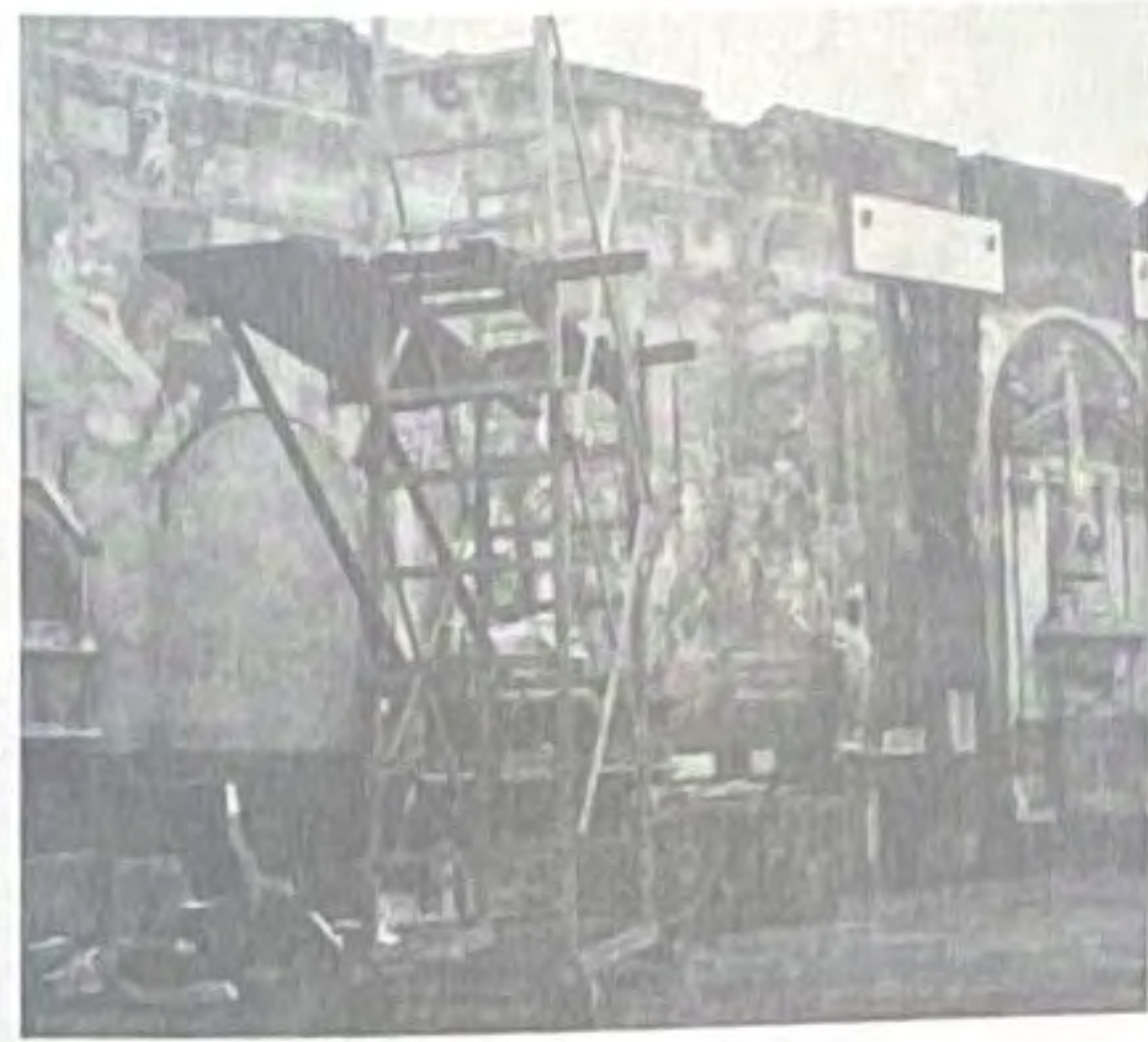
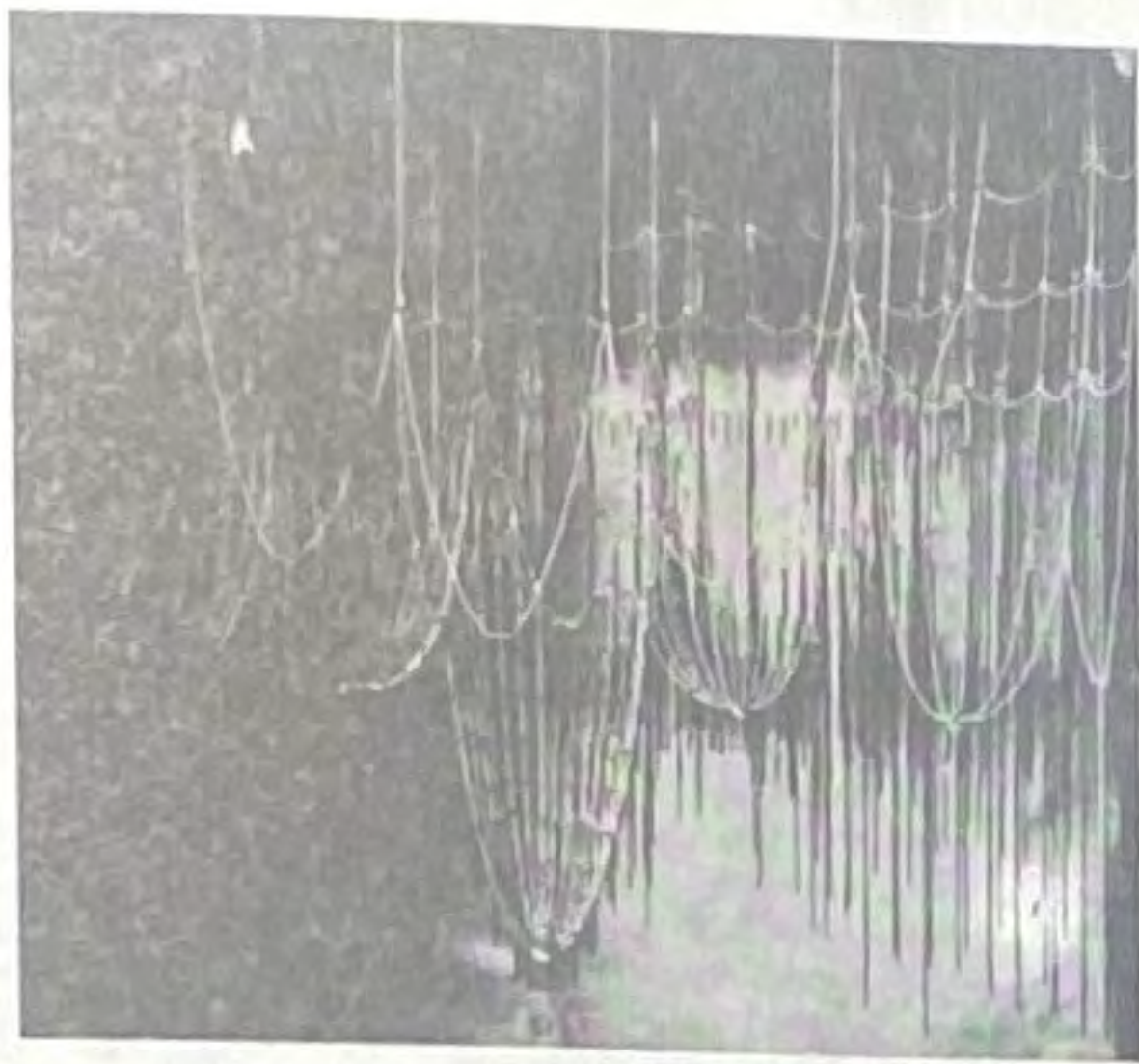
¹⁷ "Our frustration in our attempts to experience the Real Thing, whether we call it 'truth' or 'presence', stems from the desire in Western philosophy to foundationalise. Here is the agenda of traditional Western philosophy: One can only seek truth if one discovers fundamental principles and builds upon them. We should recognise this agenda by now as privileging. The act of privileging requires the privileged term to be foundational, complete, self-sufficient; however, it is none of these things. It is related

to the non-privileged term in a system of mutual differentiation and dependence, or *differance*. The privileged concept is incomplete; it is only a supplement, a signifier, a metaphor. For that reason, we are able to use it against itself, to deconstruct it." — *The Logic of the Supplement, Part II, Deconstructive Practice and Legal Theory*, Jack M. Balkin, 1998.

¹⁸ The author in conversation with Mark Cousins, 27/7/2006.

Support maintains possibilities open, for the object to collapse or for an eventual repair (a making perfect again, back to a mythical original state), in both ways in a projection towards a potential new. Temporariness, therefore, is actually a means of resistance to the occurrence of a solution, and pushes the predictability of an outcome away by stretching its own weakness, and in this way allows a state of possibility (or status quo) to further remain open.

“A frame is essentially constructed and therefore fragile: such would be the essence or truth of the frame. If it had any. The fragility of the frame = its essential constructedness or systemic precariousness, need for incessant recreation/its lack of being ...”¹⁹



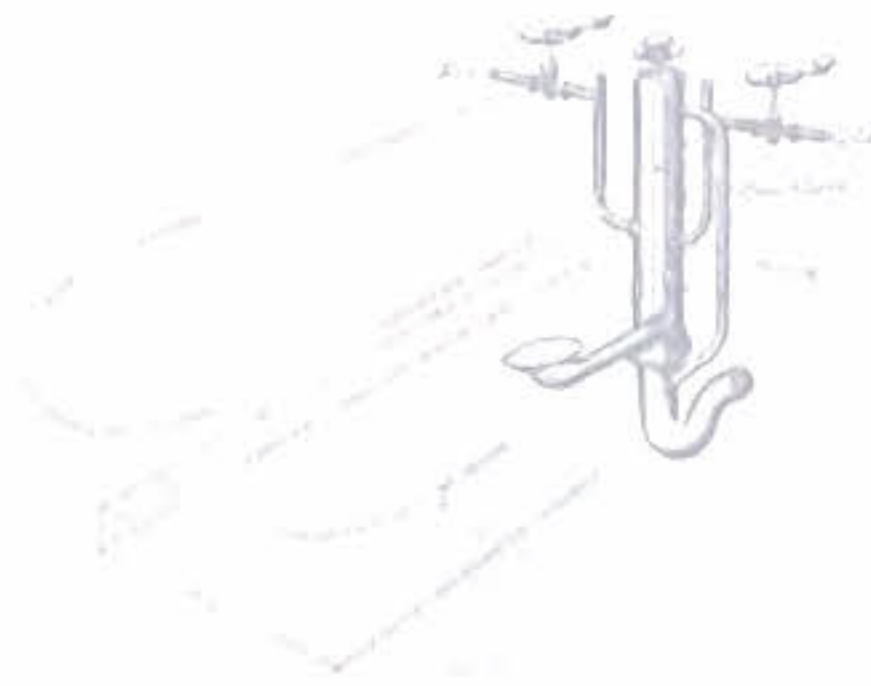
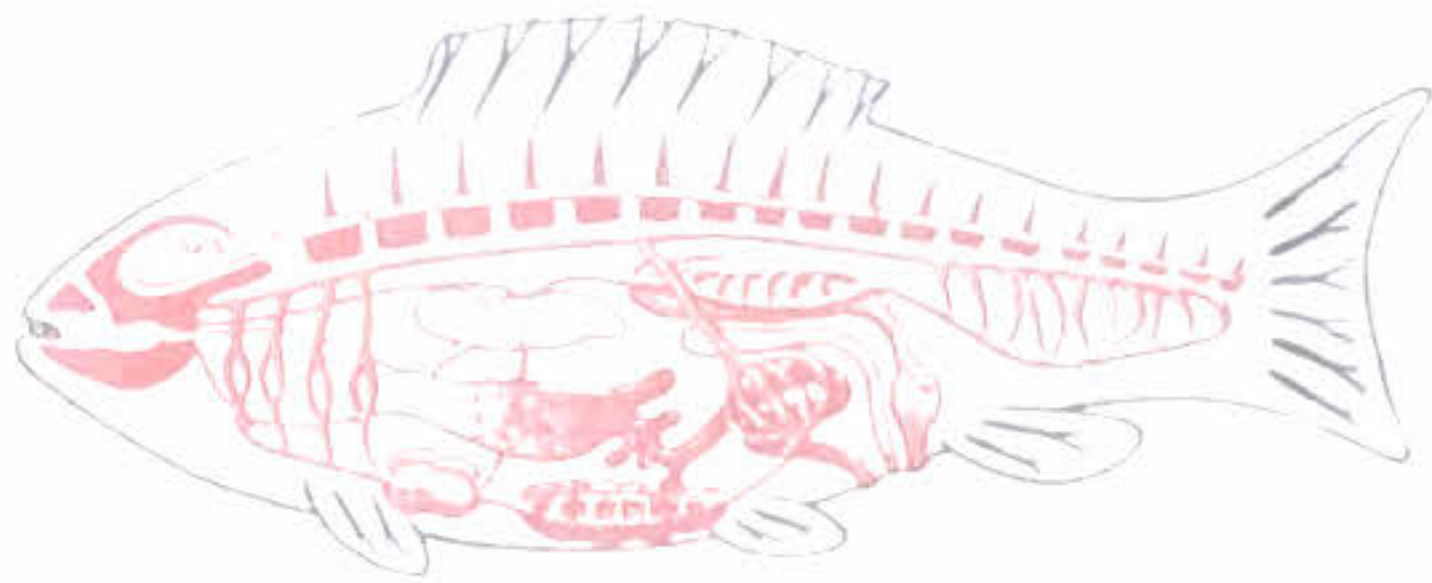
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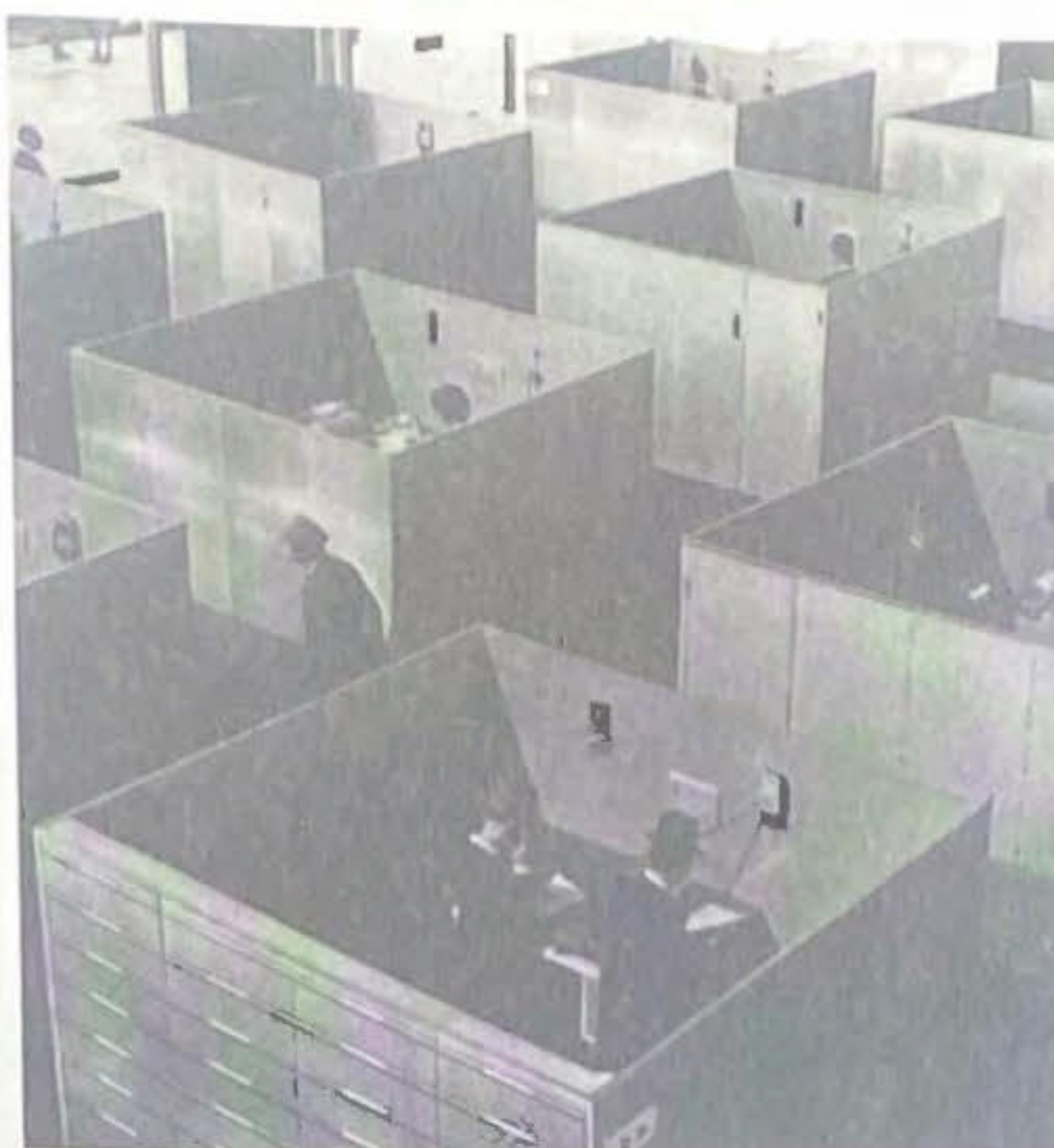
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Thymus thymoides + *Leontopodium alpinum* appear to have the same source of the chemical, i.e. both probably originate in the same source from which other plants also obtain the same chemical. The plants of *Leontopodium alpinum* have been found in other parts of the mountains, but several different *Leontopodium* species have been found in the same area. It is possible that the same source of the chemical is used by other plants of the same area.

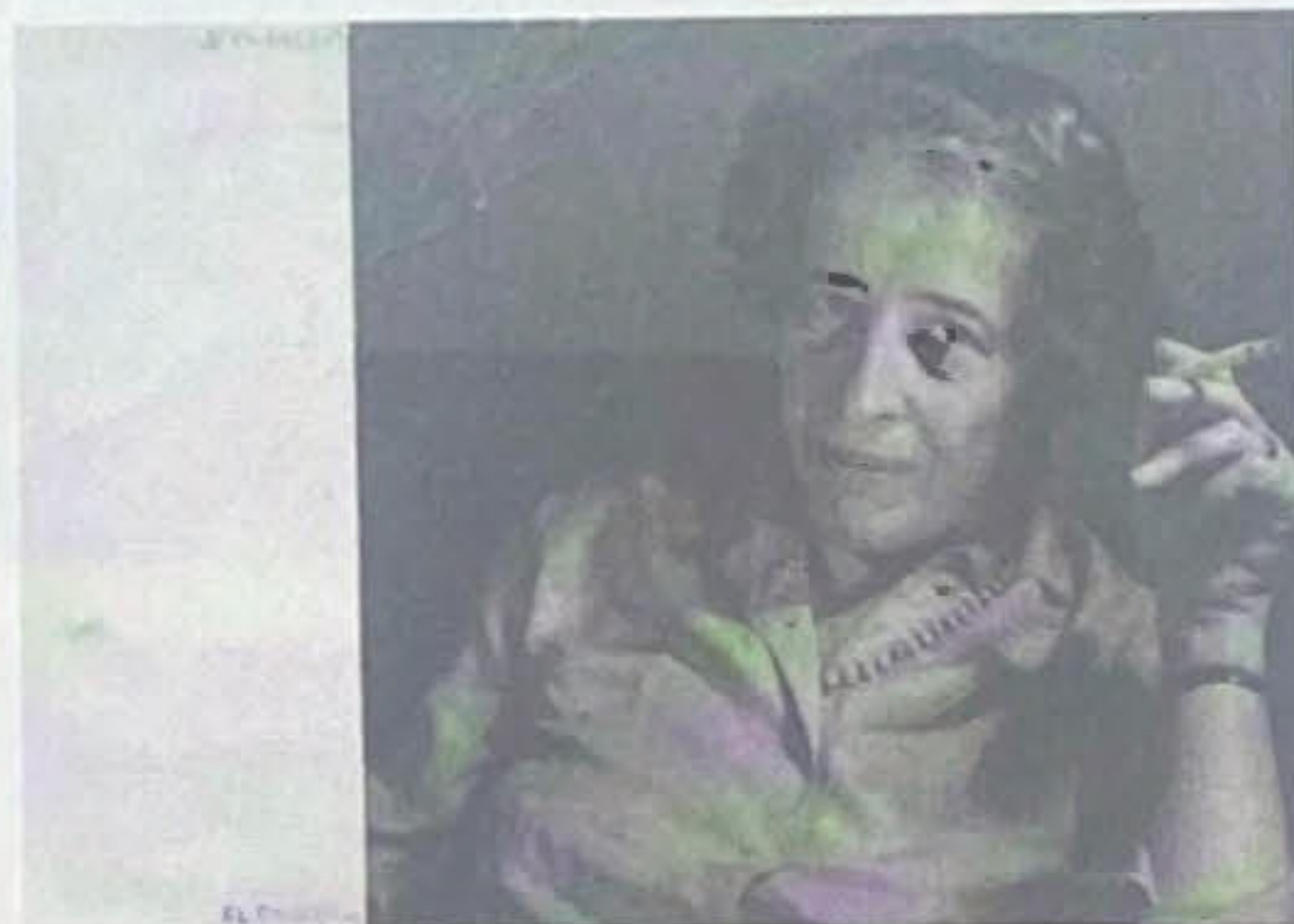
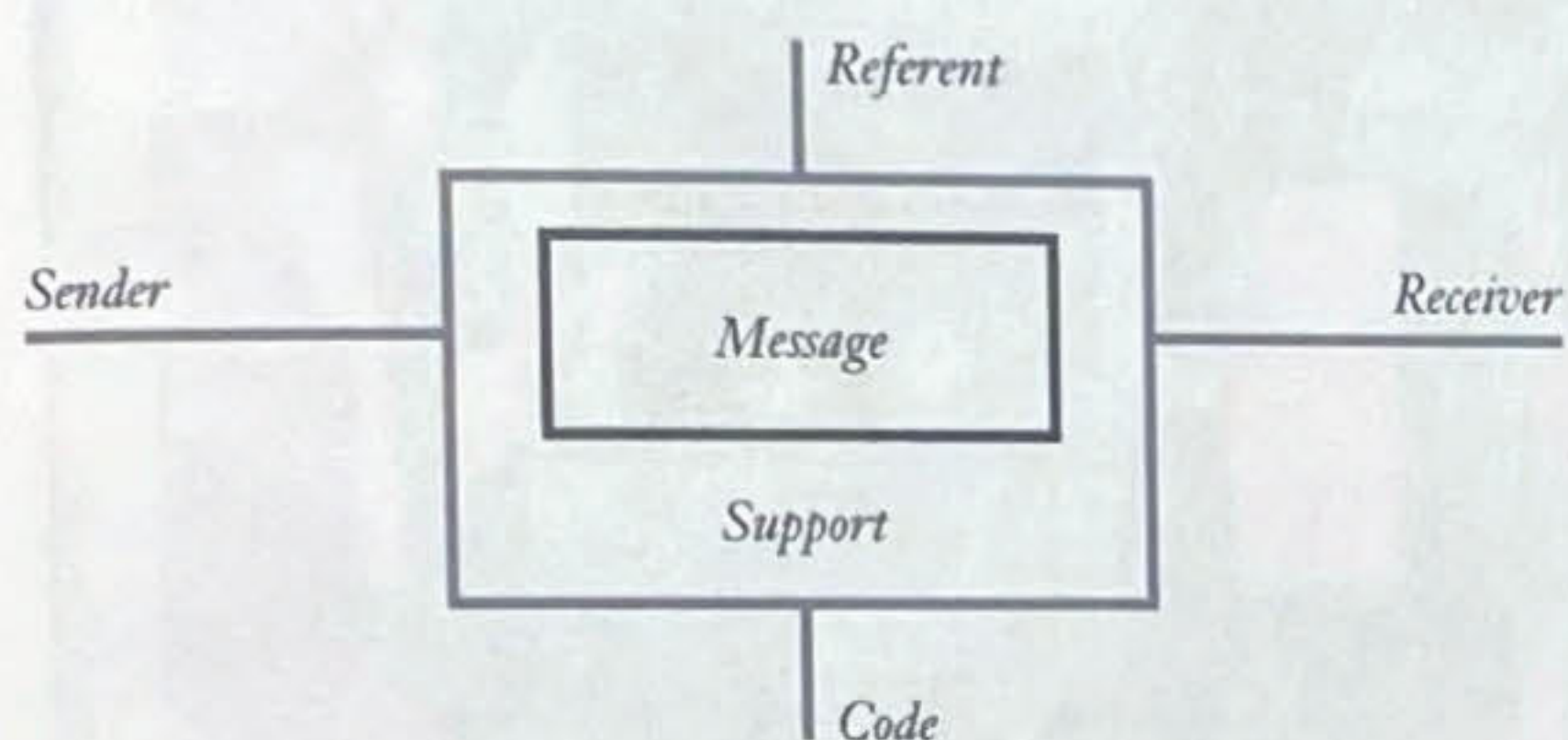
Study was an observational, 7-month study, conducted in 1994-1995, designed to identify subjects at greatest risk of developing asthma. In-person visits to patients' homes were conducted by the study physician. Subjects in the highest risk group were invited to participate in a treatment trial designed to reduce the severity of asthma.

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The Title

The term 'immaterials' has been chosen for two reasons:
– the message cannot be dissociated from the support (material),
and the code itself is inscribed in the support as an orderly
distribution of the discrete elements (grains).





[An offering for May-day 1894 from
Gladstone (cont.)]



1 Antoni Gaudí, hanging chain model for structural skeleton (c. 1890).

2 Restauration tower, Camposanto, Pisa, Italy (c. 1900); Oumayyagashi Asakusa, Hirokage Utagawa (1859).

3 W. H. Fox Talbot, Trafalgar Square London, during the erection of Nelson's Column (1844). "Did you know Trafalgar Square is precisely as old as photography?" David Campany (2009); El Escorial palace complex under construction, Madrid, Spain (1567); Céline Condorelli *Support* (2006).

4 Ludwig Michael von Schwanthaler, Statue of Bavaria in the royal foundry, Ruhmeshalle, Munich, Bavaria, Germany (1848).

5 What we don't like to see in fish; What doesn't appear in architectural drawings; *Wie Funktioniert Das?* (1963); Handwritten marginalia, Aristotle manuscript; Chris Marker *Commentaires* (1961).

6 From Jacques Derrida, 'Le Parergon', *La Vérité en Peinture* (1978).

7 Jacques Tati *Playtime* (1967); Jean-Francois Lyotard *Les Immatériaux* (1984); Telephone support.

8 Hannah Arendt and her lifetime friend, Mary McCarthy (circa 1954).

9 Walter Crane, cartoons for the cause (1896); The Pageant of the Patterson Strike (1913).

10 Suffragettes, National Woman's Party headquarters, Washington (1920); La Commune, Paris (1871).

Operation: *Structures*

Instances of support here are considered as structures, measures taken, complex plots and schemes. Structures take shape insofar as they are imagined, planned, drawn up and committed to, and most importantly, made, built, constructed, erected, and put together. This is the entry of support into a work, beyond any reactive, symptomatic gesture it may suggest (no forgiveness is possible here). There is no redemption in a structure as it is a complex arrangement, which is put up — this explicit intent is essential here, as there is no structure without volition, and no volition without desire.

“I want, I desire, quite simply, a structure (this word, lately, produced a gritting of teeth: it was regarded as the acme of abstraction). Of course there is not a happiness of a structure; but every structure is habitable, indeed it may be its best definition.”²⁰

Volition and desire are important to us here, as while support structures are invested with a longing for emancipation, emancipation itself is not a question of knowledge, but a question of will. The faculties of will allow us to understand that emancipation, in fact, starts from the principle of equality, rather than from an ambition to address and overturn inequality. “Emancipation”, says Jacques Rancière in *The Emancipated Spectator*, “begins when we dismiss the opposition between those who look and those who act, and recognise that the distribution of the visible is not a manifestation of existing configurations of domination and subjection, but is an intrinsic part of it.” Supporting structures are added onto existing dynamics, in order to supplement them, and in this way re-distribute complex sets of forces that also go through them; while doing so they are not attempts to acquire knowledge of a condition, but function, through their persisting, active presence as reconfigurations in time and space, that overturn and transform the old distribution of the sensible.

Structures²¹ are not the shape of things, but the underlying principles behind how things appear, as if they resided behind a curtain. A structure displays; but properties that are manifest in its appearance can only be understood formally, and do not necessarily disclose the inner structure, and are in fact able to hide and obscure it exactly by offering a front, a skin, a first degree depth of comprehension. The superficial appearance of things, by the same token, often has the strategic function to hide their hidden deep structure.

20 Roland Barthes, ‘Dark Glasses’ in *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*, Vintage Books, 2002, p. 47. First published in French as *Fragments d’un Discours Amoureux*, Editions du Seuil, 1977.

21 According to Barthes’ 1957 essay ‘Histoire et Sociologie du Vêtement: Quelques Observations Methodologiques’, Braudel opposes structures to

events, and was influenced by Merleau-Ponty’s polarity between process and system, and Saussure’s between language and grammar. Structures therefore do not reside in spoken language and cannot be apprehended directly, but they are the grammar of language, which refers to deeper, more abstract levels of reality ordering and conditioning how we speak.

“Scientific analysis would be superfluous if the phenomenal appearance and the essence of things directly coincided.”²²

Structures are solely produced by the principles underlying observed phenomena, and as such delve beyond their representation (how something is shown), within structural determinants: structure is the syntax of transformation, the relational system latent in any object, which can therefore be present in not obviously related ones. To specifically address support structures therefore, is to privilege a particular type of relations in systems—those that are supporting—and to do so by working in them on a deeper level: constructing and adjusting frameworks through which the exercise of support takes place. This work is a process of engagement in the operative dynamics and forcefields of power systems, and therefore also, inevitably, a strategic apparatus. As such, support structures are set-up not to modify a given phenomena or an individual occurrence, but to intervene at the level of their determinants—they may produce multiple, diverse, individual events, but they are affecting the conditions of possibility for those to occur in the first place.

A structure of support is a reflexive, performative system—while the structural exists on the level of syntax and grammar, support works on the mode and the operational, both together beyond redemption or a charitable endeavour in a process which, by preceding representation, and working behind appearance, opens-up complex possibilities for multiple, simultaneous authorships.

To take Lévi-Strauss’ description:

“First, the structure exhibits all the characteristics of a system. It is made-up of several elements, none of which can undergo a change without effecting changes in all the other elements. Second, for any given model there should be the possibility of ordering a series of transformations resulting in a group of models of the same type. Third, the above properties make it possible to predict how the model will react if one or more of the elements are submitted to certain modifications. Finally, the model should be constituted so as to make immediately intelligible all the observed facts.”

The potential quality of a structure’s organisation can be considered as a framework, an outline that could be filled in, added to by each of us. The property of a structure is a systematic reason and purpose, but like any pattern, also by definition the capability to be extended, repeated, or rearranged: it is a tool. Support taking place through structures allows it to be explicitly functional, and implies a certain organised arrangement: we know in what way to rely on a structure, as its internal logic is an operative order, and not imposed randomly through an independent, or worse, seemingly neutral, logic.

“As support, the structure is separated from desire.”²³

²² Karl Marx, *Capital III*, p. 797.

²³ Roland Barthes, ‘Dark Glasses’ in *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*, Vintage Books, 2002, p. 47. First published in French as *Fragments d’un Discours Amoureux*, Editions du Seuil, 1977.

Operation: *Entries*

Support Structures is composed of entries. Each entry appears not as a definition of support, but as a particular manifestation—a display—and configuration of it. Any attempt at defining support would entail a position external to the subject, and as previously outlined, there can be no discourse on support, only discourse in support. The entries, therefore, do not refer to the subject of support or what it might be, but to how it articulates: they are instances of support at work.

Entries occur in random order and without consistent authorship, for in each instance they take place within already specific relationships. They identify both the act of coming in—the gradual process of participation—and the place of entrance in its designated legality. Each entry in *Support Structures* also involves a responsible undertaking, in the sense of taking-up responsibility for its activity, the opportunity as well as the choice to enter, a regulation of entry, and a right to access—these mobilising a combination of possibility and conscious commitment. But an entry appears in a bibliography as it is being registered, and goes through a process of recognition itself, implying a legality and inclusion at least in name, in a domain. An item, a story is recorded, and becomes an account by recalling and announcing its possible archival through a particular knowledge; it denotes the logging of this into a larger structure, a bibliography of support in the shape of a manual.

Bibliographies, on the other hand, generally designate systematic lists of material (books, texts, documents) considered relevant to a particular subject, and are used as pointers to understand the kind of knowledge available about it: such a bibliography does not, however, exist on the subject of support. For this reason, this particular bibliography does not appear at the end of a work, but is the principal component of this book—it is not a list of relevant materials, but the compilation of materials towards the relevance of the activity as support, and towards its intelligibility as a subject. Its key function is still to guide readers into a field by providing anchors, locations, and references, and explaining how a subject is constituted, with the only difference that this specific bibliography is here the main agent in this process of constitution. While the word bibliography now only indicates the description of books (analytical or enumerative), its etymology (, from *biblion*, meaning ‘book’ and the suffix *graphia*, meaning ‘writing’) points towards its previous use for describing the activity of copying books by hand; in the twelfth century it was used to describe ‘the intellectual activity of composing books’. It is the latter connotation of the notion of a bibliography that is privileged in this case, in full knowledge that a composition is fragmented in origin and heterogeneous in nature, and a work of collection as much as creation. This bibliography has a supporting role, and works against the solitude of a practice by logging, crediting and acknowledging space for the voices that support can speak through and with, the events that one can anchor its thought to, the people and projects to be considered as friends.

By appearing in a bibliography, an entry is a participant already, inevitably implicated in the subject—or the problem—and therefore participates in its constitution. The entries, in this way, become functional; by working in constituting the ground of support, they provide us with the grounds for a manual. They offer instructional, useable manifestations, and compose, as parergonal framing devices, the display and exhibition of support.

Entries of various origins have been arranged, combined, and put together towards the constitution of this support structure. Some originate from the very few references and relevant texts found on the way or suggested by friends, made all the more precious—in an Epicurean way—through their scarcity. Some come from previous collaborations or encounters with existing works, which were taken along, and used as tools or inspirations through the years. Some are text or project-based commissions. And some come from the collaborative project Support Structure, with Gavin Wade from 2003 to 2009.