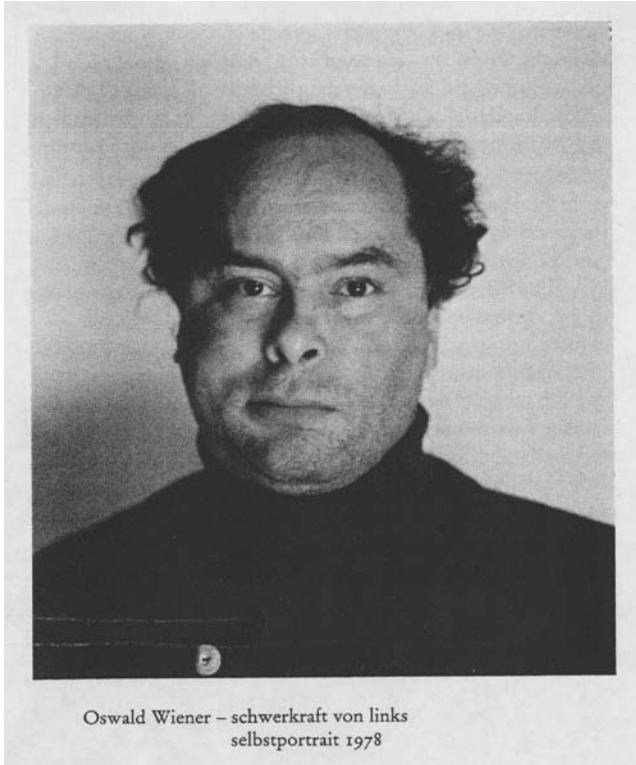


On Assignment:

Prolegomena to "I Myself Am Only A Receiving Apparatus," Joachim Koester at Jan Mot r. A Dansaert 190 A Dansaertstr. Bruxelles, 29/01-12/03

-For Oswald Wiener



Oswald Wiener – schwerkraft von links
selbstportrait 1978

Literary jealousies, the vertigo of the infinite, mental woes, the insults of poverty: Poe fled all of it in the darkness of the grave. For he drank not as a lush, but as a barbarian...

-Baudelaire on Edgar Allen Poe

The crux of Dandyhood, of all self-observation without a theoretical interest, is the barren infinity of this inward turn.

-Oswald Wiener

I stepped off the train to Brussels a little later than expected. No bother, the assignment could wait. There was a light drizzle. The grey of the city was protected by a misty gauze. I had the distinct impression that if I cut the city, like thought, it would ooze grey. I made my way to the Archiduc.

Generally I find two or three glasses of Lafitte suffice to soften the brain. A fourth jostles it from its stupidity. As it ripens, it becomes more attuned to the singular, the idiosyncratic. A delicate balance must be struck. Like a well-cooked egg, the tissue of the synapses should remain runny while the meat remains firm. Nothing too viscous. No gelatinous muck. But nothing of the magma should be lost.

The brain too has to be cured. Its machinations slowed, so that a slice from its bulk can be shaved off and digested. I prefer Iberico ham. In such brine, the mind akin to a wax mold becomes a fine recording apparatus retaining a singular imprint of the sundry impressions that regularly assault it. Sobriety ensures that these impressions are harmless, fitting them into the habitual schemata that orders the world and makes it possible for us, with mechanical precision and little to

no thought, to place one foot in front of another. If too drunk impressions bleed out in a blurry mess.

Although I confess the prospect of pickling the brain in Lafitte holds its appeal. When one is tempted to let the universal mud swallow up all distinction and relax as the last gasp is wrung from a lung engulfed in quick sand—for temptations of this ilk—there is Poe's Angel of the Odd. "Mein Gott, den, vat a vool you bees for dat!" Life attains an elegant precision when the strings of the marionette haven't been fully clipped. In these rare circumstances, the mind assumes a bluish tint, cooling the illusory glow of consciousness and enabling, if only briefly, its unsystematic meanderings to be charted. One becomes the idiosyncratic observer of one's inner and outer surroundings. An ad hoc theoretician. Or is it a theoretician of the ad hoc?

I ordered a fifth Lafitte. A conversation caught my attention. There are a rash of incidents in which homemade saunas unwittingly serve the purpose of entombing their makers. It seems that the amateur miscalculates, failing to factor in the degree to which the door swells when heated. Thus it is not untypical for the makers to be cooked alive by their creation unable to escape the confines they erected.

After the fifth Lafitte, the mind is an

icy mass. Aloof, cold and resistant. Distant. The world refracts through its layers. Consciousness loses its sovereignty and the mind locates itself elsewhere, expressing everything and nothing. Not a self, but its gesture. A gigantic mirror which reflects, in the other's incomprehension, its disgust with life, the penury of existence, and the baseness of the human animal. I paid up and left. Jan Mot was only a short distance. The drizzle chilled my flushed cheeks.

As I entered the space, my eyes adjusted quickly to the darkness gently illuminated by the projection of two 16 mm films. For the exhibition, Joachim Koester selected two recent works, presented with the utmost Geschmack. I found the hum of the projectors soothing. I remained transfixed by the central figure in both films, the poet Morten Soekilde, as if struck by an apparition of an impenetrable form. In both films, his gaze remains steady but vacant, inscrutable and obscure. I knew what I would write. I wrote my name in the visitor's book, the void heavy as each letter was awkwardly etched. Not to be a dandy, but to play at it. As I left, I had the sudden impression that the world could end. Not tomorrow or the next day, but the day after the next, at 25 minutes after 10.

-Ludwig Fischer



• Joachim Koester, *I myself am only a receiving apparatus*, 2010, 16mm film, black & white, silent, 3 min. 33 sec. (looped)