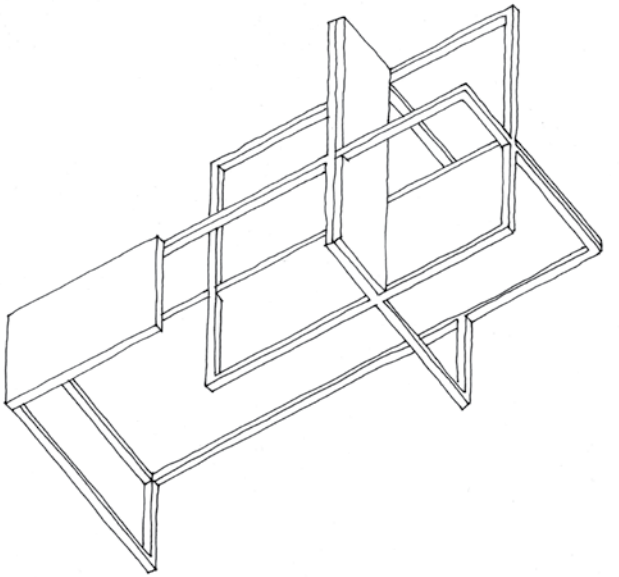
Matter is plastic in the face of mind [5X]

Following a break, the woman enters the auditorium, returns to the seat, places the A4 notebook on the seat and sits on the notebook. She is carrying the light grey hooded cotton sweatshirt and wearing the light blue jeans. She places the sweatshirt on her lap. She places the canvas tote bag on the floor, leaning against the leg of the chair. A lecture begins. After some time, she falls asleep, her head slumped forward slightly. Some time later she wakes and takes the bar of chocolate from the bag. She opens the wrapper and takes a bite of the bar. The rustling sound of the wrapper attracts attention in the auditorium. Further time passes. She places the bar back in the bag, takes the felt-tip pen from the bag and begins to write notes and make drawings on the sweatshirt resting on her lap. The notebook is visible on the chair.

Afterwards, in the refectory

Céline, Franciska, Lars, Micha and Valentina arrive at the café of the Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig. They are discussing possibilities for a redesign of the café's interior. As they enter the space, Franciska is in mid-sentence "… the general assumption of Unism is the unity of a work with the place in which it arises, or with the natural conditions that had already existed before the work of art was made. For example, Władysław Strzeminski's 1948 'Neoplastic Room' in Museum Sztuki, Lodz, Poland. A functional space for the exhibition of artworks including Katarzyna Kobro's 'Space Compositions'." Franciska pauses to point out some of the fittings in the space in response to an earlier conversation. The continues: "In 1950 — just two years after its installation — the room's polychromes, alluding to constructivist-neoplastic aesthetics, were deemed inappropriate to the official style of social realism and painted over, and its contents entirely removed."

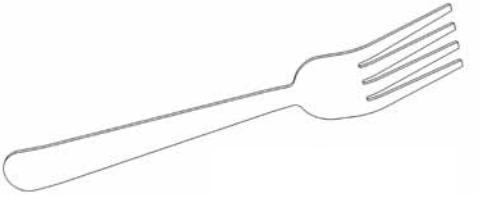
Preparations for the renovation are already underway. There are no tables in the space, so the five gather around the kitchen and bar area. The floor and wall coverings have been partially removed. Samples of paint finishes and printed wallpapers mark the wall, and floor tiles are stacked in the corner. The only furniture is a curious looking steel bench constructed from an angular space frame supporting flat planes painted in primary colours. Two of the group drag the bench toward the bar and tilt it onto its side so that it can function both as seating and as an ad-hoc table.



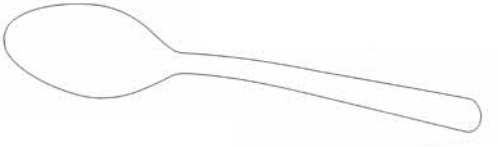
They begin to prepare a meal. A large chopping board with ginger roots and carrots is placed on the largest surface of the bench, functioning as a table. Céline takes a knife and roughly chops the carrots into large chunks and grates the ginger.

She begins to speak slowly and clearly: "There was a statue, attributed to Lysippus, which was found in Siena at the beginning of the fourteenth century." She stacks the carrot and ginger on the chopping board. "Praised and eulogized as a wonderful specimen of sculpture, it immediately attracted the attention of Sienese artists and art connoisseurs who rushed to admire it, and campaigned to have it placed, amid great celebrations, on the fountain of a prominent city square."

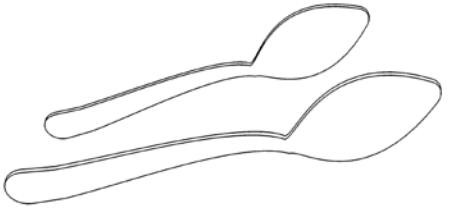
She stands and walks over to the kitchen where a pan of water is coming to the boil. "But there followed a bleak period in the history of the city. After several defeats in battle by the Florentines, the town council called a meeting. A citizen addressed the meeting 'Since we have started honoring that statue, things have gone from bad to worse. The statue has brought bad fortune on Siena.'" Céline drops the vegetables into the pan and reaches over the counter for a fork.

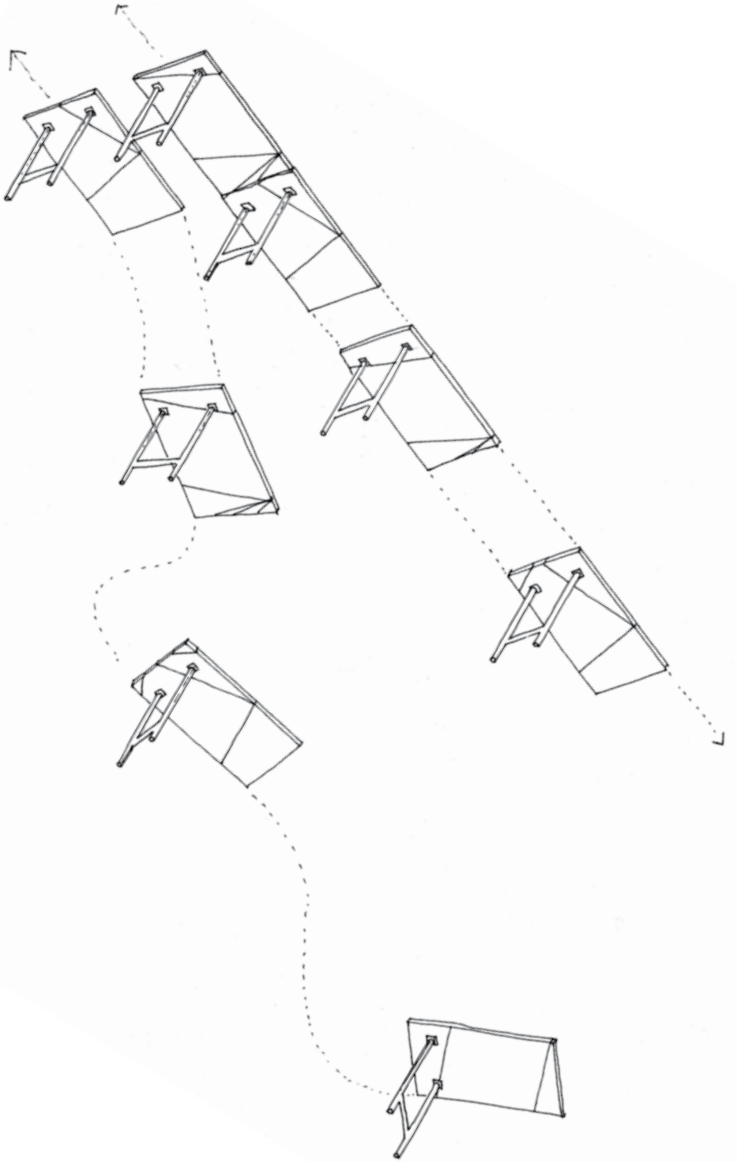


She continues "On November 7, 1357, the town council ordered that the statue be pulled down, wholly lacerated, broken into pieces, and buried in Florentine ground to decay." She tests the vegetables with the fork to see if they are soft enough to mash.



She mixes the soup vigorously with a wooden spoon as it continues to boil for several minutes. Eventually it finds a smooth homogenous consistency, its original ingredients unrecognisable.





Lars prepares cheese, bread, gherkin and red pepper for an open sandwich. He hollows out crusts of bread with his fingers and sets them on the improvised table, one for each of the seated group. “The ship in which Theseus returned from Crete was repaired in such a way as to have had, over time, every single one of its parts replaced,” he announces. He makes a pile of cheese, pepper and gherkin inside the bread base, and instructs the others to do the same. “This ship became a contentious subject among philosophers. Is an object that has had all of its parts replaced still the same object?”

He picks up his ship and partially disassembles it, gesturing to the group to imitate him. A new configuration is put together using the original bread, cheese and peppers, but replacing the sliced gherkins with whole ones. These support a platform of cheese, with sliced peppers laid loosely on top. “One school of thought held that the ship remained the same, another contended that it was not.” A third example configuration is constructed on the counter. A base of cheese with two gherkins impressed into it, with the bread inverted like a deck. “Theseus’ ship thus questions the category of related things and their possible definition, and has been torn ever since between sameness of properties or qualities, and the sameness of being one.”

With the soup and sandwiches on the table, the group are seated around the colourful structure to eat.

After dinner Micha gets up and disappears to the store room. He reappears with a coffee grinding mill and a jar of coffee beans. He leans on the edge of the bench and grinds the beans. Pausing momentarily so as to be audible over the machine he says:

"Coffee was first discovered by the Ethiopian goat-herd Kaldi, who noticed that his goats, upon eating berries from a certain tree, became so spirited that they did not want to sleep at night. Dutifully reporting his findings to the abbot of the local monastery, Kaldi was scolded for 'partaking of the devil's fruit'. However the monks soon learned how this fruit from the shiny green plant could help them stay awake for their evening prayers, and slowly knowledge of the energizing effects of the berries began to spread. Istanbul was introduced to coffee in 1543 during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent by Özdemir Pasha, the Ottoman Governor of Yemen, who had grown to love the drink while stationed there. However, the drink was soon utilized for its energizing effects on the large slave population under Ottoman rule, to make them work harder, and longer hours. In the Ottoman palace a new method of drinking it was discovered: the beans were roasted over a fire, finely ground and then slowly cooked with water on the ashes of a charcoal fire."

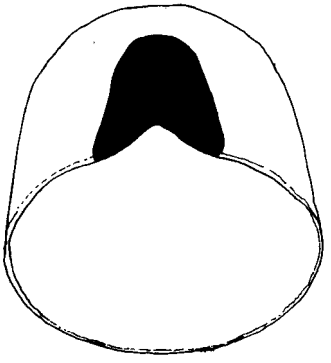
He returns to the mill and finishes grinding the beans. He places spoonfuls of coffee and sugar into five small ceramic cups without handles.

"Grinding the coffee also allowed it to be transported in a way that it could not be planted or grown by others than those controlling the coffee and slave trades." Micha brews the coffee at the stove and serves it at the table.

"Ground coffee was soon transported in sacks throughout the Ottoman Empire, and became both an instrument of control, and a sophisticated, if addictive, delicacy. It is only after their defeat at the siege of Vienna, in 1529, that Ottoman sacks of unground and unroasted beans were left behind to be discovered by the Austrians who soon started their own highly lucrative coffee commerce."

Céline drinks from her cup, sipping until it becomes impossible to drink more. She flips the cup over and puts it down on a saucer. As the conversation continues the remains of the coffee grounds settle and dry in the cup.

Micha takes the cup and holds it up. "This bell rang the signal of insurrection in Uglich, Russia, on 15 May 1591, the day that exiled ten-year-old Prince Dimitri, second son of Ivan The Terrible, was found dead with his throat cut open. Tried for treason and found guilty, the bell was sentenced to perpetual banishment in Siberia where it was sent with other convicts. The ruling also determined that the culprit be silenced by having its tongue removed, which was also exiled."



Micha concludes "After 299 years in solitary confinement in Tobolsk the bell was partially purged of its iniquity by conjuration and re-consecrated and suspended in the tower of a church in the Siberian capital. However, it still took a few years for it to be fully pardoned and returned to its original home in Uglich, where it was hung in St Demetrius of the Spilled Blood, the church erected on the exact place where Prince Dimitri had been found and the crime of his murder committed."

Valentina takes the cup from Micha and begins to study the formation of the residual grounds. With her gaze fixed on the cup, she begins to decipher the grounds, reading aloud to the group.

"Standing on the elastic floor of this place, tall walls would surround you, awash with dark outlines, which like old paintings show images and hide stories."

Valentina slowly rotates the cup in her hand as she deciphers the marks. "This is a story of reversals, in which a situation is heightened, like an image growing in intensity, and in this way another situation — or another image perhaps — is made to appear."

Her attention is fixed by the largest formation of grounds. "The circumstances were created by a large figure, a grand character, perhaps a big man, who had the ability to feed the future into the past. A visionary one might say. But someone, a woman, is in the way, watching the events unfold. Her arms are crossed; she is unwilling, or maybe unable to act. Perhaps there is little she can do, but she is standing in the present. She is our vantage point, the position through which this story is made visible. It is most likely the story told by the man would be very different."

"It is the contrast between both these positions that intensifies, which allows attention to shift to the clear gaps between them, which become pathways, and spaces in their own right."

“Far into the far past there is a nest of snakes, empty spaces that are now alive and sliding, as they probably always were but had gone unseen, negative spaces becoming positive. Snakes stand for strong relationships, and they are also just what they are: emerging figures, revitalized gaps. Previously hidden, they now swarm, moving things around, spreading agitation amongst other faint dark figures that live in a recent past. Their work is one of revitalisation, breathing new life through gaps and in-between spaces; this stimulates social, intellectual, and affective relations and this is precisely what is both a force and a threat to previously existing, sedimented structures.”

“Going back to the grand figure of the man, a snake is biting him from the back. It may be a necessary betrayal of categories, or perhaps machinery fuelled by minor doses of venom, but we are yet to find out if this is a story of reversal as change, or as that which was always already there.”

Deutsche