

This is a statement and set of mores for those of us who reckon with art and want coherence between our concern – regarding climate disruption and the megaflop of plastics-reliance and how we live among other sentient beings whose lives we do not think are less worthy of attention than our own – and how we actually go about things.

CATHARTES 19

We are birds that do not kill.

We accept that we have been variously ignorant, naïve, and in denial.

We recognize that our individual actions are almost immeasurably small. But we love the small, so it makes no sense to dismiss the small. And we know that small is relative.

We remember that for a very long time artists have made artworks without relying on burning oil extracted from the earth. And without much traveling about, let alone presumptively, rather than specially.

We follow Douglas Huebler's statement that 'the world is full of objects, more or less interesting; I do not wish to add any more.' How do we follow it? Some of us do make objects. And we commit to making objects that follow a path of less harm.

We propose that the appropriate question is not, 'what do I/we want to make? What do I/we need for it to happen?'

Instead we ask, 'what is viable? How can we continue to meet materials while respecting the whole ecosystem we are a part of, rather than illusorily ignoring our effects?'

We do not aim to 'do good'; we actively avoid doing bad. And when we fail, we recommit.

We think it is better to not add to the damage rather than to apologize for it.

We are materialists, however dematerialised our practices.

We are committed to reality, however many imaginaries we inhabit.

The world is full of objects, more or less interesting, and we do not wish to add any more at the expense of other subjects.

There are some guidelines for actions that obviously align with this wish. They are mores, not lesses; while they are limitations, they are not restrictive. We consider them undemanding.

In fact, we consider them beautiful – a hedonic ethos. We aim to commit to them in a spirit of friendly disagreeableness: a friendly disagreeableness with the general customs and assumptions, within the mainstream of cultural production, of what is necessary to make/meet art today.

PRODUCTION

Physical works are subject to decomposition,
or, if inert, also nonsynthetic *

Therefore,
no acrylic paints
no plastics
no polyurethane foams, polyester resins, etc
no polyvinyl chloride (PVC)
no vinyl record pressing
no plastic coated photographic paper

No or minimal long-distance oil-dependent
travel - reliance on proxies as needed

No CD manufacturing

No new electronics (incl cameras, computers,
data storage, etc)

Outsourced fabrication is local
and fairly paid

Publications are printed local to distribution
no non-recycled paper, no petroleum inks
no plastic coating on covers
no plastic wrap on books

EXHIBITION

New exhibition materials are compostable

Therefore,
no vinyl - e.g., lettering, signage, banners
no plexiglass
no new electronics (incl projectors,
computers, data storage, etc)
no non-reusable temporary walls

* with the exception of salvaged materials

PACKING, STORAGE, SHIPPING

New packing materials are compostable

Therefore,
no poly sheeting, bubble wrap,
polyethylene, styrofoam, foamcore, etc.
no plastic wraps for crates

Cardboard-surface crates, built for re-use

TRAVEL

Anyone non-instrumental is discouraged from
traveling by air in order to be present

Anyone who feels they *need* to be present
somewhere travels by train if possible,
and if flying, sits in coach, avoids overnight
flights, and avoids connecting flights

Institutions/galleries incentivize not-flying
by offering equivalent cash to artists
in lieu of covering flight & lodging costs

No business or first class flights,
no private planes, no cruise ships

OPENING

No imported water, far-flung wine, etc

If a meal is offered in the context of
the show, no food is served that comes
from animals that are either kept in
captivity and/or killed for this purpose

No single-use cups, dishes, unless made from
plant material that can be non-industrially
composted, i.e. in garden, unless there is
great confidence that your municipality
successfully can compost the material
(currently unusual)

NOTES

All the material Nos are for the purchase of virgin materials from a for-profit business.
Yes to non-primary use of these materials, e.g. reuse of existing stock,
purchasing from salvage/reuse centers, etc.

You are invited to co-half/half-sign this document. The more signatories the easier it becomes
to follow the guidelines and the clearer our collective conscience becomes. (If working with an
artist/gallery/institution that has not signed, they can be temporary co-signatories on a rider
for a particular exhibition. To formalise the commitment to lessen our un-helpful effects is
helpful in its clarifying explicitness.) To sign, and/or to view an annotated version
of this text, and/or retrieve an adaptable rider: <http://hmirra.net/cathartes19>