

BROOKLYN RAIL

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

Double Bind: An Excerpt

by Rhea Anastas and Leigh Ledare

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[...] Rhea Anastas: You also seem to be very interested in how all sorts of information that may not be directly communicated or made reference to—how details, detailing—is handled and played out through social behavior. Take a specific context—your trip with Meghan, let's say. What's possible to be communicated within the parameters of that time spent together? What can boundaries contain or restrain, what can they allow to be put out corporeally?

I wonder, what are the cues for the viewer? And what was your actual process of structuring this within the performances? Did you have a way of trying to get this detailing out of the interactions and the photographing that accompanied them?



Leigh Ledare, *Double Bind (Diptych #6/25)*, 2010. Courtesy the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York

Leigh Ledare: *Double Bind's* script orders the performances, but it also opens the installation, introducing a set of parameters for viewing and focusing the viewer on what to pay attention to. The question of difference raised by the comparative structure is key. First, as a response to an observed dynamic, I created the script. This was an abstract model—a system that the subjective parts, the participants in the project, were then submitted to. The actions of the specific participants, including mine, fleshed out the script. So, at the initial level, this was about an ordering of the complexity of the environment. This structuring created the conditions for the internal complexity that plays out interrelationally—at the level of the individual participants' agency, at the psychosocial level. The script functions as a kind of container. It's a framing—not unlike that of the camera, but on an interrelational scale that allows for a recording and mapping of these cross-reflective dynamics.

Anastas: In viewing I hold an open place for all this detailing of what can't be stated, of the performances and the internal complications within each scenario, and how some of this crosses from one situation into the other. The photographs suggest that a cataloguing of these worlds of privacy could be taking place. But the indexical can't actually do this, nor can the relationships between each couple. I am left with the sense, as you just put it, of what to pay attention to, what kinds of experience, but my attention is in a strange way overloaded on a sensory level, and at the same time disappointed, because I can't get to this experience, I can't see it—and the participants' experience is parallel, they can and can't get to it, too. In *Double Bind* something extremely subjective turns around and looks at times to be highly objective. It conjures the discourse of the archive, the objectification of daily life, but here, in *Double Bind's* so-called archive, the capturing of affect and encounters would always be that which fills in this objectification, and that which is missing from it.

Ledare: That's partly what I mean by emphasizing that *Double Bind's* meaning hinges on this projective space.

Anastas: Will you read the project description?

Ledare: It reads: "Double Bind. Convince my ex-wife to go alone with me for three nights to a remote cabin, upstate NY. Married for five years, but now divorced for five years. She agrees, but gets remarried before we leave. I stay with her and photograph her over the course of the four days. This results in roughly 500 images. We sleep in different beds. Most time we've spent together in five years. Two months later, pay for Meghan to return with current husband to the same cabin. Three nights again. He also happens to be a photographer. Photographs her for four days, brings me fourteen rolls of unprocessed film. I process and print all 1,000 photographs over the course of the next ten days. This results in two sets of images. My images of my ex-wife appear on black; his images of his new wife appear on white. This makes up the first comparative structure. The two sets of photographs are then positioned against a collection of media images and other ephemera. This makes up the second comparative structure."

Anastas: So the main contours of the comparative structures, the two overlapping ones, are introduced: the first, the triangle created through the recording of the two relationships; and the second having to do with the cross-reading of these private images of Meghan with the juxtaposed public images from the media collection.

Ledare: These problematics don't simply originate with my constructing the script though—it's a rematerialization and description of dynamics that preexist it, and which are contemporaneous and intertwined with culture, right? Such dynamics are already overwhelmingly present in the collection of media materials.

Anastas: But the text—it's not entirely straightforward, is it? You're using a voice, and one of the things that you do in the course of the script is to share a certain amount of information that's autobiographical—it is offered as such, within the narrative voice anyway. Even so, I don't know where exactly to place that voice, how to read the telling: autobiographical and distilled down, conceptualist in some sense.

There are a few areas of heavily-marked redactions in the writing in the project description. The reader is reminded of how much she doesn't know, and of what is visible and invisible.

Another thing that you do is gesture in a really condensed way toward fantasy construction. Since only a few details appear, they command a certain attention, such as "convince my ex-wife," and "she agrees, but gets remarried before we leave," and "we sleep in different beds." [...]