Letter to the Editor

Bradford R. Collins

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experience, indeed of a collector or a man of

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museum is the place of protection where the

prove that his work is a failure, that
is only the plan of an ideal work to be ac­
complished; for it is obvious that the work of
the artist is, after all, only raw information —
that is, pretext, point of departure, fragments
to set off each one's retrospective and evolving
perception. An ideology that apparently hides
its vast charm, its potential destined to be
developed in our brains. While it is a failure,
seems artificial to us, on the other hand, to
compare this work to a simple photographic
experience, indeed of a collector or a man of
letters (a Proustian analogy that its author
rejects).

Media of photo and object are, in this pre­
cise case, only the personal choice of supports
more fitting, by their impact and their effective­
ness, to the discourse they convey: a choice
that itself expresses the breach that carries
the artist from the technical values of an art,
if not completely outstripped, at least in agony.

Boltanski's work the idea of non-dying
invariants) and psychoanalytical (gestus). A
work that invites us to ponder on the truth
of this sentence by André Malraux: “The work of
art is never formed of itself.”

Boltanski does not exist, nor has he ever
existed; he is only a myth, for himself as much
as for others.

For footnotes see French text.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, B.C.,
March 14th, 1975

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Madame:
I wish to publicly apologize to Bill Laing for
his own because it belongs to an area "I am
a sum of others", he acknowledges. “Even if an
experience never lived by anyone should hap­
pen to me, I would not have any new thoughts
to suffer it, nor any new words to express it.
Therefore, I repeat, we always repeat what has
already been said, even while drawing analogi­
gies, like that of the astronaut who, going
around Earth, said it was blue.”

In 1971 Boltanski began his Inventories.
Now, he is also interested in the gap aspect
of the persons in childhood. In front of the
camera, the artist himself reconstructs the
gestures that recall those of mother, father,
grandmother, grandfather, uncle, aunt, etc. He
restores to us cliché images in which comedy
and ridicule abound.

On the subject of the Inventories from which
he has lately exhibited 34 Rules and Tech­
tiques Used in June 1972 by a Child of Nine
Years, at the Galerie Sonnabend in Paris, Boltan­
ski stated that this method sends him back
to his own memories. "By asking for the pho­
ograph album that my friend Michael D’s
parents had, i, who knew nothing about them,
wished to try to reconstitute their life by using
these pictures which, taken at all important
moments, would remain after their death.
evidence of their existence. I was able to dis­
cover the order in which they had been taken
and the ties that existed between the persons
they pictured. But I realized that I could go
no further, because these documents seemed
to belong to the mutual memories of any family,
and anyone could recognize himself in these
photographs of holidays or of anniversaries”.
At Sonnabend’s a real little museum obe­
dient to a certain museum-aesthetic, related
the world of an unknown boy through framed
things and photographs, arranged according
to scenes, in series of four, six, eight, among
which were some of rectangular shape, like
those of the swing, the forming of the triangle,
the game of marbles; others vertical: like the
tree-climbing, the soccer game, the descent,
the banana. In a show-case were displayed
labelled objects: crest, religious picture, little
penknife, exercise book, eraser, compasses,
pen, stamp collection, school books, coloured
pencils. In another there were things made of
paper: boat, arrow, rocket, glider, bird, cut­
cuts, cardboard pistol, arm-band, little theatre;
A cabinet of curiosities, revealing a contribu­
tion to the museum institution at the same time
as an act of subversion.

Boltanski’s procedure doubtless sets a pat­
tern. His work is the document of everyone.
A work essentially archaeological (the recon­
struction of childhood), ethnological (the in­
vventories) and psychoanalytical (gestus). A
work that invites us to ponder on the truth
of this sentence by André Malraux: “The work of
art is never formed of itself.”

Boltanski does not exist, nor has he ever
existed; he is only a myth, for himself as much
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Sincerely
Bradford R. COLLINS