

entered everyday vocabulary—has made startlingly clear, there's not much backing up this system besides the consensus of its constituents. Surfaces count for a lot in the financial world, perhaps even more than for art. It seems then that combining the two, as *Headless* does, might amplify the artifice even more. The project's style turns any investigative genre on its head. It makes me wonder: is Goldin+Senneby's performance of a particular form of self-conscious fiction (authors like Thomas Pynchon come to mind) where the project's real goals lie? Is its style its substance, revealing Oscar Wilde's great secret—"that Truth is entirely and absolutely a matter of style?"

In *The Decay of Lying*, everything of importance is expressed through the way it is written, through its style. Following this surface-as-substance mandate to its logical conclusion leads to the doctrine: "Art never expresses anything but itself," or the more pithy "Art for Art's sake." Suddenly one is dealing with the mantra of the Decadent movement, an aesthetic theory that is two-faced at its core—referring both to beautifully useless indulgences and the social, cultural, or political decline associated with a perceived lapse in morality—and signaled in the very "decay" mentioned in the title of Vivian's article. In reality, decadent societies are often characterized by outward prosperity that hides severe discrepancies between economic and social classes. Wilde contributed to the discussion on both sides, writing economic treatises that offered a libertarian reading of socialism alongside his more familiar satires.

The Decadent movement that Wilde championed was driven by excessiveness, which—to tie together a pair of hanging threads—was also a concern of Georges Bataille. The writings of Oscar Wilde and Georges Bataille and Goldin+Senneby's *Headless* intersect at the level of the global economy, making the two-headed monster of money and excess the lowest common denominator here. Bataille's book *The Accursed Share* introduces the concept of "general economy," which states that a certain part of wealth is always unrecoverable: growth reaches a limit and must then be inverted into giving. This "accursed share" can be spent in two ways: luxuriously, on spectacles, the arts, and non-procreative sexuality, or destructively, on conflict and warfare. A similar excessiveness is behind certain themes in *Headless*, including decapitation (which is a symbolic act, not a logical way to kill) and the entire concept of offshore finance (those wealthy enough to consider using its services can certainly afford to pay their taxes). What we have here, with Wilde, Bataille, and Goldin+Senneby, is a bunch of tired hedonists, trying to turn society's collective hangover into something more productive.

It is the true lie that remains to loosely bind these ideas—its reach stretches to financial structures and offshore finance, to shifts in authorship and authority, to the imitative qualities of art or character, to the primacy of surfaces and style, to paradox and wordplay, to metafiction and more. In the end, the true lie is a claim difficult to prove but, more importantly, impossible to refute. It is a poem, a building block of mythology, which, if nothing else, provides the script for a more vibrant life.

Sarah Rifky

Fables in the Kingdom of the As If

I am trying to summon the theatrical grace with which Adnan Yildiz would accurately summarize my critical meandering concerning our vocation as artists and curators with his singular phrase, boldly exclaiming: "There *is* no audience!" (with much too much emphasis on the "is" than is really necessary, since there is in fact no audience except three of us in the back room of some over-priced cafe in downtown Zurich).¹ Falling back in his chair, he takes a long satisfied sip of his third coffee, raises his eyebrows a little and asks: "Don't you agree?" I agree, and I also agree with a great thinker who said that anything we ever mean to say is solely summoned from an intonation;² it is the "is" that Yildiz so strongly emphasizes that I am after. Two things are at play here.

First, this emphasis of Yildiz's "is" embodies Paul Ricoeur's imaginative "if" when the latter speaks of the "kingdom of the as if,"³ the territory of enacted narratives. This kingdom, in a way, is the (non-)stage of the everyday in which we perform ourselves as cultural practitioners. We could easily say that this corresponds to the public spaces that hosted Allan Kaprow's happenings which, in turn, may have led to the birth of on- and off-stage characters such as Hollywood's Pee-wee Herman, who would attend red carpet events as himself (when some stars would swear it was Paul Reubens). The second thing at play is that I could have easily skipped the personal anecdote at the beginning of this introduction, but I didn't.

When does fiction end and real life begin? And how does the notion of the