FIA BACKSTRÖM AND WADE GUYTON

FIA: Are you going to see the [Marcel] Broodthaers films tonight?

WADE: No, you had to reserve and it was already fully booked.

FIA: I called White Columns and they had one ticket left.

WADE: One ticket [*laughing*]! That's so great.

FIA: I was very lucky. They should do another day.

WADE: Yeah there are enough people who want to see them. Definitely...I know, I never do things on time. So I missed it.

FIA: So that was one of the things I was thinking about, that you never do things on time, or rather about you having a slow process. Contemporary art is fast as lighting. Things get turned over like seasonal fashion, much like the fashion world. You just pull in the artist, and it's like Snap! Whereas, your process seems much slower.

WADE: I think so. Although sometimes it's very slow and sometimes it's very fast...well, yeah, it seems more and more that's what the expectation is—that everyone can work incredibly fast. And also people are barely looking at things. The forms of communication have speeded up so that no one is even having conversations at all and it's just a constant distribution of surfaces. Things circulating and no one's really paying attention.

FIA: A new way of viewing?

WADE: Well, it's certainly a *way* of viewing. I was thinking that this new work I'm doing now and showing in New York in November is going to be hard for people in a way. Because it feels a little stranded without a context, at least when you think about the way people look at work now. It feels a little old-fashioned in its expectations for looking.

FIA: In a slower pace?

WADE: Slower and *actually* looking. Or nothing really happens unless you are paying attention. But maybe I'm wrong. But I do feel like it will be a little lost.

FIA: Your work or in general?

WADE: Well right now, this body of work. Like those hanging on the wall: the black paintings.

FIA: I was thinking about our image culture in particular. You are expected to serve up these iconic images. I'm sitting and choosing images for a publication now, I'm having problems because I consistently have negated the image. I try to avoid that "one" image.

WADE: Of your own?

FIA: Uh-huh, I could obviously pick any image and give it over and over.

WADE: Maybe it could be something arbitrary that you repeat over and over. So you have your own body of images, and if you're constantly negating images but yet the structure is constantly asking for images, maybe you just need a different category that satisfies that demand. Maybe when people ask for images it doesn't have to point to that specific image bank of negation and instead it points to a different image bank.

FIA: Certain works are time-based, event-based. An image of course is also time-based, in the narrative structure and in the viewing instance. Are you saying to separate the event and the image, or are you coming to it from the idea of demand? I always thought it was more natural *not* to fulfill a demand...as in seduction but no satisfaction...

WADE: There are always these demands that can't naturally be satisfied, especially by *your* work. I don't know how *you* satisfy. My work can be more well-behaved in that way. If someone wants some kind of iconic image or something representative of what I do, there are enough images that pretend to represent what I do.

FIA: Repeated like advertising slogans or the chorus?

WADE: Yeah, I actually like that some of the work does that. At least for me it seems crazy to be proposing something radical or a new way to look at things. It's more manageable for me to think about the work satisfying certain demands and then also failing to satisfy those demands. They are only

momentarily iconic and then something else in the work undermines that.

FIA: Are you thinking this in relation to a model of criticality which has been so prominent in art? Are you instead proposing an idea of pleasing?

WADE: Well, at least participation. The model of criticality is that one can look at art and culture and has a privileged-enough position to hand down some sort of critical evaluation. I don't feel comfortable trying to take that sort of position.

FIA: I agree with you about that imagined position of privilege. Me neither, I don't feel comfortable in that place and I don't believe in it. It is dishonest! Regarding this idea of pleasing and not policing, then you get into a much more interesting place, where you have access and can move around in a way you can't otherwise do…what shall we say…if not explosions it can cause flames of fire…but if you do 'insert' criticality that's the expected move — there will be a little whipping. It's like an S&M relationship: a little sting for the thrill, everybody is happy and then we move on with business as usual.

WADE: Which in itself is also a form of pleasing. It just happens to be a bit sadomasochistic. We are smart enough to know that it's impossible to be outside and have a clear critical position. Of course, it's possible to be cynical and simply please a market, but there's also some grey area in between where criticality is mixed with participation and it seems…it becomes more interesting to take on a number of those roles and let things slide in and out of being decipherable or pleasurable or completely indecipherable or fitting in the discourse and other times not feeling like it has a place at all. Like fitting into whatever the trendy discourse could be—like right now it's all neo-appropriation or neo-formalism and although I don't feel super comfortable with that, it's fine momentarily to engage with those ideas and participate in that conversation.

FIA: It's interesting that you say that you serve iconic images. I'm going abstract now…so to be what it does, that is operational artwork I guess. You propose something, which looks like it's doing one thing, but actually operates in another way. So, an image can have several uses at the same time.

WADE: I would agree. It also gets so abstract and completely complicated to figure out where exactly your place

is. If we are talking about criticality or something radical, that might be some kind of radical uncertain position to be in…the return of the de-centered subject maybe…not knowing exactly what an image is doing or what a person who is making those images is doing.

FIA: Absolutely, this ambiguity certainly applies to both of us in different ways.

WADE: Then we get more and more confused.

FIA: There is this great movie title from a film with Leonardo Dicaprio called *Catch Me if You Can*. It might not be a great movie, but it's a great title. It is about a con artist who always manages to escape. All artists are sort of like con artists.

WADE: Of course. It always feels that way…"catch me if you can." That should be the title of this conversation!

FIA: Yeah!

WADE: Try to "understand us if you can"!

FIA: I want to talk about this neo-appropriation flavor versus ways of reconfiguring not-currently-used avant-garde spaces or practices. Once somebody told me: "Wade is an okay artist, but he shows his sources too much on the surface."

WADE: What does that mean?

FIA: Exactly! I thought this was a great comment, because maybe for you the source is the work?

WADE: I don't even know what "the sources" are. What happens when you are just printing a black square or just printing ink? I don't know, of course with the Xs it's just typing and printing.

FIA: I just saw this Soviet movie called *Cranes are Flying* from the '50s, about World War II. As the war becomes progressively severe there are more and more street barricades, which were actual Xs, like your wooden sculptures. There were Wade Guyton's all over the place.

WADE: Sounds great. I want to see this. Because I also think of those sculptures as these provisional things that you just put up, that anyone could do, very quickly. I guess they could be a barricade or a momentary signifier. Or a mobile form of protest or have some sort of variable state.

Hmm. And just be totally legible and honest about what it is. Not illusion or some sort of trickery.

FIA: It is simultaneously an X but not really the letter x.

WADE: Right, just two pieces of wood screwed together in a really dumb way.

FIA: You were talking about the ink when printing the X for example.

WADE: Like on the paintings? I guess I was thinking about whatever that criticism was…that the source is on the surface and being too visible.

FIA: What a conservative idea—that one would have to hide one's sources in order come off as authentic. I guess that would come from an ideology of a solid coherent subject.

WADE: I guess in a lot of cases I don't really think I'm appropriating something and then representing it as something else.

FIA: That's what I mean; the source and the work are the same. It's a mistake to see it as if it should be something else.

WADE: Or maybe there isn't a source either? Maybe a lot of the stuff points to things that exist historically, like with the X paintings, conceptual art had been about typing up language and having the language exist as the artwork. So that's of course there. Or maybe, you could point to some kind of Minimalist painting or Constructivism. But they are still just Xs typed on the screen transferred to canvas and the ink is just on the surface. So those are not pointing to anything very specific, there's nothing specifically referential there.

FIA: It apparently was very important to Rodchenko that his work in whatever medium; graphics, furniture, paintings— would represent a strong character of the citizen of the Soviet Union, to encourage the collective spirit in order to change society. Certain elements made it stronger, such as the diagonal or strange points of view…[*Laughing*] but we don't really have these socialist aspirations.

WADE: [*Laughing*] I don't think we do. Well maybe not through the artwork itself. It's hard to imagine any artwork galvanizing society now.

FIA: If you believe you can change society with your diagonals or a strange perspective, that transition between art and the real seems way too unproblematic. I have to admit, I believe in a radical potential, but closer to what you said earlier of displacing the operational components. I work with certain convictions of the social, or rather signification processes and the collective of images, then undermining the basic assumptions of the work and its relations to other things.

WADE: The *Herd Instinct 360°* and the idea of congregation or the community is more like material for you. It's proposing community but in a weird way, not completely. And critiquing it in an even weirder way.

FIA: Image-wise or romantically speaking? You mean in the reality?

WADE: It's not a necessity for it to work in reality. Like a lot of work in the '90s or Fluxus or Happenings required… participation?

FIA: I think the interest was always language based, rather than an idea of going out into the streets. Though it requires its audience, or, say temporary community, which fictionalizes itself by being there and recognizing itself as being there.

WADE: Right. You just did the *Herd Instinct 360°* in Sweden. What happened?

FIA: There wasn't a revolution for sure! [*Laughing.*]

WADE: Well, why not? [*Laughing.*] What's wrong with the Swedes? So you're no Rodchenko?

FIA: I guess.

WADE: Your diagonals weren't strong enough?

FIA: Exactly! I have to work on my diagonals. It was interesting, compared to when I have done it here, since the art model in Sweden is very community based.

WADE: What do you mean?

FIA: Classically it has been a socialistic society where art is state funded for the most part, like the Soviet model, though all of that is changing as we speak. The funding usually goes to work that has an engagement with different communities, where art is believed to have an impact. Let's say productive art for society, or a way of affecting change…*Herd Instinct 360°* of course, is not

really a sunshine story of potential and emancipation....So it was good to have been able to do it there.

WADE: **How was it perceived? I wonder if there was an expectation for your work to engage with the community. I see that your work kind of engages but maybe only on a certain intellectual level and maybe on a formal level. It's also acting like the "catch me if you can" with the community.**

FIA: You mean something that didn't get delivered? I guess it promises to deliver one thing, say in a relational tradition, then it goes all textual or image bank-excavational—ending in this shared corrupt or perverted wish for 'togetherness.'

WADE: **Yeah, or did it then act more like a disruption?**

FIA: For example, when I was hanging, the installers were constantly 'fixing' things, making it nicer. I had to catch them and say "stop."

WADE: **So you would just throw something on the floor or just tack something to the wall and it wasn't so straight and they'd want to make things look better?**

FIA: They were suggesting how they could build boxes to conceal. People thought it was trashy and chaotic in this New York way, as they said. I hadn't realized that New York actually has this...

WADE: **That's the New York aesthetic? The trashy...**

FIA: A chaotic brand versus a Scandinavian clean modernist environment. It made me think about these loaded ways of presentation, which we carry around as givens. Few people give it ideological consideration, more often it comes off as if it was pure fashion.

WADE: **Was it in a gallery or museum?**

FIA: In a Museum! Another event that I did was *Eco Day*.

WADE: **Wait!** *Eco Day* **was your idea?**

FIA: Yes! It took place in their sculpture park with bronzes like Marino Marinetti or Raymond Duchamp-Villon and older Swedish artists. They are really nice! I got sponsoring from a toilet paper company, so I set up an interpretative dance with kids using the toilet paper. They had aprons with the BP sun logo silk-screened on them. They were dancing with the toilet paper, writing words with the trace of it, such as garbage and so on. There were eight

musicians from different bands, whom I had asked to play. I wanted them to play in a Krautrock way, droning on and on forever. After a little while the musicians stopped, they seemed to think it was boring. They said it didn't bring them anywhere. They wanted to play tunes instead.

WADE: **So did you force them?**

FIA: I wasn't going to be a dictator. They started to play their own songs. This idea of not getting anywhere was disturbing. There was another labor spot in the park; I asked some people to make a flat copy of a small pond next to it, with torn black garbage bags. The garbage bags got slippery in the water of the pond, and some kids got injured.

WADE: **But it was kind of collaborative...and then the toilet paper dance?**

FIA: Yeah, that disintegrated as well, everything did, it was great...

WADE: **And this was your** *Eco Day*? [*Laughing.*]

FIA: I did not offer up the idea of goal-oriented or purposeful activity, which seemed to bother the visitors to the park. I did not engage the community in something meaningful so to speak. Everything came apart.

WADE: **But it intended to fail from the beginning?**

FIA: Well, it was important not to "produce," nor to set up a smooth situation. There were gaps set-up, where fantasies of this kind of get-together surfaced unfulfilled.

WADE: **But you were the producer. More like producing a film. Rather than a worker on an assembly line, you were the manager.**

FIA: Why can't I be the director...with a script fragmented from the wear of weather? [*Laughing*] Yeah, I was the manager I guess, more in a '70s spirit of free upbringing with no borders, creating dysfunctional co-dependant scenarios.

WADE: **You were the manager that would get fired!**

FIA: In America, I would have gotten sued by the injured kids' parents.... In the end it all turned into debris, lots of discarded toilet paper and ripped garbage bags.

WADE: **That must have been offensive...**

FIA: How so? Anything to do with nature or ecology is untouchable, and automatically gets placed in a terrain of ethics. When the city heard the title for this project, they immediately wanted to be part and sponsor…

WADE: Did you make signs for *Eco Day*?

FIA: There was a bunch of posters that were mounted on flat cardboard with sticks, the way it is usually done for demonstrations. I asked people to move them to different arbitrary places in the park. It worked like atomic units of a disorganized demonstration. Compared to your Xs, here their role as mobile forms of protest was severed, and in that fracture potentially there was something else. Why are we talking about this…the reality and the community?

WADE: What's your next topic?

FIA: I have no idea. Reality, community, stripes. I had lots of yellow stripes in the show. You like stripes don't you?

WADE: From Blonde Ambition. What was it called? *Blonde Revolution*! What was Blonde Ambition?

FIA: It was Madonna. There's way too little art on Madonna don't you think?

WADE: Oh yeah, there was a lot a while ago wasn't there? Or they were always writing on Madonna…cultural studies and stuff. Nobody writes on her anymore. Is she too banal now?

FIA: But she imported this child from Malawi.

WADE: I thought she adopted a kid, not imported! [*Laughing*]

FIA: …the child's father went to the media and said: "no I'm not ok with you taking my child." It turned into a money case. He said he didn't want her money, but he wanted his child back, while she claimed the kid would get a much better life with her…

WADE: That's terrible. I didn't know anything about this.

FIA: Me neither really.

WADE: Then why did you bring it up?

FIA: It was last year's headlines. Seems like headline stuff makes it into this sensation-driven art climate fairly easily.

WADE: I keep missing the headlines.

FIA: Do you think it could be third world political art?

WADE: Yeah.

FIA: Did you go to Documenta?

WADE: No. Did you?

FIA: Yes. On the top floor of the Neue Gallerie, there was an African artist; Churchill Madikida, who had done a huge installation stretching over three rooms, the biggest space allocation. This guy had made something, which looked like an *AIDS disco*. This was real third world art! There were coffins with plastic babies and blinking red lights…

WADE: That sounds horrible.

FIA: Yes, it was truly grotesque.

WADE: Sounds like it.

FIA: It was real third world art. What can you do? It is a grotesque situation of inequality and suffering. Nobody wants to deal with it. Can you make anything else but grotesque art? Or what is the space available here?

WADE: I don't know…what are we doing?

FIA: You're asking me?…Once you were telling me a story about when you went to school.

WADE: Yeah?

FIA: You were asked to build your own stretchers. Do you remember this?

WADE: No, keep going.

FIA: You had a hammer and…

WADE: Oh yeah, my Painting I class. We had to build stretchers.

FIA: Completely going into the craft of the support for the image. Then you had to figure out what to paint, and you didn't understand it had to be about content…

WADE: I painted a hammer.

FIA: That eureka moment about content...it doesn't really matter....

WADE: I guess, yeah. That was my first painting. It was a painting of the hammer that I used to build the stretcher. It wasn't so radical.

FIA: But when you told me this story it was like you realized something...

WADE: I don't remember. What did I realize?

FIA: You realized [*Laughing*]...*I'm going to tell you exactly what you realized!* We were talking around the idea of content, what you are supposed to reveal. And now you had constructed and built these structures, which took a long time. You had worked your way up to the surface.

WADE: And I had no content...

FIA: ...to plug in.

WADE: Yeah, not at all. And I still have the same problem.

FIA: It doesn't really matter. Does it matter?

WADE: Maybe it doesn't matter to begin with, and then I'm always attempting to build some kind of system or to think about structures and systems. Things start out as arbitrary and then develop into some kind of structure or kind of system. Just like any of the work here. The Xs and stripes or...with the stripes I came upon accidentally. It was in a pile of torn-up book pages, because I was doing other things, and then the red and green seemed to stick out and seemed to be a good-enough image to use.

FIA: I agree, the scaffolding, or even the background, are pivotal points to consider. It's weird; the stripes seem so essential now to your work. It's as if you opened the door and all these doors from history open. You have circles too?

WADE: The circles, those are holes. Yeah. They're just the absence of ink. Deleted spaces like in a Photoshop file.

FIA: It never prints white?

WADE: Yeah, because you can't print white. So the white is really just the canvas showing, the primed surface and with all the Xs too, the background, it's just the untouched—

FIA: But if you printed light beige would that cover over them?

WADE: Yeah, actually sometimes I have accidentally printed a really light beige or a very light grey not knowing, because you know sometimes when you look at the color picker on Photoshop, a very light grey looks white. I'm not good at seeing colors, or pure white, or color correcting. I'm terrible at it.

FIA: Can I ask you a question? For example these Xs here...what would be the difference for you if you silk-screened them instead of printing them?

WADE: Well, I probably wouldn't do that. But you're asking what would be the difference?

FIA: Or does it matter?

WADE: I think it matters only because I'm using this particular tool, the printer, to make them. If I decided to silkscreen, then I would give more importance to the image—at least to me. If I was actually deciding to use another tool to reproduce the same thing I'd be saying it was important enough to try to replicate with another machine or tool. Does that make sense?

FIA: Yeah, it's strange that the image would gain a sort of importance.

WADE: Because it's connected to the way it was made. It's connected to the typing on the screen, to Microsoft Word, connected to the printer, which produces the image left to right, top to bottom. So, as it's coming out of the printer it's being built sequentially or directionally also. Which is like reading or writing, we do it in a direction. But with silk-screening...

FIA: That's why the Xs are good also. They go in an anti-direction.

WADE: Both directions.

FIA: That's funny, I say anti-direction and you say both directions.

WADE: Anti-direction. That's interesting. So it's essential character is struggling against the directionality of it's making.

FIA: Therefore, if it was a silkscreen these issues would not be important.

WADE: Right, if I were silk-screening I would be wanting to make an X...I don't know why.

FIA: The physicality of it.

WADE: It would totally change.

FIA: And the hand gesture.

WADE: I just chose the printer arbitrarily also. When I started with the printer drawings it just happened to be because I was trying to make an X or block something out with a Sharpie marker and it was too much labor. What I was doing was not very difficult but spending time doing it didn't make sense. When I realized the printer was just sitting on the desk, and that's what it does. It prints stuff much more evenly and efficiently.

FIA: I want to ask another thing. This idea of forms, the social meaning of forms: what do you think about these ideas of form or formalism? We spoke of the idea of cancelled out representation and referent, then there's no content, everything has been thrown out. There are of course forms there.

WADE: Right, you mean forms as in conventions? That they take the form of paintings? Or?

FIA: Their importance or signification potential in the languages of forms. For example, do they communicate, do they have some sort of social presence, do you think?

WADE: Maybe I'm seeing that they participate in at least two kinds of forms. One they take the form of a painting. And so then they can maybe participate in the language of painting. As an object and what a painting does whether it's abstract or representational or gestural.

FIA: When I heard that you called them paintings, I was skeptical. I have had to accept it. If you say it's a painting it is a painting, if that's how you want to have it exist.

WADE: Why was it strange? Just because I was choosing to make a painting or...

FIA: No, because I would probably say it was a print.

WADE: Because it was printed?

FIA: Of course, it was on canvas but still it was done in that mechanical process.

WADE: Well, I got to calling them paintings because I was calling the works on paper drawings because they were are all unique and they were a solution to my drawing problem. So the works on canvas would logically then be called paintings.

FIA: Again, not the idea of inventing a new thing. You place it in already accepted categories; technically, socially, and economically accepted.

WADE: Yeah, exactly. What were we talking about earlier? This idea of being able to participate within a language or conventions even just momentarily in order for people, you know for me as well, to be able to understand what the work could do or does or could even deviate from. Otherwise it would remain in this abstract space or it could also be pretentious to try to create a new category for it—to assume that they are so important that they need their own category.

FIA: That has to do with this social idea again, they want to play with others. If you make new categories, you are all alone, that's kind of boring.

WADE: And when you already feel all alone all the time it's a struggle to find any way to fit in to please other people. [*Laughing.*]

FIA: And the second...

WADE: Oh, the second would be if you look at the images as participating in the history of formalism. And that differs actually because there are many different histories of formalism. Sometimes people are talking about Constructivism, sometimes people are talking about Minimalism or minimalistic imagery or modernism. Any number of...

FIA: One of the slogans of Documenta was 'migrating forms.' Seeing that exhibition, it was many times hard to relate on a classical critical level in the juxtapositions of formal languages. It actually worked closer to advertising, using suggestive methods to set up a feeling of making sense, which made visitors unable to specifically hone down on anything...similarly many times the histories of formalism are diverted or perverted or...it seems to feed on misunderstanding, things get placed together because they look the same but their starting points are very dissimilar.

WADE: Exactly. To connect the work to Russian Constructivism seems kind of crazy in a way. I can see in

this case they're black paintings and you have Malevich's black paintings or Xs, you know, in some morphological way appear throughout Constructivism. But come on...

FIA: It was also a different idea of risk they were working with than we are. They could actually get executed for doing the wrong form.

WADE: Exactly. We're very safe. It was very brutal. Does that answer what your questions were about form? Or do you see form in another way? I mean that's kind of simplistic...

FIA: Yes, the idea of form relating to other forms and making or un-making sense. In a sense, I don't see a difference between representation and abstraction. Things can be both, signify its own use and history and simultaneously blank it out on another plane...

WADE: Right. I don't think any of those issues are important to us anymore. Also, the philosophical, spiritual, or political ideas that go along with different kinds of formalism don't exist for us either...

FIA: That has all been washed away into a huge glossy surface. The spiritual side is now for the corporate identity. They use forms to get to a sense of spirituality and yoga classes, to look like real people of higher moral standards or whatever.

WADE: And corporate identity and branding.

FIA: They use it for feel-good purposes.

WADE: And to make money.

FIA: Of course, that is the ultimate purpose of it all. The reason for using an image, what it depicts/represents, could be the least interesting. Instead, it could be how it has been used, which hands have touched it, how its sense-making process has been contaminated, or whatever other criteria...

WADE: Well, anyone can choose an interesting image because images already seem to be loaded full of meaning. So maybe it's more difficult to try to find something that has more potential and isn't burdened with so much baggage. Although maybe someone would say this stuff is really burdened with modernist baggage. But I don't really think of it this or that way.

FIA: I'm attracted to the burdened. Then they can play more.

WADE: That's true. It's hard for me to tell what the burden of these things is because we all look at them differently.

FIA: All people have, is a little taste of Constructivism it's very vague like a perfume. I think few people really can articulate what they mean with this and that formalism.

WADE: Exactly. I think this discourse we seem to be talking about seems to have become diffuse and it's all about "eau de criticality." And we are all a part of this, we are lacking some kind of critical coherence. Not that everyone needs to agree upon everything. But even momentarily we don't even have anything to build conversations upon. There's this excessive pluralism that says anything is fine. Don't you see that too?

FIA: Absolutely, I think we could come back to where we started with the idea of the speed of consumption of images, well consumption of everything. Pluralism makes everything look the same, easily digestible.

WADE: Right. And it sounds reactionary to say that pluralism is bad. I don't want to say that but it seems at least in the way I work, for me to get a handle on things I have to really narrow things down, narrow the language down, narrow the images down, narrow the process down, in order to have some kind of focused relationship with a few sets of things. And figure out how those things can work together, what that can expand into. But then on a larger scale, like in Chelsea or the whole world, there's such an overabundance of people producing things and very little critical writing done that takes strong positions in order to create even just momentary alliances so that conversation can happen out of which that something can build. I think everything is working against that.

FIA: It seems like some species of pluralism always was present on art scenes. For example, in the Soviet Union at the time of the Revolution, there were a large amount of active artists. They were writing a thousand manifestos, which all seemed to cancel each other out. Although, in opposition to us, they were very firm in what they believed in, at least momentarily, then they behaved like sluts. One day they were affiliated with one person or idea, then the next day they affiliated with the opponent

WADE: In the end it's like "eau de revolution" or some-thing. The problem then is also coming up with theoretical models that really say what's good and what's bad.

FIA: The [Clement] Greenberg style?

WADE: Greenberg or even [Hal] Foster or [Rosalind] Krauss saying this is good postmodernism, this is bad postmodernism. They hated someone like [Jeff] Koons, who now we kind of think is great. And of course there are potential problems with his work and it's question-able. But to discount his work or a number of other artists is a problem. But maybe even momentarily those lines needed to be drawn in order to produce ideas about everything else.

FIA: It inserts friction in the system. Now there's no friction.

WADE: Nothing at all. Everything that's negative or anything that's critical simply seems like style. Rather than really saying no or drawing any lines.

FIA: And poses, there are tons of poses. That's why Madonna could count, right?

WADE: That's why nobody cares about writing about Madonna anymore.

FIA: One reason for this new-age-no-negatives vibe in the art world right now, has to do with the market situation for art, where the effect of a negative comment on an artist's work could have damaging networking and business effects. Both El Lissitzky and Rodchenko, Lissitzky more so, went with the system of totalitarian Stalinism when the years got really tough. He made some really great work, which actually [Benjamin H.D.] Buchloh wrote about. Just like Koons, Lissitzky was a yes-sayer, or pleaser if you will, in the system, in a very complicated situation.

WADE: Well those are such extreme things.

FIA: Yes, in a sense Jeff Koons is the El Lissitzky of our time, going into the bed with Capitalism, making some images together. They acted beyond criticality, as we know it. Forms are good. Forget about criticality, for a pure form...

WADE: What is a pure form?

FIA: Perhaps the X or the U. Last question, why didn't you do a V?

WADE: I started with the X because it was just a mark...a negation, or a signature, a doodle, it pointed to mapping and then to OSX and X Men.... But then someone wrote that my X was a "cancellation of modernism" and then people repeated it and I didn't really like that—so I thought maybe another key on the keyboard could work—and the U seemed good enough.

FIA: The U is a shifter, and both are at the end of the alphabet.

WADE: Also the curved line. We need a clever ending!

FIA: Maybe that was it...what is the status of the scan?

WADE: I like to think of the scanner as, at least in relation to the printer and in contrast to the camera. The camera takes a picture, obviously, but all at once. Whereas a scanner goes left to right, top to bottom. So it's a directional recording and there's also the contact with the glass. There's only a very shallow picture space, so it has to touch. Seems more digital/indexical in a way. The reading left to right, top to bottom, then the printer produces the image in the same directional way.

FIA: Top to bottom. Bottoms up.

WADE: That's a better way to end the conversation!

FIA: Ok let's turn it off. I was going to say one more thing.... ▮