(LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION)

To Whom It May Concern:

I hope this dispatch finds you well. I am writing to inform you of a most curious and thoughtful exhibition that will be gracing New York City this autumn. You will find it at the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, on the second floor, at 323 West 39th Street, and I suspect you will be pleased with the results.

The exhibition is titled "all we ever wanted was everything," and includes some of the most noteworthy artists working today. This rather poetically titled confluence of creativity was organized by galería perdida. Perhaps you have already heard of this up-and-coming cooperative? If not, please know they are a smart and hard-working lot—facilitating an impressive variety of contemporary art projects in Los Angeles, Michoacán, and most recently, New York. I encourage you to visit their comprehensive website (galeriaperdida.com) for further evidence of their enterprising output.

I would be remiss to not say a few words about the exhibition, "all we ever wanted was everything." This exhibition is comprised of posters designed by nine leading contemporary artists (Fia Backstrom, Shannon Ebner, Patricia Esquivias, Spencer Finch, Joachim Koester, Alice Könitz, Gonzalo Lebrija, Mathias Poledna, Danh Vo) as well as yours truly. Each poster is the same size and black and white. No other limitations or demands were placed on the design of the posters. Due to the inherently ephemeral nature of the poster, these works will be free and available to the exhibition's visitors. (Another compelling reason to avail yourself of this opportunity!)

The good people of galería perdida have confided to me their "interest in the cultural and political history the poster has served," and have further remarked that they "do not see this merely as a collection of images," but rather an invitation "to artists whose work will use and challenge the form..." I hope you find this précis as intriguing as I do.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if there is any additional information—or encouragement—I may provide.

Kindest regards,

Michael Ned Holte

(LYRIC POETRY)

All we ever wanted was everything
All we ever got was cold
Get up, eat jelly
Sandwich bars and barbed wire
Squash every week into a day

Oh, oh, oh, oh
Oh, oh, oh, oh

The sound of drums is calling
The sound of the drum has called
Flash of youth shoot out of darkness
Factory town

Oh, oh, oh, oh
Oh, oh, oh, oh

Oh, to be the cream
Oh, to be the cream
Oh, to be the cream
Oh, to be the cream

(INSTRUCTIONS)

EFFECTIVE POSTER DESIGN: A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Define Your Audience
Effective communication starts with knowing who your audience is. At poster sessions there is intense competition for audience attention. In their first three (3) seconds your audience will determine whether to stay and explore your content or leave. If they stay you have 30 seconds to secure their attention by conveying an overall understanding of your subject matter.

Distill Your Message
Consider the fact that your audience has only a limited time to view your poster. If there were one thing you could say on the poster, what would it be? Select a statement, photograph, or diagram that is sure to attract your audience's attention. This is your three (3) second hit. Your focus item should be enlarged so that it will occupy at least 30% of the area of the finished poster. Remember that your audience will not approach you if it is not clear what your topic or theme is from a "safe distance" of 10 feet.

Leaving Space
Effective posters are spacious and easy to follow. Adequate clear space will direct attention to key elements. Remember the eye looks for edges, so align photographs, headings, text materials.

Edit, Edit, Edit!
Eliminate all but the vital elements.

Finishing Touches
If your document contains unusual fonts make sure to bring a copy of those font files with you when you take your poster to the service bureau for printing.

Delivering the Message
Is the subject matter presented clearly and concisely?
Does the information presented flow logically?
Is the text readable in terms of linguistic difficulty?
Is the text legible in terms of font choice, size, color and spacing?
If you stopped to look at this poster, would you read the text on it?

(CLASSIFIED AD)

EVERYTHING WE EVER WANTED? Poster stacks will constitute this exhibition. Unique approach is open to artists' decision making, creating chapters of events—political, social, abstract or otherwise. To learn more, visit "The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts," 323 West 39th Street, 2nd Floor, NY.

(FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS)

HEY! WHAT KIND OF SHOW IS THIS?

"all we ever wanted was everything" is a group exhibition organized by galería perdida featuring work by nine contemporary artists: Fia Backstrom, Shannon Ebner, Patricia Esquivias, Spencer Finch, Joachim Koester, Alice Könitz, Gonzalo Lebrija, Mathias Poledna, and Danh Vo. Each of these artists has contributed a poster design according to criteria specified by galeria perdida; one thousand copies of each poster have been printed and exhibited in stacks at the Elizabeth Foundation.

SO, IS THIS REALLY ART? WHY POSTERS?

You've asked two questions here. Let's answer the latter explicitly, with hopes of constructing an implicit framework for answering the former. According to galería perdida, "The locus for this exhibition began by our interest in the cultural and political history the poster has served... It is important however for us to note that we do not see this merely as a collection of images, but look to artists whose work will use and challenge the form to initiate a vocabulary as defined by their image, creating chapters of events—political, social, abstract or otherwise."

CAN I TAKE A POSTER HOME?

Yes, the posters are available to the exhibition's visitors while supplies last and are free of charge.

WHERE IS GALERIA PERDIDA?

galería perdida is not a fixed location—and not really a "gallery" in any traditional sense. Perhaps it's better to think of it (or shall I say them?) as a set of tent stakes marking a temporary gathering spot before moving on to the next site or situation. galería perdida has organized exhibitions and inaugurated events in Los Angeles, Michoacán, Houston, and most recently, New York.

THAT SEEMS PRETTY ELUSIVE.

Is that a question? Because it sounds more like a comment.

(EPIGRAPHS)

I seem to be good at describing the cage. I am not very good at describing how to remove the bars.

– Martha Rosler

The world is full of objects, more or less interesting; I do not wish to add any more.

– Douglas Huebler

I WILL NOT CALL MYSELF AN ART WORKER BUT RATHER AN ART DREAMER AND I WILL PARTICIPATE ONLY IN A TOTAL REVOLUTION SIMULTANEOUSLY PERSONAL AND PUBLIC.

– Lee Lozano

For the rustle [...] implies a community of bodies: in the sounds of the pleasure which is "working," no voice is raised, guides, or swerves, no voice is constituted; the rustle is the very sound of plural delectation—plural but never massive (the mass, quite the contrary, has a single voice, and terribly loud).

– Roland Barthes

All we ever wanted was everything
All we ever got was cold

– Bauhaus

(NEGATIVES)

The given form of the poster is not beside the point here because "all we ever wanted was everything," organized by galería perdida, is nothing like the usual exhibition. It is the opposite of rote or standard issue. It is not on view at a commercial gallery, nor is it at a museum or Kunsthalle. It does not partake in the display of unique art objects; it does not neglect a pattern of consumption. It avoids an unspoken distain for the products of mechanical reproduction.

"all we ever wanted was everything" is not stingy in the distribution of posters created by nine contemporary artists. These artists were not willing to take the easy road, nor did they take this assignment lightly. No, they surely did not underperform in the face of the brief provided.

No artist will be represented by less than 1000 posters—and not more than 1000 posters.

These posters are not printed in color. They are not two-sided. They cost the viewer nothing. Absolutely nothing!

The organizers of this show are hardly unaware of the rhythms found within these images; they do not eschew the cultural and political history the poster has served. The non-autonomous forces behind galería perdida display no reluctance to challenge the form and no hesitation to enable a vocabulary defined by the image.

They are not loath to situate these stacks of images, nor are they afraid to relinquish some of their responsibility to their presumptive audience.

"all we ever wanted was everything"?

Never say never.

(PANTOUM)

All we ever wanted was everything?
Do we see a pattern of consumption?
Present day usage ultimately strikes a chord
With the desire that these images conjure

Do we see a pattern of consumption?
Challenge the form to initiate a vocabulary
With the desire that these images conjure
Chapters of events—political, social, abstract or otherwise

Challenge the form to initiate a vocabulary
Our approach is open to rhythms, found
Chapters of events—political, social, abstract or otherwise
Why do they take this image and not that one?

Our approach is open to rhythms found
Within popular culture since the later 19th Century
Why do they take this image and not that one?
It is also of no coincidence: the audience

Within popular culture since the later 19th Century
Present day usage ultimately strikes a chord
It is also of no coincidence all the audience
Ever wanted was everything

(APOLOGIA)

I know you are wondering why I did this. By "this," of course, I mean this sort of meager excuse for a text—or, well, assortment of texts that stand in, all too imperfectly, for a more sensible catalogue essay. I realize this surely smacks of cheap gimmickry. I had hoped to craft a brilliantly observed, thoughtfully articulated response to the brief of your promising exhibition, "all we ever wanted was everything." But I clearly possessed neither the clarity nor mettle to accomplish the feat. Then, as I have previously confided, I had schemed to interview you, galería perdida, on your intentions for this occasion, but on that count too I failed to deliver. So, I have presented you with... "this." A sort of lack or catalogue of lacks. A rubbery phantom limb in the place of muscular arm ready for the heavy lifting of commissioned essaying.

Obviously, I have used this plurality of formats to defer the task of saying something truly noteworthy or productive—and to evade the responsibility of claiming a singular voice (and, therefore, some revelation of myself, my quote-unquote inner being). In this sense I have just as obviously fallen back into the old postmodern, "death of the author" trap. (It is a trap, by now, is it not?) And surely, I have also borrowed heavily from the playbook of Raymond Queneau's "Exercises in Style," though doubtlessly your present author lacks the range, ambition, endurance, and humor of that well-known genius—not to mention his considerable charm.

I can only imagine what's going through your collective head right now! "What on earth was Holte thinking when he wrote these cloying bagatelles?" C'mon, I can read your unified mind. "What on earth were we"—by which I mean you, galería perdida—"thinking when we asked this jester to participate in creating a poster for our show?" I know, I know.

But, alas, in the final analysis, a text is a text, right? (Or "copy" as it's known in the poster world—funny sense of that word, isn't it? Copy?) There's a perceived need for a text and—voila!—here it is: A text. Just in the nick of time. And, besides, we all know how little the art audience actually reads! This crazy enterprise is still called visual art for a reason—a notion this writer is reminded of all too often. So, there's really no use beating oneself up about these things. Is there?

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A Program of the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts

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