

# Transmedial Autotheories / *Passage* / Kris Pint, Nadia Sels, and Maria Gil Ulldemolins

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Thirza Cuthland, from *Less Lethal Fetishes*, 2020. Image courtesy of the artist.

*Fusing self-representation with philosophy and critical theory, autotheory moves between “theory” and “practice.” It is critical and it is creative; it is experiential and experimental; it is scholarly and it is popular. It brings theory to life and life to theory. It plays with personal polemic, positing a speaking self in the act of writing “I,” and then, self-reflectively and self-reflexively, it deconstructs itself. Autotheory’s genealogies spring from the institutions it seeks to critique. It privileges thinking with over thinking against; its politics of citation unveil its relations. From social media technologies to the publishing industry, from live performance to visual art, autotheory’s escalating ubiquity in cultural production serves as a provocation: why autotheory and why now? What motivates the methodological melding of an autobiographical “I” with academic scholarship? What implications does theorizing the self have for the politics of knowledge production? A digital companion to the special issue of ASAP/Journal, this cluster animates the autotheoretical intersections of art and art writing in time-based media. Transmedial in form and provocative by design, these works appear accompanied by autotheory’s telltale synthesis of critical-creative writing. The cluster includes film and video by Maider Fortune, Annie Macdonell, and Ree Botts; performance for the camera and documentation of live performances by Ceylan Öztürk, Calla Durose-Moya, lo bil, and Mel Keiser; web-based work, including memes, by Simon Evnine and Piper Curtis; other moving-images, including GIFs, by Migueltzinta C. Solis, and sound-based work by Arezu Salamzadeh. Off the page and on the screen, these autotheories invite as much as they imagine, contest as much as they contrive, and exude as much as they include.*

— Lauren Fournier and Alex Brostoff

[Passage](#) is a new research project based in the Architecture and Arts Faculty of Hasselt University, Belgium. “Passage” has three main meanings for us: a corridor, a connective space for transit; a literary or painterly fragment; and, in French, *pas sage*: that is, not well-behaved. Consequently, *Passage* is a project that aims to (1) connect different research groups from our university, as well as reach out to other scholars, artists, and writers; (2) investigate citational practices; and (3), challenge what is expected from academics.

First and foremost, *Passage* wants to be a space where academic tradition can meet creative, intimate reflections – hence our emphasis on autotheory. For *Passage*, autotheory is uniquely exciting in its ability to feed on cultural theory, which can help us understand how to inhabit our realities better; with the affective, phenomenological, very much embodied testimonies of what actual living is as experienced in the world. We are convinced that in autotheory, the hybrid whole is greater than the sum of the parts. For *Passage*, autotheory brings forward the relevance of art, architecture, literature, philosophy, mythology, and religion by relying on the minutiae of the embodied quotidian, rather than hegemonic discourses. We want intimate reflection to guide how we perceive and process our environments, interior and exterior. Interiority and intimacy become key in understanding what dwells in the public spheres. *Passage* specifically seeks to ensure these creative-critical reflections are welcomed and validated in an academic context. The *intimate*, here, is knowledge. This connective motion extends further than the encounter with the intimate and the theoretical. Our challenges are our opportunities: seeking new ways of engaging and confronting the European tradition which we locally come from; ensuring artistic expression is seen as reflective in an academic context, but also fostering an artistic take on theorising. We want to provide a forum for modes of writing that are too scholarly for the art world, and too biographical, too ‘artistic,’ and too outlandish for most academic journals.

Ultimately, we want to build a community. *Passage* is a peer-reviewed journal for autotheory, which we have launched as a means to showcase, and also to reach out to, those who are working in this mode. We want and need *Passage* to bring together a rich and diverse group of voices. We are attempting to work horizontally, connecting junior and senior, theoretical and practical, mono- and trans-disciplinary researchers. By meeting as peers, the review process garners a different set of stakes: we work towards something common, close, and, of course, personal, that moves between the autobiographical and collective.

We have opened a new, ongoing [Call For Papers](#) that is a passage itself: the CFPs are like connective tissues between disciplines and genres, as well as between the personal and the theoretical. Each CFP engages with fragments of what Roland Barthes calls “the large objects of knowledge” and, last but not least, are not all well behaved. We encourage experimentation with established disciplinary conventions and forms. Anyone interested can find more information at [projectpassage.net/ongoing](http://projectpassage.net/ongoing).

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*This is one of twelve contributions from the ASAP/J cluster of Transmedial Autotheories. Read the other pieces [here](#).  
Read the Autotheory special issue (6.2) of the print journal ASAP/Journal [here](#).*

## Kris Print

Kris Pint is associate professor of cultural theory at the Faculty of Architecture and Arts at Hasselt University. His research focuses on how literature, interior architecture and visual arts help propose alternative forms of living, dwelling, and knowing. He also examines how creative (non-)fiction can be used in artistic research.

## Nadia Sels

Nadia Sels teaches art history at PXL-MAD School of Arts (Hasselt) and mythology at Ghent University. Her research explores the common denominator between art and mythology, as two fields that are part of a continuum: she approaches both as expressions of the way in which humans use analogous thinking and metaphor to find meaning and orientation in an inherently meaningless and overwhelming reality. This historical process does not only run through concepts, but starts out from a bodily, sensory involvement with the world.

## Maria Gil Ulldemolins

Maria Gil Ulldemolins is a postdoc researcher at the Faculty of Architecture and Arts at Hasselt University (BE). Her doctoral thesis, *Collapse: A Warburgian Autotheory of Impacted Interiorities and Folding Bodies* mixed autobiographical excerpts with secular, contemporary reflections on the Catholic trope of the swooning Virgin; as well as contemporary art, literature, and cultural theory. Currently, she is researching architectural interiors and interiority; soft materials; and hyperlinked, non-linear, ergodic texts.