

EUROPA AS COW

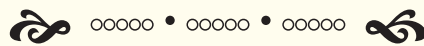
OR



EUROPA THE MOON GODDESS

★ OR ★

HISTORY AS RUMINATION



CIVIC VIRTUE

2012



# Introduction

## (1)

CIVIC VIRTUE is an artists' collective based in Amsterdam. The collective has 4 core members, but also seek active collaboration with other artists for each project. CIVIC VIRTUE is best understood through its interest in signs and symbols. It is an active engagement with meaning as a fundamental motif for the creation of our environment, if not the whole of our reality. A main focal point of CIVIC VIRTUE has therefore been the function of signs within governing bodies. This ranges



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from secret societies to a spectrum of revolts, starting from Spartacus and into the modern era. Notable examples being the many peasant revolts that took place in medieval and Renaissance Europe, up to the Romantic wave that culminated in 1848.

CIVIC VIRTUE is interested in the idea of government, as it is constituted by dynamic organisations like a body is constituted by organs. Ergo there are bodies of government, which are considered positive for their dynamic interaction within the whole, as in the case of democratic



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representation, while a body without organs may be considered as a system of control in the most negative aspect of how governments may function as a mere machines. Such a system necessarily implies the need for radical reform.

Motifs as the Marianne-figure and the guillotine became figurative symbols for overthrowing an ailing hierarchy. It is therefore that beheadings, and thoughts on the physicality of power, quickly became a habit to us. It is the symbology of revolt that gets reproduced at the thought of displacing the head

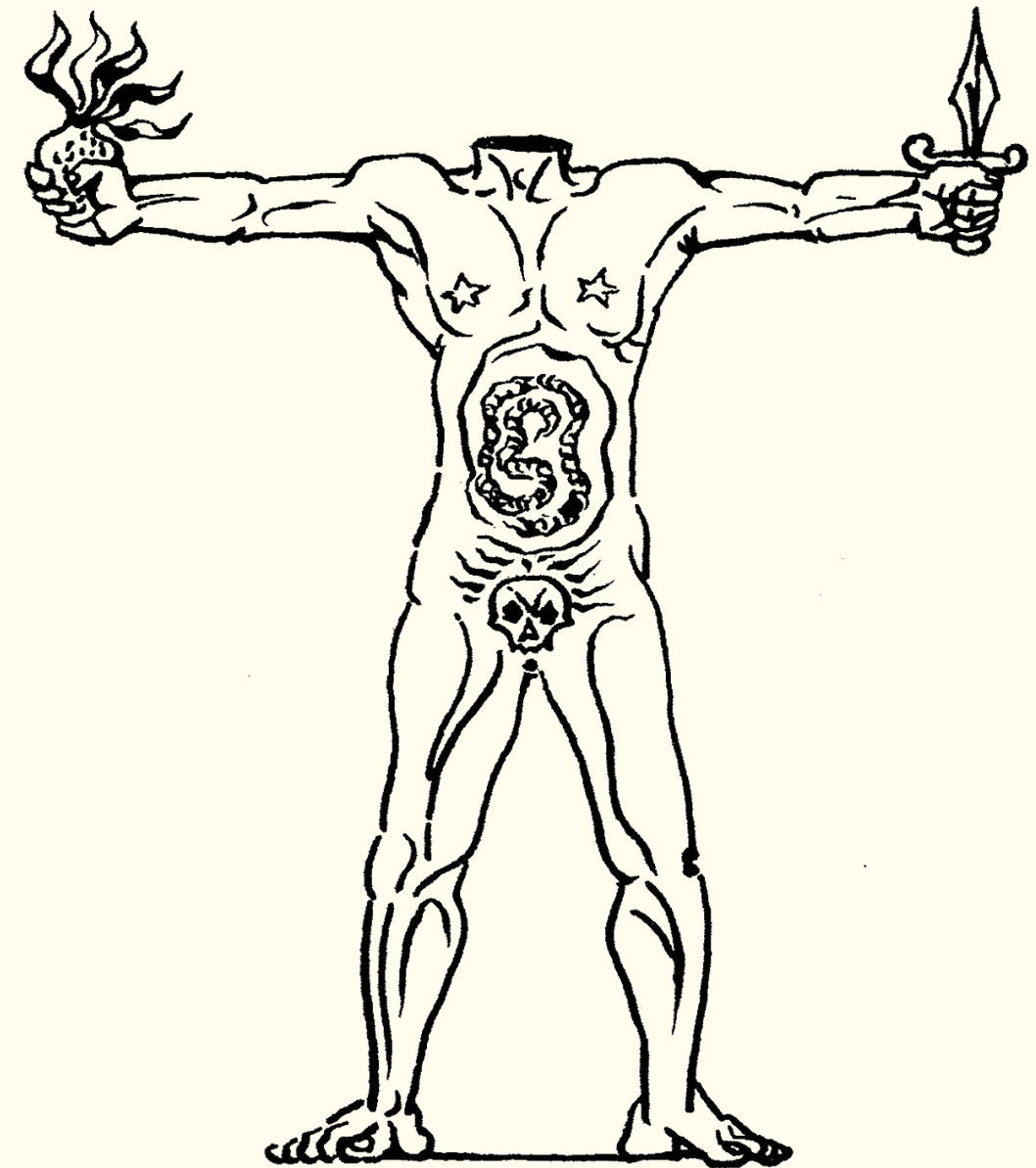


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from the body. Thus, the idea of the beheading contains a potent symbol for altered social structures.

However, each political group in history, in its attempts to overthrow a ruling class, has always had to deal with the dynamics of its own members to make such a revolt possible. But the connotation of such presumptions tend not to be thought through. While it is a common truism that such groups of a pragmatic compromise. It can be replaced by a more joyful sense of polemics, which ideally should animate all artistic pursuit. And



# ACEPHALE

RELIGION · SOCIOLOGIE · PHILOSOPHIE · REVUE PARAISSANT 4 FOIS PAR AN  
1<sup>re</sup> année LA CONJURATION SACRÉE 24 juin 1936  
PAR GEORGES BATAILLE PIERRE KLOSSOWSKI ET ANDRÉ MASSON

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infuse work with a mirror of how  
power functions, rather than merely  
representing its outcome.

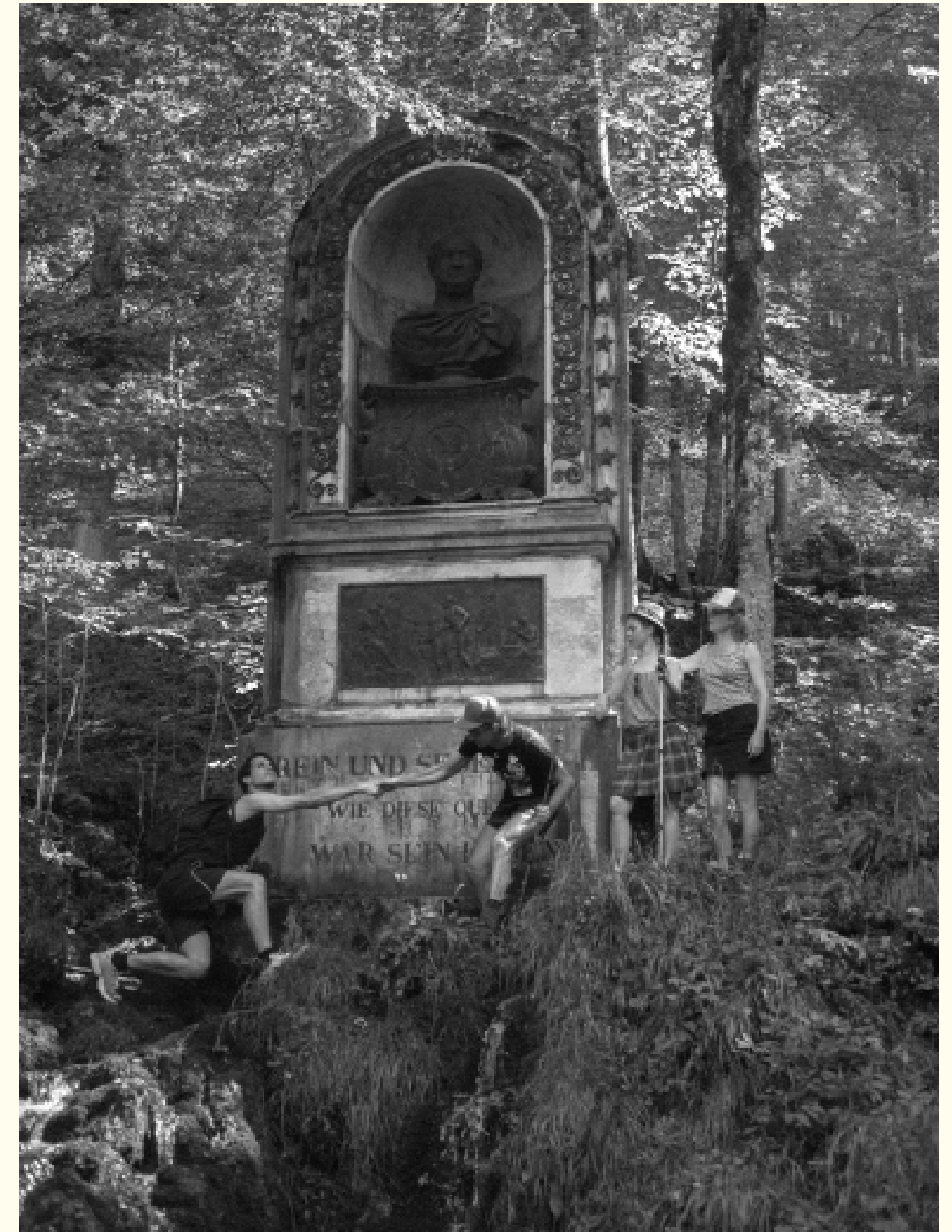
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## ∞ The Definition of the Neoclassical (2)

CIVIC VIRTUE defines itself as a Neoclassic revival. Neoclassicism was the dominating trend of the 18th and early 19th centuries. It is an historical style dictating the mood of art and fashion in a period that coincided roughly with the age of enlightenment. What is most interesting about the style is how it is built on recycled ideas and objects from the past. It is within Neoclassicism that we have a century's worth of small movements, all of which were inspired by the



Photograph – Bavarian Alps, 2012



re-discovery of artefacts and styles from past eras. The most symptomatic examples of this being Greek columns, and Roman frescos.

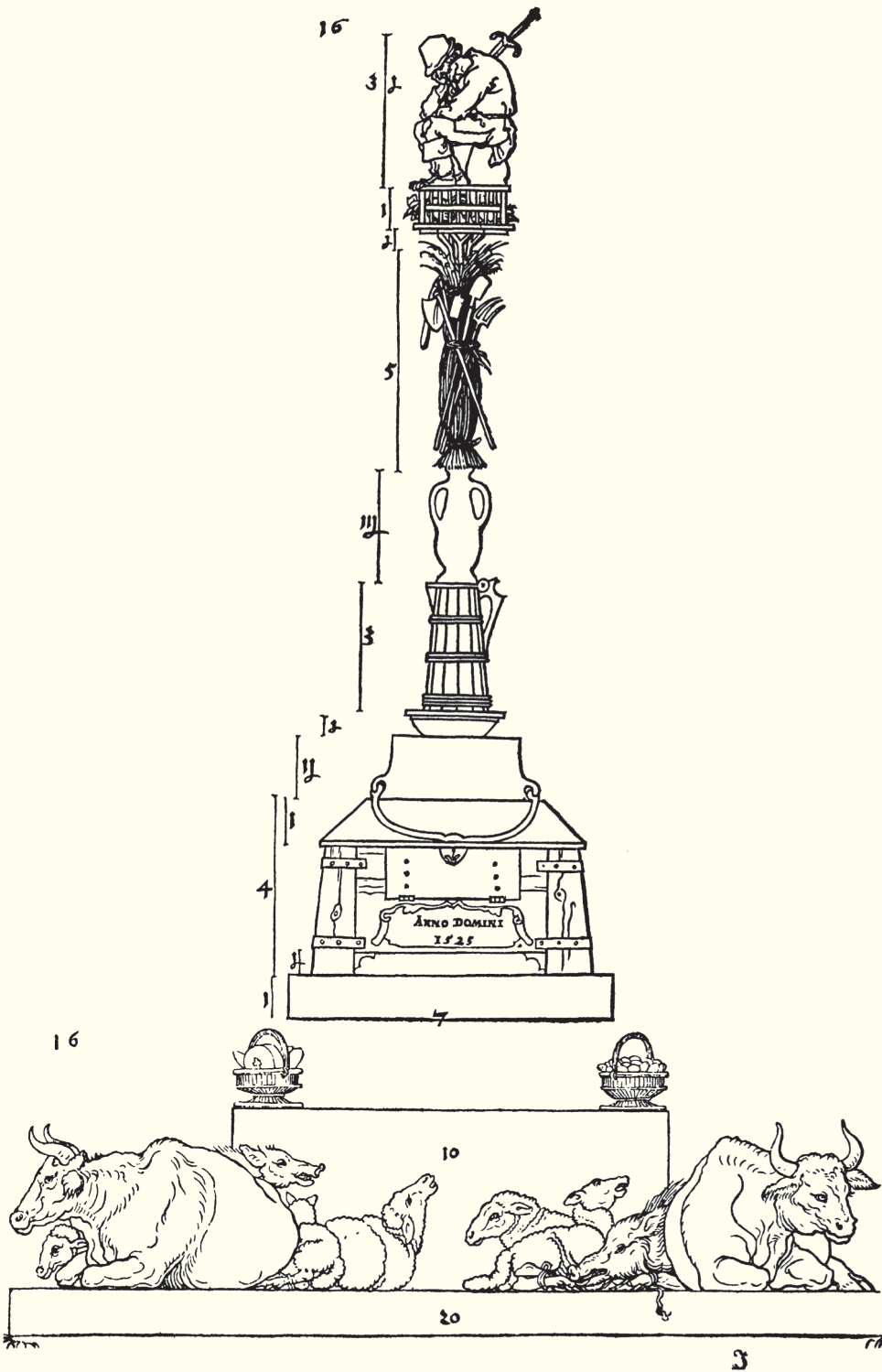
And so it is that CIVIC VIRTUE chose a theme, as it allows for nearly endless variations when it comes to historical motifs. Each reference to the past has the possibility of becoming a modern-day revival, rather than remaining an isolated reflection, focused solely on what once was. This allows CIVIC VIRTUE to joyfully delve into the whole of everything that had ever happened in history.



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And perhaps more importantly: to find ideas and ideologies that are worth recuperating.

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## ∞ The Grand Tour of the Intestines (3)

Today we would like to introduce CIVIC VIRTUE's Grand Tour of the intestines. This is of course built on the tradition of North-European aristocrats traveling south for the sake of their "cultural education". In the spirit of the Grand Tour, we will approach Europe from the perspective of a founding myth: that is the Grand Tour of Europa - divine Moon Goddess from Phoenicia. As Europa and the Moon Goddess are the same thing, we are impelled to see the Tour of Europa as a tour



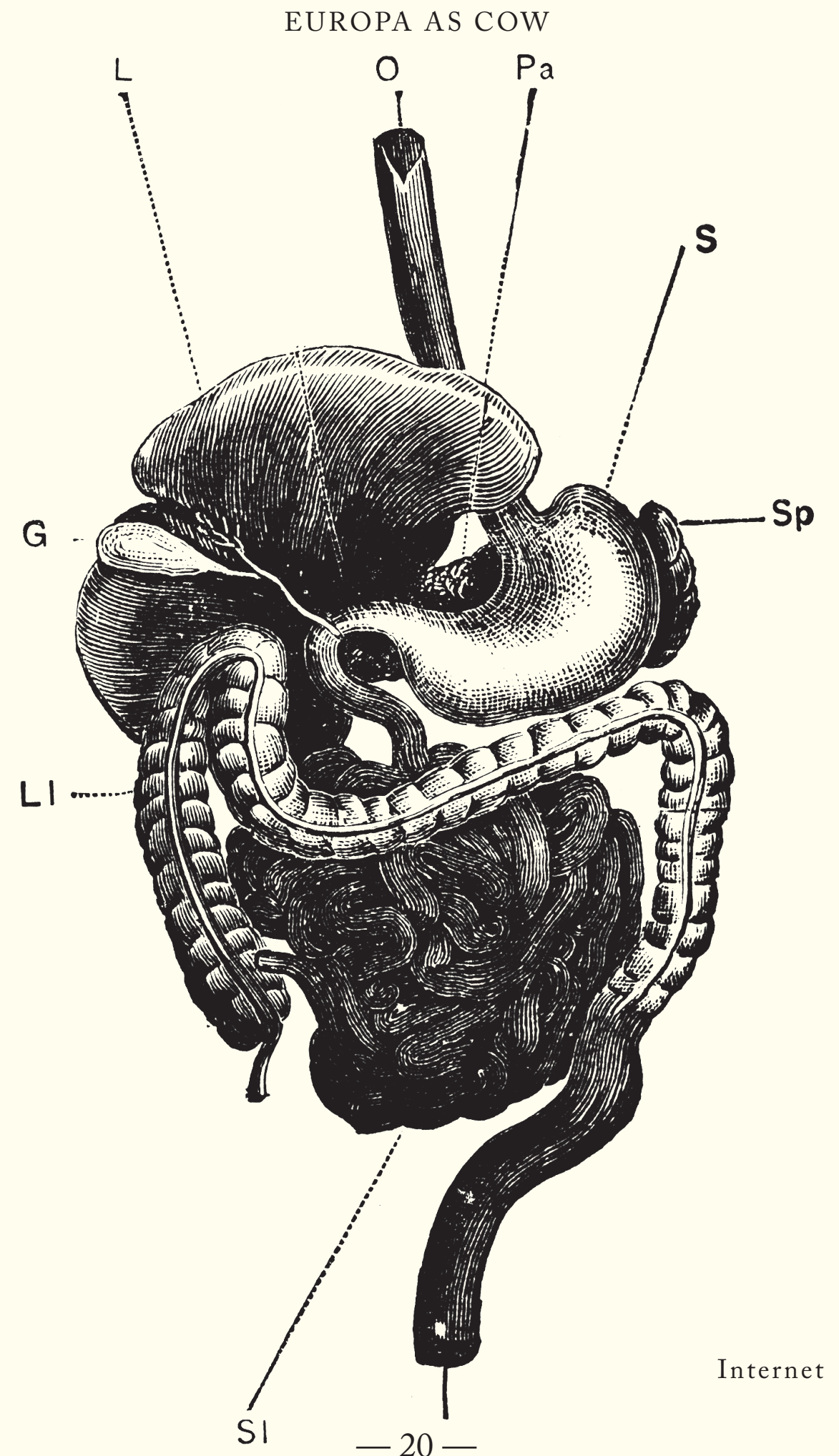
Photograph – Munich, 2012



of her digestive system. We will enter through her mouth, spend some time in the stomach, check out organs such as the liver and kidneys, before delving into Europa's large intestines.

What we have is the multi-purpose use of the intestines as a drive for our narrative pursuits. The intestines are a metaphor for:

- The river systems of Europe, which were the original foundation for travel and commerce on the continent.



- “Digestion as thought” in the Nietzschean sense. This is a metaphor for digestion as thinking.
- Intestines are formed like a maze, and thereby a metaphor for the notions of narrative in the universal sense of linear progress.

CIVIC VIRTUE is interested in the digestive system as metaphor for arriving at conclusions. Concepts present themselves as liver, kidneys and pancreas that have the ability

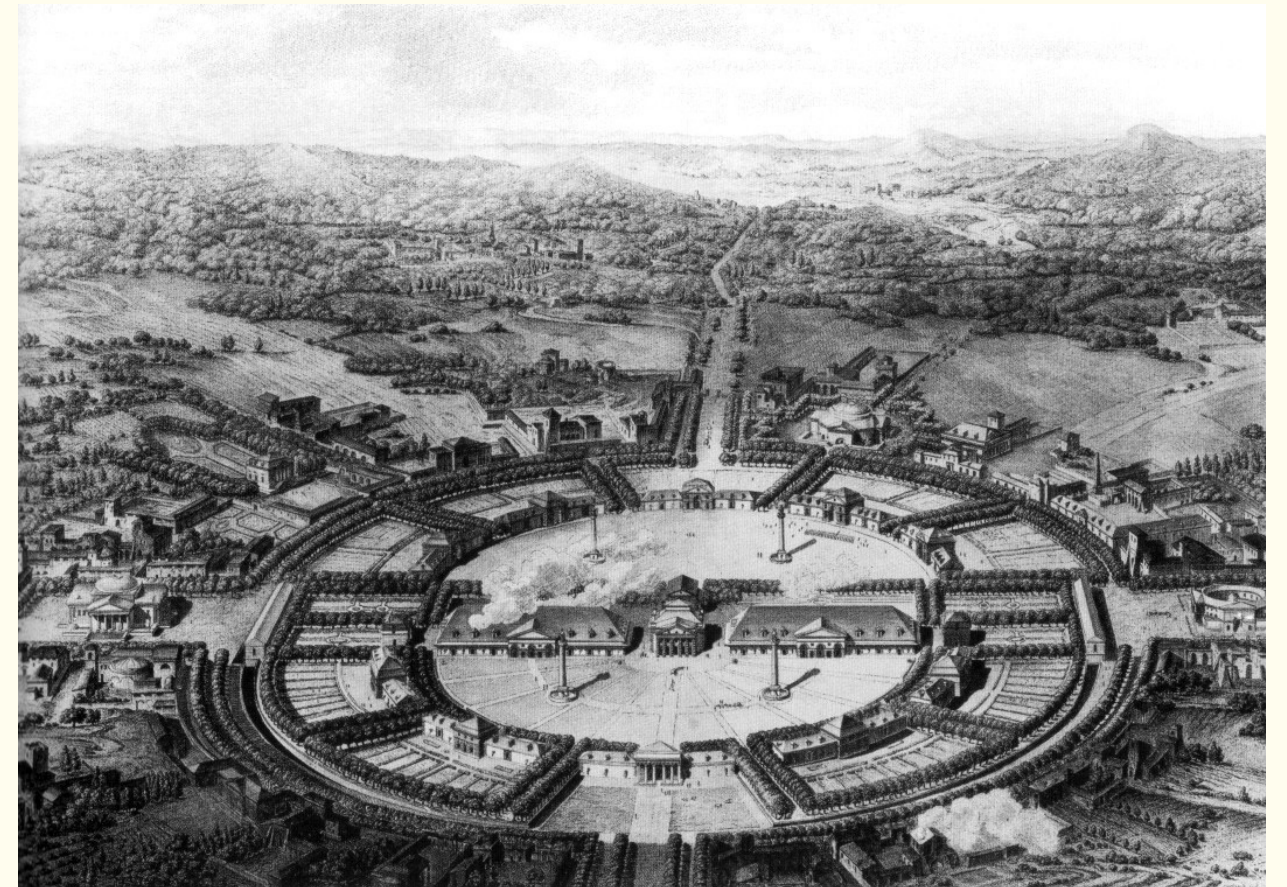


Video still, 2012



to purify and distil elements from within food and to make it useful to the body. However, the organs only use nourishment appropriate to themselves and disregard the rest. This is similar to how a mental filter produces ideology at the moment when the mind is selective about the information it takes in.

Furthermore, the digestive system provides a well-formed analogy as it bares an uncanny resemblance to a labyrinth. As a labyrinth, it is the embodiment of a complex and heroic journey filled with trials of



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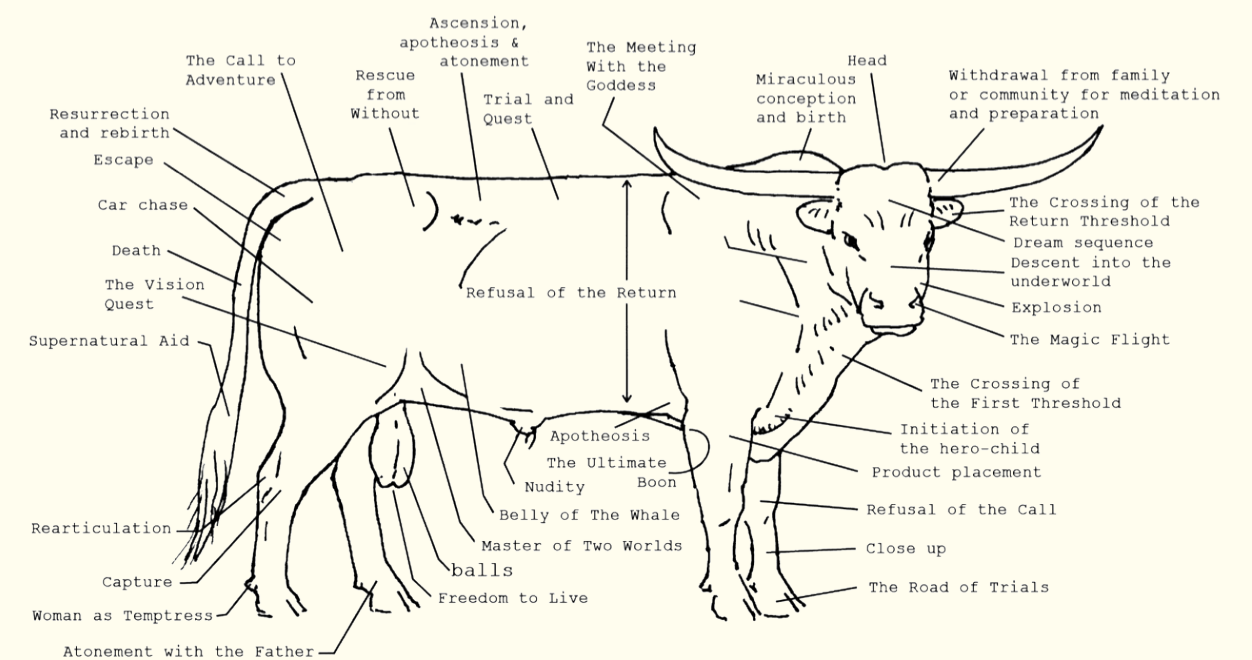
endurance, strength and wit. In addition, the digestive tract looks similar to the human brain. And so the Journey, the Digestive Tract, the Labyrinth and the Brain, all become interchangeable with each other.

Interestingly enough, the origins of the labyrinth is found at Knossos along with the ancient myth of the Minotuar. In the first version of the myth Europa conceives a child with Zeus – who had disguised himself as a bull. The child of this union was Minos. In the second version, it is Minos's wife who conceives a child



Photograph – Munich, 2012

with a divine bull sent by Zeus for Minos to sacrifice. The child of this union was the Minotaur, who went on to live in the labyrinth, safely hidden from the rest of society. The reason that Minos put his stepson in the labyrinth, was perhaps not because the Minotaur was a man-eating monster, but on the contrary, because Minos was ashamed of the affair his wife had had with the holy bull. It was, after all, completely the responsibility of Minos, who had not sacrificed the animal as he was obligated to do by Zeus. Perhaps he too was seduced by the bull?



Altered image, 2012



It is therefore that we doubt the physical existence of such a labyrinth and propose that it is an allegory for the psychological layout of Minos's mind, in which the Minotaur is that monster that lives in everyone's head: shame! Yet the myth of the Minotaur and of King Minos both seem to be spin-offs from earlier forms of bull worship. Moreover, if it is an allegory, it is necessarily one that implies a connection between propaganda and the imagination.

We can only assume that the accusation of bestiality was intended



Photograph – Milan, 2012



as slander by a new ruling class – the Greeks – towards the Minoans – who once predominated in the region. It is the Minoans who seem to have worshiped bulls, and happily danced upon them in a tranquil harmony unknown to the war-like mindset of early Greeks who brought a dark age to the Mediterranean region.

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## ∞ Ruminations (4) ∞

Rumination is a modern-day metaphor for the melancholically inclined, and is appropriated from cows. When a cow ruminates, it chews grass, swallows it, digests it, regurgitates the cud, chews it more, and swallows it again. In English, “to ruminate” means to think repeatedly about events from the past. Ergo, the psychological act of ruminating is when the brain and the digestive system become interchangeable once again.



Photograph – Milan, 2011



After all, ruminations go hand-in-hand with Neoclassicism. It is the essence of a memory that had been recycled, just as styles keep re-emerging only to become forgotten to history once more. These cycles only hasten in today's production-based mode of industry, but the question remains: where does the cud go?

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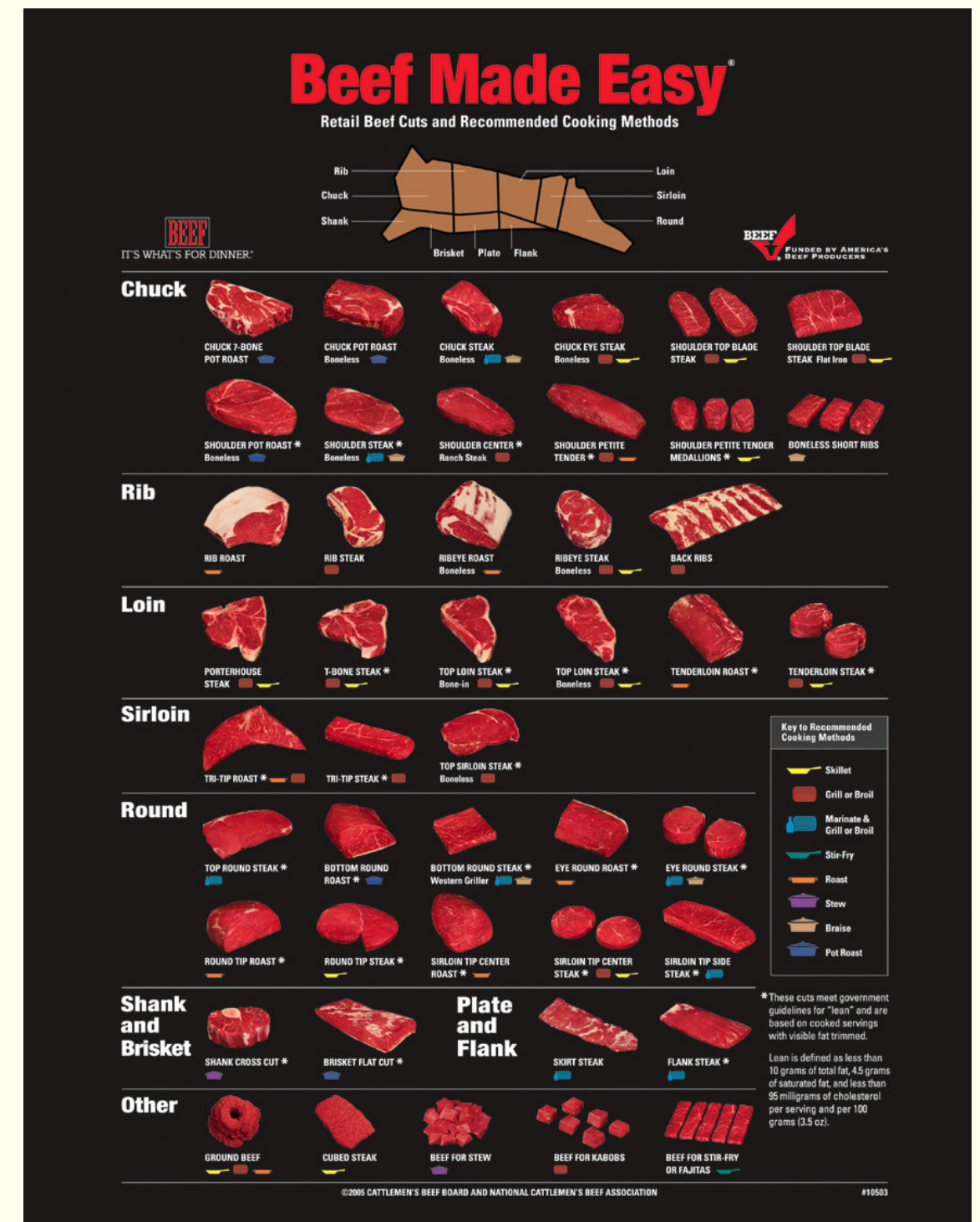


Linocut, 2012

# oo The Fordist oo Model of Production (5)

To complete the cycle, we will now turn our attention to the modern era. More specifically, to the manufacturing process for constructing cars, now known as the Fordist model. This model was built upon the idea of the deconstruction of a cow.

The factory system is an extension of the time-honoured work of the butcher. That is to say, the automobile is put together in the

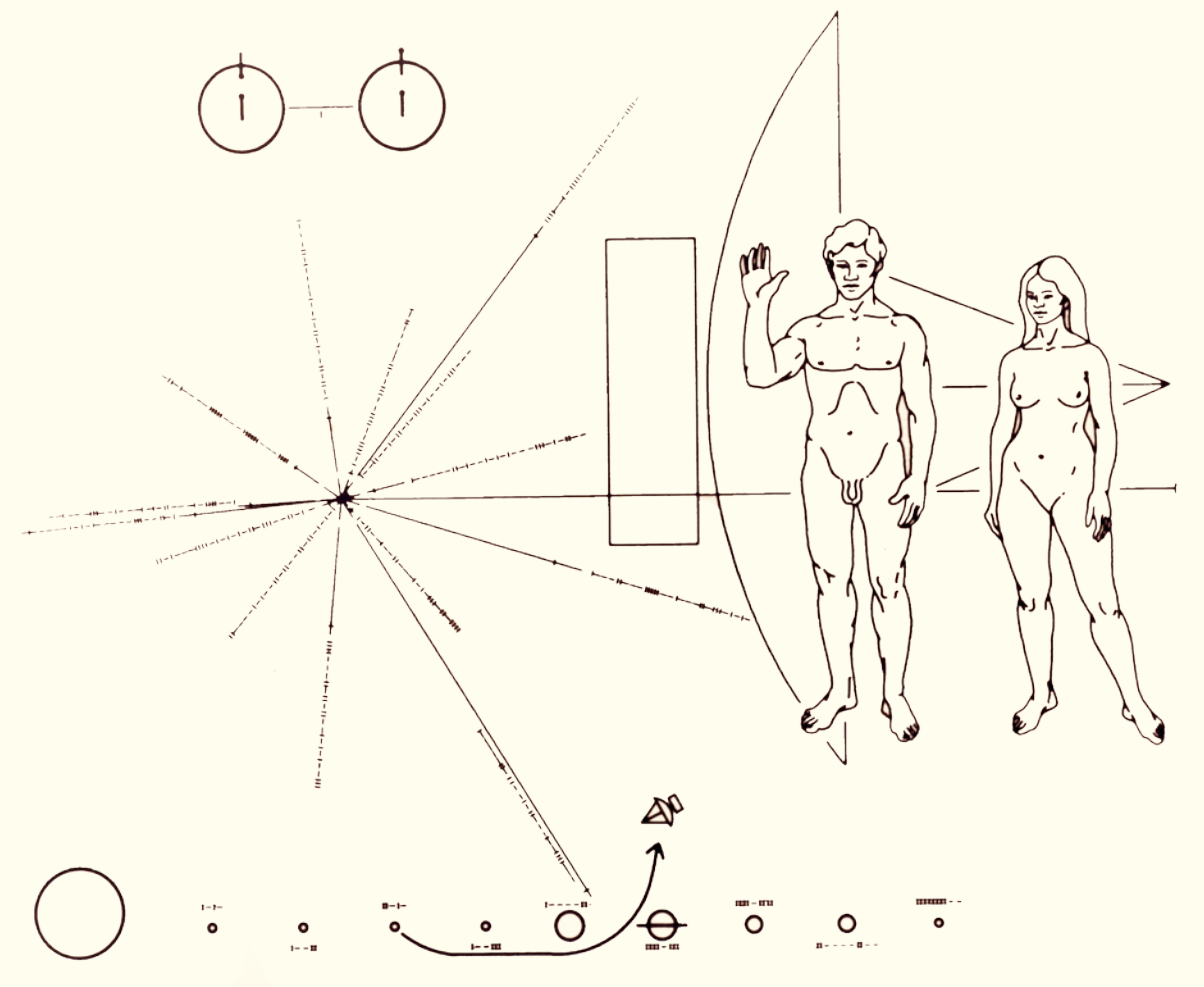


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same way that cows are taken apart – only in reverse. Instead of a biological map, the butcher's map sketches out the production value of the cow. It is a schematic deconstruction, and unlike a map of the digestive system, such a diagram ignores concepts of linear progress. It is where all parts are shown simultaneously, and in isolation from one another - hovering in the void.

CIVIC VIRTUE takes this as an analogy of the modern era, now ruled by the production value of industry, wherein phenomena



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seem completely devoid of history.  
What all this may imply is that if  
meat is time, digestion is the flow  
and progress of events.

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Linocut, 2012



## Conclusion (6)

CIVIC VIRTUE is not only interested in, but perhaps even concerned with the future. Or, more precisely, concerned for a future that risks being devoid of utopian ideals. Such a future would of course be one without progress; and life without progress can merely be called the passing of time.

And so it is for the sake of the future that CIVIC VIRTUE embarks on a Grand Tour, and thereby submits



Photograph – Friesland, 2011



itself to the age-old rituals of travel. These are ritual that are aimed at the resurrection of the whole body instead of being yet another revival of disembodied limbs. It is more akin to a voodoo enchantment of a corpse, than it is a history lesson in anatomy.

The exhibitions CIVIC VIRTUE mounts on this journey serve as a house of memory, and assimilate the adventures and experiences CIVIC VIRTUE undergoes during the Tour. After encountering the organs, CIVIC VIRTUE travels along the labyrinth of Europa's intestines,



Photograph – Hamburg, 2012



