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Dan Perjovschi: Late News Bucharest-based artist does what any of us could, but none of us are allowed to

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EDITORIAL RATING: Cultural journalists, a.k.a. poorly paid comp hounds, don't tend to take admission into account when praising or condemning something, but let's face it: a four-star free experience is vastly different than a four-star \$20 experience. (Lucky me, most contemporary art is free - though, uh, there's definitely a reason for that.) In the case of the Royal Ontario Museum's post-reno Institute for Contemporary Culture - a venue that, to be sure, makes good on its promise to program relevant, provocative exhibitions - there is often little to justify the hefty admission price based on its offerings alone.

This isn't to say you shouldn't see Bucharest-based Dan Perjovschi's new site-specific installation, "Late News" - just do it in conjunction with a visit to the recently reopened bat cave or something (or go for the free hour on Wednesdays or on half-price Fridays). Recalling the droll scribbings of David Shrigley - so much so that he's likely sick of the comparison (he's several years older than Shrigley, after all) - Perjovschi is one of those contemporary artists who, in part, makes art about being a contemporary artist, specifically about roving the planet from metropolis to metropolis as an artist-in-residence.

It's a tricky business to which to draw attention, especially for someone with such political aspirations. (Indeed, the contemporary art world now seems firmly divided into two camps: those who are shameless about how much more glamorous their lives are than yours, and those who'd rather die than remind you of it.) Perjovschi not only has gusto enough to critique himself, but also current events and attributes, good and bad, of his host venue, filling spaces - here, Daniel Libeskind's slanty, pyramidal, top-floor walls - with doodles that amalgamate political cartoons, bathroom graffiti and journal jottings. (Part of the installation is Perjovschi himself, who, for the past few weeks, has let the public witness his creation process.)

Said critiques can be witty, but just as often seem superficial, as an overly ponderous stranger's brief impressions of a new place might. Admittedly, this - i.e., to see one's home represented in monumental shorthand - can be usefully cutting, and Perjovschi relishes in the timeliness of his stay, making a lot of Olympics-related drawings. But the primitiveness of the project is, ultimately, unsatisfying. Couldn't any university-educated person with a competent command of line and an ironic sense of humour do this? More to the point, couldn't, say, a high-school art-student from Scarborough with a stronger, purer penchant for wry, druggy misanthropy do better? It's probable that the world-famous Perjovschi, who was essential to the development of a subversive, democratic conceptualist practice in post-communist Romania, would agree.

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