



This page: André Cadere presenting his work on West Broadway, New York, December 11, 1976. Photo: Gianfranco Gorgoni.

Opposite page: André Cadere, *New York City*, November 1975 (detail), thirty inkjet prints, each 9 7/8 x 11 3/4 or 11 3/4 x 9 7/8".

ROMÂNUL

BRUCE HAINLEY ON ANDRÉ CADERE'S ITINERANT ART



He's spent his whole life waiting for luck, looking for signs of it with a kind of fatalism, and he supplements this fatalism with the best skills of a shrewd hunter and gatherer, picking up booty like me.

—Bruce Benderson, *The Romanian: Story of an Obsession*

YOU COULD SAY, couldn't you, that André Cadere's métier was incompatibility?

The incompatibility of the exile, of the emigrant?

The incompatibility of border-crossing?

Of trespassing?

Of crashing the party?

Incompatibility, even, with Romania, where he was born the son of a

diplomat who was arrested in 1952, then convicted, without a trial, of “intensive activity against the working class” and imprisoned for four years? The Cădere family lost everything.

A “young [man] with a ‘bad dossier,’” Andrei Cădere graduated from high school and was drafted into the “labour brigades,” a conscription “very close to penal servitude.” Despite *diribau*, as “the forced labour performed by those who had ‘problems with the regime’” was termed, curator and scholar Magda Radu writes, Cădere “entered the art world as a life model and assistant in the studios of artists who received official commissions or worked within the state system.” The gigs paid him a basic income, but Stalinized life was brutal. Given where his mind would lead him, his posing

for social-realist paintings by artists approved by the state perhaps disciplined him in ironies that even the banned books being passed around didn't.

But you could also say the above sketch, pre-stick, is too pat, no?

Once he immigrates to Paris in 1967, he rarely mentions his former life and artmaking activities, exiling that narrative along with any notion of straightforward autobiography, of the “social and political hide-and-seek” of his existence in the gulag, but this doesn't mean he was compatible with the West's artistic machinations and circuits, does it?

“Prankster” and “vagabond,” as art historian Sanda Agalides positions him, Cădere, not just after he starts traveling with his multicolored and coded bars of round wood/*barres de bois rond/bară rotundă din lemn*—simultaneously art objects, itineraries, parasitic programs, and conceptual devices he put in motion in 1972 and for which he is best known—was “structurally incompatible with, and opposed to, all entropic regimes of power,” wasn't he, and regarding not just Russification but also those entropies which hebetate art in the name of art, even so-called institutional critique?

“Boy with stick,” Sylvère Lotringer called him. “You use the baton to put a monkey wrench in the works.”

“Yes, that's it . . .”

“Your baton is at once an object and an act.”

“Exactly.”

The incompatibility of his enterprise: as he brought one of his homemade object-acts, uninvited, into a gallery or museum opening, gently leaned it against a wall or gently dropped it on the floor, amid the other artists' works on view, only to be jettisoned, exiled, often, more often than not, artist and stick, abruptly from the proceedings; or purposefully yet leisurely walked with a stick down the street or into a conference; or nestled it in a pastry shop window, something strange and sweet amid the sweets; or let it vogue in *Le Grand Chic Parisien*, oblique or (even) obtuse to the 1930s fashions, *objets*, and jewels; tapped it like a kind of herald to conversation in a pub; or slanted it against the fence while guys enjoyed a pickup game of hoops on the other side. He was, wasn't he, fucking with the contingencies, regimented, rigged, of inside and outside, and of who decides what comes into focus when something uninvited or unacknowledged radiates its difference?

The picture of the *barre de bois rond* courtside—its round stack of colors repeating like the colors of the sweatbands on the wrists of the lovely arms of the beautiful young Black man who seems almost to reach for it with his hands, just so—however provocative, suggestive, erotically charged, it wasn't, no never, “the work,” was it?

No, as Cădere stated, in 1974: “This work is in contradiction with the text and the photograph printed here. Depending on the constraints of this book, / the text and the photograph relate to what they describe in one way only: incompatibility.”

“What you do is sneaky because it is at once altogether shrewd and yet completely naïve,” Lotringer said to him in an interview for *Semiotext(e)*, before the Romanian replied (with a grin?), “Yes, it is rather twisted.”

“You're a sort of squatter in the art world.”

“I'm a squatter in the art world, and what's more, one who would have his little studio downtown like anyone else.”

THIS IS MY STICK. I walk with it.

Stick stick stick.

I speak softly,

or not at all,

and carry a big stick.



Above: Galerie MTL poster of André Cadere and Gilbert & George, 1975.

Opposite page, from left: André Cadere, *Barre de bois rond B 02010003* (Round Bar of Wood B 02010003), certified 1978, paint on wood, 28 3/8 × 1 3/8 × 1 3/8". André Cadere, *Barre de bois rond A 02310040* (Round Bar of Wood A 02310040), certified 1977, paint on wood, 32 3/8 × 1 3/8 × 1 3/8". André Cadere, *Barre de bois rond B 00201030* (Round Bar of Wood B 00201030), certified 1975, paint on wood, 80 7/8 × 4 × 4". André Cadere, *Barre de bois cubique* (Cubic Bar of Wood), certified 1971, paint on wood, 77 3/4 × 1 3/8 × 1 3/8". Installation views, Ortzar Projects, New York, 2022.

“Men” notice my big round bar of wood. Stick stick stick. Stick it here.

(Don't you want, instead of cold war, hot intimacy?)

Shall I unstick the hairpins scattered in Gilbert & George's recollection that André Cadere (the francophone name under which his *désoeuvremments* circulated through—and often stymied—the tight network of artists, dealers, curators, critics, and collectors of Conceptual art then emerging in the West) “was so wonderfully handsome” that “when and wherever we bumped into him”—say, on a cold Sunday in March on the *escalier Darue* in the Louvre—“he always had a wealth of wonderful saucy/raunchy new stories to tell” by asking if Cadere considered it unlikely that in Gilbert & George he had found his cadre?



He was, wasn't he, fucking with the contingencies, regimented, rigged, of inside and outside, and of who decides what comes into focus when something uninvited or unacknowledged radiates its difference?

Perhaps they found him?

They seemed to enjoy one another often—the trio meeting at various art intersections, where Cadere, uninvited or invited, showed up, presenting his bespoke sticks, in Brussels, in Düsseldorf, in Antwerp, in Rome, in Naples—so was it something like love at first sight, and/or something rent-boyish, for the artist couple?

Life modeling worked another way?

Did they lean into his neck and sniff, *What's that you're wearing? Ambition?*

Did its base note make him even more attractive?

Despite the puckish aspects of his charming ambition—one of the things evident in his saunter through the busy city streets, slower, more careful, gentler than any of those rushing around him in some of the film footage that exists—and purposeful parasitism (using some other artist's vernissage as a site for the presentation of his baton), why do I keep returning to thinking that he placed the bars of round wood by resting them one at a time, or eventually in sequence, against the wall, in a corner, so that they didn't fall (but so easily could), and that this precariousness, of art, and of life, a precariousness involving a lack of invitation (or trigger warning), was part of what he desired to point out?

What does it mean to point something out?

Is it like asking a question?

When X (an artist) *questions* (as the tired phraseology goes) Y (medium, status quo, institution, their political efficacy and/or compromise, etc.), what does that mean and what does it accomplish?

The advertisement or announcement sometimes billed as “MTL poster of André Cadere and Gilbert & George with a round bar of wood at 12 Fournier Street, London E1,” 1975: What exactly did it publicize, and for whom?

What did it perform or what kind of action did it document, however potentially incompatible with everything that might have led to it?

Do I have to describe the poster, how it pairs two similar black-and-white pictures side by side?

On the left, credited to Gilbert & George: Cadere, alluring as a kouros, cornered in a sitting room of the artist couple's home on Fournier Street—which at the time was rather rough and dreary, often strewn with debris and stinking of drunks, to whom G&G would offer a cup of tea, if not a G&T—between a window stool and tall built-in cabinets, holding in his right hand one of his round bars of wood, just about his own height.

On the right, credited to Cadere: the sprucely besuited and, from their expressions, bemused artist couple (daddies?) similarly posed, with the same Cadere work (or its twin) grasped now in Gilbert's right hand and settled between them, as if Cadere or some part of him were what he gripped.

Was the poster produced in relation to the almost contiguous exhibitions the artists had in late spring of 1975 at Galerie MTL: Cadere's “*noir, blanc, jaune, orange, rouge, violet, bleu, vert,*” from April 16 to 30, and—it is not clear any exhibitions occurred in between—G&G's “Bad Thoughts,” from May 30 to June 25?

Was it what some today call a flex, commemorating the gallery's changing hands, from Fernand Spillemaeckers, recently bankrupt, to Gilbert Goes for a rumored 3.5 million Belgian francs, with Cadere's April outing the first show organized by the new proprietor?

Did the placard pay homage to friendship, former good times, continuing relations between Spillemaeckers and the artists, regardless of whatever other business transpired, cf. the various smiles on all the men's faces in contemporaneous candid photos taken in front of La Taverne du Passage in Brussels?

Or were the reasons for it more . . . personal: that Cadere or Gilbert & George wanted to preserve their likeness, being alike in their way of desiring, being alike as their desire, being alike marking their differences, friendship the most underrated of romances?

Am I alone in picking up on some ménage-à-trois frisson?

Gilbert & George framed things, didn't they, so that a bright light hovers above Cadere's head like the pictograph for ideas, for thinking, that suddenly appears—eureka—in the Sunday comix?

Ticker-taped across the bottom beneath the two pictures (a blank space in between) is the gallery information, with addresses in French and Flemish:

13 AVENUE DES ÉPERONS D'OR — BRUXELLES
GULDEN SPORENLAAN 13 — BRUSSEL
TEL. 649 76 77

And is it just me, or doesn't Gulden Sporen (Golden Spurs) sound like the name of a gay pub or sex club?

Was it Cadere's first time at G&G's home, and did it cross anyone's mind that he himself never owned a home, having left Romania with practically nothing?

Was this visit before or after he made *Round Bars of Wood B 13020004 (Double)*, black, orange, white, green, with a certificate dated "24/9/74," a work the artist couple commissioned, a pair of round bars of wood,

partnered, sometimes although not always identified as "Portrait of Gilbert & George," a work that remains in their collection and care?

Was this commission one of the causes for the at-home meeting of this cadre?

On the window stool below sheer curtains rest a teacup and saucer as well as a water glass—to the right, toward the front of a G&G-designed chair, perhaps painted sap green—rearranged at some point between the taking of the two pictures so that one might ask if the three artists had tea, or had Gordon's gin, or moved during the visit from one to the other, and if the Gordon's made them drunk.

What did Gilbert the Shit, George the Cunt, and the come-hither, wonderfully handsome émigré discuss during the visit before and after snapping the photos?

Was it raunchy?

Was it saucy?

Was it whether the name Galerie MTL came from the first Belgian cannery, Marie Thumas in Louvain/Leuven, producers of the tomato base

Quickie: the length of so many of Cadere's presentations, tasty street actions, bar of round wood among the éclairs and babas au rhum in the window vitrine of L. Darcy, Boulangerie-Pâtisserie.





Opposite page: André Cadere presenting his work on West Broadway, New York, December 11, 1976. Video still: David Ebony.

Above: Parisians tanning on the quai des Tuileries, Paris, July 1984. Photo: Jean-Marc Charles/Gamma-Rapho/Getty Images.

Right: André Cadere, *Barres de bois rond B 13020004 (Double)* (Round Bars of Wood B 13020004 [Double]), certified 1974, paint on wood, 48 x 1 x 1".



preferred by Fernand Spillemaeckers's artist wife, Lili Dujourie, or was it, as she insisted, "chosen for no other reason than that [the letters] formed a pleasing combination"?

Shall I propose that the cadre of Gilbert & George with Cadere forms a pleasing combination?

Did the cadre bat about the dirty words *queer cunt communism fuck bugger* before G&G made them into pictures?

Did the artist couple enjoy hearing the Romanian bandy about those words in the *doucette*, or "fruitiness" (Lynda Morris's term), of his French-Romanian accent?

Cadere didn't need G&G, did he, to explain why they'd chosen the Tuileries for their "Art & Project" installation in 1974 or to enjoy the fruit of its suggestive context, the raunch and ramble of the goings-on there; to explain why from at least the eighteenth century, among the shadows of the corses, in the bushes all the way to Tata Beach, the saucy exchanges between men that flagrantly, fragrantly achieve ahistoricity in their anonymity, achieve almost an understanding or derangement not reliant on language, instead softly tending fleshy, fluid, even commercial rapprochement, and/or, if desired, ruder approaches, things occurring between (so-called) men, acts, actions, pleasurings, rather than names, in other words *free love*, but is anything ever really free?

How many times at an opening, at a museum, at some art event, are the people more beautiful than the art?

In a film shot by David Ebony, what to make of the juxtaposition of a Cadere bar tilted very briefly to the left of—not a Frank Stella, Roy Lichtenstein, Kenneth Noland, or Ellsworth Kelly, as the camera tracks Cadere walking by or standing in front of each—Andy Warhol's *The American Indian (Russell Means)* at what seems to be an opening at Leo Castelli, and Cadere's removing it at someone's slightly worried behest, as if to gesture toward some allegiance or acknowledgment of expropriation and loss, and then reconsidering?

Didn't Andy Warhol mutter something about how they (people) were so beautiful you just couldn't take a bad picture?

Is there a bad picture of Cadere?

There are sad pictures, heartbreaking facts, photos of him wracked and wasted with cancer. In his itinerary for "Moving," *Hôpital International de l'Université de Paris* is written repeatedly in his hand. It was a site he returned to day after day, too weak to travel to New York—but go ahead, show me a bad picture of the guy in his heyday, before he was ill, but you can't, can you?

Sailor stripes and tight dark jeans, "wonderfully handsome," telling "saucy/raunchy" tales: Couldn't he, if he'd survived cancer, have done a walk-on for Fassbinder in *Querelle*?

Certain street corners facilitate rendezvous, and couldn't we take those invitations, itineraries, announcements—from La Galerie des Locataires, from David Ebony Gallery—as not only mapping such streetwise exchanges but also potentially (analogically) putting the issue forward of which kinds of relationships garner recognition as relationships ("couple," "family") and which remain unnamable, however actual the assignations, not so easily assimilated (cf. Jean-Jacques Schuhl on the quickie)?

Quickie: the length of so many of Cadere's presentations, tasty street actions, bar of round wood among the éclairs and babas au rhum in the window vitrine of L. Darcy, Boulangerie-Pâtisserie, or placed on the sidewalk for a Dachshund to ponder, art (or its unworking) just a stick for a dog maybe to play with, causing a woman to laugh.

The dick knows what sweets it wants, when it wants them, clarifying, yes, and from puberty, don't so many young or old know what it's like to



carry a round bar of wood of their own, without invitation, variegated impromptu hard-ons, and why should there be any hesitation in stating that Cadere, especially working the streets, streetwalking, almost cruising, looks sometimes like trouble, the kind referred to as rough trade, and wouldn't G&G have noticed?

Didn't he like to stir up trouble?

Didn't they?

Wasn't part of his project, his pursuit, to displace the ease with which what's accepted becomes accepted?

Doesn't he summon some negotiation of, rub shoulders with, street persons, vagrants, "dirty" communists as well as other "marginal" types in his walking and meeting people *dans la rue*, presenting and utilizing, pointing with his motley pointers to, class specificity, to who has what they have and where they can have it, rest it, display it, and who doesn't?

Shouldn't there be an acknowledgment that, in light of his nomadism and of frequent brevity of his actions, art should be transitive, vehicular, always moving, almost improvised, before capital stagnates it, and couldn't this itinerancy then become a way to regard his "cruising" art as a thinking-through of different kinds of relationality, ways of loving and liking, that would value the quickie, the anonymous fuck, various random and organized concupiscences and contacts, as highly as those sanctioned engagements, inheritances, whether "family" or "couple," and in ways those cannot?

Shall I try to press on, re: ahistoricity and quickie consequentials, Cadere's insistence that his round bars are never dated and that if a date is attached it's when he inscribed the work in his files and made a certificate that is part of the work? That, despite his sometime itineraries, there seems to be a desire to register the anonymity and ahistorical event of so many of his encounters, to greet time out of joint from the historical register as a way of slipping off or between the life sentencings of existence, its terms and the surety of its definitions?

When one of the bars is encountered in a collector's home or on a bookshelf or in a dealer's office, can it simultaneously and/or any longer be seen as a sign of poverty and urban want—akin to arriving with nothing from Romania and to arriving whenever he interceded in any gallery with nothing to lose, a squatter?

If Cadere, carrying the homemade harlequin highlighter of one of his



barres de bois rond, had run into Stephen Varble or Richie Gallo or Adrian Piper in the hubbub of New York City, does anyone really doubt even for a minute that he would have crossed to the other side of the street rather than strike up a conversation, whether he recognized them or not?

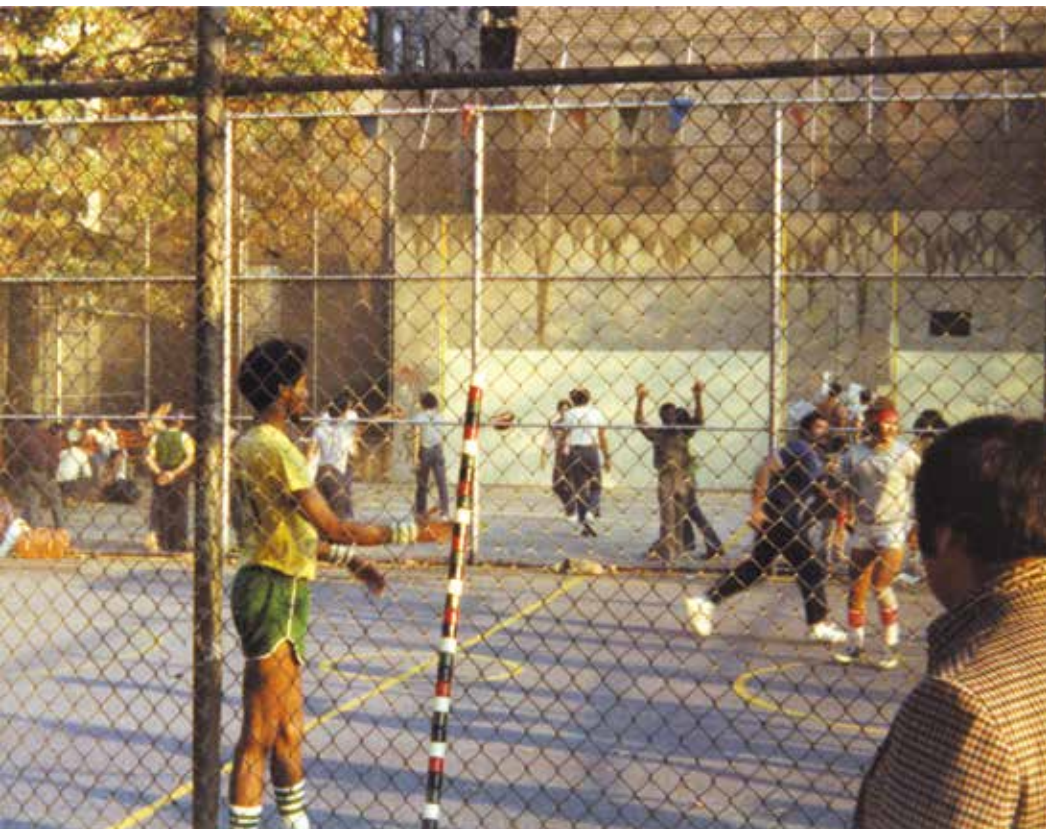
Hadn't he noticed the punks in London and New York and liked them ("They kiss off and drink their beer. They don't give a damn. They live on the outside"), identified, however complicatedly, with Tony Shafrazi and KILL LIES ALL?

Why did Cadere want his pursuit to be seen in relation to painting rather than to performative actions, dance, sculpture, or minor forms of terrorism?

Are these the questions anyone should be asking?

("Why / ask questions?" or, "What are the questions you wish to ask?") Along with the urban studies of Jane Jacobs, consider James Schuyler's *Hymn to Life*, 1974, which concludes with those questions about questions, as not only synchronous with Cadere's pursuits but as offering some of the most cogent reckoning with their theoretical application.)

Cadere's picture of one of his bars propped against a New York basketball-court fence, 1975, as well as, later, 1978, the gold of the second and final invitation card for his walks for David Ebony Gallery, for all their gilded-visitation-Giotto aspects (given the artist's illness), aren't they also

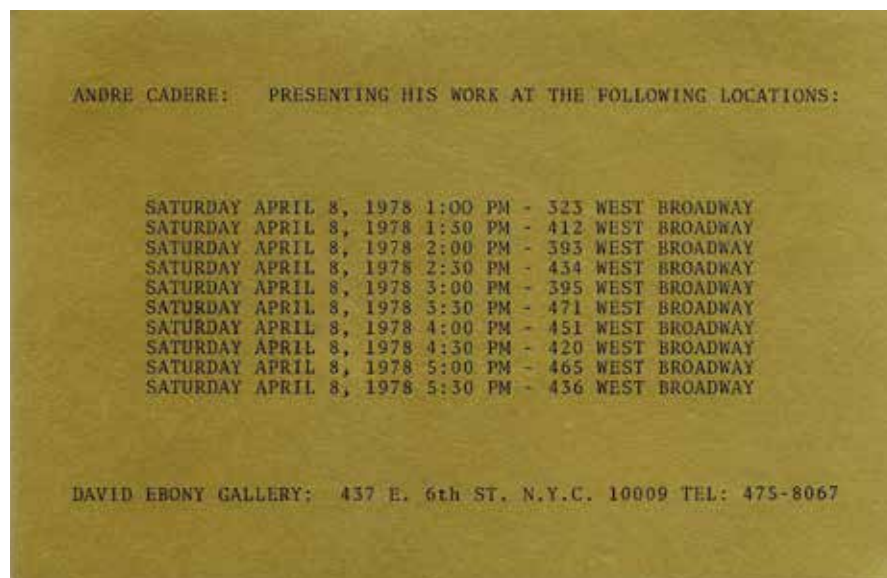


Opposite page, left: **Alain Fleischer, *Le bâton (The Stick)*, 1973**, 16 mm, black-and-white, silent, 2 minutes 58 seconds. André Cadere.

Above: **André Cadere, *New York City, November 1975 (detail)***, thirty ink-jet prints, each 9 1/4 x 11 3/4 or 11 3/4 x 9 1/4".

Below: **David Ebony Gallery invitation for André Cadere's presentation of works in New York, April 8, 1978.**

Opposite page, right: **André Cadere presenting his work on avenue des Gobelins, Paris, 1973**. Photo: Bernard Borgeaud.



disco house music Paradise Garage, that space and politic, Black rainbow bodies dancing, sweating, shirtless, and isn't his walk at various West Broadway addresses—grocery store clothing store auction house art supply store Chinese restaurant neon store model agency contemporary art gallery traditional gallery jewelry shop—his last time working walking the streets of New York, the best preparation for the Artists Space show that fall, 1978, organized by Janelle Reiring, for which she invited four artists to “reflect an analysis of the art-world system and their individual attempts to deal with it,” one of them (Piper) testing aspects of the liberal dilemma; another (Louise Lawler) beaming light from the gallery windows onto the street; yet another (Cindy Sherman) redressing identity; and the last (Christopher D’Arcangelo) responding by removing his name from all the show’s PR, not long after he’d intended to call attention in *Libération* to how he’d moved Gainsborough’s *Conversation in the Park* from its place on a wall of the Louvre, gently leaning it on the floor beneath, in part to ask, “What is the difference between a painting on the wall and a painting on the floor?”

Hadn’t Cadere already pointedly prepared anyone who listened for this question in relation to his own *travail* by reminding them at the end of his lecture in Leuven on Cézanne’s painting that was discovered after his death as chicken-coop repair and that quickly made its way, sans coop, sans chicken, into a museum collection that whatever anyone might think about the painting now, it then circulated in a very different manner, on a very different itinerary? Didn’t Cadere’s prankster misprision, Cézanne quietly supplanting Van Gogh, urge doubting the artist’s authority, power, and narrative as much as any other kind?

And if so much of the so-called artscape or art world, its constituencies, experiences, and institutions, is now not much more than an entertainment concierge service for the idle rich and those striving toward such lucre, is it anachronistic and/or futile to think that Cadere’s bars could serve, could have served, as a warning flare for the networked fractal commercializations to come? A lien on art’s conceptual framing? Maybe, but that didn’t stop him, sweet incompatible anarchist to the bone, from wanting a studio even while squatting, did it? That didn’t stop him from wanting to resituate *painting* and think with Cézanne.

And if my brooding on his desiring (that invisible history tucked into the pocket or next to the package of “saucy/raunchy”) hatches troubles of knowing whether it is “in” his work or “in” his performance actions, or whether the fagginess of the gesture is just “in” my head, a mistake, wouldn’t it be one way of enacting how he always put a mistake into every repeating color sequence of his *barres de bois rond*, disrupting the flow of the system and any mere et cetera of so-called understanding—a way to activate, even in such a discursive assembly, a Cadere function?

Cadere: “I mean that if, for instance, someone wishes to swallow a round bar of wood in public . . . that’s his business.”

This writing is a round bar of wood left in the corner of the institution called a critical essay. Each word has a color attributed to it, as words stand in for color and painted marks whenever they come to try to describe a painting, even those eschewing the classical supports. It is critical of the sentence, critical of the critical essay, critical of a lot of what might be a Cadere cadre, but not the *Românul* himself, shrewd hunter and gatherer, picking up booty like me. □

For Phil

BRUCE HAINLEY IS A CONTRIBUTING EDITOR OF ARTFORUM.

I would like to thank Alex Bacon for inviting me to think about Cadere’s work for a forthcoming book he is editing about the artist; for sharing access to elusive film footage of the artist in action as well as to an email from Gilbert & George about their friendship with Cadere.