

Rules for Invention

- 1.** Through the rings and records the axe goes—away with the old days—until hands and iron splinter the wood into lumber, as if clearing the forest were war. The fire burns brighter that way, and for the good of mankind.
- 2.** The king of time said there is another way: Be armed only with numbers and colors and the victory will be yours. Leaving behind the present, it will bow to your inventions. It may also splinter.
- 3.** Reminders: One contains your greatest sorrow, the other your greatest hope. Meet them simultaneously. Measure them as if they've never had mass before, and you were once a technician.
- 4.** Since before the first breakthrough, before the first in the series. Since before things in art were not things, before darkness in art was not darkness. Since before black paintings needed security guards.
- 5.** There was no money for color when, in 1913, certain residents of St. Petersburg stole the sun from the sky and enclosed it in a concrete urn. And so there emerged a need for a particular form, which seemed in retrospect to suggest a particular crisis—nobody knew or wanted to know what anybody was saying—but may have merely been a previous need in a different stage of gratification, an old problem stubbornly seeking a solution.
- 6.** If this is so, who will be the king of time? The king of time will find a way. He always does.
- 7.** You should make pictures about nothing. You should learn to look at an empty sky and feed its total dark sublime. You should make the last word the first. You should tear the energy of the old world down from the heavens and embrace a different virtue. You should recognize that we inhabit a finite world of limited possibilities, which are still largely unexplored.
- 8.** Others will begin echoing this conclusion, dismissing it, complicating it; taking issue with its purity, isolating its imperfections, discrediting its adherents; defending its integrity, hailing its otherworldliness, locating its origins in Plato's Theory of Forms; seeking an Eastern equivalent, wondering at the possibility of reconciliation in the arena of universal time, asking members of the public to take this conclusion and make it their own.
- 9.** The fear of coming late, when the feast is over (knowing that it is no fault of your own).
- 10.** The fear of looking only at old light (knowing that there is no other light to look at).
- 11.** The victors bring with them new rules, demands, desires. Crisis ensues, and we agree to speak differently, or slightly so; grant them their solutions; surrender our pets without protest. This could have been happening for all of time, but it would not change much—and if so, we won't lack for illustrations.
- 12.** There are options: destroy history, know history, or forget history. But they are mutually exclusive.
- 13.** Do not expect encouragement. The newspapers behave like New Zealand Papuans. This is apparent because of their sandwich-like staleness and unwillingness to follow the present growth of the creative soul.
- 14.** There was no money for color, and so they papered over the sun, left the halo of phonemes, the penumbra of deep time. This, too, is part of the general idea, part of the "All is well that begins well and has no end."
- 15.** Defining victory down: It is the first blackness beneath the demotic blackness of fade-outs and night skies. It is down there in the sediment of world religion and object-as-fact. It is no fun, though it may sound vaguely funny. Start by digging your nails into rough cement. Make sure there is in your path no timelessness, no terror, no world beyond our world.
- 16.** The scenario always ends with an airplane crashing onto the stage. (Not pictured.)

-Alexander Provan