

Nick Irvin 340 Lexington Ave Apt #4
 Brooklyn, New York
 11216
 United States

Billed To	Date of Issue	Invoice Number	Amount Due (USD)
John Knight	09/26/16	NI-1604	\$150.00
4077 NE 7th Ave Portland, Oregon 97212 United States	Due Date 10/26/16		

Writer's Fee | John Knight, "No Half Measures" at Muscle Beach, Portland, OR, 30 Sep - 31 Oct 2016

Description	Rate	Qty	Line Total
<p>Hey John,</p> <p>Thanks for bringing me into this. It's been odd to be a third party, remotely jumping into talks with you, talks with MB, and talks with you and MB for the last year-and-change of a three-year conversation, working toward delivering a text to cap the whole thing. Going off my notes, we started our regular phone conversations on July 7, 2015, with seven (7) phone talks and four (4) in-person meet-ups that were expressly project-oriented since. They were also our main vehicle for getting to know one another, and one of the ways that I've kept myself tethered to my old home of Portland. The tone and the rhythm of the thing made it a minor-key kind of happiness for me; it felt more like weather than a service.</p> <p>It rains a lot where you are. When I lived there, I was a bit of an anxious mess at a pressure cooker college, and I spent a lot of time thinking about the gap between a racing mind and a mute mouth (or pen [or keyboard])—the frustration of articulation. It's probably too quaint that, around the age of 20, I started to imagine an intangible 'cloud' of thinking, and thoughts themselves as 'precipitation'—every sentence a raindrop. You can see a cloud and gain an ambient familiarity with it, but you can't grasp the thing until it concentrates. And by then it's lost its shape, its contour, its plumage. If you're lucky, it becomes a puddle. But one thing about a body of water is that its shape conforms to its context.</p> <p>As I understand it, rain has made its way into your project, soaked into the salvaged plywood you're designating a stage. Cultures of moss, corroded edges, spraypaint applied wet-on-wet. Is it structurally sound? Probably less sturdy than the quarterly projections of the local construction agency you took it from. But maybe one collapse leads to another. Hah.</p> <p>When I think back on our conversations—and I'm sorry they weren't as regular as we had hoped—I feel like I was catching snapshots of your own thought-cloud, and due to our distance and infrequency that</p>	\$150.00	1	\$150.00

cloud would have a very different shape each time. It was as though each talk was a different project that I would meet and assess on the fly, trying to thread these disjunctive, percussive takes together. For a while, you cooked up schematic choreography, tight scripts by which your gallerists would wear another hat and perform, bluntly, the types of tasks that you all shared at your respective dayjobs. You also spent a lot of time treading around a legacy that you inherited by coincidence, and you schemed to recast an exhibit by the grand master with whom you share a name, and whose Google results eclipse your own (I still hope to see your Flowers Show one day). One major through-line was always pondering what to do with the plywood, which was always meant to index, however tacitly, the speculative real estate interests that it had served in its past life.

But anyway. If I have to generalize, I'd say I've watched you draw up all these circuits of ideas, materials, and transactions, as a way of thinking through the icky business of forging cultural capital. In those circuits, you foreground barricades to allowing the situation to be read according to the standard scripts. The gallerists can't be *Gallerists*, the artist can't be an *Artist*, the exhibition can't be an *Exhibition*, not without an inversion. You want to reframe, and precise intentionality is your means and ends. So always, rhetorically, your books aim to be tidy. No loose ends, i's dotted, t's crossed—kind of like a good accountant.

So now the project's just about congealed, and the scripting has been scrapped. I got an email about it today. Congrats, at long last. I'm sad to not see it in person.

It's interesting to me that the exhibition text is so simple, and focused on objects: three colors, and three materials, paired with the means of their acquisition. So the cloud of meta-game has precipitated into things.

I don't know where you've landed on how to arrange these things, but at least I've seen them in person. Last time we met, we talked about how viewing them is kind of, somehow, beside the point. I went on about the way that a lot of people 'perform' viewing art—arms behind their backs, maybe, orbiting if it's a sculpture, heads leaning in, seeking some kind of heaven in the detail. The little dance of a Jeff Jahn musing, up on the plywood platform. But there's no heaven in these enamel slop jobs and you and I both know it. And I bet that at the opening, people will try, because that's just what people do in these spaces. There will be a decision for each—get on or stay off?—with an option of thinking on what might be at stake in this staging.

There's a lot riding on the platform, on the plywood. But strangely, it's not in the exhibition text! It seems there's an absence in your inventory. What lets it stand outside? Is it meant to be a surprise? Is it too architectural to make the works list? Is it a typo? I can't get over this little seam in your generally airtight approach, and it makes me wonder if there's some info hidden, even from me. Speaking of looming opacity: if the show gives us unhappy, ambivalent, mute objects, one might hope to find their salvation in some provided conceptual linkage—some context to give shape to the thought-pool. But the exhibition text, when inverted, is loath to inform. I guess I'm trying to counterbalance that here.

By the way—what about me, anyway? What do I, as a writer, provide? I've wondered all along, hands wringing, what role I'm meant to play in this circuit. It's been important to you, from the very beginning, that I get paid a fee for the text I would write. You told me over and over. And I get it: you want me to be compensated for my work, in an industry where unpaid and underpaid labor runs rampant. Thanks for that. But for various reasons, I haven't been able to shake a queasiness about the interjection of money—\$150, to be exact.

With money in the picture, I felt like I couldn't just be a friend helping out, or having fun. Instead, it pulled me toward becoming an independent contractor, with implicit deliverables, deadlines, and expectations. On a personal level, I've wondered what it means for our

relationship when, technically, all my hours spent with you are billable. On a more structural level, I've wondered what it means that I'm the only person who's making any money off of this project at all.

I feel that if the money stops with me, that makes me a terminal point in the project's circuit of transactions. You've made a show that contemplates gentrification, dissent, and the imminence of fascism in America—and I provide textual ornament and get money. That's not a conclusion I feel too great about. Thanks to my job (among how many other advantages?), I'm currently in a fortunate enough position to not need the fee urgently. So, since you insist on paying, I'm going to reroute the circuit. Upon receipt of payment, a donation of the same amount will be made to intersectional, anti-gentrification organizing efforts in Portland. The exact recipient will be determined in consultation with people much closer to those efforts than I currently am.

This puts capital into the causes that the exhibition gestures towards, and extracts value from. It also takes the task of accounting beyond your control—and, arguably, beyond the parameters of what we're told an aesthetic gesture can do. Given all of our conversations around the project, I think this is a good and relevant use of funds, and I hope you think so too.

Best,
Nick

Subtotal	150.00
Tax	0.00
<hr/>	
Total	150.00
Amount Paid	0.00
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Amount Due (USD)	\$150.00

Terms

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NO HALF MEASURES.