“As long as freedom is based on violence and the practice of art on privileges, works of art will tend to be prisons; the great works, accomplices of power.” HM from “Falter +/- Keuner”

“What is needed is a three-dimensional presentation that goes at top speed and is composed of clearly defined groupings like those historical tableaux at fairs. [...] in front of white-washed curtains spattered the colour of ox-blood.”

Brecht wants the play to contribute to ending the public’s adoration of mass murderers. Hoping that an audience will learn to see instead of gaping in awe. He wanted to hit where the film Natural Born Killers failed—the Nguyen Ngoc Loan experience.

I am interested in making one of these Chicago plays—I am interested in making all of them—but I want to start with Arturo Ui, or else I will start with St. Joan of the Stockyards. Arturo Ui is unnerving relevant in America. This play is about a guy who establishes an unshakeable power-base via his relationship with violence—his partnership with terror.

The process of building a power base through terror is simple—evidence an unmistakably clear threat, consolidate power gradually as the threat begins to erode public confidence and fear sets in, provide clear examples of the threat when not self-evident—then offer security. All dissenting voices should be quickly eliminated with extreme prejudice—physically, politically, brutally. No one declines the offer of protection.

On st. valentine’s day 1929 in a warehouse on clark street in chicago, a policecar pulled up and five or six guys, in cop uniforms, slipped inside, lined seven members of the moran gang up against the brick wall at the rear of the room and machine-gunned them all in the back.

This would become The St. Valentine’s Day Masacre. It was one of the most famous gang hits of the century. No one was ever prosecuted, although it was more or less clearly Al Capone’s work. Famously, Capone blamed it on Moran himself—that he slaughtered his own guys. But everyone more or less knew who did it. And, interestingly, this event was to mark the crest of Capone’s popularity—the public would adore him no more. Perhaps it was the photos. This time, he had simply gone too far and his downward spiral was rapidly underway.

In the case of Arturo Ui he always goes too far—but he’s elusive and slips by—gunning down a witness on the courthouse steps, beat-downs and frame-ups, murdering an influential journalist whom he had publicly threatened. But in the end Ui does not lose favour, he is unshakeable and blazes stylishly into the future, expanding his operations across the nation. While Brecht quotes many of the idiosyncrasies of chicago Fruits and Vegetables

“yo wen u gonna fite me ones bitch ... ur fukin ded dude ... one way or the other ... or better off fitin me than gettin a gun put in ur fat face ... any1 that sees u is gonna fuk u yo ... ill kill u ... WAIT TILL MY BOYS FROM ARCHDALE HAVE A GUN IN UR MOUTH.”

Benjamin Collotta, Ring-leader of the Roxbury gang called:

THE Fruits and Vegetables

Some of the members, it turns out, are the sons of Boston cops. More importantly they have dished out a number of “very serious beat-downs” and the DA’s office intends to make an example of them. They are so named because many of them met working at the grocery store. I do not think that this local gang “The Fruits and Vegetables” means a lot to me, and they don’t fit the paradigm except in their quest for fame. But I want to make a prologue. Starting the play with a five minute conven-ience store robbery—an bad shootout in which this novice gang ends up knocked off by a real gang who then knock off a couple of cops as they make their escape. Five or seven minutes, 500 rounds of ammunition or something. Serious glory.

thug 1. You know what a wanker is?
thug 2. a masterbator?
thug 1. no.
thug 2. I don’t know.
Thug 1. It’s somebody who dresses like a gangsta but isn’t.
gang life—the right-hand man sleeping outside his door, pistols in each hand—the names of the characters, his real target was Hitler and, in particular, his lightning rise to power.

The play was one of the Scandinavian / en-route-to-America plays. It has more in common with the action film genre than perhaps meets the eye—and this is where I will cement my reading of the play, and how I would choose to proceed. Top speed Suspense, and Action. Clear use of language and clearly defined actions, clearly defined groups—but with a use of rhythm that rivals any of the great action films of our time.

I don't want to make a play about Hitler any more than I want to make a play about Bush—why hammer an open window. I just want to make a play about consolidating power by claiming national security. The wealth of research material is extraordinary. I think of everything from the tv series 24's uncanny justifications for torture to the cynicism of Team America World Police to today's headline on cnn online: an attack with a WMD is 70% certain in the next decade. This play is about power thru violence, and an extraordinary charisma, as sleek and beautiful as the portrayals of Goebbels, as cinematically supported a la Leni Reifenstahl—but such references I will make transparent. Comparrisons to the Nazi's don't help anyone. Just as making Bush a villain hardly helps anyone to see and comprehend the scale of what is happening.

I am interested in everything that Brecht has to say about this play. I especially interested in delivering on the lush and grand beauty of the event. I am interested in visual artist Gillian Wearing who has been doing self-portraits as other people, with masks—him as his brother, him as his sister, his mother, etc. The mask work is brilliant for their exceptional realism. I want to lift this idea. I would like to work with a lean ensemble—and perhaps pursue the use of masks. Finding a costume person who has also has a talent for latex masks. And a scenic design-er with a good architectural sense—someone who can envision a city on the plains, and compress it.

Really, I want the thing to accomplish what Brecht hoped it would. His strategy was to show the rise of a guy—that he could have been resisted is the discovery of the audience and not a parable moral shoved down our throats. But a self-evident awareness in the face of victory. I think that the key to this is showing more or less why it is impossible to stop guys like these.

Note on the Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui

The role of Ui needs to be played by someone who is young—let’s say 35. Charismatic and willing to be ruthless because that’s how things work. Power is taken and not given, etc.

My point of view with regard to this play is through the eyes of those who have lost everything and are forced to swallow it whole. Betty Dullfeet for example interests me greatly. Likely I am looking at needing some 7 men and 4 or 5 women. The Judge should be a woman for sure and others as well I think.

I do not precisely know how to categorize the use of video. I take cues from visual artist Mik Aernout (my new favorite). I will want to develop an approach through the rehearsal process but I do not have at this time a clear idea. I am certain that I will look at the architecture, shops, and crimes of the 1930's in Chicago but also the situation the current scenario in the US. The fruits and vegetables gang is a purely a funny coincidence. They beat-down too hard, went too far. Finding a synthesis between these two time periods interests me from a design standpoint but generally I wish to make the work thoroughly modern. These images are just a kind of start.