

BYPRODUCT

On the Excess of Embedded Art Practices

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INTRODUCTION

- 10 **Byproducts and Parasites: On the Excess of Embedded Art Practices**
by Marisa Jahn and L.M. Bogad
- 19 **Parasite (excerpt)**
by Michel Serres
- 19 Response by Ian Clarke
- 20 Response by Matthew Soules
- 22 **What is an Institution?**
by John R. Searle
- 23 Response By Joshua Moufawad-Paul

PRODUCING & ITS BYPRODUCTS (ART & COMMERCE)

- 34 **Preface to Producing and its Byproducts**
by Marisa Jahn

ARTIST PLACEMENT GROUP

- 39 **Context is Half the Work**
by Peter Eleey
- 42 **Countdown to Zero, Count Up to Now**
An Interview with the Artist Placement Group
by Pauline van Mourik Broekman and Josephine Berry Slater
- 49 **Manifesto, 1980**
by Artist Placement Group
- 50 **APG: Legacies and Aftermaths**
A Conversation with Claire Bishop and Stephen Wright
Editorialized by Marisa Jahn

N.E. THING CO. LTD.

- 54 **N.E. Thing Co. Ltd.: From Soft Sell to Soft Skills**
by Adam Lauder
- 59 **Things United and Non-Categorical: N.E. Thing Co. Ltd.**
An Interview with Ingrid Baxter
by Grant Arnold
- 63 **On the Philosophy of “Gross National Good”**
by IAIN BAXTER&

E.A.T.

- 64 **The Artist and Industry. E.A.T. Proceedings, No. 4**
A talk presented at the Museum of Modern Art, December 16, 1968
by Billy Klüver
- 68 **Beginning 9 Evenings**
by Michelle Kuo
- 74 **Manifesto, 1967**
by E.A.T.

FELICITY TAYLER

- 78 **The Incidental Persons of the Information Revolution**
by Felicity Tayler
75 Editorial introduction by Marisa Jahn

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

- 79 **Col-labor-atë?**
A Conversation with Kent Hansen
by Marisa Jahn

PAUL ARDENNE

- 84 **Of Economic Concerns**
by Paul Ardenne, translated from the French by Emmanuelle Day and Lisa Larson-Walker
86 Response by Amish Morrell
- 85 **Le souci de l'économie**
par Paul Ardenne

A CONSTRUCTED WORLD

- 92 **All the Bankers at Altamont: An Interview with A Constructed World**
by Joseph del Pesco

MAUREEN CONNOR

- 95 **Personnel**
A Conversation with Maureen Connor
by Marisa Jahn
Special contribution by Kadambari Baxi

AU TRAVAIL / AT WORK

- 99 **There Are Shitty Jobs Everywhere; That's My Freedom**
An Interview with Bob the Builder of Au Travail/At Work
by Gina Badger and Adam Bobbette
100 Response by Allan Antliff
- 103 **Manifesto, 2010**
by Au Travail / At Work
- 104 **Manifeste, 2010**
par Au Travail / At Work

TOMAS JONSSON

- 105 **The Magpie: Economic Redundancy as Civic Participation**
An Interview with Tomas Jonsson
by Marisa Jahn

PERFORMING POLITICS

- 109 **Preface to Performing Politics**
by Marisa Jahn
- 113 **"Refresh": Versionhood and The Multiplicity of the Self**
An Interview with Kristin Lucas
by Marisa Jahn
- 115, 117 Court transcript
114 Response by Kate Henderson

KRISTIN LUCAS

- 120 **Subversion and Similitude in the Janez Janša Project**
by Marisa Jahn
- 123 **The Name as a Readymade: An Interview with Janez Janša, Janez Janša, and Janez Janša**
by Lev Kreft

STEVE MANN

- 132 **Prior Art: Art of Record for Personal Safety**
by Kathleen Pirrie-Adams
- 133 Response by Michael Page
- 135 **Incidentalism and Existential Contraband: On Steve Mann**
By Marisa Jahn and Connor Dickie

MAMMALIAN DIVING REFLEX

- 137 **Social Acupuncture and The Dog That Saved the Duck**
An Interview with Darren O'Donnell and Natalie de Vito
by Marisa Jahn
- 143 **Social Acupuncture: A Guide to Suicide, Performance, and Utopia** (excerpt)
by Darren O'Donnell, Mammalian Diving Reflex

JOHN SEELY BROWN

- 144 **On Performance Fabrics** (excerpt)
by John Seely Brown
- 145 Response by Etienne Turpin and DT Cochrane

THE YES MEN

- 146 **The Baked Apple: On the New York Post "Special Edition"**
An Interview with Andy Bichlbaum (The Yes Men), L.M. Bogad, and Andrew Boyd
by Marisa Jahn and Merve Ünsal

REVEREND BILLY

- 152 **Billy Versus Bloomie: Electoral Guerrilla Theatre in New York City**
by L.M. Bogad
- 159 **Letters from the Congregation to Reverend Billy and The Church of Life After Shopping**

MR. PEANUT

161

Mr. Peanut for Vancouver Mayor 1974
An Interview with Vincent Trasov
by Luis Jacob

TEJPAL S. AJJI

164

Isotopes and a Radioactive Modernity
by Tejpal S. Ajji

MISS CANADIANA

167

And the Winner Is...
by Michelle Jacques

ANTANAS MOCKUS

171

Living Fossils, Cultural Amphibians, and the Future's Midwife
An Interview with Antanas Mockus
by Pedro Reyes
Editorial introduction by Joseph del Pesco

177

CONTRIBUTORS' BIOGRAPHIES

183

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

WE BEGIN IN THE IMPERIAL BELLY

This book includes examples from mostly North America and Europe. There are many more individuals and groups that I would have liked to include but that will have to be included in an expanded book or additional framework.

—Marisa Jahn

A *byproduct*, commonly understood, is defined as:

1. Something produced in the making of something else.
2. A secondary result; a side effect.

A *system*, commonly understood, is a regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole; a harmonious arrangement or pattern; and/or an organized society or social situation regarded as stultifying or oppressive.¹

BYPRODUCTS AND PARASITES

ON THE EXCESS OF EMBEDDED ART PRACTICES

Narrator Camille Turner is a Canadian artist of African descent who invented a persona named “Miss Canadiana.” Appearing in public in a floor-length red gown, tiara, and white sash imprinted with this self-given title, the costume allows Turner to tread past boundaries, and appear as a VIP guest at a panoply of otherwise prohibited events (political functions, military guard ceremonies, tourist sites, pageants). Turner herself does not physiologically conform to the mainstream public’s expectations of beauty. However, by invoking the gesture and iconography of beauty pageantry, Miss Canadiana reconditions expectations about beauty and race.

Turner recalls a vivid experience on a trip to North Preston, Nova Scotia, where Miss Canadiana was paraded through the streets on the hood of a fancy car to greet the town’s residents. The tour ended with a reception at a community centre where Miss Canadiana gave a short talk. Not promoted as an art event, Turner describes her sense of curiosity about what would happen when she revealed that Miss Canadiana was an invented character that investigated her sense of racial exclusion in Canada. Amidst the audience’s whispers and stirs, someone in the audience stood up and abruptly turned on the lights.

“You mean you just made all this up?” one woman questioned. Turner replied, “Yes. The pageant was filmed in my backyard.”

“So, you mean, we could do this too?”

Turner recalled, “I smiled broadly. As I travel across the country Miss Canadiana continues to inspire those who see themselves when they look at me.”² The presence of Miss Canadiana thus allows others to recognize the facture of public self-presentation, and offers a means to envisage

the otherwise.

Slavoj Žižek describes the psychic liberation of deploying a stand-in to substitute for the self: “By surrendering my innermost content, including my dreams and anxieties, to the Other, a space opens up in which I am free to breathe: when the Other laughs for me, I am free to take a rest; when the Other sacrifices instead of me, I am free to go on living with the awareness that I did atone for my guilt; and so on.”³ Žižek argues that psychic displacement, in fact, regulates normalcy – even for the individual who “knows better,” and “behaves as if,” this self-consciousness does not obviate the experience of cathartic release. Figures such as Miss Canadiana might be seen as stand-ins that allow anxieties and hopes to emerge; subsequently, through practice, through their enactment, the stand-in becomes confluent with reality.

Consider the advantages of camouflage – it enables the organism to slip and slink into its surrounds. In *Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia* (1937), Roger Caillois examines the way that insect mimicry entails not only morphological simulation, but also the restructuring of space and perception. For instance, an insect’s development of colour patches to match surfaces, dapples of light, and variance along depths of field induces visual fragmentation. In extreme forms, such as the praying mantis and the walking stick insect, animals adapt behaviour to match the movements of their surrounds. Caillois, however, warns against the risk of self-dissolution faced by the camouflaged organism. “It is with represented space that the drama becomes specific, since the living creature, the organism, is no longer the origin of the coordinates, but one point among others; it is dispossessed of its privilege, and literally no

longer knows where to place itself.”⁴ The moral inflection of Caillois’ bio-phenomenological studies are echoed in a conversation included in this volume between the artist Pedro Reyes and Antanas Mockus, the former mayor of Bogotá, Colombia. For Mockus, a relevant or impactful academic necessarily works between sectors, fields, and constituencies. This task, he suggests, demands a judicious balance between assimilation and moral retention.”

Cultural amphibians are related to chameleons, but guard themselves from having that camouflage become ethical duplicity.” Mockus’ analogy of the camouflaged entity that risks disappearing into its context is ultimately a warning about the dangers of moral relativism and the loss of political agency.

While the walking stick insect is not concerned with such issues, a human being misrepresenting himself might. Take, for example, those dissidents in Nazi Germany who camouflaged themselves as loyal subjects of the Reich in order to escape persecution. For these individuals, delivering the “Sieg Heil” salute to their compatriots many times a day likely may have felt psychically draining, and even ideologically demoralizing. While for Caillois and Mockus the radically de-centered self induces a state of psychosis, or schizophrenia, philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari offer a more fluid model that hails the collapse of binary logic (figure vs. ground, self vs. whole) as a felicitous implosion that dismantles essentialist notions of being and truth. They posit instead a more dynamic notion of becoming:

Mimicry is a very bad concept, since it relies on binary logic to describe phenomena of an entirely different nature. The crocodile does not reproduce a tree trunk, any more than the chameleon reproduces the color of its surroundings. The Pink Panther imitates nothing, it reproduces nothing, it paints the world its color, pink on pink; this is its becoming-world, carried out in such a way that it becomes imperceptible itself, asignifying, makes its rupture, its own line of flight, follows its ‘parallel evolution’ to the end.⁵

In other words, for Deleuze and Guattari, the camouflaged organism “paints the world its color,” slipping between an autonomous self and an environment, the singular and the organizational, the visibility and the invisible — it vacillates from its very contextual instability, unconscious at times of its aptitude for adaptation.*

This play in that very tension between assimilation and distinction describes a strategy of contemporary art production some have referred to as “embedded art practices.” Some embedded art practices seek to completely assimilate, surfacing or showing themselves at critical junctures; others foreground their difference as the very means of activating their surrounds. Sometimes it is beyond the control of the artist to remain indistinct, and circumstances pronounce his/her difference. Embedded art practices are cousins of other process-based (as opposed to “object-based”) practices, known by terms such as “service aesthetics,” “post-studio practices,” “post-mimetic practices,” “relational aesthetics,”

*

L.M. Bogad Oh! Maybe it’s kind of like the notion of social camouflage!
Marisa Jahn What exactly do you mean by that?

Bogad I mean when an excluded actor cannily manipulates the dominant signs of dress, address, comportment, and identity in order to move more easily through what would otherwise be an exclusionary or forbidden social space. This is easier for some than others, of course. The Yes Men simply put on thrift store suits; their shorthaired, white maleness affords them access to corporate events that easily. But for Camille Turner, a black female, to gain access to such spaces, she must enact a more inventive and creative transformation into the fantastic, fabulous Miss Canadiana. In a racist and sexist society, it is more of a fantasy that Camille would be invited to attend such events, especially as an honoured guest; hence the use of fantasia to get a “pass.” But what would Žižek or Deleuze and Guattari say to that?

Narrator Ahem. May I direct your attention back to the primary text above?

“interventionist works,” “site-specific practices,” and “contextualist artworks.” As its key distinction, however, embedded art practices are ones in which the artist becomes parasitically reliant on its institutional “host” to produce a “byproduct” of the system — this is the artwork. A certain intimacy and reliance between parasite and host evolves. As Michel Serres writes:

*The relation with a host presupposes a permanent or semi-permanent contact with him; such is the case for the louse, the tapeworm, the *pasturella pestis*. Not only living on but also living in — by him, with him, and in him⁶ . . . [The parasite] enters the body [of the host] and ingests it.^{**} Its infectious power is measured by its capability to adapt itself to one or several hosts. This capability fluctuates, and its virulence varies along with its production of toxic substances.⁷*

For Serres, the “infectious” and “toxic” capacity of the parasite is inextricably bound with its ability to assimilate. Embedded practices, therefore, signify not from a position of pure oppositionality (antagonism), but one in which oppositionality is irreconcilably bound up with an empathic relationship to the larger whole (agonism). Michel Foucault explicates this as a distinction: “Rather than speaking of an essential antagonism, it would be better to speak of “agonism” — of a relationship that is at the same time mutual incitement and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation that paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation.”⁸ From the vantage of the embedded artist, such a “permanent provocation” is often valorized as an indicator of flux within a system, and the prospect of difference.

**

Bogad Wait... Is the parasite ingested by the host, or does the parasite ingest little cells of the host, feeding off of some of its internal cells/tissues? Or both?

Marisa Well, it's both... both activities happen at the same time.

Bogad Thanks... also, do we have to stay down here?

Marisa You mean, cramped up in here with the footnotes?

Bogad Yeah. This font is kind of small.

Marisa Oh, well we are free to get up in the main narrative whenever we want! Here, let's go in to, as you say, the imperial belly.

Bogad Hold on a minute. I think we're going to have to address the negative connotation of the words “tapeworm” and “parasite,” aren't we? Don't artists, and especially socially engaged artists, have enough problems these days? The metaphor is playfully nauseating, and holds up nicely... but [uplifting classical music fades up gently]... maybe we're the grain of sand that the oyster is irritated by, so it ends up producing a pearl? Something more flowery and marketable? Sorry to surface from the bowels of our essay in such an energy-draining way...

Marisa No, Larry, it's cool. It's about time we talk about this, actually. I think it's helpful to look at the etymology and different usages of the word “parasite.” For one thing, we should note that Narrator is a bit of a Francophile, and here he is quite heavily drawing from Michel Serres, the French post-structuralist thinker. According to Serres, the word “parasite” in French has a different connotation.

Narrator Why yes, it does. Cary Wolfe, who provides one of the most interesting interpretations of Serres' work, points out a third and unsuspected meaning of the French word “parasite.” Wolfe writes:

The word “parasite” derives its meaning from the Latin words “para” (beside) and “situm” (food): (1) Biological parasite; (2) Social parasite; (3) static or interference. As we know from classical information theory and its model of the signal-to-noise ratio, noise was typically regarded as simply the extraneous background against which a given message or signal was transmitted from a sender to receiver. Joining a lineage of systems theorists such as Gregory Bateson and Niklas Luhmann, Michel Serres writes that noise is productive and creative: “noise, through its

presence and absence, the intermittence of the signal, produces the new system.”⁹

Marisa What Narrator means to say is that if we think about a parasite not as a little thing that is singularly preying on a larger host, but as an entity that is contributing a beat to the overall rhythm, then the pejorative connotation of the word is neutralized.

Narrator If parasitism is not a one-way usurpation of power, but a recursive chain of gestures in which we are taking turns relying on and giving to one another, then we've transformed the notion of a parasite into a figure that plays an alimentary function.

Marisa “Alimentary?”

Narrator Yes, “alimentary.” As in, you know, “nurturing.” [Narrator sighs condescendingly, shakes head.]

To continue... In embedded art practices, there is always a complicity on behalf of the institutional host. In many cultures, being a guest or host are coterminous – the French word hôte, for example, corresponds to both “host” and “guest” in English. Jacques Derrida offers the term “ipseity” to describe the twin poles of hospitality and hostility, which he sees as a kind of choreography of complicity between multiple entities...¹⁰

Marisa “Ipseity.” I like that... that's a pretty useful term for situations like the one Turner was describing when she didn't know how the crowd was going to react. Although, I wouldn't know how to use it in a sentence.

Bogad Right, that's tough, but we've all

teetered along that “ipseitic” axis, when they've let us in, but we don't know if we're to be feted or sacrificed, [looks towards audience] and they haven't decided yet, either...

Marisa [Whispering to Bogad] Well, technically they have a few more pages before they have to decide what they're going to do with us.

Narrator To continue... While Turner's smiling and gracious “Miss Canadiana” persona presents a palatable and non-confrontational way of confronting difference, the artist Darren O'Donnell, working collaboratively with others under the moniker “Mammalian Diving Reflex,” creates projects that foreground what the participant knows will be socially awkward frameworks. The titles of Mammalian's projects indicate that confronting one's “discomfort with discomfort” is part of the artwork itself – “Haircuts by Children,” “Slow Dance with Teacher,” and “Children's Choice Awards” (the latter which are awards bestowed by kids at high-profile art or film galas). O'Donnell likens his projects to a process of “social acupuncture”:

The feeling of the needles during acupuncture can vary. It can just plain hurt, like you'd expect of any needle. But more often, the sensations are of a whole other order; the needle can feel heavy and almost nauseating at the point of entry; it can feel electric, the sensation travelling the length of the nerve; it can feel kind of itchy. It can also reproduce the sensation you're trying to eliminate by getting acupuncture in the first place, just like a shoulder massage can initially hurt but lead to a more relaxed state. Analogous sensations and effects are felt with social acupuncture. The social awkwardness and tension it generates can feel stupid, the

projects seeming to constantly teeter on the brink of embarrassment and failure. As any system experiences a shift into higher complexity, there will be a time when it feels like there has been a drop in understanding, dexterity, or control.¹¹

For Turner, O'Donnell, and many artists working in an embedded capacity, the discomfiting aspects of the process are the tools of the trade. Their institutional hosts, however, often have a more complex relationship to their expectations for what might occur, and whether it is art. In many cases, the institution may not know it is unwittingly "hosting" the artist within its system. Other times, the artist will use a "Trojan horse" strategy in which a tangible or traditional art project is offered, but all the time the "real" artwork happens as a series of processes along the way. In these cases, the institutional host may, in fact, understand that something critical indeed is happening, but they do not have a means to formally recognize it. Rare and visionary are those cases when the institutional host itself is able to anticipate difference, discomfort, and change. Founder of Xerox Parc's Artist in Residency Program that sought to pair artists with scientists, John Seely Brown uses the phrase "productive friction" to valorize the provocation naturally occurring in cross-disciplinary exchange:

In the business world's relentless quest for efficiency over the past several decades, most executives have become conditioned to believe that all friction is bad... Friction was a sign of waste and needed to be rooted out wherever it reared its ugly head. Perhaps we are even too hasty in dismissing all friction. Perhaps we should learn to embrace friction, even to seek it out and to encourage it, when it promises to provide opportunities for learning and capability building.

We need institutional frameworks that can help foster productive friction, and the learning that comes with it, rather than the dysfunctional friction that we too often encounter in large corporations around the world today.¹²

Interestingly, Brown recognizes that rather than seeing it as a waste of corporate resources, instead friction might be regarded as a means of testing limits, and ultimately bolstering the epistemological frameworks of an institution.

The aesthetics of embedded art practices.

The aesthetics of embedded art practices.

THE AESTHETICS OF

[Narrator pauses, looking downwards meaningfully.]

Bogad ...what?

Narrator The aesthetics of embedded art practices! That's the title of the next chapter: "The Aesthetics of Embedded Art Practices."

Bogad Wait – but what was the title of the section we just went over?

Narrator It was called "Embedding Difference." Only I didn't say it. I was thinking it.

Bogad Oh – ok, sorry. Go on.

Narrator Well, for the embedded artist, the negotiation of different environs often necessitates a comfort in shifting behavioural and linguistic registers. The cultural theorist Doris Sommer refers to these moments as junctures within a game of "code-switching" and "side-stepping."¹³

For Somner, when the subject deliberates the proper means of address, he/she occupies a philosophical relation to language and multiple ego-positions. Characterizing this “bilingual aesthetics,” “externality is always visible and audible, and it goads movement rather than marks impasses. Multi-tongued engagements are opportunities for a range of performances and asymmetrical receptions.”¹⁴ As a code-switcher who revels when “one tongue invades another,”¹⁵ and for whom “rubbing words the wrong way feels right,”¹⁶ the embedded artist typically embraces those moments when originary creation and individualist notions of authorship give way to a subjectivity based

states of exception, downtimes, strengths, contours, and vulnerabilities; he/she becomes master of the system’s patterns, and engages its logic to produce the artwork itself. What results is a byproduct that reveals the contingency of a system, and the possibilities of its redirect.

Marisa [Turning to Bogad, whispering.] It’s funny to hear yourself quoted by a third person, no? [Now turning to Narrator.] Narrator, I’m a little confused. Would you mind saying that last bit again – maybe this time in different words?

Narrator Sure. Embedded artists engage systems, and they try to make the system itself produce the work. While “things” may

be produced along the way, the artwork lies in its very capacity to re-sensitize us to affective relations. This is the byproduct – that resplendent excess produced by the system itself, that moment where the body or the “grain of the voice”¹⁸ begins to emerge, that place of incomplete ideological subjection, that indivisible remainder at the end of the calculation that cannot be squared away, that moment that reminds of the bright possibilities of the otherwise – [turning to Marisa] did that help at all?

Marisa Well, somewhat.

Bogad Hey, not to butt in, but MJ, should I take a stab at rewriting the last bit up there so that it segues into what Narrator is going to say about...

Narrator Shhhh! Again?!

Marisa Oh – sorry! [To Bogad.] Just let him go on.

Narrator For some embedded practices, the appropriation of an institution's logic involves mastering not only the language but the look and feel of its official documents, or what philosopher John Searle refers to as "status indicators" – policemen's uniforms, wedding rings, marriage certificates, drivers' licenses, passports, etc.¹⁹ Searle also employs the term "deontic powers" to describe the process and ceremonies by which powers are conferred between subjects to reify institutional beliefs:

An institution is any collectively accepted system of rules (procedures, practices) that enable us to create institutional facts.²⁰ ... Human institutions are, above all, enabling, because they create power, but it is a special kind of power. It is the power that is marked by such terms as: rights, duties, obligations, authorizations, permissions, empowerments, requirements, and certifications. I call these "deontic powers."²¹

Playfully conceding to these roles of status indicators and deontic powers can be subversive.

Marisa "Deontic?"

Narrator For example, many of the artists in this book such as N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., Artist Placement Group, Experiments in Art and Technology, and Maureen Connor/Kadambari Baxi all critically adopt the look and feel of the corporations they work with. When Steve Mann, Janez Janša, and Kristin Lucas interact with clerks, politicians, and judges, they remind us that institutions are composed of other humans who invented a fallible set of conventions, but ones that at some point got reified as institutional practices. The invented characters of Mr. Peanut and Reverend Billy, respectively, running as mayoral candidates of Vancouver and New York, parodically exploit the familiar strictures of electoral politics. So too

does Antanas Mockus, but from the position of the elected mayor of Bogotá.

As Slavoj Žižek suggests, the subject is, in fact, aware of this process of hegemonic replication, and accordingly participates in this social construction of reality:

"We all know very well that bureaucracy is not all-powerful, but our effective conduct in the presence of bureaucratic machinery is already regulated by a belief in its almighty..."²²

For Žižek, however, participation in the hegemonic process does not preclude a critical distance nor foreclose its subversion; participation "as if" merely allows the subject to maintain cognitive and psychic coherency. He writes:

What we call "social reality" is in the last resort an ethical construction; it is supported by a certain "as if" (we act as if we believe in the almighty of bureaucracy, as if the President incarnates the Will of the People, as if the Party expresses the objective interest of the working class...). As soon as the belief (which, let us remind ourselves again, is definitely not to be conceived at a "psychological level": it is embodied, materialized, in the effective functioning of the social field) is lost, the very texture of the social field disintegrates.²³

For Žižek, behaving "as if" accedes on the one hand to the necessity of adhering to the social construction of reality, and on the other hand, acknowledging its contingency.

Marisa Do you mean to say that the artists discussed in this book are embodying the doubly conscious position of the "as if?"

Bogad Or, maybe what Narrator is saying parallels Stanislavsky's "magic if," an

exercise on the part of the imagination of the actor, designed to trigger emotional specificity and realism that will in turn trigger a suspension of disbelief, and thus emotional investment, on the part of the audience for the “truth” of the play they are watching. And...

Narrator Žižek further postulates that...

Marisa Well, hold on, you big lug! Larry was speaking...

Bogad No, it's ok, let him go. I exhausted that tired line of thinking...

Narrator ... Žižek says that it is this self-conscious recognition of an incomplete ideological subjection that produces enjoyment (*jouissance*):

... ‘Internalization’, by structural necessity, never fully succeeds, [...] there is always a residue, a leftover, a stain of traumatic irrationality and senselessness sticking to it, and that this leftover, far from hindering the full submission of the subject to the ideological command, is the very condition of it: it is precisely this non-integrated surplus of senseless traumatism which confers on the Law its unconditional authority: in other words, which – in so far as it escapes ideological sense – sustains what we might call the ideological *jouis-sense*, enjoyment-in-sense (enjoy-meant), proper to the ideological.²⁴

Marisa Wait, so is he saying that appropriating this leftover, and embodying or rendering it, is what produces a kind of mirth? Maybe it's kind of like what you mentioned in your book about electoral politics, Larry...

Bogad Well, in the sense that a sort of radical ridicule – or, ridicule armed with a fundamental structural critique, explicit or implicit – operates when a guerrilla artist runs for public office, as, say a working class African-American drag queen such as Joan Jett Blakk. All sorts of unmarked exclusionary devices in the system are tripped and triggered with every step that Jett Blakk takes in her high heels – to literally, transgressive comic effect.

Narrator For Žižek, the Law, or the hegemonic “Other,” as an ultimately arbitrary and contingent system, is incapable of completely dominating the subject. There is always a remainder – an excess, *jouissance*, or *byproduct*. It is this excess – this critical distance – and this place of “mirth,” which allows the subject to identify with the Law or the hegemon; this excess is this place from which insurrection or alterability arises.

Bogad Wait – the excess is the root both of identification with the oppressor, and the possibility of insurrection...?

Marisa Well, let's end on that note – “insurrection.”

Although I'm sorry, I've gotten ahead of myself because I do have some pragmatic things that we need to mention about this book's contents. The first section, “Producing Byproducts (Artists in Industries),” traces a lineage of twentieth century artists who worked with industries from the vantage point of an agent moving in and out of being fully immersed and critically disengaged. The second section, “Performing Politics,” features artists who engage a range of institutions – the electoral politics, judicial courts, elementary schools, and

other forms of everyday bureaucracy. By including contemporary examples alongside historical precedents, I intend to foreground the legacy of these projects, many of which have evaded traditional forms of canonization. Peppered throughout the book are responses to primary texts by thinkers coming from the fields of architecture, biology, political economy, art, and more.***

[Pauses meaningfully. Narrator, Bogad, and Marisa look up. Audience applauds.]

Bogad Ok, Marisa — looks like you've got the Narrator under control—just let me know if you wanna knock him out and stick him in an endnote somewhere. Have fun with the rest of your intros.

Marisa Hey thanks, Lar, I'm so glad you decided to drop in. It was really fun having you. Hey, I'll be quoting you later so bye for now but see you soon.

PARASITE

by Michel Serres

The parasite is a thermal exciter.

It enters the body and infests it. Its infectious power is measured by its capability to adapt itself to one or several hosts. This capability fluctuates, and its virulence varies along with its production of toxic substances. They lie dormant, rise up, lose wind, and are lost for a long time.

The parasite is an exciter. Far from transforming a system, changing its nature, its form, its elements, its relations, and its pathways (but who accomplishes this act, what set, what force succeeds? What does "transform the world" mean concretely? What is "work," really?), the parasite makes it change states differentially. It inclines it. It makes the equilibrium of the energetic distribution fluctuate. It dopes it. It irritates it. It inflames it. Often this inclination has no effect. But it can produce gigantic ones by chain reactions or reproduction. Immunity of epidemic crisis [...]

The parasite intervenes, enters the system as an element of fluctuation. It excites it or incites it; it puts it into motion, or it paralyzes it. It changes its state, changes its energetic state, its displacements and condensations. By despoiling actions, like ascarid worms or leeches; by toxic actions, like ticks or fleas; by trauma, like bilharzia or trichina worms; by infection, like dysenteric amoebas; by obstruction, like the filaria of elephantiasis; by compression, like those that form cysts; by irritations, inflammations, itching; by rashes (my two parasites together eat [*manger*], and are scratched [*se démanger*]).

The thermal excitation is minimal; it is differential. This business seems to occur at night in the dark and in silence. Everything is very small there: scratching interrupting the quiet, a small consciousness upon waking, a small creak, a short run to safety, and then immediate return. The parasite produces small oscillations of the system, small differences: parastases or circumstances.

The differential change of state insures the group in its equilibrium. Yes, it is no more than a shudder, as if the whole trembled around its stability.

By small packets of energy, by this information that comes from the mouth, the system will reinforce its equilibrium or will be transformed from top to bottom. [...]

Parasitology, as we shall soon realize, uses the vocabulary of the host: hostility or hospitality. First of all, the parasite is always small; it never exceeds the size of insects or arthropods.

In vaccination, poison can be a cure, and this logic with two entry points becomes a strategy, a care, a cure. The parasite gives the host the means to be safe from the parasite. The organism reinforces its resistance, and increases its adaptability. It is moved a bit away from its equilibrium, and it is then even more strongly at equilibrium. The generous hosts are, therefore, stronger than the bodies without visits; generation increases resistance right in the middle of endemic diseases. Thus, parasitism contributes to the formation of adapted species from the point of view of evolution. At the same time,

MICHEL SERRES

Incredible changes have happened in the world of science since Michel Serres wrote *Parasite* in 1980. One of the most notable is the breakthrough technology of modern molecular biology. We learned to read our own genetic code, and in the last decade of the twentieth century, we sequenced our entire genome. Now we have completed the sequence of literally hundreds of organisms spanning the tree of life from viruses, single celled bacteria, to large mammals, and complex plants. This knowledge has transformed our understanding of the evolution of life on earth. Our own DNA is a testament to our evolutionary past. Over billions of years, our cells have been infected by viruses that place their genetic sequences into our DNA. Many of these residual sequences are still there to read as historic documents of our relationship to viral parasites. As much as eight percent of our DNA is retroviruses, and more than fifty percent of our DNA is made up of small viral elements called "retrotransposons." In effect, our DNA is more virus than human. In my field of research, neural stem cell biology, there is recent evidence that human brain cells may have come to use these retrotransposons to help generate the complex nerve heterogeneity that makes us human. In other words, our parasites may be part of how our brain forms.

These incredible symbiotic relationships could not have occurred unless these two species co-existed in an intimate relationship over millions of years. In ecology, we call this co-evolution, where each species helps determine the evolutionary process of the other. The role of the embedded artist in human culture is similar in that the artist requires the host culture to exist, but by exerting their artistic practice on that same culture, culture adapts and evolves. We do not create culture out of a void – it is a complex, symbiotic, co-evolutionary process.

it causes the disappearance, by terrifying epidemics, of unadapted species; the story of these disappearances can even be written. A small difference and a return to a reinforced stability; a small difference and there is unbelievable multiplication and uncountable destruction.

It lives sheltered in the body of its host (or on his surface) that is its environment. The outside for it is the inside of another. Its outside is an inside. Thus the parasite has few enemies, for the simple reason that it rarely meets any. To avoid the hostility of the host, it sometimes copies some of the cells of the surrounding tissue. Thus it minimizes its risks by lightly transforming its own body, changing its hostility into hospitality, exchanging outside for inside.

The parasite is an inclination toward trouble, to the change of phase of a system. It is a little troublemaker. It was there, necessary, on my path. How can the state of things themselves be transformed? ○

*Originally published as Le Parasite, Paris:
Grasset & Fasquelle, 1980. English translation,
Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press,
1982. Excerpt reprinted with permission from
the University of Minnesota Press edition, 2007.*

MICHEL SERRES

RESPONSE BY MATTHEW SOULES

The contemporary preference for conceptual constructs informed by both the eco-systemic and the bio-logical, registers, at least in part, the pervasive scope of the rhizomatic worldview; one fixated on describing almost everything in the terms of group pluralities in asymmetric movements of exchange¹.

At this discursive moment, the parasite, an exemplary bio-logical diagram of exchange between a side and a centre, sits squarely centre. This socio-cultural centralizing of the parasite and its many cohorts should cause some pause. The parasite's prominence is itself a by-product of its ability to minimize risks by "changing its hostility into hospitality," and "exchanging outside for inside." While such simple yet sophisticated trickery is alluring for its transformative potential, it is its totalizing tendency that potentially denudes its operational modus. In its enfolded proclivity, doesn't the parasitic shimmy too closely with some of the more unnerving logic of contemporary liberalism? In his introduction to the 2007 edition of *Le Parasite*, Cary Wolfe quotes Steven Connor's description of Serres as envisioning "a plenitopia of included middles"² in which no exceptions or exclusions or residues can be tolerated². This casting of Serres' larger project, in which the parasite sits most prominently, resonates sharply with Žižek's portrayal of the post-political dimension of globalized liberalism's emphasis on middles. The parasitic may very well shift too easily to a negotiated pragmatic that could ultimately end up foreclosing politics "proper."

Perhaps the notion of infrastructure obliquely offers an alternative, complimentary, or parallel conceptual construct⁴. Like the parasite, infrastructure (in architecture, at least) has acquired heightened attention in the rhizomatic century, and shares its devotion to transmission. As architect Stan Allen reminds us, "[t]erritory, communication, and speed are properly infrastructural problems⁵." Exchanging "para—" for "infra—," a "beside" for an "under," and replacing "site" (sitos) with "structure," a

"feeding" with a "putting together," is tantalizing. Operating infrastructurally may entail the very transformative potential that the parasitic invokes, only with a decreased tendency towards "ethical claims for synthesis⁶." Why is this? "Although static in and of themselves, infrastructures organize and manage complex systems of flow, movement, and exchange⁷." Because infrastructure foregrounds the necessity of assuming a position regarding what moves and what does not, infrastructurally can enable unforeseen and multiplicitous transformations that resist an over-population of synthetic middles.

Notes

MICHEL SERRES

¹Perhaps Foucault was right when he half-seriously proposed, "One day, perhaps, this century will be called Deleuzian," in "Theatrum Philosophicum," Critique 282, (1970): 885.

²Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007. Originally published as *Le Parasite*, copyright Grasset & Fasquelle, 1980.), xix.

³Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 1999), 198.

⁴Stan Allen, "Infrastructural Urbanism," *Point and Lines: Diagrams and Projects for the City* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), 48–57.

⁵Ibid, 52.

⁶Steven Connor, "Topologies: Michel Serres and the Shapes of Thought," *Anglistik* 15, (2004): 116. (As quoted in Cary Wolfe's introduction to Michel Serres, *The Parasite* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

⁷Stan Allen, "Infrastructural Urbanism," 55.

WHAT IS AN INSTITUTION?

by John Searle

1. Economics and institutions

When I was an undergraduate in Oxford, we were taught economics almost as though it were a natural science. The subject matter of economics might be different from physics, but only in the way that the subject matter of chemistry or biology is different from physics. The actual results were presented to us as if they were scientific theories. So, when we learned that savings equals investment, it was taught in the same tone of voice as one teaches that force equals mass times acceleration. And we learned that rational entrepreneurs sell where marginal cost equals marginal revenue in the way that we once learned that bodies attract in a way that is directly proportional to the product of their mass and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them. At no point was it ever suggested that the reality described by economic theory was dependent on human beliefs and other attitudes in a way that was totally unlike the reality described by physics or chemistry.

Some years ago, when I published *The Construction of Social Reality*, I was aware that it had implications for the ontology of economics, but I was not aware that there had already been an important revival of the tradition of institutional economics. It would be an understatement to say that I welcome this interest in institutions; I enthusiastically support it. But I think that in the institutional literature there is still a lack of clarity about what exactly an institution is. What is the ontology, the mode of existence, of institutional reality? This article tries to add to this discussion.

Economics as a subject matter, unlike physics or chemistry, is largely concerned with institutional facts. Facts about money and interest rates, exchange and employment, corporations and the balance of payments, form the very heart of the subject of economics. When in a classic work (1935), Lionel Robbins, tells us that "Economics is a study of the disposal of scarce commodities," he takes for granted a huge, invisible institutional ontology. Two dogs fighting over a bone or two schoolboys fighting over a ball are also engaged in the "disposal of scarce commodities," but they are not central to the subject matter of economics. For economics, the mode of existence of the "commodities" and the mechanisms of "disposal" are institutional. Given the centrality of institutional phenomena, it is somewhat surprising that institutional economics has not always been at the centre of mainstream economics.

One might think that the question that forms the title of this article would long ago have been answered, not just by economists, but also by the enormous number of social theorists who have been concerned with the ontology of

society. I am thinking not only of such foundational figures as Max Weber, Emil Durkheim, Georg Simmel, and Alfred Schütz, but of the whole Western tradition of discussing political and social institutions that goes back to Aristotle's *Politics*, if not earlier. You would think that by now there would be a very well defined and worked-out theory of institutions. One reason for the inadequacy of the tradition is that the authors (stretching all the way back to Aristotle) tend to take language for granted. They assume language, and then ask how human institutions are possible and what their nature and function is. But, of course, if you presuppose language, you have already presupposed institutions. It is, for example, a stunning fact about the Social Contract theorists that they take for granted that people speak a language, and then ask how these people might form a social contract. But, it is implicit in the theory of speech acts that, if you have a community of people talking to each other, performing speech acts, you already have a social contract. The classical theorists, in short, have the direction of analysis back to front. Instead of presupposing language and analyzing institutions, we have to analyze the role of language in the constitution of institutions. I am going to try to take some first steps toward this goal in this article. It is a continuation of a line of argument that I began in other works, especially *The Construction of Social Reality*, but I will draw also on my book *Rationality in Action*, as well as several articles.

In the twentieth century, philosophers learned to be very cautious about asking questions of the form, "What is...?", as in, for example, "What is truth?", "What is a number?", "What is justice?". The lessons of the twentieth century (though these lessons are rapidly being forgotten in the twenty-first century) suggest that the best way to approach such problems is to sneak up on them. Do not ask, "What is truth?", but ask, "Under what conditions do we say of a proposition that it is true?". Do not ask, "What is a number?", but ask, "How do numerical expressions function in actual mathematical practice?". I propose to adopt this method in addressing the question, "What is an institution?". Instead of coming right out and saying at the beginning, "An institution is...", I propose to start with statements reporting institutional facts. If we could analyze the nature of institutional facts and how they differ from other sorts of facts, then it seems to me we would be well on the way to answering our question, "What is an institution?".

In some intuitively natural sense, the fact that I am an American citizen, the fact that the piece of paper in my hand is a twenty-dollar bill, and the fact, that I own stock in AT&T, are all institutional facts. They are institutional facts in the sense that they can only exist given certain human institutions. Such facts differ from the fact, for example, that at sea level I weigh one hundred and sixty pounds, or that the Earth is

ninety-three million miles from the sun, or that hydrogen atoms have one electron. Of course, in order to *state* the fact that the earth is ninety-three million miles from the sun, we need the institution of language, including the convention of measuring distances in miles, but we need to distinguish the *statement* of this fact (which is institutional) from the *fact stated* (which is not institutional). Now, what is it about institutional facts that make them *institutional*, and what sorts of things do they require in order to be the sorts of facts they are?

2. Observer independence, observer dependence, and the objective/subjective distinction

I want to begin the investigation by making certain general distinctions. First, it is essential to distinguish between those features of the world that are totally independent of human feelings and attitudes, observer independent features, and those features of the world that exist only relative to human attitudes. Observer independent features of the world include force, mass, gravitational attraction, photosynthesis, the chemical bond, and tectonic plates. Observer relative features of the world include money, government, property, marriage, social clubs, and presidential elections. It is important to see that one and the same entity can have both observer independent features and observer dependent features, where the observer dependent features depend on the attitudes of the people involved. For example, a set of movements by a group of people constitutes a football game, not just in virtue of the physical trajectories of the bodies involved, but also in virtue of the attitudes, intentions, and so on of the participants, and the set of rules within which they are operating. Football games are observer relative; the trajectories of human bodies are observer independent. I hope it is obvious that most of the phenomena we discuss in economics, such as money, financial institutions, corporations, business transactions, and public offerings of stock are all observer relative. One can say that, in general, the natural sciences are concerned with observer independent phenomena, and the social sciences with observer relative phenomena.

A rough test for whether or not a phenomenon is observer independent or observer relative is: could the phenomenon have existed if there had never been any conscious human beings with any intentional

states? On this test, tectonic plates, gravitational attraction, and the solar system are all observer independent, and money, property, and government are observer relative. The test is only rough-and-ready, because, of course, the consciousness and intentionality that serve to create observer relative phenomena are themselves observer independent phenomena. For example, the fact that a certain object is money is observer relative; money is created as such by the attitudes of observers and participants in the institution of money. But those attitudes are not themselves observer relative; they are observer independent. I think this thing in front of me is a twenty-dollar bill, and, if somebody else thinks that I do not think that, he or she is just mistaken. My attitude is observer independent, but the reality created by a large number of people like me having such attitudes, depends on those attitudes, and is, therefore, observer dependent. In investigating institutional reality, we are investigating observer dependent phenomena.

A second distinction we need to make is between different kinds of objectivity and subjectivity. Part of our puzzle is to explain how we create—out of subjective attitudes such as beliefs and intentions—a reality of corporations, money, and economic transactions, about which we can make objectively true statements. But there is an ambiguity in the objective-subjective distinction. Because objectivity and subjectivity loom so large in our intellectual culture, it is important to get clear about this distinction at the beginning of the investigation. We need to distinguish the *epistemic* sense of the objective-subjective distinction from the *ontological* sense. Thus, for example, if I say “Van Gogh died in France,” that statement can be established as true or false as a matter of objective fact. It is not just a matter of anybody’s opinion. It is epistemically objective. But if I say, “Van Gogh was a better painter than Manet,” well that is, as they say, a matter of opinion or judgment. It is not a matter of epistemically objective fact, but is rather a matter of subjective opinion. Epistemically objective statements are those that can be established as true or false independently of the feelings and attitudes of the makers and interpreters of the statement. Those that are subjective depend on the feelings and attitudes of the participants in the discourse. Epistemic objectivity and subjectivity are features of *claims*. But in addition to this

RESPONSE BY
JOSHUA MOUFAWAD-PAUL

The desire to locate the ontology of social reality leads to numerous philosophical dead ends. For example, John Searle’s attempt to discover the ontology of institutional reality results in the positivist conflation of language and the social. For Searle, language not only indicates institutions, but also forms the basis of institutional reality.

Institutions are concretized social relationships – customs and structures – both under- and over-determined by a mode of production. If being human means being a “social animal” (and not just a “linguistical animal”), then humans are also “institutional animals.”

We build institutions, and we institute ourselves, as part of this historically creative process. If we produce society and are also produced by society, then we create institutions, and, in turn, are re-created by them: this is how we give our world meaning.

These institutions often cohere as ideological reflections of an historical mode of production. In other words, residual institutions linger from previous social contexts – Deleuze and Guattari’s apparatus of capture. But we also create institutions, rebel and subterranean, that challenge the normative institutional framework, that prefigure alternate modes of production; without this faith in the future, counter-institutions would lack meaning.

Alain Badiou’s response to Searle’s question, “What is an institution?” is, perhaps, fitting. Warning against the pursuit for an ontology beyond the social, which can ultimately end up neglecting social ontology itself, Badiou writes, “What is a philosophical institution?”

Notes

Badiou, Alain. “What is a Philosophical Institution?” in *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2006), 9–14

sense of the objective/subjective distinction, and in a way the foundation of that distinction, is an ontological difference. Some entities exist only insofar as they are experienced by human and animal subjects. Thus, for example, pains, tickles and itches, and human and animal mental events and processes generally, exist only insofar as they are experienced by human or animal subjects. Their mode of existence requires that they be experienced by a human or animal subject. Therefore, we may say they have a *subjective* ontology. But, of course, most of the things in the universe do not require being experienced in order to exist. Mountains, molecules, and tectonic plates, for example, exist, and would exist if there had never been any humans or animals. We can say that they have an *objective* ontology, because they do not need to be experienced by a conscious subject in order to exist.

It is important to emphasize that the ontological subjectivity of a *domain* of investigation does not preclude epistemic objectivity in the *results* of the investigation. We can have an objective science of a domain that is ontologically subjective. Without this possibility there would be no social sciences. In light of these two distinctions, we might say that one way to pose our problem for this discussion is to explain how there can be an epistemically objective institutional reality of money, government, property, and so on, given that this reality is in part constituted by subjective feelings and attitudes, and, thus, has a subjective ontology.

With these two distinctions in mind, the distinction between observer relative and observer independent features of reality, and the distinction between the ontological sense of the objective/subjective distinction and the epistemic sense of that distinction, we can place our present discussion within the larger context of contemporary intellectual life. We now have a reasonably clear idea about how the universe works, and we even have some idea about how it works at the micro level. We have a pretty good account of basic atomic and subatomic physics, we think we have a good understanding of the chemical bond, we even have a pretty well established science of cellular and molecular biology, and we are increasing our understanding of evolutionary processes. The picture that emerges from these domains of investigation is that the universe consists entirely of entities we find it convenient to call particles (even though, of course, the word *particle* is not quite right). These exist in fields of force and are typically organized into systems, where the internal structure and also the external boundaries of the system are set by causal relations. Examples of systems are water molecules, galaxies, and babies. Some of those systems are composed in large part of big carbon-based molecules, and are the products of the evolution of our present plant and animal species. Now here is our general question, and here is its bearing on the social sciences. How can we accommodate a certain conception we have of ourselves as conscious, mindful, rational, speech act performing, social, political, economic, ethical, and free-will possessing animals in a universe constructed entirely of these mindless physical phenomena? It is not obvious that we can make all our self-conceptions consistent with what we know from physics, chemistry, and biology about how the world is anyhow. We might, for example, in the end, have to give up our belief in free will. But since our self-conception is pretty

well established, and is substantiated by thousands of years of human experience, we are reluctant to give up any central portions of it without some very powerful reasons for doing so. The investigation in this article is focused on one small part of that larger problem. How can there be a social and institutional reality, including economic reality, within a universe consisting entirely of physical particles in fields of force?

3. The special theory of the logical structure of institutional facts: X counts as Y in C

I will be very brief in this section, because for the most part it will be a straight summary of material that I have previously published in *The Construction of Social Reality*.

Though the structure of actual human societies is immensely complicated, the underlying principles, I believe, are rather simple. There are three primitive notions necessary to explain social and institutional reality. (There is a fourth, what I call the “Background,” which I will not go into here.)

Collective intentionality

The first notion we need is that of collective intentionality. In order to explain this notion, I have to say a little bit about intentionality in general. “Intentionality” is a word that philosophers use to describe that feature of the mind, by which it is directed at, or about, or of, or concerns, objects and states of affairs in the world. Thus, beliefs, hopes, fears, desires, and the emotions generally can in this technical sense be said to be intentional. It is important to emphasize that intentionality does not imply any special connection with intending, in the ordinary sense in which I intend to go to the movies tonight. Rather, intentionality is a very general notion having to do with the directedness of the mind. Intending in the ordinary sense is simply a special case of intentionality in this technical sense, along with belief, desire, hope, fear, love, hate, pride, shame, perception, disgust, and many others.

Now given that we all have intentional states in this sense – we all have hopes, beliefs, desires, fears, and so on – we need to discuss the role of intentionality in human social groups. It is a remarkable property that humans and many other animal species have that they can engage in cooperative behaviour. Obvious examples are playing in an orchestra, or playing team sports, or simply engaging in a conversation. In such cases one does act individually, but one’s individual actions – playing the violin part, for example, or passing the ball to another player – are done as part of the collective behaviour. Sometimes there is even cooperative behaviour across species as, for example, to take a simple case, when my dog and I go for a walk together. When I am engaged in collective action, I am doing what I am doing as part of *our* doing what we are doing. In all of these cases, an agent is acting, and doing what he or she does, only as part of a collective action. It is an extremely complicated question how exactly the intentionality of the individual relates to the collective intentionality in such cases, but I have discussed it elsewhere, and I will not go into it here (Searle, 1990).

Collective intentionality covers not only collective intentions, but also such other forms of intentionality as collective beliefs and collective desires. One can have a belief

that one shares with other people, and one can have desires that are shared by a collectivity. People cooperating in a political campaign typically desire together that their candidate will win, and in a church, the people reciting the Nicene Creed are expressing their collective faith.

Collective intentionality is the basis of all society, human or animal. Humans share with many species of animals the capacity for collective intentionality and thus the capacity to form societies. Indeed, I will define a social fact as any fact involving the collective intentionality of two or more agents. Our problem, then, is to specify what is special about human collective intentionality that enables us to create special forms of social reality that go beyond the general animal forms. Both the Supreme Court making a decision and a pack of wolves hunting a sheep are engaged in collective intentionality, and, thus, are manifesting social facts. Our question is, what is the difference between the general class of social facts and the special sub-class that constitute institutional facts?

The assignment of function

A second notion we need is that of the assignment of function. Again, human beings have a capacity that they share with some, though this time with not very many, other species of animals, the capacity to impose functions on objects where the object does not have the function, so to speak, intrinsically but only in virtue of the assignment of function. Tools are the obvious case. Humans are tool-using animals *par excellence*, but, of course, other animals have tools as well. Beaver dams and birds' nests are two obvious examples. And in some cases animals are even capable of discovering useful tools, when the use of the object as a tool is not already programmed into the animals as part of their genetic endowment. Think of Köhler's apes, for example. Assigned functions are observer relative.¹

If you combine these two, collective intentionality and the assignment of function, it is easy to see that there can be collective assignments of function. Just as an individual can use a stump as a stool, so a group can use a large log as a bench.

Status functions

The third item we need, to account for the move from social facts to institutional facts, is a special kind of assignment of function where the object or person to whom the function is assigned cannot perform the function just in virtue of its physical structure, but rather can perform the function only in virtue of the fact that there is a collective assignment of a certain *status*, and the object or person performs its function only in virtue of collective acceptance by the community that the object or person has the requisite status. These assignments typically take the form *X counts as Y*. For example, such and such a move in a football game counts as scoring a touchdown. Such and such a set of procedures counts as the election of a president of the United States. Such and such a position in chess counts as checkmate. These exhibit the general form of the assignment of status function, *X counts as Y*, or, more typically, *X counts as Y in context C*. In all of these cases, the *X* term identifies certain features of an object or person or state of affairs, and the *Y* term assigns a special status to that person, object, or state of affairs. Human beings have a capacity which, as far as I can tell, is not possessed by any other animal species,

to assign functions to objects where the objects cannot perform the function in virtue of their physical structure alone, but only in virtue of the collective assignment or acceptance of the object or person as having a certain *status*, and with that status a function. Obvious examples are money, private property, and positions of political leadership. In every case, the object or person acquires a function that can be performed only in virtue of the collective acceptance of the corresponding status.

I like to illustrate the distinction between status functions and other kinds of functions with a little parable. Imagine a tribe that builds a wall around its collection of huts, and imagine that the wall keeps members of the tribe in and intruders out, since it is difficult to get over the wall without the tolerance of the members of the tribe. But imagine that the wall decays to the point where it is nothing more than a line of stones, yet let us suppose that the people involved continue to — and watch this vocabulary closely — *recognize* the line of stones as a *boundary*. They recognize that they are not *supposed* to cross unless *authorized* to do so. Now, we are supposing that the wall, though it is no longer a large physical structure but simply a line of stones, continues to perform the same function that it did before, but this time not in virtue of its physical structure, but in virtue of the fact that the people involved continue to accept the line of stones as having a certain status. It has the status of a boundary, and people behave in a way that they regard as appropriate for something that they accept as a boundary. The line of stones has a function not in virtue of its physical structure, but in virtue of the collective assignment of a status, and with that status, a function that can only be performed in virtue of the collective acceptance of the object as having that status. I propose to call such functions *status functions*.

As this example is intended to make clear, the transition from physical function to status function can be gradual, and there may be no exact point at which we can say, the status function begins and the physical function ends. The vocabulary is revealing: "You can't cross that" can mean either "It is too high," or "It is not allowed" (or both).

The general logical form of the imposition of status functions is, as I said, *X counts as Y in C*, though I will point out some exceptions later.

It might seem that this is a very feeble apparatus with which to construct institutional structures; surely the whole thing could come tumbling down at any moment. How can it do as much work as it apparently does? The answer, or at least part of the answer, is that this structure has certain purely formal properties that give it enormous scope. The first is that it iterates upward indefinitely. So, for example, when I make certain sounds through my mouth, making those sounds counts as uttering sentences of English; but uttering those sentences of English counts as making a promise; and, in that context, making a promise counts as undertaking a contract. Making that kind of contract in that context counts as getting married, and so on upward. Notice the logical form of this: *X₁ counts as Y₁*. But *Y₁ = X₂ counts as Y₂*. And *Y₂ = X₃ counts as Y₃*, and so on upward indefinitely.

Secondly, the whole system operates laterally as well as vertically. Thus, I do not just own property, but I own property as a citizen of the city of Berkeley, in the county of Alameda,

in the State of California, in the United States of America. Locked into this institutional structure I have all sorts of rights and obligations. For example, I have to pay taxes to all four of those entities I just named, and all four are under obligations to provide me with all sorts of social services. I acquire various rights and duties as a property owner, and these interlock with other social institutions.

When the procedure or practice of counting *X* as *Y* becomes regularized it becomes a rule. And rules of the form *X counts as Y in C* are then constitutive of institutional structures. Such rules differ from regulative rules, which are typically of the form “Do *X*,” because regulative rules regulate activities that can exist independently of the rule. Constitutive rules not only regulate, but, rather constitute the very behaviour they regulate, because acting in accordance with a sufficient number of the rules is constitutive of the behaviour in question. An obvious contrast is between the regulative rules of driving, such as drive on the right-hand side of the road, and the constitutive rules of chess. Driving can exist without the regulative rule requiring right or left; the rule regulates an antecedently existing activity. But chess cannot exist without the rules, because behaving in accordance with (at least a sufficient subset of) the rules is constitutive of playing chess.

Now I want to make a very strong claim. The institutional ontology of human civilization, the special ways in which human institutional reality differs from the social structures and behavior of other animals, is a matter of status functions imposed according to constitutive rules and procedures. Status functions are the glue that holds human societies together. Think not only of money, property, government, and marriage, but also of football games, national elections, cocktail parties, universities, corporations, friendships, tenure, summer vacations, legal actions, newspapers, and industrial strikes. Though these phenomena exhibit enormous variety, their underlying ontology reveals a common structure. The analogy with the natural world is obvious. Bonfires and rusting shovels look quite different, but the underlying mechanism that produces them is exactly the same: oxidization. Analogously, presidential elections, baseball games, and twenty-dollar bills look different, but the underlying mechanism that produces them is the same: the assignment of status functions with their accompanying deontologies according to constitutive rules. (I will say more about deontology in a moment.)

We are now close to being able to give a provisional answer to the question that forms the title of this paper: “What is an institution?” We have substituted for that question, the question: “What is an institutional fact?” I have claimed that these facts typically require structures in the form of constitutive rules *X counts as Y in C*, and that institutional facts only exist in virtue of collective acceptance of something having a certain status, where that status carries functions that cannot be performed without the collective acceptance of the status. This I am claiming is the glue that holds society together.

There is a gradual transition from informal but accepted assignments of status functions to full-blown established institutions with codified constitutive rules, but in both cases the crucial element of deontology is present, as we will see. Furthermore, the notion of “collective acceptance” is intended to be vague, because I need to mark a continuum that goes from

grudgingly going along with some social practice to enthusiastic endorsement of it.

As a preliminary formulation, we can state our conclusions so far as follows: an institutional fact is any fact that has the logical structure *X counts as Y in C*, where the *Y* term assigns a status function and (with few exceptions) the status function carries a deontology.² An institution is any system of constitutive rules of the form *X counts as Y in C*. Once an institution becomes established, it then provides a structure within which one can create institutional facts.

Our original aim was to explain how the ontology of institutions fits into the more basic ontology of physics and chemistry, and we have now done that: one and the same phenomenon (object, organism, event, etc.) can satisfy descriptions under which it is non-institutional (a piece of paper, a human being, a series of movements) and descriptions under which it is institutional (a twenty-dollar bill, the president of the United States, a football game). An object or other phenomenon is part of an institutional fact, *under a certain description of that object or phenomenon*.

I am leaving out an enormous number of complexities for the sake of giving a simple statement on the bare bones of the ontology in question.

JOHN
SEARLE

4. Status functions and deontic powers

How does it work? How does a set of status functions, deriving from systems of constitutive rules, function in the operation of society? The essential role of human institutions, and the purpose of having institutions is not to constrain people as such, but, rather, to create new sorts of power relationships. Human institutions are, above all, *enabling*, because they create power, but it is a special kind of power. It is the power that is marked by such terms as: rights, duties, obligations, authorizations, permissions, empowerments, requirements, and certifications. I call all of these *deontic powers*. What distinguishes human societies from other animal societies, as far as I can tell, is that human beings are capable of a deontology, which no other animal is capable of. Not all deontic power is institutional, but almost all institutional structures are matters of deontic power. Think of anything you would care to mention — private property, government, contractual relationships, as well as such informal relationships as friendship, family, and social clubs. All of these are matters of rights, duties, obligations, etc. They are structures of power relationships. Often the institutional facts evolve out of the natural facts. Thus, there is a biological family consisting of parents and their biological offspring. But humans have imposed on this underlying biology a rather elaborate formal and informal institutional structure, involving the respective statuses of the mother, the father, and the children. In so-called “extended families” authority relationships and other status functions may include not only the parents and children, but sundry other relatives. Furthermore, given the institutional structures, one may have families with parents and children where no one is biologically related to anyone else.

But that only forces the question back a bit: how exactly do these power relations function? The answer, which again is essential to understanding society, is that institutional

structures create desire-independent reasons for action. To recognize something as a duty, an obligation, or a requirement is already to recognize that you have a reason for doing it, which is independent of your inclinations at the moment.

It might seem paradoxical that I talk about institutional reasons for action as “desire-independent reasons for action,” because, of course, many of these are precisely the foci of very powerful human desires. What is more a field for human desire than money? Or political power? I think this question raises a deep issue: by creating institutional reality, we increase human power enormously. By creating private property, governments, marriages, stock markets, and universities, we increase the human capacity for action. But the possibility of having desires, and satisfying them within these institutional structures – for example, the desire to get rich, to become president, to get a Ph.D., to get tenure – all presuppose that there is a recognition of the deontic relationships. Without the recognition, acknowledgment, and acceptance of the deontic relationships, your power is not worth a damn. It is only worthwhile to have money, or a university degree, or to be president of the United States if other people recognize you as having this status, and recognize that status as giving desire-independent reasons for behaving in certain ways. The general point is clear: the creation of the general field of desire-based reasons for action presupposes the acceptance of a system of desire-independent reasons for action. This is true both of the immediate beneficiaries of the power relationships (for example, the person with the money, or the person who has won the election), and of the other participants in the institution.

5. Language as the fundamental social institution

I suggested earlier that one reason that traditional accounts of institutions, both in institutional economics and elsewhere, are incomplete is that they all take language for granted. It is essential to see in exactly what respect language is the fundamental social institution in order that you can see the logical structure of the other social institutions. It is intuitively obvious, even pre-theoretically, that language is fundamental in a very precise sense: you can have language without money, property, government, or marriage, but you cannot have money, property, government, or marriage without language. What is harder to see is the constitutive role of language in each of these and, indeed, in all social institutions. Language does not just describe a preexisting institutional reality, but is partly constitutive of that reality, in ways I need to explain.

It seems intuitively right to say that you can have language without money, but not money without language. But now we need to state exactly how and why language is essential. The general form of status functions is that we impose a status, and with it a function on something that cannot perform that function in virtue of its physical structure alone. It can only function if it is assigned a status function, and in that respect it differs from other tools. Think of the difference between a knife and a twenty-dollar bill. The knife will cut just in virtue of its physical structure. But the twenty-dollar bill will not buy just in virtue of its physical structure. It can only function as money if it is recognized, accepted, and acknowledged as valid currency. The knife function can exist for anybody capable of exploiting

the physics, but the status function can only exist if there is collective representation of the object as having the status that carries the function. *A status function must be represented as existing in order to exist at all, and language or symbolism of some kind provides the means of representation.* You can explore the physics of the X terms as much as you like, but you cannot read off the status function as you can read off physical functions, because there is nothing in the X term physically that by itself carries the status function. The piece of paper is only money, the man is only president, insofar as the piece of paper is represented as money and the man is represented as president. But now, if there are to be these representations, there must be some medium of representation, and that medium is language or symbolism in the broadest sense. We must have some means of representing the fact that this stuff is money, or that that man is president, in order that the stuff can acquire the status of money and the man can acquire the status of a president. No representation, no status function.

This is why pre-linguistic animals cannot have an institutional reality. My dog has very good vision, indeed much better than mine. But I can still see things he cannot see. We can both see, for example, a man crossing a line carrying a ball. But I can see the man score a touchdown and the dog cannot. We should reflect on this, because it is a very deep and important point. Why is it, exactly, that my dog cannot see a man score a touchdown? Is his vision not good enough? Well, we might train the dog to bark whenever a man crosses a white line in possession of a ball, but that is still not yet seeing a touchdown. To see a touchdown scored he would have to be able to represent what is happening as the scoring of a touchdown, and without language he cannot do that.

This also leads to very deep considerations about the ontology of institutional reality and its relation to cognition. In order to perceive the man score a touchdown, or to perceive that he is president, or to perceive that this is a dollar bill, we have to think at two different levels at once. We have to be able to see the physical movements but see them as a touchdown, to see the piece of paper but to see it as a dollar bill, to see the man but to see him as a leader or as president of the United States. Now this looks like it is a standard form of *seeing as*, of the sort discussed by Wittgenstein, and of a kind that is common in Gestalt psychology; but in fact it differs sharply from them. It is not at all like the ambiguous duck/rabbit figure that can be seen either as a duck or as a rabbit. It is different because we have to think up a level. We have to think from the brute level up to the institutional level, and the capacity to think at different levels enters into the actual cognitive processes of our perception. I literally see a twenty-dollar bill; I do not just see paper. I literally see a touchdown; I do not just see a man carrying a ball across a line. But the cognitive capacity to see these things requires a linguistic or symbolic capacity. To put it very crudely: no language, no status functions. No status functions, no institutional deontology.

Let us explore these ideas by going through some of the steps in which language is involved in the constitution of institutional reality.

We have the capacity to count things as having a certain status, and in virtue of the collective acceptance of that status, they can perform functions that they could not perform

without that collective acceptance. The form of the collective acceptance has to be in the broadest sense linguistic or symbolic, because there is nothing else there to mark the level of status function. There is nothing to the line and the man and the ball that counts as a touchdown, except insofar as we are prepared to count the man with the ball crossing the line as the scoring of a touchdown. We might put these points in the most general form by saying that language performs at least the following four functions in the constitution of institutional facts.

First, the fact can only exist insofar as it is represented as existing, and the form of those representations is in the broadest sense linguistic. I have to say “in the broadest sense,” because I do not mean to imply that full-blown natural languages with relative clauses, iterated modal operators, and quantificational scope ambiguities are essential to the constitution of institutional reality. I do not believe they are. Rather, I believe that unless an animal can symbolize something as having a status, which it does not have in virtue of its physical structure, then the animal cannot have institutional facts, and that those institutional facts require some form of symbolization – what I am calling language in the broad sense. The symbolization has to carry the deontic powers, because there is nothing in the sheer physical facts that carries the deontology by itself. No language, no deontology.

Secondly, and this is really a consequence of the first point, the forms of the status function in question are almost invariably matters of deontic powers. They are matters of rights, duties, obligations, responsibilities, etc. Now, pre-linguistic animals cannot recognize deontic powers because without having some linguistic means of representation they cannot represent them. Let me state this point with as much precision as I can. Animal groups can have an alpha male and an alpha female, and other members of the group can make appropriate responses to the *alpha male* and the *alpha female*, but this hierarchy is not constituted by a system of rights, duties, obligations, etc. Indeed, the terms alpha male and alpha female are invented by ethologists from a third-person point of view to describe animal behaviour, but the animal does not think, “I have to recognize his authority because he is the alpha male.” What the animals lack is the deontology – the obligations, requirements, duties, etc., that go with the recognition of higher and lower status. For those obligations, requirements, and duties to exist, they have to be represented in some linguistic or symbolic form. Again, when a dog is trained to obey commands, he is just taught to respond automatically to certain specific words or other signals.

(By the way, I frequently make remarks about animal capacities. I do not think we know enough about animal capacities to be completely confident in the attributions we make, especially to the primates. But, and this is the point, if it should turn out that some of the primates are on our side of the divide rather than on the side of the other animals, in the sense that they have deontic powers and deontic relationships, then so much the better for them. In this article, I am not asserting the superiority of our species, rather I am trying to mark a conceptual distinction, and I assume, on the basis of what little I know, that where deontology is concerned we are on one side and other animals are on the other side of the dividing line.)

Third, the deontology has another peculiar feature.

Namely, it can continue to exist after its initial creation, and indeed, even after all the participants involved have stopped thinking about the initial creation. I make a promise today to do something for you next week, and that obligation continues even when we are all sound asleep. Now, that can only be the case if that obligation is represented by some linguistic means. In general, one can say this: human societies require a deontology, and the only way they can have this is by having language. To repeat – no language, no deontology.

Fourth, a crucial function of language is in the recognition of the institution as such. It is not merely particular cases within the institution that this is my property, that that was a football game, but rather, in order that this should be a case of property or that a case of a football game, one has to recognize the institutions of property and football games. Where institutional reality is concerned, the particular instances typically exist as such because they are instances of a general institutional phenomenon. Thus, in order for me to own a particular item of property or to have a particular dollar bill, there has to be a general institution of private property and money. Exceptions to this are cases where an institution is being created *de novo*. But the general institutions, in which the particular instances find their mode of existence, can only exist insofar as they are recognized and that recognition has to be symbolic, linguistic in the most general sense.

JOHN SEARLE

6. Steps toward a general theory of social ontology. We accept [S has power (S does A)]

I want now to discuss some of the further developments in the theory of institutional reality since the publication of *The Construction of Social Reality*. I want to mention two such developments. First, in the original statement of the theory, I pointed out that, in order for status functions to be recognized, there typically have to be some sorts of *status indicators*, because there is nothing in the person or the object itself that will indicate its status, since the status is only there by collective acceptance or recognition. Thus, we have policemen’s uniforms, wedding rings, marriage certificates, drivers’ licenses, and passports, all of which are status indicators. Many societies find that they cannot exist without status indicators, as, for example, the proliferation of identity cards and driver’s licenses will attest. However, Hernando De Soto (2000) pointed out an interesting fact. Sometimes the status indicators, as issued by an official agency (where the agency is itself a higher-level set of status functions), acquire a kind of life of their own. How is this so? He points out that in several underdeveloped countries, many people own land, but because there are no property deeds, because the owners of the property do not have title deeds to the property, they are, in effect, what we would call squatters; they do not have status indicators. This has two consequences of enormous social importance. First, they cannot be taxed by the governing authorities because they are not legally the holders of the property, but, secondly and just as importantly, they cannot use the property as capital. Normally, in order for a society to develop, the owners of property have to be able to go to the bank and get loans against their property in order to use the money to make investments. But in countries

such as, for example, Egypt, it is impossible for the vast amount of private property to be used as collateral for investments because so much of this property is held without the benefit of a property deed. The owners of the property are in effect squatters, in the sense that they do not legally own the property, though they live in a society where their status function is acknowledged and generally recognized, and hence, on my account, continues to exist and generate deontic powers. But the deontic powers stop at the point where the larger society requires some official proof of the status functions. Thus, without official documentation, they lack full deontic powers. Collective recognition is not enough. There has to be official recognition by some agency, itself supported by collective recognition, and there have to be status indicators issued by the official agency.

Barry Smith pointed out a second and equally important development to me. He pointed out that there are some institutions that have what he calls “free-standing *Y* terms,” where you can have a status function, but without any physical object on which the status function is imposed. A fascinating case is corporations. The laws of incorporation in a state such as California enable a status function to be constructed, so to speak, out of thin air. Thus, by a kind of performative declaration, the corporation comes into existence, but there need be no physical object, which is the corporation. The corporation has to have a mailing address, and a list of officers and stockholders and so on, but it does not have to be a physical object. This is a case where following the appropriate procedures counts as the creation of a corporation and where the corporation, once created, continues to exist, but there is no person or physical object which becomes the corporation. New status functions are created among people — as officers of the corporation, stockholders, and so on. There is indeed a corporation as *Y*, but there is no person or physical object *X* that counts as *Y*.

An equally striking example is money. The paradox of my account is that money was my favourite example of the “*X* counts as *Y*” formula, but I was operating on the assumption that currency was somehow or other essential to the existence of money. Further reflection makes it clear to me that it is not. You can easily imagine a society that has money without having any currency at all. Indeed, we seem to be evolving in something like this direction with the use of debit cards. All you need to have money is a system of recorded numerical values whereby each person (or corporation, organization, etc.) has assigned to him or her or it a numerical figure, which shows at any given point the amount of money they have. They can then use this money to buy things by altering their numerical value in favour of the seller, whereby they lower their numerical value, and the seller acquires a higher numerical value. Money is typically redeemable in cash, in the form of currency, but currency is not essential to the existence or functioning of money.

How can such things function if there is no physical object on which the status function is imposed? The answer is that status functions are, in general, matters of deontic power, and, in these cases, the deontic power goes directly to the individuals in question. So my possession of a queen in the game of chess is not a matter of my having my hands on

a physical object, it is rather a matter of my having certain powers of movement within a formal system (and the formal system is “the board,” though it need not be a physical board) relative to other pieces. Similarly, my having a thousand dollars is not a matter of my having a wad of bills in my hand, but my having certain deontic powers. I now have the right, i.e. the power, to buy things, which I would not have if I did not have the money. In such cases, the real bearer of the deontology is the participant in the economic transactions and the player in the game. The physical objects, such as chess pieces and dollar bills, are just markers for the amount of deontic power that the players have.

In the early part of *The Construction of Social Reality* I said that the basic form of the institutional fact was *X counts as Y in C*, and that this was a form of the constitutive rule that enables us to create institutional facts. But my later formulation in the book gives us a much more general account. I said that the basic power creation operator in society is *We accept [S has power (S does A)]*; and that we could think of the various forms of power as essentially Boolean operations on this basic structure, so, for example, to have an obligation is to have a negative power. What then, exactly, is the relationship between the two formulae, *X counts as Y in C*, and *We accept [S has power (S does A)]*? The answer is that, of course, we do not just accept that somebody has power, but we accept that they have power in virtue of their institutional status. For example, satisfying certain conditions makes someone president of the United States. This is an example of the *X counts as Y in C* formula. But, once we accept that someone is president of the United States, then we accept that he has the power to do certain things. He has the positive power to command the armed forces, and he has the negative power, i.e. the obligation, to deliver a state of the union address. He has the *right* to command the armed forces, and he has the *duty* to deliver the address. In this case we accept that *S* has power (*S* does *A*) because *S* = *X*, and we have already accepted that *X* counts as *Y*, and the *Y* status function carries with it the acknowledged deontic powers.

Continuing with the example of the corporation, we can say that so and so counts as the president of the corporation, and such and such people count as the stockholders. This is an example of the *X counts as Y in C* formulation, but, of course, the whole point of doing that is to give them powers, duties, rights, responsibilities, etc. They then instantiate the *We accept [S has power (S does A)]* formula. But to repeat a point made earlier, the corporation itself is not identical with any physical object or any person or set of persons. The corporation is, so to speak, created out of nothing. The president is president of the corporation, but he is not identical with the corporation. The reasons for doing this are famous. By creating a so-called “fictitious person” we can create an entity that is capable of entering into contractual relationships and capable of buying and selling, making a profit, and incurring debts, for which it is liable. But the officers and stockholders are not personally liable for the debts of the corporation. This is an important breakthrough in human thought. So, what amounts to the corporation when we set it up? It is not that there is an *X* that counts as the corporation, but, rather, that there is a group of people involved in legal relationships, thus so and

so counts as the president of the corporation, so and so counts as a stockholder in the corporation, etc., but there is nothing that need count as the corporation itself, because one of the points of setting up the corporation was to create a set of power relationships without having to have the accompanying liabilities that typically go with those power relationships when they are assigned to actual human individuals.

I regard the invention of the limited liability corporation, like the invention of double-entry bookkeeping, universities, museums, and money, as one of the truly great advances in human civilization. But the greatest advance of all is the invention of status functions, of which these are but instances. It is not at all necessary that there should exist status functions. Non-human animals do not appear to have them. But without them, human civilization, as we think of it, would be impossible.

7. Different kinds of “institutions”

I have not been attempting to analyze the ordinary use of the word “institution. I do not much care if my account of institutional reality and institutional facts matches that ordinary usage. I am much more interested in getting at the underlying glue that holds human societies together. But let us consider some other sorts of things that might be thought of as institutions.

I have said that the fact that I am an American citizen is an institutional fact, but how about the fact that today is September 24, 2004? Is that an institutional fact? What does the question ask? At least this much. Does identifying something as September 24, 2004 collectively assign a status function that carries with it a deontology? So construed the answer is no. In my culture there is no deontology carried by the fact that today is September 24. In that respect, “September 24, 2004” differs from “Christmas Day,” “Thanksgiving,” or, in France, “14 July.” Each of these carries a deontology. If it is Christmas Day, for example, I am *entitled* to a day off, and collective intentionality in my community supports me in this entitlement. Since every day is some Saint’s Day, there is presumably a subgroup for which September 24 is an important Saint’s Day that carries an institutional deontology, but I am not in that subgroup.

I think there is a sense of the word “institution” in which the Christian calendar or the Mayan calendar are a kind of institution (both of them were, after all, *instituted*), but it is not the kind of institution that I am attempting to analyze. A calendar is rather a verbal system for naming units of time – days, months, and years – and indicating their relationships. Similarly with other verbal systems. Different societies have different colour vocabularies, but that does not make the fact that the cloth in front me is magenta into an institutional fact. Similar remarks could be made about systems of weights and measures. The fact that I weigh one hundred and sixty pounds is the same fact as the fact that I weigh seventy-two kilos, even though this same fact can be stated using different systems of measuring weights.

More interesting to me are those cases where the facts in question are on the margin of being institutional. I think that the fact that someone is my friend is an institutional fact because friendship carries *collectively recognized obligations*,

rights, and responsibilities. But how about the fact that someone is a drunk, a nerd, an intellectual, or an underachiever? Are these institutional concepts and are the corresponding terms institutional facts? Not as I am using these expressions, because there is no collectively recognized deontology that goes with these. Of course, if the law or custom establishes criteria under which somebody is a recognized drunk and imposes penalties as well as entitlements for this status, then being a drunk becomes a status function. *X* counts as *Y*. Again, I might personally feel that, as an intellectual, I have certain sorts of obligations, but this is not yet an institutional phenomenon unless there is some collective recognition of my status and of these obligations. When I pointed out in a lecture that being a nerd was not a status function, one of my students told me that in his high school it definitely was, because as the class nerd he was expected to help other students with their homework. He was under certain sorts of collectively recognized obligations.

Another sort of “institution” that I am not attempting to describe are massive forms of human practices around certain subject matters that do not *as such* carry a deontology, even though there are lots of deontologies within the practices. So, for example, there are series of practices that go with what we call “science” or “religion” or “education.” Does that make science, religion, and education into institutions? Well, we are using institution as a technical term anyway, and it is open to us if we want to call these institutions, but I think it is very important that we not confuse science, education, and religion with such things as money, property, government, and marriage. Within such gross human practices as science, religion, and education there are, indeed, institutions and plenty of institutional facts. Thus, for example, the National Science Foundation is an institution, as is the University of California or the Roman Catholic Church. The fact that Jones is a scientist, Smith a professor, and Brown a priest are again all institutional facts. Why then are not science, religion, and education institutions? To ask of any word *W*, “Does *W* name an institution?” is to ask at least the following:

1. Is *W* defined by a set of constitutive rules?
2. Do those rules determine status functions, which are, in fact collectively recognized and accepted?
3. Are those status functions only performable in virtue of the collective recognition and acceptance, and not in virtue of the observer-independent features of the situation alone?
4. Do the status functions carry recognized and accepted deontic powers?

So construed, “The National Science Foundation” names an institution; “Science” does not. The rules of scientific method, if there are such, are regulative and not constitutive. They are designed to maximize the probability of discovering the truth, not to create status functions with deontic powers. All of that is consistent with the fact that in my subculture to say that someone is a “scientist” is to state an institutional fact, because it assigns a *Y* status, on the basis of meeting certain *X* criteria, that carries certain rights and responsibilities, a more or less specific deontology.

As I said before, I do not much care whether or not we want to use the word “institution” for both those practices whose

names specify an institutional deontology and those which do not, but it is crucial to emphasize the important underlying idea: we need to mark those facts that carry a deontology because they are the glue that holds society together.

8. Some possible misunderstandings

Each academic discipline has its own style, set of background practices, and habits. We inculcate these into our graduate students, and they are then passed on, for the most part unconsciously, from generation to generation. There are certain special features of the cognitive style of economics as a discipline that I want to call attention to. I think these are probably, in general, very powerful intellectual resources, but they can also impede understanding when we are involved in the sort of interdisciplinary exercise in which I am currently engaged.

Models and theories

Economists typically believe in models. In my experience in dealing with economists, they often talk about ‘your model’ as if one were not trying to give a factually accurate theory about the real world but to construct a model. Indeed, of course, in classical economic theory one typically does construct models. One makes a set of assumptions about entrepreneurs trying to maximize profits and consumers trying to maximize utility, for example, and then one deduces certain conclusions. To the extent that the assumptions are true, the conclusions will be substantiated. To the extent that the assumptions are only partly true, or allow for all kinds of exceptions and interferences from outside the assumptions, then the applicability of the model to the real world will be to that extent limited. Economists in general are not worried by these limitations, because they think that as long as the model has important predictive powers, we need not worry about whether or not it is literally true in its details.

This methodological approach can be useful for lots of purposes, but it has impeded understanding of my own views. I am not trying to construct a model; I am trying to advance a theory that states an important set of facts about how society actually works. Just as when I say I have two thumbs, that statement is not a “model” of my anatomy but a literal statement of fact. So, when I say institutions generate status functions, this is not a model, but, if I am right, it is a true statement of fact. It is not a case of constructing a model that ignores all sorts of complicating details.

Thought experiments

Economists, in my experience, typically confuse thought experiments with empirical hypotheses. Here is an example that has come up over and over. I point out that there are desire-independent reasons for action. A classic case of this is promising; when I make a promise to do something, I have a reason for doing it, which is independent of my desires. When I point this out, economists often say, “Yes, but you have all sorts of prudential reasons why you would keep your promise; if you did not, people would not trust you, etc.” These are familiar arguments in philosophy, but they miss the point. One way to see that they miss the point is to construct

a thought experiment. Subtract the prudential reasons, and ask yourself whether I still have a reason for keeping the promise. The answer is not an empirical hypothesis about how I would behave in a particular situation, rather it is a thought experiment designed to show the conceptual distinction between my prudential reasons for acting and the desire-independent obligation that I recognize when I recognize something as a promise that I have made. The point is that I am not making an empirical prediction about how I would actually behave under certain circumstances; rather I am giving a conceptual analysis where the concept of a prudential reason is a different concept from the concept of a desire-independent reason. The concept of promising, by its very definition, contains the concept of a desire-independent reason. To recognize something as a valid promise is to recognize it as creating an obligation, and such obligations are desire-independent reasons for acting.

Methodological individualism

It seems to me that there is a certain amount of confusion surrounding the notion of “methodological individualism.” Without going into too many details, I want to state the precise sense in which the views advocated in this article are consistent with methodological individualism. The sense in which my views are methodological individualist is that all observer-independent mental reality must exist in the minds of individual human beings. There is no such thing as a group mind, or an “Oversoul,” or a “Hegelian Absolute” of which our particular minds are but fragments. Another way to put this point, in light of the distinctions made in this article, is to say that all observer independent intentionality is in the minds of individual human beings. I want this sense of “methodological individualism” to seem quite uncontroversial. It is perfectly consistent with the idea that there are predicates true of social collectives which are not in any obvious way true of individuals. So, for example, if I say that the United States government has a huge annual deficit, that statement has implications about the behaviour of individuals, but it is not the individuals that have the “huge annual deficit.” A second issue that this definition of methodological individualism enables me to sidestep is that concerning “externalism” in the philosophy of mind. I do, in fact, think that mental states are entirely in the head, but many contemporary philosophers think that the contents of mental states are not in the head but include, for example, causal relations to the real world and to the surrounding society. I do not think these views are true, but I do not need to refute them for the purpose of this investigation. I simply insist that all mental reality is in the minds of individuals. This is consistent with the theory that says mental contents and hence minds are not in heads, although I happen to think that theory is false.

9. Conclusion

I have now offered at least preliminary answers to the questions posed at the beginning of this article. At the risk of repetition I will state them:

What is an institution? An institution is any collectively accepted system of rules (procedures, practices) that enable us to create institutional facts. These rules typically have the

form of *X counts as Y in C*, where an object, person, or state of affairs *X* is assigned a special status, the *Y* status, such that the new status enables the person or object to perform functions that it could not perform solely in virtue of its physical structure, but requires as a necessary condition the assignment of the status. The creation of an institutional fact is, thus, the collective assignment of a status function. The typical point of the creation of institutional facts by assigning status functions is to create deontic powers. So typically when we assign a status function *Y* to some object or person *X* we have created a situation in which we accept that a person *S* who stands in the appropriate relation to *X* is such that [*S has power (S does A)*]. The whole analysis then gives us a systematic set of relationships between collective intentionality, the assignment of function, the assignment of status functions, constitutive rules, institutional facts, and deontic powers.

The theory of institutions in this article is very much work in progress, as was the earlier work on which it is based. I see the theory of institutions as still in its childhood. (Maybe not in its infancy any more, but still its childhood.) Two methodological lessons for anyone wishing to pursue it further: First, because the institutional ontology is subjective, it must always be examined from the first person point of view. Institutional facts only exist from the point of view of the participants and for that reason no external functionalist or behaviourist analysis will be adequate to account for them. You have to be able to think yourself into the institution to understand it. Second, a consequence of this analysis is that society has a logical structure. Other parts of nature – the planetary system, mitosis, and the replication of DNA, for example – do not have logical structures. Theories about such parts of nature have logical structures but not the nature itself. But society consists in part of representations and those representations have logical structures. Any adequate theory about such phenomena must contain a logical analysis of their structures. ◉

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This article grew out of my participation in a conference on Institutional Economics at the University of Hertfordshire, in 2004. I am grateful to the participants for helpful comments, and I especially want to thank Geoffrey Hodgson and Tony Lawson. I also want to thank two anonymous reviewers for JOIE and most of all, I thank my wife Dagmar Searle for her help.

JOHN
SEARLE

PRODUCING AND ITS BYPRODUCTS (ART & COMMERCE)

PRODUCING AND ITS BYPRODUCTS

by Marisa Jahn

This section of the book includes artists' practices that involve working in and with industries; the case studies highlighted are artists who have approached institutions themselves, and whose work retains a high degree of critical autonomy from their institutional hosts.

At times, the capacity of an embedded practice to adapt to its institutional host (or system) is driven by socio-economic or other structural determinants. For example, the funding structure of Canada's cultural sector in the early 1970s changed because of an extension to fields outside traditional art, as well as the integration of communication technologies previously used exclusively by business sectors. With the intent of reducing unemployment, the Canadian Department of Manpower and Immigration launched two programs in 1971 — Young Canada Works and Local Initiatives (LIP/PIL) — that sought to create jobs within artist-run centres. To encourage the diversification of revenue streams, one requirement of LIP/PIL was to involve non-art sectors in their professional activities. This mandate was taken up by artists' groups, many which adopted communication and informatic technology to broadcast their message to new audiences. In his exhibition and publication series entitled Documentary Protocols that charts the rise of artists working as cultural organizations, Vincent Bonin points to the influence of the LIP/PIL initiative on the formation of North American art collectives such as Intermedia Society, Image Bank, Art Official/General Idea/FILE Magazine, Vehicle, and the Montreal and Toronto chapters of Experiments in Art & Technology, and

N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. For these groups, the support from LIP/PIL allowed them to integrate new tools that significantly shaped their aesthetic practices — Sony's Portapak (a portable camera and video recorder system commercially released in 1967), printing technology, and transmission devices such as the Telex machine. These tools gave them a means to speak the language of their institutional surrounds.

Incorporated in 1966, by Ingrid Baxter and IAIN BAXTER& (formerly known as Iain Baxter), N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. in its early years operated as a business that offered services ranging from "visual sensitivity" consultations to the integration of the informatic technology. Through their rapport with the Canadian Board of Trade and their endorsement by Ronald Basford, Canada's then Minister of Corporate Affairs, NETCO worked to meet the needs of varied companies, responding in turn with the proliferation of "departments" entitled "Thing," "Research," "Movie," "Project," "ACT & ART," "Service," "COP," "Printing," "Photography," "Communications," and "Consulting."¹ To recruit they set up booths in trade fairs of diverse fields. The Baxters experimental approach is emblemized in their use of the Telex, a new form of technology at the time that shocked the cultural sphere and ignited artistic possibilities. In an interview with Grant Arnold published in this book, Ingrid Baxter describes the Telex machine as a means to transgress the traditional barriers of the art world: "We could send images and penetrate into companies at night, and they would receive it in the morning." Writing about NETCO's participation in the Data Processing Management Association (DPMA) conferences in Vancouver and Seattle, art historian and critic Adam Lauder points out that NETCO's booth was seen by over

twenty thousand conference-goers – an exposure that would have exceeded the possibilities of any existing art venue. The self-same entrepreneurial and genre-bending sensibility informed the Baxters' subsequent development of enterprises such as a photo lab and a restaurant.

A shared interest in transcending disciplinary divides drove the formation of Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), founded in New York City in 1966 by Billy Klüver, Fred Waldhauer, Robert Rauschenberg, and Robert Whitman. Active until the 1980s with Klüver at its forefront, E.A.T.'s mission was to fuse art, science, and industry around different projects. For Klüver, experimentation was both a means and an end for an artist's collaboration with other disciplines:

Today, the artist moves into working with materials where unfamiliarity with the material and its physical limitations become an important element of his work. The old assumption that the artist must know his material before he acts no longer has the same meaning. The contemporary artist is developing an attitude toward his new materials similar to that of the experimental scientist. Experimentation and process become an integral part of the artist's work.²

To meet the demands of the contemporary artist, E.A.T. actively recruited members from major research institutions (Bell, MIT, National Standards, etc.), and through a booth set up at the annual engineering trade fair – the IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers). E.A.T., then, was made possible through the training and technical resources developed in corporate research laboratories. Klüver went so far as to suggest that experimentation could not exist otherwise. As he suggested in a

talk at the Museum of Modern Art in 1968, "Thus it is essential for the artist to have permanent and organic access not only to existing technical facilities and materials, but also to facilities for experimentation. Only industry can give the artist what he wants. It would be, at this point, not only wrong but sheer indulgence to think in terms of setting up separate laboratories and facilities for artists to work in."³

With impressive rigour and scope, E.A.T.'s varied projects demonstrated a reliance between the artistic and corporate sectors. The Technical Services Program, first begun in 1971 as a telephone hotline, matched about six thousand artists with engineers and helped the formation of approximately five hundred artworks. Second, varied programs (lectures, projects) served to acquaint the public, spur innovation, and explore the expressive capacity of emergent technologies such as computer-generated images and sounds, video, synthetic materials, lasers, holography, and robotics. Michelle Kuo's essay in this book examines 9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering, an event that took place at the 69th Regiment Armory in New York City from October 13–23, 1966, as a formative moment in E.A.T. as an organization. As Kuo investigates, E.A.T. arose from the methodological questions posed in the production 9 Evenings – how to integrate disparate bodies of knowledge through "interfaces," and how to embrace, anticipate, and incorporate risk. For E.A.T., then, technological innovation, and the need for artists/engineers to adapt to the constraints of other disciplines spurred a self-reflexive epistemological inquiry.

The self-same need to discover models of working with non-art sectors was heralded as one of the chief outcomes of Artist Placement Group (APG, now known

as O+I or Organization and Imagination), founded by Barbara Steveni and John Latham in 1966, and active until 1991. The scope of APG's placements is impressive, claiming dozens of successful placements in corporations such as British Airways, ICI Fibers Ltd., the Milton Keynes Development Corporation, Brunei University, the National Coal Board, and the Intensive Care Unit of Clare Hall Hospital.⁴ Barbara Steveni, founder of APG/O+I, describes this gradual discovery of "optimal" associations between art and industry in an interview with Josephine Berry Slater and Pauline van Mourik Broekman:

It was only by doing the industrial placements that we [APG] began to find out how art activity, or how as artists, an optimum association might be developed which complied with making an artwork in these contexts – so that both sides were getting something out of it.

Steveni also mentions the challenges and discoveries of work-placements.

So after the industrial placements, which were seen as kind of terrible by the majority of the art world, for tangling with this "dirt" so to speak – I was personally, and artists that we worked with, able to find out just what sort of exchange and engagement could be had in these situations. What we discovered was that we have to take great care to preserve the integrity of art's motivation vis-à-vis the commercial and political interests around.

By "preserv[ing] the integrity of art's motivation," Steveni refers to APG/O+I's insistence that an artist's critical position is at times uncoincident with the immediate goals of the organization, but that this difference should be valorized. As APG/O+I declare in their manifesto written in

1980, "...The status of the artist within organisations is independent, bound by the invitation, rather than by any instruction from authority within the organisation, and to the long-term objectives of the whole of society." In his essay on APG included in this book, Peter Eleey notes, "This dematerialization, this emphatic refusal to give form or definition to the placement itself, seemed designed expressly to critique the notion of an object- and product-based society – and, in that way, may have gone further than any other contemporaneous Conceptual practices, most of which were content to take aim simply at the art market and the museum." But this rigour and commitment was not without its costs: "APG did so sometimes at significant cost, vanishing into its rhetoric and practice, lost in what looked to anyone else like straightforward social service activities, albeit practised by artists. Certain of its activities, resulting only in government reports and correspondence, disappeared into the bureaucracy." Claire Bishop, interviewed about APG, suggests that the "bureaucratic flavour" of APG's highly informational installations turned away many art critics. Others such as Stephen Wright have argued that it is this uncompromisingly conceptual approach and the disregard for formalist concerns that makes APG's work so refreshingly radical. Further, APG's insistence that "context is half the work" characterizes what Grant Kester describes as the hallmark of an "aesthetics of listening" – a paradigm that regards listening and understanding as a constitutive act, counterposed, in fact, to the Western emphasis on declaration and assertion.⁵

The self-same threat of indiscernability or dissolution, counterbalanced by a belief in the liberatory opportunities afforded

from working “on the outside,” pervades each project or practice highlighted in this book. In 2000 – in a vein similar to APG’s work-placements – Kent Hansen founded “democratic innovation,” which strives to develop participatory frameworks, oftentimes with the workers of a particular institution. Lamenting the insular tendencies of market-driven art worlds and the social importance of finding new models of operating, Hansen posits that “the risk of doing ‘non-art world stuff’ is, of course, exclusion from the art world... However, working ‘outside’ is perhaps the only way to begin to direct ‘art’ at a future.”⁶ At once idealistic, utopian, and pragmatic, these themes are charted in the contribution to this volume by Felicity Tayler, an artist, writer, and cultural organizer whose practice incorporates her talents honed as an information professional. In her account of the lineages of artists working in industries, Tayler charts the central tenets of artists’ work-placements from the 1960s onward.

Paul Ardenne’s essay in this section complicates a straightforward and earnest rationale typically espoused by art work-placements. For one, Ardenne pokes holes in the assumption that it is possible for an artist to operate as a neutral negotiator and suggests that he/she has a personal stake in occupying such a position. Despite the fact that the artist-as-negotiator may share the altruistic objective of achieving social cohesion, there are other personal motivations at stake such as the desire to secure a place of social relevancy in what has become as an increasingly networked culture.

While Ardenne’s essay comes across as highly skeptical of the humanist rhetoric espoused by “economics art,” those included in the section almost always

foreground the problematics of assuming as such. A particularly playful riposte to Ardenne’s concerns is Tomas Jonsson’s “Harakapood” project, which involves the creation of a temporary store in a small town in rural Estonia. The “store” is composed of goods that are legitimately purchased from the stores he mimics, sold to passersby at the same price. The revenue earned from the items sold was then used to subsequently buy other goods. Operating without any fiscal gain, Jonsson’s economically superfluous position points towards commercial transactions as a means of social exchange. The title of Jonsson’s shop, “Harakapood” (which in English refers to the magpie, a bird that steals the nests of others to make their own), foregrounds his outsider status, and the agonistic dynamic emblematic in almost all embedded practices. Michel Serres describes the strategy of the parasite that, like Jonsson, positions him/herself in this position as the exchanger of goods, and as such, one who profits:

He sets the prices or discusses it. It is essential that he has the isolated spot – unique, at the intersection, the knot, the neck, of the two parts of the hourglass. The one who holds this position produces, with himself at the origin, divisions and dichotomies... The translator places himself in the center or at the heart of the hourglass, or of any hourglass, as does the shopkeeper, as does Maxwell’s demon. They transform the flows that pass through the exchange. They ease passage, control it, and relate to the one-to-one... The parasite has placed itself in the most profitable positions, at the intersection of relations. The elementary link of his individual activity was to relate to a relation; its performances are far better in spots where several relations cross or meet... The one who succeeds in the relation of many-

one, forms it and makes it work, is the politician and has found power. As is often said, he has the power of decision: of course, since he is at the crossings, the intercuttings: here, the intersection.⁷

For Serres, the parasite charges or imprints the goods or message. He/she does not occupy a place of neutrality, but is, in fact, a catalyst towards a system and its particular inflections. "The message, passing through his hands in the location of the exchanger, is the changer. It arrives neither pure nor unvarying nor stable... What is true is that the message is burdened and arrives thus burdened. To speak correctly, it is parasited."⁸ In other words, the parasited message looks towards the recipient/audience for complicity or participation.

A Constructed World (ACW) is a collaborative group formed by Jacqueline Riva and Geoff Lowe whose practice includes facilitating art-based workshops with corporations. In an interview with Joseph del Peso about their project that involved a group of employees from the Banque Nationale de Paris (BNP) in the summer of 2009 who recreated the riots of the infamous Altamont rock concert of 1969. When asked to describe their method of engagement, ACW remarked, "We believe that the wider public does understand contemporary art perfectly well but have their own – often appropriate – reasons for pretending and saying they don't. We want to include what people know in the artworks even if they're not aware they know anything or are being disingenuous." In other words, it's not that the general public doesn't know about artwork, it's that they refuse showing their cards, pretending not to know.

A similarly humourous sensibility that belies a complex understanding permeates

the work of Au Travail / At Work, a collective founded in Montreal in 2004. In this book, artists Gina Badger and Adam Bobbette interview the collective's founder (alias "Bob the Builder"), who acknowledges that the predominance of artists in North America operate at a net loss and have to keep a day job to pay the bills. Given this, questions "Bob," why not steal back one's time from those who profit from it? Why not situate one's own – and here he would say, "shitty" – day job as a site for artistic work-placement? Au Travail / At Work thus consists of documentation by "Bob" and others of artwork created in quotidian workplaces – photos of anonymous workers bathing in the oil vat at a fast food chain, anecdotes about a plastic surgeon who fuels his Mercedes-Benz on the liposuctioned fat of his clients, casually snapped photos of Styrofoam coffee cup sculptures, documentation by an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher who, instead of giving examples based on useless hypothetical scenarios, instead pragmatically instructs his/her participants on how to file letters of complaint, etc. Au Travail / At Work's theory on self-determination (libre-arbitre, in French) favours a symptomatic (rather than structural) response to a systemic problem. While this viewpoint might appear to espouse a position of political resignation, the project of Au Travail / At Work as a whole raises important questions about self-examination, and warns against the pitfalls of exoticizing the workplace or industrial other. So too, Au Travail / At Work's modus operandi of creating artwork from the margin of existing workplaces lends valence to the notion of the "byproduct," or artwork produced from within and as a result of existing systems.

CONTEXT IS HALF THE WORK

by Peter Eleey

In 1966, the Artist Placement Group (APG) was founded to integrate artists into businesses and corporations around Britain. Did the strategy bear fruit?

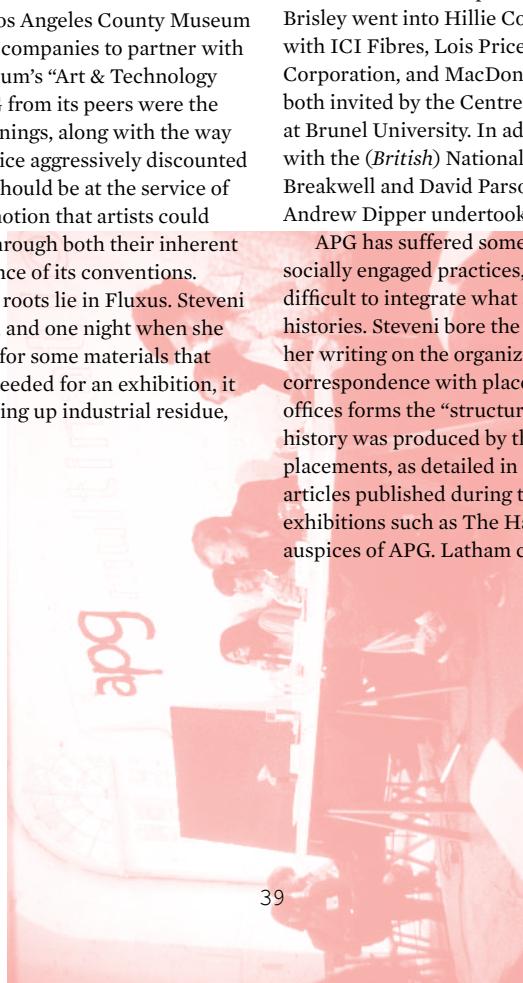
When the artist couple Barbara Steveni and John Latham founded the Artist Placement Group in London, UK, in 1966, to arrange invitations for artists to take up residencies at various companies throughout Britain, they were among a number of practitioners during the 1960s who expanded on the “art & technology” collectives of the previous decade, seeing potential for new kinds of collaborative relationships between art and industry. That same year, two similar groups emerged in New York and Los Angeles: the Bell Labs scientist Billy Klüver joined with Robert Rauschenberg to create Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.) – Klüver described it as a “service organization” that brought science to the aid of artists – and curator Maurice Tuchman at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art began recruiting Californian companies to partner with artists in the formation of the museum’s “Art & Technology Program.” What distinguished APG from its peers were the group’s heavily theorized underpinnings, along with the way in which its philosophies and practice aggressively discounted the idea that science and industry should be at the service of artists. Instead, APG favoured the notion that artists could have a positive effect on industry through both their inherent creativity, and their relative ignorance of its conventions.

Perhaps not surprisingly, APG’s roots lie in Fluxus. Steveni herself was active in Fluxus circles, and one night when she was out scouring London factories for some materials that Daniel Spoerri and Robert Filliou needed for an exhibition, it occurred to her that instead of picking up industrial residue,

artists ought to be inside the factories working within the systems of production. Latham, who was travelling, returned to find his wife’s radical approach to the “applied arts” a perfect vehicle for many of his theoretical interests. Friends and artists – Maurice Agis, Stuart Brisley, Barry Flanagan, David Hall, Ian MacDonald-Munro, Anna Ridley, and Jeffrey Shaw – soon joined Steveni and Latham, and APG was born.

In 1968, the group set about organizing its first event, the “Industrial Negative” Symposium in London, which included Klüver and E.A.T. Steveni convinced the Arts Council* to provide some funding, and to make The Hayward Gallery available for an exhibition titled, “Art & Economics,” to be held in 1971, which would showcase the group’s activities up to that point in a corporately structured environment. With The Hayward show in the works, Steveni arranged the first placement in 1969 – Garth Evans at the British Steel Corporation – inaugurating a very productive two years for the organization. Evans’ placement was followed by that of Hall’s at British European Airways and Scottish Television. Brisley went into Hillie Co. Ltd., Leonard Hessing worked with ICI Fibres, Lois Price joined Milton Keynes Development Corporation, and MacDonald-Munro and Marie Yates were both invited by the Centre for the Study of Human Learning at Brunel University. In addition, Latham took up placements with the (British) National Coal Board and Proteus Bygging. Ian Breakwell and David Parsons were placed with British Rail, and Andrew Dipper undertook a residency with Esso Petroleum.

APG has suffered somewhat in historical accounts of socially engaged practices, in part, perhaps because it is difficult to integrate what are essentially its three parallel histories. Steveni bore the management responsibilities; her writing on the organization’s structure, and her correspondence with placement companies and government offices forms the “structural” history of APG. The “operational” history was produced by the artists who conducted the placements, as detailed in a number of *Studio International* articles published during the group’s first decade, and in exhibitions such as The Hayward show, organized under the auspices of APG. Latham constructed APG’s “theoretical”



APG ARTISTS AT DOCUMENTA 6, KASSEL, GERMANY. APG APPROACH TO GOVERNMENT, 1977, BY INVITATION OF JOSEPH BEUYS (IN THE HONEYPUFF). COURTESY JOHN LATHAM FOUNDATION & BARBARA STEVENI.

narrative, and while the verbose density of his language at times provides a philosophical framework for the group's ambitions, its relationship to the actual work of the organization was also a source of conflict among its members and their peers. Gustav Metzger, for example, who participated with Latham and Steveni in the "Destruction in Art" Symposium in 1966, would come to critique APG in 1972, for both what he called its "prosaic" history – essentially Steveni's structural formulations, which he found to be unremarkable and crude – and the preposterousness of its "sublime" history, laid out by Latham, which he considered a threat to clarity of thought, if not to the positive relationship between art and technology in general.

The core of Latham's grander cosmology was an approach he called the "event structure," which was predicated on a long horizon ("time-base") for measuring the effect of ideas and actions. Central to the "event structure" was Latham's notion of the "least-event," an idea borrowed from scientist friends, which he saw as a kind of zero moment from which things flowed forward into the present and beyond. (He found a visual representation of the "least-event" in a can of spray paint, whose single burst of dots onto a white sheet of paper perfectly symbolized his sense of an action that ricocheted forward out into the world from a single point of origin.) Latham located art's "least-event" as taking place in 1951, when Robert Rauschenberg famously displayed his white canvases as an artwork to be supplemented by the shadows of its viewers. From that blank slate, which annexed the ambience of its surroundings, we can spray forward through John Cage's famous silent performance 4'33" (1952), and the numerous Fluxus events that followed, arriving at APG's desire to cross the threshold of art entirely to reach the mechanics of society. Instead of pulling the audience and environment into the artwork, APG located the work out in the world, a *tabula rasa* on which society's approval of artists (or lack thereof) would register.

Rauschenberg's proposition is summarized in APG's central tenet, which the group outlined in a show at the Kunsthalle Dusseldorf in 1970, that "context is half the work." With this in mind APG sought to reframe the traditional patronage relationship, aiming to integrate artists into a participatory role in business matters and decision-making at their host organizations. As Latham and Steveni described it retrospectively in 1990, "the status of artists within organizations must necessarily be in line with other professional persons, engaged within the organization." Yet, APG insisted on the independence of its artists, "bound by invitation rather than by instructions from authority within the organizations, department, [or] company." These were

invitations that Steveni laboured to achieve despite, and expressly because of, the artists' lack of pertinent specialized experience or knowledge – an irony that made her efforts seem at times laughably naive to those she approached. An IBM official famously responded: "If you [APG] are doing what I think you are doing, I wouldn't advise my company to have anything to do with you. And if you aren't, you're not worth taking into account anyway."

The true radicalism of APG may lie in these paradoxes and contradictions at the heart of the group's model, which often seemed to arise from the tension between the structural and theoretical sides of the organization. Latham developed a definition of the artist as an "incidental person" – seemingly focusing on the small scale of an artist's action within the loaded system of industry and what he saw as its enormous butterfly effect-like possibilities over time – whereas one gets the sense that Steveni's pitch to placement hosts necessarily described a modest, non-disruptive presence for the artist. Of course – and this is where the tension comes in – APG's very argument for the value of the artist's presence in the company was rooted in a deliberately outsized view of the artist's role in society.

This conflict played out across various placements. George Levantis, who in 1974 was placed aboard three different shipping vessels belonging to Ocean Trading and Transport Ltd, had a sculpture tossed overboard because it didn't fit with what his hosts expected of him: namely, to relieve boredom among the crew by teaching them watercolour painting. While Levantis found the open brief that APG demanded inspirational, remarking that, "the undefined nature of my position proved to be the source of my ideas," his shipmates had other ideas. The hosts, after all, paid stipends to the artists, and sometimes struggled to understand their resistance to a service relationship. As an Ocean Trading official put it: "If we had wanted some kind of sociologist aboard, I'd have hired a sociologist."

Even the Arts Council, which seemed an early ally, found cause to complain. Following The Hayward exhibition in 1971 – for which the group lived in the gallery, and presented conversations between artists and industrial executives in a "boardroom" format, alongside films, photographs, reports, and other results of the placements – the Arts Council revoked APG's funding, alleging that the group was "more concerned with social engineering than with straight art." Not surprisingly, this rejection galvanized Steveni to redirect APG's activities towards government departments. While commercial residencies continued throughout the 1970s, APG successfully placed a number of artists within government offices, including a stint for Breakwell at the Department of Health and Social Security, who produced a number of controversial films while in residence at a mental hospital. After Joseph Beuys invited Latham to discuss government placements at *documenta 6* in 1977, APG increasingly established connections abroad, and effected a number of placements in Europe during the 1980s.

By 1989, with activity winding down, Steveni refocused APG into a research body she called “Organization and Imagination” (O+I), shifting its attention more to advocacy and policy than actual placements. Nevertheless, the Utopian vision of what she called “repositioning art in the decision-making processes of society” remained and continues in force.

The group described their artists as “committed to the making of no product, work or idea” on behalf of the company (unless volunteered), and it is perhaps most interesting to consider APG’s activities within the period’s broader movement away from the art object – not towards a kind of performance but as a socially applied form of “conceptual” dematerialization. Robert Barry’s radio-wave transmitters emphasized invisible energy; Latham described his “event structure” approach as an involvement with “the human resources and the energies utilized within them.” James Lee Byars spoke of collecting moments of people’s attention into a museum; APG focused on attention as a kind of economy. Latham advocated that society should consider the number of people affected by an idea, the period of time the idea is influential, and the degree of attention and awareness it achieves. Not a new formulation, per se, but introduced in a new context.

The approach of APG makes evident artists’ obsession during the 1960s and 1970s to engage with the new “systems” of social science, culture, and industry. But, it was among the first to model in its practice the shift towards a service-based economy that was occurring in society at large, as well as the rise of intellectual property as a product. Latham mirrored other artists of his moment, such as Stephen Willats, in over-theorizing and systematizing often self-evident information into sublime new forms that seemed somehow different – if only because they were presented as art.

In that sense, context could become the entire work. This dematerialization, this emphatic refusal to give form or definition to the placement itself, seemed designed expressly to critique the notion of an object – and product-based society – and in that way may have gone further than any other contemporaneous conceptual practices, most of which were content to take aim simply at the art market and the museum. APG did so sometimes at significant cost, vanishing into its rhetoric and practice, lost in what looked to anyone else like straightforward social service activities, albeit practised by artists. Certain of its activities, resulting only in government reports and correspondence, disappeared into the bureaucracy. Most of the early APG materials filed at the Arts Council before 1972, for example, are now lost or inaccessible (whether deliberately or not), and Breakwell’s work with the Department of Health and Social Security may still be subject to the Official Secrets Act.

Of the variety of projects from the last decade or so that have mimicked or inhabited corporate models, while also making participation and collaboration with audiences a core element of their meaning, few seem to have achieved

APG’s delicately Utopian co-existence of antagonism and service; fewer still share that aspiration. When artists work in open-ended collaborative relationships – projects such as Marjetica Potrč’s infrastructure improvements in impoverished communities, Superflex’s GUARANÁ POWER co-operative and soft drink company in Brazil, Thomas Hirschhorn’s *Bataille Monument* (2002), or France Morin’s *The Quiet in the Land* residencies, to name only a few – they tend to do so directly with communities, rather than through the infrastructure that serves them. The most ambitious ones, nevertheless, force us to ask the questions begged by APG’s contextual legacy: Where is the art? Where is the social value delivered? Who is assuming the risk?

But, on the business side these days, such questions don’t even seem relevant. Nevertheless, it is hard not to think of the “least-event” that was APG as corporations increasingly devise ways to bring artists and art into the fold (however well defined) as designers of logos, handbags, cars, or shop windows. As for government? “It should not be unreasonable to predict,” APG prophesied in 1971, “that as a result of carefully directed dissemination of the basic concepts, in twenty years some thousands of millions of people will have their lives significantly improved, qualitatively, as compared with their condition today; many major policy decisions will have been altered, and innovations introduced of a kind which will be fundamentally democratic on a wider base than is possible under the present short-term considerations of power.” Certainly, one such example of a major policy decision that has been introduced would be the Arts Council’s habit of handing down strictures to funded groups and institutions demanding a certain percentage increase in attendance by a given minority audience – this is yet another ironic marker of APG’s success. When O+I applied for funding recently, the Arts Council refused to support them. Call it the straight art of social engineering. ◉

*This essay was first published in Frieze magazine, November/December 2007.**

**Author’s note: In the original version of this article, I misstated the nature of the financial involvement of the Arts Council of Great Britain (whose name was changed to Arts Council England in 2003) in mounting the exhibition. Barbara Steveni clarified that this funding came from the APG host organisations whose placements were represented in the exhibition, not from the Arts Council.*

COUNTDOWN TO ZERO, COUNT UP TO NOW

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE ARTIST PLACEMENT GROUP

November 28, 2002

The Artist Placement Group, founded in 1966, brokered some of the first artists' placements within UK industry and government. Now that corporate sponsorship of the arts has become the common condition, and artists' residencies are cropping up all over, the experiences and politics of the APG serve as an important means of depth-charging the present. Pauline van Mourik Broekman and Josephine Berry, editors of Mute magazine, interviewed APG's founders, Barbara Steveni and John Latham.

JB Josephine Berry Slater

JL John Latham

BS Barbara Steveni

PB Pauline van Mourik Broekman



JB Could you describe the cultural context in which APG and its thinking came about?

JL It's a quite complicated beginning. I was teaching at St. Martins, and Barbara came up with this idea: why don't we go into the factories? These were no-go areas at that moment – and I think she had contact with the Fluxus group. There were high tensions in the art world about having anything to do with organisations of the industrial-commercial kind. They wanted to use art as something prestigious.

BS Might I come in there? John was in America just at the time, and the Fluxus group came to stay in our house, and they were going to do an exhibition in, I think it was called Gallery One – they wanted some material. And I said, I'll go to the outer circular road, to the industrial estate, and I'll pick up some material. So I went there, and I got lost in the industrial estate, and it was dead of night, but the factory was absolutely booming away, and I thought: well why aren't we here? Not to pick up buckets of plastic, but because there's a whole life that we don't touch. This is what people go on about – academics, artists, politicians – but they go nowhere near it. That was where the idea got born, and when John came back I told him about it.

At that time, artist types like Stuart and Deborah Brisley, John, myself, and others, were doing events and happenings in the street – like Peter Kuttner's *Nodnol Lives*. Very much out of the gallery and into the street. Looking at a reaction against the object and its value for the market – so that was the sort of context out of which it came. As John was saying, the whole idea of fine artists having anything to do with commerce and stuff was, like, real dirty. But the idea of context, "Context is Half the Work," which John coined, developed into a main APG/O+I axiom [APG became Organisation and Imagination (O+I) in 1989] through to today, developed as a result of making approaches to industry.

JB Were you interested in Russian Constructivism as an example of artists going into industrial situations and contexts? Was that known about in London at that time?

BS It was known about, and especially John was much more into art history. I was into life experience. In fact I had no schooling.

JL At that time, I was oblivious of art history. I just did what I'd been touched off by as an art experience. It was like seeing something so intensely moving that I had to understand it. And I didn't bother about the art history. When people talked about Picasso I said, well, who's he?

BS And I became very interested, when going into the factories, in the social role of the people, the individuals in there, and how they were connecting up to what they were doing. And what was it that the organisation was doing that they were in. And all that developed out of a real interest and questioning which I guess now would be called research. I think they thought I was a sociologist since I'd remarked at British Leyland, for example, on the fact that women worked only in

the trimming shops, but they couldn't be found in other parts of the factory. So my interest was in the role and the purpose of individuals, and their relation to the wider unit beyond, and John's was what the language was doing.

JB Was meshing your quite different sensibilities around APG a fairly natural progression? You're saying that you had this more hands-on sociological approach, and John was interested in, you might say, more esoteric areas of physics and language.

JL I want to answer that one. I was a brush painter, gone into what it was I'd been hit by. As a brush painter, it was a completely irrelevant thing to do to think about having anything to do with anything else really. It was a closed little research establishment to put it in a friendly way — or a waste of time, to put it in another. But I met two scientists, C.C.L. Gregory and Anita Kohsen, who were crossing their disciplines, and who were very dedicated to finding what the difference was between physical and human animal behaviour. Now they'd gone into partnership and we got an introduction to meet them because they lived in the neighbourhood, and, as time went on, they suddenly paid a visit, and the professor of astronomy said, "Would you like to do a mural for a party we're giving on Halloween night?" Now I've told this story before, but the long and the short of it is that I discovered that a spray gun is a very meaningful instrument for getting over what had happened in painting — which was a countdown to zero. A countdown to zero starts from complete confidence in spatial appearances, and in the skill that you've got in the mid-nineteenth century, say with Delacroix, to a complete rejection of the idea that the spatial appearance of the world is anything but an illusion — that life is an illusion. And it was emphasised by the discoveries by Max Planck in 1900, who came up with the idea of the discrete bit that everything was made up of discrete events basically. And you don't find an interval between the discrete events. And this was very important because scientists can't talk about event structure. Physicists refer to waves and particles in space-time.

PB And how did this relate to the spray gun?

JL This is accounting for it after the event. There had been a blank unmarked canvas exhibited as a work, and what that meant was that all art is on a par with no action. That was a very high-powered, challenging statement.

JB Was that Rauschenberg?

JL Yes. Well, he worked a lot with Cage, and Cage may have been responsible for the idea in the beginning — a zero sound concert — the same kind of thing. But what was important was the blank white board, and taking the spray gun to register a history on it with discrete marks of an accretive process that had permanence. Once a point mark has gone down, it doesn't disappear. And an inference that I drew later on was that this is an insistently recurrent event that makes it seem permanent. And an insistently recurrent event is like a quantum unit of light, it doesn't have an interval between its discrete bits. I think you'll come to see that this is very important: what we regard as time is counting — counting via caesium atoms, clocks, days, years. And very high frequencies in the Planck world give us new techniques. It goes down to something really beyond what we can either repeat or imagine. An initial "Insistently Recurrent Event" (IRE) is an oscillation between nothing — the blank canvas — and a point mark, and it translates as a proto-event universe.

JB If you extrapolate from that, does that oscillation suggest the ever present and explosive possibility of transformation? If reality has to reaffirm itself in this insistently recurrent way, is it an instability?

JL The most logical series is what I'm really talking about. What we have to do is get past this idea of the Big Bang having started out of nothing. Physics has come to a point where it's very practical. You can find out what happens with most things. But it's got a problem, which Stephen Hawking refers to about once every ten years. And that is an admission that — and he said it in so many words — we don't know where to begin. At one time it was, "if we haven't solved it by the end of century, we won't know where to begin." And at the end of the century, he said on CNN, "Let the twenty years start now." It was the admission that it's too big a problem, and we don't know where to begin.

Well, the arts had proposed not that the world starts with a bang, but that it starts from a prehistory of an event structure that has a non-extended starting line, equivalent to the score in music, that's to say, not heard as sound. A non-extended state doesn't show up in physics, it's not allowed. What you do find though, and one of the ideas that compensates for it is called a vacuum. Now "vacuum" is a spatial word, you can't have a vacuum in no space, or it's nonsense to talk about it. But they can talk about it happily because there's a "quantum vacuum," that means the non-space in between the two extended states which form the positive side of the wave. The vacuum is a

THE SCULPTURE: FORMAT OF BOARDROOM MEETING
FIRST USED AT "BETWEEN 6," DUSSELDORF
KUNSTSALLE, 1970 AND LATER AT THE HAYWARD
GALLERY, LONDON, 1970-71. COURTESY JOHN
LATHAM FOUNDATION & BARBARA STEVENS.

state nought — very easy to translate into artists' terms. If you go into the structure of a concert you experience a clock time duration; a thing starts with a waving of a stick, say, and ends with another waving of a stick. This is in "count" time, say in the minutes between the start and the finish. The performance is an ordering of time-bases or frequencies, rhythms, and pause lengths. With the score aspect of time these make up the three components of "three-dimensional" time, which now constitute the dynamics of a musical performance. So, there you've got a score that is timeless, apparently, but it has such control over what goes on in time that you have an equivalent there for an atemporal, omnipresent coding. It's not a coding so much as a matrix of previous experience.

JB Is that the "Least Event" for you?

JL Can I say yes? The "Least Event" in music, you could understand as somebody recognising that a sound was interesting, and feeling the "do-it-again" impulse. The "do-it-again" impulse is equivalent to saying, "insistently recurrent." Those two ideas belong together, because what then happens is "we'll do it again," and then, "we'll do it differently." And if you can think of a proto-event, a universe in a state where there isn't anything, a total zero extension in space and time, if you can imagine that series in a non-extended context, and it then becomes a habit within that non-extended state, you find that there are performances which are enactments from a score which grow in complexity all the time.

Well, the event-structured world is what the artist naturally works in. We work in it, deriding all the common sense objections and adulations, and all the blah-blahs that come in from the outside, and which are totally irrelevant to what goes on that's exciting to do, say, on a wall. It's that interest, that kind of impulse that is important because it reveals the actual universe to people who are totally blown by the fact that, to quote Stephen Hawking, "we don't know where to begin." They all seem to know what they ought to do next because they have a medium for how to exchange value. And it's flawed just the same as the verbal medium.

JB You mean money?

JL Language and money together.

PB Sticking with the cultural context of the sixties, if you were engaged with this critique of objects, and their role as vehicles of value in the art system, how did your critique of language relate to the fact that a lot of other artists were precisely using language as an agent of dematerialisation — as a questioning, philosophical method — all of which they thought could challenge the same system of value, objects, and spatial relations?

JL I think what was intensely interesting in the history of ideas is that people always thought in a dualistic way. They've always thought that things are things, but we are not things. We are inhabited by mysterious forces. The most recent quote is Descartes, who set philosophy on the course of two worlds. There came a point in the early twentieth century, in Cambridge, where you found Bertrand Russell cooperating in mathematical philosophy. And he got a communication from Vienna, from Wittgenstein, who as a young punter had said, "How about this, is this any use, or is it total nonsense?" And Russell wrote back and said, "No it's wonderful, come over and talk to us about it." And the nugget of what Wittgenstein was on about was that they would talk through and discover an atomic proposition, or perhaps a set of atomic propositions, which are basic and indestructible.

JB For language you mean?

JL For language and logic. It's an attempt to systematise language logic. If we actually go into what then happened — 1912, I think, was the initial date in a period where the idea of the "Tractatus" was being written. He argued the case of the atomic propositions and it got published at the end of the First World War. Wittgenstein had to go and fight in the Austrian army. He then returned to Cambridge, and found that he didn't get on with anybody except the economist Keynes. That was his last sort of friend there, and he disappeared to Norway and places. He was thoroughly frustrated when things didn't work for the atomic propositions.

Well, 1951 is the date that I quote, anyway, of the Cage and Rauschenberg "Zero Action" works. It's also the date of the posthumous publication of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* that says, at the beginning, that the idea of the atomic propositions must have been mistaken. I'll now go over the bits and bits, sorting out what we mean by and what are useful types of expression. And he's famous for the second. But he's famous for starting a movement in philosophy which then went into its opposite, into reverse. He was the trigger for a big effort to get, even with what physics had found out, at the indestructible basic unit, which is still not there. It wasn't identified. We're still looking for a particle, still spending billions of pounds in crashing one particle against another in these circuits, looking for an initiating particle or state.

Well, the point for us is that if you think in terms of event, you don't go into all that language, and all those heavy equations about the behaviour of matter because we've found forms for visualising the event structure. It's represented on the back of my *Time-Base Roller* as a memory, like a piece of music, which has got all music behind it, so it can go as far

back as a proto-universe. Whereas one bit of an extended state has neither location nor interval. Two “Least” extended states together set up what we call “time,” the initial kind of extendedness. We then go to scientific people, and they tend to say, well, you’ve got to actually describe what space is; and we talked to someone who was interested in the idea, and he said, well, you’ve got to account for space somehow. And I had this argument out with David Park, a professor of astronomy or astrophysics. Anyway, he was in the Williamstown, USA, observatory. He had written a paper called “Are Space and Time Necessary?”, and it turned up mysteriously on my desk, and I was amazed, so I read it. And “necessary” meant — in a philosophical sense — do we need to talk about them, are they structural?

JB Good question.

JL I wrote to him saying, I’ve got this paper of yours and I’m sending you a photograph of the *Roller* that had been in the Tate. The Tate hadn’t bought it, but it got shown and photographed, so I could send him a good photograph. He wrote back saying, “this is really extraordinary, I had no idea that an artist might be interested in what we’re interested in.” And a certain amount of dialogue came about, and I said, “Why is it that you physicists don’t regard the event as parent of the particle?” The answer I got was, “In principle you’re probably right, but in all our equations we have gravity, gravity occurs in all our mathematics, and we can’t get gravity into events.” Now in my terms, gravity shows up as the ‘coming to an end’ of a score being played out. The internal dynamic on the gravity scale is that all events tend to coincide at a zero or dimensionless point. In “General Relativity,” density of matter in space finally translates from zero space, zero time, infinite temperature, into an infinitely rich score somewhere, like in a drawer.

JB Could we make a transition to art more directly? You say that the fifties were a “zero point” in art — a kind of compression of all of art history into a non-gesture. I’m interested in how you see the conceptual artists’ interest in language, a decade on from that point, in which they were trying to escape from the finality of the object. Was that a “zero point” in itself?

JL Short answer is, no.

JB Why not?

JL The date of the spray gun paintings might have coincided with a lot of other activity. Obviously it did. See, the difference is between a mark that goes across the surface, and one that hits it vertically as a point. The point mark is an extension of the “Zero Action” works, and blows in a new question as

to nature’s *tabula rasa*, a non-extended state as active where the received idea is that any “nothing” state has to be passive. Newton’s claim, “ex nihilo nihil fit,” is flawed. The answer to your question is that the “zero point” is not just neutrally zero in meaning. It is that a non-extended but omnipresent score is inherited from long generations of this universe, and begins from an active component in the zero, which corresponds to many parts of the culture including both sciences and faiths. For me personally, conceptual artists and their language-based solutions were chasing the wrong hare. And the real one was the problem that Wittgenstein had come across, and that philosophy had come across — that language was a flawed medium. It didn’t do what it set out to do in the most serious instances. So what had been known for all the previous centuries, the belief systems and sacred texts which had come out from the prophets — had all recognised not to try and be logical but take it from the inspired source.

JB How did these ideas connect to your preoccupation with artists doing placements, and an engagement particularly with the state and industry? And why were you led to engage with the establishment as a means of siting art in a more socially engaged context, rather than creating something like an alternative space of action?

BS I think that it was very exciting to come across contexts — I’m answering this instinctively now — which were very heavily peopled, and very full with material, with ongoing processes, and unfamiliar activities. A context that had great extensions out, and which seemed to be touching possibilities which artists were only trivially touching before. They were very conditioned by, say, promotional desires like Pirelli’s *Desk Diaries*, etc. The idea that there might be another role within these contexts which obviously has a vast influence on our lives made it seem intriguing in juxtaposition with the way we were coming out of the gallery, and those types of things. Also the media at the time was expanding into new forms — sculpture became inflatable, video was coming up, film, and performance. So it seemed like a heavily interesting context to engage with, and the idea that one might change what the engagement would be in those contexts, and could then filter through into the society differently, was instinctively felt at the time as being a very exciting thing to do. Where else might one go? Didn’t think so much of setting up an alternative. That wasn’t nearly so interesting as what one had stumbled into — this was an alternative. And the possibility that one could stumble into it, and that one could actually have some effect, change things — in both directions — sounds so hideously idealistic ... It’s a bit like, “You can never change anybody, least of all your parents.”

JB But it felt at the time that there was leeway for change?

BS Yes, absolutely. When we had our first presentation as APG, the Industrial Negative Symposium which brought artists and industrialists together for the first time, down at the Mermaid Theatre, and the Event Structure Research Group, Jeffrey Shaw, one of APG's founding artists, and Theo Botschuijver came over from Holland, Billy Klüver (really shocking speaker) – anyway, it had a lot of press. I remember the speaker from Esso Petroleum saying, “I’m glad to see that APG is not asking for support, but to make a contribution.” And at another point, Gustav Metzger got up and said, “I want to burn down your factories,” and the British Oxygen guy walking out.... I do feel that we were virtually responsible for opening up these “new horizons,” or this can of worms that led to all this institutionalisation, both by government departments and corporations, of how the artist might be “used,” in inverted commas. It was the highjack of what we did as artists by the Arts Council that made it a can of worms. At that time, the context was very exciting and shifting for both sides. It was only by doing the industrial placements that we began to find out how art activity, or how as artists, an optimum association might be developed which complied with making an artwork in these contexts – so that both sides were getting something out of it. So after the industrial placements, which were seen as kind of terrible by the majority of the art world, for tangling with this “dirt” so to speak – I was personally, and artists that we worked with, able to find out just what sort of exchange and engagement could be had in these situations. What we discovered was that we have to take great care to preserve the integrity of art’s motivation vis-à-vis the commercial and political interests around. That’s what the “Incidental Person,” or artist’s presence, is there to contend with and to insist on. But, I think it might have opened up a can of worms, which is taking it in this institutionalised direction now.

PB But don’t you think this can of worms was the precise same thing that gave you a sense of excitement? Was that engagement with what you call more “peopled” environments to do with their magnitude, their existing power? Did you think that if you intervened in these places, you could adopt their existing power rather than seeking it in alternative communities?

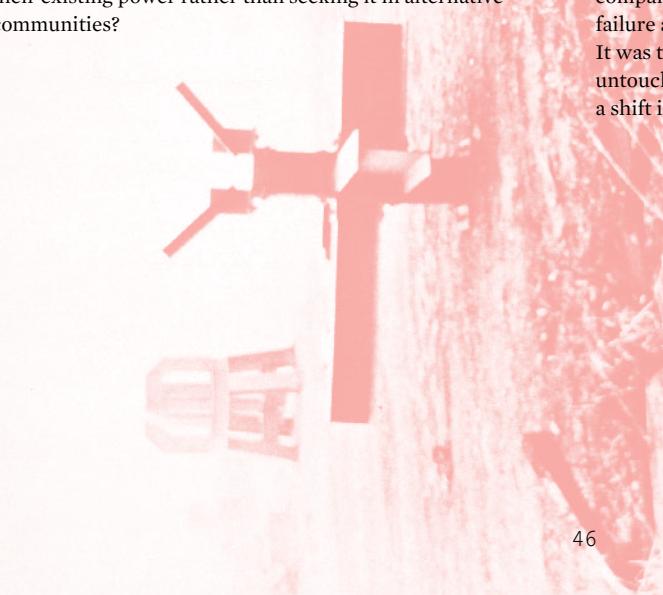
BS Well, yes! I realise that this is a very hot question, and it demands a very hot answer. I know this question is levelled all the time, and it’s a main focus for me right now in today’s global “money-worshipping societies,” and I don’t have an immediate sound bite.

JL The difference between the industrial and the government department placements was where the interests lay. If the artists went into the sectional interests, the establishment, they were walking into a fireball. The chances are that it would make more trouble. But the non-sectional interests that a government department has are different; certainly in Britain, the civil service is supposed to be serving the people. It is an institutionalised body that tries to get the elected government to do certain things, but it’s always seeking more info from our side. When we got to the civil service, we were under investigation by the research department, Whitehall’s research station.

BS I slightly disagree with what John said about industry, because I was seeing it – as I think were the artists who we were working with – as an engagement we had with individuals and a very important learning process; an exchange with large chunks of society that we’d had no engagement with. I still think of it as a conglomerate of individuals whose activities were impacting on society. And I think a lot was learnt about exchange and stuff. And yes, we went to government, which appeared to have less sectional interests at the time. In the language of today they were also trying to manage change. At the time the thinking might have been, we’ve got to have these outsiders in here to think differently. We were the outsiders.

JB Do you think that an understanding of an organisation as a conglomeration of individuals and activities made you also believe that if you could influence key individuals you could influence an entire system in a certain way?

BS I think that was rather a naïve motivation, but it did feel that that was happening. Especially when the guy from ICI left, and became, as he put it, “APG’s first drop-out” from the company. It brought up the whole question of success and failure again. For whom – the organisation, society, the artist? It was to do with the fact that here was a context previously untouched by the art process which appeared now to change – a shift in the mindset, perhaps – however naïve it was. I still



Objects found resembling sculpture FIND AT GREENWICH

from our art correspondent

Last year the British Steel Corporation made Garth Evans, the sculptor, their new link man with that world of exponential structure we know as art. In his examination of the corporation’s diverse establishments he came across some steel constructions hidden away in their processes that

BRITISH STEEL CORPORATION PLACEMENT,
1968-73. UNDERTAKEN BY GARTH EVANS. OBJECTS
FOUND RESEMBLING SCULPTURE, WELDING
PRACTICE PIECES BY BRITISH STEEL APPRENTICES.
PHOTOGRAPH: GARTH EVANS. COURTESY
BARBARA STEVENS.

think that you do have to engage with all the forces that are powerful, in different ways, and that one is also powerful as an individual, that ideas are powerful. You had to get your hands dirty, and I still think you have to get your hands dirty. I think it's about responsibility.

JB So what do you think about class interests and solidarity, then? How does an individual artist go into an industrial situation in which you have class conflict, a conflict of power between workers and capitalists, between workers and management, and operate between those two "groups?"

BS Well, very delicately, and ready to be spat out on all occasions. And that was one of the things that we tried to set up. How far could one go without being spat out? And again, what would be a relevant activity? What is coming up enormously now, is the question of "socially engaged art." What the hell is that? And how is the aesthetic talking, the actual power of the aesthetic, or the power of the process of engagement. This is being found out and demonstrated through the whole explosion of "artists-in-residence" that is coming out of our ears now. But I haven't quite answered your class thing. I had a personal thing, which was that — although I was obviously a nice, middle-class girl, and everything — not going to school, I didn't have an identification like that. They were all people to me, and I automatically asked the question at all moments. I was responsible for being me.

PB Do you mean that not having had an education you didn't feel socially situated in a way?

BS Yes, certainly, I've never felt socially situated. Because I wasn't brought up by my parents. I didn't go to school. Anyhow, APG and I have been very heavily attacked for going in there very naively, and not thinking, not dealing with class. But the point is that I think that artists have a responsibility to the impact of their insights when in these various engagements — as did APG input.

PB Why was the self-consistency of APG's identity, one might say the preservation of its unique identity, so important to affecting the wider aim of transforming the social role of the artist?

BS Part of maintaining the uniqueness of APG/O+I is, perhaps the opaqueness of its terminology, for instance the "Incidental Person." The "Incidental Person" was a useful way of describing a new socially engaged artist, or a new socially engaged role for a person that has come from the art trajectory, that John dreamed up to distinguish it from the

word "artist," that we had to get away from because of all its baggage. (Incidentally, for the Industrial Negative Symposium, Stuart and John jointly wrote a paper on the disappearance of the artist). So, I feel that in relation to your question about uniqueness, that terminology was very useful to begin to define a new role, which had come out of first working in industry and then government. The term was linked to the methodology we tried to develop in order to gain the maximum possibilities for exchange, and development, and new ideas. You also asked whether our idea could be taken on by anybody else. Yes, certainly — using the "Incidental Person" was, and is a good way of identifying a change of role for the artist. So I guess the term stands historically along with its method of engagement for those with the understanding to "use" it.

JL It is important to note that you could actually tangle with the money. The "Incidental Person," and O+I's possessiveness has to do with the responsibility one has to host bodies. Supposing that we got to the Department of Education or whatever, if we gave them something really hot, and they took it up, we wouldn't let them simply say they we invented it. We wanted — and I put it down in "The Report of a Surveyor" — a way of assessing what the contribution was after a placement, after an association. Any good results needed insisting on. What has happened is that the Arts Council is composed of people who are supposed to maintain the status quo. And it's a total disaster because it means no artist is actively allowed in there. As Donald Macrae apparently said, "Only the established may innovate. No innovator is established." Basel Bernstein quotes it in his book.

JB Was it also ever your intention to introduce really, truly, incidental people into these positions? Without the qualification of the art academy, and so on?

BS Absolutely. It was to try and develop a completely new role, and therefore, ask how it comes up through education. One of the things we are trying to do possibly with the London Institute, is to see how the experience can be taken into education, how it can be taken on in a range of areas. This is a different role.

JL As a self-funding body O+I has got to be responsible for turning out the goods, and arguing the goods, against the opposition. So "Incidental Persons" as participants need to be well enough informed to cope with the job. Now, if they're not trained in art, they would be liable to be tripped up. That said, the empowerment that it ought to give to everybody is where anyone can come across very good insights. The most unexpected insights can come to the most improbable people, and instead of being dismissed as being too improbable to talk to, as one is by the local bureaucracy, or the arts bureaucracy, that should effect something like what Joseph Beuys was doing in his way. Joseph said that "the 'Incidental Person' is a YES solution."

JB In effect, you might argue that today, in what is called the knowledge economy, or within creative industries, what is being assimilated into production is precisely the creative impulse, the virtuosity, the psychic or social experience that might have previously been left out of industrial technique. In a sense you could argue that everyone has become an “Incidental Person” within the knowledge economy – at least potentially – but in the most debased way. But do you also see something hopeful in that condition where administration and production now assimilate precisely the kind of imaginative, creative impulses that they formerly excluded?

BS Well, yes, but it's being taken in this most appalling direction, where it's the money that determines things.

PB In a funny way, maybe it brings up language and the event again? If we're saying what's being imported are language elements, or art-like language, to stimulate innovation, creativity, change, etc., maybe language can have a positive role if we insist on its greater precision. Specificity could be used to combat the lazy blurring of definitions of artistic activity and commercial production, and instead, be made to really describe not obscure what people do.

BS That's exactly what has to be done.

APG

PB Digital culture is suffused with the rhetoric of dematerialisation, time-based processes, social collaboration, interactivity, and collective authorship – do you feel any affinity with it?

JL Not if it reasserts the space-based mindset. Collaboration is not one of the words we would be defined by.

BS Oh? But, social collaboration has to be something I personally believe in for O+I, provided it can be heard above the rhetoric, and not commodified by digital culture.

JL This issue is around (failed) space-based belief systems and a “Time-and-Event” means of representing the real world. The event-structured media are inclusive where the space-based are divisive. ●

ARTIST PLACEMENT GROUP

MANIFESTO, 1980

by Artist Placement Group

O+I today operates on these following essential axioms:

1. The context is half the work.
2. The function of medium in art is determined not so much by that factual object, as by the process and the levels of attention to which the work aims.
3. That the proper contribution of art to society is art.
4. That the status of artists within organisations must necessarily be in line with other professional persons, engaged within the organisation.
5. That the status of the artist within organisations is independent, bound by the invitation, rather than by any instruction from authority within the organisation, and to the long-term objectives of the whole of society.
6. That, for optimum results, the position of the artist within an organisation (in the initial stages at least) should facilitate a form of cross-referencing between departments.

Negotiations are contingent upon both participants having this understanding and a mutual confidence. O+I requires intelligence and strength in art and a reciprocal response from within organisations.

The following ten steps are an example of how O+I goes about setting up an artist placement in an organisation:

1. O+I identifies host organisations
2. Agreement in principle between host and O+I
3. O+I proposes a range of artists
4. Host organisation meets to agree on: Artists to be placed; location of study; any special conditions; a link person to liaise between artist and host; and, finally, financial considerations
5. Host organisation invites artist
6. Agreement between artist and host
7. Start of initial study (also known as the “feasibility study”)
8. Artists’ report and proposals
9. Implementation programme
10. Evaluation of results and exhibit (this last not necessarily part of the placement). ◉

APG: LEGACIES AND AFTERMATHS

The following conversation discusses aspects of the reception and legacy of the Artist Placement Group (APG). In doing so, what unfolds is a range of positions at stake for artists engaged in industrial work-placements, and – more broadly – for those engaged in socially-engaged practices.

Marisa Jahn Claire, you are interested in participatory modes of address. How did you come to know APG's work, and what was it that prompted your investigations?

Claire Bishop When I first began thinking about APG's work, I have to confess that I was not enamoured with their project. A few years previously, I had supervised a Master's student writing a dissertation on APG, and it had left me with the impression that it was all rather boring, grey, and bureaucratic. Lots of writing, lots of theorizing, and interminably complex examples. I had very little point of access into it. But of course, art projects that try to embed themselves in society require a different kind of perspective than the purely visual, and demand an immersive process of research that complements the process-based character of the project.

MJ I think that others have also wondered in which ways to evaluate APG's social engagement – how it shifts ways of looking, and teaches a different strategy of aesthetic reception.

CB Many of the issues around APG's work are very contemporary – social engagement, artists working in society, problems of collaboration and complicity. For the history that I'm currently writing, APG plays a specific role. Most artists become involved in social engagement at a grassroots level: working with specific communities of interest. APG, by contrast, got involved with government departments and big business. This immediately requires us to imagine an alternative framework for participatory art. We are dealing with a couple of artists (Barbara Steveni and John Latham) seeking to place other artists at the highest level of large-scale national corporations and government departments. The

A CONVERSATION WITH CLAIRE BISHOP AND STEPHEN WRIGHT

question of APG's intentionality – the goals that it hoped to achieve through these placements – were very ambiguous, and remain contentious today.

MJ How do you see the legacy of APG's work, and/or how would you characterize the historical significance of their work?

CB I find a number of things extraordinary about APG from a contemporary perspective. Firstly, the idea of a new model of patronage: artists were funded by businesses and government, but without the latter requiring any concrete outcome from the artist in terms of a work of art. The organisations had to be more interested in encountering an artist's perspective on a dialogical basis than in sponsoring the production of an object. As such, it forms part of the rise of corporate sponsorship of visual art in the late 1960s – a situation that we know the consequences of today all too well. Secondly, the APG exhibition *Inno 70* is hugely prescient of so many discursive exhibitions in the last decade. The central component of *Inno 70* (Hayward Gallery, London, 1971) was an area called “The Sculpture” – a large white boardroom table for daily discussion. To turn an exhibition space into a discursive space anticipates so many contemporary exhibitions today, especially in Europe; “The Sculpture” was thus perhaps the first discussion platform of this kind. The critical response to *Inno 70* also reminds us that the type of spectatorship produced by this exhibition was a radical shift in how an audience was expected to engage with this work. The displays were primarily informational rather than artistic, and many critics were disenchanted by the bureaucratic flavour of the exhibition. This is something I can certainly identify with when I go to galleries, and see artists present documentation of their process, without resolving this into a meaningful visual experience for a secondary audience. It is telling that the only enthusiastic reviews of *Inno 70* were by journalists in other areas (e.g., business), rather than art critics.

A further aspect of APG's work that I find appealing is the combination of Steveni's hard-nosed pragmatism, and the loopy theoretical inventions of Latham. When these two ways of thinking coincide, the results are complex and paradoxical. For example, Latham wanted to re-organise art around questions of time rather than space. As such, he believed that you couldn't make a judgment on APG's work until at least 20 years had



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT PLACEMENT
BIRMINGHAM, ENGLAND 1973–76, UNDERTAKEN
BY ROGER COWARD, RESIDENTS OF SMALL HEALTH
ARTICULATE THEIR RESPONSE TO CENTRAL
GOVERNMENT POLICY, AIDED BY THE ARTIST.
COURTESY BARBARA STEVENI.

gone by. His idea of the “delta unit” was a way to determine the value of a work of art, by measuring its importance in terms of three types of attention: the number of people affected by an idea; the period of time it remains influential; and, the degree of awareness it induces. So this attempt to rethink how we account for the impact of a work of art is eccentric, but also ambitious — which artists today are bold enough to think through the criteria for analysing their work in these terms? Finally, I think APG are important for short-circuiting and replacing the curator as an intermediary: they organised placements directly, without any mediating negotiator. In my view, this administrative work should be seen as much a part of their practice as Latham’s elaborate cosmology.

MJ Stephen, I know you are interested in different forms of knowledge production as counter-examples to normative epistemic currents – in other words, you are interested in the ways that artwork can produce alternate modes of thinking or doing. I wonder then what you might add to this list or how you might see things differently.

Stephen Wright I tend to think of art as a decreative activity. At its best, art decreates apparently self-evident things; it decreates ideas we take for granted about things, about the world, and about art itself. Of course, most art, most of the time, does just the opposite of that, and satisfies itself with merely creating.

What's most striking to me about APG was that its practice was located at the very core of Fordism, whereas the group's activities prefigured what we would today associate with post-Fordism — somehow inserting the informal knowledge producer, or artist, into a very unfamiliar setting, and using that industrial world as an art world. APG's work was not about producing objects, but more generally about experimenting with the production of artistic subjectivity. At the same time, using the workplaces of the industrial economy as sites of artistic residency, production, and exhibition. Although it was ultimately a failure, inasmuch as it neither transformed the mainstream art world, nor made much impact on Fordist capitalism, it was a groundbreaking experiment in rethinking apparent self-evidences about the conditions and places of possibility of art.

MJ You bring up the point that APG's work really emphasized processing information, and positioning the artist as this kind of “processor.” In an argument similar to the one you make, APG's emphasis on process over product, and their insistence on contextualist modes of production characterizes what is referred to as an aesthetics of listening.¹ Barbara and others involved in APG have underscored many times that this is the reason why not much “stuff” was produced.

This lacuna forces one to consider the ways that APG was in fact communicating, what media, in fact, most aptly communicates the nature of these works, and what

differentiates it from other art practices. As one example, one particular strength characterizing practitioners of embedded practices is that because they are working from empathetic vantage points, they are highly sensitized to moments in an artwork that alienate its participants and spectators.

Going further, one of the main challenges of an embedded art practice is finding a method or medium that (a) retains the contextual vitality of what happened on the inside (within the institution), (b) communicates this to other audiences (and art worlds), and (c) does this in a way that authentically transposes this in an inclusive way that doesn't alienate those involved in the production of the work.

For many embedded practices, documentary fragments serve to partially explain what transpired. But more often than not, for embedded practices, anecdote, rumour, or recollection is, in fact, their main form of cultural currency and primary medium. In fact, Magnus Bärtås writes about the primacy of oral transmission in *most* kinds of cultural pedagogy.

The fact that works of art to a large extent are tales, points to the folkloristic aspect of the art world. In other words, the art world is a place for transmissions: someone has seen or heard of someone who has done something. The story is told and retold. As in any other oral culture there are misunderstandings, adjunctions, displacements, and falsifications. The dependence on “what is on every lip” creates a situation where works that are difficult to talk about run the risk of being neglected and “disappearing.”

In other words, for artists like those involved with APG, operating within a rumour economy is in both the most valuable form of cultural currency, and the most contextually sensitive.

SW Rumour is an incredibly powerful medium, and a performative agent in the shadow economy. What APG has done is found ways for art to prosper outside of the mainstream attention economy. The question then is how to bring those “shadow” practices to light — so that they are not lost to posterity — without betraying their fundamental wish to maintain a low profile. That's where documentation becomes crucial.

There is a great deal of critical indigence around thinking about documentation. If an art practice has such a low coefficient of artistic visibility as to not be perceived as such, then it can only be performed as art through documentation — be it visual, oral, written, or whatever. That gives a very special, and very powerful role to the document: not merely bearing witness to what is no longer present, but actually transforming its ontological status — making it into art, without effecting its primary ontology. We might refer to it as “performative documentation” — which, of course, has nothing whatsoever to do with documenting a performance.

MJ So for you, one of the strengths of APG's work is the way they problematized the productivist bias that informs many

artworks, and, in fact, renders them obfuscating. In other words, APG elided the documentary artifact or the art-object stand-in, and instead focused on the process itself as the ends and the means of a transformation.

SW When we assume that ideas can be produced in the art world, we take for granted two things that APG directly challenged: on the one hand, art's inherent productivism; and on the other, the idea that it is possible to speak of "the" art world — as if others were not only possible but existent. In abstaining from production, APG drew attention to the productivist elephant that was so omnipresent as to be invisible: productivism was and is embedded in both capitalist and socialist ideology (as well as in art). And in inventing another way of looking at host institutions as places for doing art and for being an artist, APG pointed to a different world for art.

MJ So rather than sabotage the workplace, you see that APG is engendering methods to work from within — to expose the fallacy or prevalence of productivist modes and posit alternatives.

SW Yes. The basic logic here is that you don't actually go into the factory and throw in your clogs.³ They redefined the primary purpose of being at work as something other than participating in the capital accumulation process for the benefit of your boss — and, at the same time, as something other than challenging that process head on. They redefined being at work as using that interstitial space to do art; more simply, to use that space in that way is already art. The alienating day job can become a place for us to find and found our artistic initiatives.

MJ Can you talk more about the conceit that the workplace itself is or can be the site of artistic production?

SW Sabotage has proven its worth historically as a decreative practice. But it's not always an appropriate strategy. Sometimes a parasitic or epiphytic strategy can be effective if art's mere presence in a particular setting can be exemplary. APG's placements were rather like placing a bunch of Bartelbys in workplaces where people were busily producing. Because although art is often productivist, the placed artists were unproductive labourers, and it's, in fact, this very productive idleness that decreased the unchallenged logic of the workplace. What, after all, is business or industry supposed to make of Robert Filliou's principle to render equivalent that which is *well done*, that which is *poorly done*, and that which is *not done at all*? This idea cuts right to the quick of what is specific to art. Deploying that kind of artistic logic in the workplace is potentially more corrosive, and more infectious than sabotage.

The challenge today is to retool our critical and conceptual vocabulary to accurately describe and analyze these practices, and those stemming from them, without lapsing into the formalist vocabularies of the art-critical establishment. Practices are changing, but our critical lexicon has not kept

pace. The upshot is that these practices are often very poorly served by the available terms inherited from a different century. When we talk about a crisis in art, we are really talking about a crisis in the focusing devices with which we grasp them.

MJ I am inferring that what you mean by "focusing devices" are those behavioural or linguistic ways in which social constructions are reified. To begin with the building blocks, perhaps you can give more examples of other ways to update the vocabulary of the art-critical establishment?

SW There are countless examples, but take another economic term: "redundancy." Redundancy is a term typically used to describe words, mechanisms, or positions that replicate a function already fulfilled by another word, mechanism, or position. It is invariably negatively connotated, particularly when labour is made redundant. But I see redundancy as something much more positive — in fact, redundancy is the concept I propose to best describe non-mimetic, or post-mimetic art practices — art that is deliberately and perfectly redundant with respect to what it also is. One could always say that a Rembrandt was both a picture and an ironing board (to quote an example chosen by Duchamp to instantiate what he brilliantly called the "reciprocal readymade," no doubt because ironing is so ironic).

However, the type of work I refer to as "redundant" inverses the primary-secondary logic: it is first of all a painting business, or a street, or a journal, or anything at all. Only in an accessory way is it a *proposition* of a painting business, street, journal or whatever the case may be. Redundant art is thus creatively and expressively idle — it isn't in any way, shape, or form different from what it would be if it wasn't art. Art used to dream of becoming non-art. Now it appears to have opted for a more caustic form of calculated redundancy. In other words, redundancy is a form of repetition.

But one key difference between redundancy and repetition is their temporality: whereas repetition is based on a temporal deferral, redundancy suppresses this interval in favour of spontaneity. You might say that repetition allows what was to be, whereas redundancy allows what is to exist simultaneously as an "as-if" proposition.

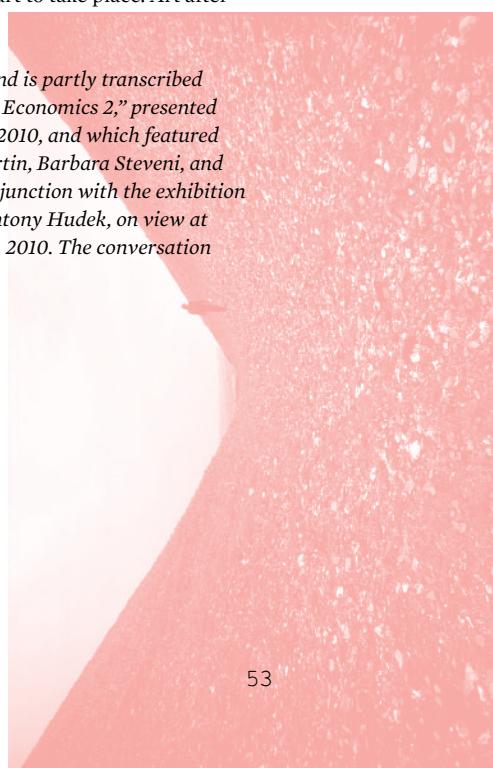
APG didn't so much create art as invent what I would call a plausible art world — one not beholden to the physical and conceptual architecture of the dominant art world. APG's project was to gain agency in the real, rather than satisfy themselves with acting in the symbolic. Many art-related practitioners today feel that need, and APG was really the first to open up that path. Their work had nothing to do with spectatorship, nothing to do with finding an audience or creating something audience-based. They were looking for a different art-sustaining environment for their practice.

It is sometimes said that artists like to bite the hand that feeds them, but they never bite it off. Sometimes that can be frustrating, and seem at odds with art's claim to want to do some damage to the dominant semiotic economy. But groups like APG, in experimenting with such concepts as redundancy, John Latham's notion of an "incidental practice," or the notion of a double ontological status allowed art to function as a secret agent — and, to wait for the right moment to deploy that secret agency.

MJ Can you elaborate further on the relationship between the double ontological status of an artwork, and what you are suggesting is a latent capacity or potential within art?

SW "Double ontological status" is a term that refers to something that, for example, can be both a thing and a proposition of that thing. I'm thinking of the Martha Rosler Library — both a full-fledged, functional, and public library, and at the same time, a proposition of a library. Or take a lesser known example: I've long been an admirer of the work of Bernard Brunon, who for the past three decades has run a house-painting outfit in Houston, Texas, called *That's Painting*. He runs his business as would any small entrepreneur in the rough and tumble Texas economy. The credo of the outfit is entirely businesslike: the work is well done, on time, and competitively priced. On the surface, and even beneath the surface, there is nothing arty about *That's Painting* — except Brunon's self-understanding: he sees what he is doing is as a collective, conceptual art project. The point is that Bernard Brunon wouldn't have done anything differently were it not a conceptual proposition — if it had only a single, stable ontology. When you drive through the streets of Houston with him in his pick-up, he points to the houses on the left and right of the street and says, "That's my work." He doesn't do exhibitions because there's nothing to exhibit. The best way to appreciate his work is to hear him talk about it. Telling a story is perhaps the least reifying way for art to take place. Art after spectatorship. ●

This conversation was prompted by and is partly transcribed from a public program entitled "Art & Economics 2," presented at apexart on Saturday, February 20, 2010, and which featured Claire Bishop, Noa Latham, Julie Martin, Barbara Steveni, and Stephen Wright. The event was in conjunction with the exhibition The Incidental Person, curated by Antony Hudek, on view at apexart from January 6–February 20, 2010. The conversation was editorialized by Marisa Jahn.



N.E. THING CO.

FROM SOFT SELL TO SOFT SKILLS

by Adam Lauder

These days most people in most advanced economies produce nothing that can be weighed: communications, software, advertising, financial services. They trade, write, talk, spin, and create: rarely do they make anything.¹

The playful industrial relations of N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. (1966–1978) incorporate an aspiration to amplify the social capital of the artist by infiltrating the channels of corporate power. Appearing in tandem with critical strategies of dematerialization that questioned Pop Art's ironic appropriation of consumer articles, the commercial postures of NETCO – the conceptual organization founded by IAIN BAXTER& (1936–) and jointly administered by Ingrid Baxter (1938–) – enacted a highly ambivalent alliance of the irreverent and the enterprising. In contrast to peers labouring under corporate personae such as Marcel Broodthaers (1924–1976), who sought to expose the institutional framing conditions of their own activity, the interventions of NETCO disclose a yearning to locate an economically viable situation for the artist in the Brave New World of the Information Society.

The role of an 'ARTIST' in society today is constructed by a series of negative structures, i.e. financial, political and especially the connotations of the word ARTIST itself, which propels his position to the fringes of the sources of power ... it seems essential to develop a financial base, therefore, the N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. is transitioning itself into a business organization ... The object is not personal profit, but to develop a structure and method whereby products, functions, and power can change directly the value systems of society.²

NETCO's social vision was endorsed by then Canadian minister of corporate affairs, Ronald Basford, in a 1969 speech inaugurating the Company's breakthrough installation, *N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. Environment*, at the National Gallery of Canada.

"The fact that he has incorporated himself," stated Basford, "simply underlines the fact that Iain Baxter is determined to take the artist out of isolation, and put him in the thick of our present everyday environment."³ The National Gallery environment temporarily transplanted the firm's headquarters from the Baxters' North Vancouver suburban home to the first floor of the Gallery (itself a recently converted office building). The bureaucratic structures introduced by NETCO into the Gallery necessitated the fabrication of functional office spaces and display areas. Perhaps the most multidimensional of all N.E. Thing Co. Ltd.'s projects, what remains particularly timely about its National Gallery installation today is less its flirtation with what Benjamin Buchloh (1990) has termed the "aesthetic of administration" than its occupation of new service roles generated by an emergent post-industrial regime.⁴

Whereas the activities of the proto-Conceptualists analyzed by Buchloh mirrored the bureaucratic features of post-war American middle class society by directly "administering labour and production," the commercial metaphors deployed by N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. also focused attention on the new prominence of service in big business.⁵ To this end, NETCO reassigned Gallery personnel as well as typists on loan from the Government of Canada: the bureaucratic role of the clerk regularly assigned to operate the Gallery's information desk, for instance, was transformed into that of a corporate service professional.⁶ Such tactics register the future shock of a rapidly expanding third-sector composed, according to theorist Fritz Machlup (1962), of a highly composite cluster of informational and service industries. Contemporary futurologists viewed the emergence of new service environments based on "games between people" as evidence of a new social formation, infamously dubbed "the information society" by Daniel Bell (1973).⁷

NETCO's critical inhabitation of the transitional economy of the late 1960s is legible in the Company's conversion from a manufacturing base (e.g., the production of sculptural objects that parodied the "soft sell" of contemporary advertising through an innovative use of pliant materials such as inflatable vinyl) to the provision of information services that mimicked the "soft skills" demanded of an emergent third-sector

workforce. The service role adopted by the Company, styling itself as a “visual informer,”⁸ reveals a prescient recognition of new economic models as well as a conflicted attitude toward the social possibilities and effects of new telecommunications technologies. Unlike traditional information specialists, NETCO’s visual informers added value to informational transactions by handling data in a “sensitive manner.”⁹

The social ambitions of NETCO spurred its protagonists to improvise an underground economy in the isolated circumstances of mid-1960s Vancouver (a city dubbed “Terminal,” not without reason). Emerging out of an experiment in communal art practice known as IT, an anonymous collaboration between BAXTER& and John Friel (1939–1972), the birth of NETCO in 1966 (initially known as N.E. Baxter Thing Co.) was marked by a brief but intense period of reorganization and rebranding. BAXTER& served as company President from 1966, with Ingrid Baxter being promoted to the rank of Co-President in 1970, following NETCO’s legal incorporation in 1969. Beginning operations as a legally registered name, N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. ended by being a fully-fledged member of the Vancouver Board of Trade (in 1971). Conceived as an “umbrella” for diverse interests and activities,¹⁰ NETCO’s company structure encompassed a flexible directory of “departments”: Thing, Research, Movie, Project, ACT & ART, Service, COP, Printing, Photography, Communications, Consulting. While this inventory attests to the eclectic objectives of N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., the pre-eminence of service within the company’s mandate is also legible, as it is in its articles of incorporation:

- i. To produce sensitivity information;
- ii. To provide a consultation and evaluation service with respect to all things;
- iii. To produce, manufacture, import, export, buy, sell, and otherwise deal in things of all kinds.¹¹

Unlike artist-industry collaborations, such as E.A.T., that attempted to bridge the gap between art and industry, N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. cheerfully occupied the margins of traditional artistic, corporate, and domestic practices. The split personality of the Company was captured by New York critic Lucy Lippard, in a June 1969 *artscanada* article. Writing in reference to the liminal status of NETCO President, IAIN BAXTER&, Lippard wrote that, “... he can be as commercial as any businessman, as free as any artist.”¹² Neither narrowly critical of the corporate structures that it inhabited, nor naively optimistic about the potential for industry to facilitate technically-ambitious art projects, the N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. preferred to expand and explode the mythologies of networked society through an inhabitation of the social roles forecast by contemporary management and media theorists.

NETCO’s futurologist of choice, Canadian media guru Marshall McLuhan (1911–1980), was a constant source of inspiration for its experiments in creative administration. McLuhan’s extracurricular dabblings in business may have been equally paradigmatic for the N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. as the Toronto professor’s popular writings. In March 1956, McLuhan entered a partnership with “Idea Consultants” Corrine and William Hagon, and Murray Paulin.¹³ Characterized by McLuhan biographer W. Terrence Gordon as a “little firm with big ideas,”¹⁴ Idea Consultants – like N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. a decade later – provided a platform for understanding real-world media structures and figures (such as the Vice-President of Colgate Palmolive, to whom McLuhan wrote proposing innovations in game show design). Although McLuhan’s association with Idea Consultants was short-lived, and ultimately unprofitable, it was not the last of his commercial ventures. In 1973 McLuhan was promoting a substitute for commercial deodorants, invented by his cousin Ross Hall. Christened “Prohtex” by the acoustically attuned McLuhan, this improbable service product resonates with the do-it-yourself spirit that informs many of NETCO’s toy-like objects.¹⁵

McLuhan’s 1972 collaborative text with electrical engineer and consultant Barrington (“Barry”) Nevitt, *Take Today: The Executive as Dropout*, is exemplary of the Canadian theorist’s interrogation of the transformed features of the electronic organization. “In the world of electric information,” speculated McLuhan and Nevitt, “all centres of power become marginal.”¹⁶ William Wood (1993) has explored the geographical resonance of this radical proposition.¹⁷ However, the work of N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. suggests that its management team was equally attentive to the purely organizational effects of the new functions of management inventoried by McLuhan (as formerly marginal roles assumed a newly central status in the post-industrial business).

The hidden force of change is the new speed that alters all configurations of power. The new speed creates a new hidden ground against which the old ground becomes the figure of the dropout. The function of the dropout is to reveal the new hidden ground or environment. The role of the typical “drop-in” or consultant is to prop up the collapsing foundations.¹⁸

In its role as “dropout” – exemplar of “non-organizational man, the stay at home commuter” – NETCO transformed the drop-in function of the conventional consultant described by McLuhan and Nevitt in the passage above into a central concern of the electric business of the future.¹⁹

Perhaps inspired by McLuhan's omnivorous wordplay, many of the most radical gestures deployed by NETCO personnel in their capacity as vanguard service providers were not structural, but linguistic. A voracious consumer of popular management studies and motivational literature, BAXTER& collaged appropriated administrative slogans to fashion novel recombinations of "business-speak." The effect was a non-linear script that mimicked the *pattern* of organizational speech, but voided its contents. Of contemporary business literature BAXTER& has stated that, "I embraced all that information. It patterned my way of thinking."²⁰ NETCO's exploration of the changing role of the artist in tandem with the purported shift from a manufacturing to a service economy (even as the much-touted arrival of a "paperless" society failed to materialize, or, more accurately, to de-materialize), points to an awareness of, and critical engagement with, the conceit of an information age or post-industrial society posited by such leading intellectuals as Fritz Machlup, McLuhan (1964), and Daniel Bell.²¹ NETCO's investigation of the contradictions and limitations of this so-called third sector thesis frequently took the form of a playful negotiation of the soft skills (prime among them being "flexibility") identified by organizational experts as the prerequisites for success in a service-intensive economy. NETCO's investigation of the value added by "emotional labour" is astonishingly prescient in light of recent critical information society studies:

Work-based skills have been replaced by managerial perceptions of social skills. This enhances the power of those who decide whether the worker 'has what it takes'; there are no objective skills that can be appealed to in disputes or dismissals, only subjective assessments (coloured by personal values and prejudices). ...

*Interpersonal interaction is the new key skill for many jobs. But given the subjective element in judgments in this area, the power held over employees may become more arbitrary and less subject to negotiation.*²²

The ascendance of soft skills and new attitudinal indicators during the peak of artist-industry collaborations is evident in Maurice Tuchman's report (1971) on the Art & Technology program of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Reflecting on the successes and failures of the A&T program, Tuchman wrote that, "We can now conclude that two factors largely determined whether or not a collaboration would result from our preliminary efforts. The first consideration had to do simply with the artist's *personality* [my emphasis]."²³ Significantly, Tuchman singles out for attention the failed collaboration between BAXTER& and Garrett Corporation

(which involved a proposal to produce remote-controlled, inflatable cloud sculptures) as evidence of the newly decisive importance of soft skills in artist-industry collaborations conducted within the context of California's service-driven economy: "Iain Baxter's seeming frivolity was worrisome to Garrett."²⁴ The deliberate failure of BAXTER& to comfortably or fully assume a dematerialized or networked identity underlines the limitations of the information society thesis in general. That is, the failure — noted by a growing community of scholars — of a "weightless" economy to supercede older, manufacturing-based models of production.²⁵

Perhaps the most poignant of NETCO's interventions in the nascent third-sector economy of the late 1960s and early 1970s was its participation in 1970 in both the Vancouver and Seattle iterations of the annual conference of the Data Processing Management Association (DPMA). Installing themselves in the midst of such "legitimate," multinational, computing enterprises as IBM, 3M, and Xerox, N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. personnel, posing as consultants, impishly disrupted the unwritten conventions of conference attendance by installing television sets that played psychedelic films by the Whitney brothers accompanied by raga music. A model sporting one of N.E. Thing Co. Ltd.'s trademark inflatable, vinyl dresses distributed buttons proclaiming "G.N.G." BAXTER& has explained the meaning of this cryptic slogan thus:

N.E. THING CO. LTD.

*We're mainly concerned with GROSS NATIONAL GOOD. All these years, industry has been creating a gross national product. But, along with it, has come a gross national by-product, like pollution. We want to help business combine GNP with GNG. They'll continue to make a profit but they'll also make friends.*²⁶

NETCO Director of Special Projects, Paul Woodrow, staffed the booth, which included a large "stop" sign that engaged passers-by in perceptual retraining by commanding them to "go." Woodrow's principle charge, however, was fielding questions from puzzled visitors:

*[W]hen they'd walk up, they'd say "What do you do?", and we would say "Well, what do you think we do?["] They would say whatever they thought and we would say, "You're right!" — and that's how we'd handle it!*²⁷

BAXTER& has reported that "[a] lot of people come up and kind of question us, and in a sense, they're questioning themselves."²⁸ The consciousness-raising mandate of the Company was realized in part by giving away manilla folders printed with koan-like sayings such as "considering this statement as a MIRROR ... reflect on your company's image," which attendees were invited to employ as containers for other conference materials.²⁹ In a similar spirit, BAXTER& s lapel button read, "My Computer Understands Me."³⁰ Underlying such seemingly unserious gestures was a serious attempt to unseat popular perceptions of machines as sterile and forbidding:

LOGO OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF DPMA,
SEATTLE, 1970.

Machines have always been used for practical things ... We're trying to show that they can be fun. ... Today's business executive has to become concerned about people, and beauty, and surroundings.³¹

The jovial, ten-foot, inflatable punch card, which hung in NETCO's conference booth, challenged preconceptions of computer hardware by proposing new attitudinal attributes. In keeping with the flexibility of this advertising-inspired vinyl object,³² BAXTER& was anxious not to frighten away potential business for the company through rigid tactics at DPMA. "I'm convinced there should be more humour in business ... we're not doing any hard sell," he reportedly remarked.³³

During the four days of the Seattle leg of the DPMA conference it is estimated that as many as twenty thousand visitors were introduced to the work of N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., far more than any traditional art venue could have accommodated. “[T]here was a really nice response [from conference attendees],” reported BAXTER&, “because it was very refreshing for them.”³⁴ The receptivity of some conference-goers to the unorthodox actions of Company representatives points to an existing appetite for fresh approaches to organizational psychology, as well as the emergence of new business models and management techniques emphasizing creativity. The evidence of DPMA’s conference program supports this thesis: it included a seminar series in which such “soft” topics as “in-service education and staff training” comingled with more traditional topics in computing, such as system analysis and system design.³⁵

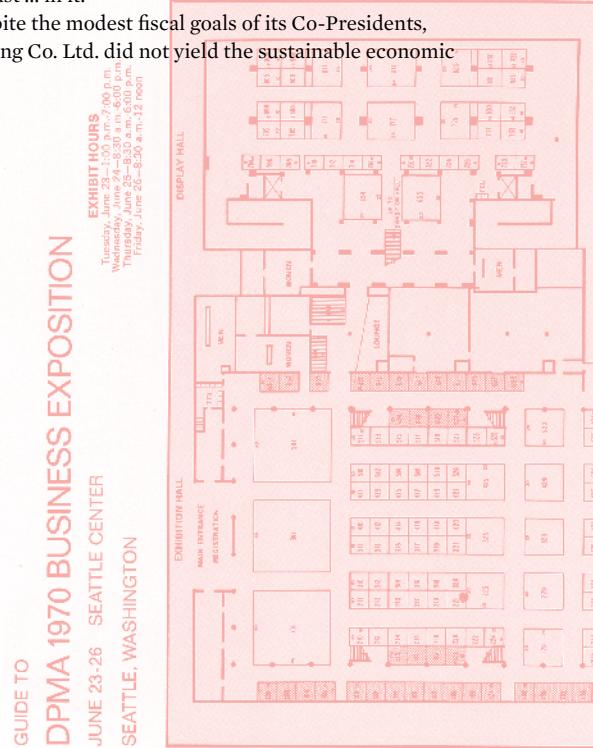
In his 1968 book, *Creativity and Performance in Industrial Organization*, management expert Andrew Crosby challenged conventional managerial wisdom by declaring that, “[t]here is room for creativity on any scale in industry.”³⁶ One approach that promised better results for 1960s businesses by harnessing their creative potential was Synectics. Founded by William Gordon, the Synectics movement preached corporate success through the veritable Dadaist principle of “joining together … different and apparently irrelevant elements.”³⁷ The technique called for the formation of a semi-autonomous group of individuals to be selected by a pair of invited “Synectors” from within an organization on the basis of their diverse backgrounds. The mission of the group was to work toward the common goal of enhancing the creative potential of the organization as a whole by exploring the creative process itself. Intriguingly, the structural features of the Synectics training program mirror the bifurcated organization chart of NETCO, as well as the non-verbal teaching techniques pioneered by BAXTER& during his tenure as a professor at the University of British Columbia:

In all training sessions at least two Synectors are present. When the use of mechanisms must be explained, two Synectors can act it out – one Synector would have to describe it abstractly. Also, two Synectors can transcend the authoritarianism associated with teaching by naturally, and without pressure, giving examples of how Synectics functions.³⁸

As in NETCO's corporate practice, industry played a critical role in the success of Gordon's experimental Cambridge Synectics group. "The most definitive experimental climate for testing Synectics theory," declared Gordon, "has been industry."³⁹ The entrepreneurial swagger of Gordon's Synectics writings approach the hustle of subsequent N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. announcements. Indeed, in places, Gordon's *Synectics* reads like BAXTER&'s pleas for corporate support: "[t]he Cambridge Synectics group needs problems to solve and groups with which to work in order to continue its research. Industry needs problems solved and must have creative groups within it to continue producing basic novelty."⁴⁰ Whether or not Synectics theory may have informed the pedagogical tactics adopted by the Baxters is unknown. Like an incorrigible Synector, BAXTER& has consistently adopted an educational stance in his business dealings that relies on the generative potential of "paradoxes and analogues."⁴¹ Unlike exponents of Synectics, however, BAXTER& has always brought a strong, satirical impulse to bear upon all his activities.

The intramural independence enforced by Synectics training was intended to enhance opportunities for entrepreneurial thinking within organizations: “[t]he group should feel itself apart from its company, yet hinged to it,” advised Gordon.⁴² As William Wood (1993) has analyzed at length, a similar tension between centre and periphery obtains in the working methods of N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. Whereas Wood ascribes a primarily geographical currency to this problematic, BAXTER& has underlined the properly organizational dimension of centre-periphery dynamics in NETCO’s operations. The comments of BAXTER& in a 1979 interview with Robin White resonate with the organizational principles of Synectics: “You can penetrate structures using communications. But that can only happen when you’re somewhere else. Because if you’re there, you don’t penetrate, you’re just ... in it.”⁴³

Despite the modest fiscal goals of its Co-Presidents, N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. did not yield the sustainable economic



THINGS UNITED AND NON-CATEGORICAL: N.E. THING CO. LTD.

AN INTERVIEW WITH INGRID BAXTER

Grant Arnold Your university studies were in music and physical education. When did you come to think of yourself as a visual artist?

Ingrid Baxter I don't think I've yet reached the point of thinking of myself as a visual artist. I've done visual art, audio art, sound sensitivity information, movement sensitivity information. How would you define art?

GA That's a slippery question. Art is defined if it gets put in an art discourse at some point — a museum or other range of activities.

IB That's quite limiting. This question I found very interesting because it informed some of the earlier experiences that Iain and I had when we went to Japan. The openness of the Japanese way of thinking made us realize how we in the Western world are very categorical, which can be very close-minded. This then influenced the projects that we did with the N.E. Thing Company in creating a very categorical company, and doing various works that we called "sensitivity information." They were intended to make people more sensitive to various things. The N.E. Thing Company then became an umbrella concept to state the fact that we knew we were doing things in many different categories and ways, but that they were all united and non-categorical.

GA When did that trip to Japan take place?

IB 1961. Our son Tor was born there.

GA Well, you address this a bit earlier — the idea of N.E. Thing Company being a categorical entity that did non-categorical activities. In one of the published statements from 1969–1971, you used the term "visual informers" instead of "artists." Can you talk about how that came about?

IB We played around with the idea in one of our projects, "What is Art?" If we were invited to do a talk someplace we

would hand out cards with the words, "What is Art?" written on them, and they could then write, or draw, or whatever on it. So we played with this concept of [...] when we were creating a company, asking the question of whether something was business or still art. We were creating "visual sensitivity information" — we were making information that would help people be more sensitive visually. We then carried that further into "audio sensitivity information" — or music — and then further, "movement sensitivity information," which would be dance.

One of the shows that I really enjoyed was at the National Gallery in the old Warren building. We did a concert, a performance in their auditorium, which had three different advertisements in the newspapers: a dance that would happen at three o'clock in the afternoon; a sculpture would happen at three o'clock in the afternoon, and a concert would happen at three o'clock in the afternoon. Depending on which ad a person read, they would have frame of mind — is it dance, is it music, is it a sculpture? And the same thing would happen. So that's again playing with the perceptions of both us and other people.

I think one of the really nice compliments on sending that idea out and people receiving that was by Charles American from a station in California, one of the FM stations. He changed his title from a music station to a "sound sensitivity information station." He asked us for permission to perform a fence, and had a couple carpenters to build the fence as a concert. He also had a fellow come up and ask if he could join in the jam session. That's the whole art question that led us to this "sensitive thinking" about this "sensitivity information."

GA I guess a part of the thinking of that was to move away from the idea of the artist as someone who determines meaning ultimately, pointing out that instead, meaning is determined by the context and the receiver as much as by the artists.

IB At the show at the National Gallery, in 1969, I was walking around the gallery with Pierre Théberge, who had put on the show and invited us. We were the first living Canadian artists to put on a show at the National Gallery — which was

nice. Charlotte Townsend was with us, and she was there at the gallery. We were standing in front of a painting, I do not know who the artist was, but it was a painting of a pregnant woman. So there was Pierre, who would never have a baby; and then me, who had been in the same shape as the lady on the wall; and Charlotte, who had not yet been in that same shape of the figure on the wall. I was thinking how differently each one of us looks to come to that same thing. So that encapsulates the idea of the sender, receiver, perception, and so forth.

IB The company thing — I can go a little bit further on that. We created the company mainly from the situation of wanting to do many different styles and types of work and events. Once we had the company, it opened many doors for us to penetrate to other companies. So at the National Gallery we had the telecopier, which we could send telecopier information, which was a new medium at the time. We could send images and penetrate into companies at night, and they would receive it in the morning. That opened us up to the Vancouver Board of Trade. As a company, we could go into the Vancouver Board of Trade, and talk about “visual sensitivity information” of the general public. One of our statements, “We consult with 1% of you,” made the statement that many companies don’t care about aesthetics. It was just again opening up sensitivity information in that form.

N.E. THING CO. LTD.

GA What kind of reception did you get from the Board of Trade in Vancouver? Did they find you interesting, and want to engage with you?

IB Yeah, the Board of Trade was very helpful and good. They would help us if there was a display or conference in which we wanted to participate. When we did this, we would set up a booth and have people come by, we would have information to hand out at a trade fair. All the different companies would come by and talk to us. There was curiosity about what we would do, now that they could hire us to do consulting on visual aspects on their companies.

GA You mean, how some of their materials might look?



INGRID BAXTER (SEATED) IN THE N.E. THING CO. LTD. TRADE BOOTH AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE DATA PROCESSING MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (DPMA), SEATTLE, 1970. PHOTO COURTESY TAIN BAXTERS.

IB Yes, not just graphic design, but going beyond that.

GA That kind of leads to another question. Another one of the position statements that N.E. Thing Company put out read, “A change in the value systems in society is one of the reasons for the incorporation of the company.” So you did see yourself as an agent of social change in some ways?

IB Yes, that kind of stumped me, so I had to think about that for a minute. It was forty years ago, at that youthful age we always felt we could change something and make something better. I think about one of our buttons — G.N.G. — Gross National Good instead of Gross National Product.

GA Another problem that you identified in your position statements had to do with the marginal economic status for the artist, and that artists had a hard time in making a living. Basically, there wasn’t really a private market for contemporary art at that time. Most funding came from museums, which would be relatively meager in terms of making a living. Did you see the company as somehow addressing that issue?

IB I don’t think that the N.E. Thing Company would address that, because we never really made a lot of money out of N.E. Thing Company per se. I remember that the conference at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design was sponsored by a cigarette company, based out of Toronto. Anyway, there were about twenty artists invited to that conference, and the subject was how artists make a living. We went around the table, and each artist said that they teach or paint houses, so they can do their art, or whatever. Joseph Beuys came to the table, and he said, “I do my art so that I can teach,” and he was the only one that said that.

GA Was it fairly early on that you came up with the idea of “aesthetically rejected things” and “aesthetically claimed things?”

IB I’d have to go back and find the dating on that. Looking through magazines I was always interested in the concept of the *Good Housekeeping* “seal of approval.” So there’s the source! We probably don’t need to take you down that path... [laughs], we thought it was pretty powerful, we thought, that we could do this — we could do a seal of approval on ways of seeing thing and aesthetically claimed things. Then we thought, if you’re going to claim things, what if you reject them? Then it’s A.R.T. — Aesthetically Rejected Things. So we did a few of those, just purposely... I think you mentioned a couple of categories, but it was just art in general, we didn’t pick on any one person, just a couple of aesthetically rejected things.

The idea of designating something as art, and something as rejected – the second it's official – it's not really art any more.

GA In looking back in the recorded history of N.E. Thing Company, it seems that you did not quite get the recognition that you should have. A lot of systems have really focused on Iain. When I first worked at the Vancouver Art Gallery, all of the N.E. Thing Company works were not listed as N.E. Thing Company in the database; they were listed as being by Iain Baxter. We had that changed eventually. I remember reading in the brochure that was published with the National Gallery show, or perhaps another one, and it really only mentioned Iain. Did you feel that was an issue, and was there a kind of gender bias in the way that played out?

IB Yes. Was and is. Thank you for picking up on that. I think that is partly a societal thing: men get the attention, and wives are just wives. You asked if that was a gender situation, I think that it probably was. If it had been two men doing something together, like Gilbert and George, then probably both names would be there. Jules Hilliard did a book (when we taught at York University we got to know him a bit) on women, famous women...I shouldn't say famous – famous art pieces that would have men's names on them, but were all done by women. So I think that I suffered, and *still* suffer from that societal aspect of not being deemed as a full partner in the works. Maybe this interview will change that. No, thank you for changing things.

GA It seemed to be something going on in a lot of places. I don't know if it is a carryover from the idea that the artist as a singular entity or singular person. You obviously traveled often, you mentioned before about being back and forth across Canada. What might have affected that idea of Iain being more visible in terms of recorded things? Were you able to travel as much as he did, or did you have to care for the children?

IB No, I think we did most of our traveling together. The year in Europe we took the kids out of school and went for the whole year, thank you again Canada Council. But we were together pretty much, he wasn't off on his own, he was an at-home father to the kids, so that was great, yeah. I don't really know, and often times it is women who did not, but you would think women would be more sensitive to my role in the N.E. Thing Company, but sometimes I'm also forgotten by women. Nancy Shaw did an excellent job in that catalogue which was titled, *You are now in the middle of a N.E. Thing Co. Landscape: works by Iain and Ingrid Baxter, 1965–1971*, and I think you referred to that earlier – so that was good.

GA This next question extends a bit beyond the 1960s. N.E. Thing Company became involved in all sorts of enterprises, such as running a restaurant, and having a photography lab. Both of these, and other projects, required a lot of energy and resources to keep them going. How did you do that?

IB For the Cibachrome Lab we partnered with David Honey, and then he eventually bought us out, and he did all the work there. He was really good.

The restaurant – Iain was there most of the time. This was one place where I was at home with the kids, and Iain was more at the restaurant, and that was into the late nights, and so forth.

GA There are all sorts of mythology around the restaurant. A person once told me that if you actually ordered a meal it wasn't made there, they went and bought it somewhere else.

IB That's a myth? No, we had a really good chef.

Well, learning experiences – all of these things go back to the Vancouver Board of Trade. Each thing we've done seems to be a learning experience, and I guess that's what life is all about. We are learning to use the technology of microphones, where you sit, and what you do today. In the restaurant we had a manager, and the restaurant was often times very busy, but each month it was losing money and losing money. So that was really what happened with the restaurant, and eventually we had to close.

GA You did a number of other things. I remember first coming across the photographs related to you sponsoring a midget Hockey team. Are there more of those types of things that you remember?

IB Companies do those types of things, don't they? I don't know if I can think of any off the top of my head.

GA It seemed like a really interesting way of expanding the audience, and taking art outside of venues. Try to imagine what it would have been like to play on a team called "N.E. Thing Company" as a kid – that must have been a lot of fun.



IB I think if I look back over most of the things we did, I think “fun” is the word I can remember to characterize almost everything. It was fun to go into a group of architects, and give them a button that looked like it was all black, but if you looked closely it was dark blue on black saying, “V.I.P.” — visually illiterate persons, then we discussed — in architecture — some of the things that can be much more interesting than what is being done.

GA I guess the idea of humour is disarming. Humour, as well as being a corporate entity, would allow you an entrance into certain situations that might otherwise be hard to get into. That is what allows you to bring certain other issues into the situation, such as issues about instrumentality, or what is for the public good, and those sorts of things. So the humour is subversive. ◉

*Excerpted from a longer interview included in Vancouver Art in the Sixties: Ruins in Process.
<http://www.vancouverartinthesixties.com>*

N.E. THING CO. LTD.



N.E. THING CO., LTD., TRADE BOOTH AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE DATA PROCESSING MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (DPMA), SEATTLE, 1970. PHOTO COURTESY IAIN BAXTER.

THE ARTIST AND INDUSTRY

by Billy Klüver

December 16, 1968

I am very pleased to be here tonight, and to have the opportunity to talk to you about the relationship between the artistic and the industrial communities, to describe some of the activities, and to suggest possibilities of the development of this relationship. I will discuss the artist's condition in terms of the process of making art. We assume a shift in industrial interest must take place, from buying art to supporting the making of art. This means an investment in process and possibility, rather than in product and posterity — an investment in experimentation, rather than an investment in objects. This change can be thought of as the difference between the investment in a steam engine in the nineteenth century, and in a computer in the twentieth.

Galbraith described industry's involvement in the arts in a talk here ten years ago, in terms of industry as the old type art patron, which would now become interested in art as it became financially secure and affluent. It was maybe too early in 1959, to see that, in fact, the moving force in changing the relationship between industry and the arts would not be the affluent, secure, art-collecting industry, but the artist himself. It is in the artist's desire to use the new technology as material to motivate the difficult social adjustment that must take place, that I offer for industry to accept the artist on his own terms. Recently, in a symposium on this subject in London, Ray Gunther, a Labour Member of Parliament, suggested that it would take thirty years for industry to accept the artist.

The artist wants to use the new technology. He wants to create within the technological world, to satisfy his traditional involvement with the relevant forces shaping society. One hundred years ago, technological discoveries gave friendly nudges to the development of art. Gombrich writes:

The development of the portable camera began the same year that saw the rise of impressionist painting. The camera helped to discover the charm of the fortuitous view of the unexpected angle. Moreover, the development of photography was bound to push artists further on their way of exploration and experiment. There was no need for painting to perform a task, which a mechanical device could perform better and more cheaply.

A TALK PRESENTED AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

But the fast development of the new technology has changed these friendly nudges into an avalanche of possibilities for the contemporary artist. The traditional view of the artist's materials was that their physical properties were known both to the artist and the public, e.g. oil, marble, musical instruments. It was the way the artist made use of these well-known materials that described the boundaries of his artistic ability.

Today, the artist moves into working with materials where unfamiliarity with the material and its physical limitations become an important element of his work. The old assumption that the artist must know his material before he acts no longer has the same meaning. The contemporary artist is developing an attitude toward his new materials similar to that of the experimental scientist. Experimentation and process become an integral part of the artist's work. The interest is shifting from the permanent finished work to involvement with process and exploration of possibilities, which, for all practical purposes, appear infinite in number.

Thus, it is essential for the artist to have permanent and organic access not only to existing technical facilities and materials, but also to facilities for experimentation. Only industry can give the artist what he wants. It would be, at this point, not only wrong, but sheer indulgence to think in terms of setting up separate laboratories and facilities for artists to work in.

I want to say right away, that not every artist is interested in technology. Claes Oldenburg described his attitude to me: "I make intimate art with restricted means. I am not interested in the intricacies of a technological situation." I am sure that he is echoing the feelings of many other artists. One interesting fact, though, is that a wide range of artists do, in fact, want to work within a technological environment. They include painters, sculptors, poets, composers, dancers, etc. The artist,

"UNTITLED (ÖYYVIND FÄLHSTRÖM) "KISSES SWEETER THAN WINE," OCTOBER 20, 1966, BLACK-AND-WHITE PHOTOGRAPH. PHOTO BY PETER MOORE © ESTATE OF PETER MOORE/VAGA, NYC

by definition, uses means that are appropriate to him, whether it be a pencil or a laser beam.

Unfortunately, there exists no systematically collected data on what the relationship between the artist and industry has been up to this point. My comments here will be based on personal experiences, rather than on a rigorous study, which, I might add, is sorely needed. Most members of the audience know of situations where artists have been involved with industry in one form or another. A rough estimate within E.A.T. is that at least a couple of hundred artists have had direct contact with industry, in terms of materials, support, working there, etc.

Some general characteristics of the artist's relationship to industry are apparent. First, the personal approach of the artist to an industry for materials is usually successful. In the case of the use of machinery or instruments, there is always idle equipment, which the artist can be given access to: computers, vacuum forming lasers, etc. All these successful approaches have been made through middle management, heads of PR, sales and marketing departments, and research departments. The second or third level management in the industrial structure can make decisions to support the artist without requiring approval from above. This is why the personal approach by the artist is so important.

In many cases, the person in middle management feels he gets something personal for himself out of the relationship. In fact, the artist has plenty to offer if he wants to — a different social environment, glamour, etc. This personal approach is successful for a limited time. But the initial motivations for it, such as public relations, publicity, interest in its unique quality, will not sustain themselves over a long period of time or through many artists' requests. I call this a "saturation effect."

The second general area in the artist-industry relationship is artist-in-residence programs, where the artist works within industry for periods of six months to one year, doing research without predetermined goals. The artists are usually on the payroll. Such artist-in-residence programs have been going on at Bell Laboratories since 1962, with one or more artists on the payroll in the computer division. Gerald Strang, Jim Tenney, Ussachevsky, Stan Vanderbeek, Xenakis, Jean Claude Risset, and Max Neuhaus are some of the people involved at Bell Labs. Singer Company has initiated a similar program with Mel Bockner being the artist-in-residence for this year.

Local 1 of Amalgamated Lithographers of America has set up an experimental lithographic workshop for artists to use their advanced equipment. Frank Stanton of CBS announced an interesting extension of these artist-in-residence programs a year ago, whereby the CBS Foundation would provide the funds for the salary of two artists to work in the industry appropriate to them.

Another area is the short-term, bounded project of the type that Maurice Tuchman is initiating. Here, the artist generally has a specific idea of what he wants to do, and the industry

provides the facilities and manpower for him to complete his project.

Perhaps the most significant step in the artist's approach to technology has been the development of collaborations between engineers, scientists, and artists. There are probably five hundred collaborations of this kind going on at this moment. The one-to-one relationship gives the artist access to a wide range of technology. Up to this point, collaborations have taken place outside the industrial structure. It seems likely that as this kind of relationship develops, and the projects become larger and more ambitious, requests for industrial support of these projects may come from the engineers themselves. One observation is that in any activity that centres on the use of the computer, the artist's adjustment to the industrial situation is simpler. The reason for this may be that the artist works directly with the computer as a tool, rather than with people.

I think everyone will agree that the present forms of relationships between artist and industry are not sufficient. So far, there has been no commitment by industrial leadership to a change in policy, and any attempt on our part to bring up such a question has resulted in a dismissal with a phrase such as, "If a member of my staff would like to do it, okay, but..." Without such a commitment there can be no permanent relationship established. Getting materials or having access to equipment from the middle management level does not imply this kind of deep-rooted commitment, nor does it necessarily lead to it.

Another shortcoming of the present situation is the attitude that the artist can perform a given function for industry, which it "pays off" directly. It is argued that the artist can inspire: i) new design ideas; ii) new ideas for use of products; iii) new patents; and, iv) publicity and public relations. The artist can also be a "stirrer-upper" who gets employees interested in their work.

I feel this attitude is wrong for several reasons:

1. There already exist professionals in industry who translate new aesthetic ideas into industrial products.
2. The artist cannot be used as a source of new ideas. There are already too many profitable ones in industry.
3. The argument that the artist will discover patentable processes is becoming meaningless, as patents are increasingly used for protection, and not innovation.

It is unrealistic to think that industry is interested in the artist for publicity or public relations. In fact, in many cases the company prefers not to have its name associated with the project. Further, the company will not trust its public relations or publicity to a situation they do not control, like the art world.

While all of these things may function in individual cases, on a one-time basis, they cannot provide a basis for a

permanent relationship between the artist and industry, since the only thing the artist does professionally is make art.

The most important hindrance to the development of an organic relationship between the artist and industry is the lack of understanding in industrial circles of the role of the contemporary artist — what he is and how he functions. This is reinforced by society's ambivalent attitude toward the contemporary artist. A recognition and understanding must be developed of the artist's right to experiment freely, a right that is not yet firmly established. It must be acknowledged that there is a distinction between support of culture and support of contemporary art: culture is something familiar, safe, and unambivalent, whereas support of contemporary art is moving into an involvement with process and uncertainty.

As long as industry's relationship to the artist is product and result oriented, a viable relationship cannot be established. In order for industry to recognize the value of the contemporary artist there must exist, I feel, a clear definition of what the contemporary artist is, and an understanding of how he works. Such a definition of what an artist is might look something like this:

1. The artist must have free access to materials to experiment and to learn and to explore.
2. The only business of the artist is to make art.
3. The artist is not dependent on prior education, like the architect or the designer is; he may or may not have been educated in the field in which he is working.
4. The artist is autonomous; he generates his own work, and takes full responsibility for it.
5. He is always pushing the limits of the definition of art. The artist cannot be defined by his product.
6. The artist wants to make a living from his work. He is a professional who wants to get something done. The only definition of avant-garde that functions in this situation is, as Robert Rauschenberg has said, "It takes more time."

Just as the industrial business community has not come to terms with the contemporary artist, so too, the art world has not developed a coherent way in which to deal with the demands of the artist to use technology. The main example of this is the fragmentation of information, and the lack of communication about the experiences of artists who have worked in industry. It must be recognized in both art and industrial communities that indulgence in esthetic theories, fads, classifications of good and bad art, will not help the artist lay his hands on a particular plastic material. Both communities

must work to create a neutral situation based on a clear sense of confidence in the artist's work. There must be an effort made to develop coherent institutional forms that respond to and fill the artist's needs.

The scientific community established such institutional identity in twentieth century terms, which protects the scientist's freedom to experiment and operate, with no need to justify the competence and output of each individual scientist. No one asks a scientist why he wants to use a laser beam. Like the scientific community, the artistic community needs a coherent representation toward the industrial world, in order to establish the artist's freedom to operate as an artist in society. Galbraith suggests this analogy when he says: "The American businessman, having accommodated himself to the scientist in the course of accommodating himself to the twentieth century must now come to terms with the artist." The success of this accommodation can be measured by a rough calculation I made that, for every dollar the contemporary artist sees, the scientist sees one thousand.

I suggest that it is the responsibility of the industrial community and the artistic community to come to terms with each other; that each has the responsibility to understand the other, and to develop viable forms for a continuing relationship.

I take it for granted that it is impossible to say what the final relationship between artist and industry will look like. The following suggestions seem to be the most fruitful way to proceed at this point. First is to encourage and push every conceivable type of project or involvement. Industry must not get the idea that artists' projects are one-shot commitments. They must understand the seriousness of the artist's commitment to using technology in his work.

Industry is not work about money, but about shortage of manpower. Thus, in approaches to industry it must be made clear that the artist's project is relevant to the capacity of the industry and, that it will appeal to the engineer, scientist, or workman from the point of view of his professional field.

That industry does not yet understand this is evidenced by the experience of one artist who, in coming into a large industry, was first introduced to a man who collected bull-fighting posters. When this did not give him the help he needed, he was introduced to a man who collects African art. Finally, he met a technical person who was not at all interested in art, who said, "The person you ought to talk to is..." and then he could get to work. I might add that the less you know about art the better off you will be.

Second, there must be developed a way of gathering information on all the experiences of artists in industry. This information must be available to the people in the art community who are trying to develop the forms of the

relationship to industry in order to develop realistic ideas of what works at this time. This information and propaganda about the role and function of the contemporary artist in society must be disseminated throughout the industrial community through public relations, conferences, and personal approaches, the main target of which is top management, particularly assistants to presidents who, in our experience, have the power to push these things through, and would be designated to do so. The ultimate goal is to push for policy changes so that the artist can be accommodated within industry — have their own case number within industry. I must emphasize that the commitment of industry to the artist is not a matter of begging and pleading, but of making industrial leadership aware of the importance of the artist's role in society, and of industry's responsibility for supporting his activities.

Before I finish, I want to try to answer two questions, which may be on your mind: Will industry do this? And, why should they do it?

I am convinced that industry will do it, if given the proper language and ways to deal with the artist. American industry is increasingly becoming function-oriented, rather than product-oriented, which involves an increasing involvement in the environment, and in society. They are basically committed to "an investment in man," to use Myrdal's term. To say this in the middle of what may well be the bloodiest war in history may seem an indulgence on my part, but let me give you some of the indications of industry's increased involvement in society: industry is committed to job training; education is big business, industry is taking on increasing responsibility in the ghetto, and will have to deal with the situation in the under-developed countries. It seems logical that this involvement in society should include the artist.

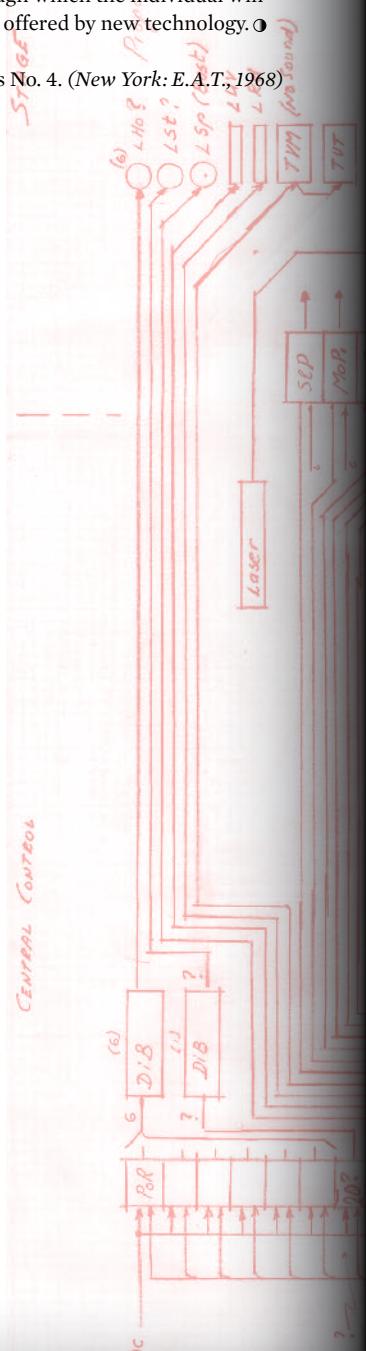
Why should an effort be made to provide the artist with access to technology? The artist is a positive force in society, whose concern is with the individual. He influences the way we perceive our individuality. He asserts life's affirmative aspects. The artist must be able to work with the relevant materials of our society, to operate on a meaningful level. I want him to be able to deal realistically with the world I live in, and not be confined to his garret. I believe this involvement of the artist has significance in two areas of great importance for our future. The first is the shape of our environment. Very little experimentation goes on today using the new possibilities technology has opened up to create new environments. An important source for such experimentation could be the artist whose increased involvement with the environment you are all well aware of.

The second area has to do with the nature of technology. One characteristic of its development is that the cost per

function decreases with time. Technology generates activity, and as it becomes more accessible and cheaper it can be used as a material, and can give rise to an infinite number of possibilities for individual expression. I feel the technical community has not explored or developed the possibilities of the new technology, and much of the activity has served to separate the individual from technology. The artist can function as a catalyst to bring technology to the individual, and make him aware of his own possibilities for exploring and participating in the resources of the new technological environment. The new technology is the most important phenomenon that will shape our future. It is the responsibility of both the artistic and industrial communities to make it possible for the artist to use technology as material in his art, and catalyze the process through which the individual will participate in the possibilities offered by new technology. ◉

Taken from E.A.T. Proceedings No. 4. (New York: E.A.T., 1968)

E.A.T.



BEGINNING 9 EVENINGS¹

by Michelle Kuo

*"The artist's work is like that of a scientist. It is an investigation which may or may not yield meaningful results; in many cases we only know many years later."*²

—Billy Klüver

In *9 Evenings*, control met calamity. The performance series was a colossal enterprise whose ambition was matched only by its scale; it lasted, appropriately, nine evenings in October 1966, and was attended by approximately ten thousand people. More than thirty engineers from the Bell Labs campus in Murray Hill, New Jersey, worked together with ten artists; their pathological struggles against and with one another brought the working methods of the postwar laboratory and studio into unprecedented intimacy. If these travails have been widely chronicled, the historical reception of the event is much more complex than its contemporary traces indicate. Indeed, *9 Evenings* moved collaboration toward a peculiar kind of collective production, a singular shift that fundamentally altered roles of authorship, disciplinary bounds, and the terms of performance.

In January 1966, Bell Laboratories engineer Billy Klüver and artist Robert Rauschenberg assembled a group to organize a performance program for the Fylkingen Arts Festival in Stockholm. The participants included a number of members of the experimental dance and theatre group Rauschenberg had been working with at Judson Church since 1962, known as "Bastard Theater": Alex Hay, Deborah Hay, Lucinda Childs, Steve Paxton, and Robert Whitman, who had all participated in pieces such as *Spring Training* in 1965. The Fylkingen Festival was seemingly aligned with the interests of the group — speakers slated for the event were Buckminster Fuller, Marshall McLuhan, and Bell Labs's John Pierce.³ On January 14, Pierce, Max Mathews (the "father" of digital music and sound synthesis, also of Bell Labs), and others gathered with Klüver's group of artists to brainstorm ideas. To this list were added Yvonne Rainer, Oyvind Fahlström, composer David Tudor, and John Cage.

Proposals ranged from making use of Telstar, the new telecommunications satellite that came on the heels of Echo I, Rauschenberg's, "Feedback. Use of feedback through speakers and mikes carried by people to create variable sound," to Paxton's inquiry, "Can sound 'materialize' in a space of different

discrete points? Without speakers? Can the surrounding area be silent? Could images, smells, or matter be 'materialized' in this same way?"⁴ During this period, preliminary collaborations ensued; Cecil Coker, for example, contributed synthetic speech technology for vocal effects in Deborah Hay's No. 3 and Rauschenberg's *Linoleum* performances, both of which took place during Alice Denney's NOW festival in Washington, DC, in April and May of 1966.⁵

Subsequently, however, extant correspondence depicts the Festival organizers as unwilling to work with the Americans' exploratory and collaborative approach. Negotiations with Fylkingen fell through in April 1966, and the project was cancelled.⁶ Klüver and the group decided to find another venue for their proposed performances, eventually selecting the 69th Regiment Armory in New York, not by coincidence the site of the 1913 Armory Show. Location secured, a fundraising scramble began. By the middle of August, the group had raised \$12,000 from private donors and corporations — ranging from established art patrons such as Robert Scull, Dominique and John de Menil, and Victor and Sally Ganz, to dealers such as Virginia Dwan and Alfredo Bonino, to the Westinghouse Electric Corporation. Schweber Electronics donated much of the electronics equipment needed for the event.⁷

Now the artists had to adapt their performances to the proportions of the Armory. Where they had been thinking in terms of a space approximately half the size, the Armory would provide a space approximately 150 feet long by 120 feet wide, and a ceiling 160 feet high. Echo and reverberation times were as long as 5.5 seconds. Working on this large scale, many artists became interested in the use of remote control for various props and effects.⁸

As meetings between the artists and engineers progressed, the need for a flexible, wireless, networked control system for the various theatrical elements became apparent. The most ambitious project undertaken was the design and development of the "Theater Electronic Environmental Modular System" (TEEM), for wireless, remote control of lights, sound, video, and other effects. It was the master network of *9 Evenings*, comprised of nearly three hundred components, and used in

C. HERB SCHNEIDER, "9 EVENINGS" ENGINEER DRAWING (ÖYVIND SJÖYVIND FÄLSTRÖM, "KISSES SWEETER THAN WINE", 1966, GRAPHITE ON GRAPH PAPER, COURTESY OF ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG).

some manner by all the artists in their pieces. Klüver described TEEM as the first electronic system built for on-stage use, and a step toward the possibility when the computer could be part of an actual performance.⁹ TEEM began to take shape early in 1966, and a description and engineering diagram of the “Wireless System,” as it was first called, was available to the artists by March 1, 1966. The system went through profound changes as the performance pieces were developing — a process that was to continue until the moment of execution of each event.¹⁰ It was designed originally for use at the Festival in Stockholm with Fylkingen having the option to purchase it afterwards.¹¹

The majority of the electronic equipment was placed at a central control panel, thought of as a “black box” by the engineers. This allowed for the remote control of the elements on the stage (lights, loudspeakers, cameras, microphones, projectors, motors, and so forth), which were linked to the control panel either by cables or by a wireless network. A novel system was developed that involved transmitters and FM receptors: it became possible to use a variety of inputs — movement, sound, electrical signal — to trigger chains of command that could set in motion a whole range of different devices.¹² The wireless control network showed that a single device did not have to function in the same way or produce the same effects. Different components could trigger different chains of command.¹³ On the system’s application for the remote controlled sequences in Rainer’s piece, engineer Per Biorn compared TEEM to the first large-scale, general-purpose computer: “The idea comes from... the ENIAC... which was programmed by patching cords on a telephone switching system, that was how we intended to change the programs.”¹⁴ *9 Evenings* became less a matter of stage design than of creating an overarching electronic and informatic network, one that served as an interface between the technical apparatus, and the performers and engineers.

The problem of such an interface was acute. Numerous accounts of the interaction between the various participants relate an inability to communicate between artists and engineers. The engineer Herbert Schneider (a researcher on radio systems from Bell) recalled, “Initially the artists were in total creative control. Then, after months of working, the whole team was having great difficulty getting things to work... there were communication problems between the artists and engineers that started to alter many of the artists’ ideas.”¹⁵ The solution was to instigate an overall organization and alignment of the technical and artistic aspects as one integrated system of action. Schneider asserted himself as Systems Engineer for the project. He decided to set up an entire control area in the Armory where the wireless control network could be centralized. Moreover, he formulated a series of unique block diagrams to organize the effects of each piece — showing the links between the control area and the devices (such as lights) in the stage area.¹⁶ As seen in the block diagram for the piece *Open Score*, whose main participants were Rauschenberg and engineer Bill Kaminski, these drawings were an innovation of Schneider’s, which both the artists and engineers were able to understand.

This organizational system, and the model of an indeterminate invention — a type of invention without a

stipulated objective or prior knowledge of how the invention might be utilized, as broached in the making of *Oracle* — were, in fact, already standard practice at Bell Labs. The open-endedness of invention had been thoroughly assimilated into corporate research and design, and its mode of systemic organization. The mission of the Labs was stated as “free innovation,” spurring untold scientific and technical discoveries that, it was presumed, would eventually result in new industrial applications — and hence, new market sectors — for the company.¹⁷

By 1966, Klüver’s own statements on failure now recognized this inscription of the unexpected into advanced research and design itself:

“Most industrial firms [today] consider that a research man who fails ninety-six percent of the time is more valuable than one who succeeds more often, because he is involved in truly important experimentation.”¹⁸

Another *9 Evenings* participant, engineer Dick Wolff (an electronics specialist), alluded ironically to the non-productive paradigm of Bell Labs research:

“At Bell your efforts get put on paper and filed away, and no one ever sees them. ...Here at Bell, guys spend months working on a beautiful idea, get it to work, write it up, and throw it away. They build this highly sophisticated equipment to produce this paper. The biggest product coming out of this place is paper. If this turns out to be so with the [9 Evenings] festival, it’s good, it paves the way for future things.”¹⁹

In this sense, the processes in *9 Evenings* repurposed the kind of free research, and de-hierarchized, horizontal management system increasingly practiced at Bell Labs. Artists and engineers began to assume common types of labour: a photograph tellingly documents Cage, Deborah Hay, Simone Forti, and Jim McGee (a holograms engineer) preparing wires together for the system’s control board.

If the work at Bell was moving toward a diffuse, integrated network where power was irreducible to the agency of any one individual or group, however, in *9 Evenings* this kind of organization was not routinized, but instead, resulted in deeply epiphanic and traumatic experiences for its participants. Roles were muddled; artists were forced to relinquish customary control over composition and production. As Forti wrote in her journal,

“Author’s journal 10/8: One of the engineers said, ‘What we need is a lot of unskilled labor.’ And there were two dancers and a composer — Cindy, Yvonne, and Cage — stripping wires. It occurred to me after the second day of putting tiny plugs on wires, at a table at which there were two to three artists at all times doing the same, that the activity, the situation, was an engineer-directed one. Maybe it was that our eyes and fingers had been so concentrated on those little wires for so long that it seemed like a world of wires. Cage said about stripping wires, ‘...this is very mysterious, because you can’t see

what you're doing. You can't see what's under it. It's typical of this technology.”²⁰

And in an incredibly revealing series of questioning, Forti's journal continues with a passage struck out in the original manuscript:

“[Fred Waldhauer was saying that their main problem here is in interconnecting. And that it's the same problem, which is the main problem of the telephone system where the input of each phone in the world must be able to connect with the output of each phone. Is interconnection a problem basic to theater in the broadest sense of the word? Have the engineers brought with them their world with its features and its problems? Have the artists been too passive? Or does this coincidence of interconnection being the main problem follow from these artists' interest in intermedia or in the landscape of mass media?]”²¹

Finally, Forti wrote, “After opening night, Billy Klüver said, ‘...there are three elements fighting: the artists, the engineers, and the audience. These three will have to come to some resolution.’”²² As we shall see, then, the actual performances themselves were to further complicate the fractious relations instigated in the production of *9 Evenings*.

E.A.T.

9 Evenings in Reverse

Let us start with the ending. Famously incendiary reviews of *9 Evenings: Theater and Engineering* erupt at the close of each night's performance, declaring everything from “total boredom,” to “the Decline of the West.”²³ Such claims of technological and critical failure live on in histories of the event, becoming nearly inseparable from the works themselves.

But what if we maneuver backward, unraveling this reception history in light of the actual form of the performances, as well as the collaborative process in which they were embedded? What if we take negative criticism at its face value — in order to understand precisely why *9 Evenings* did not match certain institutional and commercial expectations for aesthetic experience? For in refusing to provide a seamless show of both art and technology, *9 Evenings* successfully did something else: it demonstrated that selected modes of neo-*avant-garde* performance and production were no longer wholly viable in 1966, having increasingly become the very spectacular effects they once sought to escape.²⁴ Brian O'Doherty articulated this change between the moment of *Happenings* in 1958–1963, and the new terrain of *9 Evenings*: “The anti-conventions then established are now conventions themselves... randomness, chance, simultaneity, lack of climax, and resolution, dissociation of parts. They are now old-fashioned as modes. What matters is what they can be made to yield as conventions.”²⁵

And yield they did. *9 Evenings* forced signature devices of chance, participation, and abstraction to confront the fully technocratic world around them. Indeterminacy was not domesticated but translated into technological breakdown. Machine behaviour trumped compositional scores. Audience and performer interaction became increasingly mediated. The structural inversion of these tactics represented not simply

an end, then, but a transformation: *9 Evenings* inaugurated a shift in the meaning of key postwar aesthetic strategies — and offered a way through and beyond their technological arbitration.

While preparing his work for *9 Evenings*, Cage penned a short series of notes, which he titled “12 Remarks re musical performance” (1966):

*no score no parts free
manipulation of available
receivers 7 generators by
any number of performers...
collaboration with engineers
composition socialized²⁶*

Free manipulation, indeterminate execution, composition socialized: Cage and engineer Cecil Coker's *Variations VII* (October 15 and 16, 1966), departed from the composer's previous use of chance operations in composition alone. Chance moved into the performance itself, so that process and reception were ineluctably fused.²⁷ The absence of score was replaced by on-the-spot transmission of inputs, including telephone lines, televisions, frequency generators, a Moulinex coffee grinder, and Smokey juice extractor. Cage gave up durational limits (even those generated by aleatory methods, like the temporal intervals for his legendary 4'33" [1952]), to flag the beginning and end of the piece; together with David Tudor, Lowell Cross, and others, he scrambled to keep the live feeds continuously pumping, prey to the whims of their signal and feedback.

Some things, of course, just didn't work: an unruly volume control, for instance, utterly defied Cage's attempts at modulation. As Coker — an acoustics pioneer who was to become celebrated for developing one of the first digital text-to-synthetic-speech converters — recounted, “It wasn't a serious thing at the moment; but now I think, by God, I should have been there [on stage] when I think how untried everything was.”²⁸ Cage's lodging of uncertainty — both courted and inadvertent — into performance paralleled his 1960s turn toward an ever more intimate relation with technology, and increasing anxiety about the use of chance. Where previously a toss of the dice or the *I Ching* (*Book of Changes*) had organized his aural material in advance, now Cage embraced electronic processes for generating sound in real time.²⁹ The switch in Cage's application of indeterminacy intensified on the second night of *Variations VII*. That evening, audience members left their seats to stroll, sit, and lie down amidst the performers. Their bodies entered a field of viscerally shifting sound routes and bandwidths, privy to the strength of telecommunications signals, as well as the acoustics of the Armory's cavernous shell. Indeed, a major issue in the use of the Armory was the range

and strength of FM frequencies received inside the structure. As Simone Forti recalled, “[the Armory] was acting as a great antenna, bringing us all kinds of extraneous signals.”³⁰ The aleatory was experienced as both phenomenological and virtual, always in contest with unstable modes of transmission and control.

Randomness also tends to breed. Tudor and engineer Fred Waldhauer’s *Bandoneon!* (a combine) systematically generated complexity and indeterminacy, producing, in Tudor’s words, “white noise” from scratch.³¹ The vaudevillian and accordion-like *Bandoneon!* became the locus of a web of sonic and visual effects exponentially distending in time, as designated by the use of the mathematical factorial symbol “!”. Tudor began with a low drone on the instrument, gradually adding more tones. Contact microphones picked up the sounds and relayed them through signal processing equipment including modulators, filters, and frequency shifters. Noise cascaded through speakers in the balcony, and ricocheted off the walls. A specially adapted switching device (the “Vochrome”) allowed variances in pitch to determine the spatial location of sounds, and intensity of the lights. Feedback multiplied into a paradoxically even yet febrile field of aural and visual sensation. Aspects of the system that failed or were not ready on opening night only served to heighten the insurgency of effects, one’s inability to take in the work as a whole. As Tudor stated later, “*Bandoneon!* [Bandoneon Factorial]’s sound image is a tending toward total oscillation (approaching white noise) with the differentiation discoverable therein... a performer activating interacting media will instigate an *unscannable* environment.”³² If *Bandoneon!* highlighted the impossibility of fully perceiving “randomness,” it also betrayed the contingencies in its slapdash, “about-to-become available technology” — at the very moment of its engineered emergence.³³

Technical and sensory breakdown thus gave an answer to the question of indeterminacy’s fate. Once a liberating escape from an administered world, chance and choice were now more than ever tools of commodification and instrumentality. On the one hand, individuated experience was being thoroughly colonized by actuarial science, advertising, and niche marketing. (As Ian Hacking so bluntly wrote, “The hallmark of indeterminism is that cliché, information, and control. The less the determinism, the more possibilities for constraint.”³⁴) On the other, technological failure was integral to the logic of planned obsolescence, and the turnover rate of technical innovation. Klüver’s own statements on failure recognized the importance of the unexpected into advanced

research and design.”³⁵ As the experience with Warhol and *Silver Clouds* showed, the enormously generative aesthetic of indeterminacy and multiplicity that Cage, Rauschenberg, and members of Fluxus had established in the 1950s–early 1960s could, therefore, no longer be deployed to the same ends.³⁶ With typical aplomb, Billy Klüver suggested a way out of this dilemma in a speech given several months before *9 Evenings*. Referring to the “Great Northeastern Power Failure” of 1965, he proposed “the whole thing could have been an artist’s idea — to make us aware of something.”³⁷

By pushing the neo-*avant-garde* use of chance into intimate contact with its counterpart in technological transmission and breakdown, Klüver and *9 Evenings* reframed the modeling of risk in *Silver Clouds* in the literal use of advanced communications technology. Whether in the form of a catastrophic blackout, or noise surrounding an electrical signal, uncertainty was unavoidable. But it was also subject to newly developed tools of management. Each piece in *9 Evenings*, whether using oscilloscopes, or the custom wireless system devised for the festival, relied upon this regulation of signals and their concomitant noise. It was an endeavour that literally staged the principles of communications theory — if only to subvert that theory’s quest for high signal-to-noise ratio, and mire it in mechanical breakdown. As Biorn remarked, “The idea that you would build something that would fall apart... in a programmed way... turned my whole idea of engineering upside down.”³⁸

Action at a Distance

Rauschenberg’s Open Score put another kind of competition into play. Frank Stella and Mimi Kanarek’s cavalier forehands and volleys coyly recalled both the ludic, participatory objects of Fluxus, and the legacy of object/subject relations in *Happenings*. As physical movement limited by conventions of the game, the tennis match enacted the type of sportive interactions invited by Yoko Ono’s *All White Chess Set* (1966), in which opposing sides were indistinguishable, or George Maciunas’ mischievous *Modified Ping Pong Rackets*, first used in the Fluxus “Olympics” of 1965. In a seesaw choreography where each contact between ball and racket set off an echoing “ping!” and extinguished successive lights, the players’ lunges became part of a level field of action amongst lights, speakers, performers.³⁹ This equivalence of things, and beings pointed to the radical aspect of Allan Kaprow’s early *Happenings*, where participants turned into props; the empathy and affect of traditional theatre were hollowed out, routinized, mirroring the analgesic and reified qualities of everyday life.⁴⁰

Interactivity took on an additional dimension in *Open Score*, however. The game insisted on an *adversarial* relation between

“UNTITLED (STEVE PAXTON, ‘PHYSICAL THINGS,’ SECOND PERFORMANCE)”, 1966. BLACK-AND-WHITE PHOTOGRAPH. PHOTO BY PETER MOORE. © ESTATE OF PETER MOORE/VAGA, NYC.

its participants — between Stella and Kanarek, but also between the hotwired rackets and the engineers, who struggled to make the remote control devices for the rackets function properly. (On the first night, the paddle-activated lights did not work, so that engineers were forced to manually unplug a cord for each light that was to go out.⁴³) When the lights did go out, and a crowd of volunteers assembled in the dark, the audience's own gaze became one of enemy surveillance. They saw ghostlike, superimposed images of the crowd captured and projected via infrared television cameras — equipment, which at the time was held as classified material for United States military research.⁴² *Open Score* thus staged an agonistic conception of the subject, one not unlike the black box actors proposed by cybernetics and game theory.⁴³ Fahlström alluded to the currency of such models for his own performance, *Kisses Sweeter Than Wine*: "Games — Seen either as realistic models (not descriptions) of a life-span, of the Cold War balance, of the double-code mechanism to push the bomb button... The thrill of tension and resolution, of having both conflict and non-conflict (as opposed to "free form" where in principle everything is equal)."⁴⁴ Here was a rejoinder to the lack of dramatic tension in the alogical, non-narrative structure of *Happenings* or Fluxus events — one that opened onto relations of antagonism in the realm of politics and war.⁴⁵

Wading throughout the warrens of Paxton and engineer Dick Wolff's *Physical Things*, the *9 Evenings* audience was also made to confront ruptures in interactivity and transmission. Ten industrial fans supported approximately twenty thousand square feet of polyethylene. The inflated structure consisted of multiple "rooms": an entrance tunnel (150 feet long), a forest room (20 ft. × 20 ft. × 20 ft.), a connecting tunnel (50 ft.), big room (50 ft. × 50 ft. × 30 ft.), exit (30 ft.), performance room (12 ft. × 12 ft. × 12 ft.), tower (160 ft.), and performance tunnel (50 ft.). In Paxton's words, "Amazing amounts of 1/2-inch Scotch tape (clear, sticky) were used to connect and seam the polyethylene."⁴⁶ Spectators palpated the tunnels' translucent, plastic skin, then entered a magnetic potlatch of sound picked up on handheld receivers. Bodily sensation and receiving process overlaid each other. Like *Variations VII*, *Physical Things* mapped not only the space of the Armory, but the commercial airwaves that girded it. During the first night, the work also entailed infamously long delays.⁴⁷ As L.J. Robinson recalled, "Fuses were blowing, weird flashes of sound and light would burst out into the gym, occasionally the acrid smell and smoke of a burned out resistor would fill the air."⁴⁸ The transmission to the modified transistor radios was weak, resulting in less aural incident than intended. As one critic complained, "There was nothing to throb over."⁴⁹ Yet Paxton himself opposed such climactic thrills.⁵⁰ Rather, the work was to unfurl in a slow series of haptic discoveries (Lucy Lippard, for one, hailed *Physical Things* as "richly sensuous").⁵¹ The intrusion of dead air and delay enhanced this halting process, as the synaesthetic turned to an awareness of mediated reception. Unlike the brassy showmanship of much kinetic art, these works inhabited a space of fissures and temporal lags. It was in this sense that Klüver explicitly positioned *9 Evenings* against the immediacy of "flashing lights and psychedelic effects."⁵²

Klüver's assessment reveals the uncomfortably close proximity between aesthetic reception as a post-Duchampian

collaborative and performative act, and reception as a heady communion between spectator and work that all too often verged on the emergent synthesis of spectacle.⁵³ Indeed, a blasé audience of New York's art-goers now anticipated either interactive participation, or multisensory effect, or both — a "completion" of the work in their actions or sensations that often presupposed a kind of prestidigitation. "I'd expected magic," the critic David Bourdon said. "For the technical things to be astonishing...[the audience was] ready, able, and willing for a lot more than they were given."⁵⁴ Lippard's review criticized *9 Evenings* as a whole for "too little professionalism in terms of the performing arts" — the lack of a good show.⁵⁵

Whitman nimbly pried apart this collusion of interface and astonishment. Television provided a surprisingly perfect tool: *Two Holes of Water-3* actively deconstructed the governing code of televisual presentation, the split in time and place (between the place of the screen and the site of recording) that spectacularly conceals itself in a coherent image for the viewer.⁵⁶ Whitman's multilayered system of cameras and projections brought this operation of spatial and temporal collapse into full and fractured view. A bizarre derby of cars with both television and 16mm film cameras swerved in front of a panoramic series of projection screens. Each car was, in turn, swathed in sheets of plastic that formed a further screen or distancing between recorder and projection. Four more television cameras took additional recordings in disparate corners of the Armory, up in the balconies as well as offstage, their images projected on the screens below. Miniature lenses connected to television cameras by fiber optics took in the hand or arm of a performer; these live close-ups were juxtaposed with film footage, joining the literal presence of cameras moving in their midst.⁵⁷ As a remarkable diagram shows, Whitman explored the possibility of recording two views of an object at once with a television camera, beam splitter, and mirrors. This splintering of simultaneity shored up the distances masked over by commercial television, dismantling any reification of images into illusory wholes.⁵⁸ The movement of screens and images in Whitman's piece corresponds, then, to television's "movement of displacement," its *transmission* at a distance, which Weber likens to Benjamin's reading of allegory as an act of dispersion (*Zerstreuung*), and collection (*Sammlung*) — Benjamin's use of these terms has been translated more commonly as "distraction" and "attention": "Like the allegorical court, television brings the most remote things together only to disperse them again, out of 'indifference to their being-there,' or rather, out of the 'undecidability of their being-there' (*Dasein*)."⁵⁹

In this sense, *Two Holes of Water-3* radically extended Kaprow's investigation of spreading simultaneous action over multiple locations in space. For *Self-Service* (1966), Kaprow had orchestrated multiple events to occur together over four months in New York, Boston, and Los Angeles. In *Raining* (1965), a *Happening* he dedicated "For Olga and Billy Klüver," Kaprow presents a list of events in a present tense that implies their concurrency, each undone as "rain washes away."⁶⁰ Despite his closeness to Kaprow (he was his student at Rutgers University), and the *Happenings* milieu, Whitman's continuing inquiry into projected images and nascent interest in telecommunications set his work on a different path — one which no longer dealt with the interpersonal and object relations of commodity

culture, but with the dispersed, dematerialized networks of information and their control.⁶¹

Likewise, *Solo* (“a white, even, clear event in space”) didn’t quite cohere into the nonhierarchical, allover monochrome field Deborah Hay had intended — the set of eight remote-controlled, motorized platforms she devised with Heilos and Wittnebert were a bit bumpy, the lighting somewhat irregular.⁶² Reductive structures were similarly overturned in Rainer’s *Carriage Discreteness*. A grid of screens literally toppled on cue, as devised and diagrammed by Per Biorn. Styrofoam, metal, and plywood constructions by Carl Andre (panels, pipes, parallelepipeds) were strewn across the floor, itself divided into a chalk-drawn grid of twenty parts. Rainer relayed spoken stage directions via walkie-talkie to the group of performers (which included Andre and others), who each had wireless earphone receivers, and were meant to act upon hearing instructions.⁶³ The choreographer’s task-oriented, affectless gestures parried with a series of mishaps in the wireless system.⁶⁴ Rainer herself could not participate in key decision making processes for her own work, a step she was uncomfortable with. As Forti related, “[Rainer] says working is very different from what it usually is for her. She has to get things each day like tape, tubes, etc., and make a lot of calls... Says, she’s never worked in such an abstract, distant, cerebral way... That so much of the work is out of the artists’ hands.”⁶⁵ Indeed, the second performance on October 21, Rainer had fallen ill, and Robert Morris took her place, relaying instructions to the performers.

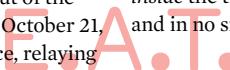
The aesthetic of negation thus gave way to an emergent conceptualism, where the labour of the artist was increasingly transferred to the non-aesthetic realm of the engineer. The discursive relation between artist and engineer was to form the basis of works such as Mel Bochner’s 1967 *Measurements* series, a landmark investigation into communication and quantification during his residency at the Singer Company’s research and development lab (facilitated through Experiments in Art and Technology). The “dematerialized” conditions of conceptual art have a whole history (however twisted) of materials behind them that has gone largely unnoticed — one of wires and walkie-talkies, as much as cool geometry or blank surfaces.

If the art of the sixties has only recently been reexamined in terms of the proliferation of “theatricality” beyond the Minimalist object, *9 Evenings* is still too often seen as a collapse of the early aims of Cage, *Happenings*, and Fluxus into the realm of culture industry, press hype, and high price tags. Nineteen sixty-six is billed as the year of *Happenings*’ demise into commodification through reproduction and documentation. The year has also served to mark the end of Rauschenberg’s utopian project for a revolutionized subjectivity.⁶⁶ Yet *9 Evenings* does not simply represent an implosion of earlier ideals. Quite the contrary: it revealed that those ideals and strategies confronted a different world. As critic Jill Johnston wrote, “A disaster is not necessarily a disaster. Without semantics I would suggest that disasters often have beautiful side effects.”⁶⁷ Jonas Mekas’ review was equally laudatory: “As far as I am concerned, everything worked.”⁶⁸ Failure was an exceptional kind of success.

9 Evenings led to the idea that artist-engineer collaborations could proliferate — and that the best way to facilitate such

relationships was an organization, a group dedicated to matching artists with engineers, and functioning as a kind of bureaucratic liaison. Klüver, Rauschenberg, Waldhauer, and Whitman led this effort, claiming to model their group on entities as diverse as the RAND Corporation and the League of Women Voters. The collective they assembled was dubbed Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), and it was to continue producing relationships and works throughout the next decade.

9 Evenings, it seemed, had generated a fundamental turning point in the kinds of collaborative pursuits explored in *Silver Clouds and Oracle*. For the mode of collective practice in *9 Evenings* was unprecedented. It emerged from the least likely place — the working structures of the corporate advanced research laboratory. These processes intervened in a set of aesthetic strategies that made possible avenues of authorship, construction, and reception that were significantly different from the neo-*avant-garde* tactics of the 1960s best known today. If those neo-*avant-garde* tactics had focused on resisting postwar systems of totalizing administration, and the military-industrial complex that would increasingly characterize economic and political relations, E.A.T. emerged as a catalyst for another kind of disruption: one that literally was to come from *inside* the think tanks of those totalizing systems, unforeseen, and in no small part unintended. ◉

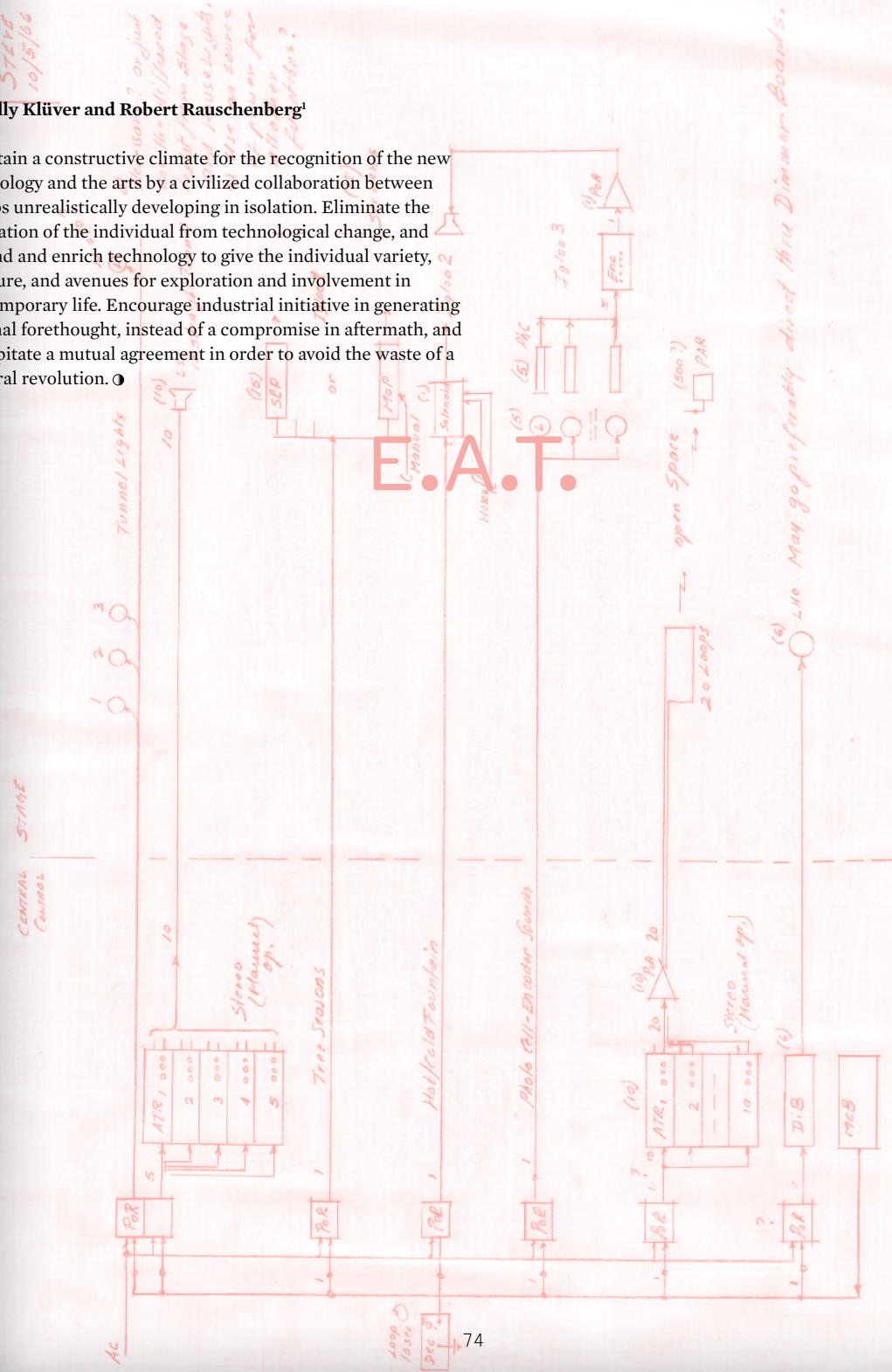


E.A.T.

MANIFESTO, 1967

by Billy Klüver and Robert Rauschenberg¹

Maintain a constructive climate for the recognition of the new technology and the arts by a civilized collaboration between groups unrealistically developing in isolation. Eliminate the separation of the individual from technological change, and expand and enrich technology to give the individual variety, pleasure, and avenues for exploration and involvement in contemporary life. Encourage industrial initiative in generating original forethought, instead of a compromise in aftermath, and precipitate a mutual agreement in order to avoid the waste of a cultural revolution. •



ACCOUNTING FOR BYPRODUCTS

by Marisa Jahn

What makes an embedded art practice different from, say, the work of a multimedia artist or designer who is working for an institution, corporation, or organization? In gathering examples for this book, I established two defining criteria:

1. *Whether a project (or ‘placement’) was initiated by an artist or an institution. Examples of institutionally-initiated placements tend to be centered around organizations such as museums, research institutions, and academic institutions.¹*

By the fact that there are less institutional resources devoted to their promotion, self-initiated placements tend to be less well-historicized, and this is one of the rationales for highlighting them as examples in this book.²

2. *Whether a project became instrumentalized towards the normative operations of an institution or whether it retained a critical distance.*

This second criteria is often difficult to evaluate since what might be considered “critical” may shift over time within the course of a placement and depending on subjective perspective. Nonetheless, this axis is helpful for distinguishing an embedded art practice from those initiatives that ultimately serviced the organizational host’s primary ends.

Rather than produce a straightforward timeline chronicling these works, I asked Felicity Tayler, an information specialist similarly engaged in the subject, to consider other forms of representation. Felicity’s interest in navigating institutional relationships arises from her involvement as a founding member of the Centre de Recherche Urbaine de Montréal (CRUM), a self-described “symbiotic (parasitic) research group.

Tayler’s response highlights artists, groups, and programs that were selected based on their intervention/partnership in industry, relationship to corporate economics,

or reflection upon changing labour practices in the post-industrial society. Comprised of a collage of schematic and narrative snippets, Tayler’s “accounting” draws from John Latham’s characterization of an artist as an “incidental person” — which emphasizes context and process, over outcome. Tayler’s reference to the “information revolution” references the manifesto written by Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.) in which Klüver heralds an epistemic shift in contemporary artistic production that privileges an engagement with the information of real-life. As a way to summarize these practices, Tayler references twentieth century industrial placements that, as highly emblematic examples, set important precedent for placements today. ●

FELICITY
TAYLER

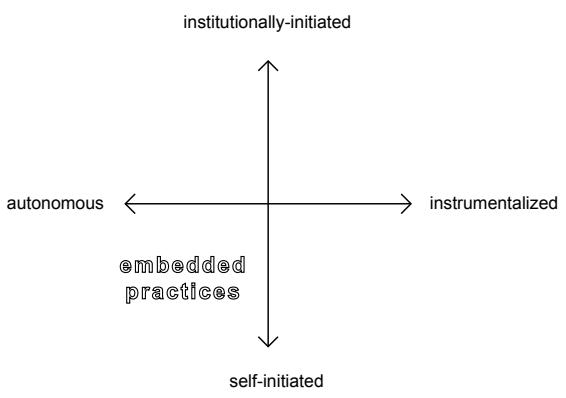


DIAGRAM: MARISA JAHN

ACCOUNTING FOR BYPRODUCTS
 F. TAYLER?MS. CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER
 CENTRE DE RECHERCHE URBAINE DE MONTREAL

	1	2	3
1	1967	LACMA A&T	1969
2		LOS ANGELES COUNTY	3M COLOUR RESEARCH LAB
3		MUSEUM OF ART	Sonia Sheridan
4		ART & TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM	
5			They had me write
6		Jane Livingston	in what they called
7		Maurice Tuchman	a patent book
8			and every single day
9	I had drawn up lists		I had to write down what
10	of corporations I felt		I was doing, what
11	should be solicited,		equipment I used
12	but it was difficult		and with whom I spoke.
13	to obtain appointments	
14	with their Presidents.		
15	(I realized then that		
16	it would be fruitless		
17	to see public relations		
18	people, or anyone other		
19	than the man at the top		
20	who could sign the cheque		
21	and delegate authority.)		
22	*****	*****	
23	**		
24	*	1967	
25	.	E.A.T.	
26	.	EXPERIMENTS IN ART	
27	.	AND TECHNOLOGY	
28	*****	Billy Klüver	Touch Sanitation
29		Fred Walderhauer	Thank you
30		Robert Rauchenberg	for keeping
31		Robert Whitman	New York City
32			alive.
33		Eliminate the separation	*****
34		of the individual	
35		from technological change	
36		in order to avoid the waste	
37		of cultural revolution.	
38	*****	AUTHORITY	
39		(REVOLUTION)	
40	*****	Ø	
41			PATENT
42			THANKYOU
43			(CREATIVE WORK)
			*)e *

liho CANADA

THE INCIDENTAL PERSONS OF THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION

		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Test the imbalance between limited resources & unlimited ideas.	1966	N.E. THING CO.	L1966	APG	ARTISTS PLACEMENT GROUP	
4	Provide a critical function.	Ingrid & Iain Baxter	V.S.I.	Barbara Steveni			
5	Participate willingly in the technological imaginary.	Visual Sensitivity	Information	John Latham			
7		TRANS-V.S.I	Transmission of V.S.I				
8		Service to corporations	The thing is to get those guys with money to hire guys like us.				
9		*****					
10	Work outside the protocols of organizational culture.	1961	Stephen Willats				
11	Diplomacy x expertise = success.	I am part of the environmental fact. The environmental fact consists of sets and subsets of variable events.	1968	INDUSTRIAL NEGATIVE SYMPOSIUM			
12		*****	Artists & Industrialists				
13							
14							
15	The research agenda is: access to materials or expertise;	VISUAL SENSITIVITY (ENVIRONMENT)	1968	Robert Linhart			
16	access to social, techno-scientific, industrial processes; collaboration & exchange.	*****	CITROEN				
17		do	Jamais autant qu'à l'usine je n'avais perçu avec autant d'acuité le sens du mot "économie". Economie de gestes ; économie de paroles; économie de désirs.				
18		*****	*****				
20	Provide services to corporations.	CONTEXT (ECONOMIE)	*****				
21	A utopic coexistence of antagonism and service.	*****	∅				
25							
26	Engage with the post-industrial shift to a service-based economy: Where labour is automated & abstracted, and intellectual property is product.						
27							
28							
29							
30							
31							
32							
33	No aspect of an investigation is irrelevant						
34	whether its outcome proves or disproves a theory;						
35	All of the information						
36	learned serves the purpose of						
37	advancing knowledge, cultural innovation.						
38	P						
41	Position your service according to the bottom.line.....						
42							
43							

FELICITY TAYLER, "THE INCIDENTAL PERSONS OF THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION," TYPEWRITER INK AND LEDGER PAPER, 8.5 X 17 INCHES, 2009.
COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST.

INFO CANADA

THE INCIDENTAL PERSONS OF THE INFORMATION REVOLUTION

by Felicity Tayler

The first column is my interpretation/writing based on the reading/research I was doing in compiling the references. It is a riffing off of historical and recent interpretations of the artists' role in industry (a remix of attitudes at the beginning and end of the information age) plus some subjective interpretation.

"Incidental persons" is a reference to John Latham's characterization of the artists placed through the APG (persons involved in process and context as opposed to immediate outcome).

"information revolution" is a reference to the E.A.T. manifesto, also to the engagement of artists with the complex networks and perceived potential of the information age.

The artists / groups / programs were selected based on their intervention/partnership in industry, relationship to corporate economics, or reflection upon changing labour practices in the post-industrial society.

How are the questions raised in this period addressed or applicable today as industrial manufacturing gives way to knowledge work and a stratified service economy? ●

FELICITY
TAYLER

COL-LABOR-ATË?*

A CONVERSATION WITH KENT HANSEN

**atë: a Greek word for “ruin, folly, delusion,” is the action performed by the hero, usually because of his or her hubris that leads to his or her death or downfall (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atë>)*

Kent Hansen has functioned as an international pioneer in the interplay in-between art, organizations, and working life issues. He is the founder and organizer of “demokratisk innovation” (1998), and co-founding member of the steering group of the artist and activist-run television station “tv-tv” (2005), that currently broadcasts nationally in Denmark. Responding to the challenges facing the developments of democracy in a current neo-liberalist economy, “democratic innovation” is an ongoing initiative that includes collaborations with varying institutions, organizations, and corporations.

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

Marisa Jahn Your project with workers at the electrical switch factory is one of your defining projects of “democratic innovations.” Can you explain how it came about?

Kent Hansen That project emerged from a larger project called “Industry of Vision” (2000–2001), that, through a series of initiatives, investigated the concept of “work,” and the pressure to compromise our democratic rights if we want to keep our jobs. In the “Industry of Vision” (IV) project, and at the electrical switch factory, we sat out to test paradoxes of work life — “we” being a conglomerate of artists, various curators and exhibitions spaces, industrial workers and managers, consultants, and various people from the Confederation of Danish Trade Unions.

MJ In their very structure, your projects fuse artists and industries. For example, who was specifically involved in organizing the IV projects?

KH Throughout the overall project I was the initiator and organizer, but as organizers of the industry-related IV initiatives, I involved some specialists in industrial psychology (in Danish we say “working life” specialists) from The Danish Institute of Technology (DTI). Eventually DTI and “BST Soroe,” a semi-public consulting firm specializing in industrial psychology, became joint developers of the project. The Confederation of Danish Trade Unions became the main financial supporter of this part of the project, as the Danish Arts Council supported an art museum exhibition “imbedded” in this part.

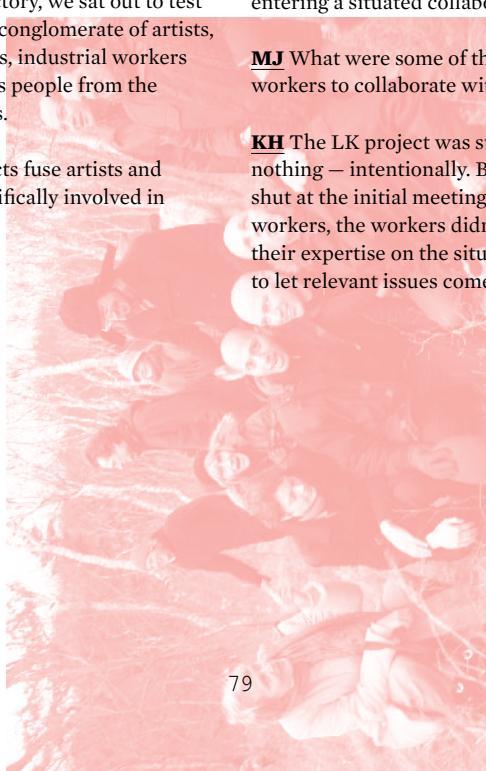
At the electrical switch factory, Laurids Knudsen Inc. (LK), I invited the artist Joachim Hamou and artists’ group Superflex to partake in the project.

MJ What was LK’s incentive to work with artists? What spurred them to want to take on what might otherwise be perceived as a risk to their existing corporate structure?

KH Well, LK had previously reorganized their production line in a series of self-governing production teams. And now they sought inspiration that would show them how to exchange knowledge between these new production units, as former ways of exchange had somehow stalled under the reorganization. Though, this corporate incentive, from the perspective of the art initiative, was more of a point for entering a situated collaboration between artists and workers.

MJ What were some of the ways that you facilitated the workers to collaborate with the artists?

KH The LK project was started by a group of artists doing nothing — intentionally. By keeping our mouths more or less shut at the initial meetings with the representative group of workers, the workers didn’t feel as if the artists were enforcing their expertise on the situation. By taking a step back, we tried to let relevant issues come to the table.



ORGANIZATIONAL ART SUMMITS: A WALK IN THE WOODS IN LISELEJE, DENMARK, 2004.
LEFT TO RIGHT: LOTTE DARSØ, NICOLA SETARI,
TEIKE ASSELBERGS, BARBARA STEVENT, PHILIPPE
MAIRESE, TINE BYRKEL, ALADIN (SIC!) (FRONT),
MARTIN FERRO-THOMSEN, KENT HANSEN (FRONT),
BARNABY DRABLE, PATRICK MATHIEU, AND
DAVE BARRY.

We held another meeting shortly thereafter. During this meeting, whose opening question was, “Why Should We Speak to One Another?” the eventual title “Superkontakt” came up, to refer to our collaboration. “Kontakt” is a Danish homonym meaning both “electrical switch” and “contact” or “connection.” “Superkontakt” was to be carried out in the methodology of the artistic group Superflex with the other participants (the workers, the other artists, me included, the intermediate managers, and the consultants) as equal, operative partners – as equal as you can get when you are subordinated by a certain methodology. The “strategy” was to develop a context-specific method that would ease or expedite a wider communication that could favour workers influence on the corporate organization.

At the workshop, everyone collected information by using different, more or less traditional techniques – video, snapshots, interviews, group work, etc. A major breakthrough at the workshop, and for “Superkontakt” itself, was when it came to the workers’ attention that some of their colleagues were going to be let off (lose their jobs). Now the workshop temporarily switched its focus to not the layoffs themselves, but to the apparent lack of communication about the issue. This then became the theme of “Superkontakt” – the interrelation between formal and informal communication within LK. You can say that the workshop just addressed the situation as it arose. The participants – artists and workers – did this in their own way, but conjointly. This could be, I guess, the very definition of “collaboration.” What is often missing is “place” and “opportunity” of collaboration. In general, IV project was about creating opportunities.

Several initiatives in “Superkontakt” exercised the group’s ideas about formal vs. informal communication; each exercise was intended as a means to arrive at proposals or models for future internal communication and organizing.

The group worked with various ideas, such as a joint notice board, information screens, how to (anonymously) collect ideas, how the production groups could express discomfort, where and how to meet and talk out of range of the noise of the production, etc.

The final and joint proposal that integrated the working groups’ thoughts and ideas was to organize an accessible “meeting place,” which should also contain an internal radio station, and the tangible results of the various ideas. One tangible result of a more symbolic nature was a huge branch of a tree decorated with discarded items from the factory production, all in strange shapes and colors – pointing to, maybe, the notion of “waste.” What is to be conceded as “waste” in and for a production? The “meeting place” was eventually dubbed “The Wise Oak.”

The radio station to be installed in “The Wise Oak” was to “broadcast” – via local radio transmission or via intranet – music of the workers’ choice and various kinds of interviews among workers, and also to transmit other forms of radio programming directly to the workstations and wireless headsets worn by the workers on the production floor. Such programs should be mixed with programs of a more corporate nature such as formal bulletins, and instructions from the management, returning afterwards to the workers’ radio programs.

But, where could we set up such a “Wise Oak?” All space in the factory was occupied by machinery and production-related equipment. How should it look? How should we organize it? The following process was back and forth discussions on various design proposals for the specific space and location of “The Wise Oak.” One proposal was to place a traditional Scandinavian holiday cottage on pillars under the roof of the factory space, symbolically referring to the sometimes problematic, leisure-time intermixture with work-time. This was, of course, a great idea seen from an art perspective, but a majority of the workers saw this as mocking them. It would be fair to say that at the same time, a major Danish television channel had a children’s series with the protagonist teddy bear living in such a holiday cottage. Maybe paradoxically, the final model for “The Wise Oak” became a high art, architectural design in the Scandinavian, modernistic tradition.

“The Wise Oak” model was firstly installed in full-scale at Vestsjællands Kunstmuseum (West Zealand Art Museum), the regional fine art museum, as part of an display of the IV project and process, and later installed in the factory space, containing the various ideas, radio equipment, a pilot of a radio show made by a group of workers, video interviews, and other elements documenting all the “Superkontakt” proposals. This model, together with calculations of the cost of implementing the proposal as part of the general corporate communication, was now handed over to the LK Human Resources department, and as such, the fate of the project was in the hands of the corporation.

Later – after debates in journals, and in the national press – few, if any, of the ideas were implemented at the LK factory. In any case, the project is now part of a work life legacy at LK, and part of reflections on “work;” the project can, perhaps, point at alternative routes even – or maybe, especially – when “creative” and “entrepreneurial,” and yes, “alternative,” skills are almost obligatory requirements of labourers in the current neo-liberal economy, though still not so much so of industrial labourers.

MJ Besides working “on the floor,” and in the space of production, part of your practice involves organizing events that bring together those who are investigating the intersection between art and industry. Can you explain, for example, how the Organization Art Summit came about?

KH The Organizational Art Summit gathered together specialists from different fields who were investigating questions such as the distinction between art and industry, socially-engaged art practices, collaborations, etc. Besides looking at what academia was writing about “organizational art,” we also wanted to look at the findings produced by businesses and artists’ projects in this terrain. The stipulated goal of the OA Summit was to collectively produce a small textbook – a “thin book” – on what was tentatively called “Organizational Art.” If anything, we did kick-start more coherent discussions about art, artists, organizing, organizers, and organizations. The “thin book” is now set up as a collaborative production at www.oobook.org.

MJ You have mentioned the way that experience is often denigrated in a business-context, and that your work is driven in part by the desire to sanction experience and informal knowledge. You make a distinction between “intellectual knowledge” and “experience-based knowledge?” Can you elaborate?

KH “Intellectual knowledge” is the principal knowledge regime historically legitimized by the Western civilization based on the written and spoken language. When corporations do address, for example, “creativity,” it is almost exclusively addressing intellectual aspects of creativity, which is emblemized in the term “brainstorm.” Problematically, however, by emphasizing only intellectual capabilities, other kinds of knowledge and capacity based in experience, practice, and sensation, are not sanctioned as knowledge at all.

Given the dominance of the corporate sector on this planet, part of my artistic practice focuses on “experience-based” knowledge in businesses, and pointing to the intrinsic conceptual schism of “economic sustainability” – a concept that in consequence eradicate “other” ways, other “ways of life” as well.

MJ In talking about specific historical moments that influenced your work, you have cited the legacy of Danish socio-economic politics of the 70s when the notion of a redistribution of fiscal or monetary wealth was introduced. You have mentioned as well a general idea of cultural redistribution in Denmark. Can you elaborate on how these policies and cultural memes influence your work?

KH What I have referred to is the legislative initiative called “economical democracy” (ED) put to the Danish parliament in 1973, by a government led by “Socialdemokratiet” – the major Danish social democratic party. The intention of ED was to change the economic power structure in the Danish society by sharing the ownership of the means of production – to create real involvement and participation for Danish workers, and – at the same time – secure the necessary capital investments for doing business. Since the late 1960s, ED had been an initiative been supported and promulgated jointly by the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) and “Socialdemokratiet.” ED should have implemented by setting up a public governed fund to secure these prospects of economical democracy, and paid by both the workers and the corporations.

But by end of the 1970s, support for ED receded after fierce resistance arose from the employer unions and executives. The notion of ED also met resistance from the far Left, and was based in the fear that workers, after becoming co-owners of their own workplace, would eventually become small capitalists with pipe hats – and eventually, reinforce capitalism. In other words, the resistance from the radical Left was about the fundamental tenets of ED.

Since the eradication of ED, Danish workers aspiring to hold a “right to manage and distribute work” have more or less regressed to a point in time when this very “right to manage and distribute work” was explicitly “agreed” to be the sole right of the owners of the means of production. In the end of the 1800s, the rapidly increasing strength of the labour organizations resulted in a three-month general lockout. After harsh negotiations the “September Settlement” was reached in 1899, wherein workers achieved the right to organize and make collective agreements; but as part of The Settlement, the “right to manage and distribute work” was to be hereafter exclusively in the hand of the owners. Almost a century later, the initiative of ED was intended to breach this exclusive right.

Parallel and corresponding to these historical ideas of an economic democracy was the notion of a cultural democracy, of cultural equality – that cultural benefits and goods should be for all, and that cultural goods should be accessible to others than only to those who is already culturally privileged.

The idea of cultural equality is of course very benevolent, but in practice, the kinds of culture that such ideas of cultural democracy reify and imitate are the bourgeois, cultural ideals of an upwardly-mobile, upper-middle class – not forms of culture that grant political agency to ordinary people.

The cultural and economic hegemony of cause pervades the “distribution” of higher education, as well. In the Danish educational system, the curriculum is geared toward “higher education,” and all citizens have free access to higher education. Yes, this is very benevolent, and everyone should of course be given the same chances, and the system

should be geared to create an equal basis and opportunities for a higher education for all. But what if someone has the talent, skill, and aspiration for other types of knowledge than those primarily sanctioned by the educational system? Do we have a real democracy if we are not able to sanction alternatives to the current intellectual, academic, and mainstream Western culture?

Under existing policies, the Danish welfare state has — to paraphrase a former chairman of the Confederation of Trade Unions — “to succeed all the way to hell.” Instead, we need to not only redistribute class-dividing cultural wealth, but to also actively sanction the various kinds of cultures and knowledge. Current forms of democracy should go to work, not to war.

MJ You have mentioned the term “biopolitics” of organizations, which suggests the internalization of management structures to maintain order. Can you elaborate?

KH The term “biopower” was coined by Foucault to express the type of power relations in where the distinction between man as a living being, and man as a political subject cannot be made. “Biopolitics” thus refers to the strategic organization of the relations of power in order to obtain the surplus of power from all living beings.¹

In this sense, the “biopolitic” is intertwined with, for example, the organizational management of the total situation of life for the working person. When it comes to the specific organization the internalization of control is exercised through a lot of strategies. For example, you have the yearly “Performance and Development Review,” you have the coaching of employees, “project-organizing,” and “self-governed production groups.” The “working man” is disciplined in such a way that is very hard to separate as “external” from the total life span. One crucial thing to notice is that “biopolitic” does not *replace* but rather *displace* the old time “classic” sovereignty, so we are not solely to target soft power techniques. That is why a proposal for dealing with these issues is — as well — to reconsider the rights to manage and distribute work, and deal with ideas such as “economical democracy,” and “ownership,” as well.

As “biopower” transgresses all aspects of life we need a trans-disciplinary approach when addressing “biopolitics.” Art can then be one among other disciplines working together in a poly-disciplinary approach — not forgetting, of course, the vital, direct inclusion of the groups that are affected by this or that “biopolitical” strategy.

MJ Who/what do you cite as your artistic influences?

KH I am influenced first by Russian constructivism and minimalism — specifically, the way that minimalism opens up towards space and the environment.

Another influential moment is more of a biographical nature. When I left the art academy in 1990, I moved to Copenhagen. This was the time when the Danish art scene — that is especially concentrated in Copenhagen — more than ever before, went international, and “art in the social field” became the brand of Danish art at the time. “Going global,” meant fierce competition in the midst of a group of artists that all knew each other one way or the other. It was actually a slaughterhouse. But the fact that this miniature Copenhagen art scene rife with internal competition could be considered as a loosely connected creative organization sparked my idea of working with art and organizing. I sat out to investigate possible ways to make art in organizational settings. As mentioned, I am born and bred within the paradox of non-democratic work-life in an ancient “social democratic democracy.”

Shortly after organizing the “Industry of Vision” project, I came across the British group Organisation + Imagination (O+I) that addresses similar organizational issues as myself. Since then, I have had the opportunity to exchange thoughts with both Barbara Steveni and John Latham on several occasions. These encounters have, of course, been exceptionally inspiring. John Latham’s more theoretical work is still really inspiring for me.

MJ Your work is an example of how to create new models of participation, how to structure new models of working with those outside of institutionalized art worlds. What other models do you recognize as ones that could be further explored?

KH Participation and collaboration are the modes for getting various relevant disciplines and knowledge together on a specific task. Under the moniker “democratic innovation,” I have focused on organizations and academia in trying to come up with a participatory organizational artists’ methodology — not that I have come up with this specific terminology myself, or even like it.

Now I am more occupied with a notion of an organizational activists’ methodology. For me, the term and concept “activist” is now more useful than “artist” when dealing with poly-disciplinary collaborations. Every discipline and every group has its activist, and in all places live “kindred activists,” whether it’s outside of or inside academia or organizations.

A crucial question for every artist-activist would be, of course, how to exercise a viable critique when “critical art” has itself become a productive part of capitalist, economical, organizational, managerial, and bio-political strategies. Once “critical” concepts – even “revolution” – are now part of managerial *modus operandi*; what is outside of management and “experience economy” has become a controllable otherness within management; revolution will hardly sweep the corporate world off its feet. Instead, management will sweep up revolution.

I propose to come up with alternative models of “managerial practice”: can art practices contribute to the development of a critique of current “management” and “organizing”? The art practices I have particularly in mind for such development are those that implicitly incorporate concepts of “management” – I am, of course, referring to participatory, collaborative art practices in which the facilitating “participatory artist” is, in fact, the manager.

Now, being the manager-artist, how will you manage? If addressing this issue together with late artist John Latham, he might have asked the more fundamental question: How will you manage the event? This is a good question, especially since neither the visual art discourse, nor Latham to my knowledge, operates with explicit concepts of “management.”

If we are really setting out to handle the event with the intention of fostering participation, Latham probably would have first of all directed us to the necessity of replacing a “space-based framework” with a “time-based” one, and as such, the need of transposing the “language of objects-in-space” – which is exclusive and dividing – into a “language of time-and-event,” which is inclusive and integrating. By this token, science and business are regimes of “language of objects-in-space,” and art is a regime of “language of time-and-event.” Following Latham, art is the only medium capable of properly grasping “the event.”

While participatory art and management may both address aspects of society and practice, they generally do not address the same concerns for the same communities. If our goal is to handle the event, we might turn to managerial concepts implicitly embedded in communal art practices. In any case, it’s crucial to be conscious about the artists’ roles as managers, and how they deal with this self-chosen inconvenience of power.

To handle the event would, as an example, probably be about how to sanction a multiplicity of interpretations of the situation, and its histories.

In any case, when juggling such incommensurable concepts such as “art” and “management,” we need to find a plausible zone of convergence of management study and art critique, if we are even to begin to answer the question of how to manage the event – that I ask of John Latham. If such a zone of convergence can be laid out, scrutinizing practice and theory might contribute to the development of organizing that goes beyond the conventional management machine, and push for other models of participation and collective production. That will come in handy when collectively casting out futures for this planet. ●

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION, COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL, BAKING FORTUNE COOKIES FOR FUTURE CO-WORKERS, 2006. PHOTO BY HENRIK STRUBE



DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION, COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL, TRYING OUT THE FORTUNE COOKIE RECIPE, 2006. PHOTO BY HENRIK STRUBE

OF ECONOMIC CONCERNS

by Paul Ardenne

The contextual artist engages the economic sphere by mimicking its workings, and by establishing himself as an actor in the economic circuit. He does so by bringing thought and action to bear on the notion of concrete value, through the creation of business ventures, and, on occasion, by integrating himself directly into the production system. This movement is a sign of the close ties that the contextual artist seeks to establish with the real world, including that part of the world which is most prosaic and least artistic: material reality, commodities, and the circulation of money. In the spectrum of contextual practices, *Economics Art* is certainly one of the most original.

Justifying Economics Art

Economics Art is not an existing term in the lexicon of art, but, the category is useful for grouping artistic practices that take the material economy as the object of consideration. *Economics Art* has taken numerous forms: by confronting methods of production, and playing with notions of material value; and, by artists creating shops or companies, becoming personally involved in the economic circuit, assuming a militant, non-profit stance or parasitic attachment – an altogether congruent scenario where the economy is at once the subject and the media of expression. The contextual artist naturally makes motifs using the materials of spectacle and interaction within the economic sphere. As the major preoccupation of the modern era, the economy is to art what the nude, the landscape, and the myth of the new were to Neoclassicism, Impressionism, and the *avant-garde*; as much a vehicle for inspiration as a reflection of contemporary fashions. Art exhibitions devoted to this subject continue to multiply (between 1970 and 2000, there have been shows titled *Inno 70, art and economics*, *Pertes et profits*, *Capital*, *Trans_actions*): a critical position that comes as the logical result of a nature increasingly mediated by the economy. The Middle Ages, haunted by salvation, generated an artistic output of an essentially metaphysical character. The Renaissance, toying with the question of man's position in the universe, resulted in an art of perspective. And modernity, obsessed with freedom, yielded an art with the radical intention to break free of all rules. The art of the liberal, post-modern era, more than any other, opens an aesthetic moment in the representation of the material economy.

Art: From manufacturing to management

The relationship of artists to the economy has gradually evolved throughout the twentieth century, logically; a retail market for artistic merchandise is one of the first associations to be made. Such artists relish in selling output by self-created systems of distribution, e.g., La Cédille qui Sourit, a store/workshop opened

by Robert Filliou and George Brecht at Villefranche-sur-Mer; Andy Warhol's *The Factory*; Claes Oldenburg's *The Store*; and Keith Haring's Pop Shop. From 1960 to 1980, artists have taken a heterogeneous approach – a process that is conceptual/commercial for some (*The Factory*), playful and experimental for others (Oldenberg, Filliou), and for a few, close to pure commerce (Haring). One of the first methods to tie art to the economy is by the artistic performance of services for immediate material profit. Such is the case with the *Baiser de l'artiste* by Orlan, 1977, "Five francs for a kiss...a real artist's kiss at a populist price"), or the "passes" of Alberto Sorbelli, prostituting himself during a private viewing of an exhibition (1990)¹.

Surpassing the status of an authentic proletariat who can only offer his labour, the artist can express his own position, suggesting his specialized services to this or that company; in short, claiming a competence that distinguishes him from unskilled labour. A salient example is the Artist Placement Group (APG) in Great Britain, active between 1966 and 1989. For the creators, John Latham and Barbara Steveni, there is no justification for niche arrangements, underlying the effort to tie the artist, ordinarily cut off from the social sphere, into production. The collective consisted of artists who occupied a variety of positions at the post office, the Rail, the Esso Petroleum Co. Ltd., and the Mines of the United Kingdom. After being "placed," the artist became an employee that brought his or her own visions of the world to the company, intervened in its choices, influencing some of its decisions in the material of management in a mixture of activism and aestheticization.² He/she was also, according to Latham, an agent who assumed the status as an "incidental person," an individual who participates in a context only to adopt a critical stance.³ This positioning in some ways approximates those of the "established," engaged artists and intellectuals who, in the spirit of May 1968, integrate the universe of the factory (like the painter Pierre Buraglio in France, in the name of his convictions), all out of a concern for working-class life. The difference with APG is that it did not separate art from production. The sought-after goal was not an experience of socio-political proximity, but rather, an integration of art with material production, to produce a natural admixture of artistic and economic creation. Yet this is a vain expectation, and furthermore, a utopia that this pioneering group could never realize. APG, in the eyes of the companies that it solicited, will never be valued in a durable and credible manner. This collective will repeatedly stumble on a question as elementary as that of an artist's salary. Most of the time, the entrepreneur refuses to pay these artistic employees, thus refusing integration of art and economics in a complete sense. The pretext? One could say that artists are in state of exception compared to the classic notion of the worker, and as a consequence of this artistic impartiality, artists necessarily consent to special treatment.

LE SOUCI DE L'ÉCONOMIE

par Paul Ardenne

L'univers économique attire l'artiste contextuel, soit qu'il en mime certains mécanismes, soit qu'il s'intromise personne, à son niveau, acteur du circuit économique. De quelle manière ? En faisant porter la réflexion ou l'action sur la notion de valeur concrète. En créant des entreprises. En s'intégrant carrément, à l'occasion, dans le système de la production. Résultat d'une conscience aiguë — et critique — du matérialisme propre à la société occidentale, cette inflexion est le signe des liens étroits que l'art contextuel entend tisser avec le monde réel, y compris dans ce qu'il recèle de plus prosaïque et de moins artistique *a priori* : la réalité matérielle, la marchandise, les circuits de l'argent. Une telle direction de travail, dans le panel des pratiques contextuelles, est assurément l'une des plus originales.

Justifier l'*Economics Art*

Economics Art ? Sous cette étiquette — une catégorie qui n'existe pas en tant que telle dans le glossaire des formes d'art —, on regroupera les pratiques artistiques dont le propos élit pour objet l'économie réelle, un type de création revêtant par extension une nature politique (*economics*, en anglais, l'« économie politique »).

La modernité durant, l'*Economics Art* ou ce qui a pu en tenir lieu a pris des tours divers : confrontation des artistes à la notion de production, jeu avec la valeur matérielle, mise en place d'échoppes ou d'entreprises, implication personnelle dans le circuit économique, militantisme *No Profit* ou parasitisme... Assujettir l'art à un propos dont l'économie est à la fois le sujet et l'occasion d'une formulation plastique n'a rien d'incongru. Cherche-t-il un « motif », c'est naturellement que l'artiste contextuel le trouvera dans le spectacle ou la fréquentation du monde économique. Souci majeur de l'époque moderne, l'économie y est à l'art ce que le nu, le paysage ou le mythe du nouveau furent en leur temps au néoclassicisme, à l'impressionnisme et à l'avant-garde : autant un mobile de création qu'un thème au goût du jour. Que se multiplient les expositions consacrées à ce sujet (des expositions ayant pour intitulés *Inno 70: Art and Economics*, *Pertes et profits*, *Capital* ou *Trans_actions*... entre les années 1970 et 2000), c'est là l'effet d'une équation logique : à société dominée par l'économie, *ars economicus*, art qu'irrigue, oriente, façonne un questionnement de nature économique. L'âge médiéval, hanté par le salut, généra-t-il une création plastique d'essence métaphysique ; la Renaissance, que titillait la question de la position de l'homme dans l'univers, un art de la perspective ; la modernité, obsédée par la liberté, un art de connotation radicale porté à s'affranchir de toutes les règles ? L'art de l'ère libérale, plus qu'aucun autre, ouvre quant à lui au moment esthétique de l'art comme mise en scène ou comme répétition formelle de l'économie réelle.

L'art, de la marchandise au management

Au long du 20^e siècle, le rapport de l'artiste au monde économique évolue de manière sensible. En toute cohérence, c'est au nom d'abord de la notion de marchandise que se nouent les liens génériques entre économie et artiste. Ce dernier, notamment, se pique d'écouler sa production en créant ses propres structures de distribution : la Cédrille qui sourit, magasin-atelier ouvert par Robert Filliou et George Brecht à Villefranche-sur-Mer ; la Factory d'Andy Warhol ; le Store de Claes Oldenburg ; le Pop Shop de Keith Haring... entre 1960 et 1980, autant d'entreprises dont la finalité et les liens avec l'économie ne sont certes pas homogènes, et fort éloignés de surcroît de propositions plus actuelles : souci conceptuel-marchand pour les unes (la Factory), ludique ou expérimental pour d'autres (Oldenburg, Filliou), proche pour certaines du pur acte commercial (Haring)... Il est une autre façon pour l'artiste de lier art et économie, parmi les premières aussi par ordre d'apparition : retrousser ses manches dans l'espérance d'un profit matériel immédiat. Ainsi du *Baiser de l'artiste* d'Orlan (1977, « Cinq francs le baiser... Un vrai baiser d'artiste à un prix populaire »), ou des « passes » d'un Alberto Sorbelli se prostituant lors de vernissages d'exposition (années 1990)².

Dépassant le statut de l'authentique prolétaire qui n'a pour lui que sa force de travail, l'artiste peut aussi qualifier sa prestation, proposer des services spécialisés à telle ou telle entreprise, bref, revendiquer une compétence le distinguant du manœuvre. L'exemple majeur d'une telle inflexion est fourni par l'Artist Placement Group britannique, actif entre 1966 et 1989. Pour John Latham et Barbara Steveni, initiateurs de ce collectif dont les membres officieront diversement dans les postes, le rail, l'Esso Petroleum Co Ltd ou encore les mines du Royaume-Uni, l'artiste d'ordinaire coupé du monde social doit être intégré à la production, et rien ne justifie qu'on lui aménage une niche. Une fois « placé », l'artiste devient un employé, il apporte à l'entreprise sa propre vision du monde, intervient dans ses choix, peut infléchir certaines de ses décisions en matière de management, en un mixte d'activation et d'esthétisation³. Ce positionnement, par certains traits, se rapproche de celui des « établis », intellectuels et artistes engagés intégrant dans l'esprit de Mai 1968 l'univers de l'usine (comme le peintre Pierre Buraglio en France, au nom de ses convictions humanistes), tout au souci du contact avec la vie ouvrière. À cette différence près : l'APG ne découple en rien art et production. Le but recherché, c'est non pas une expérience de proximité socio-politique mais une intégration de l'art à la production matérielle, la création artistique à la fin agrégée se vouant à devenir un mode d'être naturel de la création économique. Une attente demeurée vaine et, pour finir, une

Ultimately, the artist ends up located directly in management, in the form of economic collaborations. In the 1970s, the Italian artist Alighiero e Boetti directed the creation of rugs in Afghanistan, for which he supplied the pattern. This integration also took the form of business as a specialized service provider. Excluding Marcel Duchamp's *Monte Carlo Bonds* (1924)⁴, the most prolific period for these enterprises took place between 1980 and 1990, motivated at this time to pull art out of a circumscribed institutional separation, as well as out of a nearly mechanical function within the industry of culture. Two kinds of enterprises came into the world. One sort was the fictional enterprise, where the artist "role-plays" as the manager, turning the material economy into a game with the intention of a specular representation animated in the spirit of criticism: take for example, General Idea, Banca di Oklahoma Srl, Ingold Airlines, McJesus Chain, Kostabi World... The other was the earnest enterprise: in this instance, the artist initiates a process that moves past the symbolic economy of art, which results in an object exchanged within the goods market, such as Int. fish-handel Servaas en Zn., Atelier Van Lieshout, Ur Sarl, Heger & Dejanov.. Largely apparent in its most recent form in *Economics Art*, this ascension of the artist to the status of manager removes the anxieties related to seeking simple, material compensation, or being positioned as a beggar. Concretely, it implies representation in a strictly social sense. Artists, *fervent saint-simonians* that they are, have strong beliefs in common property, and often rise to leadership with an organizational role. His or her participation in the production and capitalization of surplus value is no longer an effect of system dependence, but of freedom from it. In a piece titled *Unites Collectives du Travail*, Laurent Hocq associated with the firm Buro-Market, by selling office furniture and receiving compensation in the form of a commission (from 5 to 30%, according to his contract). The members from Bordeaux of Zebra-3, founders of Buy-Sell, put together a catalogue of artist objects that could be ordered by mail or on the Internet. To bring to life their series, *Quite Normal Luxury* (1999), Swetlana Heger and Plamen Dejanov were contracted by the Bavarian automobile manufacturer BMW to recycle its advertising imagery (however they saw fit) into the format of a contemporary art exhibition. In exchange for mining advertising clichés they were conferred the use of a BMW vehicle; an arrangement that continued on opening night, where VIPs were shuttled around in the newest BMW models manufactured in Munich, etc. Heger and Dejanov, in doing so,

were not simply sucking the lifeblood from BMW, since the company profited from the opportunity to solidify its image in the highly cultivated milieu of contemporary art. This sort of collaboration, on the contrary, points to the possibility of a fruitful partnership between art and business.

Militants and "conciliators"

The vitality of *Economics Art* could give the appearance of a complicit relationship between artistic production and an economically centred world in which everything can be commodified. However, this connection is hardly peaceful, as the artists' need to assert a critical position most often takes a militant, polemical turn. The artist of *Economics Art* has a vision of what the economy should be. Collectives like Bureau d'Etudes or Syndicat Potential, consisting of the trio of artists Bonaccini, Fohr, and Fourt, campaign for an artist's salary similar to the redistribution theories of Jean-Marc Ferry, who called for "the creation of an unconditional minimum allocation for artists," in addition to a stronger public representation of artists within official arts institutions; "An artistic presence at the decision-making level in the administrative structures of contemporary art." Freeland is an artist group that promotes the concept of "free," which "resists the administrative rationalization and commercialization of living conditions," and "in the face of the all-powerful exchangeability and equivalence of beings to signs and objects, it responds with nonsense and non-utility." It comes as no surprise that the options for the "economic" artist are firmly leftist or otherwise involved in the modernist habit of activism: petitioning for the taxation of stock transactions, for the extension of welfare, of solidarity, and of free goods and services, to the protection of net neutrality...⁵ *No economy without ethics*, pleads the "economic" artist, in condemnation of liberal barbarism and its secularized violence — as much local (class struggle), and global (the exploitation of the south, the "commercialization" of the world).

Trying to introduce humanism and thought into the world of business is the goal of the artist at the task of *Economics Art*, seeing him or herself as the "Last Mohican" of neo-Keynesianism, however much of this is an eccentric caricature. The artist's objective is to avoid marginalization; on the contrary, reaching instead towards the status of "negotiator," to borrow a term from Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, authors of *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (1999), a book whose impact, at its time, was considerable — even in

RESPONSE BY AMISH MORRELL

Paul Ardenne's *Of Economic Concern* describes art practices that employ elements of economic circulation as part of their formal realization, such as the provision of services for profit, the manipulation of value through exchange, the use of currency, the introduction of art into the workings of existing institutions, or the creation of fictional enterprises. With the notable exception of Duchamp's *Tzanz Check* completed in 1919, the works that Ardenne describes as "*Economics Art*" have mostly occurred since the 1960s. They parallel both activist art and forms of institutional critique while also being distinct from these movements. *Economics Art* mirrors activist art, in that it engages contexts outside of galleries and museums, but rarely makes specific social or political demands. It also resembles institutional critique in mimicking or circulating within the existing forms of economic exchange, without necessarily being situated within art institutions. *Economics Art* is defined in a way that is not inherently political, left, or radical — it can easily operate in the service of corporate interests.

Ardenne's description of *Economics Art* is predominantly concerned with form, raising questions about the place of the political within a theory of *Economics Art*. There are several possible responses: while *Economics Art* may seem exempt from this question, the forms it takes can operate as carriers camouflaging more radical content, and potentially correcting inequalities that are the effect of economic systems. Like the Situationist practice of *détourne*ment, usually applied to images or artworks, economic forms themselves can be recuperated for the realization of alternative ends. Another response is that artists, as producers and re-distributors of cultural goods, are always sited within the political. Culture and symbolic meanings circulate as commodities, and artists are especially adept at creating economic value, or conversely, destroying it to achieve political ends. For example, in 2004, a member of the media activist group, The Yes Men, impersonated a spokesperson for Dow Chemical

utopie que ce groupe pionnier ne pourra concrétiser. L'APG, auprès des entreprises qu'il sollicite, ne se fera jamais valoir d'une façon durable et crédible. Ce collectif butera encore sur une question aussi élémentaire que celle du salariat de l'artiste. Artiste que l'entrepreneur refuse le plus clair du temps de payer, donc d'intégrer au sens strict du terme. Le prétexte ? L'art, argue-t-on, est désintéressement, et l'artiste, un producteur considéré sans amendement possible comme différent du producteur classique, et à qui il s'agit en conséquence de consentir un traitement d'exception.

Le stade ultime de cette intégration graduelle de l'artiste au circuit économique, c'est celui du management direct, sous forme de collaborations de nature économique. L'Italien Alighiero e Boetti, dans les années 1970, fait réaliser en Afghanistan des tapis dont il fournit le motif. Sous forme, aussi, de créations d'entreprises ou de structures prestataires spécialisées. Si l'on excepte, de Marcel Duchamp, les *Obligations pour la roulette de Monte Carlo* (1924)⁴, la grande période de ces créations prend corps avec les années 1980-1990, la perspective étant alors de tirer l'art hors de la sphère séparée où l'inscrivent une institutionnalisation croissante et son insertion devenue quasiment mécanique dans l'industrie culturelle. Deux types d'« entreprises », alors, voient le jour. D'une part, l'entreprise fictionnelle, où l'artiste « joue » au manager et au jeu de l'économie réelle avec une intention de représentation spéculaire ou mue par un esprit critique : General Idea, Banca di Oklahoma Srl, Ingold Airlines, McJesus Chain, Kostabi World... D'autre part, l'entreprise authentique : cette fois, l'artiste initie une production qui dépasse l'économie du signe et voit ce dernier converti en objet échangeable sur le marché des biens : Int.fish-handel Servaas en Zn., Atelier Van Lieshout, UR Sarl, Heger & Dejanov... Largement signalée dans les formes les plus récentes d'*Economics Art*, cette accession de l'artiste au statut de manager périme le souci trivial du simple gain matériel ou de la position que l'on mendie. Concrètement, elle implique une représentation stricto sensu *sociale*. L'artiste, fervent saint-simonien, s'élève de son propre chef au rang d'« organisateur ». Sa participation à la production et à la capitalisation de la plus-value générale n'est plus l'effet d'une dépendance au système mais de sa capacité à s'en emparer. Pour ses *Unités Collectives de Travail* (u.c.t.), ventes d'éléments de mobilier de bureau agencés par ses soins, Laurent Hocq coopère avec la firme Buro-Market et se rémunère à la commission (de 5 à 30 % selon le contrat). Les membres bordelais de Zébra 3, initiateurs de *Buy-Sell*, élaborent un catalogue d'objets d'artistes que l'on peut acquérir par correspondance ou sur Internet. Pour réaliser leur série *Quite Normal Luxury* (1999), Swetlana Heger & Plamen Dejanov passent contrat avec la firme automobile BMW, leur activité s'appliquant dans ce cas à recycler (à leur guise) l'imagerie publicitaire de la firme bavaroise dans le champ de l'exposition d'art contemporain. Exploitation de clichés publicitaires ; échange de prestations contre le libre usage d'un véhicule de marque BMW ; organisation, lors de vernissages, de navettes utilisant pour le transport des VIP les plus récents modèles d'automobiles conçus à Munich, etc., Heger & Dejanov, ce faisant, ne vampirisent assurément pas BMW, qui profiterait même de l'occasion pour solidifier son image de marque dans le milieu hautement cultivé de l'art vivant. Cette forme de collaboration, en revanche, signale la possibilité d'un fructueux partenariat art-entreprise.

Militants et « meilleurs »

Au vu des apparences, cette vitalité de l'*Economics Art* pourrait paraître sceller la parfaite complémentarité entre, d'un côté, la création artistique et, de l'autre, une société dorénavant dominée par l'économie, où tout ou peu s'en faut se résout de manière comptable ou au nom d'impératifs matériels. Complémentarité peu pacifique le plus clair du temps, est-il besoin de le préciser, de nature le plus souvent polémique, où l'artiste fait bien valoir une compétence mais en profite aussi pour instiller un point de vue contestataire, dans une perspective militante. L'artiste adepte de l'*Economics Art* a des idées sur ce que devrait être l'économie. Des collectifs tels que *Bureau d'études* ou *Syndicat potentiel*, émanation du trio d'artistes Bonaccini, Fohr et Fourt, militaient ainsi, à l'extrême fin du 20^e siècle, pour un salaire d'artiste, proches en cela des théories redistributives d'un Jean-Marc Ferry (« Création d'une allocation minimum inconditionnelle pour les artistes »), en plus de réclamer une représentation publique plus affirmée de la gent artistique dans les instances officielles (« Présence des artistes aux niveaux décisionnels dans les structures administratives de l'art contemporain »). *Freeland*, que créent ces mêmes artistes, se bat pour la « gratuité ». De celle-ci, peut-on lire dans une plaquette, « elle résiste à la rationalisation administrative et marchande des conditions de vie » et, « à la toute-puissance de l'échangeabilité et de l'équivalence générale des êtres, des signes et des choses, elle répond par le non-sens, l'inutilité ». Les options de l'artiste « économique », sans grande surprise, s'ancrent en général à gauche, elles s'inscrivent dans la grande tradition moderniste du refus : activisme pétitionnaire pour la taxe dite « Tobin » de fiscalisation des opérations boursières, pour l'extension du domaine de l'aide sociale, de la solidarité ou de la gratuité, faveurs allant au « copyleft » plus qu'au copyright, à la libre circulation Internet plutôt qu'aux portails d'accès payant⁵... Pas d'économie sans éthique, plaide l'artiste « économiste », tandis qu'il n'a de cesse de fustiger la barbarie libérale et sa violence sécularisée, tant locale (la précarisation des statuts) que planétaire (l'écrasement du Sud, la « marchandisation » du monde).

Introduire, via l'art, pensée et humanisme dans le monde des affaires ? Se donnant à cette tâche, l'artiste *Economics Art* s'en voudrait d'être le dernier Mohican d'un néo-keynésianisme quelque peu excentrique ou caricatural. Ses objectifs ? Éviter la marginalité, accéder au contraire de façon concrète au statut de « meilleur », pour en user d'un terme emprunté à Luc Boltanski et Ève Chiapello, auteurs du *Nouvel esprit du capitalisme* (1999), une publication dont l'impact, à son heure, se révéla considérable, jusque et y compris dans le monde de l'art⁶. Au sein de la société dite « connexionniste », modèle bientôt prédominant d'organisation sociale dont le fondement est le réseau, l'exclusion est moins affaire de bas revenus que d'isolement, moins question de pauvreté que de non-représentativité. Exister à l'heure du « connexionnisme », constatent Boltanski et Chiapello, ce n'est pas tant être qu'être relié et, si possible, *reliant*. En l'occurrence, est « reliant » celui qui, pour appartenir au réseau, l'active aussi, y réunit les différents agents autour d'un projet, d'une idée, d'une hypothèse de vie ou de production. Ce fantasme du « meilleur » propre à maintes démarches *Economics Art* explique le renouveau des esthétiques dites « relationnelles » constaté durant les années 1990, dont nombre d'entre elles veulent opérer sur le terrain de l'économie réelle : Fabrice Hybert avec

the art world.⁶ In a “connected” society in which the network organizational model predominates, exclusion is less a question of poverty than of non-representation. According to Boltanski and Chiapello, to live in the “networked” era, is not so much to be connected, but to be linked and reliant. Those who are in the network activate it by uniting different actors around a project, an idea, a hypothesis of life or production. This illusion of the “negotiator,” integral to many practices of *Economics Art*, explains the renewal of relational aesthetics in the 1990s, in which many artists wished to participate in the material economy: Fabrice Hybert with *L'Hybertmarché* (1995), a work in the form of an installation of a supermarket in the heart of the Paris Museum of Modern Art; the attempt of an establishment, by Freeland, of this collective economy of the instantly evoked “free economy”; numerous actions directed towards corporations, by Liliane Viala... whereas we incessantly promote art as the fabric of social ties, and the artist as “operator” of socialization. The artist's role is to embody this “negotiation” that one would like to believe as legitimate by virtue of its democratic appearance, and the impression given of improving social cohesion.

The Question of Significance

Economics Art, despite its dynamism, is much faulted for its lack of efficiency. An honest assessment forces us to ask the question: what, in fact, is the significance of *Economics Art*? This question seems set up for a disappointing answer. Or perhaps, this type of art only seeks to exist at the level of representation. In this case it is difficult to see what new insight it offers about the world (yes, money and exchange exist, as do exploitation and commercial determinism, and so what?) Or maybe it aims for material effectiveness, an impact that can be quantified. The admittance of failure in this area demonstrates that this art does not have the power to remedy, nor does it have power over anything, nor does it even inspire the curiosity of real businessmen. According to David Perreau, “...in order to exist, an art practice encompassing exchange and transactions, relations and commerce, must surpass the autarkic and sometimes autistic workings of the artistic milieu.”⁷ The artist who does not leave the art world or really push its limits risks non-existence. To quote Warhol, “...that which is not seen does not exist,” and in this case, “... that which cannot be capitalized does not exist.” Viable artistic enterprises are rare; those that turn a profit even rarer. Andy Warhol's *The Factory*, a truly profitable business venture in which a serial portrait on commission cost

\$20,000, was an exceptional example. The trouble with working in the economic field is that, sooner or later, one must post a profit. Without quantifiable results, the practical position — and thus the critical one — is untenable for very long.

As Marc-Olivier Wahler observes about the limitations of “Economics Artists,” “no propositions [put forth by an “Economics artist”] could function autonomously.”⁸ Were it not for the interest shown by art galleries and a few museums, *Economics Art* would not exist. All too often it remains an exhibition formula, a pseudo enterprise. Whatever gambles the artist takes, he will never be a major player in the financial world; his earnings having no likelihood of exploding. His gains, for that matter, are purely symbolic as one must admit that such enterprises never radiate outside the narrow circle of the contemporary art world. The material gain, in fact is so little that an artist must look elsewhere for survival. He must live off his own funds or find funding elsewhere — quite often in the form of institutional subsidies (art institutions, notably). This is enough to undermine its truly threatening character.

Undoubtedly, the limitation placed on the (symbolic) value of these art practices dealing with (material) value explains certain less ambitious postures of artists who keep a low profile, and are content to exercise a guerilla movement on the conscience to make up for a weak factual efficacy. Striking, in this spirit of *modest resistance*, is the fixation on bartering which is a late formulation of *Economics Art*. The Latin-Americans of Colectivo Cambalache, organizers of the *Museum in the street*, manage a bazaar in the streets of Bogotá, Puerto Rico, and Saint-Denis, where a demand is placed on the barterers to engage in “honest” exchange. Tsuneko Taniuchi operates in parallel on the order of *Micro-Events* (a designation that explicitly measures the ambition of such a project), “*Micro-events of barterers*” in Paris, Nantes, and other places, are organized around the principle of “take what you please and leave what you want.” Jean Kerbrat, in his piece *Calais-Kerbrat – On gagne au change!* (1999), invited the population of Calais to barter a personal object, which the artist modified before restoring it to its owner, scratched and endowed with the surplus value of art. Joel Hubaut, in the context of his piece *C.L.O.M. TROK*, organized a simultaneous exchange of objects of the same colour...In all these examples an exchange did indeed take place, and thus strictly speaking, an impact was made on the material economy, but the

on BBC World News, describing fictitious plans to liquidate Union Carbide, and use the profits to care for the victims of the 1984 Bhopal Disaster. Resulting in a two billion dollar decrease in the value of Dow Chemical shares, this reveals the intricate and volatile relations between the sphere of cultural production and economic valuation. Twentieth and twenty-first century economies — particularly in Western nations — are based extensively on the creation of cultural value, on image, appearance, and the production of symbolic meaning, as well as on the exchange of material goods. Within this ecology of economic and cultural production, it is impractical to separate the economic from the political.

Notes

¹Ryan Gilbey. “Jokers to the left, jokers to the right.” *The Guardian*, July 17, 2009.

PAUL
ARDENNE

l'*Hybertmarché* (1995), une œuvre sous forme d'installation d'un supermarché au sein du musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris ; la tentative de mise en place, par Freeland, de cette économie collective de la gratuité évoquée à l'instant ; diverses actions, dirigées vers les entreprises, de Liliane Viala..., tandis que l'on n'a de cesse de faire valoir l'art comme fabrique du lien social et l'artiste comme « opérateur » de socialité. L'interactivité est-elle alors parée de toutes les vertus, que l'artiste, d'ailleurs, œuvre dans le champ de l'économie ou autre part, c'est d'incarner ce « maillage » qu'on veut croire légitime du fait de son apparence démocratique et de l'impression qu'il donne de pouvoir favoriser la cohésion sociale.

La question de l'impact

L'*Economics Art*, malgré son dynamisme, pèche par un travers souvent fustigé : son manque criant d'efficience. L'honnêteté, en la matière, commande de poser une question simple : quel est, au plus juste, l'impact réel de l'*Economics Art* ?, question à même d'accoucher une réponse décevante. Ou bien ce type d'art s'en tient à dessein au niveau de la représentation, au prétexte que l'art émerge au champ symbolique, et l'on voit mal dans ce cas ce qu'il vient décliner de la réalité du monde qu'on ne sache déjà (oui, il y a de l'échange et de l'argent, oui, il y a de l'exploitation et du devenir marchandise, *et alors* ?). Ou bien il vise l'efficacité matérielle, un impact quantifiable dans ses résultats, et dans ce cas ce constat de faillite s'avère aisément à établir, quelque peu déprimant : cet art-là ne corrige ni n'a pouvoir sur rien, qui n'inspire pas même la curiosité des affairistes réels. David Perreau : « Pour exister, une pratique de l'art ouverte sur l'échange et la transaction, la relation et le commerce impose de dépasser les fonctionnements autarciques parfois autistes propres au milieu artistique ». Le constat, en conséquence, faute que l'on sorte du monde de l'art ou qu'on en repousse vraiment les limites, ce sera donc le risque de l'*inexistence* (Warhol : « Ce qui n'est pas vu n'existe pas » ; dans ce cas, « Ce qui ne capitalise pas de manière concrète n'existe pas »). Les entreprises d'artistes réellement viables, comprendre bénéficiaires, restent en effet des plus rares. La plus célèbre, la Factory de Warhol sur la fin, authentique entreprise et véritable générateur de plus-value (20 000 \$ minimum pour un portrait de type sérigraphie, réalisé sur commande), faisant figure d'exception. L'inconvénient d'œuvrer sur le terrain économique, c'est qu'il faut tôt ou tard afficher son bilan. Sachant que sans résultats comptables, la position pratique, donc critique, est intenable longtemps.

Comme le relève Marc-Olivier Wahler, qui y voit une authentique limite, « aucune des propositions [de type *Economics Art*] ne pourrait réellement fonctionner de manière autonome⁸ ». N'était l'intérêt que lui accordent les galeries d'art et quelques musées, l'*Economics Art* reste en effet, trop souvent, une formule d'exposition, un *pseudo*. Quoi que risque l'artiste, on pressent qu'il n'accèdera jamais au statut d'acteur majeur du monde des affaires, ses gains n'ayant de leur côté aucune chance d'explorer. Gains en termes symboliques, déjà, si l'on veut bien admettre que de telles entreprises d'artistes ne rayonnent guère au-delà du cercle étroit du milieu de l'art vivant. Et gains matériels plus encore : trop peu, entre les entreprises d'artistes, fonctionnent sur leurs fonds propres ou dégagent des bénéfices, nombre d'entre elles se révélant au surplus subventionnées, qui plus est, bien souvent, par des instances officielles (centres d'art, notamment). De quoi amoindrir d'office leur caractère perturbateur.

Sans nul doute, cette limite mise à la valeur (symbolique) des formes artistiques traitant de la valeur (matérielle) explique certaines positions d'artistes moins ambitieuses, où le propos met profil bas, se contentant à une guérilla par conscience de sa faible efficacité factuelle. Ne manquera pas de frapper, dans cet esprit de résistance *modeste*, la fixation sur le troc dont font état plusieurs formules tardives de l'*Economics Art*. Les Latino-Américains du Colectivo Cambalache, organisateurs du *Musée de la rue*, gèrent de la sorte autour de 2000 une entreprise de troc active à même les rues de Bogota, Porto Rico ou Saint-Denis, où il est demandé aux troqueurs un échange « équitable ». Tsuneko Taniuchi, parallèlement, opère d'une même manière dans le cadre de ses *Micro-événements* (une désignation explicite quant à l'ambition mesurée du propos) : « Micro-événement de troquistes », à Paris, Nantes ou autre part, que règle le principe affiché du « Prends ce qui te plaît et laisse ce que tu veux ». Jean Kerbrat, avec *Calais-Kerbrat – On gagne au change !* (1999), convie pour sa part la population de Calais à venir « troquer » avec lui un objet personnel, objet que l'artiste modifie avant de le restituer à son propriétaire griffé et doté de la plus-value de l'art. Joël Hubaut, dans le cadre de ses *C.L.O.M. TROK*, organise au même moment des sessions d'échanges d'objets d'une même couleur... Il y a bien, dans ce cas, échange, et donc répercussion en matière d'économie proprement dite, mais celle-ci demeure minime. Slimane Raïs échange avec le public des rêves privés contre la rédaction d'histoires : on en reste là, à dessein, au niveau d'une prestation élémentaire, sans ambition politique, loin des fantasmes d'une contestation « macropolitique ». Avec le *Grand Troc*, qu'il réalise en direct à la télévision basque espagnole (*El Gran Trueque*, Bilbao, Canal Bizkaia, janvier 2000), Matthieu Laurette s'amuse, plus qu'il n'endosse le froc de l'économiste critique. Principe du *Grand Troc* : l'échange, non à compte proche mais à compte déséquilibré. Non sans malice, la règle du jeu établie par Laurette commande que le premier lot soit échangé contre un lot de valeur inférieure et ainsi de suite jusqu'à négation de l'échange faute qu'il se trouve encore à proposer des objets simplement négociables, puisque en bout de chaîne sans plus de valeur. L'analogie est implicite. Le recours au troc ? Il est surtout une des formes fétiches de l'économie de la misère (voir les « Clubs de troc » en Argentine au tournant du 21^e siècle), résultat d'un ajustement de la nécessité entre offre et demande voyant triompher un échange par défaut, jamais à compte équilibré. Faute que l'économie réelle lui soit accessible dans ses forces vives, l'artiste qui « troque » ou encourage le troc s'en tient en fait à mettre en forme ce par quoi se constitue l'échange minimal, « produit contre produit » (une formule de l'économiste Jean-Baptiste Say), en une mise en scène qui tourne le dos à la croissante immatérialité des flux d'échanges. Ce qui s'abolit de pair, c'est aussi l'économie prestataire, celle des services et des intermédiaires, devenue pourtant aujourd'hui l'activité dominante des sociétés de type Pays Développé d'Économie de Marché (parce que la plus rémunératrice) — celle donc qui devrait avant toute autre retenir l'attention d'un artiste réellement contemporain.

À cette attention portée à des modèles d'échange de main à main relevant de la paléo-économie (mais ayant du moins pour contrepartie le contact), d'autres artistes préféreront des formes d'action « plastique » nourries au sein du terrorisme, signe là encore d'un constat de relative impuissance à affronter

impact was negligible. Slimane Rais shares his private dreams with the public to challenge the writing of histories. It remains in the realm of intention, without political ambition, far from any fantasy of a “macro-political” contestation. With the *Great Barter* shown live on Spanish television (*El Gran Trueque*, Bilbao, Canal Bizkaia, January, 2000), Matthieu Laurette is having fun more than he is challenging the pantheon of the critical economist. The organizing principle of the *Great Barter* is to exchange not on equal terms, but on unbalanced terms. Not entirely without malice, the rules of the game established by Laurette ordain that the first lot be exchanged against a lot of inferior value, and repeated, until the negation of the exchange, since at the end of the line, objects no longer have value. The analogy is implicit. A return to the barter system, or rather, a fetishization of the “hardship economy” (one can reference this in the “Club of markets” in Argentina, at the turn of the twenty-first century), in which the cycle of supply and demand is adjusted out of necessity, witnessing a triumph of exchange by default, but never on equal terms. Without real market forces being in play, the artist that barters or encourages bartering is putting in place a system of minimal exchange, as formulated by the economist Jean-Baptiste Say, of “product against product” a *mise-en-scène* that turns its back on the growing immateriality of the flux of exchanges. It also omits the service economy which has, today, become the dominant economy in the developed world, and therefore, should captivate the attention of the *truly* contemporary artist.

For all the attention that has been focused on an anachronistic form of hand-to-hand exchange, other artists prefer an “action aesthetic,” nourished by the precepts of terrorism, a sign yet again of a powerlessness to directly confront the system with its own arms. These artists generally adopt the seditious practices of hackers who target the stock exchange or e-businesses. One such example is the International Virology Numismatic (IVN), a structure created by the Canadians Mathieu Beauséjour and Peter Dubé. For ten years, between 1988 and 1998, IVN methodically imprinted the words *Survival Virus de survie* on Canadian dollars. Retrieved by the central bank, these dollars were withdrawn from circulation. By drawing attention to the stamped bill, IVN reminded the public that money is not simply a means of exchange, but also a social object. Another example is etoy, a collective of “hacker artists” formed in 2000, with the objective of undermining the company eToy (an online toy store), by taking advantage of confusion between the two names. Such “pirate” actions, though symbolically rich, have a narrow reach. Millions of bills are taken out of circulation each year simply because of overuse. Though one would like to be persuaded that the bankruptcy of eToy (the company) in the spring of 2001, was the result of the disruptive actions of etoy (the collective of artists), it could more easily be attributed to the burst of the dotcom bubble.

Parasitism and uncoupling

Duchamp’s *Tzanck Check*, from 1919, was staged in the office of his dentist Daniel Tzanck. When it came time to settle the bill, Duchamp recounts in *Engineer*, “I asked for the amount, and I made the check entirely by hand. It took a long time to make the little letters, to make something that looked printed – it wasn’t a small check. And I bought it back, twenty years later,

for a much larger sum than the amount on the check!”⁹⁹ In this context, the artist has become a kind of speculator exploiting the over determined symbolic value attached to the art object. John Cage, a horrified spectator, chronicled Duchamp’s descent into commercialism. After having profited from an edition of ready-mades created with Arturo Schwarz, the older Duchamp, writes Cage, “signed everything that he was asked to sign,” using the ready-made as a pure object of commerce.

As noted by Cage (a good idealist, regrettfully) announces that Duchamp’s signature was no longer that of the artist, but that of the artist as businessman. Long before this episode, however, Duchamp had thought of selling insignias with DADA inscriptions at a dollar a piece. He was also engaged in the business of selling art: exchanging Brancusi works with Lady Rumsey, to increase their market value... Putting aside questions of morality, the artist’s accession to the status of businessman is a marker of the success of *Economics Art*. Without shame, Duchamp abandoned one register for another. He deserted the symbolic field of art to concentrate entirely on the material realm. This approach, cavalier perhaps, but profitable, is undertaken only by the practitioners of *Economics Art* – who act like profiteers which succeed by exploiting the system. It relates to those for whom it is not “art” that matters, but money, before everything else. Sponsored by the Parisian Ghislain Mollet-Viéville in the 1990s, Matthieu Laurette explicitly titled his work, *Feed an artist for less than one hundred francs*, as a call for donations. In 1999, Edouard Boyer came up with the concept of a “Bio-Taxe,” a system of donations in which companies like Nova or OPA were contracted to deposit 0.5% of their revenue to Boyer. Stipulated under contract, Boyer did not owe anything to anyone, requiring no particular effort or recompense whatsoever. Gianni Motti solicited money under auspices of converting travel into a work of art. These services sanctify the figure of the artist as parasite, distinguished more for conceptual clarity than their efficacy. Their primary fault is the absence of longevity in exegesis, especially if the artist is not recognized socially or within his milieu. Gille Mahé, who devised numerous strategies to support himself, came across this difficulty a number of times. Despite making an appeal to conceptual art, his request for the minister of culture to pay his taxes directly to the minister of finance was promptly denied.

If *Economics Art* cannot be simply discredited, on the contrary, one must acknowledge its contradictions. Short of becoming a parasite, the *Economics Art* artist must admit his precariousness as an “economic actor.” If he attaches himself to the production system, he is playing a game of shock value to little effect, demonstrated by the previously mentioned example in 1960 of the APG. The artist of *Economics Art* may never fully participate in the system that conceptually nourishes his or her creations. Nevertheless, it is the duty of the artist to remain watchful and inclusive, in order that no aspect of human activity escapes scrutiny. ◉

Translated by Emmanuelle Day and Lisa Larson-Walker

directement le système avec ses propres armes. Ceux-là, en général, adoptent les pratiques séditieuses des *hackers* actifs dans le domaine des changes ou du « e-business » (commerce électronique). C'est le cas avec Internationale Virologie Numismatique (IVN), une structure créée par les Canadiens Mathieu Beauséjour et Peter Dubé. Dix ans durant, entre 1988 et 1998, IVN s'applique à tamponner méthodiquement la formule *Survival Virus de Survie* sur des dollars canadiens. Récupérés par la banque centrale, ceux-ci sont retirés de la circulation. Si le geste d'IVN n'est pas tout bonnement de subversion (en attirant l'attention de l'usager du billet estampé, on lui rappelle que l'argent n'est pas seulement une matière circulante vouée à gérer l'échange mais aussi un objet social, un effet de la vie matérielle d'utilisateurs que préoccupe sa détention), il reste qu'il n'est pas moins contestataire. Ou encore etoy, collectif d'artistes « hacktivistes » réuni autour de 2000 dont l'objectif est de contrecarrer l'activité de la firme eToy, vendeuse de jouets en ligne, en profitant de la confusion du nom. De telles actions de « piratage », pour symboliquement parlantes qu'elles soient, restent toutefois d'une portée limitée. Des millions de billets, parce qu'usagés, sont de toute façon pilonnés chaque année par les banques centrales. Quant à la faillite, au printemps 2001, d'eToy (la firme), on aimerait se persuader qu'elle est le résultat de l'action perturbatrice d'etoy (le collectif d'artistes). Au vrai, l'une de celles affectant au même moment, entre des milliers d'autres, les start-up (entreprises nées du boom de l'industrie du numérique) trop ambitieuses ayant misé sur le développement accéléré d'un commerce en ligne qui, faute de réel décollage économique, se fait alors attendre.

Parasitisme et découplage

Duchamp, *Chèque Tzanck*, 1919. La scène se passe chez un dentiste, un certain Daniel Tzanck. Au moment du règlement des soins, raconte Duchamp dans son texte *Ingénieur*, « j'ai demandé la somme, et j'ai fait le chèque entièrement de ma main, j'ai mis longtemps à faire les petites lettres, à réaliser quelque chose qui ait l'air imprimé — ce n'était pas un petit chèque. Et j'ai racheté ce chèque, vingt ans après, beaucoup plus cher que ce qui était marqué dessus⁹ ! » Devenant émetteur automatique de monnaie fiduciaire, rhabillé de surcroît en spéculateur, l'artiste exploite pour la changer en or la plus-value symbolique culturellement attachée à l'objet d'art. Duchamp, est-il besoin de le rappeler, qui n'en restera pas là. John Cage en fut le témoin médusé que l'on sait. Après avoir tâté de la plus-value au terme d'une fort rémunératrice édition de ready-made réalisée avec Arturo Schwarz, le dernier Duchamp, dit Cage, « signait tout ce qu'on lui demandait de signer », utilisant le ready-made comme pur et simple objet de commerce.

Comme Cage le relève (en bon idéaliste, et pour le regretter), cette signature n'est plus celle de l'artiste mais celle de l'artiste devenu un véritable businessman — Duchamp, d'ailleurs, qui avait formé longtemps avant cet épisode le projet de vendre des insignes portant l'inscription DADA à un dollar pièce, quand il ne se piquait pas de faire purement et simplement du commerce d'art : échange tarifé d'œuvres de Brancusi avec lady Rumsey dans le but de soutenir leur cote... Supposant reniement de la morale et don de soi au matérialisme, l'accès de l'artiste au statut du businessman est l'indicateur d'une incontestable réussite en termes d'*Economics Art*. Duchamp, sans vergogne, abandonne un

registre pour l'autre. Reste-t-il en apparence dans le champ de l'art ?, il le déserte, à dire vrai, il évacue le territoire du symbole pour se concentrer tout uniment sur la matière. Cette manière de procéder, cavalière peut-être mais qui paye cash, se retrouve à peine revisitée chez les seuls artistes *Economics Art* dont admettre qu'ils « gagnent », et qui sont ceux-là qui se comportent en profitteurs, en exploitants du système. Comprendre : ceux pour qui ce n'est pas l'« art » qui importe mais bien d'abord, avant tout, l'argent. Matthieu Laurette, dans les années 1990, lance ainsi un appel au don d'un genre particulier, ouvertement intéressé, une opération initiée avec l'agent d'art parisien Ghislain Mollet-Viéville dont l'intitulé fort explicite nous évitera le commentaire : « Nourrissez un artiste pour moins de cent francs »... Édouard Boyer, quant à lui, met en place à partir de 1999 la *BIO-Taxe*, système de don nourri du principe de « BIO-assistance » défini par l'artiste et auquel souscriront bientôt des entreprises telles que Nova ou OPA, qui s'engagent par contrat à verser à Boyer 0,5 % de leurs revenus. Édouard Boyer dont il est stipulé de façon notariée qu'il ne doit rien à personne, aucun effort particulier, aucune contrepartie, quelle qu'elle soit. Gianni Motti, de son côté, peut détourner sans vergogne, au nom du droit de l'artiste, des sommes affectées à la production d'œuvres d'art *in fine* converties en voyages... Ces prestations sanctifient la figure de l'artiste parasite. Elles ont pour éminentes qualités leur clarté conceptuelle, plus leur efficacité. Leur principal défaut, en retour : elles ne peuvent être multipliées longtemps, à plus forte raison si l'artiste bénéficie d'une faible reconnaissance sociale ou dans son milieu. Gilles Mahé, qui échafauda diverses stratégies pour se faire entretenir, s'en rendit compte à maintes reprises. Lorsqu'il demande au ministère de la Culture de payer ses impôts directement au ministère des Finances, par exemple, une requête pourtant formulée sous les auspices de l'art conceptuel mais qui restera sans effet...

S'il ne s'agit pas tout bonnement d'invalider l'*Economics Art*, force est en revanche d'accréditer l'indéniable existence, le concernant, d'un découplage. Sauf à se faire parasite, l'artiste *Economics Art* doit admettre la précarité de sa condition d'acteur. Se collette-t-il à l'univers de la production, il joue un ébranlement qui ébranle plutôt peu de choses. De là le découplage, épreuve de la scission pratique dont on notera qu'elle s'avère du même ordre que celle dont fit l'expérience douloureuse, dès les années 1960, l'APG évoqué précédemment. Passage du temps, évolution des contextes mais, en l'occurrence, rigidités permanentes... Marié à un système qui alimente conceptuellement ses réalisations, l'artiste *Economics Art* doit endurer de ne jamais participer à plein à celui-ci. En revanche, il lui appartient de signaler que nul domaine de l'activité humaine ne saurait lui échapper à l'artiste, et qu'il reste vigilant, sans exclusive. ●

ALL THE BANKERS AT ALTAMONT

A Constructed World (Jacqueline Riva and Geoff Lowe) convenes groups of people to workshop art-related ideas and practices. Their work enacts and constructs moving links between different places, technologies, and layers of knowledge, considering that which is missing, forgotten, or lost.

Joseph Del Peso In the Summer of 2009, you realized a workshop with a large group of employees of the Banque Nationale de Paris (BNP Paribas Assurance) to create a tableau vivant based on the famous free concert at the Altamont Speedway in California. What were the conditions that made this event possible?

A Constructed World Centre National d'Art Contemporain (CNEAI), an art centre in the suburbs of Paris, invited us to make a workshop with one hundred and twenty employees. BNP wanted an art experience as part of their retreat, and had approached the art centre wanting to make etchings. We were invited because we don't make etchings, and the director, Sylvie Boulanger, wanted these people to have a contemporary art experience. Logistically, one hundred and twenty people is a lot to coordinate, and we wanted to include everyone, and move away from the stereotypical ideas of what non-art people make when they make art. I guess this idea of a retreat from work opens some sort of place for contemporary art, so the question arises – how do we represent contributions by participants, rather than simply incorporate them into the existing figure of art?

Initially, we introduced the idea of making a *tableau vivant* talking about the event, performance, and collaboration as a known and historical form for making artworks. As examples, we used works made with large numbers of people, like Arthur Mole & John Thomas' "Conceptual Photographs." They were made after World War 1, with large crowds assembled to represent, symbolically, the unified consciousness of the masses of the day (these were, in fact, in a show at Palais de Tokyo at the time). Another example was an illustration from 1660, printed in Thomas Hobbes' book "Leviathan," representing the sovereign as a society made of tiny figures, which together formed the "body of the people." It was Hobbes' conviction, after years of civil war in England, that we must remain afraid of each other to be free in a civil society.

JDP How do you imagine reenacting an act of violence involving the Hells Angels as experienced by a group of bank employees?

AN INTERVIEW WITH A CONSTRUCTED WORLD

ACW Taking place a few months after the Woodstock festival in December of 1969, Altamont was an attempt to make an unregulated event where the crowd could pursue whatever they want to in an individual way. Woodstock has been called "the most famous event in rock history," an unregulated gathering where half a million people lived together for three days to enjoy themselves and listen to music, without incident or violence. Preceded by the ideas of Thoreau and Rousseau, it was an example of how people could live together peaceably; yet still pursue their desires and freedom without fear. Liberty to do what you want, where every individual is a kind of rebel pursuing their individual needs and desires, has pervaded our societies ever since. It follows in the world of economics where we have had completely unregulated markets, rogue traders, and rebel consumers.

The workshop took place over just a few hours with one hundred and twenty people, so we had to work very fast, and trust that the participants would know what to do. We started with four smaller groups, and the different groups identified with what was proposed by choosing their scene: "I don't want to do anything violent," "I'll be the person killed by the Hell's Angels," "We want to be the band," etc. We worked with as little direction or coercion as we possibly could, offering them a platform – but it's definitely not a *learning* environment.

JDP In a previous conversation, you mentioned that Altamont was an event famous enough to be known to everyone in the group, and that this general knowledge allowed you to realize the staging without a history lesson. However, in your work you often propose the acceptance of "not knowing" as a strategy for working together in a group. In this way you are able to introduce unfamiliar or complex ideas to untrained participants. How did "knowing" and "not knowing" interrelate during this event?

ACW Initially the project was an answer in search of a question. When we knew we were working with a large group of people, Altamont seemed like a known event that would cross the boundaries of age, culture, and language. In fact, some people said they didn't know at first (what Altamont was), but after we mentioned the context with Woodstock most of them did know something about it. So the subject was a prompt to people, inviting them to respond with their bodies in an impromptu or spontaneous setting.

We believe that the wider public does understand contemporary art perfectly well, but have their own, often appropriate, reasons for pretending and saying they don't. We want to include what people know in the artworks, even if they're not aware they know anything or are being



disingenuous. Generally, we trust these people to know that this is not the real Altamont, and allow them to make some choices about the one they would prefer to represent, which is exactly what an artist does. Too often, the art world implores the audience to see an artwork or artist as fragmented, reflexive, and polyvalent, yet the viewers themselves are expected to remain as the “unified subject.” This is why art education, discourse, and the culture of the viewer are always lagging behind the production of contemporary art.

It's like no one is really an expert in what we collectively “don't know.” We, as ACW, choose to undertake it together. We live in an age of unprecedented excess and information; it's not really possible to “not know” about something like contemporary art. The presentation of important contemporary art is often so sadistic and divisive it's not surprising that so many members of the public are happy to avoid this kind of psychic castration, and remain the “disingenuous subject” (“I don't know about art,” “I don't understand,” or even “no one else will understand.”)

Looking at the final large group photograph, it seems each individual has interpreted the sentiments of the original concert attendees differently. For example, some are dancing and enjoying the music, while others are bearing witness to the violent event, and responding with gestures or vocalization. You mentioned using as little direction as possible, echoing the “whatever you want” atmosphere of the historic event. What other aspects of the process were significant?

We started with four smaller group tableaux, and then we brought everyone together in the last twenty minutes to enact the four different events altogether. Because it was quickly rehearsed in the smaller groups, most of the actors or “actants,” were oblivious to what was going on in the other groups, just like the crowd at Altamont. I guess it's finally about conflict, and about how people see and respond to events differently. For the final work we wanted a high quality photograph because, as they say in history painting, we wanted to see all the faces. It's somehow a very convincing document when you scrutinize the action and expressions; it seems unlikely that there was so little preparation. In many ways this work represents the effortless or unconscious thinking about the event that has been ongoing for forty years.

JDP During our conversation prior to this interview you identified a parallel between rock stars and bankers. Taking this a step further to think about the recent economic recession (verging on depression), in relation to Altamont as a symbolic crash of the “peace & love” sentiments of the late 1960s, how do you think about the parallels between 1969 and 2009?

ACW Rather than using security or police to regulate the event at Altamont, the Rolling Stones hired the local chapter of the Hell's Angels motorcycle club to monitor the crowd. It was thought of as a way to let a generation express themselves freely without interventions or regulations of officialdom. Many expected the concert to be another Woodstock, a coming together in mutual understanding of common interests and values, without incident. However, as the band finished their famous song, *Sympathy for the Devil*, a number of dramatic events began to unfold which could suggest that despite the

best intentions of everyone involved, conflict, and perhaps, violence inevitably arose.

In many ways the global and dynamically creative uses of money in our period now has enormous image appeal, and bankers have become like rock stars as they enact the stories of supply and demand, liberty and desire. Money has become the determining factor and image of how we regulate actions and negotiations between nations and individuals today. Rock stars used to be conspicuous, traveling around, and making known their excessive consumption, whereas now, bankers are seen to *create* wealth. Presumably, the wealth of musicians came from the fans and sales, but today, very few of us understand how this money is being generated. We both often read *The Economist*, and while the writing is very precise, it seems a lot more “Rock and Roll” than most music magazines now. It's skillful, arrogant, risky, has transgressive ethics, and is predictive about what they think now will become the future later.

JDP Your repeated use of the word *unregulated* to describe Altamont, Woodstock, and financial products designed by and for banks internationally reminds me that the art market is still widely acknowledged to be the largest (legal) unregulated market in the world. I would guess art makes more sense to bankers in terms of its value as a commodity. However, because the art commodity often has an unstable or indeterminate value, it requires a more internal kind of deregulation on the part of the individual – the willingness to take a risk. How do you see your work as artists in relation to the unregulated?

ACW Yes, the unregulated quality is celebrated, yet we are stripped and raided by it, especially in terms of civil society and the group. We are freer, but the landscape we inhabit together somehow has been savagely reduced. For us, as artists, we impulsively make all kinds of works, publications, events, paintings, and multiples that no one asked for. It's not a question of supply and demand, it is seeking a way out of a kind of cultural loneliness. Part of what we make doesn't reach the market at all, yet some of it does, often after ten years. Finally it's one of the easier times to be alive in some countries directly because of the excesses that are currently generated. As everybody knows there are far too many products in the world already, yet making immaterial consumables doesn't really offer much of a shift. Some kinds of restraint and modesty seem noble to us.

We were thinking, once we finished the Altamont project, that it was a picture of “unregulated money” now in 2009, but we had to work on it, and make it with others to realize that. What we had done and made *together* was the media of the work, but it never really becomes the product because it is so vexed with questions of interpretations and authenticity. So, the photograph enters a commodity market, acting as a prompt to make us think about what cannot be contained within it. ●

PERSONNEL

A CONVERSATION WITH MAUREEN CONNOR

Marisa Jahn How and why did you first get interested in doing work placements?

Maureen Connor Well, for one thing I've only "placed" myself, at least so far. My initial foray into this territory was unwitting. As the opening date for a long-scheduled survey show of my work approached, the originating venue was in the depths of a crisis among its employees that made further planning and preparation almost impossible. As an alternative to cancelling the show, I began an experiment; I offered to reserve a large portion of my allotted exhibition space to the creation of structures and environments for the museum's staff, and began discussing this possibility for the use of space with each of the institution's fifty-two employees.

MJ So you were responding to an existing dynamic, and creating an alternate framework or pattern?

MC Yes. Ultimately, I knew I was unable to offer them what they really needed: higher salaries, more autonomy, better benefits; but I could supply them with working conditions in which their needs were respected, and, in some cases, even met, however temporarily.

MJ I'd like to think that your project offered the opportunity to see things otherwise. Now this project took place in the year 2000. How did this project lead to other placements?

MC This situation generated the first installation of *Personnel*, which has now become an ongoing series of interventions in a range of workplaces including art venues, academic institutions, non-profits, and one industry.

MJ Can you describe *Formica Faux/Real*, the project that you did in collaboration with the architect Kadambari Baxi, for the corporation Formica Group? How did this project come about, and what did you two do while at the factory or corporate headquarters?

MC *Formica Faux/Real* was produced as an installation for Disonacias, an experimental arts organization in Spain that promotes joint projects between international artists and regional industries. We were selected to create a project with Formica (which has a large factory in Bilbao).

It started with an open call in which they listed the companies and their interests. Artists could then apply with a proposal to a specific company, who would then choose which concepts they found most interesting.

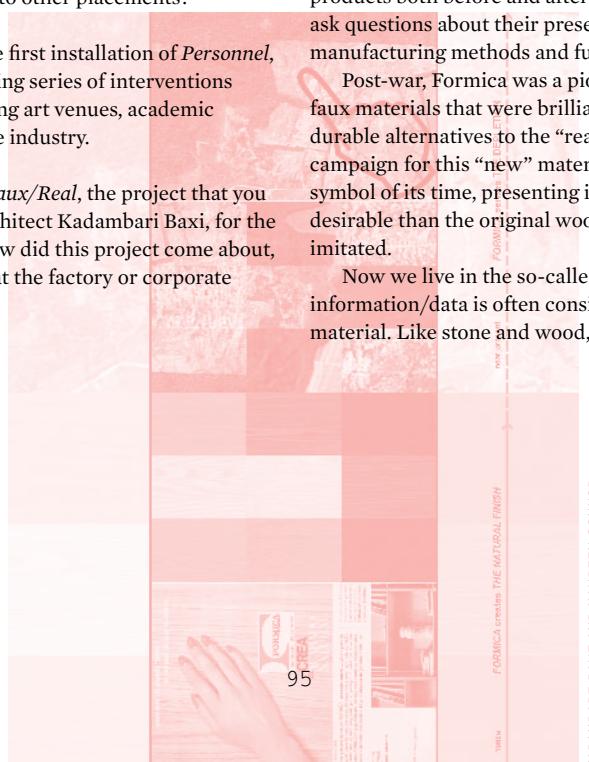
Formica, like many products developed in the early twentieth century, found its niche in World War II defense manufacturing. Its postwar reinvention as a symbol of modern design is much better known, with its vintage products experiencing a recent mid-century modern-related revival. However, its current and future plans, considering its dependence upon the use of wood-derived paper products and petroleum-based resins, are much less clear.

Kadambari and I had proposed using a new form of digital media to create options for embedding virtual links/digital information in Formica surfaces. Originally conceived as a workplace intervention, our goal was to discover the most interesting and productive functions for Formica by conducting a variety of interviews and experiments with the Formica staff.

Ultimately, due to limitations of time and funds, we decided to use vintage advertisements from Formica's archives in order to represent the history, and the psychosocial impact of their products both before and after WWII. We also wanted to ask questions about their present practices, as well as future manufacturing methods and functions for their products.

Post-war, Formica was a pioneer in producing imitation, faux materials that were brilliantly marketed as modern, durable alternatives to the "real thing." The advertising campaign for this "new" material made the Formica brand a symbol of its time, presenting it as more modern, and thus more desirable than the original wood, stone, and metal which it imitated.

Now we live in the so-called digital age in which information/data is often considered the most valuable material. Like stone and wood, this new material —



KADAMBARI BAXI AND MAUREEN CONNOR,
FORMICA FAUX/REAL, DIMENSIONS VARIABLE, 2007.

information/data – may also be “imitated” to develop new products. In addition, we constantly obsess about the future, so methods such as Scenario Planning (used by economists to consider events that could radically change the world, and thus the needs and desires of its population) become important strategies. *Formica Faux/Real* presents scenarios: Future Natural, Future Individual, and Future Illusion, which explore how the development of future products may influence, and be influenced by the “digital age.”

MJ So your installation placed the Formica factory into a critical, historical narrative?

MC The installation functioned as a critique as well as a challenge to a multinational corporation whose narrative is not unlike that of other industries now confronting global warming. We also tried to make humour and fantasy part of the challenge.

MJ How did the people at Formica react to your installation? How was it received?

MC The Disonancias staff was initially more concerned than the representative from Formica, who actually thought it was very funny. But it could have gone either way.

However, *Formica Faux/Real* also tried to emphasize planning and possibility rather than blame and reproach. Also, the title was meant to be an acknowledgement of the fact that Formica led the way in using concepts of “artificiality, imitation, the unnatural, and *faux*(ness)” as positive, creative alternatives long before anyone was concerned about saving rainforests. For them, it was about presenting an affordable alternative, and therefore, making an idea of good design more democratic and accessible.

Precedents and Legacies

MJ Were you influenced at all by the work of Artist Placement Group (APG)?

MC When I began *Personnel* I was not familiar with APG, and since discovering them, I've been continuously baffled by their invisibility. I was astonished to find out such work was going on in the 60s–70s, and it's been interesting to speculate on the reasons for their disappearance.

MJ And what do you see as the legacy of APG's practice? For example, you've mentioned that the relative obscurity of their work is perhaps due to the relative paucity of the documentary components to their work—but also, that the documents that were produced weren't, for example, fetishized.

MC For one, I think that the letters and contracts that Barbara Steveni, co-founder of APG, wrote to the heads of business and people in government positions – what she calls her terms of negotiation – would be fascinating to read and, eventually to publish. I mean, she obviously writes a brilliant proposal. I have a feeling she could publish these letters and contracts, and have a best seller, better than all the “how-to,” business, and self-help books currently available – and she wrote them forty years ago!

MJ That's a good point. I think Barbara's letters would be helpful guides to those practitioners who take on the role of the mediator. Those in this role, and who do it well, like Barbara, have to selflessly mediate between the placed artist and the institutional host. Barbara's letters might put forth what was asked, and what could be asked of a host.

MC Looking at Barbara's methods, it seems to work better if the mediator organizing the placement, and the artist doing the placement are two different people. I've been trying to play both roles at once, and I think that can make people uncomfortable. Somehow the mediator seems to represent a kind of official accountability or responsibility for what the artist does even if that perception is mostly illusory.

MJ “Service aesthetics” is a classificatory term that arose in the 1990s to characterize a certain genre of work that took on the aesthetics of the service industry. How do you see the relationship between APG and artists performing “services” twenty years later?

MC APG's philosophy and methodology both anticipated and calls into question the area of artists' “services,” a notion first identified by Andrea Fraser in the 1990s. She noted that “service aesthetics” includes a broad range of practices, which had evolved from the 1960s and early 1970s, and she went on to classify such projects within an expanded set of terms that include community-based art, public art, context art, project art, and cultural production.¹

Calling attention to the proliferation of such services, Fraser's aim is to examine some of the functions they perform in and for institutions. Stating that these projects are not similar thematically, nor were the artists a part of a new generation or movement, she proposed that the call for such efforts was driven by other institutional needs. For example, she suggests that community-based projects were developed to satisfy the public service requirements of institutions' funding agencies.

Although Fraser's critique confronts those who seek to instrumentalize artists, from the perspective of 2010, it also

seems mired in an *avant-garde* idea of artistic autonomy, a position that APG outgrew more than twenty years earlier. On the other hand, it was probably too early to recognize that what she called “service aesthetics” was, in fact, the beginning of a movement.

MJ So, to summarize, you see APG’s work as an earnest precursor to what would later be referred to as “service aesthetics.” As you see it, APG’s vantage was performed from a more progressive place that fundamentally did away with notions of artistic autonomy. Also, APG foundationally restructured the social relations within artistic production. This same gesture performed in the 1990s would resonate quite differently given shifts in the political economy, and widespread shifts in the workplace.

MC I do think APG had their own idea of artistic autonomy, which reflected the limits of what their hosts could ask them to do during placements. APG demanded a kind of independence from what their hosts might consider “aesthetic needs or requirements,” like making paintings for offices, or teaching crafts to workers. They wanted to have the freedom to view the workplace from a totally fresh perspective in order to understand what might help it function better. Service work could arguably be defined (at least in the 1990s) as museum programs and activities that had generally been considered non-art (although art related), and provided through departments like education. Andrea Fraser was concerned that artists who performed these services were asked to be complicit with institutional power by taking over some of its non-art functions and defining them as art. At that time, Fraser’s main interest was to challenge the power art institutions have to bestow legitimization on art and artists. She didn’t want to see artists trade their independence for the “privilege” of doing a museum project.

APG wanted to find contexts in which artists could bring their independence and outsider status to bear on problems in the workplace, whereas I think aesthetic services eliminate some of the distinctions between art, and extra-aesthetic activities within an art institution. In fact, the intention is similar – to ask artists to challenge conventional approaches to museum programs in the same way APG engaged with the rules of the Fordist workplace.

In some ways, however, what Andrea Fraser feared would happen to artists in the context of art institutions actually came to pass within the service and new technology economies of the business world. In addition to autonomy other privileged components of artistic production – creativity, flexibility – have been transformed into tools to increase productivity and

decrease labour costs. As Andrew Ross was among the first to point out, “in the ‘new economy,’ bosses routinely barter discount wages for creative satisfaction on the job.”

Theorist Brian Holmes shows this cross-pollination between business and art to be even more insidious. Pointing out that the anti-hierarchical approach to economic organization was a response to the 1960s revolt against “authoritarianism and standardization,” he explains how neo-liberal social policy experts capitalized on these values to exploit the “immaterial labourer(s)” of newly developing technological industries. By metamorphosing the specific anti-establishment qualities “that made the sixties ‘hip’ – “authenticity, individuality, difference, rebellion” – into the prerequisites of job description, neo-liberals were able to instill “a new form of internalized vocation, a calling to creative self-fulfillment” that shaped and directed employee behaviour. “It is a distorted form of the artistic revolt... the revolutionary energies which emerged in the Western societies in the 1960s, and which for a time seemed capable of transforming social relations.”²

MJ So then, do you see *Personnel* as a response to neo-liberal economic policies along with their new approaches to human resources and management consulting?

MC When I first began *Personnel* in 2000, it was only the initial phase of the dot com bust, but the firing of massive numbers of workers had already begun, and corporate trainers were brought in as consultants to evaluate the effectiveness of the workforce (who should stay and who should go), and to help with the problems this created. This role traditionally belonged to personnel or human resources departments, which they themselves, had already been downsized, hence corporate trainers emerged to fill the gap. As outside experts or “specialists” rather than co-workers, their practice carries the aura of a therapist – someone focused on the best interests of those involved – thus masking the fact that they are really there to deploy the demands of management, and consider the bottom line.

MJ To clarify, then: *Personnel* responds to the ways in which neo-liberal workplace ideology has cost-effectively maximized internal management: first, by job shedding, and second, by hiring outside consultants to surgically perform this role that employees once did. In other words, *Personnel* points towards the shift from a traditionalist Fordist model of employee-workplace relations towards a neo-liberal model that touts creative liberty at the expense of a worker’s stability and security. While APG’s work developed at the onset of this shift,



you locate the occurrence of your own work at the point where this trend has already taken place in a widespread fashion. As I see it, you are willfully performing this role of the outside consultant, but are reclaiming it by widening the scope of the consultant's political purview and artistic prerogative. You have suggested that APG's work offered liberatory or emancipatory solutions. Would you say that this is the role you are casting for artists today?

MC I think the time has come for a re-evaluation of the kind of contributions artists can make to society — artists can and should be enlisted as creative consultants, and participate in finding solutions to the most intractable social problems of our time.

An Aesthetics of Hospitality

MJ As I see it, the negotiation between hostility and hospitality is a dynamic inherent in embedded art practices. Many working in embedded capacities assuage what might otherwise be perceived as an antagonistic position by referring to a model, figure, or emblem that casts their antagonistic position in a more neutral or constructive light. What are your thoughts about this?

MC Michael Corris and Charlie Gere discuss what they refer to as “an aesthetics of hospitality.” They start from Derrida’s notion of “absolute or unconditional hospitality,” which is an inconceivable hospitality because “it would mean giving up mastery over the space in which we receive our guests, and thus our capacity to be hospitable.”³ Corris and Gere point out that in French, the word *hôte* can mean both “guest” and “host,” an ambiguity that links both the artist and those at the placement site in a more profound way.⁴

Grant Kester designates APG as prototypical social practice artists with the unique ability to create an “open space” — a space in which otherwise impossible exchanges can occur. Kester’s space that allows for impossible exchanges could also be viewed as the condition of hospitality. The artist, a stranger, is welcomed into the workplace as an other, a subject, and he/she in turn does the opposite: she invites workers to step outside and see their workplace from her perspective as an outsider. Artists and workers become subjects to/for each other. It can’t happen, but it does happen because both are guest and host simultaneously, and thus can be fully open to each other. Perhaps this is the plausible world that Steven Wright speaks about — through hospitality the implausible is made plausible — with an invitation based on

trust, trust in the productive possibilities that exist through the mutual recognition of subjectivity. “At the same time, to offer hospitality is always, necessarily and structurally, to risk destruction as a result of the hostility of the enemy, which is nicely indicated by the Latin word *hostis*, meaning both ‘enemy’ and ‘guest.’”⁵

As an artist in the workplace my role is always ambiguous, multivalent, even duplicitous. The relationship is always based on trust, but what that means has to be constantly renegotiated and agreed upon, however tacitly. The therapeutic model is a good reference point. In therapy, trust in the unique nature of the communication enables you to hear and acknowledge difficult information as part of the process of learning and change. What might be experienced as hostility in another context can be recognized as helpful, constructive feedback during therapy. I think artist placements can work in a similar way. ▀

MAUREEN CONNOR



KADAMBART BAXI AND MAUREEN CONNOR,
FORMICA FAUX/REAL, DIMENSIONS VARIABLE, 2007.

THERE ARE SHITTY JOBS EVERYWHERE; THAT'S MY FREEDOM

Artists have long sought to establish connections between themselves and the rest of the working population. Cultural producers have sometimes lifted organizational and lobbying strategies from other labour movements – as with the Art Workers' Coalition – while artists such as the Productivists and the Constructivists have argued for joining the workforce proper. The goal of these efforts was not simply to refigure the status of cultural production, but to create and/or strengthen solidarity between artists and other working people. Recently, there has been renewed interest in revisiting these debates in the context of a neo-liberalized economy.

Au Travail / At Work is a collective whose core project is the transformation of the workplace into a site of clandestine art production. Members are invited to consider their current employment as a kind of ready-made artist's residency, complete with wages, social connections, resources, and dead time. Au Travail / At Work's members, far from attempting to unite labour in order to leverage its power against capital, have simply stopped believing in work, while continuing to be "At Workers." In so doing, "At Workers" claim to have transformed their conditions of oppression into the conditions of freedom, with no further goal than the continued practice of their own personal freedom. While this strategy might be read as so much playful resignation, it offers the following provocation: the onus is on each of us to produce our own freedom, regardless of how hopeless the conditions might appear.

Au Travail / At Work was formed around 2004, in Montréal, before the collapse of the economy. The following exploration of the collective's activities centres on a conversation with Bob the Builder, one of the founding members.

Gina Badger How do people become members of the Au Travail / At Work collective? How do they hear about you? How do they get in touch with you? Is there any sort of eligibility criteria, or is it open to anyone?

Bob the Builder When Au Travail / At Work started, it was mostly myself, and friends. It started with talking in bars, being

AN INTERVIEW WITH BOB THE BUILDER OF AU TRAVAIL / AT WORK

fed-up with our jobs. First, I wanted to do the project alone, but then I realized that a lot of people were in the same shit hole as me. I had an exhibition coming up, a solo show, but I decided to open the door to everybody, so I rewrote my text to make it an open call.

GB When was that?

BB I started on my own in 2004. I wrote proposals to Dare-Dare [in Montréal], and Le Lieu [centre d'art actuel] in Québec City, who invited me to show what I had been doing in my workplace. But, I opened the door to anybody. The only criteria were to have a job, and to either think, act, or hijack stuff from the job. That was the only criteria.

Over time we became too many [in the initial group], and it was impossible to meet anymore. There were people in Asia, the United States, Europe, ... and I felt that I should explode the initial group of people. Until then, we were privileged; we could see each other. But we had to develop new tools to be a collective – a collectivity, I should say – and to be all on the same level. So, I made a comprehensive website where I archived all sorts of actions and interventions. That became the second phase of the collective, and it worked for, let's say, three years. Then it became too big again, because I couldn't keep up with the website updates and everything, so I decided it would be alright to just let the collective Au Travail / At Work become an entity, and to let it be in the real world. It was not about compiling stuff and archiving stuff anymore, it was more like a movement. People would share their projects with each other, but in an anarchical way.

GB So, it's not something that you feel the need to organize or keep track of, at this point.

BB I don't want to. We are well known; people use the term "At Worker."

Soon, I will put the film I'm working on online, so anybody who wants to have information about the collective won't have to go through a website with tons of projects, but just watch

the film, and do shit on their own. And if they want to make a group, or if they want to restart the whole thing from scratch in their country, then they are more than welcome to do it. But I don't want to be the father anymore.

I just wanted it to be wild in nature. It's a movement.

GB Do you think that the collective becomes more or less goal-oriented when it transforms into a movement?

BB As a movement, people hear about it and then they can do things on their own in their life, instead of doing it for their collective, or in order to have exhibition opportunities. As a movement, we avoid having exhibitions. Now the collective exists just to inspire people to act in their own lives. If they share ideas and everything, it's fine, but not in an art-careerist fashion. It was a big problem in the beginning because there were a lot of people who wanted to be part of the collective in order to have access to a gallery, a biennial, a catalogue... Now, I try to talk about the collective more as, let's say, a life philosophy, instead of a way to join the art world.

Adam Bobbette Is there a particular kind of practice or act that people have to do in order to be part of the collective?

BB As long as they have a job, and that things happen at their job, they can call themselves "At Workers." There are some "At Workers" that are better than others. This works like Punk; some people pretend to be Punk, but people laugh at them, you know? It becomes more natural for some.

GB The text you described is a call for "collaboration," that is open to anyone who has a job. If members are geographically dispersed, so that they don't have any personal contact with one another, how do the members actually work together, or what is it that they produce collaboratively?

BB Just knowing that the collective exists may give confidence to other people to act. They don't feel so alone. Also, they can always share their project, let's say, by opening a website and posting projects on it. Anybody who searches for "Au Travail / At Work" can get in contact. It's happened in the past: a guy in Brussels contacted me because he wanted to be part of an exhibition; and the day after, another woman contacted me; she was working in the same store as him at the... something like a FNAC [a French big box entertainment store]. I proposed that they work together, do a project together, since they were in the same store. Eventually, they did a demo for HD cameras, and they set up a spy cam, so that they could save all the video images of kids behaving stupidly in front of their display.

So it does happen, people are inspired by other people's actions. Often people like the idea behind the collective, but they don't know what they could do at their job, the nature of the art that they could make, why would it be art, or anything like that. They ask themselves. So they hear an anecdote, and can refer to it, and work with confidence. I would say this is "indirect" collaboration.

GB In a sense it is the collective itself that is produced collaboratively...

BB Yes, but I mean it happens more directly, too. There are still people in Montréal strongly associated with the collective. It gave them confidence to walk that path, and they made it more of a personal entity. I would say that their first experiences with the collective triggered their production as artists. Then they talk about it, and more people contact me and say, "what should I do?" Now, I am trying to answer all those questions with the production of a feature-length documentary about the history, the development, and the future of our movement. The film explains how people meet, how they could meet, what they can do, everything.

GB So the film will also function as a kind of backbone or support network?

RESPONSE BY ALLAN ANTLIFF

The Au Travail / At Work collective's efforts to subvert the conditions of labour in capitalist economics by reinvigorating creative agency lends itself to an anarchist reading, given that its valorization of subjective freedom is premised on antagonism towards workplace authoritarianism. They are not the first to engage in such an undertaking: a standard feature of anarchist activism, born of necessity in communities that are largely impoverished, is the appropriation of workplace materials, time, and resources so as to realize the anti-authoritarian ends of the protagonists. Which is not to say that the activity of workplace subversion is replicating the instrumentalism of capitalist employer-labourer relations through a kind of perverse inversion – far from it. The more one brings a workplace into line with the pursuit of human capacities for imagination, the more it is transformed into a terrain of contestation where working can serve as an invitation to rebel (as opposed to acquiescence). This, to my mind, constitutes the anarchic dimensions of Au Travail / At Work's project, which come into play as an inescapable component of its stated purpose. The challenge the collective poses is not to ape the exploitative agenda of the employer: it is to actualize freedom in the workplace as an extension of our social being, bringing work into the flux of rebellion, and intensifying our capacities for self-realization. This is another way of de-alienating artistic activity through concrete means, a decoupling of art from the banal round of capitalization and spectacular consumption. To the degree that the collective realizes itself in the course of doing so, it is insurrectionary.

BB Yes.

GB And, is this support network meant to help people endure working conditions that are not favourable? Or, is it meant to transform the conditions of their working lives in a more fundamental way?

BB Often they work in secret. They do not transform so many things in their workplace, but it will affect the way they look at it. People who have a nice job, a well-paid job, won't think of doing something else. They are just happy. The way I like to see work is more along these lines: the shittier it is, the more opportunity I have to do art, because the constraints are bigger. Now, I am a really happy man because any type of work is always an opportunity to rock it. Though other people might transform their working conditions in, let's say, a passive way. Not in a direct way. There is no confrontation. It is very different from the class conflict we believed in, in the 1960s, or during the French Revolution.

AB How is it different?

BB Than in the 1960s?

AB Yes.

BB I mean, what is different is – well, in a way it's a reflection of our times. It's more individualistic. So you don't try to confront the authority, or your boss, or the economy directly. You will go to work, and you will do this little thing that makes it more interesting for you, or more meaningful, but you work in secret. And the job that you are hired to do becomes secondary. You're a bit freer than if you try to fight the power directly. You don't give a shit about the power anymore, because shitty jobs are everywhere. You can lose your job, and find another one the day after, if you are willing to do shitty work. That is the way we conceive freedom. When I say "we," I mean most people who are part of the collective. They really hate their jobs.

GB You talk about an anarchist faction in the collective that is a little more extreme, maybe in this way that you are describing, that considers the actual job itself to be totally disposable. So you'll take any kind of work...

BB Yes.

GB Can you tell us a little bit more?

BB It's more the way I do it... I look for the stupidest jobs, instead of trying to save my ass. I am always available to do stupid stuff. That's how I end up being a wrestler in oil, and doing telemarketing, and stuff like that. And then you start to laugh at everything, even if you are asked to do a conference at the Canada Council [for the Arts], you take the opportunity to do robot songs, and dance on the table. It makes your life really funny.

AB You've never reached a point where you just can't get work?

BB No, there are shitty jobs everywhere, and that's my freedom. I will never look for a job that offers freedom. I will just be free.

AB For us, one of the central questions about Au Travail / At Work is whether people are interested in destroying work, or finding better and better ways to make their own jobs more bearable.

BB Yeah, this is a question I always ask myself. If you start to enjoy yourself at the workplace you may become a better employee – you're just *assisting* the global economy. You are making shitty jobs more attractive for yourself.

I would say it's like driving on the road: there are two ditches; there is one on the right and one on the left, you can crash into both of them, but only one of them at a time. There is a risk on both sides. So becoming satisfied with your job would be one of the ditches, but the other ditch is more... it would be destroying the job, so it is about following this thin line in between. You understand?

We are against instrumentalization, and are for *libre-arbitre* [self-determination]. *Libre-arbitre* – it's about trusting yourself to make the right decision when it's time to work. But, of course, many people criticize us because they think that we are the worst lobbyists – neo-liberal lobbyists – because we just want to stimulate the economy by having a better time on the job, and therefore, becoming more productive. But I don't have any examples from anyone in the collective where that's actually the case.

And with the other ditch, there were no cases of destroying work because in the end people act more like parasites. And parasites – let's say small fish parasites – if they eat the whole shark, then they don't have food anymore. So, they shouldn't eat too much, and just take what they need, and let the shark be because it's their future. A normal "At Worker" has bills to

CCD: COFFEE CUP DISORDER; ANONYMOUS, CANADA,
2005; CUPS COLLECTED BY ARTISTS FROM GARBAGE
CANS AFTER A LONG TELEMARKETING CAMPAIGN IN A
PRIVATE COMPANY.

pay. While a member of the anarchist faction of “At Workers” will — instead of destroying the work — will just make a big mess, and then leave, and go somewhere else; because he’s free in his mind, and he exercises his freedom in many, many places. So, it will not destroy work, it will destroy something smaller, like *tasks*. [Laughs.]

GB Maybe the threat mounted by a collective such as Au Travail / At Work, changes over time. With a small collective where individuals work in secret, they can only pose so great a threat to something as large and abstract as “Work” with a capital “W.” But, as the collective grows and grows, and becomes something of a movement, which, in itself, can become a different kind of threat.

BB If you feel fear then people have control over you. And if you fear nothing, it's you who has control over the employers. That would be the goal — to feel freer.

GB In the documentary, *DATA*, there's that repetitive, prominent image of people spinning out in forklifts. Can you talk about that forklift ballet, and why you like that image?

BB “You give a man a tool and he is gonna play with it.” It’s just people having fun, you know? I found those forklifts in every country; people do the thing same with them. So, it’s a common denominator — of what could be a poetic gesture in warehouses. People are being bored to death in warehouses now because there is no traffic or merchandise anymore... and also, I may have a little fetish with trucks!

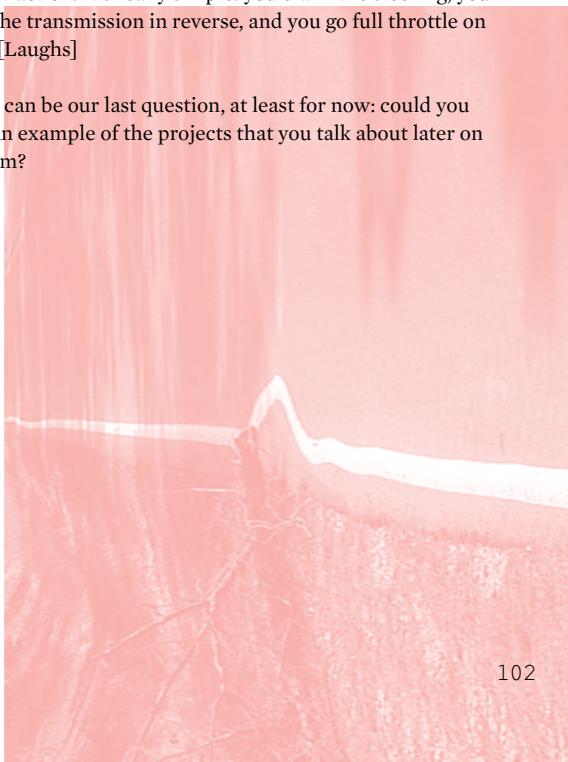
GB [Laughs]

BB That is only in the beginning of the film. Later, there are more complex projects that are more intelligent, and better developed. In the beginning of the film I wanted to show some raw action. It's really simple: you crank the steering, you engage the transmission in reverse, and you go full throttle on the gas. [Laughs]

GB This can be our last question, at least for now: could you give us an example of the projects that you talk about later on in the film?

BB Yes. The project I've most recently learned about is from a plastic surgeon that does liposuction. He works in Los Angeles. And he drives a Mercedes-Benz — a big, black Mercedes. And in his garage he converts grease — the fat from his clients — into fuel for his converted Mercedes-Benz engine. A friend of his submitted the story because he wishes to be anonymous — you can understand why. I like the poetry of it, because when you literally burn fat in a black Mercedes, it refers to a lot of things. ●

AU TRAVAIL / AT WORK



LIGNE DE CONDUITE / LINE OF CONDUCT.
ANONYMOUS, FRANCE, 2007

AU TRAVAIL / AT WORK

MANIFESTO, 2010

by Au Travail / At Work

Today's economy engenders real spaces for the expression of freedom: workers of the immaterial sectors (informatics, communications, education, fashion, advertising, etc.) are growing in number, and they are often free to make use of their time as they please.

Au Travail / At Work is a project based on a call for collaboration which is open to all. This experimental project urges artists and workers to consider their workplace as a site of artistic residence. In all cases, the space of reflection, production, or intervention becomes the space of the employer.

The members of the collective appropriate the culture of work within the very framework of their daily lives and, ultimately, they produce themselves by making use of, subverting, or undermining the cultural and technological means that are available to them in the workplace.

The workplace is considered as a field for experimentation and discovery wherein are deployed the conflictual relations arising between private Utopias, collective necessities, and economic realities.

The members of the collective capitalize on the individual worker's right to manage his or her own free time, and they sometimes refuse certain conditions by means of the re-appropriation and self-valorization of such time.

The *Au Travail / At Work* collective offers its members a network of relations as well as methods for sharing, and it organizes exhibitions that ensure the dissemination of their ideas, actions, and accomplishments.

Immersed in diverse economic sectors, this collective sketches the possible figures of a new form of commitment.

Such work, which entails the appropriation and subjectivization of the world of labour, and which is accomplished on the basis of a common cultural background, acts on our capacity to develop ideas.

The mission of our members is to produce that which is not reducible to a calculable exchange value.

The objective of the collective is to recognize such wealth, to assemble it, and to make it accessible to all.

The dissident employee is a model employee. He or she fulfils his or her tasks and lives up to the criteria of the employer. He or she often works in the shadows, and is anonymous.

The movement was initiated in February 2005, with the aims of exploring and amalgamating multidisciplinary actions in the context of an incessant declaration of a new world order and its dominion over all economies.

This act of resistance in the face of the power of neo-liberal economic rationality essentially seeks to enrich members of the collective by means of capacities for action, communication, creation, and reflection.

The *Au Travail / At Work* collective allows each member to become the permanent arbiter of the use value of his or her time versus its exchange value. In other words, he or she judges between the "utilities" he or she may purchase by selling work time, and those he or she may produce independently by means of the self-valorisation of such time.

An anarchical faction of the collective seeks completely to abandon the merchant-utilitarian economic conception of labour, and considers the pursuit of human capacities for imagination and resilience as an end in itself.

The members of the anarchical faction accept any form of work under any conditions whatsoever, and they overcome the limitations such work imposes. The victory of the new form of capitalism becomes total, and it is precisely for this reason that resisting capitalism's grip on our lives becomes increasingly eloquent. Various corporations have been infiltrated and thereby included in a territorial network, which is itself interconnected with other trans-territorial networks.

The job market just got hotter. ●

AU TRAVAIL / AT WORK

MANIFESTE, 2010

par Au Travail / At Work

L'économie d'aujourd'hui crée des espaces de liberté réels : les travailleurs de l'immatériel (informatique, communications, services, éducation, mode, pub...) sont de plus en plus nombreux et disposent souvent de la gestion de leur temps.

AU TRAVAIL / AT WORK est un appel de collaboration ouvert et libre à tous. Ce projet expérimental propose aux artistes et aux travailleurs de considérer leur lieu de travail comme un lieu de résidence de création. Dans tous les cas, le lieu de réflexion, de réalisation ou d'intervention devient celui de l'employeur.

Les membres du collectif s'approprient la culture du travail au sein même de leur cadre de vie et se produisent eux-mêmes en utilisant, détournant ou pliant à leurs propres fins les moyens culturels et technologiques dont ils disposent au travail.

Le milieu de travail est considéré comme un champ d'expérimentation et de découverte où se jouent les rapports conflictuels entre utopies privées, nécessités collectives et réalités économiques.

Les membres du collectif capitalisent sur le droit individuel des employés à l'autogestion de leur temps et refusent parfois certaines conditions par la réappropriation et l'autovalorisation de ce temps.

Le collectif AU TRAVAIL / AT WORK offre à ses membres un réseau de relations, des modes de partage, et organise des expositions qui assurent la diffusion et la mise en commun de leurs idées, actions et réalisations.

Immergé dans divers secteurs de l'économie, ce collectif dessine les figures possibles d'une nouvelle forme d'engagement.

Ce travail d'appropriation et de subjectivation du monde du travail, accompli sur la base d'un fonds culturel commun, agit sur notre capacité à développer des idées.

La mission des membres est de produire ce qui n'est pas réductible à une valeur d'échange calculable.

L'objectif du collectif est de reconnaître ces richesses, de les rassembler et de les rendre librement accessibles à tous.

L'employé dissident est un employé modèle. Il s'acquitte de ses tâches et répond aux critères d'exigences de son employeur. Il œuvre souvent en secret, parfois sous le couvert de l'anonymat.

Le mouvement fut initié au mois de février 2005 dans le but d'explorer et d'amalgamer des actions multidisciplinaires dans le contexte de la déclaration incessante du nouvel ordre mondial et de sa domination sur toutes les économies.

Cet acte de résistance au pouvoir de la rationalisation économique néolibérale consiste essentiellement à enrichir des capacités d'action, de communication, de création et de réflexion chez les membres du collectif.

Le collectif AU TRAVAIL / AT WORK permet à chacun d'arbitrer en permanence entre la valeur d'usage de son temps et sa valeur d'échange : c'est-à-dire entre les « utilités », qu'il peut acheter en vendant du temps de travail et celles qu'il peut produire indépendamment par l'autovalorisation de ce temps.

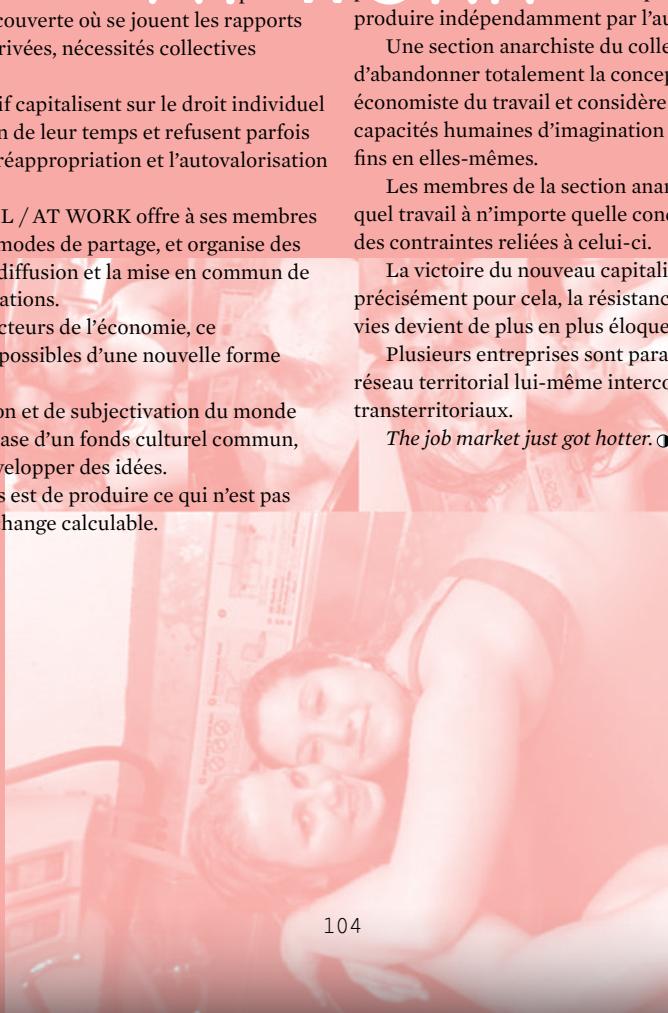
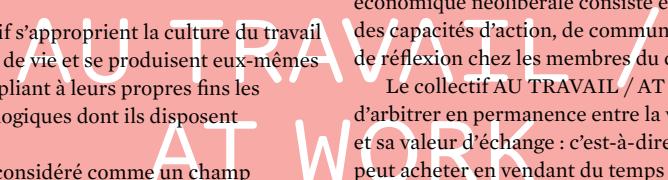
Une section anarchiste du collectif se donne comme objectif d'abandonner totalement la conception marchande-utilitaire-économiste du travail et considère le développement des capacités humaines d'imagination et de résilience comme des fins en elles-mêmes.

Les membres de la section anarchiste acceptent n'importe quel travail à n'importe quelle condition et s'affranchissent des contraintes reliées à celui-ci.

La victoire du nouveau capitalisme devient totale et, précisément pour cela, la résistance à son emprise sur nos vies devient de plus en plus éloquente.

Plusieurs entreprises sont parasitées et incluses dans un réseau territorial lui-même interconnecté avec d'autres réseaux transterritoriaux.

The job market just got hotter. ●



THE MAGPIE: ECONOMIC REDUNDANCY AS CIVIC PARTICIPATION

For his one-month residency at MoKS Center for Art and Social Practice in Mooste (a small, 400-person village in Estonia), Canadian artist and curator Tomas Jonsson created a temporary “store” by setting up a folding table, cash box, and an inventory consisting of \$100 worth of ordinary household goods (mosquito gel, nail clippers, sponges, etc.) purchased from the village’s two local general stores. For seven consecutive evenings, Jonsson would receive customers, selling them items marked at the same price for which he bought them. The profits Jonsson made were then used to purchase new items, so that the store, ultimately, made no profit.

Neither profit-making nor commercially competitive, Harakapood functioned as an economically superfluous and redundant endeavour, intended solely as a means for interacting with local Estonians. Jonsson’s self-conscious acknowledgment of his own role as an outsider is humorously foregrounded in the project’s title, Harakapood (or “Magpie shop” in English), which refers to the bird (family name Corvidae) that constructs its habitat from eggs, nesting items, and shiny objects stolen from other birds’ nests.

Marisa Jahn Can you explain your choice of the magpie as a figure emblemizing your position as an outsider, and, would you even agree with this characterization of yourself as an “outsider”? If not, perhaps, how do you regard your otherness?

Tomas Jonsson What I was interested in here was this ambivalent character quality to the magpie, from an anthropocentric perspective. While it is aesthetically pleasing, the magpie – particularly in rural contexts – also carries a negative identity as a nuisance or pest. I also understood the bird as a type of interloper, taking advantage of other birds’ nests, and knocking out the eggs to make room for their own. Of course, this behaviour isn’t limited to this particular family of birds.

AN INTERVIEW WITH TOMAS JONSSON

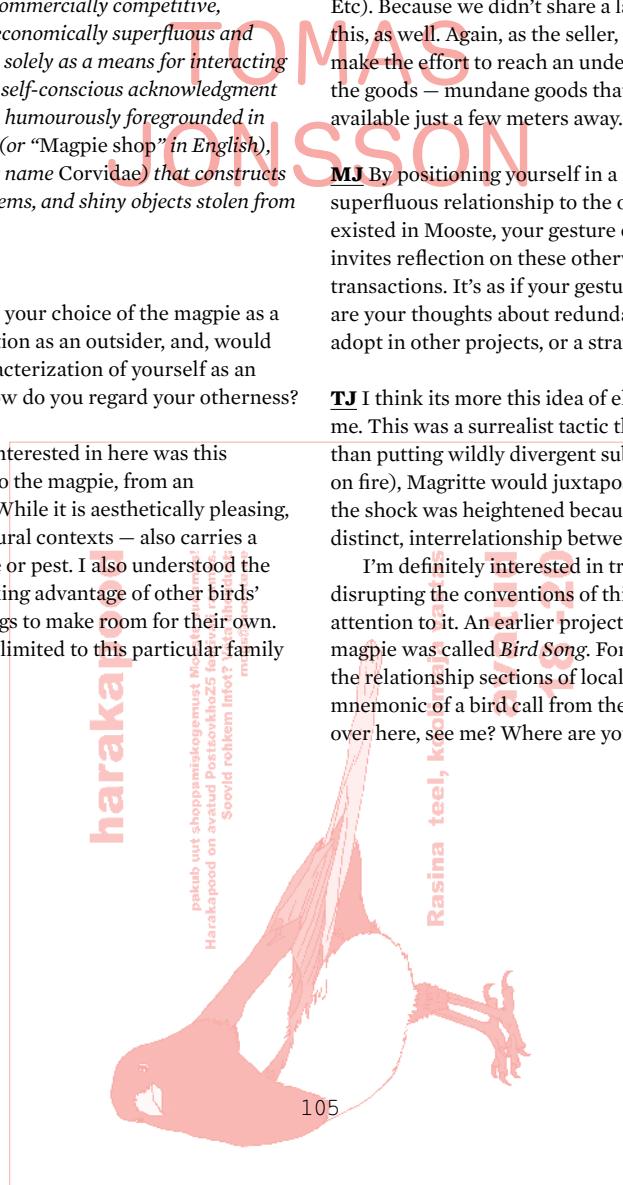
MJ Like a parasite, a magpie is also an agonistic figure that foregrounds relations of power and otherness (alterity). How did your project allow you to understand and change this dynamic?

TJ My aim was to see how much I could diffuse the conventional economic relationship between buyer and seller, and try to open up another sort of relationship, however tentative. Inverting the roles was one way, as I became the object of focus, the one to be approached and interrogated (How much is this? Do you have this item? Why are you doing this? Etc). Because we didn’t share a language, we had to negotiate this, as well. Again, as the seller, the onus was more on me to make the effort to reach an understanding if I wanted to sell the goods – mundane goods that were otherwise conveniently available just a few meters away.

MJ By positioning yourself in a non-competitive, and fiscally superfluous relationship to the other two general stores that existed in Mooste, your gesture of redundancy, ultimately invites reflection on these otherwise quotidian consumer transactions. It’s as if your gesture puts real life in quotes. What are your thoughts about redundancy? Is this a strategy you adopt in other projects, or a strategy you adapted?

TJ I think its more this idea of elective affinity that appeals to me. This was a surrealist tactic that René Magritte used; rather than putting wildly divergent subjects together (say, a giraffe on fire), Magritte would juxtapose an egg with a bird cage. So the shock was heightened because of the close, but still logically distinct, interrelationship between the subjects.

I’m definitely interested in transactions, and ways of disrupting the conventions of this relationship in order to draw attention to it. An earlier project that informed my approach to magpie was called *Bird Song*. For this project, I posted an ad in the relationship sections of local papers. The text I used was a mnemonic of a bird call from the red-eyed vireo: “Here I am, over here, see me? Where are you?”



TOMAS JONSSON, HARAKAPOOD (MAGPIE SHOP), 2005,
POSTER ADVERTISING OPEN HOURS AND LOCATION

Anyone who called that number heard the call of the vireo on the answering machine, and could then leave a message in response. While some people were obviously frustrated, I was happy that others took the cues of the piece, and tried to offer a response.

MJ An interesting aspect of your project is that by creating your “store,” you are inserting yourself into existing circulatory systems – the exchange of money, goods, language, etc. You are becoming part of the flows and patterns of the small town. Can you describe how you envision this – perhaps assimilatory – gesture?

TJ In the case of Mooste, where the project took place, the stores were important for local products, but also as a social space. There were also interesting dynamics between the two. One store had been there for many years, while the other was only a few years old. I never fully understood the dynamics between the two, and how a town of this size could support both, but there didn’t seem to be any particular conflict between them. Customers seemed to flow easily back and forth between them.

My shop was located just off the main thoroughfare of the town, between the two stores, so there was a lot of foot traffic, but also intercity traffic. Most often in the case of the former I was more of a visual anomaly, people might slow down to see what this was all about, but otherwise, carry on.

Local residents at first took some time before approaching. In the years that MoKS has been presenting socially engaged art projects in this village, I imagine that they are generally acclimatized to projects like this, and in some ways I probably just fell into the background. But, especially by the third day, people were becoming accustomed to this. The organizers of MoKS, John Grzinich and Evelyn Muursep, had a large part to do with this, by fielding questions, and informing people about what was going on, with this project and others. So I can imagine that this helped, as well.

My favourite aspect of this project was when two local kids who lived just across the street from where I was set up would come and check out what I was up to. Eventually they started helping out, stopping people in the street, and getting them to come to the shop and buy things. They would also recommend

items that I should look for in the stores that they knew certain people would want. At that point, what I liked is that I went a bit more into the background, the shop was still there, but the relationship dynamic had changed. I had offered the store as a project to the kids to continue on, but sadly I don’t think that happened.

MJ What interests me about your project is that by offering others a way to participate in economic exchanges as either consumers or as vendors, and then more directly by training the local teens in Mooste to run your store, you symbolically invited others to assume your position of the outsider. You were, in a sense, converting insiders into outsiders, and complicating their distinction. Do feel that this is an apt characterization?

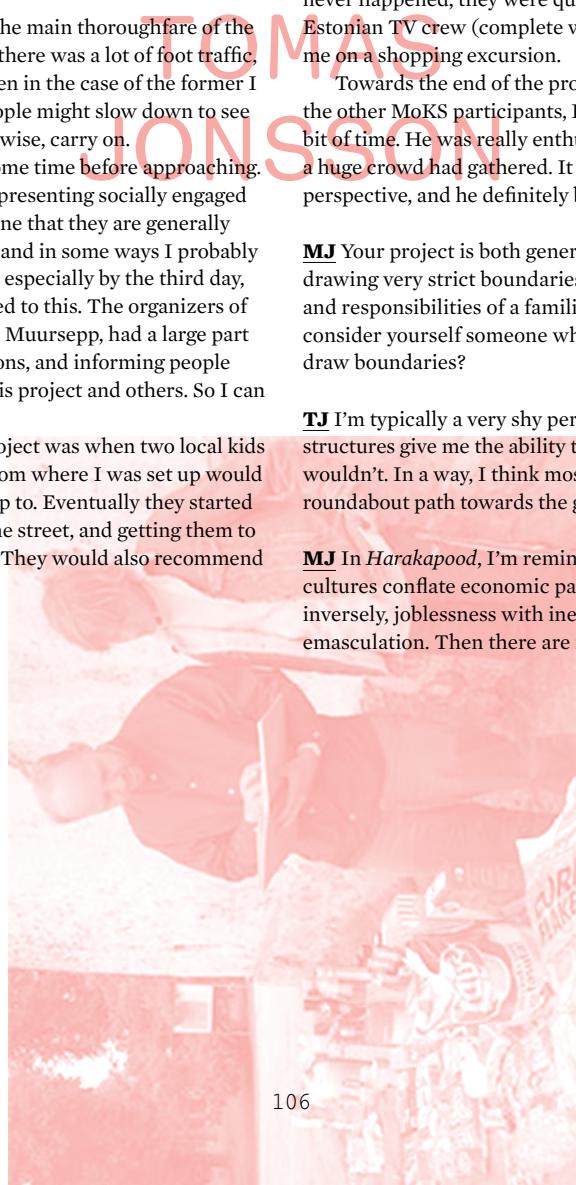
TJ Yeah that sounds right, except I don’t know that I ever lost the “outsider” status. I think if I had been more outgoing in my presentation, calling out to customers, etc., that might have been the case. But, as it was, I spent most of my time feeling nervous, and wondering how soon it would be before the store keepers would ban me from their shops. That never happened, they were quietly supportive, even when an Estonian TV crew (complete with boom mike) followed me on a shopping excursion.

Towards the end of the project, I took a break and one of the other MoKS participants, Hiroshi Egami, took over for a bit of time. He was really enthusiastic, and when I came back a huge crowd had gathered. It was interesting to see from that perspective, and he definitely brought a different dynamic.

MJ Your project is both generous and generative, but by drawing very strict boundaries, and foregrounding the roles and responsibilities of a familiar social schema. Do you consider yourself someone who is inclined to (interpersonally) draw boundaries?

TJ I’m typically a very shy person, so in a way, these rules or structures give me the ability to engage where otherwise I wouldn’t. In a way, I think most of my performative work is a roundabout path towards the goal of having a conversation.

MJ In *Harakapood*, I’m reminded about the way that many cultures conflate economic participation with agency; and inversely, joblessness with ineffectuality, invisibility, and/or emasculation. Then there are many examples where economic



activity functions primarily as a form of either entertainment or socializing. For kids, setting up a lemonade stand by the side of the road is usually more entertaining than financially remunerative. Similarly, I recall that when I was visiting Guayaquil, Ecuador, some twenty years ago, people commonly would set up folding chairs and tables on the sidewalk or roll up their garage doors to sell their personal belongings. The stated objective of this activity was to earn additional revenue, but it mostly provided an excuse for people-watching or to engage the passersby. I know you are interested in commerce as a form of economic exchange, as a form of civic participation — I'm wondering if you can say more?

TJ Mooste, like many other small towns in rural Estonia, was a Soviet collective farm, grafted on to a traditional German manor house and village. Following the post-Soviet transition, of course the new economy did not support this, and the town was left with an existential crisis. Most people now work in Tartu or Tallinn, and come home on the weekends.

The town was sold, and purchased by a foreign investor who didn't put any effort or funding into maintaining the town, so it began to atrophy, until the town's residents bought it back, and tried to build it up again. In the absence of industry, and wanting to transcend the recent past, there was a desire to look further back to its history, in order to create a tourist-friendly experience. When MoKS established itself in the town, the organizers were able to convince the local authorities to not fully disregard the recent and troubling history in favour of a nostalgic vision.

Following independence, Estonia has played host to an increasing wave of tourists who took advantage of the newly opened borders, as well as the fluctuating economy and society. The discrepancy of price, and the interplay between identities that surfaced in the tourist economy (Soviet-era memorabilia, and traditional Estonian wares) was picked over in markets that appeared throughout the space. As prices and cultures become less "exotic," invariably there will be a drop in the level of tourism, and certainly of the proliferation of markets.

These markets were not just touristic, and especially in the transition period were an important source of everyday

items, and a source of income. In the capital of Tallinn particularly, there are a number of empty kiosks throughout the centre core — outside of the touristic Old Town — that can be temporarily occupied, to sell flowers or small amounts of produce. Often, pensioners use these kiosks in order to supplement their incomes.

With *Harakapood*, I wanted to put myself in between these two experiences. Taking on the role of the tourist, but inverting the dynamics of the arrangement, I carved out a bit of a space for myself. Taking into account my externality in this relationship, I wanted to otherwise reduce my impact, from an economic point of view, in favour of opening up more of a social space. ◉

TOMAS JONSSON



TOMAS JONSSON. HARAKAPOOD (MAGPIE SHOP), 2005

PERFORMING POLITICS

PERFORMING POLITICS

by Marisa Jahn

"The isotope," Ajji writes, "is an element, that by the presence of an additional or removed neutron, a small particle in its nucleus is differentiated. It is specifically different while belonging, bearing a discernable mark, weight, or sense of difference, as well as an essential sameness."¹ Both belonging and different, the isotopic artist provokes the reconsideration of existing truths. The "radioactive" – or generative – effect of the isotopic artist's tactic is illustrated by the many examples when others recognize that self-invention is a strategy they too can adopt. Parodic figures hovering between authenticity and irreverence, the very presence of these "isotopes" destabilizes the ontological status of other institutions, pointing towards their facture.

The Yes Men are perhaps the most well known artists in this generation who emblemize Ajii's figure of the isotope. Featured in this book is an interview with The Yes Men's Andy Bichlbaum and two artist-activists, Andrew Boyd and L.M. Bogad, who discuss a newspaper they produced spoofing one of New York City's Rupert Murdoch-owned, right-wing newspapers, the New York Post. Major reactionary newspapers are only one of the targets for this kind of action.

Of lasting influence in the Canadian public imaginary is "Mr. Peanut," a character invented in 1971 by John Mitchell and artist Vincent Trasov, who together ran for mayor of Vancouver. Throughout his mayoral run, Trasov would suit up in a life-sized costume resembling the Planter's Peanut character used to advertise comestible peanuts. Outfitted with spats,

cane, and top hat, Mitchell performed as Mr. Peanut's spokesperson while Mr. Peanut, himself silent, would tap-dance in accompaniment to his backup singers, the Peanettes. Whether behind a podium adjacent to the other candidates or in the newspaper emblazoned with punning headlines, Mr. Peanut's very presence mocked the efforts of the other "serious" candidates. Mr. Peanut ended up placing third in the mayoral race, but his influence on the political imaginary of Canadians evidences Bogad's thesis – that one of the outcomes of "electoral guerilla theatre" is its galvanization of an otherwise disenfranchised constituency. Hearkening a utopic future possible in the present, Mr. Peanut's campaign posters read, "A New Mayor; A New Era. Vancouver Civic Election, 1974."

Reverend Billy is a character invented by artists William Talen and Savitri Durkee. An ordained minister whose comedic presence hovers between irreverence and earnestness, Reverend Billy adopts the costume, inflections, and fiery rhetoric of an evangelical soap box preacher to broadcast messages about sustainable ecology, supporting local businesses, and civil rights issues. In accompaniment to Reverend Billy is a forty-person gospel choir called "The Life After Shopping Gospel Choir," and a wide network of "believers." Reverend Billy thus functions as a vehicle of belief: he absorbs collective aspirations, and in turn, embodies an alternate worldview that energizes the larger whole. This is the role of the parasite: "The parasite is an exciter. Far from transforming a system, changing its nature, its form, its elements, its relations, and its pathways... the parasite makes it change states differentially. It inclines it. It makes the equilibrium of the energetic distribution

fluctuate... Often this inclination has no effect, but it can produce gigantic ones by chain reactions or reproduction.”²

In 2009, Reverend Billy ran against the incumbent Michael Bloomberg for the position of mayor of New York City. In his analysis of Reverend Billy’s candidacy for mayor of New York, artist, activist, and scholar L.M. Bogad inquires into the way that the mayoral run provides a human face to what some regard as the oligarchical tenure of the incumbent mayor, Michael Bloomberg. In 2009, Bloomberg orchestrated a legislative coup that extended term limits, allowing him to run for what looked like a virtually uncontested third term. Reverend Billy attempted to channel the feeling of political resignation and outrage among many New Yorkers with a platform built on principles that ranged from satirical, absurdist propositions, to pragmatic alternatives to Bloomberg’s regime. Referring to the strategy of intervening electoral politics, Bogad coins the phrase “electoral guerilla theatre,” a term that refers to “an ambivalent, hybrid measure that merges the traditions and techniques of ‘third-party’ electoral intervention with grassroots direct action and performative disruption.” Bogad notes: “Electoral guerilla theatre is often an expression of the frustration felt by individual citizens and social movements who feel excluded from the real decision-making process in current democracies.”³ Powerful are those projects that afford the framework for sensing political and individual agency anew.

Bogad also considers the often-posed critique that contestatory projects intervening governmental (statist) systems frivolously “waste” taxpayer’s dollars, and alienate an already-disillusioned voter base:

[...] What does this phenomenon reveal about voter frustration and dissatisfaction across a range of political systems and nationalities? Do these satirists pollute and abuse the electoral discourse and system, wasting public resources and media time with their outrageous performances, or is this “offensiveness” necessary for galvanizing marginalized communities? While many people in developing nations still struggle for the right to vote, is this primarily “developed nation” phenomenon just another appalling symptom of political disillusionment and cynicism in post-industrial democracies, or is it an unexpectedly constructive response, an innovative method of political engagement?⁴

In response, Bogad suggests that a cost-benefit analysis overlooks the function of these cultural expressions in galvanizing a social movement/base through carnivalesque expression.

Winning office is rarely the primary goal. Rather, these campaigns usually aim to simultaneously corrode and rejuvenate different elements of the civic body, much like the degrading and regenerative aspects of Rabelasian carnival [...] They satirize the dominant political centre, and expose its unacknowledged exclusionary divides and ritualistic nature [...] This can create a moment of theatricality in the public sphere, disrupting assumptions of dignity, fairness, and legitimacy [...] At the same time, these campaigns echo, entertain, and energize the performer’s base community(ies), and communicate grievances from that marginal position to the centre through parody and irony.⁵

In fact, many of the projects included in this book emblemize one of the unique characteristics of embedded art practices – an inclusive approach to authorship that shifts emphasis from

originary creation to participation. Artist Darren O'Donnell foregrounds the blurred distinction between audience and participant with projects such as the one featured in this volume entitled "Children's Choice Awards." Artist and engineer Steve Mann's notion of "incidentalism" encapsulates his approach to creating works that engender the participation of individuals in those institutions he encounters. Camille Turner's invented beauty pageant persona mocks the institutionalization of beauty, and invites others to create their own set of criteria.

Kristin Lucas is an artist who officially changed her name from Kristin Lucas to Kristin Lucas (same spelling). In her discussion with the court judge she likened her experience to that of a web page: when you look at a web page, you are seeing the data that is assigned to it by a server. If you hit the "refresh" button on your keyboard but nothing on the server has changed, then what is seen on the screen appears to be the same, but, in fact, this is a whole new set of data retrieved from the server. Analogously, Lucas felt that she was the same person but in a new place in her life. The court transcript is disarmingly intimate, registers that the judge (and by extension the court) gave a lot of thought to the philosophical question about the power of naming that her project posed. The judge, then, became her unwitting or half-complicit collaborator whose participation, in fact, made the project possible.

In an excursis on the name, Jean-François Lyotard writes that proper names are "a metaphysical exigency and illusion," but that nonetheless, they function as stabilizers that enable cognition: "[...] names must be proper, an object in the world must answer without an possible error to its

call (appellation) in language. Otherwise," he concludes, "how would true cognition be possible?"⁶ Lucas' project can be seen as an artistic response to this question of what happens to truth when this cognitive chain is ruptured – a consideration of alternate systems of truth or meaning.

Similar in strategy and its capacity to loosen the ties between the signifier (reference) and signified (referent), the "Janez Janša" project was conceived in 2007 when three artists living in Ljubljana each changed their name to "Janez Janša," the name of the incumbent centrist Slovenian prime minister who was running for re-election. When asked why they had changed their names to "Janez Janša," each replied that it was for "personal reasons." Absenting from explication, the media and general population was forced to interpret the artistic gesture themselves. By enscripting the media as constitutive producers of the work, the project rapidly propagated through the media, and through quotidian conversations. Several critics even maintained that the "Janez Janša" project "does not exist outside the media at all."⁷ One critic noted, "Incidentally, the journalist always co-creates the event about which s/he reports, however, while this aspect of the journalist's creativity usually remains hidden and unthematized, it becomes explicit in the case of the Janša's project."⁸

As in the "Janez Janša" project, authorship in embedded art practices is not contained nor delimited, but instead, arrogated throughout the system, implicating endlessly with the project's continual morphogenesis. The artist does not occupy a fixed place, but figures instead as the canal, the stream of transmission, the channel, the circuit, pipe, or conduit – that strategic place between.

Serres clarifies the distinction between an originary producer and the parasite:

The producer plays the contents, the parasite, the position. He who plays the position will always beat the one who plays the contents. The latter is simple and naïve; the former is complex and mediatized. The parasite always beats the producer... The one who plays the position plays the relations between subjects; thus, he masters men. And the master of men is the master of the masters of the world... To play the position or to play the location is to dominate the relation. It is to have a relation only with the relation itself. And that is the meaning of the prefix para- in the word parasite: it is on the side, next to, shifted; it is not on the thing, but on its relation. It has relations, as they say, and makes a system of them. It is always mediate and never immediate. It has a relation to the relation, a tie to the tie; it branches onto the canal.⁹

In other words, for Serres, the parasite does not operate from a singular vantage, but as the system as a whole in constant movement. Cary Wolfe points out that for Serres, "this parasitic cascade, the chain, or what he sometimes calls the arrow of ongoing movement of parasitic relations, forms the ur-dynamic of social and cultural relations."¹⁰ Embedded practices thus signify from contextual and relational shifts over time; they move an understanding of historical consequence from one that is linear and repetitive towards one that is dynamically and topologically determined. Within this paradigm, adjacency and incidence weigh more heavily than consecutive patterning; an emphasis on contingency and asynchronicity keeps in check the overdetermination of effect.¹¹ Embedded, the artist produces on a small scale, but with a mindfulness towards what artist

John Latham might see as "the enormous butterfly-effect-like possibilities over time."¹²

"REFRESH": VERSIONHOOD AND THE MULTIPLICITY OF THE SELF

Positioning herself at the centre of her projects, Lucas' work addresses the digital realm, such as its effect on human psychology and regimes of thinking. Reversing the moral imperative to infuse humanity into machines, Lucas maps technological concepts into her life, making evident their presuppositions and flaws. By questioning the construction of the subject through its domination and resistance, Lucas' work raises questions about the contingency – or ultimate arbitrariness – of identity and its configurability.

On October 5, 2007, Lucas became the most current version of herself when she succeeded in legally changing her name from Kristin Sue Lucas to Kristin Sue Lucas in a Superior Court of California courtroom. On the name change petition, she entered the word "refresh" as the reason for the change. After a philosophical debate on the perception of change, and a second hearing date, the presiding judge who granted the request said: "So you have changed your name to exactly what it was before in the spirit of refreshing yourself as though you were a web page."

Feedback Loops; Legislating Change

Marisa Jahn Can you describe what happened in the courtroom?

Kristin Lucas There was a lot more going on than the transcript conveys. The tension was palpable. My voice was shaky from fear but I was determined; the judge, who had responded with good humour to earlier petitioners, altered his tone when he called me to the stand; he had saved me for last. I read a brief statement off an index card, notes that were jotted in the minutes preceding the hearing. Witnesses in the courtroom seemed to hold their breath in anticipation of the judge's ruling. His declaration of a two-week recess took us by surprise.

A few witnesses approached me after the hearing to shake hands, and offer congratulations on the second hearing date. One witness, present for both hearings (she had incomplete paperwork) smiled and said, "I know how you must feel. I

AN INTERVIEW WITH KRISTIN LUCAS

haven't been myself in over fifty years." She had succeeded in changing her name back to her maiden name — two weeks before her plan to remarry and take her fiancée's surname. We stood in line together to purchase copies of our stamped name change decrees, each original copy punctuated with an embossed state seal.

MJ Why did the judge decide to make a decision in the second hearing and not the first?

KL The judge needed to recognize that my request was not a waste of the court's time. It was the judge who threw me a curve ball. He asked for a continuance to think about his decision. For those two weeks I rode a roller coaster through "Limboland." I did not know myself during this time. Might I only have two weeks left of life as I have known it? He was taking me seriously? It was a very strange period for me personally.

MJ How did your "refresh" feel?

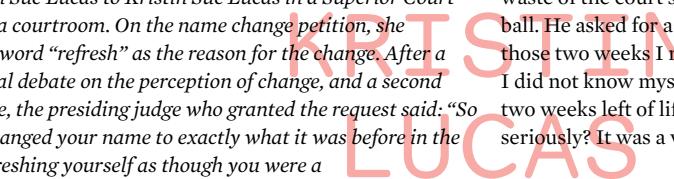
KL It felt instantaneous with the judge's ruling. There was an immediate change. Blood rushed through my body, and I experienced a sense of detachment from everything that had happened before — it was fun, I loved it. I felt different. In that moment I imagined my body being redrawn in space, refilled identically through the process of refreshing, much like the image of being beamed through a transporter on a *Star Trek* episode, with witnesses present. I had anticipated that my entire field of vision would blip off: death, then blip back on: life. Same information, fresh eyes. That did not happen. I never stopped feeling alive. There is nothing like facing your own death to make you feel more alive.

There were hiccups after the "refresh." Walking down the street later that day, I crossed paths with a community activist. I was eager to put my new name to the petition, but at the last minute I became concerned about fraudulence. Kristin has signed this same petition a day earlier.

I wondered how responsible this version of me would be for the life that came before. Life is more complex now. It's richer, and fuller.

MJ How do you see yourself in relation to the court?

KL The court provides a kind of feedback loop. You enter a plea or a petition, and you get back an answer. I can make a change in my life independently, but a change has more consequence when it involves an interaction with someone else. This is



the case with the judge. I like to work in that way with something that is actual. We both experienced a transformation.

MJ Do you see “refresh” as a way of giving a face to authority, or to the court? Do you see your project as a way to humanize the relationship between individual and state?

KL My central motivation is that I genuinely want a “refresh” and to do so I need to work within the system. The system depends on entrusting the judge with the power to change my name, and in submitting myself to it and requesting a name change, my gesture is both crediting the government with more power than it actually has, and tacitly raising the question of whether, in fact, the judge has the authority to grant a new lease on life. So I see myself as working from within the system, rather than from a position of opposition to it, and I favour this complication.

MJ Do you think your “refresh” might induce a craving for more “refreshes”?

KL Well, in my conversation with the judge, I had the impression I was insufficiently explaining myself, but there was this moment when I was succinct. The judge asked whether I was going to come to the court for a “refresh” every fifteen minutes – which I enjoyed because of the Andy Warhol reference – I pointed out the difficulty of the question because I had not yet experienced a “refresh,” so therefore, I could not make an informed decision. I could make no promises.

On the one hand, I am a fan and proponent of the adage, “less is more,” and I think it is foundational to this intervention.

Method

MJ What influenced the method by which you chose to “refresh” yourself?

KL Well, I was thinking about myself as a corporate entity. Bylaws change regularly, and most of the changes are imperceptible. Companies reinvent themselves with a fresh coat of paint and a new slogan every year, and corporations are given the same rights as individual citizens. Shouldn’t I have a legal right to rebrand myself just as corporations do?

The method of using a name change court to enact my desire for a “refresh” came to me while mulling over the Borges short story *Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote*. “It is about a writer who sets out to reconstruct fragments of Cervantes’ novel, *Don Quixote*.” I related the intensity of Menard’s total identification with the Quixote to my total identification with a computer function.

“He did not want to compose another Quixote – which is easy – but the Quixote itself. Needless to say, he never contemplated a mechanical transcription of the original; he did not propose to copy it. His admirable intention was to produce a few pages which would coincide – word for word and line for line – with those of Miguel de Cervantes.”

Changing my name to my name, precisely letter-for-letter, is a tip of the hat to Borges. The main goal was to be refreshed, and renewing my name is what had to be done to achieve this.

The Post-Human Subject/The Self As Multiple

MJ You’ve used the word “versionhood” to refer to a sense of being self-defined as a multiple. The possibility of “versioning” complicates a unitary and linear sense of the self, and suggests instead a subjectivity that is divisible, and distributed over space and time. Can you elaborate what the concept of “versioning” means to you and your work?

KL I apply the concept of “versioning” – the perpetual cataloging of revised virtual documents – broadly, to equate this phenomenon with the experience of becoming a version of myself. “Versioning” alleviates the pressures associated with completion by placing focus on process. But it can also lead to feeling insufficient, inadequate, or incomplete. We are reminded

RESPONSE BY KATE HENDERSON

“Righteousness goes beyond justice. Justice is strict and exact, giving each person his due. Righteousness implies benevolence, kindness, generosity.”

– Abraham J. Heschel, *The Western Idea of Law*¹

Being mindful of Kristin Lucas’ interest in the spirituality within the machine – the system – *Refresh* chances upon a surprisingly spiritual figure in the form of Justice Frank Roesch. I would have expected the court to conclude with perfunctory consideration that Lucas’ petition was inappropriate, a mockery of the rules, a squandering of public resources. But Roesch, J., did not adopt such rigidity or judge with the deity’s blindness. Instead, he took two weeks to ruminate. This detail goes to my heart. Imagine Roesch, J., at home, in his pyjamas, in bed, opening a mystery novel then putting it down again, with the name-change—that-is-not-represented-in-an-actual-change-of-name pervading his consciousness.

The fear and trembling that any person, from unrepresented citizen to seasoned trial lawyer, might experience in approaching a court is alleviated vicariously in the transcript of *Refresh*. A daunting arbiter hears a plea; considers it in the context of restrictive legislative language; deems the plea perhaps earnest, perhaps smart and endearing; sets a precedent of sorts (or refuses to follow then-current precedent); and, grants an oddball order.

Whether or not one loathes authority in all of its officiousness, one sometimes needs a certified document – not only to validate one’s transformation in the eyes of the community – but also to convince oneself that such renewal has unambiguously

SECOND FIRST BIRTHDAY, 2008. A SECOND FIRST YEAR PORTRAIT (2008) TAKEN ON THE FIRST YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF KRISTIN LUCAS' REFRESH, IN THE STYLE OF HER FIRST FIRST YEAR PORTRAIT (1968).
PHOTO CREDIT: MICHELLE PROKSELL.

SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
County of Alameda, Reine C. Davidson Alameda County Courtthouse
Case No. RG07336497

Date: October 2, 2007

Petitioner represented by: Kristin Sue Lucas

Judge: The Honorable Frank Boesch

Transcript of Change of Name Hearing:

JR : Kristin Sue Lucas... Well I must say that I spent probably way too much time thinking about this situation. I think it's a nutty idea, it's not really a name change, but I'm going to do it. Uh...

KL : Thank you your honor.

JR : So you have changed your name to exactly what it was before in the spirit of refreshing yourself as though you were a web page.

KL : Thank you your honor.

JR : Stay here and we'll have some paper work for you.

115

JR : Uh, I... um, I'm considering it like a switch or a renewal. Grrr... For me I'm feeling like a change would take place the moment between a name that exists and then rewriting the same name. If I write my name over and over on a paper my name is different every time I write it. Because it's, it's about time, it's about experiencing it as the moment. So I ask you to please honor my, my name change and give me this chance for intervention in my life.

JR : The law does not, in which you have placed yourself into, is procedure to make a name change. Not a spiritual change, not a change of a relationship to yourself, not a change of... not a refresh as on a computer screen where you want to refresh a website. Um... The law only provides this process for people that are changing their names. Mostly people change their names because of their self-identity or their religious beliefs, or there are those who changes in a relationship that they cannot agree with. This process isn't set up to avoid giving an opportunity to come together in a spiritual or emotional way.

KL : Or just, everyday affirmation of self, is also what I see in mind. JR : The court's not in the business of humor. The system of laws that we have isn't set up to either help or hinder a person from doing that. I am... There is a disconnect in my mind. That a person's personal sense of identity and relationship towards the world, and the way the law treats them. Um... I have considerable amount of difficulty in... taking that word change and entering in order the doesn't include any change... other than your perception of a change. And that's why, whatever you all are doing is changing the paper.

KL : I have the feeling that the technology that we have available can make that change for us. It's like, reflecting information. The computer, the technology, the system has a way of erasing you, and, and I see that, um... this is a change I have seen in my lifetime. And I... I just, I'm really interested, uh... just rechristening, um... I feel I had laid that out for you but it's difficult to describe. I don't feel that this intervention into my life, or into the system is in any way a danger to the system, or to myself, and to one has appeared now to effect this change. And I also respect your...

multiple times a day about offers to upgrade or update our computer, phones, software, and operating systems — these reminders can lead to a sense of insufficiency. However, in my experience, I have found that life as “version” seems fuller.

MJ What's interesting is that the judge's ruling in favour of your “refresh” also legislates the concept of the human or subject as “versionable.” In the court transcript, you mentioned that you wished you had brought along a philosopher. Whom would you have wished to be there to testify with you?

KL Going into the courtroom I didn't have a philosopher in mind, but in retrospect, I would have liked for Donna Haraway to be there. Here is a quote pulled from her essay, “A Cyborg Manifesto,” that in part summarizes how I intuitively felt about my name change.

Race, gender, and capital require a cyborg theory of wholes and parts. There is no drive in cyborgs to produce total theory, but there is an intimate experience of boundaries, their construction and deconstruction. There is a myth system waiting to become a political language to ground one way of looking at science and technology and challenging the informatics of domination — in order to act potently.²

MJ Yes, the analogy between the cyborg's intimate experience of boundaries I see relates to your own intuitive relationship to the structures that are entrusted with the power to, as you say, “grant a new lease on life.” How does this cyborgian premise about the configurable influence other projects or experiences?

KL At I-Machine Festival in Oldenburg, Germany, earlier this year, I presented myself as a wearable technology. I was biologically born into a body, refreshed within the same body through a process of digital erasure and data entry on a computer. I gave my presentation from the perspective of being both a forty year old (age before the “refresh”), and one year old (age after the “refresh”).

MJ And how do the multiple versions of yourself interact with each other?

KL During my first year as a new version, past memories surfaced. It would have been great to start with a clean slate so to speak,

but my attitude about that has changed. The wisdom of forty years of life experience is a compliment to my newly refreshed mind. I tend to speak from a collective voice, and so I get asked a lot of questions about how these versions of self interact. “Are you in love with yourself? Did you choose your gender? Are you sometimes Kristin, and at other times Kristin? Why do you stop at two? What is so special about your name? Did you already experience the need for a third ‘refresh?’” — these are among the questions that come up. I don't want to control the conversation. I don't have stock answers; what's most interesting is to provoke the conversation. I had my reasons for entering a petition for a name change, but they have little to do with the name change politics and gender issues that have been called to my attention after the fact.

As I mention earlier, the desire to have the same name had little to do with this specific name or identity associated with that name. Anyone can do what I did, though they will probably have the best luck in the state of California where there is now a precedent. This was not a ritual for choosing or reclaiming my name, but I can see how some of my word choices, like “renewal” allude to this idea... in the big picture I am identifying with machine processes.

occurred. Lucas' *Refresh* leaves the byproduct of the transcript and her stamped papers, flimsy things weighty enough to make conclusive her second coming.

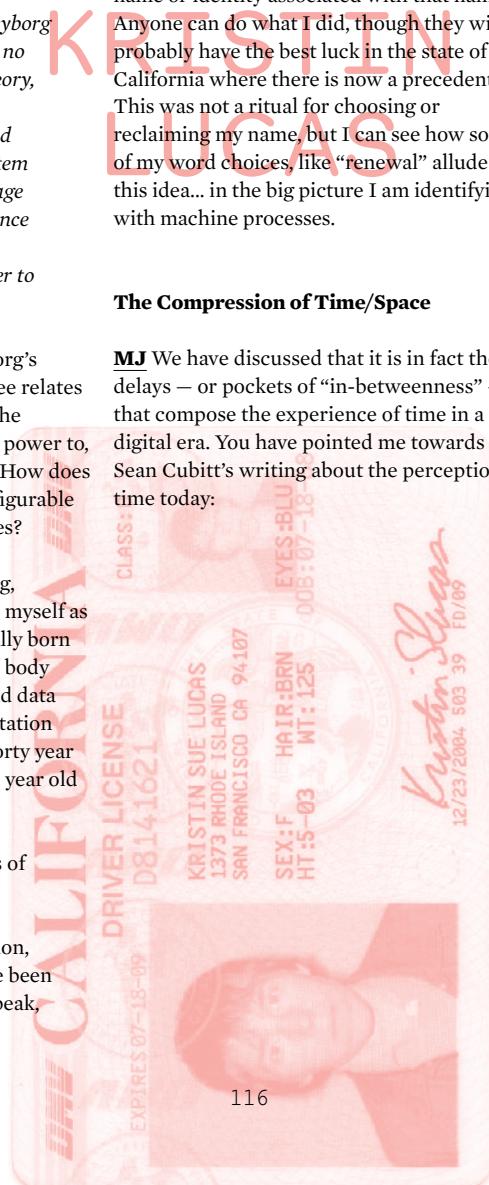
Refresh may also demonstrate that each of petitioner and justice system are elevated in the absence of the smooth, heartbreaking remarks of lawyers.

Notes

¹Abraham J. Heschel, “The Prophets,” in *The Western Idea of Law*, eds. J.C Smith and David N. Weisstub (Toronto: Butterworth & Co. Ltd., 1983), 225.

The Compression of Time/Space

MJ We have discussed that it is in fact these delays — or pockets of “in-betweenness” — that compose the experience of time in a digital era. You have pointed me towards Sean Cubitt's writing about the perception of time today:



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
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Case No. RE07336497

JR: But it's not a change.
KC: I should have brought it to Josephine, I feel, I feel like a charge. Moment to moment in my life I experience many changes and I am looking for the approval of the court to just to kind of sanction that change for me.

JR: How many more times are you going to come to the court and change your name, because you're changing every fifteen minutes, or...?

KC: Well, I've been thinking about this charge for a year and it brought me here today and I would like to experience what the differences might be. I can't make that decision about how many times I might need a referral, but I want to respect the court's time, as well.

JR: Well...

KC: And I'm here to abuse the system.

JR: I'm afraid I think that you are.

KC: Okay. Thank you.

JR: And I don't mind the time, I just don't know that I have the legal authority to change your name when it's not a change. The code sections talk about changing. Can I give you an order that I'll change your name at all? That keeps your name the same? Is that the same as changing a name change? And I think not. And I'm going to do this, I'm going to continue this matter for two weeks... and try to think about these issues in this time...

KC: Thank you.

JR: I'll try to puzzle out in my mind whether I do, I, if I clearly the law gives me the discretion given here to make a name change or not, um... So, do you know in my own mind that the law permits me to do it, I know that the law permits me to say "no", but gives the law permission to say "yes", is the second question, and I'll go do some legal research, quite frankly it's the first time anybody has come here and tried to do this.

KC: Thank you. I appreciate your time, thank you.

JR: So, it's going to be on October fifth, I -- see you back on that day.

KC: Thank you.

JR: And you don't have to sit down because you're not going to be telling any papers with you today.

Date: October 2, 2007
Petitioner: Kristin Sue Lucas
Petitioner represented by: Kristin Sue Lucas
Judge: The Honorable Frank Roesch
Transcript of Change of Name Hearing:

JR : Kristin Sue Lucas... Well I must say that I spent probably way too much time thinking about this situation. I think it's a nutty idea, it's not really a new change, but I'm going to do it, I...
KC : Thank you your honor.

JR : So you have changed your name to exactly what it was before in the spirit of refreshing yourself as though you were a web page.
KC : Thank you your honor.
JR : Stay here and we'll have some paper work for you.

What then has the digital era brought us? One characteristic experience is render time – seen from the other end of the production process we can call the same phenomenon download time. You build a wireframe, a process, which the verb already describes in terms inherited from the work of traditional modelling with physical materials. You select surfaces and surface effects, try a few options, select a view and render it as a bitmap. Even to load this onscreen can be a time-consuming experience. Happy with the result, you dump the frame, or a sequence based on it, to digital video. You sit back. You make a cup of coffee. You saunter next door and see what they're up to. You check the render progress. You decide maybe this is a good time to make a few calls, perhaps catch a bite to eat. The hard drive is still whirring when you get back...³

Cubitt also suggests a moral imperative to embrace these moments of “render time” or “download time”:

The delay is itself an integral part of web traffic and file transfer protocol and has been since the early days of mainframe time-sharing. The staggering speeds of even desktop machines and the ubiquitous impression that Moore's Law is to all intents and purposes a law of physics rather than of economics both lead to the idea that there is a zero of instantaneity toward which we advance by approximation...It is always worth savouring time: there is a limited supply in any life. Rendering and downloading are aspects of the time of digital production which are there for contemplation...Slowness and its artefacts, like the stagger and jump of downloaded QuickTime movies and RealPlayer files, are not flaws but materials.⁴

Your piece, *Refresh*, is predicated on this disparity between the expectation of instantaneity – in both a digital paradigm and the event of changing a name – and the actual lapses that surround the event. What are your thoughts about this? Why is Cubitt's passage meaningful to you?

KL A lot of what I was going for in the “refresh” was an expression of the kind of exhaustion that is related to the compression of time and space we experience now, but also feelings of being overwhelmed about abundance and accumulation – so much production, so much excess, so many fragments. It's exhausting.

I was struck by a call for proposals (CFP) published by the cultural centre and city of Weimar's studio program for artists. Their starting question was, “What effects might deprivation of the sense of speed have on an individual, on a system?” The rest of the CFP reads:

“Standstill or zero-growth, which unsettles or even alarms opportunists, economic planners and futurologists, leads for many others to relief from the unreasonable demands posed by life and the historical process.” [...] Calming down, not-carrying-on-this-way represents strong desires within an accelerated civilization whose motto appears to be faster, higher and further. So the well-known slogan

*'less is more' may be extended to 'no more is everything.' When life's tempo slows down, our capacity for observing, hearing and speaking more carefully develops. And isn't it necessary to stand still, to pause and become aware of ourselves before we can reflect on our own lives and that of society? In turn, such rejections of speed may trigger enduring uncertainty among the more restless. Opposition to the status quo (which is a permanent carry on as usual) may thus emerge from a simple decision to remain standing. And yet at a time when rapid and extensive changes are regarded as necessary – and if need be as positive – standstill and opposition to dynamics and change represent a comparatively rare and little considered *topos*. [...] Where art halts our view, it does not lead to boredom, but to comprehension and recognition – subversion generated from the rejection of speed.⁵*

So I chose to literally take a stand – the stand – and slow process down, momentarily at least, as a symptomatic gesture. I see *Refresh* as a genuine response to the condition of the effect of technology's influence on space and time, and the sense of overwhelming that it produces.

The artist Anne Kugler used to perform a late night cable show presenting fictional strategies for recuperating the land currently occupied by the state of Florida. Dramatic as it sounds – her idea involved first blowing everything up. It was just faster than trying to turn things around the way they were going. I was wondering if a “refresh” would recalibrate me, like closing my eyes, and opening them to find that things made sense in a way they previously had not. Like a life and death and life experience.

Artistic Influences

MJ How did your background or training as an artist influence your approach?

KL Although I practice art and produce projects for art and non-art contexts, I did not plan this intervention as an art project; it is something that I wanted to do, and I sometimes act on this impulse. I just wanted to have this experience and see what happened.

As the date of my hearing got closer, the conversations that I had with people became heavy and unsettling. “Will you ‘back



up? How invasive is a government rewrite? Will they wipe the slate clean? Will you remember anything about your former life?" I became overwhelmed. "Back up"? Which format to use? Where to begin? I was working within a narrow time frame, and half of my belongings were in a storage unit on the other coast. I was too disorganized to "back up" in any kind of comprehensive way. Ultimately, I arranged for artist friends and colleagues to produce portraits of me before and after my hearing. These portraits would serve as a time stamped "backup," regardless of the outcome of the hearing.

MJ In other projects you also, likewise, assume a very humourous approach to investigating the way that spiritual beliefs and notions of subjectivity are put to the test with the advent of new technology. Can you elaborate?

KL I often create characters that have a clear understanding of their place in the technology/spirituality matrix, but have a difficulty in conveying this clarity to the audience. In *Simulcast*, practitioners could "see" the electromagnetic spectrum and adjust it with tinfoil and rituals, but had to resort to clumsy metaphor when describing it to an audience. In the video *Involuntary Reception*, my character has less control over her abilities, and was as much a victim as a superhero. While she was consumed by her condition, she still struggled to be able to communicate (both figuratively and literally) with the audience.

Like a lot of science fiction, my work tends to assume a position, and leave it up to the audience to try to piece together what that position really is. I am less interested in the "ghost in the shell" scenario in which machines come alive, or the AI promise that evolution into machines will lead us to immortality. I am far more interested in cyborg spirituality. What happens to our species as technology invades further and further into our core beliefs?

MJ How has *Refresh* influenced subsequent art projects? What are you working on now?

KL Right now I'm working on this satellite project called *Versionhood*, where I will go around the country, and ask advice from people who have had different kinds of "versioning" experience. In Las Vegas I met celebrity impersonators.

Byproducts

MJ What changed through your project? In what ways has your name change influenced aspects of your everyday life?

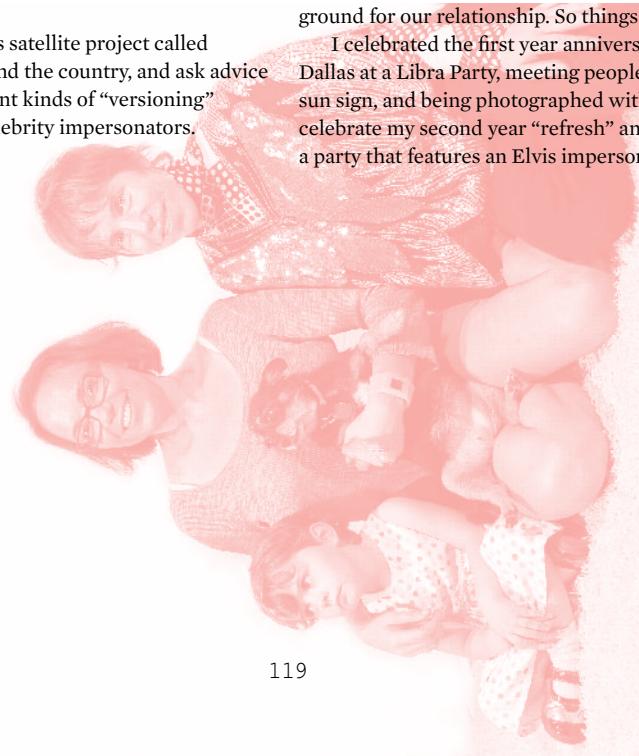
KL I deliberately went to court to make a life-altering change that would be outwardly imperceptible yet could create gravitational ripples in its wake. I have a lot of experiences that are uncanny for me.

When I submitted my name change petition, I was required to publish a public notice ad in the local paper. A representative from *The Oakland Tribune* phoned to notify me of the mistake I made in placing the ad. I explained that no mistake had been made; I was in fact pursuing a same name change. She became an ally in this effort, and approved the ad for print.

After the judge agreed to my name change, I went to the DMV to get a new driver's license. When my documents produced error messages — they were rejected by their scanners — I suggested that this may have something to do with my name change. Several clerks and a shift manager inspected my documents and my name change decree a few times; I was met with blank stares. They dismissed this possibility, and apologized for the wait. People working in an official capacity do not always understand what I am asking of them when I hand them a copy of my name change decree. They almost always ask me to explain, and I like involving people in this process.

Also, my mother and I have developed a closer bond because of my "refresh." I hesitated to tell her initially because I thought she might find the news of my second life upsetting. What was wrong with the life she had given me? She asked what she should get me for my July birthday, and that's when I broke the news to her, explaining that she should probably get me two birthday gifts from now on — one for my biological birth date, and one for my "refresh" birth date. I was surprised by her reaction; she was thrilled with the realization that we are now both Libras. We have more in common, and this provides a new ground for our relationship. So things have definitely changed.

I celebrated the first year anniversary of my "refresh" in Dallas at a Libra Party, meeting people who shared my new sun sign, and being photographed with them. This year, I will celebrate my second year "refresh" anniversary in Oldenburg at a party that features an Elvis impersonator and karaoke. ☀



PORTRAIT WITH LIBRAS, CENTRAL TRAK, DALLAS, TEXAS, 2008. PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN ON THE FIRST YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF KRISTIN LUCAS' REFRESH, PICTURED HERE WITH OTHER LIBRAS. PHOTO CREDIT: MICHELLE PRORSELL.

SUBVERSION AND SIMILITUDE IN THE JANEZ JANŠA PROJECT

by Marisa Jahn

The namesake draws comparison between the respective contexts of the persons or objects in question. By drawing attention to likeness, what is instead foregrounded is difference. In 2007, embodying this paradox of similitude as a form of subversive appropriation, three artists – formerly known as Davide Grassi, Emil Hrvatin, and Žiga Kariž – each changed their name to Janez Janša, the name of the Slovenia's conservative Prime Minister at the time. Unfolding around this central gesture, a series of events played on the ensuing confusion over whether the name “Janez Janša,” when seen in print or heard over the news media, was referring to the Slovenian Prime Minister or to the artists.

Under the political tenure of the Prime Minister Janez Janša, mounting journalistic censorship was evidenced in July 5, 2007, when journalist Natasa Stefe announced on a national radio program (Val 202) that if you type in the words "Janez Janša" on YouTube, the first hits show up as images of pet dogs by the same name. Stefe was fired soon after. Adapting to this constraint, the popular uptake of the *Janez Janša* project is due to its capacity to use double entendres to launch veiled critique. For example, early on in the *Janez Janša* project, a well-known journalist published an article in a Slovenian weekly with a heading that translated in English to, "Is Janez Janša an Idiot?" By ambiguating the name's referent, the article exploited the confusion to make indirect polemical jabs. Continuing this artistic gesture, the article was published under the name Ivo Sanader, the name of the right-of-centre Prime Minister of Croatia. Addressing the reader, the author of the article closes by delivering a jubilant critique: "Of course, if you disagree with me, you can always say: 'What a cardinal idiot this Ivo Sanader is!'"

In another example, a political weekly magazine entitled, *Mag*, published interviews with all leaders of the parliamentary parties just before Slovenia's parliamentary elections in 2008. When Janez Janša, leader of the Social Democratic Party (SDS), refused the interview, the three artists were invited instead. This proved to be a rare and exclusive situation when

an interview with contemporary artists was published on the political pages of a magazine.

Strategically timing their gestures according to the rhythm of electoral cycles, the three artists were able to anticipate and take advantage of substantial news coverage. The book, *Janez Janša: Biography*, written by renowned film critic and publicist Marcel Štefančič Jr., was published on the fiftieth birthday of the Prime Minister – just four days before the election. The media ignored the event until it became official that Janša’s SDS party had lost the elections. Only then did the media report on the biography of Janez Janša, which narrated the lives of the three artists. The book, which flits between referencing any one of the three artists, reads like a nostalgic memoir structurally interrupted by the absence of a stable referent.

To explain their multiplication of Janezes, the artists cite the party rhetoric of the Prime Minister's own party, the SDS: "The more of us there are, the faster we reach our goal." The literalist multiplication of the name, of course, did not accelerate the party's success, but instead weakened the name's signifying force. In other words, once the name did not exclusively refer to a single public figure, its social and political collateral was lessened.

Aside from the rationale they offered as a conceptual genesis for the project, when asked to explain why they changed their name, the artists responded, “For personal reasons.” By deferring, the public and the media were forced to actively interpret the artists’ intention. Some suggested the artists were trying to tarnish or “cheapen” the Prime Minister’s name. The artists’ Facebook profiles revealing whom Janez Janša had recently befriended, and what groups and causes Janez Janša supported, portrayed the life of an ordinary Slovene. Published in a weekly newspaper widely circulated throughout Slovenia, a series of correspondences between the three artists described their trips to the beach, details about their children, their thoughts and ruminations, which portrayed Janez Janša at leisure and engaged in contemplative activities.

While some saw the artists' gesture as a form of reducing the Prime Minister's stature to an ordinary level, some saw it

ay: 'What a weekly magazine for leaders of the parliamentary opposition, Social Democracy, three artists and exclusively

as published under
of-centre Prime
Minister. The author of the
article said: "Of course, if you
call me a cardinal idiot this
magazine entitled,
'The parliamentary
elections in 2008.
Democratic Party'
were invited
to the situation when
the government
was formed, to take a key role in the negotiations to form
a coalition. I was asked to be part of the team that would
negotiate with the Socialists. We were told that the Socialists
had a clear position on the issue of the state budget, which
we had to accept. We accepted it, but the Socialists did not
accept it. They wanted to change it, but we did not want to
change it. So we had to leave the negotiations. This is why
I am not a cardinal idiot." The author of the article
also said that he was not invited to the negotiations because
he was not a member of the Socialists. He was invited
because he was a member of the Democratic Party. The
author of the article also said that he was not invited to the
negotiations because he was not a member of the Socialists.
He was invited because he was a member of the Democratic Party.

Umetnika je razliko od 120 - posver - nečimovo idejno novinarstvo. Ustracirijo. U nima jo ravnatelj vernikov

EDITORIAL BY IVO SANADER. ORIGINALLY

PUBLISHED AS "ALI JE JANEZ JANŠA KRETEN?"
N DNEVNIKOV OBJEKTIV, 1ST SEPTEMBER 2007.

TRANSLATED BY POLONA PETEK. COURTESY:
KSIOMA — INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART,

as an attempt to elevate or recuperate the Prime Minister from his dastardly political positions. For example, when one of the artists married his girlfriend, a professional involved in the arts, the wedding produced an uncanny ripple as the public saw photographs of one Janez being wed to an agreeable and sympathetic-looking woman at a modest ceremony.

Others still perceived the artists' work as a way to promote the name of the Prime Minister. As Petra Kapš wrote: "The person whose name has been assumed by the artists has not responded to their acts; his silence and non-responsiveness signal his tacit support for them, for the artists have not caused him any harm; in fact, they have added extra value to his name, and are actively promoting it."³

The enormity of press coverage about the *Janez Janša* project demonstrates the currency of the artistic gesture within a mainstream audience. One day in 2007, the artists collectively "signed" their name by arranging rocks in the shape of letters near Mount Triglav — a Slovenian national symbol iconized on the coat of arm, flag, fifty-cent Euro coins, and other items of institutionally conferred stature.

After a photograph documenting the "signature" was published in a weekly paper, the newspaper editors initiated a contest for the person who could most creatively "sign" the name Janez Janša. Hundreds responded. The winning photograph: a woman on the beach with seashells outlining the letters of the Prime Minister's name on her lower back.

Besides its popular and humourous appeal, the virulence of the project in the news was directly related to the journalistic mandate to cover the entire spectrum of positions around a certain issue or event. Delo Jela Krečič, a writer for a daily newspaper in Slovenia, commented on the way that the imperative to uphold a position of putative journalistic objectivity, in fact, cast the journalists and the media as partial producers of the artwork:

The media, which co-creates the art project, induces a certain split in the journalist who is duty-bound to report about the project, and in the process of reporting about the three Janez Janšas, the journalist understands — at least, instinctively — that s/he is not merely a recorder of a neutral event, but that s/he is also dealing with an event that constantly evokes a series of meanings (and their interconnections) that cannot be done away with, regardless of how precisely or dispassionately the journalist treats the event. ...The journalist who reports about the Janšas always gets the feeling that s/he is somehow, willingly or inadvertently, of service to the Janez Janša project; because the author of the present discussion has often found herself in the role of the reporter, the commentator, or the interviewer of the three Janez Janšas, she finds that she must reflect upon this split position for the present text to retain its credibility.⁵

Positioned between roles as neutral observer and active creator, Krečič's ethical split illustrates the very constitutive nature of interpretation and the fallacy of journalistic objectivity.

Further exemplifying the *Janez Janša* project's destabilizing nature is the way it calls to question the identity of the Prime Minister in the present and past tense. Specifically, the artistic gesture interrogates how and why the Prime Minister assumed the name "Janez Janša" himself. After the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the late 1980s and culminating in 1991, a leftist by the name of Ivan Janša positioned himself as a democratic reformer and leader. Taking the name "Janez Janša" at the debut of his political career, his leanings became increasingly conservative as he ascended from the role of Defense Minister in Lojze Peterle's Democratic government, to the leading member of the centre-right Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), and finally, to Prime Minister of a Slovenian parliamentary from 2004 to 2008. Amelia Jones points towards the Prime Minister's name change as a signal of his political performance: "Janša, in his transition from Ivan to Janez, from radical young activist to right-wing leader, performs — *signs* — himself via the name as the embodiment of the newly "democratic" nation of Slovenia."⁶ Describing the desire to conflate the name "Janez Janša" with the constitution of Slovenian nationhood in the public imaginary, Jones remarks:

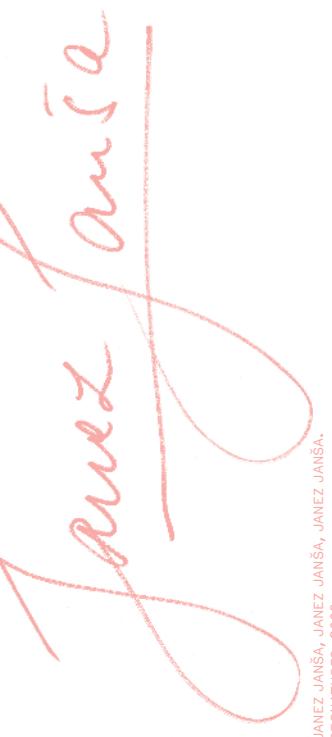
In a sense, Janez Janša "is" contemporary Slovenia — or would, at least, like to be seen as such. As cited above, [the Prime Minister's] autobiography, The Making of the Slovenian State 1988–1992: The Collapse of Yugoslavia, which poses as a history of modern Slovenia via his own diary entries and descriptions (thus, to some extent, collapsing Slovenia into Janez Janša), makes this much clearer. As Janša retells the history of contemporary Slovenia as the history of his heroic participation in the events resulting in the overthrow of the former Yugoslavia, and the repulsion of Serbian aggression, his project raises the question of how histories are written, and how they — seemingly inevitably — get attached to "great names" (usually those of men who have access to the public visibility and agency that allows them

*to determine shifts in national or international affairs,
and then to ensure the documentation of these shifts
in history).⁷*

By pointing out the theatics of history, the *Janez Janša* project points towards the possibilities when it is performatively re-appropriated and enacted anew.

Embedded between electoral, mediatic, and quotidian events, and shaped by manifold interpreters, receivers, and producers, the *Janez Janša* project exists as one that eludes containment. Destabilizing, the artwork unravels certain givens as it produces meaning through time, shifting the context's entire set of relations. ●

JANEZ JANŠA



THE NAME AS A READYMADE

AN INTERVIEW WITH JANEZ JANŠA, JANEZ JANŠA, AND JANEZ JANŠA

On the Uncanny and the Sublime

Lev Kreft Usually, we use our names to distinguish ourselves from other people. Your names are very clear, yet, they are also indistinct; they cannot be told apart. Alexander Gotlibie Baumgarten defines aesthetics as something that operates in the field of clarity and indistinctness. The clear and indistinct is what appeals to the senses. Do you think this aesthetic effect of indistinctness is important for an (artistic) choice of name?

Janez Janša The fact that three people are using the same name, that they have the same name in the same time and space, hacks the analogue mode of the administrative system, for personal names are usually used precisely to distinguish one person from another. In our case, the media, our friends, and even public servants feel the need to add something to our names when they introduce us in public. This means that, in this case, the very concept of the personal name is cracked, that it no longer functions without an addition of some sort. It no longer functions without an addition, such as date of birth, or place of residence, or profession. I find this an important consequence of this virulent gesture. A virus breaks into the system, and the system no longer works. There are no preventive measures already present within the system to prepare it for such cases.

JJ What interests me within contemporary art is the question of how to produce a gesture that, in some way, cuts into the regime of comprehension, looking, perception, etc. Such a gesture puts the spectator in a position where he needs to negotiate — above all, with himself — his relationship to this gesture, how to understand it. There is no prior moment of comprehension; the spectator first needs to ask himself, that is, he needs to negotiate with himself, how he is going to understand the gesture. This is what happens if the gesture involves something sublime, which is very close and at the same time very remote. What I find interesting in art is that which draws the spectator radically close and, at the same time, pushes him far away.

LK We are dealing, then, with a relatively clear identity — what becomes indistinct is identification. Now that you have acquired some experience with how this works, and given the contemporary (also artistic) obsession with identity, do you find interesting such an interrogation of identification as the only reliable proof of identity?

JJ The personal name is something that puts a person into public circulation. If you enter a certain public situation, you enter it with and through your own name. Since this is so, the question immediately arises: how personal is the personal name if its basic function is, after all, predominantly public? It belongs to you, but others use it in order to distinguish you from other people. If there is confusion regarding the names, there is confusion regarding identities, a case of mistaken identities.

LK We'll get back to that issue...

JJ What happens is a shock to the system of perception, for others must distinguish you from others by using a new name. But the new name means that they must also distinguish you from yourself. In this sense, it is perhaps possible to talk about the change of projection, the change of the projected part of identity, that is, the part which is projected onto you by the others — they call you neither "Žiga Kariž" nor "Janez Janša," but rather "the guy who's changed his name." In my view, the act of changing one's name is akin to the act of dying: the change of name affects others, that is, the people who actually use my name, far more than it affects me — or us. It is the same with death — one always dies for the others; you have died, and you have nothing to do with it, as you are dead, but the others have to deal with it.

JJ Every person who comes into contact with us knows, of course, that we are the same people — we have not changed. Yet the change of name renders communication very unstable, and this is so in the professional and artistic spheres, as well as in the private ones.



JJ In a way, I am in a permanent reality show of sorts, since the change of name brings with it an additional fictionalization — a parallel reality of sorts. And reality resists the prospect of this parallel reality becoming part of it.

LK At the beginning of the interview, Janez mentioned the effect of the “sublime” — safe conditions are required for the “sublime” to manifest itself. In this situation, I think, that the others do not feel quite safe, meaning that the “sublime” is foreclosed here in the sense that it remains — at least, in part — not so much in the domain of horror, but rather in the domain of the uncanny (*Unheimlichkeit*). The response to this uncanniness can, in my opinion, give us insight into the significance of this sort of identification.

JJ This uncanniness is obvious. At the beginning, people avoided addressing us with our old names as well as with our new ones — they refrained from using any names at all when they addressed us.

LK But, let's not limit the uncanny just to the others. Of course, we can maintain that having a name is a convention. Given what we have talked about thus far, a name is just an externally functioning convention, which has no consequences for the person carrying the name. Yet, the name can also be conceived of in a different way, as something essential, even ritual, this is where the act of naming comes from. If you choose another name you become another person, you become this other name. Don't you find this at least a little bit dangerous?

JJ What we are dealing with here is the fact that this gesture actually intervenes into the relationship between art and life; it locates itself at the intersections of the public, the private, the political, the artistic, the administrative, the judicial, the mediated... You cannot avoid the consequences of changing your name in any of these spheres.

JJ What is the basic paradox? Why does this gesture produce uncanniness? Precisely because it has *really* taken place: had we used the name as a pseudonym, the whole thing would have been immediately clear, as well as distinct: “Ah well, this is just the name they use in public.” But now the question is: “Why did they do this for real? It would be more or less the same thing [if they only used the pseudonym], and we would understand it.”

JJ We also need to point out the difference between this gesture and the existing forms of multiple names. Usually, the latter are collective pseudonyms. The case of one of the most famous multiple names, Luther Blissett, was similar to mine in that it involved the assumption of the name of an actually existing person (Luther Blissett was a black football player with AC Milan); however, I assumed my new name not only as a pseudonym, but also administratively.

On the Change of Name and Identity

LK Well, we have recently seen Mehmed Pasha Aurélio, who plays football for Turkey. He is the Brazilian who changed his name to be able to play for Turkey (he not only became a Turkish citizen, he also changed his name); he retained Aurélio and added Mehmed, which helped, and then the public added Pasha, for he is an excellent player. There are other such examples. Therefore, I suggest that we take this debate further as far as the true effect of the name is concerned.

The *avant-garde* artistic gesture is defined as a descent from art into life (Peter Bürger), but here we are dealing with a descent in the opposite direction: a descent from life into art. We are interested in this irruption of the true in art. If it is true that, in the art world, something — say, Duchamp's *Fountain* — can happen as an artistic act (as Danto claims) only in a certain space, at a certain time, then the change of name of this kind can also happen as an (artistic) act only in a certain space and at a certain time. Not all legislation is the same: the Slovenian legislation is more liberal than many others. We also know why: because there has been the desire to be able to change one's name so as to avoid being identified as non-Slovenian. I was wondering if this — the liberal nature of the Slovenian legislation — was something that you had in mind when you set forth to change your names? This is the post-1991 political context of name changes in Slovenia.

JJ We carefully studied the Slovenian legislation as well as the potential reasons why our applications might be rejected. The Personal Name Act was passed by the Parliament on February 1, 2006, that is, during the mandate of the Prime Minister Janša's government. The Act includes two articles on the basis of which an application for the change of name can be rejected: the first article states that the application would be rejected if the applicant is subject to criminal proceedings; and, the second article states that “the right to freely choose one's personal name can only be limited if this is essential for the protection of public safety, morality, or the rights and freedoms of other people.” This is the flexible part of the Act, which made us ponder the possibility of our change of name applications being rejected.

JJ We knew that there have been eleven people with this name in Slovenia before the three of us decided to change our names, so we thought, "If they can have it, why couldn't we?"

JJ Our change of name is not a direct reflection or a commentary on the – conditionally speaking – liberal circumstances concerning name changes in Slovenia, although it does entail this dimension.

LK So, it has nothing to do with the changes aimed at making the names sound Slovenian?

JJ That's right.

LK Didn't you know that somewhere else this might have been impossible?

JJ I did enquire about how these things are done in Italy, because I am also an Italian citizen; the public servant at my Italian municipality told me that I am Davide Grassi for the Italian administration, and that they do not care under what name the Slovenian administration manages my information. At present, I have valid Italian documents issued in the name of Davide Grassi, and equally valid Slovenian documents issued in the name of Janez Janša.

JJ The change of last name is not permitted in Italy if the name is historically significant, or if it belongs to a person who is very important, or very famous in the place where the applicant was born, or where he lives at the moment – such a change could create confusion.

JJ As a Croatian citizen, my experience is similar to Janez's in Italy. I am Emil Hrvatin in the Croatian records.

LK But probably, in this procedure of applying for the change of name that you have started, there still exists the requirement to state the reason for wanting to change one's name? Or is the procedure pure formality?

JJ Not in Slovenia, no, but in Italy and in Croatia you do have to state such a reason. The Slovenian form only requires you to state your former name, and your new name, and to list your family members, but you do not need to state any reasons or rationale for the change.

LK The next points of our discussion are the very documents that you have acquired. On the one hand, you have acquired a name, which, in itself, is not a document; it is, however, your identification, just like at the beginning, when we introduced

ourselves. On the other hand, though, the name is a document that authenticates the change. It proves that you are not using a pen name or a pseudonym; if you say, "I am Janez Janša," this is absolutely accurate, and you can prove it with your identification cards. A name is obviously something that one can pick for oneself: it is not just something that the others choose for you, you do have a say in this. What does this gesture of baptising yourself, so to speak, mean? It is an unusual gesture after all, isn't it?

JJ American artist Kristin Sue Lucas had her name officially changed on October 5th, 2007, to the exact same name – the same as the one that she had had before. This was obviously a matter of agency, the fulfilment of her desire to determine her own first and last name.

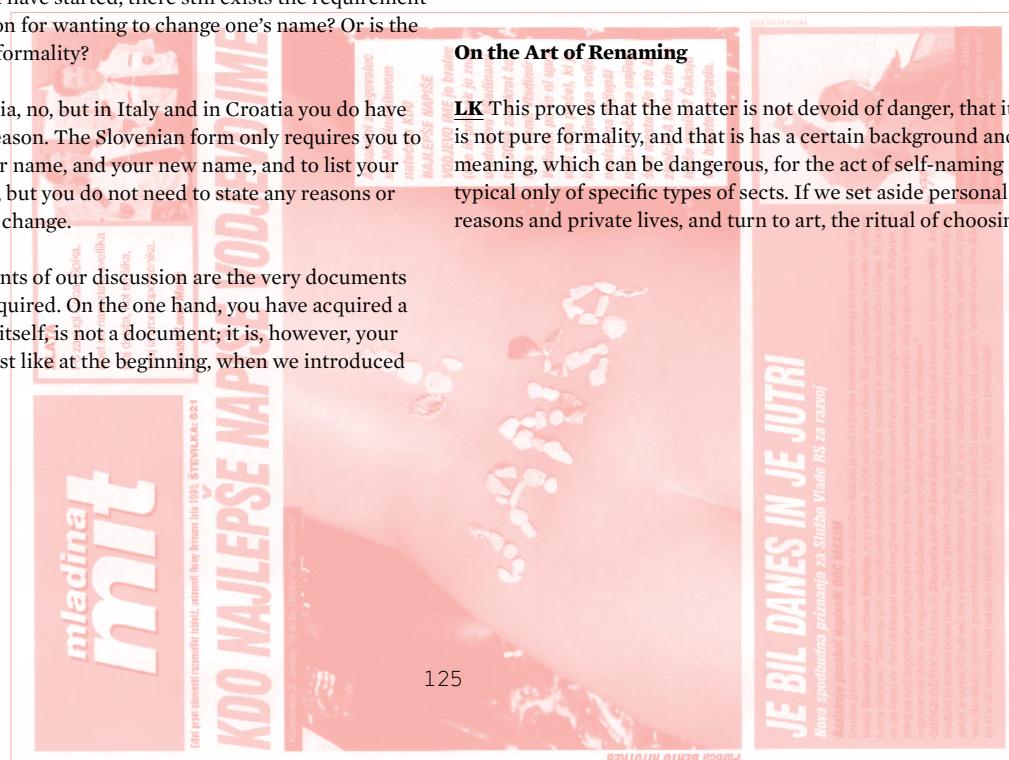
JJ I think it is a great statement in terms of understanding a subject in its discontinuity.

LK Let me clarify: we have all experienced a stage – perhaps during puberty – when we wanted to change our names because our parents had given us something that we were not pleased with. Some of us pondered this possibility very seriously, and if anyone went ahead and really did it, the first people to be offended by this would be his parents. Which is to say, this act obviously means something more – not only identification and the change of identification; it means a specific personal problem – it is you who has made the decision. How do the people who gave you your former names feel about this change?

JJ My father understands the change of name, above all, as a renunciation of the name that he gave me, and which is part of the family tradition. Somewhere deep in his heart he is probably also wondering whether or not I have renounced him, as well. He is very hurt.

On the Art of Renaming

LK This proves that the matter is not devoid of danger, that it is not pure formality, and that it has a certain background and meaning, which can be dangerous, for the act of self-naming is typical only of specific types of sects. If we set aside personal reasons and private lives, and turn to art, the ritual of choosing



one's own name is probably connected above all with art, because in art – at least metaphorically – one has to make a name for oneself. Is this a *significant* effect of the name change?

JJ If we are dealing with a personal name within the art system, this can be read at various levels. One such way is through the conditions under which the artists live, in this case the conditions of neoliberal capitalism where you are what you do, you are your name, you are making a name for yourself, and your name is your work.

JJ A brand.

JJ That's right, you are a brand, and you are recognised as such, you are creating this brand name....

JJ ...and you are doing this slowly, in contrast to the act of renaming...

JJ ...you are making a name for yourself slowly and, in the moment when you decide to change your name, you stake...

JJ ...your name...

JJ Not only do you renounce your name, but also, when several authors with the same name appear, your work is automatically undistinguished. Our change of name is still a novelty, but from a certain distance – particularly in the international context – all our works, individual ones included, will be seen as the works of a collective.

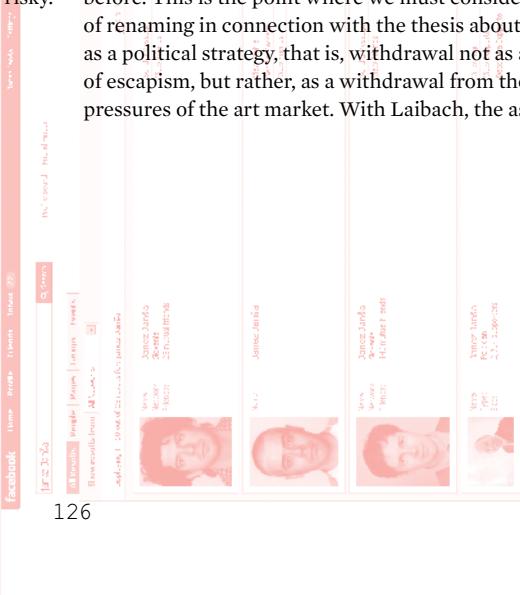
JJ However the whole thing figures in the public sphere, it, nevertheless, greatly affects us. This is a gesture that you cannot perform and remain unscathed. What is most painful about the whole business, however, is this: if the public is experiencing a certain uncanniness, the authors are living a certain uncertainty. Yet again, this uncertainty is something conscious. If we were to talk about how much is lost... This is the uncertainty that follows you: "Where is this whole thing going? What can I anticipate?"... We have confronted a lot of precedent-setting situations, where we cannot appeal to any sort of established practice. Uncertainty is part and parcel of this, and it is what renders the whole situation extremely risky.

On Sameness and Difference

LK In Slovenia, there exists a group that worked anonymously for years while people kept asking who its members were. I am talking about Laibach/NSK, and their anonymous collective statements, a group of people without personal names – that is extremely difficult in Slovenia, where everybody knows everybody. If I look at your biographies in the past two years, I would say that the change of name has not burdened you, for you are all still doing what you were doing before the change, and you also do things together. Am I wrong? Do you bring your individual projects into line with one another, or do you keep doing your own things – your individual artistic careers – while there is also a space in which you are creating something together?

JJ You have already answered your own question; we all changed our names individually. We have not become one person, one group, or one collective. We have not changed our modes of working, we have not changed the ways we function in the society, and we have not changed our interests, views, or strategies. We have created some works together, but we had done so before, as well. I collaborated with Janez on *Miss Mobile*, and he collaborated with Janez on *Problemarket* and *Kača na nebesnem svodu* (*The Snake in the Sky*). Laibach appeared as a group of anonymous and unknown individuals; in our case, the opposite is the case, we have all been active for more than a decade, we have all established ourselves publicly under our former names, therefore, our change of name has different consequences. We have never concealed our identities, my CV is still the same, only the name has changed, and everybody knows exactly who I am. If we talk about names as brands in the art world, we must see this as a counter-marketing gesture; a brand must be pushed forward, it must become more and more visible, whereas in our case, the appearance of the new name is necessarily connected with the gradual disappearance of the old one.

JJ We are dealing with a paradox here, which I would describe as visible disappearance, that is to say, Grassi, Hrvatin, and Kariž have disappeared, but in a visible manner, their disappearance has rendered them even more visible than before. This is the point where we must consider the gesture of renaming in connection with the thesis about withdrawal as a political strategy, that is, withdrawal not as a romantic act of escapism, but rather, as a withdrawal from the logic and pressures of the art market. With Laibach, the assumption of



the name is more important, for the name represents a certain traumatic historical point that was topical at the time; their name hit the traumatic core, and produced uncanniness in the public.

LK What about your names, don't they produce uncanniness in the public?

JJ I think they produce a lot of uncanniness, but the difference is that, today, you do not need to legally classify someone as the enemy of the state, but you can characterize them as a terrorist in the military sense.

On the Right to Erase One's Former Name

LK Never say never... under the new media law, the safeguarding of the name, and the reputation of the state is considered a good enough reason to interfere with the autonomy of the journalists. Yet again, it is just like during socialism. But what does this safeguarding entail, and does it involve the legal protection of a person who performs a state function? This is a whole new issue, but it is all coming back slowly.

JJ I was going to say that the conditions under which we live today demand a certain public trading in names. Our change of name shows how you can step into a certain anonymity precisely by revealing yourself so drastically. The uncanniness emerges in a very broad spectrum: in the political, the collegial-professional, as well as in the private.

JJ Let's take Mladinska Knjiga's *Leksikon osebnosti* (*Who's Who* directory), for instance. The editors and the authors insisted – for a very long time – that the three of us should appear as entries under our former names. They rationalised this demand by saying that the public knows us better by our former names than by our new ones.

JJ This gesture conceals a certain kind of uncanniness, for everybody who knew me by my former name knows me by my current name as well, and in the meantime, I have been introduced to many other people who did not know me before. This means that the argument conceals another reason, which the editors and the authors did not want to reveal...

JJ ...to have four Janez Janšas listed in the directory one after another...

JJ ...or something else... Again, this incredulity that has been a constant feature of all reactions: "But this is just a game, while we are serious, we are putting together a directory. This is a lexicographical publication. This is a publication based on facts; we cannot play games here..." It is precisely the fact that we have *really* changed our names that produces incredulity and uncanniness.

JJ If we follow the story about the directory to its end, the fact that I have changed my name means that I no longer want to use my former name. This means that I have the right to rename my former works – if copyrighted work is bound to the author as a person, the person is the same, and only the name has changed. If I did a project called X ten years ago, I am still the author of this work; and if my name is now Janez Janša, then Janez Janša is the author of X.

JJ Under the Personal Name Act, the citizen is *obliged* to use a personal name.

On the Personal Document as a Readymade

LK Here, I want to reiterate a story recounted by George Dickie in his book, on the institutional theory of art. In a museum, there is an exhibition that features one hundred metal plates. A plumber comes in to fix the toilets – for even museum toilets break down occasionally – and he walks through the museum and straight over the metal plates. Everyone is watching uneasily until someone points out, "Watch out, you are trampling all over a work of art!" He asks, "What work of art, for God's sake? This is where the plumbing needs to be fixed!" An artwork that is a readymade of sorts is quickly confused with an ordinary thing by the uninitiated. The opposite is the case with names: people confuse your readymade, which is a perfectly ordinary name, with an artwork, and then they experience uncanniness when they find out that this is not an artwork, but rather, a perfectly normal real name. The institution of art cannot bear something that is real; for if that is the case, then we must be dealing with a Roman amphitheatre and not fine art. Therefore, I want to end this matter, which concerns the name itself as a readymade, like this. It is obvious that this readymade works. It is obvious that your new name represents no problem for those who do not know that you

are artists. Even the police are fine with it; otherwise your applications would have been rejected. The problems, then, only arise in the world of art. This kind of readymade — one that is real — is, of course, fundamentally different from Duchamp's or Warhol's readymades. If we take *Fountain* as an example, Duchamp's readymade was not an ordinary thing at all, unchanged and merely transported; he signed it, he turned it around. In short, in order to make an ordinary thing a work of art, he transformed it. Andy Warhol actually did not make readymades at all, what he did was paint portraits of ordinary things — commodities, such as Brillo boxes that contained no Brillo soap. You, however, are contained in your name! This "box" contains precisely what it says, and to contemporary art — despite all the changes that occurred throughout the twentieth century — it is still scandalously disturbing that this is real.

I suggest we move on to the other aspect of the readymade. In addition to the personal name being a readymade of sorts — because it can be moved or changed and because, transplanted into the field of art, it appears uncanny to the others — the documents themselves are also ordinary things, readymades. Everybody has identification documents. You have decided to exhibit yours. This is your decision, but it is not a personal matter; you have decided to exhibit your documents as artworks. I believe there are two types of readymades present here: one is the name as a readymade; and, the other are the documents as readymades. The status of the documents is serious. In any given society — not necessarily just contemporary society — these documents prove your identity to everybody with the right to ask for your identification. These documents assume and facilitate certain procedures; in short, they are not just any odd ordinary things — they are not a urinal turned into *Fountain*. How and why have you decided to jointly exhibit your personal documents?

JJ In the history of art, such readymades did not exist. Personal documents such as personal identification cards, passports, health insurance cards, credit cards, etc., cannot "simply" be bought in shops, recontextualized, turned around, exhibited, and produced as readymades. To obtain them, you have to initiate a process: you have to initiate an administrative process to obtain them. In our case, all the documents that we have state the same name. For this reason, these documents are unusual and have a different status, even though they are the exact same kind of documents as every other personal identification card issued in Slovenia. We consider them works of art precisely because they contain the procedure through which they were produced.

On Useful and Useless Readymades

LK If we follow the trail of logic: these documents are your personal documents, and also a proof of your change of name — which was done for entirely personal reasons — and this triggers uncanniness in the world of art. This is one level. As the documents confirming your change of name, these documents are not works of art, for the change of name, as such, was not an artwork, either.

There exists a second level, where these documents are already recognised as works of art (at least some of them), for their designers won the Prešernova Award, the highest state award in the field of artistic creation. The documents themselves can thus have the status of artworks from a different perspective than the one you have tackled. The passport, for example, has the status of an artwork; it has been exhibited before, together with coins and a bank note. Yet, it was exhibited anonymously, that is, without the name of the owner of the passport in question, only the name of the designer-author was stated. This is certainly a new situation, which could not have been possible a few decades earlier.

The third level, however, involves testing personal documents as readymades, that is, as art works, and this is the level that is probably most interesting here. Readymades are supposedly all about transposition, a gesture (this is another recurring thing in this conversation), namely, the gesture through which an ordinary object becomes a work of art, as Duchamp claims, "I am the author who made the gesture, I have discovered that this is a work of art, because I have chosen this object." You, of course, chose these documents as documents, and not as art works; but then you have selected them as art works through an additional gesture, by putting them in glass cabinets, even though this second gesture has not stripped them off their status as ordinary things. This is a unique situation: in this case, these documents can be used for their usual purpose at any moment — they remain valid. They are as valid in glass cabinets as anywhere else. If someone had pissed into the urinal labelled *Fountain* at the exhibition, he would have done so wrongly, for the urinal was turned upside down. Things like this have actually happened — albeit not intentionally, but rather as mistakes — but *Fountain* cannot, in fact, be used for the usual purpose as a urinal — it is not even connected with the infrastructure that would enable this. In your case, however, these readymade documents — even when they are placed in the art world — are so strongly "ordinary objects" that they have retained their everyday function even in the world of art. What is interesting here is not the fact that anything can become an object of art — we have known this for a quite a while now, anything can be a work of art — but some things are intruders in the world of art: they become art works, yet, they do not shed their usual function.

JANEZ JANŠA, JANEZ JANŠA, JANEZ JANŠA,
WEDDING, LJUBLJANA, 11TH AUGUST 2007.
CEREMONY: FROM LEFT: DANTE GRASSI, NEWLYWEDS'
SON, MARCELA OKRETT, BRIDE, SOFIA A. GRASSI,
NEWLYWEDS' DAUGHTER, JANEZ JANŠA, BRIDEGROOM:
PHOTO: NADA ŽEANK / MEMENTO, COURTESY:
AKSTOMA — INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART,
LJUBLJANA

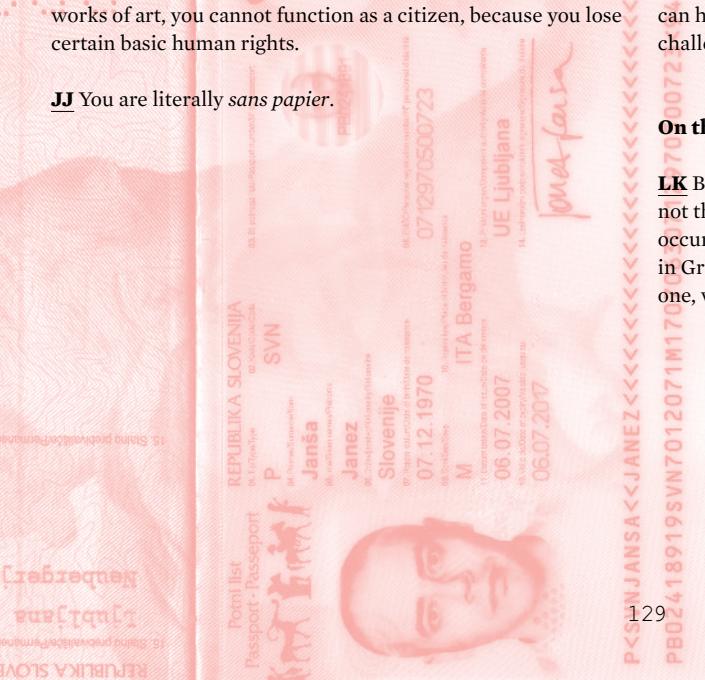
JJ I believe this is the key thesis here: in contrast to all other readymades, the validity and usefulness of this readymade in the physical reality is bound to only one person, and this is what we call *specificity*. This validity has a clearly stated expiration date. Our gesture is completely driven by reality, and because everything happened in a certain administratively verifiable reality, it seemed logical to exhibit the documents as such – without any further aestheticisation. What emerges here, then, are yet more levels: on the question of the series, the multiple, reproduction. Namely, the works that we are exhibiting here are mostly labelled with numbers; these are the only distinguishing elements. Personal identification cards have the same standard shape, size, design, and – in this case – also name; the only difference between them are the photos, the signatures, and the numbers. Moreover, in a purely administrative sense, it is only the numbers that serve as a criterion of differentiation.

JJ This is about the production of a series. The personal document, which we use as a means of differentiation, is part of a certain series, which is what we are underscoring here, that is, we are making the series more explicit by using the same name. The moment of seriality is, in this way, further emphasized. This is an interesting question, and many dystopian scenarios have been written about societies where everyone has the same name, and where only numbers are used to differentiate between people. To conclude on the question of why we selected the documents, this is an example of reality producing something that shakes the foundations of art perception.

JJ We are going to live these few weeks of our lives in reality while the documents of these lives – which are also our administrative documents – will be locked up in the gallery.

JJ If you have documents but you do not carry them on you, then you cannot function normally. The exhibition places you within the relationship of power between the spheres of art and administration. As a readymade, a personal document is a work of art, but as an administrative document it serves to identify a certain person in public. When these objects become exhibited works of art, you cannot function as a citizen, because you lose certain basic human rights.

JJ You are literally *sans papier*.



On the Alienation Effect and *Sans Papier*

LK Now we have come so far that we must give a name to this phenomenon. Brecht uses the term “alienation effect” to express the phenomenon when a personal document becomes almost more important than the person carrying it. Brecht mentions the example of the eviction notice, when the postman delivers the document announcing the cancellation of lease because the rent has not been paid in three months. He says that this seems perfectly normal to everyone nowadays, yet, this scenario has only been possible for the last fifty or sixty years; the post as we know it did not exist before then, and neither did apartments for lease. Documents are similar in this sense, of course. A hundred years ago, even as late as just before the First World War, documents were not as significant as they are today where you are hardly a person without your papers. Borders were not as protected as today, and migration was less of a concern; in short, personal documents have acquired their current level of significance fairly recently. This happened first in the totalitarian regimes, and documents – or rather, the lack thereof – have become generally more important over the past two decades. This fatal significance of documents is what you are challenging here.

JJ We are going to be temporarily deprived of our documents; we are going to be *sans papier*. We are aware of the luxury: we are doing this voluntarily while so many people are forced into such a situation. We are also aware of the possibility that the whole thing could turn against us, and that the situation could become subject to legal procedures, and no longer be merely a temporary, socio-political experiment. We do not want to be cynical, and we do not want to exploit the safety of the artistic/academic position by putting ourselves into the position of the subjects *sans papier*, and thus, pointing out the difficulties of the people without personal documents. But we do also want to problematize the so-called “leftist art world,” where there are a lot of projects, debates, and actions happening, exploring the topics of human rights (the problems of migration, the erased, and so on) to no real effect. We are now doing something that can have real effects, and we are doing it by using reality to challenge art. This is the turn that we are making.

On the State and Authenticity

LK But, this is the authenticity owned by the state. You are not the owners of this authenticity. This is where a problem occurs: what should the art collectors do? If I were a curator in Graz, I would say, “We would like to buy this piece. For that one, we can put you in touch with a bank that wants to buy it,

and a furniture company wants that personal identification card, and so on." But they can't! Regardless of your position that what happens here constitutes a gesture, this is in fact a "gesture on display" — this is ultimately the true work of art, that which cannot be collected. One of the main goals of the *avant-garde* artists was to produce something that could not be collected by the museums. Everybody can see the documents at the exhibition, but they cannot make them part of a collection; in fact, no one but you can claim these documents without stealing them or rendering them invalid. If you sold them, you would be taken to court, and if the state nullified them, the collectors would be left empty-handed — they would not get the authentic documents, but merely a document of an art project that took place once upon a time. Duchamp's passport could also be exhibited in this manner — so we could see whether he was really Marcel Duchamp, or maybe R. Mutt, or Rrose Sélavy. This, then, is a historical document, but it is no longer an artwork or an authentic valid personal document.

JJ That same document, that same readymade, will change with time, and it will change its relationship to the circumstances. For me, this is an additional advantage of the new readymade that we are creating, an “authenticational” readymade.

JJ It seems to me that another paradox has become apparent here. On the one hand, Lev is saying that, once the validity of the document expires, its authenticity ceases. On the other hand, this object will absorb its former story, the story of it being an authentic document, once it becomes a document of a document, and changes its status. I argue that something is indeed lost, that something has changed, but something has also been gained: the object contains the history of its former and present shape, and I can only consider that an advantage.

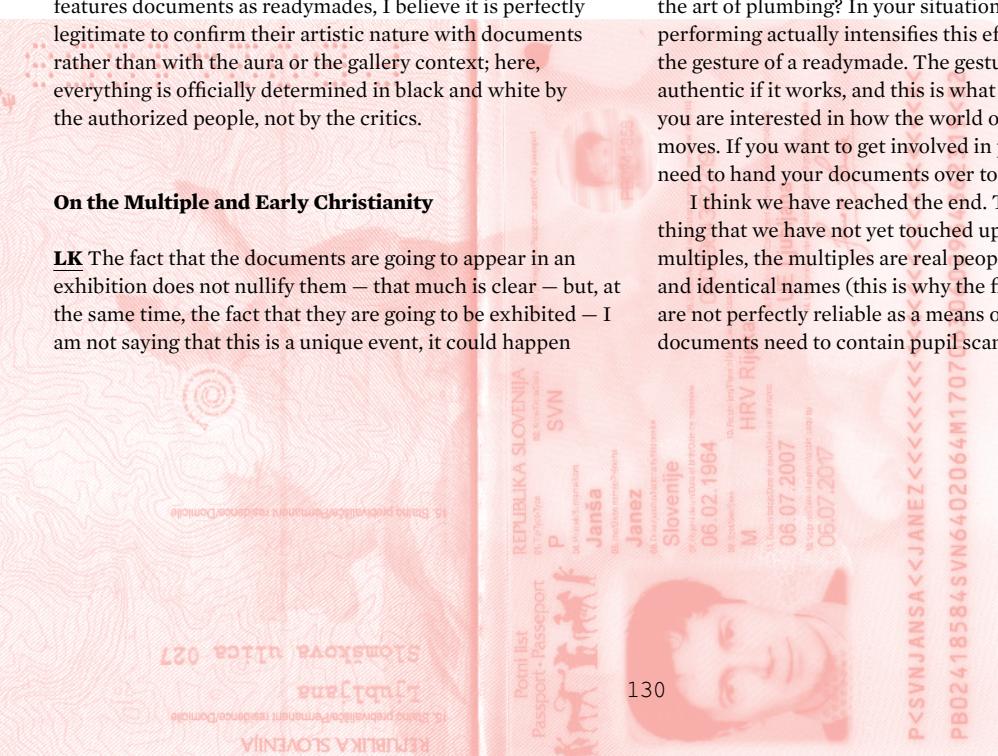
JJ I cannot see anything contradictory here; if an exhibition features documents as readymades, I believe it is perfectly legitimate to confirm their artistic nature with documents rather than with the aura or the gallery context; here, everything is officially determined in black and white by the authorized people, not by the critics.

On the Multiple and Early Christianity

LK The fact that the documents are going to appear in an exhibition does not nullify them – that much is clear – but, at the same time, the fact that they are going to be exhibited – I am not saying that this is a unique event, it could happen

again somewhere else – this is unique in that all these kinds of authenticity converge here. A classical authentic work is authentic only in a certain environment. Once it becomes part of a museum collection, it loses its authenticity; this is the first phase. Once it can be reproduced, its authenticity is lost even further; this is the second phase. These kinds of documents, the substitutes that would be issued to you to enable you to go about your business as usual, and which you would have to return once you had your old ones back after the exhibition, can basically be reproduced, but yet, they are authentic as long as they are issued by the state: they are not copies, you are not asking for duplicates because you have lost the originals, for a duplicate is not a copy, it is a duplicate, it is always authentic. This is where the authenticity of a work of art, and the authenticity of a document converge. If you are granted permission for this, if your application is accepted, then it is a unique experience to go to the exhibition, and see this double authenticity, which is in fact just a readymade. This is truly an absolute paradox. One of the objections expressed by one of the jurors of the Association of the Independent Artists of New York immediately after Duchamp had submitted *Fountain*, under the pseudonym R. Mutt, was that this was not an original artwork. Yet, this was precisely Duchamp's ploy: not to prove that he had or had not made *Fountain*, but rather, to show that there is no such thing as independent art or independent artists, that what the *avant-garde* claims is bullshit. Not even the *avant-garde* allows an individual gesture; such a gesture unsettles the *avant-garde*. This is what Duchamp wanted to prove, and he succeeded. The main argument against *Fountain*, however, was that the item was obscene (we, here in the art world, are not going to address the question of whether or not the name Janez Janša may be obscene), while the other key argument was that it was not original. We know what Duchamp's response was: what could possibly be more original than to dismantle something that is a true original product of American art, for there are no other arts in America apart from the art of plumbing? In your situation, the gesture that you are performing actually intensifies this effect: the authenticity of the gesture of a readymade. The gesture of a readymade is truly authentic if it works, and this is what I find crucial. Obviously, you are interested in how the world of art reacts to all these moves. If you want to get involved in prostitution, they say, you need to hand your documents over to the pimps.

I think we have reached the end. The multiples are the only thing that we have not yet touched upon. Pseudonyms are not multiples, the multiples are real people with different identities and identical names (this is why the first and the last name are not perfectly reliable as a means of identification, and the documents need to contain pupil scans and DNA records, for



instance); multiples happen when it becomes fashionable to be called Iosef Vissarionovich, or Stalin, and then there are masses of Stalins, or masses of Jovankas. When Jovanka married Tito, people wanted to be Titos as well, of course, but the name was protected, or else there would have been hundreds of thousands of Titos in Yugoslavia — everybody would have changed their name. These are multiple names. As for multiple names and last names, now this creates an additional problem, for what emerges here is the problem of identification. There are many Janez Novaks in Slovenia, but this is a different case, which results from the fact that there are a lot of Novaks here, and that many children are called Janez. You, however, have chosen a multiple name, and you have made it multiple by choosing it. I cannot think of an appropriate comparison.

JJ We have chosen a name that already exists, a name which is a readymade, and we have thus, of course, raised the following question: what is the difference between what we have done, and the scenario in which one assumes a certain name, say Luther Blissett, in the public artistic life, while in one's private life one is still called Lev Kreft? In my view, the difference can be explained as such: if a sculptor in 1917 made a cast of a urinal, and exhibited it as a classical sculpture called *Fountain*, this would appear somewhat problematic and obscene, but it would not constitute the gesture of a readymade, which really is a gesture, the gesture of interrogating the status of the object in the artistic context. We have transposed the urinal, while Luther Blissett has merely made a cast of it.

LK Well, the fact that this is not a pen name or a pseudonym is crucial for multiples. This is why this is a readymade, for it enters art from life. A pen name exists, at first, only in art, and then becomes part of life, for in the end no one remembers the real name. This is a common situation, there are plenty of examples like this — Andy Warhol is not Andy Warhol.

JJ Madonna is not just Madonna, and not even the Primer Minister Janez Janša is really Janez Janša.

On the Romantic

LK This is rather romantic, isn't it — to risk your life to create a work of art?

JJ The truth about the majority of politically engaged contemporary art is that it entails challenging reality through artistic measures. In contrast, we are using the real, or more precisely, the administrative, the legal, something that transpires in the sphere of law, to provoke art itself, like you said before. Art finds it difficult to accept something that is real, and today the real resides in the sphere of law, which

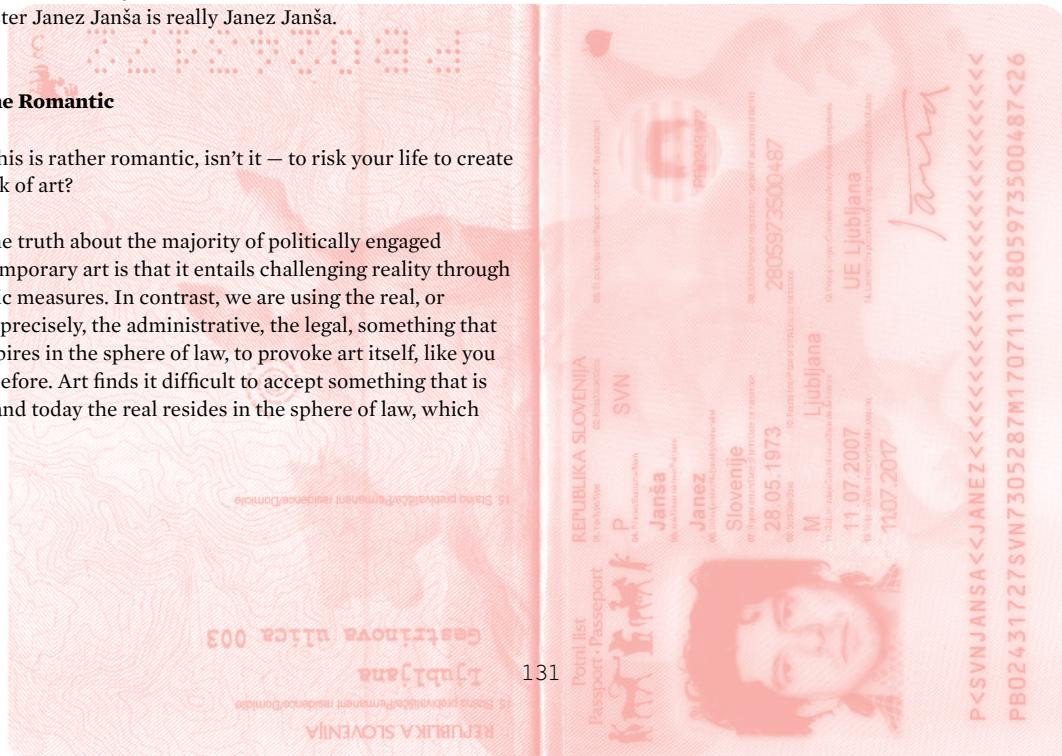
deals with facts. We are today prepared to accept something as real only if it is backed up by facts. This is an additional reason for our use of documents — they are judicially verified.

LK I was thinking about the fact that people are ready to support human rights (since we have already mentioned the supporters of human rights) as long as this support does not entail any risks. People are happy to worship art, do art, and be known as artists, as long as this does not require taking any risks. The artistic situation, as I know it, is such that people are not willing to risk anything for their art. You, however, are risking something for art, which is why, in this sense; I can see this as a "romantic gesture." Being prepared to take risks as an artist — I find this exceptional nowadays, and this is what, I think, the art world will not appreciate at all.

JJ I would, nevertheless, like to emphasize that this is not an act motivated by any kind of sacrifice; this is an interrogation of some fundamental questions: the status of fact, the status of truth, the status of perception, the status of the political in art... ◉

This interview excerpted from the essay by the same name first published in Name Readymade (Ljubljana, Slovenia: Moderna galerija, 2008).

JANEZ
JANŠA



PRIOR ART

ART OF RECORD FOR PERSONAL SAFETY

by Kathleen Pirrie-Adams

Visual surveillance is a ubiquitous and powerful system that generates redundant and often empty images: endless hours of vacant apartment lobbies; deserted subway platforms; the mechanical routines of minimum wage workers collecting burger and donut fortunes; pedestrians passing by bank windows; and, the slow flow of commuter traffic. Sheer volume and real-time duration support its claims to truth or reality, while the emptiness at its heart obscures its real purpose by suggesting an apparent lack of effect.

In Michel Foucault's analysis of Bentham's "panopticon," the philosopher identifies continuous observation as one of the techniques used for ensuring social control. While the structure is able to minimize the number of guards needed to mind the prisoners, its efficiency goes beyond simply saving labour. The design has deeper consequences. Its imposition of constant and continuous visibility creates a situation within which the subject internalizes the gaze of the watcher. Self-surveillance begets self-regulation, which allows the system to operate automatically, by remote control.

Over a period of twenty years, artist, inventor, and engineer Steve Mann has developed a body of work that provocatively and humorously undermines the efficiency and normalization of surveillance. Borrowing from the Situationist notion of *detournement*, Mann has developed a number of strategies (involving wearable devices and performative routines) that allow him to frame surveillance as a political problem, and interrogate its banal self-justifications. His subversion of the stealth and insidiousness of surveillance is achieved through "Reflectionism," a program that turns the largely invisible visual order of surveillance into spectacle.

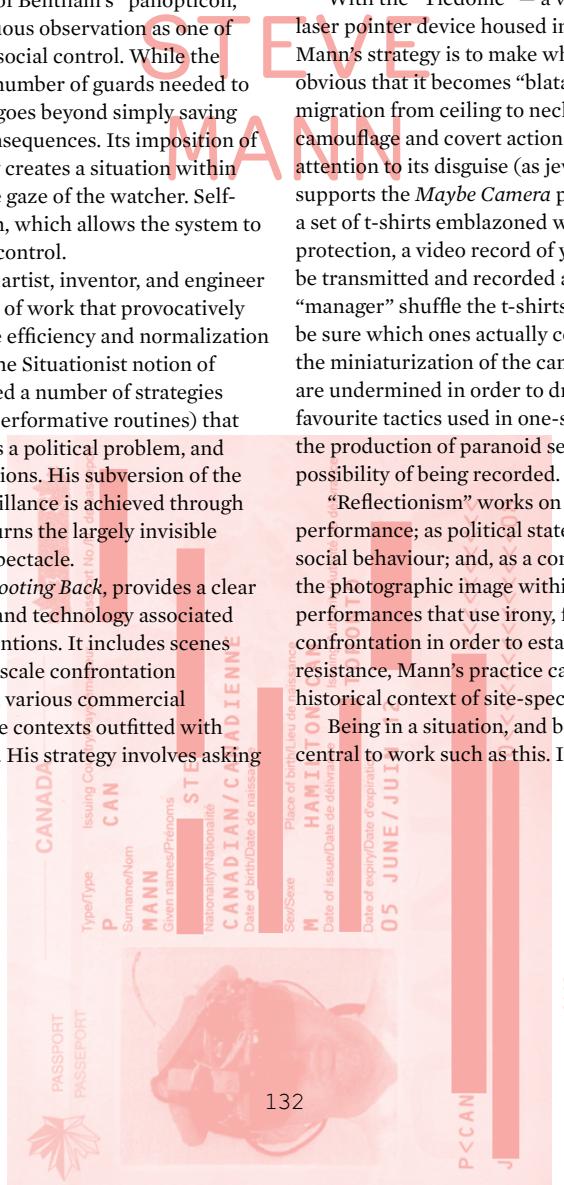
A video document entitled, *Shooting Back*, provides a clear demonstration of the techniques and technology associated with Mann's performative interventions. It includes scenes of strategic disruption, and small-scale confrontation with security guards and clerks in various commercial establishments. Mann enters these contexts outfitted with wearable computers and cameras. His strategy involves asking

questions about the closed-circuit camera systems, and then mimicking individual employees' disavowal of responsibility for the invasion of privacy or the resulting climate of suspicion. Their defense usually consists of pointing "upstairs" to their management, or claiming merely to be implementing an impersonal system. Mann applies the same rationalizations to his own image-capture practices, asserting that his camera is necessary for personal security purposes. This, and his reiteration of their claim that "only people with something to hide are afraid of being monitored," creates a revealing feedback loop.

With the "Tiedome" – a wireless camera and telematic laser pointer device housed inside a smoked Plexiglas dome – Mann's strategy is to make what is supposed to be hidden so obvious that it becomes "blatantly covert." The Plexi dome's migration from ceiling to necktie provides a burlesque of camouflage and covert action while simultaneously calling attention to its disguise (as jewellery). A similar, ironic gesture supports the *Maybe Camera* project. In 1996, Mann produced a set of t-shirts emblazoned with the following text: "For your protection, a video record of you and your establishment may be transmitted and recorded at remote locations." Having his "manager" shuffle the t-shirts meant that even Mann couldn't be sure which ones actually contained cameras. Here again, the miniaturization of the camera, and its potential invisibility are undermined in order to draw attention to one of the favourite tactics used in one-sided surveillance situations: the production of paranoid self-consciousness based on the possibility of being recorded.

"Reflectionism" works on a number of levels: as performance; as political statement; as an experiment in social behaviour; and, as a commentary on the status of the photographic image within contemporary culture. As performances that use irony, feigned ignorance, and low-key confrontation in order to establish a technique for active resistance, Mann's practice can be situated within the art historical context of site-specific intervention.

Being in a situation, and being part of that situation are central to work such as this. It makes no claim to be objective



STEVE MANN. PASSPORT. 2008.

analysis, external to the events being observed. This non-objective representation is, to return to Mann's vocabulary, the product of "existential technology." Resistant to the notion of essences or pre-existent forms, Mann places emphasis on the role of existence in all processes of creation. Not only does Mann's approach insist on a recognition of the social context of technology (and specifically, the role of choice and intention in its use), his embrace of Heisenberg's insight into the influence of measurement (mediation) on outcomes also informs his inventions, and emphasizes their status as social machines.

While there are parallels to be drawn with earlier institutional uses of photography aimed at regulation and social control — Charcot's clinic, Bertillion's invention of the mug shot, and various social-hygiene movements — several elements unique to current modes of surveillance are brought to light by Mann's body of work.

The insistent flow of surveillance video produces a very different perspective on what it views than the photograph does on its subject matter. These moving pictures collect at a rate that is extraordinarily difficult to archive. Video surveillance does not readily lend itself to categorical classifications or exemplification. In light of the time-based character of the media, the frame functions quite differently than it does in photography — serving to connect, rather than differentiate or isolate.

Even when working within the tradition of the print, Mann applies some of the principles of his post-graphic photo practice. With the *Look paintings*, for instance, Mann presents a segmented vision that represents the movement of the subject's eye as it travels across space stochastically. This picture of active vision suggests not only the subjective view of the operator of the "Eyetap" camera, but also the motion within the short intervals of time that constitute a look. As the residue of a kind of untethered eye, they also suggest what photographic information might look like without a frame.

In a related way, Mann's use of the Internet for live relay of real-time events depends upon the convergence of media that characterizes the digital age. In such practices, the image is no longer subject to the snap-print-display time frame, nor bound by the production requirements of print distribution.

Considering the worldwide volume of surveillance imagery, or speculating about where it goes, how it gets saved, or abandoned, or what its life as a historical document will

later be immediately draws our attention to a surplus. Not simply a question of quantity, there is something in surveillance that exceeds what we normally think of as the image. Within the realm of surveillance, awareness shifts away from the screen to the camera. In fact, the screen and the frame — aspects of the image that have traditionally defined it — seem to have disappeared. The image has, metaphorically speaking, been dispersed — become data.

Although a number of artists such as Kristin Lucas, Tran T. Kim-Trang, and Surveillance Camera Players for Mass Observation Unit have been intrigued by the qualities of the surveillance still — and the relationship of surveillance to voyeurism, power and identity — few are as interested in exploring the circulation of such imagery in its natural habitat. Less concerned with the visual rhetoric of the surveillance image, Mann is focused on the role such images can play in resisting and transforming that realm. While new dimensions of photography are made apparent through Mann's anti-panoptic surveillance project, the purpose of his work is to keep questions of power and control alive in an era when the value placed on ownership of information tends to exceed all others.

The phrases, "art of record," and "prior art" refer to ideas for inventions that have been filed with the patent office. On the one hand, using these phrases in Mann's exhibition title registers the work's documentary aspect, while on the other, it playfully points toward the extended realm of his project. Because the gallery is not the primary site of Mann's practice, it functions as an interpretive context within which to provide an overview of his work's many dimensions. The exhibition title also suggests that the art does not simply belong to the product — in this case, the photographic image — but denotes a whole set of performances, theoretical writings, and institutional processes (scientific, commercial, and legal) through which it comes into being.

Some of Mann's own patent documents are on display in the *Prior Art: Art of Record for Personal Safety* exhibition, and their inclusion works in a number of ways: It emphasizes that the exhibition is itself a record of Mann's history and practice; it reinforces the notion that everything that goes into the presentation is part of the art — that it has a prior history, an existence before it becomes a record; it highlights the

RESPONSE BY MICHAEL PAGE

Steve Mann's commitment to the on-going investigation into computer-assisted, wearable appliances and early recognition of mobile technology make him a visionary in his field. The prosthetic devices he proposes in pursuit of augmented ("computer-mediated") reality can be seen as a logical extension of MIT culture. MIT, the institution where Mann studied until 1997, established its own Department of Nuclear Engineering in 1957, and has historically celebrated its involvement in the military-industrial complex as a source of pride. Since then, many have considered MIT as the heart of emerging technology in North America. The culture of the 1980s and 1990s at MIT's Media Lab claimed domain over synthetic reality and interactivity with research in advanced holographic technologies, haptics, and augmented reality. Recently, the institution has embraced social issues with high profile initiatives such as the "OpenCourseWare" project, which put many of its course materials on-line, Nicholas Negroponte's "One Laptop per Child" initiative, and more.

Expressions like "Digital Destiny"¹ correctly imply that there is no avoiding a new cultural contract that must be signed — a contract based on the imposition of corporations on individuals, whereby the individual receives something "free" in exchange for simple data mining or another submission. This conformity or character modification are all part of a new reality predicted in the 1960s by author Phillip K. Dick.

Notes

¹Steve Mann, *Digital Destiny and Human Possibility in the Age of the Wearable Computer* (New York: Random House Inc., 2001).

influence of engineering on Mann's art; and, it calls attention to the artist's interest in a radically expanded field, one that could even include a patent office as a possible site for artistic intervention.

The patent office represents a layer of the data-sphere where authorship and ownership are fixed. It is the place where what is potential becomes what is producible, the place where ideas become properties. For many, this area of symbolic activity might seem subterranean — even Kafkaesque — an echo of this impression resounds throughout the exhibition, and in the decontamination facility patent, in particular.

Canadian Patent 2303611, submitted to the Intellectual Property District Office in Toronto on April 1, 2000, describes an emergency-response facility for handling mass casualties: victims of chemical spills, and the like. The decontamination facility stands out amongst Mann's projects. While its basic design echoes the "panopticon" — which has provided the model for the desired psychological effect of video surveillance — unlike his earlier work, it is neither wearable nor image-making. In fact, Mann's architectural turn signals a shift of attention: from acting as the model of possible resistance, to the widespread invasion of privacy, to the role of model-maker.

The "decon" facility, nevertheless, continues the artist's critical investigation of the issues of privacy and social control, and his practice of "Reflectionism" — albeit, in an entirely new medium. It continues to show that beneath the call for "public safety" there is much going on that is invisible to the public, bears little, if any, public scrutiny, and may not even express the needs or desires of the public. Putting the tools and techniques of "public safety" on display returns it to the realm of the public. By drawing attention to the idea of public safety, and calling into question its presupposed necessity, Mann is able to make it apparent that there remains something potentially ominous at the heart of the cultural and political practices of our new networked being. ●

STEVE MANN



INCIDENTALISM AND EXISTENTIAL CONTRABAND

ON STEVE MANN

by Marisa Jahn

As a cyborg, Steve Mann's engagements with bureaucracies probe institutional classifications of human subjectivity. Mann's exploration of what it means to be a cyborg takes place through other institutional engagements such as filing patents, and going through airport security checkpoints and manifold offices that any citizen normally encounters. Mann is known for this performative deployment of a wearable computer device and "personal imaging lab" (or "EyeTap"). EyeTap's invention characterizes Mann's practice: he not only developed the technological devices, but also the correlative semantic frameworks, which are tested through everyday interactions.

When his daughter was born in the U.S., Mann was required to report to the U.S. embassy to pick up her passport; however, electronic devices are not allowed in the U.S. embassy. He was, simultaneously, both required to enter the embassy and forbidden from entering it. After much deliberation, the embassy officials came out onto the public street to serve him his daughter's papers. By virtue of the electronic materials on and in his body, Mann was considered existential contraband. By playing with institutional conventions, Mann's methods point towards the ways in which power structures reproduce themselves through a certain stylized use of language, a certain use of (portrait/surveillance) photography, etc. This variegated practice is emblemized by Mann's adage that "the invention itself is intervention," i.e., "in(ter)vention."

Mann regards individuals in corporate and statist structures as those who are, in fact, in the position to enact change, given the right or amenable conditions. Mann explicates this through his concept of "self-demotion":

A typical example of a situation in which self-demotion is useful is when an individual attempts to negotiate with a used car salesman, and the used car salesman might say something like, "I'd love to give you the car for two thousand dollars; let me check with my manager." The used car salesman then disappears into a back room, alone, has a coffee, reads a newspaper for a few minutes,

and then comes out and says, "I'd love to give you the car for two thousand dollars, but my manager won't let me." Although the salesman never talked to a manager, the salesman has some degree of power over the customer by virtue of being able to credibly pretend that he is bound by a higher, and unquestionable authority. A credible, articulable, higher, and unquestionable authority allows representatives of organizations to obtain external blame and excuses for what would otherwise be irrational or disagreeable actions.

Referring to his strategy of including individuals within the bureaucratic system to produce meaningful situations, "art" or change, Mann uses the word "incidentalism" — a term that resonates with other moments in the history of art that arrogate creative agency to circumstance and individuals. In the late 1960s, the British artist John Latham coined the phrase "the incidental person" to replace the word "artist," the latter that, to him, carried individualist connotations. For Latham, socially engaged artists initiated change, not through the production of a self-contained work, but through the process of its creation, which involved interaction with others, with site, under certain conditions, etc. Howard Slater summarizes Latham's position:

[...] Rather than produce a static subjectivity where the artist's person, commodified, becomes an institutional currency, the hope for the incidental person, it seems, was that the performative aspect of work within industry and government departments would not be seen through the prism of the art institution. The conceptual activity of the "incidental person," in becoming immersed in the unfurling dynamics of the workplace, and in maintaining a fluid position of independence and "affectivity," would come to "generate maximum public involvement and maximum enthusiasm," so as to "release the impulse to act."¹

Like Latham, Mann is invested in eliciting the individual agency, and reflection of the humans that compose institutions.

Accordingly, to take advantage of the liberties offered to clerks, and the lack of institutional responsibility for which they are liable, Mann created a federally incorporated company, and appointed himself as an “Assistant Mailroom Clerk Trainee.” As a clerk, he is allowed to move in and out of institutions, claiming that he cannot do this or that (such as taking off his EyeTap), because it is against the orders of his bosses. Other clerks recognize and sympathize with this position, and accept and facilitate exceptions to the rule. Mann summarizes, “In the same way that clerks facilitate empowerment of large organizations, through my work I have been able to facilitate personal empowerment by being a clerk. My self-demotion provides a deliberate self-inflicted dehumanization of the individual that forces the clerk to become human.”

Summarizing, Mann writes: “As bureaucracy becomes absurd, it folds in upon itself, in these kinds of situations; and when it collapses, it reveals the human compassion, and the basic good in people, when stripped of bureaucracy. Certainly, humans being clerks can make clerks be human.”

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SOCIAL ACUPUNCTURE AND THE DOG THAT SAVED THE DUCK

Founded in 1993, Mammalian Diving Reflex is a research-art atelier dedicated to investigating the social sphere through theatre-based performance, events, and the publication of theoretical texts. Their mandate to create “entertainment” with challenging and rich content often includes a highly participatory element that examines political dimension of life through accessible and humourous strategies. This interview with Artistic Director Darren O'Donnell and Artistic Producer Natalie de Vito focuses on The Children's Choice Awards, an ongoing project that involves casting youth as the jurors of existing festivals.

INTERVIEW WITH DARREN O'DONNELL AND NATALIE DE VITO

Performance Festival in Vancouver, we expanded the number of kids we worked with, and partnered more formally with a school, necessitating parental consent forms, photo release, and a more rigorous take on the pedagogical side, including a blog that I maintained and constantly updated with photos, videos, and comments from the students, encouraging them to also post to the blog — always a challenge. We also standardized an evaluation form that the students would fill out after each performance, after learning in Melbourne that a deliberation process with thirteen insistent children is a cake-walk compared with trying to reach consensus with forty. For the project, we simply spend the duration of the festival attending different events ranging from theatre, dance, music, visual art, and street performances, bringing ten kids to each event, and then, together, we assess them, the kids fill out their evaluation form, and at the end, we hand out the awards at the ceremony.

Marisa Jahn Can you describe the *Children's Choice Awards*? Your intent, the tension it invokes in others, the experience of the youth, and the conditions that you request from the hosting institution/organization?

Darren O'Donnell The *Children's Choice Awards* has evolved into an intervention into large-scale cultural events featuring a group of children all around the age of ten, who are chauffeured to a bunch of performances and events happening, and then hand out a bunch of awards.

It started in Toronto with *Alley Jaunt*, a weekend-long art show where artists installed their work in garages surrounding Trinity Bellwoods Park. I worked with the students from Parkdale Public School, who I had been and continue to develop a collaborative relationship with. We spent the day walking around the neighbourhood, pulling one of the kids who had broken her leg in a little red wagon, and checked out thirty-two installations. We then had what for me was a totally head-spitting sessions of deliberations where the kids debated, argued, and fought about who would win which award, inventing new awards on the spot to accommodate some work that exceeded the categories they had predetermined. At the end of the day, we presented the winners with trophies dipped in a mixture of chocolate and wax and decorated with candy that we had spent the preceding week making.

In making the jump to large-scale, city-wide cultural events like the Melbourne Festival and PuSh International

Natalie De Vito The first large-scale presentation of the *Children's Choice Awards* was at the Melbourne International Arts Festival, where we worked with forty-two children. By that time we had created a loose structure of preliminary workshops with the kids to talk about what we were going to be looking at (theatre, dance, performance art, sound art, visual art, music, etc.), and for them to develop criteria to evaluate the shows, and particular awards, including, for example, Most Inspirational, Most Moving, Most Kid Friendly, Best Shoes, Best Choreographed Dance, and Most Emotive. The kids would then choose all of the fifty or so awards that most suited the performance, and we would tally up all of the votes and calculate the winners.

DO We ask the various artists who are presenting in the festival to accommodate the young people by allowing us to announce them as they enter the space, inviting the audience to acknowledge that the jury has arrived. This is a big ask; this means sharing that delicate preshow period, and setting a tone that includes the children as another part of the show: the audience's curiosity is peaked, and they often will keep an eye on the kids throughout the performance to see how

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they're getting on. The performers are also asked to extend a bit of generosity our way, and forgive the minimal amount of whispers, rustling, and shifting that does occur, which for actors onstage is actually asking quite a bit.

Natalie We understood from the beginning that we were asking a lot of the other performers presenting, but it became very clear throughout the Melbourne Festival at a number of shows. Several of the performances were solo presentations — quiet, intimate, and emotional. One in particular was also a bit confusing and boring. One typically forgets, or at least I did, and what became blatantly obvious and hilarious to watch, sitting in the middle of ten kids, was the realization that our reactions at such events are learned. Adults know when to laugh or clap at the appropriate moments, or keep quiet during a particularly dramatic moment, and remain rustle and shuffle free. We were in the second row from the stage, on view for all to see, including the actor. Aside from the confusing aspect of the show in which the actor addressed the audience that was a non-existent audience in the future, but didn't, and so when the kids responded to the actor when they weren't meant to, it caused a bit of a ruckus followed by an outcry, when the kids became bored to death, and began asking how much longer the show would go on, and flipping through their program guides discussing more promising, upcoming shows.

It never occurred to us to discuss etiquette, and what to expect, and how to deal with it, in advance of the shows. We now mention it, but we tend to leave them to their own devices; that's part of a kid's or adult's first visit to a performance. It might be annoying for some, but that's life.

Do That moment of annoying people is very important. I think it's important to expect this to occur, and, while not courting it, allow it to happen, and see who can rise to the challenge, and see who feels the need to control the children's behaviour. Allowing children, and, for that matter, other's who are also excluded to participate in civic life doesn't mean insisting that they conform to prevailing norms, but that those norms must shift to allow for them, their attention spans, etc. If kids served on city council, we might see a proliferation of playgrounds, but that's just something we would have to accept.

MJ You also mention that the more important part of the project is the least visible — the work and conversations involved in building relationships with people different from your own age set that live in your neighbourhood, and building a diverse group of participants.

I'm particularly interested in your conversations with art administrators about procuring a group of visibly diverse kids, and your intention to involve them in doing the work of outreach. Can you share snippets of the more salient parts of these conversations (whether written or spoken), and some of the documents you've produced — such as your contract — and can you articulate this mandate in an institutional setting?

DO In one instance, we had arrived in the city and I had to do an interview with one of the national newspapers without having met the children. We had been told that the school was in a famously diverse neighbourhood, so I talked about this to the journalist, making it clear that this was an essential part of the project. But when we met the kids they were almost all white. It took a while to sort out what happened, but as far as we can tell, the host festival had farmed out the responsibility of finding the school to a community centre in a diverse neighbourhood without also mentioning that the kids needed to be a diverse group. It was simply taken for granted that any school in that neighbourhood would be mixed, but it was a neighbourhood in the midst of a gentrification process, and the population at this particular school had shifted. When the journalist joined us for one of our outings, she couldn't help but noticed this disparity, and asked me about it, and I spoke honestly. Well, they used that statement as a pull-quote in the newspaper, featuring it prominently. We were hauled in front of the festival director and producer, and basically told that we didn't know what the fuck we were talking about; that in this particular country that group of children was actually diverse, and that our perceptions were accustomed to a Canadian version of diversity that wasn't relevant. They insisted that the other people attending the festival would most certainly read this group of kids as diverse. This, to me, sounded like some serious Orwellian insanity. We tested their assertion by simply talking to a bunch of locals, and asking them who they thought it looked like we were working with. "A bunch of white kids," was the consistent response. No shit.

Natalie Getting hauled in is an understatement; we were subpoenaed. I think they did base their decision of neighbourhood on the fact that perhaps at one point it was diverse, and maybe it still is, but the school we were paired with, was evidently not so much anymore. The key issue was that we could not agree on a definition of "diverse." "Diverse" in the eyes of this festival was achieved because the suburb's name still connoted it. Whether or not it visually represented it, the area was, at one point, predominantly lower income, and a neighbourhood of new immigrants. However, it didn't translate visually, which is what our primary interest is, and how our expectations of how three thousand white, middle-class theatre-goers would react to a non-white jury of kids. It was a miscommunication, and as a result, we have changed the wording of our contract.

DO I think you're being too diplomatic, Natalie. If you recall, the point person from the festival who was working with us also expressed surprise at the lack of visual diversity. I think it was a case of the festival delegating the responsibility without fully communicating the details — which would have been fine, if they had owned up to it. Like all of our social practice work, we prefer to work with populations who are usually not featured in events of this nature, asking our host organization

to find us kids who are racially diverse — if not themselves immigrants, then the children of immigrants. We also take geography into consideration preferring to work in suburban areas far from all the cultural activities that are happening in the cores of most cities. With this and other projects with young people, the host organization will often propose partnering with an alternative school, but we're specifically interested in working with schools that are not already well serviced with atypical activities. This, and our interest in diversity, is simply motivated by the fact that we find equity aesthetically pleasing.

ND And, I would add that I think we also try to ensure that we're including kids in these performances and arts programs from schools or neighbourhoods that don't typically have access to them, but more specifically, to call attention visually to power hierarchies that exist within the arts scene, which remains predominantly white and middle-class.

DO Finding a diverse group of kids can be a challenge for our host organizations, and I've come to really enjoy the struggle they have, trying to be tolerant of their failures, as long as they can be honest with us. It's a bit of a logistical pain in the ass for a performing arts festival with no links to schools, and to further complicate it with a diversity requirement can be frustrating for them. Some, simply, don't make an effort; some make a nominal effort but farm the responsibility out, and end up coming up short; while others completely step up. I think talking about race and equity is very difficult for many people, especially white people — and all of the organizations we work with are run by white people — so the project demands that they figure out, within their own community, how the hell they're going to talk about this, what words to use, and who to talk to. There have been instances — in Victoria, BC, for example, where the host organizations (Theatre Skam and The Belfry Theatre), were convinced that the city was just too white for such a task, but with a bit of effort, they were easily able to find a school that serviced a diverse population. They talked about a change in understanding their own city that they experienced. This, for me, is probably a much more important moment in the project than all the rest, even more so than all the stuff that happens for, with, and in the public realm. It can be very frustrating when these requirements are not met, and I will often respond by doing some research myself, and presenting our host organization with a strategy for how they might have been more effective at the task or, in that one particular annoying case I mentioned, ratting the festival out to the media.

ND It was this “ratting” and blogging about how crap the festival was about the diversity issue that caused our being hauled into the office. I think we put the cart before the horse, and I think the discussion with them about what had happened, or didn’t, would have been more productive if we’d

addressed the issue, and talked to them first. In this instance, a festival board member had read our blog before the issue had ever been taken up with the festival director. I think we came across as “high school.”

DO Yes, that's true. When we arrived and met the kids, I was devastated and apoplectic. At the best of times, diplomacy is not my strong suit.

MJ You have mentioned that, oftentimes, what is the least important part of the project — the public presentation — is what gets circulated in the media. You've referred to the way that your projects get placed in the “human interest” section of the media — those stories that, as you say, resemble the “aw shucks,” “dog that saved the duck” narrative. I like this way of thinking about art works such as yours whose friendly façade belie darker issues. The “dog that saved the duck” then is, perhaps, an apt way of describing the way that “community arts” fulfill the need for a humanist sound bite, and allow those participants involved to experience something more complex. Or simply hang out on Friday nights unsupervised because they are making “artwork.”

DO In the *Children's Choice Awards*, there was obviously the human interest aspect of having a bunch of kids judging the work of adults, but more important than that was the fact of the institution having to deal with the kids, the negotiations that have to happen with all the different artists presenting work in the festival, the need to work out the details as to how exactly the jury is going to interface with the space. The jury enters the space, and is at the focal point for a moment, taking all the attention, and occupying centre stage. It's a feel-good moment, but that feel-good feel hides the some-time anxiety of the front of house person as they deal with us, trying to keep the kids from treating the lobbies, like playgrounds. There are urgent last minute questions to determine whether we will be allowed to play a prerecorded announcement introducing the kids, will the performers acknowledge us, will they talk to us afterwards, if there's participation, just how participatory can things get... *Chunky Move* threw down a bunch of paper balls in Melbourne, and the kids grabbed at them after the show, and had a massive paper ball fight on the set. Treating the world of performance with a little common disrespect, as if to say: you were designed to offer us an artistic moment, but you are also available for play.

ND *Chunky Move*, as an example was amazing with the kids. They took the time to meet with them, answer questions, and treated them with respect. As Darren mentioned, some of the most difficult moments have been with the front of house or front line staff. Some staff see a whack of kids enter a theatre, gallery, performance hall, etc., and immediately start yelling at them, and telling them what to do, embracing the need to enforce “order,” as if these public spaces are sanctuaries. We've

seen the full spectrum from the most composed Norwegian kids to the most unruly Italian ones, but for the most part, they aren't particularly wild or uncontrollable, maybe louder, but many adults just can't relate to them anymore, and assume they're "up to no good." Whatever that means.

MJ We've discussed the anecdotal quality of projects like the *Children's Choice Award* and *Haircuts by Children*. In this case, the project's oral transmission and circulation is an important part of the project. You've also considered creating works that resist this totalizing perspective, and resist an outside evaluator. Can you say more about the challenge to de-centre or "despectacularize" the work of art?

DO This is something new, and is motivated by the need to create experiences for the young people that are more sophisticated and complex, and the need to create a moment for an audience to consume was just getting in the way of that. It became a problem with *Eat the Street*, with some people who wanted me to facilitate an encounter with the youth; it wasn't enough that I forced everyone to sit together, they wanted an activity to help them connected with the young people. I really didn't want to bring this kind of dynamic to the table, it would have felt like just more school. For me, it was fine if some people were unable to connect with the kids – they would just have to try harder. And some people did indeed try harder – too hard – and revealed themselves as dorks incapable of talking to children, their misperception of children as people who need to be spoken to in a particular way, unmasking their prejudice.

Now, we're interested in developing projects that continue to generate atypical encounters for the young people, but the publicly stated function is pedagogical rather than entertainment. The events will be about learning, but this, again, will also be secondary to creating new and unusual social dynamics, attempts to instantiate a more ideal and momentary community, unusual connections, across various social divides.

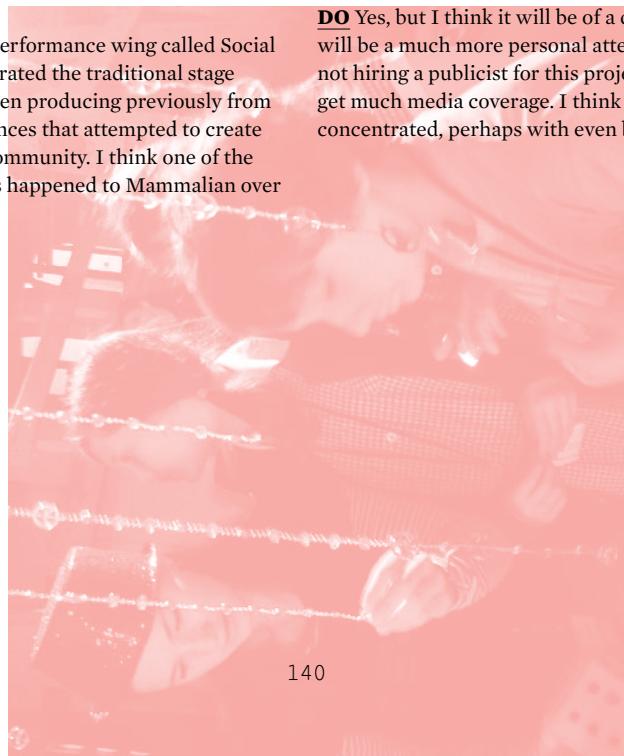
ND Mammalian introduced a performance wing called Social Acupuncture in 2003, that separated the traditional stage works that the company had been producing previously from the new, event-based performances that attempted to create these moments of utopia and community. I think one of the most interesting things that has happened to Mammalian over

the past few years is that there isn't the same need to create this distinction. We are already doing this. All of our work on stage, one-off events, or performance art works are being driven by this single vision; an attempt to create environments, situations, and moments between individuals, communities, and groups who would never have the opportunity or interest to engage with one another because of socio-economic, cultural, or generational differences. I also think that we strive to be critical, pedagogical, but I would disagree, our work is absolutely entertaining. And fun.

DO I think one of the biggest challenge to this way of working is simply coping with the lack of attention we're going to receive, and coming to terms with working behind the scenes, rather than publically but, that said, the way through has been a shift in scales and intensities so that, for example, in an upcoming project, the visibility will be scaled down but also intensified with the youth meeting and connecting with some very specific people who are strategically chosen for their ability to make stuff happen at the level of the city. I think it's also a maturing of our that makes this shift possible; personally, I'm confident in the value of the work, and don't need the kind of superficial validation I used to; working more "behind-the-scenes" means being able to engage more directly, specifically, and meaningfully because general audience accessibility is not a concern.

ND What? Lack of attention? I don't see how ingratiating Toronto's top artistically-, socially-, and politically-minded figures into inviting a group of kids to their public events, homes, and VIP parties to see how the top brass function, and makes things happen in our city is particularly "behind-the-scenes." We're going to be watching the "behind-the-scenes," backroom deals, but the kids will be directly engaging and lobbying to make change. We will most definitely be in the public realm, and I would expect a lot of attention.

DO Yes, but I think it will be of a different order in that it will be a much more personal attention; for example, we're not hiring a publicist for this project, and I don't expect to get much media coverage. I think the attention will be more concentrated, perhaps with even bigger impact.



MAMMALIAN DIVING REFLEX, CHILDREN'S CHOICE AWARD, MELBOURNE THE JURORS DISCUSSING CANDIDATES' PERFORMANCES, 2009. PHOTO CREDIT: MARTIN WURT, WORKINGPHOTOS.

ND And, I'm not sure that I would agree with your statement about maturing, or seeking a less superficial means of validation...

DO Hahaha, yes, well, I'm speaking quite personally there. I was trained and worked as an actor for the first few years of my career, and seeking superficial validation was a big motivator for me. You've always been much more sophisticated.

MJ Is there a particular emblem or figure that you think about when defining your role to other institutions? For example, some artists think of themselves as parasites, interlopers, magpies, hunters, etc.

DO I like to think of myself as a social impresario, a producer who conflates the role of the social worker with that of the opera impresario. Currently, art and culture are often being deployed for a couple of contradictory reasons. On one hand, you have art as grease for economic wheels with large-scale, city-wide events that are intended to generate an image of the city as a happening place and tourist magnet. On the other, artists are being asked to glue a torn social fabric by working with marginalized communities and youth, creating ameliorative events that make the world a better place. These two imperatives – greasing the economic wheels, and gluing the social fabric – rarely occur together in any meaningful way. It's understood that the young participants in the community-based, spoken word workshop, for example, are not yet ready for the mainstage of the large-scale, international performance arts festival. I'm interested in ways to conflate these two imperatives by gluing the grease, bringing the community into the spectacle of the big tent, and hauling the venue of the big tent to the realm of the community. The social impresario is the guy who can do this. It would be as if PT Barnum focused his efforts on generating social capital, rather than piles of cash. Barnum's notion of profitable philanthropy provides a good model, but, in my case, the profits that accrue are more supportive and comprehensive social networks that, inevitably, profit everybody involved.

ND And the social impresario needs a producer and a company with funding to do this. Mammalian does this.

DO Well, in this formula there is also a conflation of the artistic with the production, which, in our case is true. You, as artistic producer, are totally engaged in the artistic side, and I, as the artistic director, focus on concerns that, in a more traditional model, would be considered more "producerly." In this case, we're both social impresarios.

MJ Darren, you've mentioned several times in writing and in conversation that you are self-conscious about the fact that as a single white guy playing with kids you will appear as a pervert or pedophile. To assuage people's anxieties you create excuses or armatures that legitimate playing with kids. Can you elaborate?

DO Some of our work directly questions stranger danger paranoia, so I, perhaps, shouldn't be surprised at some

people's response, I am. I've made the mistake of assuming that our critical position is obvious, and that the concern we're intentionally triggering should be seen for the paranoia that it is, but that's a pretty serious misunderstanding of the dynamics of paranoia on my part. I've been defamed on blogs and we had to threaten legal action, verbally attacked for simply standing around outside the school with a couple of girls, waiting for their parents to pick them up, and strangely prurient articles written that question my mental fitness, and my assertion that I want to be friends with children. It's really fucking crazy out there.

ND No one has ever once questioned my intentions working, eating, or walking around with kids as a single white female. It points to the absurdity of trust, suspicion, prejudice, and fears that people project onto other people. It seems that when a writer has nothing critical to say of the company or our projects, the gossipy, attention-getting, mudslinging comes out.

DO As I mentioned before, the projects sometimes have a primary intention that is not stated, and that the publicized objective is one that is easier for people to accept. I don't feel like the publicized aspects are excuses or armatures, but just that they're secondary; but it just so happens that I'm much less interested in creating art than I am in triggering atypical social dynamics; but, there are no funding bodies dedicated to that, and to do that without the gossamer shroud of art would just end up confusing people. Using the appellation of art provides a nice magical cloak that allows slightly strange activities to occur: children cutting hair, university professors slow-dancing with students, adults talking to kids at a public pool, providing massages for large groups of First Nations people, etc.

ND Art offers the tools and space to evaluate, critique, and offer alternative solutions for what is happening around us. It, and what we try to do with our performances, offers the general public the possibility of a moment of seeing something from a new perspective, or the safety of space – physical, social or mental – to question their thoughts, assumptions, and fears, and for a brief moment, try something new.

MJ Some ethnographers and theorists suggest that a precondition for allowing experiences of make-believe play is the fact that they are temporally delimited, and do not, thus, threaten the rest of life. The "boundedness" of this experience is, in fact, what allows one to suspend normative judgement and behavioural restrictions. Art can function in this way as well, but especially for those in socially engaged practices, the "bleed" is the part that is sometimes the most important. In printing, a "bleed" refers to the part of a printed material that exceeds the margins to ensure the desired effect. "Bleed," of course, also refers to blood, and invokes associations with fresh wounds. In your (physiological) analogy of social acupuncture — a method of injecting discomfort to alleviate

pain in the long-term — you also talk about people's general discomfort of discomfort. Can you say more about this role of the acupuncturist? How your art projects offer and respond to discomfort?

DO I think of social discomfort as analogous to conceptual confusion. When you're trying to raise your conceptual intelligence you have no choice but to endure moments of confusion: a newly encountered math problem needs to be puzzled over for a moment, or even something as banal as figuring out how to secure a shelf to the wall requires a little confusion (I'm currently being flummoxed by some home repairs). Similarly, when social intelligence is being addressed, and one is moving into new circles or, for that matter, is the first to arrive at a dinner party at a new acquaintance's place, you have to endure some discomfort and awkwardness in order to get anywhere. So the discomfort generated is not a particularly invasive one, but it's one that's not usually associated with works of performance. The kids and adults who met each other during *Eat the Street* had to endure this but, for the most part, it got sorted out, and most people were able to transcend it. Obviously, the more dinners you attended the easier it became, with a few individuals coming to almost all the dinners, and becoming close with some of the jury. It's nothing special really, but I think there is something interesting and unique about a perspective that views that kind of awkwardness as something to seek and foster. No pain, no gain. You don't develop new social muscles without feeling the burn.

MJ We have spoken a few times about the outcomes of your work, and how, after the gesture, you wonder how these subversions affect life outside that experience. Can you describe some of these "by-products?"

DO Yesterday, geographer Heather McLean, who works with Mammalian, and I attended a Tibet community picnic, through an invitation that I managed to finagle from some of the kids I work with at Parkdale Public School. One of the kids, thirteen-year-old Samten, recently moved to another school, and told me how she told her new friends to google her, and they found photos and references to her from *Haircuts by Children*. She said the fact that she was on the Internet spread amongst the other students, and everybody was quite impressed. I was happy that the project generated some social capital for her, and hoped that she and her classmates experienced a small ontological shift, realizing to whatever tiny degree that their actions can sometimes affect others, and that they can occupy a meaningful symbolic place. It's so important to me that these kids in my neighbourhood — many of whom, like this girl, are relatively new to the country — understand that there are people (me) here who care about their well being, and are willing to invest time, energy, and resources to make their transition even just a little easier. The social capital we were able to facilitate for Samten was very exciting to hear

about, and was an affirmation of our goals. But it's certainly not all about altruism; one long-term objective that I'm very curious about is the possibility of generating some future collaborators, with the hope that eventually these kids will inherit Mammalian Diving Reflex. This idea is one very strong motivation; I'm very curious to see if this is achievable, and it gives me a really interesting and concrete goal for the next twenty years. But in the immediate, I engage in this kind of work because I want my neighbourhood to provide me with the Sesame Street experience: I want to walk around and bump into kids who I've worked with; I want to be invited to picnics; I want to disappear into the multitude, never to be heard from again.

ND I think that the impact is far greater than social capital for teens, although that can never be underestimated. "Inherit," I think is the wrong word, but, perhaps, points to the utopic visions of the company. We're a non-profit, charitable organization. One just simply cannot, by law, inherit us. That said, we have maintained a commitment to Parkdale Public School since 2006, and we have had the good fortune to become close with a number of the kids and families from the neighbourhood, to the point that we can go to them directly to participate in our projects, and we no longer need the legitimacy of the school as an institution. The idea that we can continue fostering our relationship with these kids, work with them, develop projects, engage their interests in the arts, in their own ideas, to the point that they can become collaborators, interlopers, instigators of their own artistic practice, under the rubric of Mammalian or not, is something definitely worth working toward.

Following is an excerpt from the contract developed by Mammalian Diving Reflect to hosting art festivals ensuring diversity of the participating youth:

"In order to ensure that the artistic and political intention behind THE CHILDREN'S CHOICE AWARDS is realized, it is imperative that 50% of the children who participate in the project are members of visible minorities.

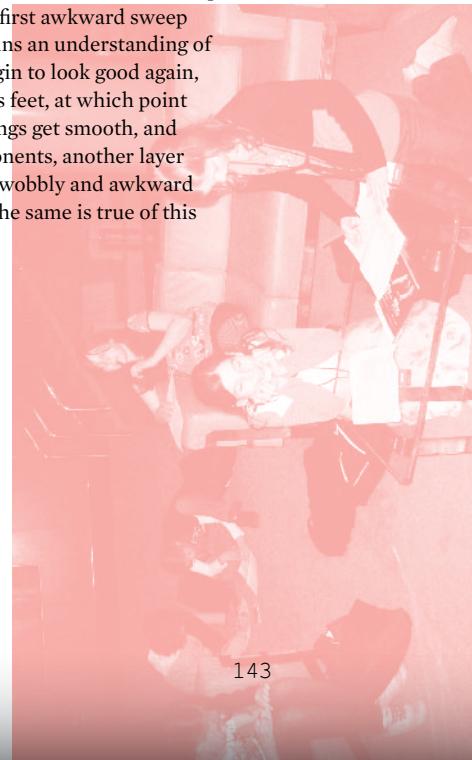
'Visible minorities' refers to new immigrants to the city, lower income families, or Aboriginal communities. We're interested in furthering the artistic intention of the work by also visually articulating the political intention, by highlighting power structures at play, not only between the kids and the adults, but between the less privileged or new immigrant youth and the typical arts/theatre audience that is predominantly white and middle class. Do you think this would be possible? Or would you have any concerns with this? Should this not be possible, THE CHILDREN'S CHOICE AWARDS may not be a good fit with your community. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns. ●

EXCERPT FROM SOCIAL ACUPUNCTURE: A GUIDE TO SUICIDE, PERFORMANCE, AND UTOPIA

by Darren O'Donnell

Social acupuncture offers the opportunity to directly engage with social flows, applying the same principles as real acupuncture, only the terrain is the social body instead of the physical body.

Like real acupuncture, social acupuncture can be uncomfortable, but this is a good thing. The dispersal of holding patterns, of energetic excesses and deficiencies, will usually generate discomfort, the social equivalent of confusion, a necessary part of any learning process. The feeling of the needles during acupuncture can vary. It can just plain hurt, like you'd expect of any needle. But more often the sensations are of a whole other order; the needle can feel heavy, and almost nauseating at the point of entry; it can feel electric, the sensation traveling the length of the nerve; it can feel kind of itchy. It can also reproduce the sensation you are trying to eliminate by getting acupuncture in the first place, just like a shoulder massage can initially hurt but lead to a more relaxed state. Analogous sensations and effects are felt with social acupuncture. The social awkwardness and tension it generates can feel stupid, the projects seeming to constantly teeter on the brink of embarrassment and failure. As any system experiences a shift into higher complexity, there will be a time when it feels like there has been a drop in understanding, dexterity, or control. For example, in the traditional play development process, there is the moment when the writer hands the script to the actors, and has to endure their first awkward sweep through the work. Once the group gains an understanding of the movement of the piece, things begin to look good again, until it comes time get the show on its feet, at which point things feel bad again. This passes, things get smooth, and then it is time to add technical components, another layer of complexity that yields yet another wobbly and awkward transition where things feel stupid. The same is true of this work in the social sphere. ●



143

MAMMALIAN DIVING REFLEX. CHILDREN'S CHOICE AWARD, MELBOURNE. THE JURORS MAKING THEIR FINAL DELIBERATIONS AND CASTING THEIR VOTES. 2009. PHOTO CREDIT: MARTIN WURT, WORKINGPHOTOS.

EXCERPT FROM ON PERFORMANCE FABRICS

by John Seely Brown and John Hagel

Performance fabrics [are] key enablers in organizing and orchestrating process networks. Performance fabrics underlie shared meaning and dynamic trust – without these elements, loose coupling would quickly unravel, and process networks would disintegrate into rivalries. Performance fabrics and loose coupling enable not just the effective coordination of geographically distributed business participants, but also the rapid building of capability across enterprises. We call this concept “leveraged capability building” to indicate that, no matter how effectively any individual company builds its own capabilities, it will push its performance to new levels faster by forming partnerships with companies with complementary specializations. Building capabilities together requires a more systematic understanding of the mechanisms that enhance performance across broad networks of participants.

When people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and skill sets engage with each other on real problems, the exchange usually generates friction – that is, misunderstandings and arguments – before resolution and learning occur. Often, this friction becomes dysfunctional; misunderstanding devolves into mistrust, and opposing sides fixate on the distance between them rather than their common challenges. Yet, properly harnessed, friction can become very productive, accelerating learning, generating innovation, and fostering trust across diverse participants. Our view of productive friction relates to the concept of “creative abrasion” as originally defined by Gerald Hirshberg, director of Nissan Design International, and richly developed by Dorothy Leonard, in *Wellsprings of Knowledge*. These early descriptions of creative abrasion typically focus on opportunities for knowledge building at the work-group level within the enterprise. In contrast, our discussion of productive friction focuses on opportunities for capability building across specialized enterprises within process networks. We also believe that the notion of productive friction can help shape new approaches to strategy. In the business world’s relentless quest for efficiency over the past

several decades, most executives have become conditioned to believe that all friction is bad. After all, wasn’t a frictionless economy the nirvana promised to us by the dot-com visionaries? Friction was a sign of waste, and needed to be rooted out wherever it reared its ugly head. Perhaps we have been too hasty in dismissing all friction. Perhaps we should learn to embrace friction, even to seek it out and to encourage it, when it promises to provide opportunities for learning and capability building. We need institutional frameworks that can help foster productive friction, and the learning that comes with it, rather than the dysfunctional friction that we too often encounter in large corporations around the world today.

Performance fabrics can help make friction productive rather than dysfunctional. Yet, performance fabrics alone cannot create productive friction. Some additional elements are required. We will focus on four elements – performance metrics, people, prototypes, and pattern recognition – the four P’s.

In this context, the design of business processes can significantly increase or reduce constraints. Traditional, hardwired business processes can coerce the participant by over-specifying actions and constraining solution spaces, whereas loosely coupled business processes can remove such constraints by specifying the performance results for each module, rather than specifying the activities within the modules. Thus, loosely coupled networks enhance the potential for productive friction.

“Action points” are generally required to make these performance requirements tangible and immediate. Productive friction occurs when participants must act together, perhaps introducing specific products, addressing performance shortfalls, or resolving breakdowns in operations. Without these concrete action points, people can too easily produce abstract and general answers or perspectives that imply action, but actually hide profound disagreements or misunderstandings. Friction occurs precisely because participants can no longer conceal their differences, and must surface them to move forward.

Productive friction depends on effectively mobilizing people with relevant specialization or perspectives. When productive friction extends beyond a single enterprise, the people who must problem solve often come from very different institutional backgrounds, and possess dissimilar skills. Increasingly, customers interact deeply with vendors in an interaction that generates new insights and innovation at both the product and the process level... Executives should recruit "translators" and "knowledge brokers" who can bridge the knowledge gaps between the various participants. In general, people engaged in productive friction must develop a deep, textured understanding of, and respect for, the relevant context for innovation, as well as each others' specializations and experiences. ●

RESPONSE BY ETIENNE TURPIN
AND DT COCHRANE

The purpose of business is control with a necessary counterpart in resistance. Resistance generates friction, an unavoidable aspect of all machines. For business — a commodification-machine — the greater the friction, the greater the need and potential for commodification. Without commodification there is no potential for accumulation, and without accumulation, business dies. As it relentlessly churns through social creativity in the quest for commodification and accumulation, business generates its own toxic creations, the management text not least among its discounted byproducts.

Advocating "art-washing," business gurus expect to prove wrong the claim that "performing arts possess a built-in resistance to consumerist totality." Proving people wrong, especially artists, isn't too difficult with armies of lobbyists and lawyers. When AT&T used images of iconic American monuments being draped in orange fabric for a 2010 ad campaign — an undeniable reference to works by Christo and Jeanne-Claude, especially their installation, The Gates, Project for Central Park, New York City, 2005 — they had the insolent genius of ending their commercial with the disclaimer: "The artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude have no direct or indirect affiliation or involvement with AT&T." "Art-washing" is lamentable not simply because an industrious pursuit of novelty becomes ubiquitous and meaningless mediocrity, but because artists do not have a similar sense of creative humility. Is it not time that artists, especially those who develop relational works by adapting basic commercial transactions to create compelling events of social engagement, put out their own disclaimer for "business-washing" their art? "The Harvard Business School has no direct or indirect affiliation or involvement with Mammalian Diving Reflex."

JOHN SEELEY BROWN

THE BAKED APPLE: ON THE NEW YORK POST “SPECIAL EDITION”

On November 12, 2008, *The Yes Men*, in collaboration with Steve Lambert, and with the help of thousands of volunteers, distributed eight hundred thousand free copies of a newspaper resembling The New York Times. The “Special Edition” newspaper and an accompanying website bore headlines such as “Iraq War Ends – Troops to Return Immediately,” “Nation Sets its Sights on Building a New Economy,” “USA Patriot Act Repealed,” and “Maximum Wage Law Passes Congress,” which envisioned a near future of corporate environmental responsibility, a bolstered economy, national health care, and more. Published one week after Obama’s victory, but with a future date set to July 4, 2009, each article in the paper reminded us that if we wanted Obama to be the President we would have to elect him to be — we had to take to the streets to make it happen.

The Yes Men’s most recent parody — produced in collaboration with climate activist Susan Alzner, editor and publisher Colin Robinson, lead writer/co-editor-in-mischief L.M. Bogad, artist/activist Andrew Boyd, producer Natalie Johns, designers Daniel Dunnam and Kelli Anderson, cartoonist Cristian Fleming, and many others, spoofed the New York Post daily newspaper, and on September 21, 2009, blanketed New York City with eighty five thousand free copies distributed by over two thousand volunteers. Its distribution was one day before a UN summit, where Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon was urging one hundred world leaders to make serious commitments to reduce carbon emissions, in the lead-up to the Copenhagen climate conference in December 2009.

Some articles published in the thirty-two pages in the New York Post “Special Edition” involve original investigative reporting, such as Deutsche Bank’s investments in airlines, coal mines, oil companies, and recent investments in coal trading despite the seven-story “carbon counter” in central Manhattan that presents an image of an ecologically-concerned corporation.

Other articles draw from many existing and already published sources to draw attention to the catastrophic effects of climate change. In an article entitled, “Pentagon top brass warn: Act now, or pay later with ‘lives’,” a statement issued by Peter Ogden, chief-of-staff to the State Department’s top climate negotiator, draws correlation between climate change, and security and geopolitical challenges. Another article in the fake Post cites

INTERVIEW WITH ANDY BICHLBAUM (THE YES MEN), L.M. BOGAD, AND ANDREW BOYD

Ban Ki Moon, who states that the world has “less than ten years to halt (the) global rise in greenhouse gas emissions if we are to avoid catastrophic consequences for people and the planet,” adding that Copenhagen is a “once-in-a-generation opportunity.” In the fake Post’s cover story (“We’re Screwed”), new attention is pointed towards a previously-released report by Mayor Bloomberg’s office that anticipates the deleterious effects of climate change on New York. All reporting in the spoof newspaper were carefully fact-checked by a team of editors and climate change experts.

Cartoons, ads, gossip columns, and editorials convey the seriousness of global warming for New Yorkers (heat waves, coastal flooding, strains on the energy grid), and point towards the disproportionate effects of climate change on poorer parts of the world (famine, mass migration, water shortages, conflicts) that threaten geopolitical security. The fake Post also, however, offers both practical and parodic alternatives for denizens to redress climate change. Classifieds point towards resources, workshops, media outlets, and rallies. An ad whose headline reads, “Sex – Why travel? (You just wanted to get laid anyways, right?)” highlights the unnecessarily destructive and wasteful way in which modern life is organized.

This interview examines the New York Post “Special Edition” as a media intervention, bringing together artists and activists, that focuses on an ecological issue, and reflects on the aesthetics and rationale of parodies.

Merve Ünsal What is it about the *New York Post* — I mean, that particular newspaper — that made you want to spoof it? Is it something about their demographic, their particular stance on ecological issues that you wanted to address, the *Post’s* unabashed use of puns for headlines, or...?

L.M. Bogad We worked with the *New York Post* because it has the widest readership in New York City. So it has the power to reach so many people, yet it does nothing about the greatest threat that humanity has to face right now, which is climate chaos. It definitely reaches a lot more people than the *New York Times*.



NEW YORK POST

Page Six

MONDAY, SEPT. 21, 2009 / Sunny, 72° / Weather: P. 26

★★ EARLY CITY SPECIAL

www.nypost.com

FREE



WORLD LEADERS SLIP ON UN SUMMIT SLOPE

PAGE 6



WE'RE SCREWED



NEW YORK FIGHTS BACK!

Over a hundred world leaders will try to tackle climate change tomorrow at the U.N., but they won't be interested in tackling each other.

Bad news for the rest of us, you bet. But the good news? New Yorkers are fighting back in all kinds of ways... and we're setting an example for the rest of the country.

Continues on Page 5

**What you're not being told:
Official City report predicts
massive climate catastrophes,
public health disasters.**

SEE PAGE 3

THIS PAGE, 149, AND 150: PAGES FROM THE NEW YORK POST "SPECIAL EDITION," 2009. PRODUCED BY THE YES MEN IN COLLABORATION WITH CLIMATE ACTIVIST SUSAN ALZNER, EDITOR AND PUBLISHER COLIN ROBINSON, LEAD WRITER/CO-EDITOR-IN-MISCHIEF L.M. BOGAD, ARTIST/ACTIVIST ANDREW BOYD, PRODUCER NATALIE JOHNS, DESIGNERS DANIEL DUNNAM AND KELLI ANDERSON, CARTOONIST CRISTIAN FLEMING, AND MANY OTHERS.

Andrew Boyd The other reason we hit the *New York Post* is after *The New York Times* and *International Herald Tribune*, it was the last paper left standing in New York. We had hit *The New York Times*, and we wanted to hit something else for the Climate Summit, and the *Post* was the next best thing.

Bogad It is definitely the nature of the stunt that you can't hit the same thing twice. We just couldn't do *The New York Times* again.

Marisa Jahn I'm, on the one hand, self-conscious about asking you about the *outcome* of *The New York Times* "Special Edition" because the question can seem to instrumentalize art towards outcome-focused political objectives. I also think that the value of artwork is its ineffable quality, and it's capacity for raising irresolvable questions.

On the other hand, the capacity of your work to influence political will is a strong element in the work that you three respectively do as performance and media interventionists. With that caveat in mind, then, I would like to ask you about some of the responses or outcomes of the *New York Post* "Special Edition"? For example, has it forced politicians to qualify themselves, restate their positions, reposition their findings, or...?

Bogad I don't know of any such specific responses that the *New York Post* spoof provoked. But, during the pre-Copenhagen climate summit happening in Brussels, we gave our fake *International Herald Tribune* out to all these delegates on their way into the meetings. What I heard back from Greenpeace is that you had these delegates going into these meetings, holding up the fake *Herald Tribune*, saying "This is the kind of news we need to create. The prime minister of Denmark was given one. I don't know if he addressed this publicly. The *Herald Tribune* news was post-dated for December 19, 2009, the day after the Copenhagen summit, with all this happy news about how mass civil disobedience had forced the world leaders to do the right thing on climate change and save our futures. It was still this *New York Times* kind of project, and this ironic, artistic artifact that was used to be provocative. It spurred activists in the trenches, and they could further the joke, and listen to the joke at the heart of the artifact. We were giving them this artistic artifact to work with as they confronted people in authority.

A Boyd Our ignorance about the results of what happened with the *New York Post* shows that it did not work. We could say that the news from the future idea, *The New York Times* Project, as well as the *International Herald Tribune* prank were more sticky. The idea of news from the future became a stickier prank. It was prophetic. It had much more of a distance, a critical distance, from the originals. It was more attractive, more provocative in that way. That's why the *New York Post* was not that effective.

Bogad We even thought of the *Tribune* as a promotional tool for beyondtalk.net. Beyondtalk.net is a website where you can log-on and sign up for practical action, to become a part of fighting climate change, including getting arrested for non-violent civil disobedience. Or you can give money so that somebody else can do it.

Many of the articles in our *Tribune* mentioned beyondtalk.net. The website really does exist. It's an organizing tool. The newspaper was an incredible practical device to promote the website as an organizing tool. We're mixing the future (newspaper with tales of our future victories!) with the present (website that enables you to sign up and help make those victories a reality). The website, and the action it helps organize, will help get us to the future we want to see as shown in the prophetic, prefigurative newspaper. We mentioned beyondtalk.net in a few articles in the *Post*. It was the collective idea that was different.

MJ There is something very satisfying about the logic of parodies: the aesthetics are determined by the "host"; a mastery of the host's aesthetic and message is exactly what becomes subversive. Achieving this logic requires a dialogue between "their" mindset, and the alternative. Larry, as one of the lead writers who also played an integral editorial role in these newspaper spoofs, I imagine that you must, by now, have a very intimate relationship with the different editorial voices. Can you talk about the process or rationale governing the appropriation of the *Post*'s editorial voice? Was it an easy mode to fall into?

Bogad The collective seems to agree that I was really internalizing the voice of the *Post* writer.

A Boyd That's correct. Larry had it, he was breathing it. It came very naturally, and he's a very dangerous person because of that.

Bogad If you're analyzing what that's about — it's a pseudo-populist take — an anti-intellectual, suspicious, and aggrieved person who is cynical in all the wrong ways. I feel that a lot of that voice is actually a put-on, but they actually pay professional writers there to adopt this pseudo-populist put-on like the newscasters on Fox News. So getting into that writing style and worldview, this technique of writing, and saying well, rather than agree with what they are aggrieved by, what if we turned this around, detoured this, and that voice was instead highly aggrieved and self-righteous about an actual ecological threat to our survival.

So, we asked ourselves, what are the elements that will remain stable for our purposes, and what are the elements we want to show moving differently? Linda Hutcheon wrote about parody as repetition with a critical distance. I would say you also need a critical difference — a difference you've chosen to focus on to make the parody work.

A Boyd Have we coined a term for that particular kind of parody or is it a generally type of parody? It's not the usual kind of parody... is that a common/standard or unusual type of parody?

Bogad Give me a counterexample.

A Boyd Well, the *Onion* is a parody of news, but it's at a higher concept level in a way. One kind of classic *Onion* parody is that they are making huge noise about something that's really

mundane and trivial; huge headlines blare to make something seem as if it is news when it's not.

Bogad Right, but the reason that works is because it's in the exact same graphic style as the *USA Today*. They have the same charts and style, but the headline and content are absurd or trivial. Steven Colbert is different; he's not just doing parody, he's doing wild satire, which is related but different.

MJ Well if we have a spectrum of parody, we have on the one hand something that is married and tied to the language of the hegemonic Other. On the other side, we have something that begins to become autonomous, like Colbert. It's become its own thing because it's complex enough. But for the *Post*, you have to stay close to the language of the *Post* to garner its readers.

Bogad There are many differences between this kind of project and what Colbert is doing... the *Post* is a one-off printed artifact that will soon be thrown out (or saved as a lefty collector's item). Whereas Colbert is doing a wild satire in which each segment is saturated and each segment is distinct. His project goes on and on, there are different ongoing shticks.

MJ Yes, when a project is serialized, then you can sophisticate the language and parody. You have more leeway to keep hooking in your reader or viewer.

THE YES MEN

Andy Bichlbaum Larry, do you agree that the *Post* was mostly not funny; whereas *The New York Times* was funnier?

Bogad Yes. For *The Times* we were soliciting content from so many people that it was really wildly bizarre, loose, and loopy. The collective decision was to rein it in and make everything fact-checkable, real science. The idea was that it would be more effective because we were simply making a point; to make it as sound as possible, in order to give it more power in a certain sense. It's just like the *Post* in style, but the critical difference is that, unlike the *Post*, which doesn't talk about climate change, our *Post* is actually covering that story with the intensity and focus that it deserves. We did this to call attention to the UN Climate Summit that was starting the next day in New York. So, strategically, that was our timing and message. This made it so that a lot of the humor was taken out. It was a sacrifice. I think if you look around in the *Post* you'll find some funny elements, but...

A Boyd I mean, even the headline, "We're Screwed," is funny, but not "funny" funny.



Bogad Yeah. If you look at *The Times* and the *Tribune*, it's funny in a very pointed way. Here's an example of what's not funny in the *Post*. We had a real story of a Pentagon report about how climate change threatens national security. It's an important article, and I wrote it up in *New York Post* style with a little bit of warmth to make it flow here and there, but the logic was that a *Post* reader who respects the Pentagon might listen to what they say about climate change. So it was a leveraging device at the expense of being funny.

Looking back, part of the *Post* was intending to attack the massively funded claims that deny climate change exists. So, this pointed attack was the source of this compromise.

A Bichlbaum Also, there was a challenge, to convey real, solid science in language anyone could understand, and in ideological terms that might not be ours. That was the main reason we chose the *Post*: because it had the clearest style for conveying horrible truths, and reached an audience that didn't believe in those horrible truths. Could we speak to those who usually believe the lies about climate change, in their own terms, and convey the seriousness of the situation?

It was a challenge, and I think we succeeded, at least in tone and content, although not necessarily in reaching as many people as we'd have liked. I guess that would have only happened if the media's imagination had been sparked by it the way they were by the fake *The New York Times*.

MU What did you learn from this spoof?

A Boyd What did we learn from this project? For example, this was not nearly as successful as *The New York Times* and *Herald Tribune* hijacks. In the *Post*, there wasn't as much distance as there is between the everyday police blotter news and the news from the future, which was large, prophetic, and impossible, yet desired. The first two ones were bigger in human scope somehow. In the *Post*, by focusing on something that the newspaper normally doesn't focus on, it wasn't as notable. Also the target audience for this project was *Post* readers, and I'm curious how far into the news articles those readers got. So here was a conceptual disconnect or poor design. I mean, who is really going to quote this newspaper as a factual source?

Bogad Yeah. Also, our *Post* is not very believable because every single article is about the same subject: climate change. Real newspapers don't do that. This was something we talked about during the process.

MJ Well, this connects to a previous conversation when Larry and I were discussing Reverend Billy's run for mayor, his campaign was more successful when he wasn't trying to be accountable, when he was being his ridiculous self —

A Boyd Yes, when he was being his prophetic, amazing, soul-changing self. Larry, this is an issue you are dealing with all the time when you are investigating electoral guerilla interventions. The ridiculous and provocative art form, when it becomes real, loses something. It's like shaving off the edges to make it fit into a very prosaic form of an election. It's the difference marking the two kinds of performance — a vote-getting performance, and an artistic performance.

Also as a media stunt, the *Post* didn't have the same attention-grabbing elements surrounding it.

Bogad Also, the fact that the *Post* was the third fake paper we did; you have to expect less reaction than, for example, the *Times*, which was the first one.

A Boyd Well, also *The New York Times* is the "iron lady." It's at the very top of the food chain in terms of print media, and has the air, and attitude, and kind of thing that people like to see taken down a notch. I mean, you do the prank on the guy that wears the crown. When you do the prank on the lieutenant it's not the same.

Bogad Also there was more international coverage with *The Times* prank because, unlike the *Post*, *The Times* is an international newspaper. In *The Times*, we went after Bush, which the rest of the world took joy in; they hated Bush so much. We went into the *Post* with far lower expectations.

A Boyd I think your point that it's a self-parody is an interesting one. How do you parody something that's already a self-parody? We took their ridiculous language and voice, and made one very important content shift. But it's harder to recognize something that's already a parody. They were already in the gutter, and we couldn't take them down there — we were trying to raise them up, and that's a hard move to do — to raise something up rather than knock it down. For the *Post*, the effect we had was more of a poke in the eye rather than a knock down.



Bogad Well, also, we weren't trying to make fun of the *Post*; we were trying to get this message out about climate change in a rather earnest way. I'm not sure if that saved us because we didn't make a big deal of mocking the *New York Post*, which you point out wouldn't have been that effective anyways, but it did rein in a lot of the wild humor. In the end, our policy shifted to emphasizing education, or edutainment, rather than entertainment, which was an important decision.

Bogad In *The Times*, a lot of the focus was on the stunt-like aspect of the project. In theater, we call that "earning the moment." It's used to describe a climactic, dramatic moment, but it has to be preceded by high quality, and powerful surrounding elements that lead up to it.

A Boyd They use that same term in the "how-to" dating books I've been reading.

MÜ Whom or what do you cite as predecessors to this project, and what have you learned from them?

Bogad As an extended affinity group, we are all learning from ourselves (praxis). We'll do one action, then adjust ourselves — sometimes in the wrong direction — and then discover that we've done things even worse. For example, in *The New York Times* project we learned what NOT to do in the ways we described previously. We then shifted diagonally, and worked on the *Post* project, which looks like *The Times* project, but was actually quite a different project. As a network or conspiracy of mischief-making artists, activists, we are constantly learning from each other.

MÜ Can you make a laundry list of things that you are moving towards?

A Bichlbaum Getting more people off their asses.

Getting more people onto their feet.

Getting more people to make trouble.

Getting more people to apply pressure of any sort to our leaders.

Getting more people to fight for change.

Getting more people to fight to end corporate lobbying.

Getting more people back onto their asses (when they're sitting down in a Senator's office in protest).

That's all. ●

THE YES MEN



TOURISTS IN THE QUEUE FOR STUDIO AUDIENCE AT
GOOD MORNING AMERICA IN TIMES SQUARE PUZZLED
AT FAKE NEW YORK POST™ SPECIAL EDITION. PHOTO
CREDIT: ERIC FRANCIS / PLANET WAVES — BOOK OF
BLUE PHOTOGRAPHY

BILLY VERSUS BLOOMIE

ELECTORAL GUERRILLA THEATRE IN NEW YORK CITY

by L.M. Bogad

“...There is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension, which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths.”

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,
from “Letter From Birmingham Jail”

*“Start spreading the wealth, I’m hoping to stay
I came to live my life here, New York, New York
Those neighborhood shops, they call out my name
Don’t need no supermall, in old New York
I want a city made of five hundred neighborhoods
Where we can pay decent rent, buy a home if we should
Those billionaire blues, they cannot compete
The greatness of this town, it’s on my street
I made it here, ain’t moving anywhere
It’s up to us, New York, New York.”*

— Reworked lyrics for *New York, New York*, Reverend Billy’s campaign song

Commuters fill a subway car on the F Line in New York City. They focus on their own internal and intimate mental space as a coping mechanism in the crowded space — reading the paper, staring at the floor, listening to iPods... Suddenly, as the doors open at the next stop, a tall man in a blue jacket and minister’s collar — with the voice, cadence, and pompadour of a televangelist — enters the car, along with a dozen disciples in choir robes.

This man is running for Mayor of New York.

He wants to represent the hopes and aspirations of the beleaguered neighbourhoods — ordinary working (and unemployed) people, shopkeepers, straphangers, artists, everyone threatened by gentrification, the oligarchy, and the current economic crisis.

He has forty-five seconds to speak before the train reaches the next stop.

People, I’m Reverend Billy. I’m running for Mayor on the Green Party ticket. What’s happened to our city? All this corruption! Michael Bloomberg is spending three hundred thousand dollars a day on his own re-election. What is that doing to democracy? Well, THIS is democracy! We’ve got it right HERE. We’re talking and listening right now! Please, take our literature!

The choir starts to sing a populist reworking of the old favorite, *New York, New York*, and gives out campaign literature. The train stops, the doors open, and the Reverend and his flock exit, enter the next car on the train, and do it again.

They do this at every stop on the F line. Miles of campaigning, in a no-budget whistle-stop ride, as an attempt to interrupt the *hegemonologue* of Mayor Bloomberg’s inevitability — not only the inevitability of billionaire Bloomie’s bought-and-paid for election victory, but the perceived inevitability of his ideology and everything he stands for: technocratic oligarchy, the corporate approach to running this city as a financial fiefdom.

Bill Talen is the performance artist-activist who created the character of Reverend Billy and the anticonsumerist Church of Stop Shopping, in the late nineties. The Church, which has changed its name in the current economic crisis to the Church of Life After Shopping, has made many dramatic, disruptive interventions in Starbucks, Wal-Mart, Disneyland, the Disney Store, and other chain stores around the world.¹ Talen’s director and partner, Savitri D, co-conspires in the dramatic conception and shaping of Reverend Billy and the Church’s actions and interventions.

Now, in the depth of the economic crisis, in a city where Mayor Bloomberg has proven almost omnipotent (including his successful end-run around the law to wrest the right to run for a third term), the Reverend and his Church are running for Mayor.

The subway whistle-stop tours serve as a metaphor for the overall Reverend Billy campaign: how its members

REVEREND BILLY AND MEGAPHONE. PHOTO CREDIT:
BRENNAN CAVANAUGH, 2009.

envision their role, and what they hope to achieve. With no TV cameras present, this hardly seems a practical strategy for reaching and preaching to as many people as possible in an effort to win office. However, it fits perfectly with this group's poetic approach to politics. They embrace the personally transformative value of such a grueling effort, and what they themselves learned by engaging with so many different New Yorkers:

Savitri D *The subways have been a highlight. We did a marathon. I appreciate the drama of the effort, doing the entire length of the F line, Jamaica to Coney Island — really transformational. It was hard. We saw so many different kinds of people at so many times of day — that was educational. It's a liminal space. People are used to being interrupted there, but they're surprised when people don't ask for money — unless they're proselytizers. It's very intimate, no police, no ads interrupting — a strangely unmediated place.*

Bill Talen *We're interrupting dream states. It may be their only time to be alone, between home and work, sitting on the F train. I feel grateful to be permitted to share that.*

Savitri D *It's a closed space, you can't get out. Our action is framed by the opening and closing of the train doors. No cops. It's so democratic. It's just us. A bunch of humans, no way out. You have to work it out. If someone were to say "Quiet!" we'd have to work it out.*

Talen and Savitri D clearly appreciated the quotidian sacredness of the subway space in the rhythm of ordinary people's lives, and didn't take lightly their own intervention into that space. But they aspired to create — both in the form and content of their own electoral performance — a kind of direct democratic engagement that would stand in stark contrast with the "real" election, a lopsided and purchased affair, occurring at great distance from the lives and agency of the average city voter.

This essay will examine the ways in which the Reverend Billy campaign theorizes and strategizes itself, as a wholly different performative phenomenon from the conventional political campaign. It is a campaign which seeks emotional and dramatic affect upon its own members and the inhabitants of New York, in an immediate, unmediated sense, defying conventional strategy, embracing the ineffable, and engaging the imagination with sincere, personal connection/confrontation and dialogue as the ultimate form of and hope for democracy.

Billy Versus Bloomie: Archetypes Collide in Gotham

Like Batman and the Joker in Gotham, Reverend Billy and Mayor Bloomberg seem custom-made to clash symbolically in New York's swirling world of politics, especially in this particular moment of economic crisis. As Mark Read, long-time New York activist and Action Engineer-in-Chief for the campaign, observed:

This campaign takes place in a moment of a collapse and crisis of capitalism. Reverend Billy and the Church have always been about questioning the inevitability of this system, calling people to reimagine their own role in it, and to question the legitimacy of it. Bloomberg, a billionaire, is a kind of champion of Wall Street, the only billionaire that has not lost money in this crisis. He is the cheerleader for hyperdevelopment, hypercapitalism, and hyperconsumption. The idea of the campaign would be to pit these two characters in opposition to each other, thereby questioning the authority of the story that we're told about how things work, the inevitability of markets, of infinite growth, and of Bloomberg's third term. The inevitability of all this — what's possible and what's not possible.

The architecture of the meta-narrative always needs to be reinforced. So if we're talking about gay marriage, or gas drilling, or whatever, we need to come back to that clash of archetypes. One, representing that smug, everything's under control, everything's working fine, there is no crisis, Bloomberg point of view; the other saying, "hold on!" This whole system is ruinous on every level — to our souls (which is why he's a televangelist preacher), to the planet, to relationships — it's just a tragedy. The best way to call attention to that tragedy is, in this case, comedy. We need to keep that story in mind. Right now, this economic crisis provides the perfect backdrop for that story, that conflict, to play out.

Bloomberg's successful maneuver to repeal term-limit laws so that he could run for a third term was unpopular, even though most New Yorkers accept his victory as inevitable. Meanwhile, Bill, Savitri D, and the Church of Life After Shopping have built — in the last ten years of nonstop performance and activism in the city, and with the release of their film, *What Would Jesus Buy?* — a reputation and profile in alternative performance and community organizing. Their success is reflected in the coverage that they have received in the neighbourhood and by the alternative city press, and even by *The New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*.? This would suggest that a campaign that played on the great meeting of archetypal opposites between "Billy" and "Bloomie" as matter and anti-matter, could provide a compelling narrative that would motivate many New Yorkers.

However, there is an incredible disparity in resources between the two — imagine the Joker with the Pentagon backing him, or Batman with a great costume but no gadgets. Bloomberg the billionaire is spending tens of millions of dollars

of his own fortune on his re-election campaign. The media market in New York City is so expensive that it precludes any purchasing of airtime on radio or TV.

Savitri D This is a city where, unless you have a lot of money, you can't do marketing and advertising — so we're talking basic analog kinds of communication. Mark Read set up our own radio station in which we talk, and have regular New Yorkers talk about what's happening in their neighborhoods. We need a community telling their stories, to get people into a room together talking, and amplifying those voices. That's the great hope.

The danger remains that the whole Reverend Billy campaign could remain invisible to most New Yorkers, even if the intrepid team exhaust themselves completely from the effort.

There is also the difficulty of running for office as insurgent, rebel artists. The entire structure of electoral campaigns seems custom-designed to absorb and co-opt as much radical energy as activists can muster. It is a format ill suited to the exuberant, visionary energy and style of the Church of Life After Shopping.

Bill Talen The theatrical conventions of this political campaign — of politics, period — are very conservative, very narrow, very repetitive — it's just a series of five or six gestures, five or six poses — it's absolutely conservative, and so, we're ignoring that. I'm saying "no" to candidates' forums, because you can spend all your time trying to keep up with the demands of a traditional campaign. We want to blow this [format] up.

Indeed, the conventional candidate's body is so regulated that presidential candidate Howard Dean was delegitimized by whooping to his supporters at a rally in 2004. With that one expression of emotion, his entire, heretofore, viable campaign collapsed.

Savitri D voiced her own frustration about the challenges of doing election work, as opposed to community organizing and agitation:

Activism, and being inside a candidacy are totally different things. When you're an activist you're in an oppositional stance. You're generating things, of course,

but essentially, you're pressing on the law, pushing laws, advocating. When you're running for office, you are inside the law, inside an arcane system of rules. The brittleness of that position cannot be overstated. How it affects the imagination, the vision of the candidate and the team, the community. You need to make sure there area couple of people taking care of that, and then ignore it altogether because it is really damaging.

The observer begins to wonder why the Reverend, Savitri D, and all the organizers and volunteers of this campaign are doing what they're doing. Why not just continue to do their usual performance activism? Why engage with such a problematic format as the election campaign? What is at risk, and what is to be gained?

Keeping Score: What are the Goals?

This entire campaign is an example of what I call "electoral guerrilla theatre" (Bogad, 2005) — an attempt to use the trappings and dramatic structure/infrastructure of the election campaign, not to win office, but to leverage a radical socio-political critique to a wider audience. Talen argued that the election, at this historical moment, offers a special opening to engage with people who might otherwise ignore the Church: "The horserace narrative of politics is a strong compelling motivator, and I think that Obama's victory brought that possibility to life, even though he has been such a disappointment." Savitri D. and Talen went on to talk about what they hoped they could accomplish with the campaign.

Savitri D We hope to leave a communication network in place, a channel for future activism — a knowledge, deep education for ourselves. That's one of the ways that we can win every day as we're losing — losing all our money and energy...[laughing], falling apart piece by piece...we hope we can break open the democratic process in New York a little bit, although that's harder to evaluate. We're doing this as a promise to the future — that we defended democracy now. That's the kind of story-making that is kind of ineffable, but that when history looks back at this time in New York City, and it will not look favorably, they will see that there was a group of people that were trying.

Bill Talen This is a Tammany Hall kind of period that history will not regard favourably. We are making images and texts, bringing many different kinds of people into public space together, singing, and saying things together. The media that is closest to political change is embodied media — people in public space where they exercise their First Amendment rights together. We've settled into a groove now where we have a series of events in public parks every Sunday; local activists from around that park come, we introduce them and they talk about their work, we sing and everybody brings food, and people



REVEREND BILLY KISSING BABY ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL. PHOTO CREDIT: BRENNAN CAVANAGH, 2009.

meet each other, strengthening relationships within that neighbourhood.

So, in part, the artist-candidate team wants to use this format to engage with New Yorkers across the whole city, people they haven't reached before in their years of agitating, leveraging the campaign format to get new people involved, and make denser activist networks and human connections for future action. They also hope to transform themselves by learning more, through direct experience and interaction, about the city in which they live. They are writing a story with their campaign, an exemplary tale of radical defiance in a Gilded Age gone sour, that will perhaps be written about in some future iteration of the *People's History of the United States*. These are hardly traditional campaign goals, but they line up very well with those of electoral guerrilla antecedents such as the Kabouters, Joan Jett Blakk, Jello Biafra, and many others (Bogad, 2005).

Mark Read expressed a similar desire for the campaign, one of encouraging people to reimagine their very lives outside of neoliberalist capitalism, and with more local autonomy and agency:

"The Rise of the Fabulous Five Hundred Neighborhoods" is the campaign motto. There's some hope to construct or encourage an ethos of local control where neighbourhoods and local communities begin to assert their own decision-making power. Systems for that actually are in place already, and they just need to be grasped by local communities. This campaign isn't a community organizing effort, but it is an idea that people can have agency, take control, and have some say in how their lives are managed. If that idea gets in there, that this sort of top-down politics is not the way out of this problem. The way to solve this crisis is not more top-down solutions. The way to solve these problems is locally, looking to one another. Figuring out the best way to support each other, to create a fabric of life, a web of life. That's the real base note of the campaign – it's about local control, autonomy, decision-making. If that gets into people's heads and it begins to activate or take root in some way, then the campaign has done a real service.

With these goals in mind, what complications and challenges occur? Cutting straight to the chase, Savitri D voiced a clear problem:

"We're trying to figure out how to explode the election, because we know what it is to enter a structure and explode it. That's what we've been doing for years. But to do that with a candidacy, that's hard. It's much harder than doing it with corporations. I'm not sure why."

Indeed, this task does seem much harder. There are several reasons for this. When the Church of Life After Shopping goes

into a Starbucks and conducts a joyous, disruptive, anti-chain store religious service, there is a clear action that provokes a clear reaction. The staff asks them to leave, the police arrive, the church members leave and/or arrests are made. A monocultural corporate space like Starbucks, or Disneyland, is a place for consumption. It is not built around dialogue, there's no pretense of this, nor are First Amendment rights protected on private property. It is a place for consumption and "appropriate" behaviour.

However, an election campaign is a process with dialogical pretensions. It is not one place, or a space with a built in counter-reaction that builds an engaging narrative of opposition. It invites participation, but then, without enormous financial resources or legitimacy, one's efforts are dropped into an apparently bottomless well. It is the challenge of simultaneously operating inside and outside of the system.

Another central challenge of electoral guerrilla theatre is that the very format of the election is top-down. To win, a cult of personality must be built around the central figure, the candidate. This is challenging to a group that hopes to embrace, enhance, and demonstrate, an egalitarian, communitarian ethos. The challenge is to tie an almost fictional campaign to a compelling narrative. Essentially, electoral guerrillas such as Reverend Billy pick and choose, taking some aspects of the election seriously (the issues at stake, the opportunity for contact with new communities, the drama of the race), and other aspects (the need to be "realistic," "respectable," efficient) not seriously at all. It is a complicated, exhausting dance (as the Reverend Billy wrote in his blog, the nonstop campaign actions gave him heart palpitations, and required a brief period of rest). But, the goal is to push the boundaries of what is possible in the imaginations of New Yorkers, to culture jam the hegemonologue with moments of defiant and joyous dialogue, to exalt the everyday talk and public spaces of a city under siege by corporatism. As Reverend Billy says:

Ordinary talk in the neighbourhoods, that's what's really fascinating. We're refugees from the theatre world, and yet we're finding that the clearest statement of inventive American radicalism right now is in the casual vernacular of the street corner, the bodega, the stoop, the bus stop. The people have been confronted by such an obvious collapse

of the corrupt economy, and the flamboyant clowns who fell from Olympus. We all watched that happen together, and now we're talking about it, and talking about it in a much different way than government spokespersons and commercial media, with their carefully constructed and lawyer-vetted language.

Yes, but what about *spectacle*?

It seems that there are three different kinds of action to be taken: a) conventional electoral events such as candidates' forums, which the Reverend has already ruled out; b) grassroots, communitarian, direct dialogue events and campaign tactics, such as the subway whistle-stop tour, and the neighbourhood park barbeques and gatherings, which have become the mainstay of this campaign; and, c) outrageous, disruptive, artful interventions in public/corporate/governmental events and spaces that could leverage a great deal of (outraged, amused, bemused) media coverage for the campaign. The latter types of interventions have been at the heart of the Church of Life After Shopping's activist work before the election. However, they have not been the emphasis now.

Full disclosure: I participated in an artist-activist brainstorming session for this campaign in June, at which we thought of more outrageous actions and political policy positions. We came up with a fun, ten-point platform, much like the platform of electoral guerrilla Jello Biafra when he ran for Mayor of San Francisco in 1979 — a combination of radical ridicule of the powerful, and earnest, progressive policies. When the editor of this volume (Marisa Jahn) suggested that the “ten points” be written up like Dr. Martin Luther’s “Ninety-Five Theses,” in acknowledgement of Reverend Billy’s religious status, I suggested that he actively dramatize that parallel by nailing the document to the door of City Hall. Such wry, nonviolent civil disobedience would certainly draw a legal and police reaction, which might yield media coverage for the campaign, and a public discussion of the issues at stake.

I do not know if this idea would work or not, but I do know why, for the first time, the Reverend and the Church have backed off from such arrestable, spectacular actions. Reverend Billy is certainly not afraid of such action; he has been arrested countless times in chain stores and city streets around the nation and beyond. Nevertheless, he told me that he had considered the whimsical-serious “ten points,” and being more outrageous in general, but that he was conflicted because he felt a responsibility to deeply engage with the new communities he had connected with during the campaign, and didn’t want to ruin that by acting so outrageously that it might alienate or embarrass those groups. Mark Read, acknowledging

the Jello Biafra platform, noted both the need for, and problems with, the spectacular, mischievous option:

“Interesting” is the only card Billy has — the only asset. We have to use outrageous street action to draw attention to our sincere, earnest, straightforward, and thoughtful website [<http://www.voterevbilly.org/>] — with our platform to make the city livable, healthy, vibrant. We only need the media for an initial burst of interest — to get people to our website so they can learn what we stand for. So, that should free us to be goofy out on the street — because once we get people to see the website, they will see that we are serious and thoughtful.

However, this kind of onerous burden of “being taken seriously” has felt like a straitjacket. There are still a lot of people in the campaign that will resist getting really wacky. I don’t know what Jello’s campaign was like, but I imagine it was mostly Jello, and his fans and friends helping him out. Billy is not beholden to, but is accountable to a community of activists who have really profound concerns about the way the city is being run, about the way that the world is, and they don’t want that to be all laughs and jokes. Even though the laughs and jokes can be the most effective way of getting the message out.

This is a classic problem for electoral guerrilla theatre: the difficult balance between whimsical and earnest engagement with a grimly serious ritual contest by which power is assigned and legitimized. Naturally, any campaign will have a coalition of different interests, ideologies, and styles. The need to be “taken seriously” sometimes outweighs the need to be noticed in the first place. Savitri D also acknowledged this problem, noting that there were “pragmatists” in the campaign who urged the Reverend and the Church to be “realistic” in their tactics, making Savitri think, “Wow, your imagination just collapsed, and you didn’t even notice.”

Savitri D’s advice for future electoral guerrilla artists:

Make peace with who you are, and remember that the professional politician did not always exist. Stop trying to fit into the shape and size of what a politician is. You need to come to terms with that before running. Even for us it’s been incredibly difficult to break through the restraint. Be free of that really narrow idea of what is realistic that’s just based on neoliberal democracy, this really shallow, narrow idea of “real.” I see it sometimes in radicals; they dismiss things that are not “realistic.” Well, where does the real come from? What’s the real? Where’s this neutral zero place where there is real? Is it Wall Street? Is it Mike Bloomberg? He has sixty billion dollars. Is that “realistic?” Is running New York City like a corporation “realistic?”

So, be clear, disciplined, and “realistic” about separating yourself from all that.

The campaign is far from over at the time of this writing. There are still about four months left before the election. And the campaign is already brainstorming new “ethical spectacles”³ to unleash soon. It will be fascinating to follow, and see how the Reverend Billy campaign balances the different kinds of actions to meet its goals, deepen its alliances and networks, and tell a radical story for the future history of this city.

Addendum

Since the publication of this book was delayed, I have the opportunity to discuss some of the actions that the Reverend Billy campaign took in the last phase of the campaign. The campaign made a deliberate push to the whimsical, confrontational, and spectacular.

On Halloween in New York City, there is a tremendous parade that marches through the Village. Tens of thousands of spectators line up to watch the brilliant floats and costumes (and the occasional participation of creative activists, such as the glamorous Perms for Permawar in 2003). This time, spectators saw Reverend Billy walking backwards, screaming for his life, and backing away from a swarm of about ninety “Zombergs,” zombies wearing Bloomberg masks. The Zombergs pursued him for the length of the parade, moaning and staggering, and trying to eat him. Savitri created the masks for the eighty or ninety Zombie-Bloomberg. Occasionally, Reverend Billy would be pushed into the crowd, and he would shout at the police, “You have to do something! Help us! These people have been mayor for CENTURIES! They won’t DIE!” According to Billy, the police got the joke and laughed, as did many in the crowd. The idea of an undead politician, immortal,

but feeding off of the people, resonated in an absurd way, and perhaps, was also a swipe at the zombie-like acceptance of many voters towards Bloomberg’s victory.

But before then, on October 13, an intervention which made a large splash in regional media was Billy’s interruption of Bloomie at the one and only candidate’s debate in front of a public audience, between Thompson and Bloomberg (as a minor-party candidate, Talen was not invited to participate in the debate). The debate was held in El Museo del Barrio, and there were a few hundred, mostly working-class protestors outside, herded by the police into the confining “protest pens” that have become the unfortunate custom in the city.

Savitri and Talen brought with them a nine-foot tall facsimile of Bloomberg out of plywood, that they had created for this event. Savitri held it up by its handles in the back, taking up a position outside of the protest pens. The pair then invited the protestors to dare leaving the pens so that they could come up to “Bloomberg,” tell him why they were upset with him, and throw a shoe at him in protest. Talen and Savitri had thoughtfully provided a large heap of shoes for this very purpose. Many people took them up on their offer. As Talen said:

People made wonderful speeches before throwing their shoes – about losing their homes, about being unable to afford daycare for their children – heartbreaking and angry speeches. Many really made exaggerated throws, too, lifting their legs in the air like baseball pitchers.

It felt good to offer to people the option to leave the pen. You had to step outside to participate. And then they would get into it. New York One, Channel 9, all carried this image. (Talen 2010)

This participatory performance, an edgy reference to the Iraqi man who threw his shoes at President Bush, turned a somewhat dreary and overregulated-as-usual protest into an opportunity for people to express their personal dissent and anger.

Reverend Billy then went into the Museo building. Police officers who had arrested him in Starbucks asked him why he was there, and he showed them his ticket. His full, neon-blue, pompadoured televangelist drag attracted the attention of ear set-wearing private security officers, who shadowed him as he took a seat in the fifth row.

Billy’s first plan had been, once inside, to throw his shoes at the Mayor. However, to avoid jail or worse (who knows if these Blackwater-type private bodyguards would open fire?), that idea transformed into the outdoor shoe-throwing event.



SAVITRI D., DIRECTOR OF REVEREND BILLY & THE LIFE AFTER SHOPPING GOSPEL CHOIR, MASQUERADE AS BLOOMBERG AND REVEREND BILLY. PHOTO CREDIT: BRENNAN CAVANAUGH, 2009.

Billy watched as about six hundred people gathered, and he prepared himself:

I got to watch how the elite gather, people on the inside, they were so excited to be allowed in, ... Koch is there... the political ruling class is gathering, in very expensive clothes. I'm this glowing, out-of-place televangelist with my own contingent of Blackwater guys hovering over me... but the theatre of democracy is being satisfied.

My heart is beating ferociously, and I've got my heart medicine. I've finally realized that I'm fifty-nine years old...I've got my heart pills, I've been inside the world of heart medicine now...our hearts are supposed to be on a reggae beat, but for ten days last summer [due to all the strain of the campaign], my heart was on a rock and roll beat...

Mayor Bloomberg won the picking of straws, and was about to speak. Reverend Billy stood up and said, as can be heard on YouTube to this day:⁴ “Mike, what are you doing here? We voted for...term limits! Democracy is important! Eight is enough! Eight is enough!” Quickly, Billy was escorted out of the room by security, along with a couple of activists he didn’t know who had spotted him, sat behind him, and joined in when he started.

If you listen closely, there is a brief pause in his interruption. According to Billy, he stood up, said “We voted for –,” and then paused, frozen, drawing a blank, as sometimes happens to performers under pressure. People around him immediately rose to the occasion, and said “Term limits!” The public served as prompter, helping Billy out in a tough moment. Everyone knew how to fill in that blank, it was on everyone’s mind. This was a subtle but revealing moment – everyone knew what Bloomie was doing, but Billy helped them to say it out loud in the hall of power.

This interruption was heard around the world, but Bill wasn’t satisfied, and in fact, it was a troubling moment for him. He wondered why he didn’t jump on stage, interrupting the visuals of the live feed with the spectacle of Billy and Bloomie in the same TV frame. Part of the hesitation was a fear of being shot, of course, especially as he is a soon-to-be father. However, there was more to it than that, according to Billy:

I agree that change never comes in our society without some people risking their lives. That's standard Howard Zinn. I wasn't able to do that. Why? Because Savitri's pregnant? I was sort of lifted away from the rigor of my own radicalism by nine months among political people – constantly compromised, hedging. Savitri and I became taken away from us, our own game, and that manifested on that night.

I shouldn't have risked the famously nervous trigger fingers of the NYPD. I'm older. I'm about to be a father. But, I've always made my theatre out of doing things that

other people wouldn't do, like Abbie Hoffman. But on that occasion, I tiptoed on the edge. I interrupted from the fifth row.

Lost chances at martyrdom notwithstanding, Billy did manage to interrupt the “one hundred and eight million dollar man” – what every New Yorker would have wanted to do [Bloomberg ultimately spent that sum on his own reelection]. But it’s interesting that as a radical performance activist, he analyzed his own hesitation and relative moderation as the by-product of being immersed in electoral politics for nine months.

The final score? In conventional terms, the campaign’s achievements were significant, but modest. They collected eighteen thousand signatures in order to get on the ballot, the result of months of enormous effort by staff and volunteers, and well over the number needed. They collected fifty thousand dollars in campaign donations, with the average gift being about fifty dollars each from about one thousand donors.

Finally, on Election Day, Reverend Billy received about one percent of the vote.

Of course, these are not the only measures by which the campaign would evaluate itself. Talen said:

Mostly, we were glad it was over. We were taken out of our game, and by about halfway through the campaign both Savitri and I got very sick. We don't regret it – we were in the neighborhoods all the time, in the subways. Savitri saw a real improvement in my speeches – just through speaking to people so often – I've been getting to the point sooner. I trained with an opera singer so I could speak to large crowds without the need for a bullhorn.

(Talen 2010)

The Church of Life After Shopping carries on, leaving the electoral game behind, and setting up their mobile pulpit in a chain store near you. Savitri D and Bill Talen are turning their attention to issues such as gay marriage and mountaintop removal mining. They have come out of the campaign with a new affinity group of about fifteen very dedicated activists. “The Church has become larger. “We feel brave; we feel the calluses from the campaign. We’re still fundamentally all about keeping public space public. We will continue to resist militarism and consumerism.”

Amen! ●



LETTERS FROM THE CONGREGATION TO REVEREND BILLY & THE CHURCH OF LIFE AFTER SHOPPING

The Church of Life After Shopping is a radical performance community, with as many as fifty performing members, and a congregation in the thousands. They are wild, anti-consumerist gospel shouters, earth-loving, urban activists who have worked with communities on four continents defending land, life, and imagination from over-development, gentrification, and the imperatives of global capital. They employ multiple creative tactics and strategies, including cash register exorcisms, retail interventions, cell phone operas, and many other theatrical devices combined with grass roots organizing, and new media activism. In the place of a position paper, here below are few of many hundreds of letters written to The Church each year describing the influence of Reverend Billy and The Church's anti-consumerist, artistic interventions on an individual's life. By demonstrating the measurable effects of an artistic enterprise, they illustrate the commitment of many embedded art practices – the dedication to change over solipsistic artistic gestures.

These letters were written while I was working as a member of The Church as an outreach coordinator. In this role, Savitri D., The Church's producer, and I kept in close correspondence with many individuals flung far across the United States and the world who had seen The Church's recently released DVD, "What Would Jesus Buy?" Besides seeking anti-consumerist resources, they were also seeking to share.

— Marisa Jahn

2/3/2009

Savitri, Marisa, and all —

I would like to pass on a few things that have happened as a result of folks watching 'What Would Jesus Buy?' You may remember from previous emails that we showed it at church. Our associate pastor was very affected by the film and preached a sermon the Sunday before Christmas addressing the amount of money that Americans spend on Christmas. He went on to make some comparisons with what our church could do compassionately – funding new wells in Africa was the specific example that he used – if each adult in the congregation cut their Christmas buying in half. On the spiritual side of things, he compared what has happened to one of our holiest days of the year to the temple in Jerusalem being turned into a marketplace back in Jesus' day. It was too close to Christmas to have put a halt to the spending this year, but it was a great sermon. Sean's own extended family has given him a really hard time about what he's said. He's the one I mentioned in a previous email who was called cheap and accused of trying to ruin everyone's Christmas because he asked that they make donations toward a local non-profit rather than buy gifts. I know it was a direct result of having seen the movie, and I'm sure that Sean will be ready to lead our church in a different direction when the next Christmas season is approaching.

Our friends Andy & his wife Heather missed the movie night, but watched the movie at home a few weeks later. They were both really troubled by the notion of sweat shop and slave labor producing their clothing and have asked me for info. on where they can buy clothing produced in the U.S. Heather has also seriously gotten into knitting lately, knowing that at least she can make sweaters she can feel good about. This past Sunday a group of us were eating together when one of our friends excitedly announced that a Kohl's department store is being built in Granite City, where she lives. I didn't even have time to respond before Heather (who also lives in G.C.) said, "I like Kohl's, but after watching "What Would Jesus Buy?" I started checking the tags on their clothing. And sure enough, it's all made in places like Sri Lanka, Vietnam, India. I really don't like to think my clothes are being produced by people who are being paid almost nothing."

Another friend said, "Yeah, I bought a bunch of things on sale at Old Navy before Christmas, and after watching the movie I checked the tags. Same thing."

REVEREND BILLY DELIVERING A SERMON WITH
THE LIFE AFTER SHOPPING GOSPEL CHOIR ON THE
CAMPAIGN TRAIL (TIMES SQUARE) (ONCE KNOWN AS
THE STOP SHOPPING GOSPEL CHOIR). PHOTO CREDIT:
BRENNAN CAVANAUGH, 2009.

The friend who'd been excited about Kohl's said, "But then, what can you do? You can't buy anything. You'd have to make all your clothing to avoid that." That's when I spoke up and reminded her that I buy almost all of our clothing second hand, and also offered her a copy of the resources that you sent. Before Christmas, in one of these same "what shall we do?" conversations, I was able to tell a friend about a shop in St. Louis run by the Central Mennonite Committee that sells fair trade crafts from around the world, and she was able to buy some gifts there.

One other step that I think the movie helped to prompt, was that prior to Christmas we did some Christmas swapping for our kids. In other words, instead of going out and buying a bunch of stuff (tho' I confess we did some of that) amongst our friends, outgrown toys were passed along to different families. Our youngest daughter, Tess, got a hand-me-down toy chest for Christmas, and Darcy and Will received hand-me-down Leapsters. Tess didn't know, but Darcy and Will recognized the Leapsters as having belonged to their friends Hannah & Jerrica – and they didn't care! It didn't seem to interfere with their excitement over opening them at all, which surprised me, to be honest. I don't know if that's the sort of change you had in mind, but I'm part of a big group of friends with limited incomes & lots of kids. We are like family to each other, and it feels very right to me to see more and more sharing between families to see that everyone is taken care of. Children's clothing goes back and forth between families constantly. I saw a magazine article recently pointing out – as if it were embarrassing – that the younger Pitt/Jolie children wear hand-me-downs from the older ones. And???

Okay, this is long and I don't know if it's helpful. But I think we're slowly moving in the right direction, and you all have been a great encouragement in that. Up next, our family plans to start a garden this spring so that we can produce at least a portion of our own food. In April we're going to start a class at church (led by our friend, Andy) on getting spending under control. I think it will be a great avenue to intentionally continue some of these conversations.

Thanks again. I know these are just baby steps, but I hope that they provide at least a little encouragement in what you're doing. Do you all have a Facebook page? Think I'll search today to find out.

Sharon Autenrieth

11/11/2008

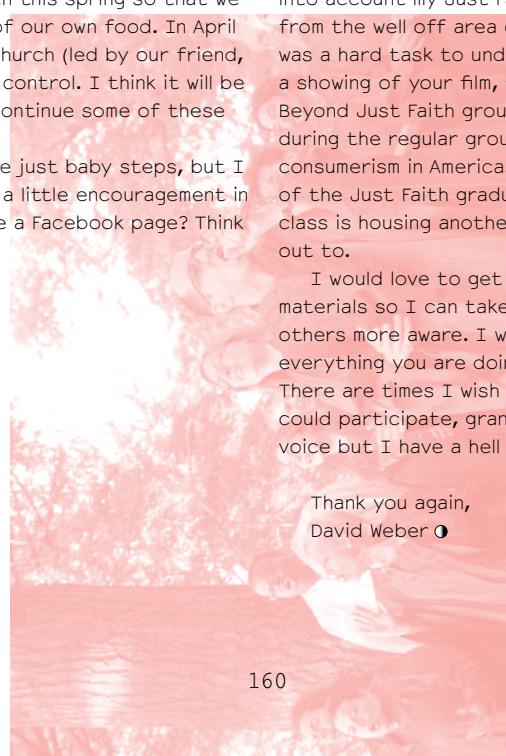
Hi Church,

For 10+ years my family and I worked at Walt Disney World. Granted to my parents it was a job that helped pay the bills. To me it was the beginning of a long journey to consumer awareness. I saw the awful things they did, learned of the awful work conditions in the manufacturing shops and witnessed first hand just how much profit they made while paying employees very little. From there I moved on to a small town named Deland just outside Orlando. There we had a nice quaint downtown where everyone knew everyone and if you were a frequent visitor to certain stores you were treated kindly and usually got the friend discount. About a year before I left there was a proposition to build a super Wal-Mart right outside of downtown Deland. I had learned of the travesty of Wal-Mart through friends and liberal papers distributed in Orlando. I knew what kind of havoc they wrought on small town America. I protested and protested and just when the protesters thought we had swayed the town council, they then pulled up to the lot in brand new cars to tell us all to go home that Wal-Mart had won. Downtown Deland has lost its spark from what I hear. I refuse to go back because of all of the dirty dealings that happened.

I moved to Raleigh, North Carolina where, though we were a red state till recent times, we are a liberal city. Here I was exposed to the 'High Cost of Low Prices' and took my stance against Wal-Mart to a new level. I also joined Just Faith through my church and learned about social justice issues around the world and here at home. Since then I have been spreading the word about how our advanced state of consumerism is wrong, how these big box retailers are devastating our towns. Now take into account my Just Faith group was affluent citizens from the well off area of Chapel Hill, North Carolina. This was a hard task to undertake. I have already proposed a showing of your film, 'What Would Jesus Buy?' to the Beyond Just Faith group and to facilitate a session during the regular group to talk about our out of control consumerism in America. There are currently 50 members of the Just Faith graduates still in the area and the new class is housing another 15 that I could get this word out to.

I would love to get a copy of the movie and the materials so I can take this to the class and help make others more aware. I want to thank all of you again for everything you are doing, your work is truly amazing. There are times I wish I lived closer to the group so I could participate, granted I do not have the best singing voice but I have a hell of a speaking voice.

Thank you again,
David Weber ●



MR. PEANUT FOR VANCOUVER MAYOR, 1974

Luis Jacob When was Mr. Peanut – your alter ego – born? How did Mr. Peanut first become “real” in the mail-art network, and in your performances and appearances in public?

Vincent Trasov In 1972, playing with persona and identity, I slipped into the peanut shell which I had made from papier-mâché, and effortlessly assumed the role of Mr. Peanut with elegance and aplomb. It seemed a sensible stance in an era preoccupied with the dematerialization of art. My interest in film animation had led me, in 1970, to appropriate the easily recognizable and simple-to-draw Planters Peanuts anthropomorphic named “Mr. Peanut.” First came the flip-book, which was later translated to film. These early efforts were realized at Intermedia, Vancouver, and before long, people were calling me “Mr. Peanut.” The name stuck.

Simultaneously, I was ideating with Michael Morris a *modus operandi* for bypassing the existing gallery structure by working directly with others in a network. The concept became known as “Image Bank” (now Morris/Trasov Archive), and was carried out largely by the postal system with a fake bureaucracy made up of rubber stamps, stationery, envelopes, postage stamps, annual reports, and much compiling of address lists and directories. Mr. Peanut took to the streets in 1972, with appearances in Toronto, Halifax, New York, Victoria, and Los Angeles. These appearances – besides being great photo ops – were intended to create the atmosphere of an “art city.”

LJ How did the idea begin, to have Mr. Peanut run for Mayor of Vancouver in 1974? What was the significance of having Mr. Peanut’s “empty shell” run for public office?

AN INTERVIEW WITH VINCENT TRASOV

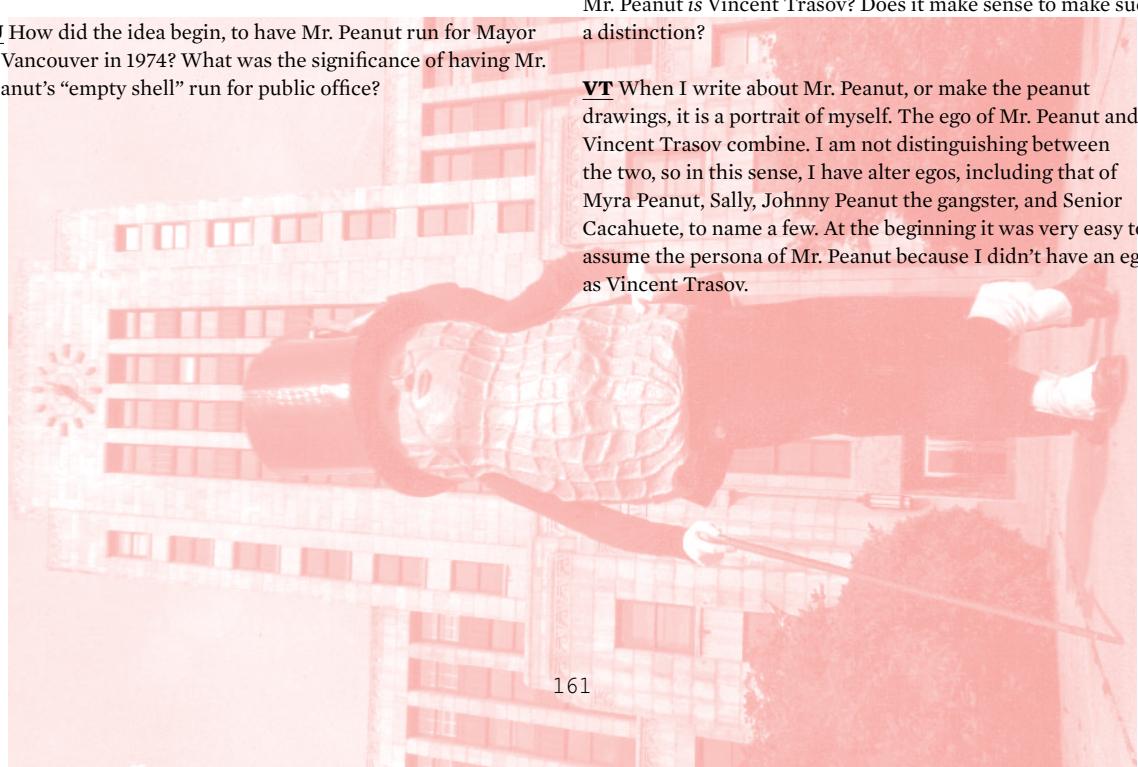
VT On the suggestion of fellow artist John Mitchell, I was persuaded to don the costume as a symbol for the collective aspirations of the art community, and run for mayor in the 1974 Vancouver civic election. Michael Morris provided the platform of the Peanut Party: P for Performance, E for Elegance, A for Art, N for Nonsense, U for Uniqueness and T for Talent. The campaign was a twenty-day performance, with John Mitchell as campaign manager and spokesperson. The author William S. Burroughs, a guest in Vancouver at the time, made the following endorsement of my candidacy:

I would like to take this opportunity to endorse the candidacy of Mr. Peanut for mayor of Vancouver. Mr. Peanut is running on the art platform, and art is the creation of illusion. Since the inexorable logic of reality has created nothing but insolvable problems, it is now time for illusion to take over. And there can only be one illogical candidate — Mr. Peanut.

Involved with the campaign was the creative input of the then recently-formed artist centres and groups such as Pumps, Video In, Blonde Warehouse, and Western Front Society. At the final counting of ballots, I received 2,685 votes, or 3.4 percent of the vote.

LJ Do you consider that Vincent Trasov is Mr. Peanut? Or, that Mr. Peanut is Vincent Trasov? Does it make sense to make such a distinction?

VT When I write about Mr. Peanut, or make the peanut drawings, it is a portrait of myself. The ego of Mr. Peanut and Vincent Trasov combine. I am not distinguishing between the two, so in this sense, I have alter egos, including that of Myra Peanut, Sally, Johnny Peanut the gangster, and Senior Cacahuete, to name a few. At the beginning it was very easy to assume the persona of Mr. Peanut because I didn’t have an ego as Vincent Trasov.



LJ People today are exploring personae online through the use of avatars, and, more broadly, through what might be called “personal self-publicity” in networking websites. Is Mr. Peanut similar or dissimilar to these recent manifestations?

LJ There are certain similarities to Mr. Peanut and today’s “personal self-publicity” in networking manifestations, just as in the way there are similarities to the networks that we helped to establish in the old days of correspondence art, and the writing of emails and creation of websites today. When I write emails it is in the spirit of correspondence art and remains personal. I hate sending the same email to all the people on my address list, and I hate receiving such stuff. I think it is more dissimilar, however. Illusion and reality were not separate. I was Mr. Peanut at home at the Western Front in or out of my costume, and Mr. Peanut when I went outside dressed in the peanut costume on an art city escapade. There was no division, as there is no division between art and life. I was interested in transforming the information, the media, into an art context, which is a life work. Nowadays, I know people, as an example, on Second Life, who don’t know how to make a cup of coffee. You don’t know your neighbours in reality, although you may know them on a social network.

LJ In 1974, when Mr. Peanut ran for Mayor, what was the connection between a persona and the realm of politics/publicity? Another way to put it: why run for mayor as Mr. Peanut?

VT The Mr. Peanut campaign was a media event, a creative collaboration with the media. The media understood what we were up to, and threw in their support for us. The last days of the campaign were euphoric, and I think if we’d had a few more days we might even have won the election. John Mitchell had

a determination and a vision, and saw the campaign as social sculpture in the manner of Joseph Beuys. The purpose was to give the citizen more strength, that he make his own decisions, rather than let other people make the decisions for him. It was very idealistic and subversive. We could unveil our ideas on art, architecture, city planning, and education. It was a desire to use art as a way to create social change.

LJ What actions in office would Mr. Peanut have taken on if he had won the mayoralty race? What would Mr. Peanut become in the move from “media image” to “political figure”?

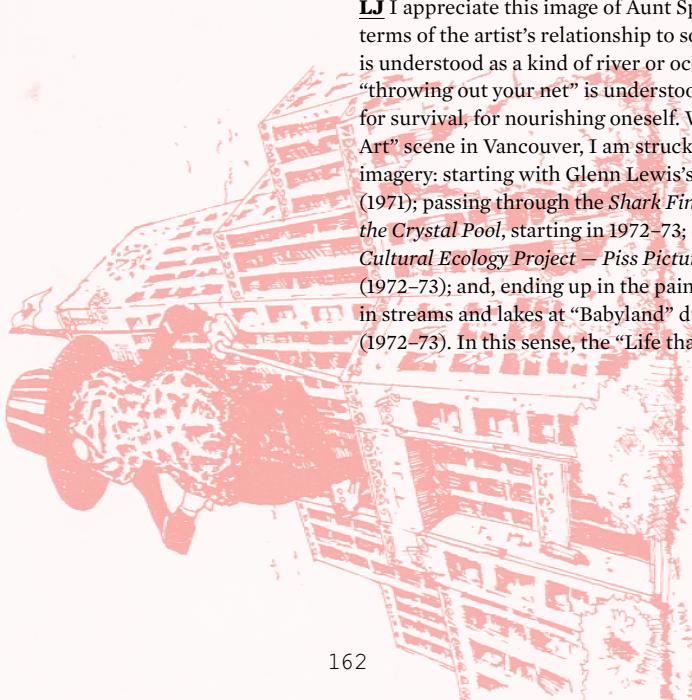
VT During the last weeks of the mayoralty campaign when we had the entire support of the Peanut Party from the media, Mr. Peanut did contemplate winning the electoral seat. I would have hopefully retained my identity as artist diplomat, which was part of the campaign slogan, “Life was Politics in the Last Decade. Life will be art in the next decade.” Perhaps it was fortunate I didn’t get elected so I could continue my career as artist/diplomat.

LJ I understand that, at the time, Mr. Peanut was part of a discussion of creating an “Art-City.” Can you describe the “Art-City” project with the projection kiosks around Vancouver? Can you talk about the desire among artists to branch out from the studios, and the galleries, out into the city streets, and more generally, about dissolving the distinction between art and life?

VT The distinction between art and life dissolves as we throw out our net, and draw in our life’s work. I think about the native British Columbian’s aboriginal myth of creation, and how the people learned survival. They observed all the different animals, only to discover they didn’t have the powers that animals had for hunting, etc. It wasn’t until they noticed Aunt Spider, and how she made her web to capture her food. This is how they learned to make their fishnets.

LJ I appreciate this image of Aunt Spider and fishing nets. In terms of the artist’s relationship to society, it seems that “life” is understood as a kind of river or ocean, and the activity of “throwing out your net” is understood as something necessary for survival, for nourishing oneself. When I think of the “Mail-Art” scene in Vancouver, I am struck by the prevalence of water imagery: starting with Glenn Lewis’s *Sponge Step Alphabet* (1971); passing through the *Shark Fin Swimming* gatherings at the *Crystal Pool*, starting in 1972–73; continuing in Image Bank’s *Cultural Ecology Project – Piss Pictures for Barbara Rose* (1972–73); and, ending up in the painted colour bars floating in streams and lakes at “Babyland” during *Colour Bar Research* (1972–73). In this sense, the “Life that sustains Art” (and which

A NEW MAYOR
A NEW ERA



1974
CIVIC ELECTION
VANCOUVER

art must approach and approximate) is something essentially flowing – it is flux.

This brings up an interesting question in relation to what happens when one captures something in the net. This is a question about institutionalization, which art in our culture is intrinsically bound up with: what happens to the stuff that once flowed, and now enters the museum, the archive, or the bank (as in an “Image Bank”)? What is the relationship between what flows, and what is deposited in an institutional context?

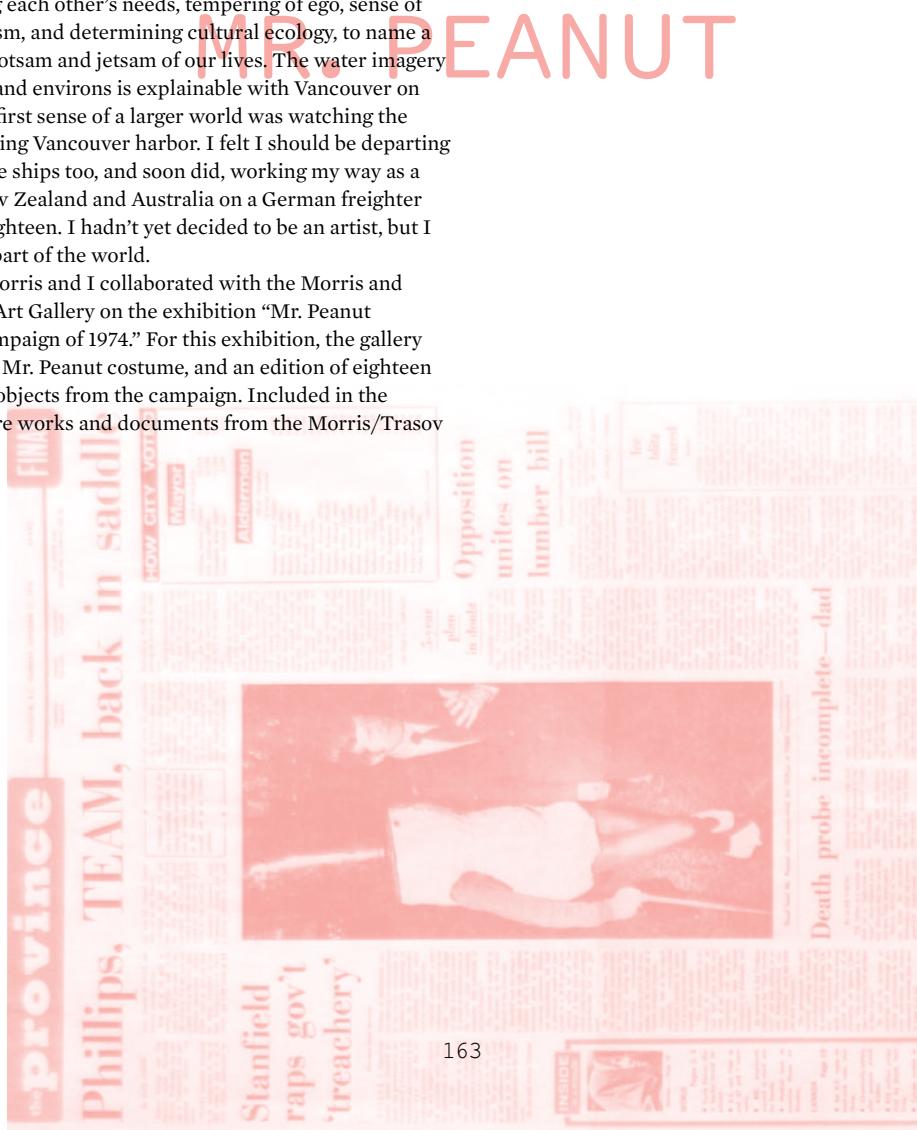
In a way, this suggests something about the mayoralty campaign. Through Mr. Peanut, Vancouver’s art community was able to cast a citywide net, and catalyze certain things into happening: dadaesque appearances in the newspapers, on television, a performance with the city as a stage. You describe not being elected as a fortunate thing. I wonder if this is because you suspected that becoming elected would have meant a reciprocal “getting caught in the net” of institutional politics? How do you imagine that an artist/diplomat could “keep the flux flowing” within the institutional context of City Hall?

VT Survival is more than just drawing in art with the nets. There are other fish, such as communicating with others, understanding each other’s needs, tempering of ego, sense of internationalism, and determining cultural ecology, to name a few. It is the flotsam and jetsam of our lives. The water imagery in Vancouver and environs is explainable with Vancouver on the coast. My first sense of a larger world was watching the freighters leaving Vancouver harbor. I felt I should be departing on one of those ships too, and soon did, working my way as a seaman to New Zealand and Australia on a German freighter when I was eighteen. I hadn’t yet decided to be an artist, but I wanted to be part of the world.

In 2001, Morris and I collaborated with the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery on the exhibition “Mr. Peanut Mayoralty Campaign of 1974.” For this exhibition, the gallery purchased my Mr. Peanut costume, and an edition of eighteen mixed-media objects from the campaign. Included in the exhibition were works and documents from the Morris/Trasov

Archive. You can make everything into a work of art by giving it a context. The latest list of publications and works in the archive is entitled *Legal Tender*. It is about establishing new currencies, and is part of the accession and database process that adds value to the entire archive. In the next list I will start with a unique (one of a kind) work in the archive, and include all the related material to it. Every item is important in the genealogy. The lists are poetry. Their importance is to account for everything. The archive is flexible in its openness to interpretation. The archive is, ultimately, about the relationship between us as artists, and culture.

The peanut campaign was an interdisciplinary collaborative event with the city as canvas, and Mr. Peanut as a visible monument. It was a watershed event that exemplified the artist’s utopian ideals of work in the public arena (art city). Image Bank, N.E. Thing Co., General Idea, and Western Front were in the vanguard of these activities, experimenting with persona, creating networks, and collaborating in interdisciplinary methods. The implications of these experiments have been a major influence on the development of media art, performative practices, as well as redefining the role of art and artist in contemporary society. ◉



“A NEW MAYOR A NEW ERA”; POSTCARD INVITATION TO CAMPAIGN BENEFIT; ROBERT CUMMING DRAWING INK ON PAPER; “MR. PEANUT AT CITY HALL”, 1974.

ISOTOPES AND A RADIOACTIVE MODERNITY

by Tejpal S. Ajji

The periodic table consists of different elements, each occupying a different position according to their elemental components. Deriving its name from the Greek words meaning “equal place,” isotopes are items that topologically occupy the same position within the periodic chart’s matrix but differ in terms of their electrons; in other words, despite their elemental sameness they can radically vary. Although some isotopes are stable, others exhibit radioactive properties – missing one or more electrons; they are unstable elements that then bind and charge atoms. Ajji’s concept of the radioactive isotope, which suggests metaphors of volatility, functions as a compelling lens for considering those artists whose work, embedded in institutional surrounds, appears as “as if,” but instead, irradiating their surrounds. The analogy between the embedded artist and the radioactive isotope also suggests that the artwork signifies contextually, and further, that its comprehension requires a close reading of the fluctuations in the equilibrium of a system. The following reflection was taken from Ajji’s text introducing an exhibition he curated at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery at the University of Toronto, from November 16 to December 30, 2007.

In mid-May 2009, Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. shut its Chalk River, Ontario, nuclear reactor after finding that it leaked radioactive water. The plant produced a third of the global output of the medical isotope *molybdenum-99*, the “parent” radioisotope of a gamma ray-emitting by-product named *technetium*. Used in nuclear medical tests to study the brain, tumours, and other blockages, the traceable lingering of *technetium* luminesces the opaque trappings of the human body with extraordinary potency before deteriorating. For a brief period, the isotope produces a product enabling vision – for data to be collected and pass through a patient’s body.² Ultimately, *technetium* is governed by a fate half-lived towards dissolution.

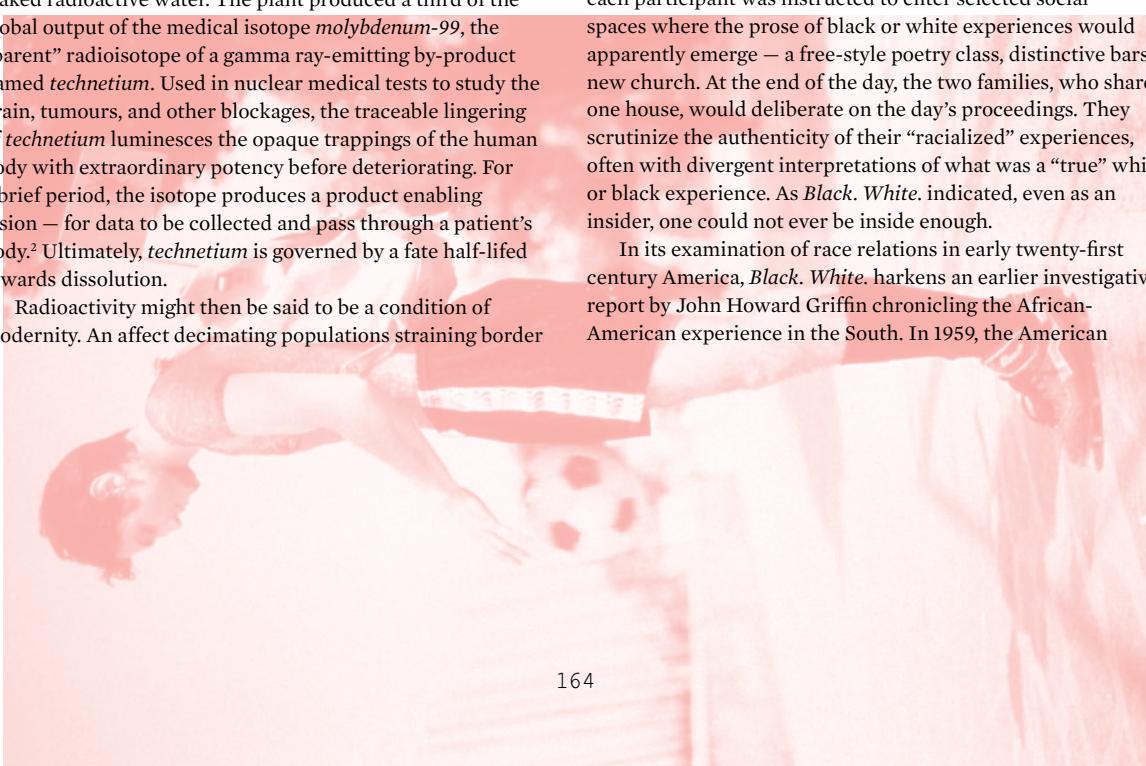
Radioactivity might then be said to be a condition of modernity. An affect decimating populations straining border

politics; a medical medium; a source of energy powering cities by steam-billowing power plants. It is a transformative and controlling force in comic books, such as the genetically-enhanced radioactive arachnid that bites Peter Parker (who transforms into Spider-Man), and the Kryptonite that keeps Superman at bay. It produces lasting mutations, and in the case of isotopes – can offer temporary scopic power. Radioactivity bears conflicting tendencies of rapid expansion and immediate deterioration: both catastrophic and medicinal, it offers a modernity that multiplies as quickly as it dilapidates.

The isotope is a chemical element distinguished by virtue of an added or removed neutron from its nucleus. Bearing a discernible mark or weight, it is specifically different while belonging, a variegated sameness. Some isotopes are unstable, and these tend to be radioactive, easily degenerative, and transgressive.

Two correlated experiments in fields of popular culture in the mediascape employ isotopic strategies, positioning the individuated body as the primary research or investigative tool. Modeled as ethnographic experiments, both are predicated on uncovering divisive conditions of a geographic locale. *Black. White.* is a pseudo-science reality program that, in 2006, aired on American prime time television. The program’s narrative was premised on “turning” an African-American family white, and vice versa. Staged in Los Angeles, and with the aid of makeup and prosthesis, each participant was instructed to enter selected social spaces where the prose of black or white experiences would apparently emerge – a free-style poetry class, distinctive bars, a new church. At the end of the day, the two families, who shared one house, would deliberate on the day’s proceedings. They scrutinize the authenticity of their “racialized” experiences, often with divergent interpretations of what was a “true” white or black experience. As *Black. White.* indicated, even as an insider, one could not ever be inside enough.

In its examination of race relations in early twenty-first century America, *Black. White.* harkens an earlier investigative report by John Howard Griffin chronicling the African-American experience in the South. In 1959, the American





journalist underwent an extreme medical procedure that turned his white skin black for seven months.

Griffin's auto-ethnographic travelogue charts a migration from observed distance to wrenching immersion. After awakening from a nightmare of being cornered by white men and women casting their disapproval of his transgression, sleeping in the home of a black family in Mobile, Alabama, Griffin observes: "I had begun this experiment in the spirit of scientific detachment. I wanted to keep my feelings out of it, to be objective in my observations. But it was becoming such a profound personal experience, it haunted even my dreams."³ Griffin staggers through his newfound blackness, which is continually reinforced within spatio-environmental segregation by interactions with white residents who, in part, define the meaning of his blackness. Whereas *Black. White.* offered its cast of families some escape during the evenings, Griffin was unable to withdraw from his newfound identity for the duration of his medical treatment. Illustrating this, Griffin recalls Lillian Smith's passage of a young black child in *Strange Fruit*, "I felt more profoundly than ever before the totality of my Negro-ness, the immensity of its isolating effects. The transition was complete from the white boy reading a book about Negroes in the safety of his white living room to an old Negro man in the Alabama swamps."⁴ Griffin's astonishing experience was published first in *Sepia* magazine, and later, as *Black Like Me*, a book first published by Houghton Mifflin in 1961.⁵

Aside from its function as a model for ethnographic analyses, consider the "isotopic" as an operating strategy for performative art practices that enable reconceptualizing the relations of power. With the isotope as its emblematic figure, artists strategically self-personify – harnessing cues such as costume, demeanor, *accoutrement*, historical artifacts, and symbols – to create identities, conscious of their position within a system. Meaning is effectively produced from the alteration of these systems, producing a new visible legibility of their circumscriptions.

In *Padiglione Clandestino* (1997), Sislej Xhafa strategically painted his body with the colours of the Albanian national soccer team uniform, and meandered through the exhibition grounds of the 47th Venice Biennale that, at the time, did not include an Albanian pavilion. The gesture confronted the nuances of international diplomacy at play in contemporary museal practices.

Camille Turner's *Miss Canadiana* is a self-heralded national beauty queen who proposes her blackness as a means to navigate the nationalism along the fault lines of race.

The Yes Men mimic the taglines, gestures, campaigns, and language of corporate multi-nationals. They isotopically

possess corporations through unsolicited participation at conferences and lectures, and through print, online, and televised media; they focus on the ethical dilemmas of an industry, and direct scenarios towards alternate means. In one skillful and acerbic attack, The Yes Men appeared at a petrol industry conference in Calgary, Canada, as Exxon Mobil executives with a business proposal for a "bio-fuel" called *Vivoleum*, produced from the bodies of those who have died from global warming.

In these examples, isotopic works are observed as often temporary strategies or instances within the artists' practices, and then later, those of participant "actors" and "researchers." The works evoked iconic self-transformations framed for a finite period resting in unique locations. As such, they resist instrumentalization and institutional co-option – however, the adoption of such tactics in *Black. White.* come close to producing a scripted methodology for such investigative methods – though in their revelatory moments, speculate a new formation or mutation of an institution of power. They proffer glimpses of information, allowing a means to re-evaluate stable institutional referents such as professional protocol, law, gender, and founding national/ethnic myths. ●

TEUPAL S. AJJI



THE YES MEN, JUNE 2007, EXECUTIVE INSPECTS
VIVOLEUM CANDLE; PHOTO CREDIT: TAVIS FORD
VIVOLEUM SCULPTURE IN THE LIKENESS OF REGGIE
WATTS; GEORGE FERRANDI

AND THE WINNER IS...

by Michelle Jacques

“...I feel like she’s another person. She’s not cynical and jaded like I am.”

On July 1, 2002 – Canada Day – Camille Turner crowned herself Miss Canadiana. As part of the fiction that she has created, there were other contestants, but they never posed any real threat. Turner is Miss Canadiana. She may have had to reach deep into her psyche to find that more optimistic, innocent part of herself, but with a tiara and floor length red gown, and over-the-top Canadian memorabilia to sustain her, she’s spent the past eight years making appearances at events across the country and around the world – sometimes invited, sometimes not – representing her country with the grace and goodwill befitting a real beauty queen.

“No matter how long I live in this country, I will never be thought of as Canadian.”

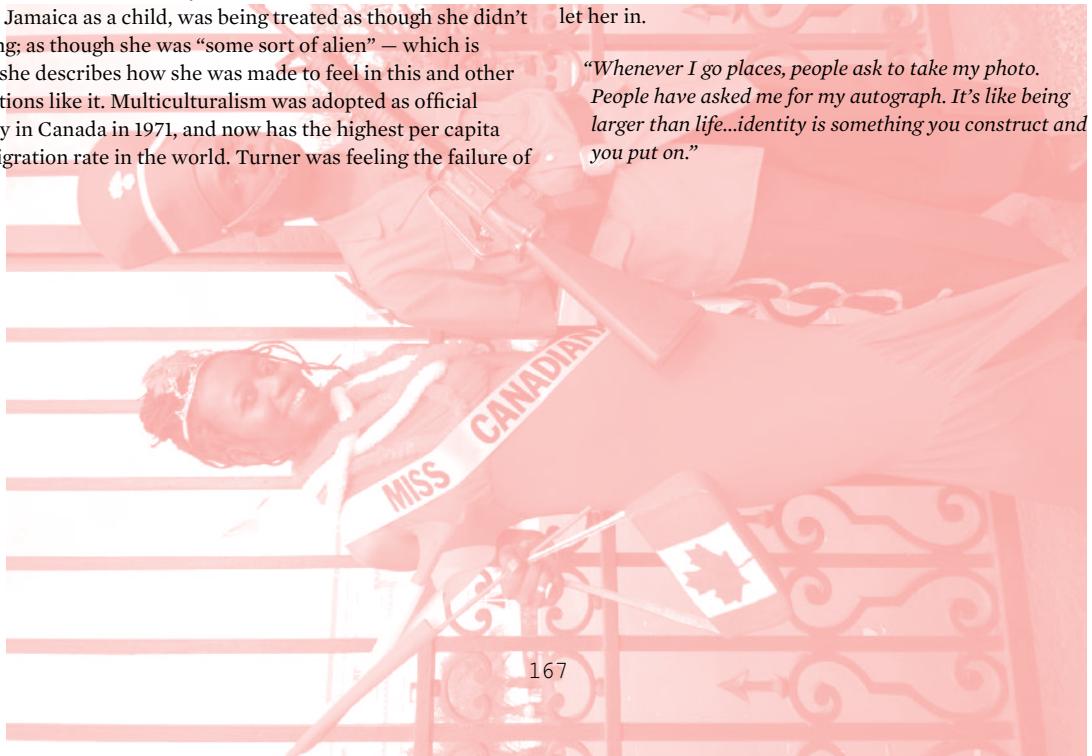
The idea for the performance came to Turner in a shopping mall in North Bay. Having stopped there for supplies for a camping trip in northern Ontario, she was surprised by the attention her presence elicited from the other shoppers. People were staring at her. She wasn’t dressed oddly; she wasn’t doing anything out of the ordinary. Canada defines itself as a multicultural Mecca, and yet, Turner who had come to Canada from Jamaica as a child, was being treated as though she didn’t belong; as though she was “some sort of alien” – which is how she describes how she was made to feel in this and other situations like it. Multiculturalism was adopted as official policy in Canada in 1971, and now has the highest per capita immigration rate in the world. Turner was feeling the failure of

Canadian multiculturalism – more than seventy-five years after the Governor General of Canada, The Lord Tweedsmuir, said “the strongest nations are those that are made up of different racial elements.”¹

“If I walk down the street, it’s different than when she walks down the street.”

After her experience in the North Bay shopping mall, the idea for Miss Canadiana came to Turner in a flash. The beauty queen that first set out with a paper sash and dollar store tiara has now appeared at events and in exhibitions across the country, and around the world. Early iterations of Miss Canadiana saw her giving away Canadian flags and maple leaf cookies in public interventions on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, and as part of Free Manifesta, a project that artist Sal Randolph developed for *Manifesta 4* in Frankfurt, Germany, in 2002.² Since then, she has been featured in exhibitions in venues in Mexico, throughout Canada, and most recently, at the Havana Biennial, Cuba, in a series of performances that cumulatively comprise Turner’s *Red, White and Beautiful Tour*. Miss Canadiana has also made appearances at many of the symposia, residencies, workshops, and panel discussions in which Turner is invited to participate – and these have taken place in locales as far reaching as: Broken Hill, Australia; Dakar, Senegal; Göttingen, Germany; and, North Preston, Nova Scotia. She has become the consummate symbol of the country that would not let her in.

“Whenever I go places, people ask to take my photo. People have asked me for my autograph. It’s like being larger than life...identity is something you construct and you put on.”



Whether she is an official invitee or an unexpected guest, Miss Canadiana is greeted with a certain awe and veneration. The admiration is well deserved, for she is as congenial and lovely as any beauty queen. Adorned from head to toe in patriotic red and white, distributing Canadian memorabilia, or presiding over a tea party, there is little in Turner's demeanor to suggest that she is not authentic. She graciously poses for photographs, embraces her fans, and answers their questions. She has amassed admirers around the world, who send their messages of support to Miss Canadiana's website. "I saw you on TV and wanted to say congratulations! You are a great representative of Canada and Canadians! You are so obviously proud of who you are, of being Canadian, and of winning the Miss Canadiana contest!" "Keep up the good job and do not get discouraged, I am so glad that you are Canadian." "You are a beautiful woman with lovely grace. You must be inspiring to so many people." "I just saw a ... documentary called *Race Is A Four Letter Word*, in which you appeared. I want to thank you so much for your wonderful project, and for representing Canada with so much beauty, and intelligence, and sensitivity, and humour."

"I don't have to explain anything. People just see the symbols and automatically assume this is who you are."

Some viewers are aware that Miss Canadiana is art. Others are not. If directly questioned about this, Turner will respond truthfully. She is often invited to speak to groups about her project, and in these contexts, she will engage in discussion about what she is trying to achieve by playing this role. But people don't tend to question the veracity of her crown; they don't generally ask whether Miss Canadiana is a real contest, so Turner remains in character. The crux of Turner's performance lies in the responses of her audience, which range from fascination with her fame and celebrity, to more pointed questions that make evident their wonder that Canada has a black beauty queen. Turner engages with all of these reactions, expanding the forum that she has created with Miss Canadiana. It is perhaps ironic that the place from which Turner examines Canada's failures to be multicultural and inclusive is one that,

on the surface, seems to celebrate it. On one level, there is a certain amount of artifice involved in Turner's venture; on another, even in situations where the truth of the matter is revealed, it never comes off as duplicitous or ill-intentioned. With a great deal of wit and goodwill, Miss Canadiana provides a framework for a discussion and celebration of what Canada could and should be, if, as the Lord Tweedsmuir recommended so many years ago, its cultural groups were to "retain their individuality and each make its contribution to the national character."³

"For me, I see the whole beauty queen icon as being kind of a blank slate that people project their desires on."

Interestingly, it is the "Canadiana" portion of Turner's performance that has drawn the most critical analysis. Perhaps it is because she is so believable as a beauty queen that the "Miss" is generally overlooked. Miss Canadiana uncovers our assumptions about what it means to be Canadian, and what it means to be beautiful. *Ain't I a Beauty Queen: Black Women, Beauty and the Politics of Race* is sociologist Maxine Leeds Craig's analysis of how personal appearance has been used by black women to negotiate the complexities of race, class, and politics in America. She traces the history of African-American beauty contests back to 1891 that consider all of their ambiguities such as the privileging of middle-class, light-skinned, black women, and the emphasis on race politics at the exclusion of gender and class politics. Craig points out the importance of these pageants in establishing positive representations of black women in a nation where most of the images of African-Americans were being propagated by the racist South. While our post-colonial and post-feminist sensibilities tell us to eschew women judged against one another based primarily on their physical attributes regardless of colour, Craig argues that beauty contests were important weapons in the defense against predominating ideas and images of black inferiority. In September 1968, while a group of women identifying themselves as members of the Women's Liberation protested the Miss America competition in front of the Atlantic City Convention Center, just a few blocks away, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was mounting the first Miss Black America pageant in what it referred to as a "positive protest" against the exclusion of black women from the Miss America title.⁴

CAMILLE TURNER, TEA WITH MISS CANADIANA:
HART HOUSE, 2007, PRODUCED BY THE JUSTINA M.
BARNICKEL GALLERY/HARTHOUSE, TORONTO (AS PART
OF THE EXHIBITION 'RIGHTFULLY YOURS' (2007),
PHOTOGRAPH BY BENJAMIN TONG, COURTESY OF
THE ARTIST.

While the NAACP typically fought racism by mounting legal challenges to the systems of racial segregation, they could not use this strategy in the case of the Miss America contest. African-American girls were allowed to compete — they just never won.

[My] cultural identity has been defined through the guise of ‘multiculturalism,’ as a fetishized display of ‘diversity’ rather than an integral part of the fabric of Canadian culture.”

Turner enters this narrative from a Canadian point of view — one that intersects with this analysis of African-American beauty contests — but is set in a country where the intersection of beauty, race, and competition is made murky by a national narrative that, at least in theory, advocates diversity. The act of creating Miss Canadiana out of the feelings of alienation that were stirred by that experience in the North Bay shopping mall is akin to the African-American examples of using beauty culture to counter mainstream representations. Turner complicates her project by making it about beauty and nationhood: while the Miss Black America contest was censured because it privileged civil rights over women's rights, Turner's performance is a critique of both gender and race as they intersect with nationality. Canadian women have been competing in international competitions since 1947. The decisions about whom to send to international competitions were made first through various local competitions, then through various national events. Of these, the best known was the Miss Canada pageant, first begun as a scholarship competition in Hamilton, Ontario, in 1946, and later televised from 1963 through 1992. (Miss Canada did not go down at the hands of angry protesters — her demise was caused more passively — by economic difficulties and falling ratings.) This is not to suggest that beauty pageants do not continue to be a huge industry in Canada, where, since 2003, new or rejuvenated events such as Miss World Canada, Miss Universe Canada, and Miss Earth Canada have continued to appear. A quick survey of these recent winners would appear to support

Canada's commitment to diversity — women of Middle Eastern, Asian, Eastern European, and mixed heritages have proudly borne the Canadian sash. But what do these beauty queens really say about Canadian attitudes? While the official pageant biographies of Lena Yangbing Ma and Mariana Valente, the currently reigning Miss World Canada and Miss Universe Canada, respectively, emphasize their ethnic backgrounds, the only “cultural” information given for Anglo-Canadian contestants are the names of their hometowns. A woman of colour with a beauty queen title is a symbol of Canada's tolerance and inclusivity. Miss Canadiana has made it her mission to question why these ideals remain emblematic, rather than a fundamental aspect of the Canadian experience.

“I can put on different clothes and people relate to me in a completely different way.”

Turner came to Canada as a child. Born in Jamaica, her memory of that country's “Ten Types — One People” contest, introduced in 1955, inevitably informs her understanding of beauty pageants. At the time of the competition's inception, Jamaica was on the verge of claiming independence from Britain; Jamaican nationalists created “Ten Types” as a step towards defining a modern understanding of the island. The “Ten Types” referred to skin tone — contestants were categorized according to the pigmentation of their skin, which was likened in colour to various types of trees and flowers, and competed under titles including “Miss Apple Blossom,” “Miss Rosewood,” “Miss Allspice,” and “Miss Ebony.” At the time, the “Ten Types” competition revolutionized how Jamaica viewed itself, transforming it from white and British, to brown and Jamaican. While Turner has noted that the dark-complexioned contestants in the Miss Ebony category rarely won, in a recent examination of the history of the event, historian Rochelle Rowe observes that it was Miss Ebony that garnered the most attention at the outset of the competition, for in the 1950s, she provided a beautiful allegory for the shift of black Jamaica into an urbane, modern citizenry.⁵ Again, the disparity between philosophies about race and beauty now, and as they existed in the mid-twentieth century becomes palpably evident. The shift in attitude about the modernization and middle-class aspirations of black individuals in Americas can be traced to

MISS CANADIANA WITH THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE, 2004

the 1970s, when the notion of aspiring to mimic the attire and deportment of white people came under dispute. As Leeds Craig notes, in the 1960s, well appointed, middle-class, black women came to represent the dignity of the race. With the rise of the Black Power Movement “[a] new generation of black leaders used a gendered rhetoric of racial pride to excoriate ‘bourgeois’ black women for ‘acting white.’”⁷⁶ Miss Canadiana plays on this very issue, and Turner has noted that she is treated very differently when she is wearing her red gown and maple leaf paraphernalia. One would think that today that we have moved beyond a time when a black woman is supposed to dress or act in a particular way, but Turner has been admonished by a male, Latino artist in South America for “pretending to be a white girl,” and a told by a white, French audience member at her conference presentation in Dakar that “When you are Miss Canadiana, I forget that you are black.” The significance of Turner’s project – of Miss Canadiana – is situated in these and other strong responses, which remind us that race, beauty, and nationality – like a red gown or tiara – are things that we wear. ●

MISS CANADIANA



LIVING FOSSILS, CULTURAL AMPHIBIANS, AND THE FUTURE'S MIDWIFE

Antanas Mockus became mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, after resigning from his post as Chancellor of the Colombian National University. While Chancellor, he had faced an unruly crowd of students in the School of Arts, and moaned the audience to surprise them into attentive silence. While this gesture was effective, it also caused controversy and drew national press, launching him into a debate on national television. Later, he used this public visibility, and his anti-authoritarian reputation to gain the support of tens of thousands as he ran for office.

The only son of a Lithuanian artist, Mockus leveraged an artist's penchant for symbolic action and radical intervention to effect change in Colombia's capital city. Here are a few examples among dozens: Mockus' administration hired over four hundred mimes to control traffic on some of Bogotá's dangerous streets (traffic-related deaths were cut in half); a "Night For Women" asked men to stay home to afford women a night out in the city (around seven hundred thousand women flocked to free concerts, specials at bars, and temporary pedestrian zones in the city); voluntary disarmament days allowed anyone to dispose of illegal guns without penalties (homicides fell 26 percent); "Knights of the Zebra" was a special club formed for honest taxi drivers nominated by citizens.

Mockus is interviewed here by Mexican artist, architect, and activist Pedro Reyes. An extended version of the interview was available in conjunction with an exhibition of Reyes' work at Harvard University.¹

— Joseph del Pesco

Pedro Reyes There is an anecdote that one day, while teaching at the University, you ran out of blackboard space, and you simply continued to write on the walls. The whole class followed as you continued out into the hallway. To me, this eloquently illustrates how your ideas and practices were able to extend beyond academia to reach a "larger classroom" in your work as mayor of Bogotá.

Antanas Mockus There are subjects that reach our country's primary school children after passing through many hands.

AN INTERVIEW WITH ANTANAS MOCKUS

If, instead, our children received their science lessons directly from Nobel laureates, it would open their minds immensely, and the level of social transformation would be much greater. Prior to running for mayor, I began to realize that I could situate myself within the political terrain but with a pedagogical intensity — educating on a larger scale, re-contextualizing vertiginously.

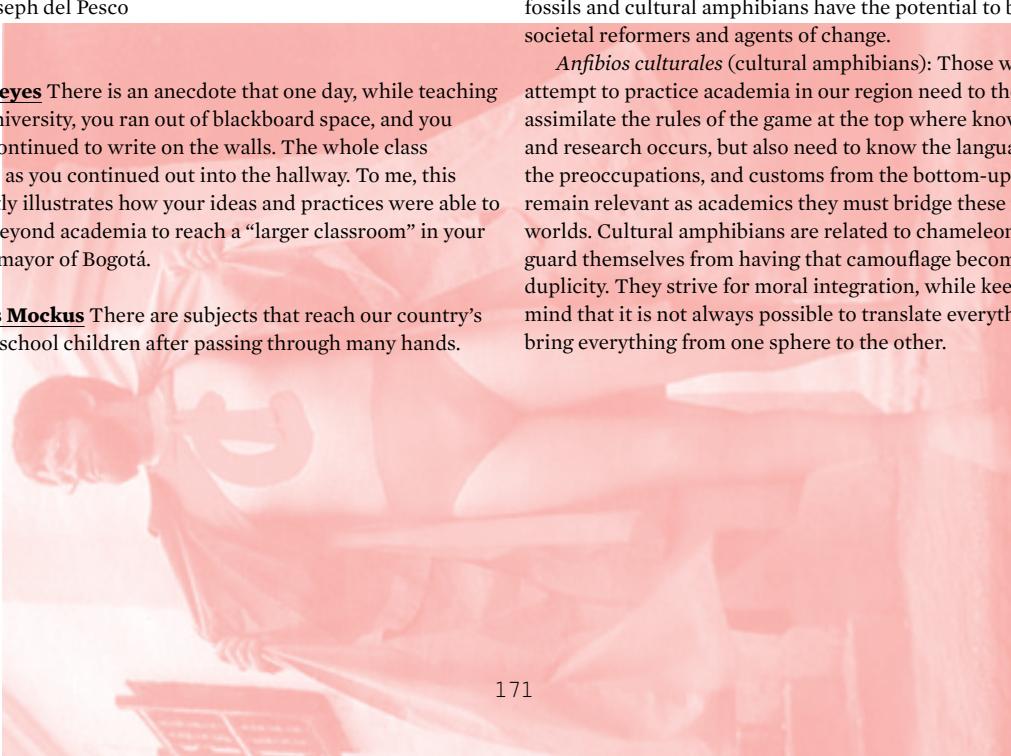
PR Even as an academic, you were already an iconoclast. Which of your early ideas were the most provocative?

AM "*Fósiles vivientes, anfibios culturales, parteras del futuro*" — terms that, to me, still offer a good description of the academic tradition.

Fósiles vivientes (living fossils): The academic profession appears about two thousand five hundred years ago, and in many ways, has remained stuck on a search-for-truth, even if it is sometimes painful — maintaining a reflexive distance even in the face of a need for action. Ultimately, agents of knowledge tend toward ethical conduct, but overtime academia has become detached.

Partera del futuro (the future's midwife): This term is ironic with regards to Marx, who considered violence to be history's midwife. Looking back, I don't believe this is the case, that instead knowledge has been history's midwife. Looking forward, it is the academics, who despite also being living fossils and cultural amphibians have the potential to be great societal reformers and agents of change.

Anfibios culturales (cultural amphibians): Those who attempt to practice academia in our region need to thoroughly assimilate the rules of the game at the top where knowledge and research occurs, but also need to know the languages, the preoccupations, and customs from the bottom-up. To remain relevant as academics they must bridge these two worlds. Cultural amphibians are related to chameleons, but guard themselves from having that camouflage become ethical duplicity. They strive for moral integration, while keeping in mind that it is not always possible to translate everything or bring everything from one sphere to the other.



PR You have often found yourself having to defend yourself before the media, starting with your role as University Chancellor. Did that cause you to steer your trajectory towards the public, political sphere?

AM I left the chancellery as a result of breaking a cultural norm. An immediate sanction was brought to bear which carried judicial consequences, but no one set a disciplinary process against me into motion or complained to the authorities. We clearly saw that it was a matter of broken protocol, and that it needed to be addressed as such. After being pressured to step down, I had the opportunity on a couple of television shows to explain why I had done what I had done, and my general stance on physical violence and what I called symbolic violence, as well as my respect in some way for tradition. I appeared to be very iconoclastic, but I was also a person in the company of two or three living fossils. My popularity on the street was very high; I attained a high level of visibility, and then went back to teaching.

My decision to become mayor came later when Gustavo Petro, who nowadays leads the main leftist party, sought me out to include me in a long list for congressional nominations, and I told him, constitution in hand, that I was barred from serving because less than a year had passed since my tenure as University Chancellor. Two weeks later, however, he appeared grinning and telling me that no such restriction was in place for the mayor's office. So, in part, judicial happenstance decided that I would go on to become mayor.

PR Were you an independent candidate?

AM That's right. We had to gather fifty thousand signatures, but enthusiasm was so high that it was easy. It was one of the first times signatures had been gathered for a candidate; it was really a beautiful process. This group, out of which the movement sprang, went under the name "Citizens-In-Training." We recognized ourselves as citizens still under development – the potential for the idea is enormous. Part of what policy produces is a simplified worldview where others are deficient, limited, malicious, sometimes violent or corrupt. One day, mankind will dedicate itself to designing criminal policies not for others but for the self.

Another idea central to the campaign was acknowledging that I had not been the best of citizens. Everyone has their bad moments, and they need to be corrected. A lot of trust was being placed in me. Children on the street would see me and yell, "That guy there showed his ass!" I achieved a level of trust being identified as a transgressor. This politics of "self-regulation for transgressors" helped me. In some ways,

I believe the same holds for violence. In pedagogy, a certain authoritativeness is key: one needs to demonstrate experience. But, one does not create a gulf between the teacher and the taught; there needs to be a common ground, a horizontal relationship in that sense. It sounds obnoxious for government to teach and citizens to learn. A mayor needs to learn and understand well in order to have something to offer. Many times I felt like a translator, like an amphibian who would meet with the experts and struggle to understand them. Nonetheless, even though I might have only grasped two or three ideas at a time, I was capable of explaining them to the citizens.

PR Could you tell me, in brief, what you feel were some of the radically different ideas you introduced to public administration?

AM Things evolve along the way. From the moment I formulated my platform, I was very clear on fighting for the environment, and supporting public resources and public spaces. I firmly believe that political administrators must act without a personal political gain in mind, in other words, what needs to be done gets done regardless of whether it is popular.

Our ability to make an impact on water conservation and disarmament proved not only the ability to communicate effectively with the citizenry, but the fact that citizens mobilized to achieve common goals, that collective action occurred. The decrease in homicides stands out as one of the most significant achievements. Early on, it became a central challenge for my administration, but I did not imagine we would attain the decrease that we did. It came about through a series of commitments. The first was arriving at solid figures and publishing them, regardless of how they made us look. In hindsight, these were very logical steps. We began with statistics for the city as well as each of the twenty administrative localities, and we ended up with figures for every block. Eventually, it became very sophisticated. Amongst public officials, a program titled "*de cada funcionario una calle*" (a street for each official) was very effective.

Both during the campaign and while in office, I played around by asking citizens: "What would you do if you were mayor?" A sort of collective experiment took place to accomplish things in non-conventional ways. Obviously, in the background there was dissatisfaction with the political establishment and its habits. Beginning with our platform, an effort was in place to obtain a pedagogical outcome. That is to say, governing not only in terms of investing, regulating, and enforcing rules, but also developing a pedagogical agenda involving the mayor and his team.

PR Your campaign and government took a strong stance against the death penalty.

AM Yesterday, after a relatively pretentious and serious talk, I repeated my game where I ask the audience if they would like to hear the eleventh article of the Colombian constitution sung or recited. It never fails because the audience always wants it sung. I sang to them: *El derecho a la vida es inviolable, el derecho a la vida es inviolable, no habrá pena de muerte, no habrá pena de muerte* (the right to life is inviolable, the right to life is inviolable, there will be no death penalty, there will be no death penalty).

PR How do you imagine the role of the artist as social agent?

AM I think one could very convincingly put forward: "Commit art, not terrorism." Art is capable of producing commotions on par with a terrorist act, installing itself in the people's memory and imagination. Art is a route, more labourious, but a route nonetheless. First message: "Substitute art for terrorism." Second message: "Combat terrorism with art." Gianni Vattimo, an Italian philosopher who fights to rid philosophy of the pretensions Marxism had, who strives for modesty, declared that the West should bombard Iraq, but with condoms and pornography — to culturally infuriate. Exacerbate the feedback loop created by polarization. They would have surely been much more culturally enraged than by the physical bombings; the stakes would have been clearer. Behind terrorism lie genuine emotions. There are cold calculations and reasoning, but there are also feelings, emotions. Art is a way in which to share, transform, and elaborate emotions, as well as to connect them with reasons.

One central idea concerning art is how strange a thing it is: art produces emotions, but then reassures us: "Relax, it's just art..." You don't need to go out and march, or take up arms and fight. In everyday life, emotion serves as a trigger — even etymologically — for action. With fear, for example, the ceiling comes crashing down: it's fight or flight. One doesn't just stand still. The artist on the other hand moves our ceiling, but then comforts us.

PR Can citizenship be a creative act?

AM The heart of the question lies in what being a citizen means, and how a citizen takes into account the rights of others — to keep others in mind, but without categorizing them. We forbade inaugurations during my first term; during the second, we celebrated and honoured public service.

Marx sarcastically describes a type of person who, as bourgeois, is incredibly selfish, but becomes altruistic as a citizen. He saw this as schizophrenic, a con, false ideology, and moral subterfuge. I read it rather as an interesting device; in certain situations you are authorized to act purely out of self-interest, but in other contexts, you are invited to function as a citizen, to adopt the city's criteria, to think of others.

PR It seems to me that this contradiction isn't the same as hypocrisy; after all, you are not lying to others but just to yourself — this is self-deception.

AM As mayor, I spoke of a culture of citizenship, of citizens as producers but also reproducers. The citizen as producer is an economic subject, and is capable of occupying public spaces. As reproducer, as a family man or woman, as a person striving for a certain quality of life, he does not want those spaces invaded. There are opposing interests at play, like the prostitute who would rather her daughter grows up in a neighbourhood free of prostitution. There is a tension between accepting prostitution on the one hand, and wanting to avoid it on the other. In a way, this reformulates constitutional privacy and property rights.

PR Nowadays, most people feel their participatory power is very limited, that the power to make decisions lies in the hands of the government or the private sector. Let's talk about a third sphere of action: civic engagement. How can this field be recovered? What are the creative spaces where one can regain agency?

AM Pico della Mirandola captures it perfectly in his poetry: "God brings all creatures into the world completed. Except for man whom he leaves with unfinished features, and tells: 'You will be able to make out of yourself what you will.' If you wish to be like the beasts, you will be a beast; if you wish to be like the angels, you will be like an angel." He presents man with the opportunity to fashion himself. I imagine that self-fashion as a massive sculpture where different people sculpt each other.

PR This image reminds me of initiatives you organized in Bogotá to elicit civic engagement. For example, asking people

2. El Voto: Mockus para Jóvenes. En AVATAR



to comment on other people's driving by holding up cards with "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" signs printed on them...

AM The interesting thing is to speak meaningfully; escape — if it's at all possible — mere routine, merely reproducing language. That our conversations serve to constitute our identities rather than merely confirming codes.

PR Back to this concept of a society that sculpts itself. Is there a need for authority, and, if so, what are its limits?

AM All security policies are based on a hysterical reaction. Suppose there is an assassination or an attack; the immediate reaction is, "Build more prisons, pass harsher laws, enforce the law more effectively." However, that is like playing a single key on a piano ignoring a much broader range. Many, many people learn through positive measures. Simple trust awakens a need to meet that expectation. If we believe someone is honest, etc., we make him or her honest and trustworthy. Of course, we still don't have the perfect methodology for achieving this. We have to start by treating people like citizens.

Bourdieu dedicated a large part of his life to demystifying originality, creativity, and the role of the academic. He pointed out the mechanisms we use to impress others — mechanisms that are generally related to class structures. The more deeply enmeshed you are in the academic aristocracy, the more easily you assimilate and make use of positioning mechanisms. You think you are making original contributions when, in fact, you are reproducing codes at the service of an order beyond your control.

PR In the case of your campaign logo — a Möbius strip — what were you trying to convey?

AM The slogan "*todos del mismo lado*" (everyone on the same side), attempts to dissolve several antagonisms, including class, gender, and generational ones. For all the prejudices, differences, and leanings we have, it is possible to recognize another human being before us. From a topological perspective that possibility always exists; the distance in Euclidean terms might be long or short.

Jean-François Lyotard detested the Möbius strip — in fact he wrote an article against it — because it annuls difference's radical nature — it's "this is good, this is bad" — and introduces a troubling relativism, where everything depends on how it is read.

PR But truth is that knowledge itself is a sum of interpretations.

AM Obviously, up and down become spatially relative when the Earth is discovered to be round. But, from our own personal vantage points, no confusion is possible. The antipodes might be upside-down at first, but once the model is in place, we can accept the idea that in space-at-large there is no up or down, but at a specific site there is. The same thing happens with the Möbius strip: if I am standing on a certain spot, I know that locally there is another side, but that I can access it by simply walking along the strip without having to switch sides.

PR Lygia Clark, a Brazilian artist, created a series of photographs depicting how tearing apart a Möbius strip can yield a longer strip. The piece is titled *Walking*. The idea that if you walk long enough, eventually you can find yourself in the Other's position — this is fascinating.

AM Part of what makes topology so attractive is the search for commonalities underlying diversity. Equivalencies reduce the diversity of geometric signs. All circles and ovals are topologically equivalent.

PR A metaphor or symbol's communicative power interests me immensely. You mentioned earlier the possibility of symbolic violence as an alternative to physical violence.

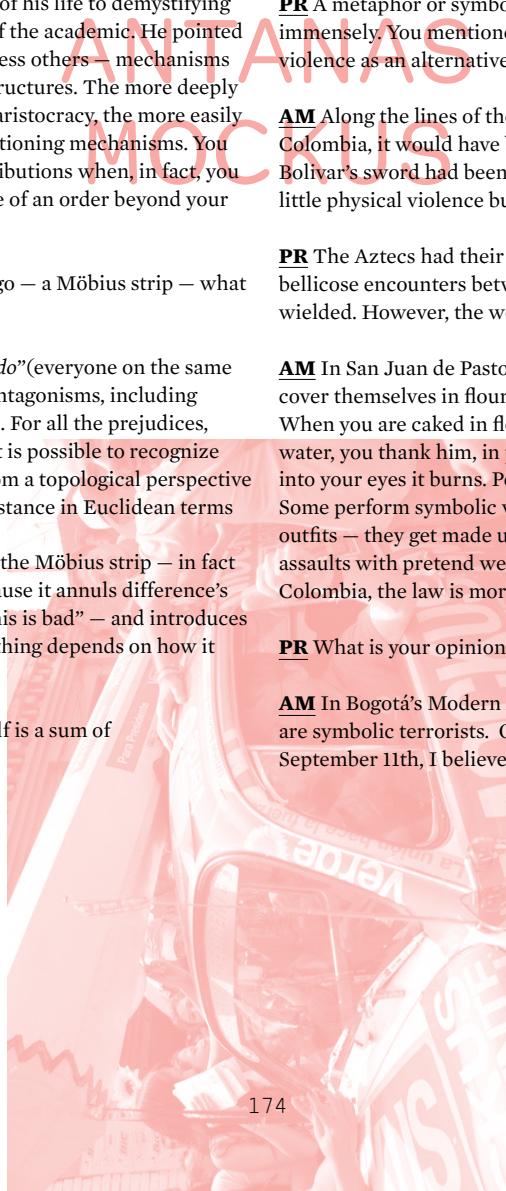
AM Along the lines of the construction of symbolic power: in Colombia, it would have been quite beneficial if the theft of Bolívar's sword had been put to this use. It was a gesture of little physical violence but enormous expressive force.

PR The Aztecs had their "*guerras floridas*," or flowery wars, bellicose encounters between city-states where weapons were wielded. However, the weapons were not lethal.

AM In San Juan de Pasto's Black and White festival, people cover themselves in flour. Many people carry water guns. When you are caked in flour and someone hits you with a jet of water, you thank him, in part, but if the flour and water stream into your eyes it burns. People tend to exercise self-restraint. Some perform symbolic violence, they wear frightening outfits — they get made up as bandits. In the United States, assaults with pretend weapons can incur heavy penalties; in Colombia, the law is more permissive.

PR What is your opinion on symbolic terrorism?

AM In Bogotá's Modern Art Museum, I once said that artists are symbolic terrorists. Only a few weeks had gone by since September 11th, I believe. The audience did not appreciate



ANTANAS MOCKUS ENERGIZING VOTERS ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL. IMAGE FROM ANTANAS MOCKUS FLICKR PHOTOSREAM, CIRCA 2009–2010.

the comment in the least. Almost every form of violence has a symbolic component, since the perpetrators strive to stir emotions in order to produce meaning. You can achieve the same result without causing physical harm. I honestly believe that, in some cases, hate or resentment can be expressed against an image, and I regret not following through on a dream of mine, where people could express their rage against paramilitary and guerrilla leaders in effigy, as primal as that sounds.

PR The subconscious substitutes the symbolic act for the real one, satisfying any desire for revenge. This reminds me of the “vaccine against violence” you mentioned. Could you tell me a bit more about that?

AM The “vaccine against violence” was carried out with forty-five thousand people. A psychiatrist receives folks off the street in a cubicle and says, “Think of the person who has most upset you in your life, paint their face on this soccer ball, we’ll place it atop this dummy. Now you say or do what you would if you were to run into them, do it, pretend you have them right here.” To my surprise, people destroyed the head a lot more than expected. The first time I saw it a boy blew up his father’s head. I was about to intervene, but the psychiatrist stopped me and said, “There are cases, such as with boys and girls, where you need to take a side.” The boy was then somewhat guilty afterwards, but the psychiatrist relieved him of it.

What took place? Instead of revenge against the person, you inflict controlled symbolic violence on the symbolic plane. However, we need to be careful: most humiliation arises out of symbolic violence. Phrases can keep one awake at night, and very often, symbolic violence preludes physical violence. In a few studies I recently came across, career criminals, whom we would imagine to act in cold blood, artificially provoke rage, resentment, or hate within themselves, in order to exert violence with less qualms through a sort of emotional self-manipulation.

PR Art doesn’t always have positive intentions; it needs to be provided with the proper opportunities. There is incredibly self-destructive art — art that can take you into a sad, desolate, or dark place. There is an ontological question at work where art does not necessarily have its own ethic. It could be aesthetics, but morality does not necessarily exist in the realm of aesthetics. There can also be an art of cruelty.

AM One could counter that, if cruelty was the dominant voice in art, art would deviate away. Sometimes art takes pleasure in the dark places, even, for example, in the work of José Saramago. The entire canvas is pitch black so that whatever does shine through towards the end does so with voracious and irrefutable clarity.

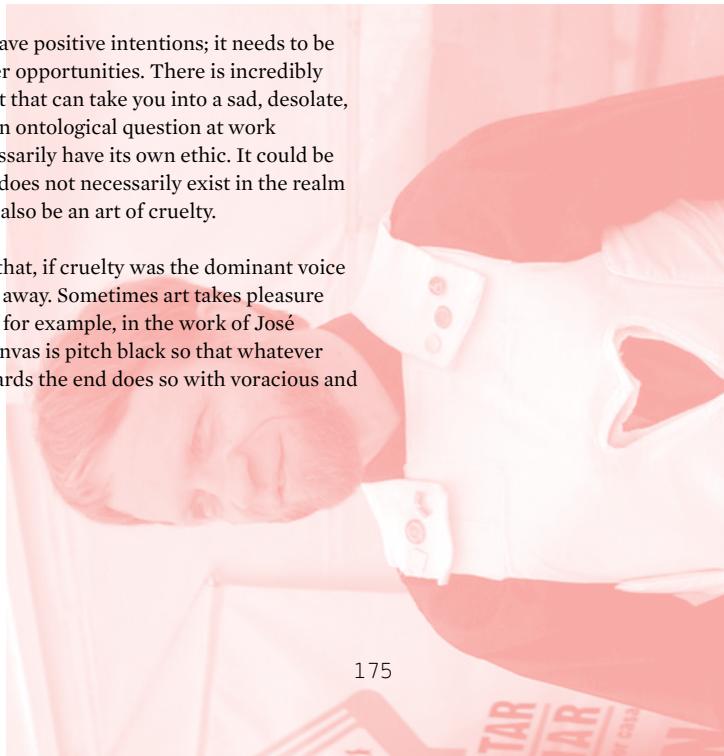
PR Let’s think about symbolic power and not symbolic violence. Violence is active, but we could consider not an attack but a defensive measure, not belligerence but rather vulnerability.

AM When I was mayor of Bogotá, I received occasional death threats. So, I had to wear a bulletproof vest. I made a hole right where my heart is. The hole too, was in the shape of a heart. I believe that this kind of gesture, in fact, gave me more protection.

PR So, in a way, you were appealing to your potential murderer for sympathy?

AM You could say that. In sociology, there is a concept known as “preventive defraudment” where one automatically expects the worst from others. So, in order to be ahead of the game, the person chooses to deceive before someone else beats him to it. The opposite logic would be to start by having an optimistic prognosis: if you hurt me that will weaken my confidence in you; this will cause me to be cautious, to the point of making me wear a bulletproof vest. This leads to a scenario where everyone, afraid of getting hurt, will end up wearing one.

I prefer to sow trust. ●



CONTRIBUTORS' BIOGRAPHIES

A Constructed World (Jacqueline Riva and Geoff Lowe) convenes groups of people to workshop art related ideas and practices. Their work enacts and constructs moving links between different places, technologies, and layers of knowledge, giving consideration to that which is missing, forgotten, or lost. ACW have facilitated workshops for institutions such as: Artists Space, New York, Serpentine Gallery, London, Camberwell College, London Institute Goldsmiths College, London, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne, and the West Collection SEI Investments, Pennsylvania. Solo exhibitions include: *Increase Your Uncertainty*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art Melbourne; *Le Feu Scrupuleux*, CNEAI Chatou; and, *Saisons Increase*, a four-part, year-long project at CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux.

Tejal S. Aiji is a Master of Fine Art candidate (Interdisciplinary Studio) in the Department of Art at the University of California, Los Angeles. From 2006–2008, Aiji was Curator-in-Residence at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery (Hart House, University of Toronto), and from 2008–2009 he was Adjunct Curator of Outreach. Aiji curated: *South-South: Interruptions & Encounters* (with Jon Soske, Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, 2009); *Rightfully Yours*, (Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, 2007); *Heritage Complex* (with Atanas Bozdarov, Art Gallery of Peel, 2007); and, *Young and Restless* (Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, 2007, 2008, 2009). He participated in 7th Station of Forums in Motion coinciding with the 3rd Guangzhou Triennial (Guangdong Museum of Fine Art, Guangzhou, China, 2008).

Allan Antliff, Canada Research Chair in Art History at the University of Victoria, and art editor for the UK-based journal *Anarchist Studies*, is author of *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the First American Avant-Garde* (2001), *Art and Anarchy: From the Paris Commune to the Fall of the Berlin Wall* (2007), and editor of *Only A Beginning* (2004), a documentary anthology of anarchist writings and activism in Canada.

Paul Ardenne has a Ph.D. in Art History, and is teaching at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Amiens, France. He specialized in contemporary aesthetics, and the relationships between politics and the arts and their presence in public space. He is the author of many state-of-the-art books, including: *Art, l'âge contemporain* (1997), *L'Art dans son moment politique* (2000), *L'Image Corps* (2001), *Un Art contextuel* (2002), *Portraits* (2003), *Extrême - Esthétiques de la limite dépassée* (2006), and, *Art, le présent. La création plastique au tournant du XXIe siècle* (2009). Ardenne regularly collaborates on art reviews in France, Belgium, and Canada, and has curated a number of major exhibitions. He is a recognized specialist of art and architecture, and the author of an essay on contemporary urbanism, "Terre habité" (2005), and of numerous books on architects. Ardenne also writes fiction.

Grant Arnold is currently Audain Curator of British Columbia Art at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Over the past twenty years, he has organized more than thirty-five exhibitions of historical, modern, and contemporary art. Recent exhibition projects have included: *Ken Lum: from shangri-la to shangri-la; Owen Kydd: Mission/Night/Joshua; Scott McFarland: Is Only the Mind Allowed to Wander; Mark Lewis: Modern Time; Fred Herzog: Vancouver Photographs; Real Pictures: Photographs from the Collection of Claudia Beck and Andrew Gruft; Rodney Graham: A Little Thought* (with Jessica Bradley and Connie Butler); *Robert Smithson in Vancouver: A Fragment of A Greater Fragmentation; Liz Magor* (with Philip Monk); and *These Days*.

Barbara Steveni conceived and co-founded the **Artist Placement Group** (APG) in London, in 1966. Steveni's innovative concept, based on a more holistic and intuitive view of art than was current at the time, would take another twenty years to enter the mainstream. APG (later renamed O+I) acted as the precursor to current notions of "Artist in Residence," and Public Art programs. Steveni is currently active as artist, curator, and lecturer, in particular, addressing Art and the "new" Economics, Art and Business, and "Socially Engaged Art Practice" from, and on behalf of the artist voice. Additionally, Steveni is engaged in a personal work under the title *I AM AN ARCHIVE*, tracing through a series of walks, revisits, and interviews, her life and role within APG/O+I, in relation to today's circumstance, and to current and future art practice.

Formed around 2004, in Montréal, before the collapse of the economy, **Au Travail / At Work** is a collective whose core project is the transformation of the workplace into a site of clandestine art production. This experimental project urges artists and workers to consider their workplace as a site of artistic residence. In all cases, the space of reflection, production, or intervention becomes the space of the employer.

Gina Badger is a visual artist and writer particularly interested in urban ecology and environmental history. Recent products of her research include a radio show based on ambient field recordings, radioactively-coloured seed bombs, pedagogical experiments in collaborative practice, a garden of weeds, and a series of workshops on herbal gynecology. Badger's commitments to group work, and the grassroots production and dissemination of knowledge have led her to initiate curatorial, organizational, and small press projects. Textual undertakings include scholarly articles, creative pieces, and technical writing. Hailing from Western Canada's prairies, Gina began her studies in Montréal, and in 2010 completed her Masters in Science at MIT's Visual Arts Program in Boston.

Kadambari Baxi is a New York-based architect engaged in a collaborative practice focused on architecture and media. She is Associate Professor of Professional Practice in Architecture at Barnard College and Columbia University, a partner in Martin/Baxi Architects, and a principal of imageMachine, a new media collaborative that incorporates expanded architecture and media concepts in multidisciplinary projects. Martin/Baxi Architects (M/BAXI) defines architecture as a cultural practice that combines aesthetic invention, social vision, and technological innovation in the public realm. The firm's work has been featured in publications and exhibitions internationally, including two recent books: *Multi-National City: Architectural Itineraries* (Actar, 2007), and *Entropia* (Black Dog Publishing, 2000). Recent projects include *Uncounted Counts: Designing Citizenship*, exhibited at the Van Alen Institute for Public Architecture (2009), as one part of a two-part show titled, *Aesthetics of Crossing*. Baxi is currently working on a multimedia project titled, *Two Cities/Three Futures: Architectural Documents*, based on CST Station in Mumbai and Ground Zero in New York. She is also designing a series of new technology games for children titled, *Triptychs*, based on multilingual alphabets.
www.image-machine.com
www.martinbaxi.com

Born in 1938, in Spokane, Washington, **Ingrid Baxter** married IAIN BAXTER& in 1959, and completed a B.A. in Piano at the University of Idaho in 1960. Working with Iain under the moniker "N.E. Thing Co. Ltd." until 1978, the former collaborative were the first living Canadian artists to have a major show at the National Gallery of Canada in 1969, transforming the entire first floor of the Gallery into a factory and showroom. Ingrid now lives between Vancouver and New Zealand with her partner Warren Edgeler, bringing the fun game of Pickleball to the Kiwis, and enjoys watching her grandchildren Hannah and Quinn tackle life with joy.

One of Canada's leading multi-media artists, **IAN BAXTER&** has been a pivotal figure in visual arts for more than forty-eight years. Recognized as an icon of conceptual art, he is among the most thought-provoking and pioneering of contemporary Canadian and international artists. His achievements have been recognized with critical acclaim, and he has received numerous awards for his insightful and provocative works about our consumer, cultural, social, ecological, and political conditions. In 2005, the Canada Council Molson Prize was awarded to IAIN BAXTER& for his lifetime achievement in the arts.

Claire Bishop is Associate Professor in the Ph.D. Program in Art History at CUNY Graduate Center, New York, and Visiting Professor at the Royal College of Art, London.

Her publications include: *Installation Art: A Critical History* (Tate/Routledge, 2005), and the edited anthologies *Participation* (Whitechapel/MIT Press, 2006), and *1968–1989: Political Upheaval and Artistic Change* (Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, 2010). In 2008, Bishop co-curated the touring exhibition *Double Agent* at the ICA, London, and edited the accompanying catalogue. She is a regular contributor to *Artforum* and other magazines, and her second book, a history and theory of socially-engaged art, will be published by Verso in 2011.

Adam Bobbette is an artist and landscape architect based in Toronto. He teaches at the University of Toronto, and is on the editorial board of *Scapegoat: Architecture, Landscape, Political Economy*.

L.M. Bogad (Associate Professor, University of California at Davis) is an author, performer, and activist. His book, *Electoral Guerrilla Theatre: Radical Ridicule and Social Movements*, is an international study of performance artists who run for public office as a prank. Bogad has led “Tactical Performance” workshops while “Humanities and Political Conflict” Fellow at Arizona State University, and at Carnegie Mellon University both as an “Art and Controversy” Fellow, and as a Distinguished Lecturer on Performance and Politics. Bogad’s performances have explored topics such as the Haymarket Square Confrontation, the FBI’s COINTELPRO activities, the Pinochet coup in Chile, and global climate chaos. His play entitled *COINTELSHOW: A Patriot Act*, will be published in 2010 by PM Press.
www.lmbogad.com

Based in New York, **Andrew Boyd** is an author, humourist, and a twenty-five-year veteran of creative campaigns for social change. As “Phil T. Rich,” he led the decade-long, satirical media campaign “Billionaires for Bush.” Boyd has written two books of political humour, *Daily Afflictions*, and *Life's Little Deconstruction Book*, both from W.W. Norton, and one how-to creative action manual, *The Activist Cookbook*. His writing has appeared in *The Nation*, *Village Voice*, *Marie Claire*, *salon.com*, *Sun Magazine*, and elsewhere. Boyd is a founding partner of Agit-Pop Communications, a “subvertising” agency, which cranks out flash animation and on-line video for environmental and social justice campaigns. A little while back, he co-produced *Stop the Clash of Civilizations*, which was awarded YouTube’s Best Political Video award in 2007.

John Seely Brown is a visiting scholar and advisor to the Provost at University of Southern California (USC), and the Independent Co-Chairman of Deloitte’s Center for the Edge. Prior to that, he was the Chief Scientist of Xerox Corporation, and the director of its Palo Alto Research Center (PARC) – a position he held for nearly two decades. He was a cofounder of the Institute for Research

on Learning (IRL), and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the National Academy of Education, a Fellow of the American Association for Artificial Intelligence and of AAAS, and a Trustee of the MacArthur Foundation. He serves on numerous public boards (Amazon, Corning, and Varian Medical Systems) and private boards of directors. Brown has published over one hundred papers in scientific journals, and has co-authored *The Social Life of Information* (HBS Press, 2000), which has been translated into nine languages with a second edition in April 2002, and *The Only Sustainable Edge*, which is about new forms of collaborative innovation. He is currently working on two new books: *The New Culture of Learning* with Professor Doug Thomas, and *The Power of Pull: how small moves, smartly made can set big things in motion*, with John Hagel.

Ian Clarke was awarded a Ph.D. in Biochemistry from Queen’s University (Kingston, Canada), and graduated in Printmaking from the Ontario College of Art & Design (now OCAD University). Currently, he is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Liberal Studies at OCAD University, and also studies brain tumour stem cell biology as a cancer researcher at The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. He is a book artist, printmaker, photographer, and installation artist, and has served as a board member and vice president of The Canadian Bookbinders and Book Artist’s Guild.

Since 2000, visual artist **Maureen Connor** has been developing *Personnel* — a series of interventions concerned with the art institution as a workplace — which explores the attitudes, needs, and desires of the staff at various institutions. She has presented work at: Periferic 8 Biennial for Contemporary Art, Romania; Tapies Foundation, Barcelona; the Queens Museum of Art, New York; MAK, Vienna; Portikus, Frankfurt; ICA, Philadelphia; and the Whitney Biennial, New York. Currently, Connor is working on an installation of *Personnel* for the Centre de Recherche en Droit Public, Université de Montréal, Canada, and a related book to be published jointly by Wyspa Art Institute, in Gdansk, Poland, and Revolver Press, in Frankfurt, Germany. Her projects have received funding from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, and The New York Foundation for Artists.

Natalie De Vito is a curator/producer, writer, and artistic producer of Mammalian Diving Reflex. Her curatorial interest is in producing works that create interactions between artwork and audience, between audience members, and in unconventional spaces. This past year she held the prestigious role of Deputy Commissioner of the Canada Pavilion at the 53rd Venice Biennale – International Art Exhibition 2009. Her previous experience

includes being Artistic Producer, spotlight Festival: 2008, and Acting Media and Visual Arts Officer at the Ontario Arts Council; Head of Development and Marketing at The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery; and Co-Director of Mercer Union Centre for Contemporary Art. She has curated, produced, and coordinated over fifty exhibitions, events, and performances (both on and off the stage), and has toured many internationally to over fourteen countries. De Vito’s writing has appeared in Coach House Books, *uTOPIA: State of the Arts*, as well as publications including: *C Magazine*, *Parachute*, *Prefix Photo*, *VISION Magazine Shanghai*, and numerous exhibition brochures and catalogues.

Joseph del Pesco is an independent curator, art journalist, and web-media producer. He has realized curatorial projects at Artists Space in New York; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco; Galerie Analix in Geneva, Switzerland; the Rooseum in Malmö, Sweden; Articule in Montréal, Canada; the Banff Centre in Alberta, Canada; and the Nelson Gallery at the University of California, Davis. He has contributed interviews, reviews, and other texts to: *Flash Art*, *X-Tra*, *Proximity*, *Fillip*, *NUKE* magazines, and *Art in America*’s website. More information at: www.delpesco.com

Connor Dickie is a scientist, artist, inventor, and futurist who explores the edge of human-machine communication. He has developed novel computing platforms that augment and share human memory and maximize attention. He also developed a display technology specifically for cyborgs. Many of his artistic and scientific projects have been featured in outlets such as *Wired*, *NextFest*, *Shanghai Biennial*, *Gadgetoff*, *BoingBoing*, *Engadget*, *Gizmodo*, *Slashdot*, *The Guardian*, *ScienceWorld*, BBC, CNN, and others. Dickie studied Film, Computer Science, and Media Arts and Science at both the Human Media Lab at Queen’s University (Kingston, Canada), and the MIT Media Lab.

Peter Eleey is the Curator of MoMA PS1. From 2007–2010, he was Visual Arts Curator at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, where he organized a survey of the dancer and choreographer Trisha Brown’s work on paper, as well as the group shows *The Quick and the Dead* and *The Talent Show*. Prior to joining the Walker in 2007, he was Curator and Producer at Creative Time in New York, where he organized a wide range of multidisciplinary public art projects, exhibitions, and events with artists including Doug Aitken, Cai Guo-Qiang, and Mike Nelson.

Experiments in Art and Technology

was founded in 1966, by engineers Billy Klüver and Fred Waldhauer, and by artists Robert Rauschenberg and Robert Whitman, to provide artists with access to new technology. E.A.T. matched artists with engineers or scientists for one-to-one collaborations on

the artist's specific project. E.A.T. initiated large-scale projects: *9 Evenings: Theater and Engineering, performances incorporating new technology* (1966); "Some More Beginnings," the first international art and technology exhibition, at the Brooklyn Museum (1968–1969); Pepsi Pavilion at Expo '70, Osaka Japan (1969–1970). E.A.T. also undertook interdisciplinary projects outside art that extended artists' activities into new areas of society.

As the initiator and current organizer of democratic innovation, founded in 1998, **Kent Hansen** has functioned as an international pioneer in the interplay between art, organizations, and the workplace. Not a collective itself, "democratic-innovation" develops projects in collaboration with others who form ad hoc groups or merge with one another for the benefit of specific projects. Kent is also a co-founding member (2005) of "tv-tv," the artist-run tv-station broadcasting throughout Denmark.
democratic-innovation.org

Kate Henderson is an entertainment and intellectual property lawyer who has been practicing law in Ontario since 1996. She lectures frequently on the interaction between law and art.

Luis Jacob is an artist and writer living in Toronto, Canada. Recent exhibitions include: *7 Pictures of Nothing Repeated Four Times*, in "Gratitude," at Städtisches Museum Abteiberg (Mönchengladbach, Germany); *If We Can't Get It Together: Artists Rethinking the (Mal)Function of Communities*, The Power Plant (Toronto, Canada); *The Order of Things*, Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen (Antwerp, Belgium); *Martian Museum of Terrestrial Art*, Barbican Art Gallery (London, UK); *documental2* (Kassel, Germany); *Luis Jacob: Habitat*, Kunstverein in Hamburg (Hamburg, Germany); and *Haunted: Contemporary Photography/Video/Performance*, at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York). Luis Jacob is represented by Birch Libralato, Toronto.

Michelle Jacques is a Toronto-based curator and writer, and holds the position of Associate Curator, Contemporary Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Her recent projects include: *Sarah Anne Johnson: House on Fire* (2009); *At the Corner of Time and Place* (Nuit Blanche Zone B, Toronto, 2007); and *Luis Jacob: Habitat* (2005–2006). Her recent writings include "The Artist-run Centre as Tactical Training Unit," *decentre: concerning artist-run culture* (YYZ Books, 2008); and "Art and Institutions: An interview with Janna Graham and Anthony Kiendl," *Fuse Magazine*, September 2007. She sits on the board of Vtape, and is a contributing editor with *Fuse Magazine*.

Marisa Jahn is an artist/writer/community organizer. In 2009, Jahn co-founded REV-

(www.rev-it.org), a non-profit organization that fosters socially-engaged art, design, and pedagogy. Jahn received degrees from UC Berkeley and MIT. In 2004, she was recognized by UNESCO as a leading educator, and in 2009, she was artist-in-residence at MIT's Media Lab, and an artist-teacher with the Center for Urban Pedagogy. She is the co-editor of *Recipes for an Encounter, Byproduct: On the Excess of Embedded Art Practices* (2010), and *Where We Are Now: Locating Art and Politics in NYC* (www.wherewearenow.org). Presented internationally, her work has been featured in *Art in America*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Frieze*, *Punk Planet*, *Make Magazine*, *Discovery Channel*, and more.
www.marisajahn.com
www.rev-it.org

Janez Janša represents a younger generation of artists who problematize the field of painting by deconstructing its social context and the position of the viewer. The theme of his paintings is often the media, especially film, which continues to influence his perception today. The most radical exhibition of his work took place at the 2003 Venice Biennale, when he hung his paintings in the homes of temporary owners. The paintings had built-in cameras that transmitted images to the gallery in real time.

Janez Janša is an author, performer, and director whose work contains a strong critical and political dimension. His interdisciplinary performances such as *Miss Mobile, We Are All Marlene Dietrich For* (with Erna Omarsdóttir), *Pupilja*, and *Papa Pupilo*. He is author of the book *JAN FABRE – La Discipline du chaos, le chaos de la discipline* (Armand Colin, Paris 1994), and was editor-in-chief of a performing arts journal titled *MASKA*, from 1999 to 2006. He is currently the director of Maska Institute for publishing, production and education, based in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Janez Janša is a conceptual artist, performer, and producer. His work has a strong socio-political connotation, and is characterized by an inter-media approach. He is the author of numerous videos, performances, installations, documentaries, and media projects. Among them *I Need Money to Be an Artist* (1996), *Brainscore* (2000), *Problemarket.com* (2001), *machinaZOIS* (2003), *DemoKino – Virtual Biopolitical Agora* (2003–06), *Brainloop* (2006), *Signature Event Context* (2008), and *RE:akt!* (2006–2009). Janša has presented his work internationally. As artist-in-residence he lectures and leads workshops at universities and contemporary art institutes. He is the artistic director of Aksioma Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana, Slovenia.
www.aksioma.org

As an artist, curator and writer, **Tomas Jonsson** is interested in issues of social agency in processes of urban growth and

transformation. Tomas is pursuing a Masters in Environmental Studies at York University. In 2007–08, Tomas participated in the Border Cities Kolleg at the Bauhaus Institute in Dessau, Germany, where he developed projects with creative and precarious communities in Tallinn and Helsinki. Tomas has served on the board of *Fuse Magazine*, and is currently Programming Coordinator at EMMEDIA Gallery and Production Society in Calgary, Alberta.

Lev Kreft is the director of the Peace Institute – Institute for Social and Political Studies (Ljubljana), and Professor of Aesthetics at the University of Ljubljana. His main areas of research are aesthetics, philosophy of culture, sociology of culture, and the philosophy of sports.

Michelle Kuo is Senior Editor of *Artforum*. She is also a Ph.D. candidate at Harvard University in the History of Art and Architecture, writing a dissertation titled "To Avoid the Waste of a Cultural Revolution: Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), 1966–1979." Kuo has written extensively for publications including *Artforum*, *Bookforum*, *October*, and *The Art Bulletin* and is the author of "9 Evenings in Reverse," included in the exhibition catalogue, and *9 Evenings Reconsidered: Art, Theater, and Engineering* for the MIT List Visual Arts Center in 2006. She co-curated the exhibition *The Carpenter Center and Le Corbusier's Synthesis of the Arts* at Harvard's Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts in 2004, and lectures frequently on modern and contemporary art.

Lisa Larson-Walker was born in Chicago, and is a graduate of The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art. She currently lives and works in New York City, creating work ranging from the poetic interpretation of Lil' Wayne's verses, to measuring the kinetic energies of influence charging the levels of appropriation of Tatlin's Tower; ultimately as a means to situate cultural relationships otherwise immaterial. Manifest as an interdisciplinary practice through formal investigation and performative delineation, her work interrogates the intermingling of the historical, the fantastic, and the lyrical.

Adam Lauder is W.P. Scott Chair for Research in e-Librarianship at York University in Toronto, where he is developing an electronic catalogue raisonné devoted to IAIN BAXTER&. He is also curator of a travelling exhibition devoted to Canadian artist and advertising theorist Bertram Brooker, organized and circulated by the Art Gallery of Windsor, *It's Alive! Bertram Brooker and Vitalism*, which opens at Museum London in December 2010, and runs through May 2011. A chapter on the multidisciplinary Brooker authored by Lauder is featured in *The Logic of Nature, The Romance of Space*. His article on Canadian architect, sportsman, and visionary conservationist Percy Nobbs, "Bio-Political Landscapes: The

Preservation Tactics of Percy Nobbs," will be published in a forthcoming issue of the journal *Future Anterior*. Lauder is a regular contributor to the Toronto arts magazine *Hunter and Cook*.

Kristin Lucas creates video, installation, intervention, digital photographs, sculpture, and projects for the web. Positioning herself at the centre of her projects, Lucas' work addresses the digital realm from the perspective of its effect on human psychology. Transformation and portraiture are the focus of works set to the backdrop of empty and meaningful exchanges with automated tellers, healing arts therapists, police officers, celebrity impersonators, and a judge. Her works are represented by Postmasters Gallery, and her videos are distributed by Electronic Arts Intermix. Lucas is a faculty member of Bard College. She resides in Beacon, New York.

Steve Mann has written more than two hundred research publications, books, and patent applications, has been the keynote speaker at more than twenty-five scholarly and industry symposia and conferences, and has also been an invited speaker at more than fifty university Distinguished Lecture Series and colloquia. Mann is also a hydraulist, as well as the inventor (and patent holder) of the hydraulophone, the world's first water-based musical instrument. *The Globe and Mail*, *National Post*, and *Toronto Life* have all described him as "the world's first cyborg," from his early work with wireless wearable webcams. He received his Ph.D. degree from MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) in 1997, and is currently a tenured professor at University of Toronto.

Born in 1952, in Bogotá, Colombia, to Lithuanian immigrants, **Antanas Mockus** obtained a B.A. in Mathematics at the Université de Dijon, France, and an M.A. in Philosophy at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. As a professor and researcher at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, he became involved with more general issues related to teaching, pedagogy, and public education, which led him to occupy the positions of vice-chancellor (1988–1991), and chancellor (1991–1993) of the university. As president of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, he participated in the discussions and workshops for the creation of the 1991 Colombian Constitution, particularly on subjects related to public education. After leaving his post in 1993, he later that year ran a successful campaign for mayor of the city. Under Mockus' leadership, Bogotá saw remarkable improvements in a broad range of areas. In 2003, Mockus stepped down as mayor, and took a year's sabbatical, travelling and speaking around the world at venues including Harvard and Oxford universities. In 2010, Mockus ran as the Green Party candidate for President of Colombia and won nearly 30 percent of the vote.

Amish Morrell is Editor of *C Magazine*, a quarterly publication on contemporary

international art. He has a Ph.D. in Cultural Studies and Education from the University of Toronto, for which he wrote a dissertation looking at how contemporary artists address conceptions of community and identity through the restaging of historical images. Morrell has written for publications including *Art Book*, *Canadian Art*, *Ciel Variable*, and *Prefix Photo*, and teaches visual culture, the history of photography, art and activism, and cultural memory studies at the University of Toronto at Mississauga and OCAD University.

Joshua Moufawad-Paul is a Ph.D. candidate in Philosophy at York University who is poised to defend his thesis. His work focuses on critical historical materialist engagements with the social, and the dialectic of social being where humans are simultaneously creative producers and creatively produced within history and society. He has presented and published on such diverse subjects as: politics and art, anticolonial theory, and philosophical analyses of labour struggles. His authoritative article on social theorist Samir Amin will be published in the *Avenel Encyclopedia of Social Theory* in 2011.

Founded by Artistic Director **Darren**

O'Donnell, Mammalian Diving Reflex is a research-art atelier dedicated to investigating the social sphere, always on the lookout for contradictions to whip into aesthetically scintillating experiences, producing one-off events, theatre-based performance, videos, installation, theoretical texts, and community happenings. Past work includes: *Eat the Street*, *Haircuts by Children*, *The Children's Choice Awards*, *Slow Dance With Teacher*, *A Suicide-Site Guide to the City*, and *Old Women Shooting Guns*. Mammalian Diving Reflex's work has been presented around the world in Lahore, New York, Sydney, Birmingham, Portland, Vancouver, Chicago, Greensboro, Los Angeles, Montreal, Victoria, Calgary, Bologna, Terni, Oslo, and Trondheim.

Michael Page is a Professor at OCAD University. He is also a visiting professor at the Institute for Optical Sciences, University of Toronto. His interactive artworks have been exhibited around the world. He has received numerous grants as a researcher in the field of synthetic reality.

Kathleen Pirrie-Adams is an Assistant Professor of New Media at Ryerson University's School of Image Arts. Her writing explores the influence of popular culture, media, and technology on contemporary art and curatorial practice. Kathleen's Ph.D. research focuses on popular music museums, and their relationship to network technology and social media.

Reverend Billy (William Talen and Savitri D.) is a New York-based arts organization that uses theatre, humour, and grassroots organizing to advance communities towards an equitable future — starting today. Whether performing on the street, for film/tv/web, or in the theatre,

The Immediate Life's principal cast — The Church of Life After Shopping Gospel Choir, founder "Reverend" Billy Talen, and director Savitri D. — fosters a joyous atmosphere that converts the everyday person into a "believer" inspired towards change. Their strategy of partnering talented artists with grassroots communities and progressive practitioners produces informed campaigns that enact our organization's core values — participatory democracy, ecological sustainability, and vibrant communities in New York and abroad.

www.revbill.com

Pedro Reyes is an artist and architect whose work addresses the interplay of physical and social space. His work uses both formal and narrative methods to explore interpersonal relationships, as well as political and economical participation. He often relies on architecture, design, language, video, and group activities to examine the cognitive contradictions of modern life, and the possibility of increasing our individual and collective degree of agency. Reyes has exhibited in institutions throughout the world including: the Carpenter Center for Visual Arts at Harvard University; the MCA, Chicago; the San Francisco Art Institute; the Serpentine Gallery, London; CCA Kitakyushu, Japan; the Aspen Art Museum; the Reina Sofia, Madrid; the South London Gallery, UK; Yvon Lambert Gallery, NY and Paris; the Jumex Collection, Mexico City; P.S.1, New York; Witte de With, Rotterdam; the Shanghai Biennial; the Seattle Art Museum; The Reykjavik Art Museum, Iceland; and the Venice Biennial.

John Searle is the Willis S. and Marion Slusser Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley. He received his doctorate degree in Philosophy from the University of Oxford, where he taught before moving to Berkeley. Searle's work ranges broadly over philosophical problems of mind, language, and society. Recent books include: *Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization* (2010), *Mind: A Brief Introduction* (2004), *The Mystery of Consciousness* (1997), *Mind, Language and Society: Philosophy in the Real World* (1998), *Rationality in Action* (2001), *Liberté et Neurobiologie* (2004), and *The Construction of Social Reality* (1995). He teaches philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, and philosophy of social science; recent seminars topics include consciousness, free will, and rationality. He is the author of over twenty books and over two hundred articles, and his works have been translated into twenty-one languages.

Michel Serres was born in 1930 in Agen, France. In 1949, he went to naval college, and subsequently, in 1952, to the Ecole Normale Supérieure (rue d'Ulm). In 1955, he obtained an agrégation in philosophy, and from 1956 to 1958 he served on a variety of ships as a marine officer for the French national maritime service. His vocation of voyaging is, therefore, of more than academic import. In 1968, Serres gained a doctorate for a thesis on Leibniz's

philosophy. During the 1960s, he taught with Michel Foucault at the Universities of Clermont-Ferrand and Vincennes, and was later appointed to chair of the Department of History and Science at the Sorbonne, where he still teaches. Serres has also been a full professor at Stanford University since 1984, and he was elected to the French Academy in 1990. Through his explorations of the parallel developments of scientific, philosophical, and literary trends, Michel Serres has built a reputation as one of modern France's most gifted and original thinkers.

Josephine Berry Slater is editor of the culture and politics magazine *Mute*, and teaches on the practices of the culture industry, in the M.A. program at Goldsmiths. She completed her Ph.D. in Site-Specific Art on the Net, and is currently working on a lecture series plotting the development of biopolitical power against art's development of life as a medium and field of praxis.

Matthew Soules, MAIBC, is a licensed architect in Canada and the United States, and holds a Master of Architecture degree from Harvard University. He is the founding director of Matthew Soules Architecture (MSA) Inc., a Vancouver-based architecture, planning, and research firm. MSA's work has been widely published, and the firm won the Architectural Institute of British Columbia's "Emerging Firm Award" in 2010. Soules is an Assistant Professor at the University of British Columbia's School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture. His writing has been published in numerous periodicals and books, including *Harvard Design Magazine*, *Praxis*, 306090, and *Azure*.

Felicity Tayler is an artist, writer, and information professional. She holds a Masters degree in Library and Information Studies from McGill University, and a B.A. in Fine Arts from Concordia University. Her work has been shown nationally in solo and group exhibitions, supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, and her writing has been published in journals in Canada and the United Kingdom. In 2010, she will curate an exhibition on artists' publications at the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives. She is a founding member of the artists' collective Centre de recherche urbaine de Montréal (CRUM). Felicity Tayler's artistic practice employs an interdisciplinary approach combining training in visual arts (painting and drawing) with the competencies and theoretical framework of information science. She is interested in the use of visual representation as an information carrier, be it eighteenth century topographic watercolours, the output of 1960s office technology, or the present-day online communication through the portable document format. Felicity lives and works in Montreal, Quebec.
www.pictorialpropaganda.ca
www.crum.ca

The Yes Men are a pair of notorious troublemakers who sneak into corporate events disguised as captains of industry, then, use their momentary authority to expose the biggest criminals on the planet. The Yes Lab is a series of brainstorms and trainings to help progressive groups carry out projects in the style of The Yes Men on their own.

Born in Edmonton, Canada, in 1947, **Vincent Trasov** is a painter, video and performance artist. His work is often media based and collaborative in spirit, involved with developing networks, and the production and presentation of new art activities. In 1969, he founded Image Bank with Michael Morris, a method for personal exchange of information amongst artists. Trasov has made videotapes since 1971. In 1973, he was co-founder and co-director of Western Front Society, Vancouver; in 1969–1974 he assumed the identity of Mr. Peanut to research anthropomorphism and contemporary cultural mythology. He presently lives and works in Berlin and Vancouver.

Camille Turner is a Toronto-based artist and cultural producer who uses media and performance to build bridges across cultures and differences. Her performance work includes Miss Canadiana, a beauty queen on a 'round the world "Red, White and Beautiful" tour, challenging assumptions of Canadian identity and normative beauty. Her new Afro-futurist project, *The Final Frontier* is inspired by her experience in Lethbridge Alberta, and the alien landscape of the coulees. Camille is a founding member of the digital collective YZO, and a curator with Subtle Technologies, a festival that blurs the boundaries between art and science. She has presented her work nationally and internationally at numerous conferences, festivals, and exhibitions.

Etienne Turpin teaches architecture and visual studies at the University of Toronto, Canada. **DT Cochrane** is a Ph.D. candidate in Social and Political Thought at York University; he has presented his research on political economy throughout Canada and the United States. Together, Turpin and Cochrane work as freelance, political media analysts.

Merve Ünsal is an artist/writer based in New York. A native of Istanbul, Turkey, she has recently finished an Internet-based art project questioning the nature of airports and airport security. She is the co-editor of BoltArt.net, and is currently working on various writing and editing projects.

Pauline van Mourik Broekman is the publisher and co-founder of *Mute*, which she and Simon Worthington edited until 2004, and continue to work with as contributing editors. In addition to working on *Mute* projects, she has written and spoken widely on culture and technology, the politics of institution-building, and publishing magazines in the "digital era." She also co-authored "*Mute*" *Graphic*

Design (2008), a companion volume to *Proud to be Flesh*, published by Eight Books.

Stephen Wright is a Paris-based art theorist, writer, and Professor of Art Theory and History at the European School of Visual Arts (Angoulême/Poitiers). In 2004, he curated *The Future of the Reciprocal Readymade* (Apexart, New York); in 2005, *In Absentia* (Passerelle, Brest); in 2006, *Rumour as Media* (Aksanat, Istanbul), and *Dataesthetics* (WHW, Zagreb); and is currently preparing, amongst other projects, *Withdrawal: The Performative Document* (New York), as part of a series of exhibitions examining art practices with low coefficients of artistic visibility, which raise the prospect of art without artworks, authorship, or spectatorship. A former program director at the Collège International de Philosophie (2000–2007), and corresponding editor of *Parachute* magazine (1999–2005), he is currently on the editorial advisory committee of the journal *Third Text*. Born in 1963, in Vancouver, Canada, he lives and works in Paris.

NOTES

I. INTRODUCTION

EMBEDDING DIFFERENCE

BY MARISA JAHN AND L.M. BOGAD

1. Merriam-Webster Dictionary,
<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/system> (accessed 3/22/2010).

2. Quoted from e-mail correspondence with Turner in 2009.

3. Slavoj Žižek, The Plague of Fantasies. (London: Verso, 1997), 109

4. Roger Caillois, "Animal Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," Minotaure 7, 1935, reprinted as Roger Caillois, and trans. John Shepley, October, Vol. 31 (Winter 1984): 16–32.

5. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, One Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism & Schizophrenia, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 11.

6. Michel Serres, The Parasite, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007, originally published as Le Parasite, copyright Grasset & Fasquelle, 1980), 6.

7. Michel Serres, The Parasite, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007, originally published as Le Parasite, copyright Grasset & Fasquelle, 1980), 190.

8. Michel Foucault, "Subject and Power," in Michel Foucault: Power (New York: The New Press, 1994), 342. This interview between Paul Rabinow and Michel Foucault first appeared in Skyline, 1982.

9. Serres, xiii.

10. Jacques Derrida, Monolinguisim of the Other, or The Prostheisis of Origin, trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 24.

11. Darren O'Donnell, Social Acupuncture: A Guide to Suicide, Performance, and Utopia (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2006), 50.

12. John Hagel III and John Seely Brown, eds. "Productive Friction: A Catalyst for Leveraged Capability Building," in The Only Sustainable Edge: Why Business Strategy Depends on Productive Friction and Dynamic

Specialization (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2005), 101.

13. See introduction to D. Sommer, Bilingual Aesthetics.

14. Somner, Doris. Bilingual Aesthetics: A New Sentimental Education. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 60.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., 59.

17. Serres, 228.

18. See Roland Barthes, The Rustle of Language and The Pleasure of the Text.

19. John Searle, "What is an institution?" Journal of Institutional Economics (2005): 15.

20. Ibid., 22.

21. Ibid., 10.

22. Slavoj Žižek, "How did Marx Invent the Symptom?" in Mapping Ideology, ed. Slavoj Zizek (New York: Verso, 1994), 318.

23. Ibid., 318.

24. Ibid., 322.

WHAT IS AN INSTITUTION?

BY JOHN R. SEARLE

Notes:

1. I think in fact that all functions are assigned and thus all functions are observer relative, but the general point is not essential to this article; so I just state the obvious fact that assigned functions are relative to the assignment and hence observer relative.

2. One class of exceptions are honourific status functions, where the recipient has the honour or dishonour of the new status, but no real powers. Honourary degrees, knighthoods, presidential medals, and beauty contest victories are all examples.

References:

Hernando De Soto, The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

Lionel Robbins, An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1935).

John R. Searle, The Construction of Social Reality (London: Allen Lane, 1995).

John R. Searle, Rationality in Action (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

John R. Searle, "Collective Intentions and Actions," in P. Cohen, J. Morgan, and M. E. Pollack, eds., Intentions in Communication (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990); reprinted in John R. Searle, Consciousness and Language (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 80–105.

John R. Searle, Consciousness and Language (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 80–105.

SECTION II: PRODUCING & ITS BYPRODUCTS (ART & COMMERCE)

PREFACE TO PRODUCING & ITS BYPRODUCTS (ART & COMMERCE)

1. Adam Lauder, "N.E. Thing Co. Ltd.: From Soft Sell to Soft Skills," published in this volume.

2. Billy Klüver, "The Artist and Industry," a talk given at the Museum of Modern Art, December 16, 1968.

3. Billy Klüver, "The Artist and Industry," a talk given at the Museum of Modern Art, December 16, 1968.

4. <http://www.tate.org.uk/learning/artistsinfocus/apg/chronology.htm> (accessed 8/27/09).

5. Grant Kester, Conversation Pieces (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 106.

6. Taken from a series of conversations with Kent Hansen between 2008 and 2009.

7. Michel Serres, The Parasite, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007). Originally published as Le Parasite, (copyright Grasset & Fasquelle, 1980), 42–3.

8. Ibid., 43.

APG: LEGACIES AND AFTERMATHS
A CONVERSATION WITH CLAIRE BISHOP
AND STEPHEN WRIGHT
MODERATED/EDITORIALIZED BY
MARISA JAHN

1. Grant Kester describes as the hallmark of an “aesthetics of listening” – a paradigm that regards listening and understanding as a constitutive act, counterposed, in fact, to the Western emphasis on declaration and assertion. From Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces*. (Berkeley: University of California Press), 2004, 106.

2. Magnus Bärtås, “Talk Talk,” *Geist*, No. 11, 12, 14 (2007–2008).

3. Here, Stephen is referring to the folk etymology of the word “sabotage,” which was said to come from peasants in Lyon who would throw their clogs (or sabots) into mills to jam them and halt production.

N.E. THING CO. LTD.: FROM SOFT SELL TO SOFT SKILLS
BY ADAM LAUDER

1. Charles Leadbeater, *Living on Thin Air: The New Economy* (London: Viking, 1999), 18.

2. N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., “Position Statement,” in *You Are Now in the Middle of a N.E. Thing Co. Landscape*, ed. Nancy Shaw, Scott Watson, and William Wood (Vancouver: UBC Fine Arts Gallery, 1993), 43.

3. Ronald Basford, cited in Marie L. Fleming, *Baxter2: Any Choice Works* (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1982), 82.

4. Benjamin Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,” *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 128.

5. Ken Allan, “Business Interests, 1969–1971: N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., Les Levine, Bernar Venet and John Latham,” *Parachute* 106 (April 2002): 108.

6. Ibid.

7. Fritz Machlup, *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962); Daniel Bell,

The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting (New York: Basic Books, 1999 [1973]), 37; Frank Webster, *Theories of the Information Society*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 42.

8. N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., “Some Thoughts Re: Communications and Concepts,” in *You Are Now in the Middle of a N.E. Thing Co. Landscape*, 42.

9. N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., “Thoughts Re: Concepts, Art (If That’s the Proper Word), Communications, Media, Anything,” in *Information*, ed. Kynaston McShine (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1970), 89.

10. IAIN BAXTER& in Susan Paynter, “Doing N.E. Thing for Gross National Good,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* (June 21, 1970): 1.

11. N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., “Articles of Incorporation,” *The British Columbia Gazette* (January 30, 1969): page unavailable.

12. Lucy R. Lippard, “Iain Baxter: New Spaces,” *artscanada* (June 1969): 3.

13. W. Terence Gordon, *Marshall McLuhan: Escape Into Understanding* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1997), 168.

14. Ibid, 169.

15. Ibid, 268–69.

16. Marshall McLuhan and Barrington Nevitt, *Take Today: The Executive as Dropout* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), 13.

17. William Wood, “Capital and Subsidiary: The N.E. Thing Co. and the Revision of Conceptual Art,” in *You Are Now in the Middle of a N.E. Thing Co. Landscape*, 11–23.

18. McLuhan and Nevitt, *Take Today*, 22.

19. N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., “DPMA Brochure,” 1970.

20. BAXTER&, interview with the author, October 6, 2009.

21. McLuhan, Marshall, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

22. Christopher May, *The Information Society: A Sceptical View* (Malden:

Polity, 2002), 63. Christophe Domino has compared BAXTER&s outlook to the anti-heroic stance of Swiss writer Rober Walser (1878–1956). Walser’s poignant portraits of service workers, *The Assistant*, and “The Job Application,” document the pre-history of the organizational behaviours explored by N.E. Thing Co. Ltd. and BAXTER&. Christophe Domino, “Formalism of the Informal,” in *Passing Through: IAIN BAXTER& Photographs, 1958–1983*, ed. Art Gallery of Windsor (Windsor, ON: Art Gallery of Windsor, 2006), 47; Robert Walser, *The Assistant*, trans. Susan Bernofsky (New York: New Directions, 2007 [1908]); Robert Walser, “The Job Application,” in Robert Walser, *Selected Stories*, trans. Christopher Middleton, (New York: New York Review of Books, 2002 [1914]), 27–28.

23. Maurice Tuchman, *Art & Technology: A Report on the Art & Technology Program of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967–1971* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1971), 21.

24. Ibid.

25. “While informational jobs (from ‘symbolic analysts’ to all manner of ‘professions’) may be increasing, these are very different from jobs which involve the delivery of personal services to clients (based on the skills and knowledge of individuals). These latter services are not traded internationally or even transregionally, but rather represent localized economic relations (from hairdressers and plumbers, to garden designers and personal trainers). These jobs are much less revolutionary than the examples often presented as typical of the information age, but represent a larger segment of the employed population, especially if transport and distribution services are included.” May, *The Information Society*, 59.

26. BAXTER& in Paynter, “Doing N.E. Thing for Gross National Good,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* (June 21, 1970): 6.

27. BAXTER& in White, “Iain Baxter/N.E. Thing Co.,” 18.

28. Joan Lowndes, “N.E. Thing Company Sells Art to Businessmen,” *Vancouver Sun* (June 4, 1970): 41.

29. N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., “We Consult with 1% of You.” Consulting and promotion material, 1970.

30. AA Bronson, From Sea to Shining Sea (Toronto: The Power Plant, 1987), 48.
31. Paynter, "N.E. Thing Can Happen When You Meet Iain Baxter," 7.
32. The post-conference sale of the punch card to late Seattle collector Anne Gerber repaid company expenses. The work subsequently entered the collection of the Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington as a gift from Gerber. The interest in service environments evinced by BAXTER& dovetailed into the ecological concerns of the artist, discussed by Christophe Domino (2006), and others.
33. Moira Farrow, "'Machinery can be fun': N.E. Thing Co. Invades the Computer World," Vancouver Sun (June 3, 1970): 36.
34. BAXTER& in White, "Iain Baxter/N.E. Thing Co.," 18.
35. Data Processing Management Association, "Seminar Series Schedule," Data Management 8, no. 6 (June 1970): 54–57.
36. Andrew Crosby, Creativity and Performance in Industrial Organization, (London: Tavistock, 1968), xiii.
37. William J.J. Gordon, Synectics: The Development of Creative Capacity (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 3.
38. Gordon, Synectics, 78.
39. Gordon, Synectics, 57.
40. Gordon, Synectics, 4.
41. BAXTER& in White, "Iain Baxter/N.E. Thing Co.," 11; BAXTER& in Shona McKay, "A Boardroom Iconoclast," Maclean's 96 (September 19, 1983): 58.
42. Gordon, Synectics, 60.
43. BAXTER& in White, "Iain Baxter/N.E. Thing Co.," 15. It is notable that Synectics emphasized the metaphoric capacity of concepts derived from the biological and zoological sciences, the very disciplines which served as BAXTER&’s introduction to the world of art: "the richest source of Direct Analogy is biology," Lowndes (February 3, 1967): 3; Gordon, Synectics, 56.
44. BAXTER& in Paul Grescoe, "Steady, Now. Is This Art?" Star Weekly (February 1, 1969): 15.
45. Ibid.
46. Paynter, "N.E. Thing Can Happen When You Meet Iain Baxter," 7.
47. William J. Horne to IAIN BAXTER&, July 9, 1970.
48. N.E. Thing Co. in Shaw, "Siting the Banal: The Extended Landscapes of the N.E. Thing Co.," in You Are Now in the Middle of a N.E. Thing Co. Landscape, 25.
49. BAXTER&, interview with the author, October 6, 2009.
50. Art Perry, "Baxter's Magic: It's All Done with Mirrors," The Province (December 13, 1981): 6.
51. BAXTER& in David Miller, "Is This a Nut or a Genius?" Toronto Star (October 2, 1983): D2.
52. Alfred Jaeger in Shona McKay, "A Boardroom Iconoclast," 58.
53. Lippard, "New Spaces," 6.
54. Luis Camnitzer, Jane Farver, Rachel Weiss, László Beke, Queens Museum of Art, et al., Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s–1980s (New York: Queens Museum of Art, 1999).
55. Ingrid Baxter in Fleming, Baxter, 2, 36.
56. BAXTER& in White, "Iain Baxter/N.E. Thing Co.," 17.
57. Yann Toma, and Rose Marie Barrientos, Les entreprises critiques = Critical Companies (Saint-Etienne: Cité du design, 2008).
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- BEGINNING 9 EVENINGS**
BY MICHELLE KUO
1. A version of this section on 9 Evenings appeared as Michelle Kuo, "9 Evenings in Reverse," 9 Evenings Reconsidered: Art, Theater, and Engineering, 1966, Catherine Morris, ed., exh. cat. (Cambridge: MIT List Visual Arts Center, 2006), 31–44.
 2. Billy Klüver, "The Great Northeastern Power Failure" (January 28, 1966), lecture given at the College Art Association annual meeting. For manuscript, see Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 3, Folder 2.
3. Harriet DeLong, "Origin," unpublished manuscript on 9 Evenings, (December 1966), Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 1, Folder 3. DeLong had been hired to interview participants and assemble information for a book on 9 Evenings, to be published by MIT Press, and edited by Brian O'Doherty. The book was never published; drafts and an incomplete manuscript, however, are extant in the E.A.T. archives.
4. Steve Paxton, "Notes On Ideas For First Meeting" (January 14, 1966), Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 1, Folder 3. As Klüver asked of Pierce "The artists in the Stockholm Festival project have increasingly been asking about the possibility of making use of Telstar, Early Bird, or some transatlantic TV communication. Cage and Fahlstrom have definite suggestions on how to use it. It has also been proposed that a performance could be put on in New York, and thus be part of the Festival via the satellite transmission. I understand that Comsat is in charge of the satellite transmission. Do you think it would be conceivable that Bell Telephone or AT&T could sponsor a national TV program from the Festival in Stockholm with parts of it coming from New York? The artists could then make a specific theatre piece (15–20 min.) to fit this situation. The program could also include interviews with you, McLuhan, Cage, and some Swede. I do not believe there would be any difficulty in getting Eurovision to relay the program in Europe." Billy Klüver, letter to John R. Pierce, (April 8, 1966), 9 Evenings Documents, The Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art, Science, and Technology, Montreal, Accession no. D 8966, C1–27.
5. Deborah Hay, unpublished interview with Simone Forti, "9 Evenings Interview Transcripts" (March 16, 1966), Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 3, Folder 15.
6. DeLong, "Origin," n.p.; see also Fylkingen, "To the American Artists," letter to Klüver, et al. (July 22, 1966), n.p., Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 1, Folder 10.

7. E.A.T. News 1, no. 3 (November 1, 1967), n.p.
8. Engineer Herbert Schneider discussed the parameters of the Armory in his document on specifications for Open Score. Herbert Schneider, "A Systems Approach to Bob Rauschenberg's Open Score," n.d., Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 1, Folder 8.
9. Billy Klüver, memorandum (August 16, 1966), Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 1, Folder 3.
10. Harriet DeLong, "Notes for 9 Evenings manuscript" (December 1966), Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 1, Folder 3.
11. Ibid.
12. Fred Waldhauer, memorandum, schematics, and handwritten notes, "Proportional Control System for the Festival of Art and Engineering" (1966), 9 Evenings Documents, The Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art, Science, and Technology, Montreal, Accession no. 9, EVE 00032686.
13. Clarisse Bardiot, "The Diagrams of 9 Evenings," trans. Claire Grace, 9 Evenings Reconsidered: Art, Theater, and Engineering, 1966, Catherine Morris, ed., exh. cat. (Cambridge: MIT List Visual Arts Center, 2006), 45–51. As Bardiot writes, "engineers and artists involved in 9 Evenings utilized some of the fundamental principles and logic of computer science: programming, data storing, shifts between one media form and another, random logic, combinatorics, etc." Ibid., 51.
14. Remarking on this potentially overly elaborate approach to the programming of the system, Bjorn continued, "which would have been fine, if the performances had been going on [a long time] ... but since there were only two shows... we should have spent less time on that." Vincent Bonin and Eric Legendre, Interview with Per Bjorn, 9 Evenings Documents, The Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art, Science, and Technology, Montreal.
15. Clarisse Bardiot and Catherine Morris, "Interview with Herb Schneider," 9 Evenings Reconsidered: Art, Theater, and Engineering, 1966, Catherine Morris, ed., exh. cat. (Cambridge: MIT List Visual Arts Center, 2006), 55–57.
16. Herbert Schneider, "The Performance Problem and a System Solution," n.d., Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 1, Folder 4.
17. Prescott C. Mabon, Mission Communications: The Story of Bell Laboratories (Murray Hill, NJ: Bell Telephone Laboratories, 1975), 71–72.
18. Klüver, quoted in Douglas Davis, "Billy Klüver: The Engineer as a Work of Art," Art and the Future (New York: Praeger, 1973), 145. Alex Hay also remembers Klüver relating this idea as they were working on 9 Evenings.
19. Dick Wolff, unpublished interview with Simone Forti, "9 Evenings Interview Transcripts," (November 11, 1966), Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 3, Folder 15.
20. Simone [Forti] Whitman, "A View of 9 Evenings: Theater and Engineering," (1966), unpublished manuscript, 20, Experiments in Art and Technology Records, Getty Research Institute, Accession no. 940003, Box 2, Folder 16.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., 28.
24. John Gruen, "Nine Evenings: First a Bore," World Journal Tribunal, (October 14, 1966); Clive Barnes, "Happening: Ineffable Night at the Armory," The New York Times (October 17, 1966). For other like-minded – and equally amusing – reports, see: "A Good Janitor Becomes as Important as a Curator," Life (August 12, 1966); "Whatever it Was, it Wasn't Fun," The Village Voice XII, no. 1 (October 20, 1966); Patrick O'Connor, "'Theater, Engineering, Less Than Pleasing,'" The Jersey Journal (October 17, 1966); Anne Jensen, "Nine Evenings of Nothing: Art as Tedium," Manhattan East (October 20, 1966); "Disharmony at the Armory," Glueck, The New York Times, (October 30, 1966): 29. Glueck strung together the following opprobrium from audience reactions: "'Boring,' 'feeble,' 'dull,' 'vilely done,'" while Barnes wrote, "God bless American art, but God help American science!"
25. I refer not only to Guy Debord's theorization of "spectacle," but to the particular moment of intense, historical pressure around 1966–67 when, as Frederic Jameson argues, "postmodern" conditions of spectacle, simulacrum, and the conflation of forms of high and mass culture transform into a "cultural dominant, with a precise socioeconomic functionality." Frederic Jameson, "Periodizing the Sixties," Social Text 9/10 (Spring/Summer 1984): 196. See also Jonathan Crary, "Eclipse of the Spectacle," in Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation, Brian Wallis, ed., (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), 291–292.
26. Brian O'Doherty, "New York: 9 Armored Nights," Art and Artists 1, no. 9 (December 1966): 14–17.
27. John Cage, unpublished manuscript, Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 1, Folder 11.
28. On this shift, see Branden W. Joseph, "Robert Morris and John Cage: Reconstructing a Dialogue," October 81 (Summer 1997): 69. Cage's own early delineation of chance used in composition versus indeterminacy with respect to performance is explained in Cage, "Composition as Process: Indeterminacy" (1958), Silence (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 35–40.
29. "I remember there was a special mixer I worked on – a long strip with about twenty knobs, and an input for each one. It came up after John Cage described his piece, but he didn't understand it had linear potentiometers rather than logarithmic pots [potentiometers], so the volume wouldn't work with a twist of a knob the way he thought. I was in the control booth, and I wish I had gone out and taken part in the performance, and told him what was wrong... It's unfortunate he never had an opportunity to experiment with it." Cecil Coker, unpublished interview with Harriet DeLong (March 1973), Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 1, Folder 37.
30. Cage had collaborated with Klüver and Coker the previous year for his Variations V (1965), where Merce Cunningham's dancers triggered sounds

by movement. For a subsequent view of the impact of electronic technology on musical practice and notation, see John Cage, *Notations* (New York: Something Else Press, 1969), n.p.

31. Simone Whitman, "Nine Evenings: Notes of a Participant," *Artforum* 5, no. 6 (February 1967): 28.

32. David Tudor, "Bandoneon ! Pre- and Post-Operative Note" (1973), unpublished manuscript, Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 1, Folder 9.

33. Ibid. Emphasis added.

34. Ibid. In the same manuscript, Tudor pronounces that "9 Evenings bent the concepts of systems engineering... celebrating the arrival of technology rather than using it."

35. Ian Hacking, "How Should We Do the History of Statistics?" in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmental Rationality*, eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 194. Hacking writes, "The erosion of determinism, and the taming of chance by statistics does not introduce a new liberty. The argument that indeterminism creates a place for free will is a hollow mockery. The bureaucracy of statistics imposes not just by creating administrative rulings, but by determining classifications within which people must think of themselves and of the actions that are open to them."

36. Klüver, quoted in Douglas Davis, "Billy Klüver: The Engineer as a Work of Art," in *Art and the Future* (New York: Praeger, 1973), 145. Alex Hay also remembers Klüver relating this idea as they were working on 9 Evenings.

37. Many of the original members of Fluxus had met in the late 1950s, through Cage's course in experimental composition at the New School. Key Fluxus texts on chance include: *Anthology of Chance Operations*, LaMonte Young, ed., (New York: LaMonte Young and George Maciunas, 1962); George Brecht, *Chance Imagery*, (1957), (New York: Something Else Press, 1966).

38. Klüver, "The Great Northeastern Power Failure."

39. Per Biorn, interview with Vincent Bonin and Eric Legendre (August 24, 2004), video recording, 9 Evenings Documents, The Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art, Science, and Technology, Montreal, Accession Number?.

40. Rauschenberg viewed his collaboration with engineers as an extension of this logic of sameness: "I think that one works with information as though it were a material. I think that somehow it is richer if you are in a live collaboration with the material; that's our relationship to the engineers." Rauschenberg, quoted in Richard Kostelanetz, "Conversation with Robert Rauschenberg," in The Theater of Mixed-Means (New York: The Dial Press, 1968), 98.

41. Judith Rodenbeck, "Madness and Method: Before Theatricality," in Grey Room 13 (Fall 2003): 54–79. Rodenbeck links Kaprow's strategy of objectification to Cage's interpretation of Antonin Artaud's "Theater of Cruelty," among other theatrical discourses.

42. L.J. Robinson, "At the Armory," unpublished manuscript, Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 1, Folder 14.

43. Larry Heilos, "Infrared TV," unpublished manuscript, Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 1, Folder 8. Heilos relates how he had to obtain the infrared cameras from an international distributor; none were commercially available in the United States.

Robert Breer, whose own extraordinary filmmaking skills were put to use as cameraman for the piece, said of the infrared technology, "The nice thing about the infrared is the memory of it. You can have a hold on some people and burn them in to the image, and they can walk away without their skins and come back again." Robert Breer, interview with Harriet DeLong, (February 1973), Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 1, Folder 37.

44. As Peter Galison has argued, for example, Norbert Wiener's cybernetics (developed as a way of predicting the actions of an enemy fighter pilot during World War II) posited the subject as servomechanism, a self-regulating

machine whose future movements could be predicted through the calculation of feedback. Galison, "The Ontology of the Enemy: Norbert Wiener and the Cybernetic Vision," *Critical Inquiry* 21 (Autumn 1994): 228–266.

45. The text, partially read out loud during Fahlström's performance, was published in full by Dick Higgins' Something Else Press that year. Oyvind Fahlström, "Take Care of the World," in Manifestos (New York: Something Else Press, 1966), 11.

46. Michael Kirby's riveting experience as a participant in Yvonne Rainer's Carriage Discreteness revealed this antagonism in the relation between audience and performer. At the end of Rainer's first performance, the audience had grown increasingly bored, and began to shout, clap, and stamp on the wooden bleachers. "Soon," Kirby related, "it seemed that all one thousand five hundred people in the audience were venting their anger at us." Rainer directed Kirby to move toward the audience: "I had the impulse to turn my back, but that seemed like a cowardly thing to do. I folded my arms and stared at the clamorous packed stands, at least trying to indicate that I believed in Yvonne and what she was trying to do. They were exceedingly uncomfortable moments for all of us. At last the noise subsided, but one could not help but feel that simplistic notions of 'audience participation' were being promulgated far too widely." Michael Kirby, "Environmental Theater," in The Art of Time (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968), 152.

47. Steve Paxton, unpublished statement for 9 Evenings book manuscript, Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 1, Folder 5.

48. Robinson, "At the Armory."

49. L.J. Robinson, cited in DeLong, "Origin," n.p.

50. Gruen, "Nine Evenings: First a Bore." Gruen prefaced this statement with his expectations of being "shook up": "Never one to avoid getting his sensibilities all shook up, yours truly was right in there with the rest of the 'cattle' but, like them, he was soon making chit-chat rather than throbbing to a new experience."

51. As Paxton astonishingly wrote a year later, in an article co-authored with L.J. Robinson, "It seems to me like the aesthetics tend toward a modest use of new materials, and really a kind of an ambiguity of focus, let alone of use, to not make them especially spectacular. Now our presenting the stuff you guys made for us in that way made it even more invisible than it was. If you do something with the wireless, and it doesn't show at all except maybe to signal a dancer to move, I mean the dancer could have been signaled any other way. And I think that's a large part of the reason for the press – they just couldn't see it. Although if it had happened in some other way, it would have looked different, but they would have nothing to compare it with, and they never will in new art and they haven't gotten used to it... it's like we're in the process of invention, of like a social tool, and invention is a twenty-four-hour a day job." Steve Paxton and L.J. Robinson, "Art and Technology: A Dialogue," *IKON* 1, no. 1 (February 1967): 21–22.
52. Lucy Lippard, "Total Theater?," *Art International* (January 20, 1967): 42.
53. Klüver, quoted in Grace Glueck, "The Sounds that Mushrooms Make," *The New York Times* (October 2, 1966).
54. Marcel Duchamp, "The Creative Act" (1957), *The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, Michel Sanouillet, and Elmer Peterson, eds., (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), 138. See also Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Ready-Made, Objet Trouvé, Idée Reçue," in *Dissent: The Issue of Modern Art in Boston* (Boston: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1986), 106–122.
55. David Bourdon, interview with Simone Forti (October 11, 1966), *Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997*, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 1, Folder 39.
56. Lippard, "Total Theater?," 39.
57. Samuel Weber, "Television: Set and Screen," in *Mass Mediauras: Form, Technics, Media* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 117–118, 120.
58. The "performers" in the piece included Terry Riley, Les Levine, Toby Mussman, Robert Breer, Jane Kramer, Elaine Sturtevant, John Giorno, and Trisha Brown.
59. As Whitman said, "Television is a great way to collect stuff." Robert Whitman, interview with Simone Forti, n.d., *Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997*, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 1, Folder 39.
60. Weber, "Television: Set and Screen," 125.
61. Allan Kaprow, *Assemblage, Environments and Happenings* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1966), 340–41.
62. The intersection of television and the huge scale of the audience also cleaved *9 Evenings* from early Fluxus projects (the later work of Nam June Paik is an important exception). Known for his curious objects approaching, yet defying commodity status, George Maciunas never actually dispersed these ersatz products at mass scale. As Robert Watts explained, Maciunas was a "cottage industry of one person...[Fluxus] has a personal philosophy directed toward a mass audience, but not the get-up-and-go to do it." The event score or Fluxus object remained strongly linked to private experience. Robert Watts, quoted in interview with Larry Miller, "Robert Watts: Scientific Monk," in *Experiments in the Everyday: Allan Kaprow and Robert Watts – Events, Objects, Documents*, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and Judith Rodenbeck, eds., (New York: Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, 2000), 92.
63. Deborah Hay, unpublished manuscript, *Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997*, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 1, Folder 7. The "conductor" for a group handling the remote controls was James Tenney; this set of "controllers" sat apart from the twenty-four performers who moved about the space in concert with the moving platforms. As Hay described the piece, "The remote controlled platforms, co-designed by Larry Heilos and Witt Wittnebert, were created to help achieve the effect of smoothness. The platforms could carry a performer absolutely still, all through the space... I decided that the platform should, therefore, operate similarly to the performer. The speed was equal to his walking rate, a platform would act on a performer by approaching him, stopping, and thereby signaling him to get on. There were eight square platforms, 26 x 26 x 12 inches made of wood, not unlike the floor."
- But as Wittnebert recounted, "The cars were controlled by FM radio, with a small receiver on each car feeding a decoder circuit that operated the relays built in the cars. Due to the small signal available and the characteristics of FM the cars were difficult to control."
- Witt Wittnebert, cited in DeLong, "Deborah Hay: Solo," unpublished manuscript on *9 Evenings*, (December 1966), *Experiments in Art and Technology Records 1966–1997*, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Accession no. 940003, Box 1, Folder 7.
64. Rainer's sixty-seven step-sequence of events concerning the set (directions for lights, projectors, props, etc.) is detailed in *Yvonne Rainer, Work 1961–1973* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1974), 303–306. See also the transcription of the audio recording of spoken instructions (as performed by Robert Morris) on October 21, 1966, conducted by Vincent Bonin, *9 Evenings Documents*, The Daniel Langlois Foundation for Art, Science, and Technology, Montreal. The audio recording is stored at the Archiv Sohm, Stuttgart, Germany.
65. On Rainer's aesthetic of negation, her refusal of the dramatic posturing of modern dance, see Carrie Lambert, "Moving Still: Mediating Yvonne Rainer's 'Trio A,'" *October* 89 (Summer 1999), 87–112; Lambert, *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008).
66. Whitman, "Nine Evenings: Notes of a Participant," 30. In a subsequent article in *Arts Magazine* (that focused on the sculpture of Robert Morris and on Warhol's *Chelsea Girls*), Rainer herself alluded to this experience, and its impact on her conception of negation and withdrawal in performance: "Complicated by unique problems of production and collaboration, such an article [on Carriage Discreteness] would have to deal not only with what I think was seen, but with the distance (which everyone connected with the Armory shebang had to traverse) between initial fantasies (fantastic as well as modest), and the Second-Greatest-Show-On-Earth aspects in re-tracing that trajectory for myself. However, I do wish to say one thing, or rather pose a question: Have I (along with

other people working in theater today) created ‘theater-objects’ that don’t look back at the audience (therefore, making ‘excessive’ demands on them), and if so, how is that possible where human performance is involved?” Yvonne Rainer, “Don’t Give the Game Away,” *Arts Magazine* 41, no. 6 (April 1967): 47.

67. As noted previously, Rauschenberg’s own works incorporating technology (contemporaneous with *9 Evenings*) have faced similar judgments of being too dull, mechanically simple, “switch-like,” instrumentalizing their relation to the spectator. See for example Leo Steinberg, “Other Criteria,” in *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 81. In fact, most of these pieces did not work well or function smoothly, stymieing any easy exchange between spectator and work.

68. Johnston began, “[t]he show itself was a failure, but the idea will live on... In my view this collaboration [between artists and scientists] is essential in a crumbling democracy. And I think the future will exonerate a festival that needed more money and time to be successful.” Jill Johnston, “Post-Mortem,” *The Village Voice*, (December 15, 1966).

69. Jonas Mekas, “Movie Journal,” *The Village Voice*, (October 27, 1966).

MANIFESTO BY E.A.T. – BILLY KLÜVER/ ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG (1967)

Courtesy of Billy Klüver. Published by E.A.T. News (New York, United States). <http://www.fondation-langlois.org/html/e/page.php?NumPage=237> (accessed 8/31/09).

A SPECTRUM OF ARTISTS’ PLACEMENTS, AND FELICITY TAYLER’S ACCOUNTS FOR BYPRODUCTS

BY MARISA JAHN

1. Examples include the Los Angeles County Museum of Art’s Artist in Residency Program (1968), the Media Lab at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) (1985), the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at MIT, Xerox Parc’s Artist in Residency Program (1993–99), various residencies by corporations such as Kohler (best

known for its manufacture of plumbing fixtures), organizations that receive funds from governmental and corporate sources such as Disonancias (Spain, 2006), and more.

2. Examples include the ongoing and multi-partite *The Touch Sanitation* project by Mierle Ukeles, produced during a residency she began in 1970, in New York’s Department of Sanitation; *Public Smog*, a project by Amy Balkin, whose goal to create a universally-sanctioned park in the air involves working with international agencies such as the United Nations; various projects by Raphaëlle de Groot, Maureen Connor, and many others.

OF ECONOMIC CONCERNS

BY PAUL ARDENNE

1. Orlan presented *Baiser de l’artiste* at the International Fair in Paris, 1977. Disguised as a saint of the Catholic Church, she kissed anyone who would pay, men and women alike. Many people thought it was fun and stated they had no regret for the price spent, however modest. Alberto Sorbelli, a provocative transvestite, strutted through private art exhibitions, even the galleries of the Musée du Louvre, selling his charms to anyone who expressed a desire to sample his goods.

2. On these ideas, refer to John Latham, *The Incidental Person – His Art and Ideas* (London: Middlesex University Press, 1995), 97.

3. On the concept of the “incidental person” see Paul Ardenne “L’art ‘contextuel’, ou comment annexer la réalité,” and “Un art contextual – Crédit artistique en milieu urbain, en situation d’intervention, de participation” (Paris: Flammarion, 2002), 16.

4. Duchamp issues this financial document to pool his funds in order to test a gambling method he had invented. The betting system, failing to render the anticipated martingale, was cut short.

5. The principle of the Tobin tax (which received a Nobel Prize for Economics) heatedly debated at the beginning of the twenty-first century: taxation of stock market transactions, transactions that accelerate globalization. Linux, a computer software operating system, much like

Copyleft, are guided by a principle of information sharing (Share Economy), a denunciation of private property, and share the same backdrop of activism focusing on copyright freedoms.

6. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliot (New York: Verso, 2007). The impact of this publication, equally considerable in the economic arena and the art world. The original text is *Le nouveau esprit du Capitalisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999).

7. David Perreau, “Gilles Mahé: toujours copié, jamais égale,” in exhibition catalogue, *Trans_actions – Les nouveaux commerces de l’art* (Rennes, France: University of Rennes Press, 2000), 28.

8. Marc-Olivier Wahler, “Rapports d’entreprises,” *Art Press* 230 (Paris: December 1997), 40.

9. In Ingénieur, 108–109, cited by Dalia Judovitz, “L’Art et l’Économie: de l’Urinoir à la Banque,” in *Déplier Duchamp: passages de l’art*, trans. Annick Delahèque and Frédérique Joseph (Villeneuve d’Ascq, France: Presses universitaires de Septentrion, 2000), 151–181. In 1965, Marcel Duchamp creates yet another counterfeit cheque; a blank cheque, this time signed with his own name, and payable to the order of “Philipp Bruno,” cashable at the “Mona Lisa Bank.”

LE SOUCI DE L’ÉCONOMIE

BY PAUL ARDENNE

1. Orlan présente le *Baiser de l’artiste* lors de la Foire internationale d’art contemporain de Paris, en 1977. Déguisée en sainte de l’Église catholique, elle embrasse quiconque la paye, homme comme femme. Beaucoup déclarent y avoir trouvé du plaisir et ne regrettent pas leur mise, modeste il est vrai. Alberto Sorbelli, travesti de manière provocante, arpente les vernissages d’exposition ou les galeries du Louvre, et monnaye ses charmes auprès de quiconque exprime le souhait d’en profiter.

2. Sur ces points, voir John A. Walker, *John Latham – The Incidental Person – His Art and Ideas*, Londres, Middlesex University Press, 1995, chap. 13, p. 97 sqq.

3. Sur le concept de « personnalité incidente » (*incidental person*), voir Paul Ardenne, « L'art "contextuel", ou comment annexer la réalité », *Un art contextuel – Crédit à l'artiste en milieu urbain, en situation, d'intervention, de participation*, Paris, Flammarion, 2002, p. 16 sqq.

4. Duchamp émet ce document financier pour réunir des fonds afin de tester une méthode de paris dont il est l'inventeur. Le système, faute d'autoriser la martingale espérée, tournera court.

5. Le principe de la taxe Tobin (du nom d'un prix Nobel d'économie), largement discuté au tout début du 21^e siècle : la taxation des transactions boursières, transactions qui amplifie la mondialisation. Linux, système informatique d'exploitation logicielle, tout comme le copyleft, s'inspirent d'un principe de partage de l'information (*Share Economy*) et d'un refus de la propriété, le tout sur fond de militantisme pour la liberté des droits.

6. Luc Boltanski et Ève Chiapello, *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*, Paris, Gallimard, 1999. L'impact de cette publication, considérable dans le monde économique, l'est aussi dans le monde artistique.

7. David Perreau, « Gilles Mahé : toujours copié, jamais égalé », in cat. de l'exposition *Trans actions ou Les nouveaux commerces de l'art*, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2000, p. 28.

8. Marc-Olivier Wahler, « Rapports d'entreprises », *Art press*, n° 230, décembre 1997, p. 40.

9. In *Ingénieur*, p. 108–109, cité par Dalia Judovitz, *Déplier Duchamp : passages de l'art*, trad. Annick Delahèque et Frédérique Joseph, Villeneuve d'Ascq, Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2000, ch. 4, « L'Art et l'Économie : de l'Urinoir à la Banque » (sur Duchamp et l'argent, voir notamment p. 151–181). En 1965, Marcel Duchamp réalise un autre faux chèque, en blanc celui-là, signé de son nom à l'ordre de « Philipp Bruno ». Le montant en est cette fois illimité et il est négociable à la banque « Mona Lisa ».

COL-LABOR-ATÉ?*
A CONVERSATION WITH KENT HANSEN
BY MARISA JAHN

1. Paraphrasing Maurizio Lazzarato from his publication entitled “Biopower to Biopolitics,” in *Pli, The Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 13 (2002): 99–113.

PERSONNEL
A CONVERSATION WITH MAUREEN CONNOR

1. Andrea Fraser in Alexander Alberro, ed., *Museum Highlights: the Writings of Andrea Fraser*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005), 48.
2. Brian Holmes, *A Rising Tide of Contradiction: Museums in the Age of the Expanding Workfare State*, <http://www.republicart.net> (accessed 8/1/06).
3. Michael Corris and Charlie Gere, “Non-Relational Aesthetics,” in *Transmission: The Rules of Engagement* (London: Artwords Press, 2008), 16.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

SECTION III: PERFORMING POLITICS

PREFACE TO PERFORMING POLITICS
BY MARISA JAHN

1. See Tejpal S. Ajii's essay in this book entitled, “Isotopes and Our Radioactive Modernity.”
2. Ibid., 191.
3. L.M. Bogad, *Electoral Guerrilla Theatre: Radical Ridicule and Social Movements* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 3.
4. Ibid., 2–3.
5. Ibid., 4.
6. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 38.
7. Ibid., 177.
8. Jela Krečič, “Janez Janša as Media

Phenomenon,” in *NAME Readymade*, (Ljubljana, Slovenia: Moderna galerija, 2008), 179.

9. Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, 38.
10. Serres, xv.
11. Ibid., xvii and 20.

12. Quoted from a characterization of John Latham's definition of the “Incidental Person” by Peter Eleey in this volume.

“REFRESH”: KRISTIN LUCAS ON THE MULTIPLICITY OF THE SELF
INTERVIEW WITH KRISTIN LUCAS
BY MARISA JAHN

1. <http://www.coldbacon.com/writing/borges-quixote.html>
2. Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 149–181.
3. Sean Cubitt, “Cybertime: Ontologies of Digital Perception,” Society for Cinema Studies Chicago, March 2000. <http://eprints.infoiv.unimelb.edu.au/00003161/01/cybertime.html> (accessed 11/6/10).
4. Ibid.

5. *The Subversion of Standstill*, “Call for Proposals,” published by ACC Weimar and the City of Weimar to announce its 12th Annual International Artists Studio Program, 2006. <http://www.acc-weimar.de/studio/progs/prog2006/index.html> (accessed 1/12/06).

THE NAME AS A READYMADe
AN INTERVIEW WITH JANEZ JANŠA, JANEZ JANŠA, AND JANEZ JANŠA
BY LEV KREFT

Published in *NAME readymade* (Ljubljana: Moderna galerija / Museum of Modern Art, 2008), 149–170. Translated from the Slovenian by Polona Petek.

**SUBVERSION AND SIMILITUDE IN
THE JANEZ JANŠA PROJECT**
BY MARISA JAHN

1. Translated by Polona Petek.
 2. Maja Megla and Veso Stojanov, "De si Janez Janša, nekaterih stvari ne smeš početi." *Mag*, No. 36, Year XIV, (September 10, 2008): 44-49.
 3. Petra Kapš., "Konstrukcija In Re-Uprizarjanje Slovensk(E)(Osti) Umetnosti, Triglav Brez Konca," *Reartikulacija*. No. 2, *Globoko Grlo*, (December 2007/February 2008), 18.
 4. *Mladina, Mladinamit* No. 618, (August 18, 2007): 72.
 5. Jela Krečič, "Janez Janša as Media Phenomenon," in *NAME Readymade* 179.
 6. Amelia Jones' footnote: While favoring some liberal social policies such as same-sex civil unions, the SDS is pro-business and follows the Reaganite policy of devolving power to local governments, reducing funding for federal social programs. From the point of view of an American, Slovenia perfectly exemplifies the corruption of the notion of "democracy" in US-inspired (or US-forced, as in Iraq) initiatives around the globe. From Amelia Jones, "Naming Power and the Power of the Name: Janez Janša Performs the Political in/for the Art World," in *NAME Readymade* (Berlin: Moderna galerija Ljubljana, Revolver, 2008), 35-36.
 7. Ibid.
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**INCIDENTALISM AND EXISTENTIAL
CONTRABAND: ON STEVE MANN**
BY MARISA JAHN

1. Howard Slater, "The Art Of Governance: on The Artist Placement Group, 1966-1989," <http://www.infopool.org.uk/APG.htm>, (accessed 7/19/09).

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<http://www.freepatentsonline.com/y2002/0057915.html>, (accessed 7/15/09).

<http://www.eyetap.org>, (accessed 7/15/09).

http://wearcam.org/cast01/cast_html/, (accessed 7/16/09).

"Existential Technology," <http://wearcam.org/leonardo/award2004.htm>, (accessed 7/15/09).

Kathleen Pirrie-Adams, "Steve Mann-Prior Art: Art of Record for Personal Safety," (Toronto: Gallery TPW, 2001), <http://wearcam.org/tpw/> (accessed 7/19/09).

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Howard Slater, "The Art Of Governance: on The Artist Placement Group, 1966-1989," <http://www.infopool.org.uk/APG.htm> (accessed 7/19/09).

BILLY VERSUS BLOOMIE: ELECTORAL GUERRILLA THEATRE IN NEW YORK CITY
BY L.M. BOGAD

1. Bill, Talen, *What Should I Do If Reverend Billy Is In My Store?*, (New York: New Press, 2003).
2. VanAlkemade, Siegel, Scheier, Weidner, White.
3. Cf. Duncombe, 124.
4. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nh5RZZL6DIQ>

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L.M. Bogad, *Electoral Guerrilla Theater: Radical Ridicule and Social Movements*, (New York: Routledge, 2005).

L.M. Bogad, "A Place For Protest: The Billionaires For Bush Interrupt the Hegemonologue", in *Performance and Place*, eds. Leslie Hill and Helen Paris (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 170-179.

Stephen Duncombe, *Dream: Reimagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy* (New York: New Press, 2006), 124.

Savitri Durkee, *Interview*, July 28, 2009.

Mark Read, *Interview*, July 7, 2009.

Jacob Scheier, "The Church of Stop Bloomberg: Reverend Billy

Launches Longshot Mayoral Bid," *The Independent* (March 20, 2009), <http://www.independent.org/2009/03/20/stop-bloomberg/> (accessed 9/12/09).

Jefferson Siegel, "Mayor-alujah! Reverend Billy is running as a Green," *The Villager*, vol. 78, no. 39 (March 4-10, 2009), http://www.thevillager.com/villager_305/mayoralujah.html (accessed 9/24/09).

Bill Talen, "Why Would I Run for Mayor?" *Metro International* (July 20, 2009) (accessed on www.voterevbilly.com, 9/22/09).

Jarrett Murphy, "Other Davids Ready Their Slings In Run For Mayor," *City Limits.org* (June 29, 2009), <http://www.citylimits.org/news/articles/3765/-i-other-i-davids-ready-their> (accessed 9/30/09).

Bill Talen, *Interview*, July 28, 2009.

Rob VanAlkemade, dir., *What Would Jesus Buy?* (documentary film), Palisades Pictures and Warrior Poets, Werner Film, 2007.

David Weidner, "Reverend Billy's Bailout: One Street Preacher Makes the Case for Propping Up Community Banks," *Wall Street Journal* (April 16, 2009), <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123982723145222287.html> (accessed 9/28/09).

Rebecca White, "Backed by Green Party, Comic Pastor Runs for Mayor," *New York Times* (March 2, 2009), <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/02/nyregion/02billy.html> (accessed 9/25/09).

ISOTOPES AND A RADIOACTIVE MODERNITY
BY TEJPAL S. AJJI

1. Entitled, *Rightfully Yours*, (November 16 to December 30, 2007), the exhibition included the work of Wendy Coburn, Steven Cohen, Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan (The Lesbian Rangers), Alicia Framis, Alison S. M. Kobayashi, Mingering Mike, Mattias Olofsson, The Yes Men, Camille Turner, Sislej Xhafa, and one's private viewing of *Ali G, Borat*, and *Bruno* (characters of Sacha Baron Cohen). The exhibition catalogue provides an expanded account of the isotopic as a theoretical tool with substantial descriptions of artists' work.

2. Steve Rennie, "Doctors in the dark over Dutch reactor shutdown," *The London Free Press* (13 July 2009), <http://lfpres.ca/newsstand/News/CanadaWorld/2009/07/13/10119306.html> (accessed 7/19/2009).

3. John Howard Griffin, *Black Like Me* (New York: Signet Penguin Group, 1996), 115.

4. *Ibid*, 109.

5. In 1964, James Whitmore starred in a film version of *Black Like Me*. Other notable bio-pics on adopted personalities include *Black Book*, a World War II drama directed by Paul Verhoeven (2007), which follows Carice van Houten. A Jewish cabaret singer, van Houten survives occupied Holland by reinventing herself as a Nazi entertainer while secretly conspiring with the Resistance. Directed by Mike Newell, *Donnie Brasco* (1997) is based on an FBI agent, Joe Pistone, who traveled under an assumed name for six years. In the 1970s, Pistone infiltrated the Bonanno mafia family as "Donnie the Jeweler," a streetwise diamond expert. When the FBI withdrew Pistone from the mission, Brasco had collected enough names to send one hundred and twenty mafia-men to prison, and unravel a network of operations in New York. [Information on Donnie Brasco: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donnie_Brasco_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donnie_Brasco_(film))]

and the Politics of Race (Oxford, UK, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3.

5. Rochelle Rowe, "Glorifying the Jamaican Girl: The 'Ten Types – One People' Beauty Contest, Racialized Femininities, and Jamaican Nationalism" in *Radical History Review*, volume 2009, number 103 (winter 2009): 36–58.

6. Leeds Craig, 4.

INTERVIEW WITH ANTANAS MOCKUS

BY PEDRO REYES

WITH AN EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION BY JOSEPH DEL PESCO

1. María Cristina Caballero, "Academic turns city into a social experiment," *Harvard Gazette*. <http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2004/03.11/01-mockus.html> (accessed 3/11/04).

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AND THE WINNER IS...

BY MICHELLE JACQUES

1. Doug Saunders, "Canada's mistaken identity," *The Globe and Mail* (June 26, 2009), retrieved August 22, 2009.

2. New York-based artist Sal Randolph purchased a spot in the 2002 *Manifesta European Biennial of Contemporary Art* for \$15,099 in an eBay auction, and invited any artist who wished to participate to exhibit their work as part of *Free Manifesta*. More than two hundred and twenty five artists and groups, including Turner, contributed free public art projects throughout Frankfurt, as well as through broadcast, telephone, mail, and the Internet.

3. Saunders.

4. Maxine Leeds Craig, *Ain't I a Beauty Queen: Black Women, Beauty*