institutional critique
an anthology of artists' writings

edited by Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Illustrations</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>xvi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Albero, Institutions, Critique, and Institutional Critique</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blake Stimson, What Was Institutional Critique?</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Framing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wieslaw Borowski, Hanna Ptaszkowska, and Mariusz Tchenek, An...</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Theory of Place (1966)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Buren, Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier, and Niele Toroni, Statement (1967)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allan Kaprow, Where Art Thou, Sweet Muse? (I'm Hung Up at the Whitney) (1967)</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, New Commitment (1968)</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julio Le Parc, Demystifying Art (1968)</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eduardo Favario, Project for the Experimental Art Series (1968)</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graciela Carnevale, Project for the Experimental Art Series (1968)</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oswaldo Mateo Boglione, Aldo Bortolotti, et al., We Must Always Resist the Lures of Complicity (1968)</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcel Broodthaers, A Conversation with Freddy de Vree, 1969 (1969)</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guerrilla Art Action Group, A Call for the Immediate Resignation of All of the Rockefellers from the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art (1969)</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Workers' Coalition, Statement of Demands (1969)</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gregory Battcock, Art Workers' Coalition Open Hearing Presentation</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Toche, Art Workers' Coalition Open Hearing Statement</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guerrilla Art Action Group, Communiqué (1969)</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Buren, The Function of the Studio (1971)</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans Haacke, Provisional Remarks (1971)</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lea Lublin, Project: Inside/Outside the Museum (1971)</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcel Broodthaers, A Conversation with Freddy de Vree, 1971</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcel Broodthaers, Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles (1972)</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Smithson, Cultural Confinement (1972)</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969! Proposal for an Exhibition “CARE” (1969)</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans Haacke, The Constituency (1976)</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans Haacke, The Agent (1977)</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II. INSTITUTION OF ART</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mel Ramsden, On Practice (1975)</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III. INSTITUTIONALIZING</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea Fraser, An Artist's Statement (1992)</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan Karp and Fred Wilson, Constructing the Spectacle of Culture in Museums (1992)</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred Wilson, A Conversation with Martha Buskirk (1994)</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans Haacke, Symbolic Capital Management, or What to Do with the Good, the True, and the Beautiful (1997)</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Dion, Untitled (1999)</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Maria Eichhorn, Maria Eichhorn Public Limited Company (2002) 386


Andrea Fraser, From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique (2006) 408

IV. EXIT STRATEGIES

Laibach, 10 Items of the Covenant (1983) 426

Critical Art Ensemble, Tactical Media (1996) 432


Bureau d'Études, Resymbolizing Machines: Art after Óyvind Fahlström (2004) 452

WochenKlausur, From the Object to the Concrete Intervention (2006) 462


The Yes Men, Jude Finisterra Interviewed (2004) 478

0.1 Hans Haacke, Der Revoluiierung (2000) 34
0.2 Steve Lambert, Emma Goldman Institute for Anarchist Studies (2005) 38
1.1 Daniel Bururi, Untitled (1968) 51
1.2 Eduardo Favaro, Closed Gallery Piece (1968) 73
1.3 Griceli Carnwade, Lock-up Action (1968) 73
1.4 Guerrilla Art Action Group, A Call for the Immediate Resignation of All the Rockefeller from the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art (1969) 86
1.5 Guerrilla Art Action Group, Bloodbath at MoMA (1969) 99

1.8 Hans Haacke, MoMa Pull (1970) 119
1.9 Lea Lublin, Inside/Outside the Museum (1971) 132
1.10 Lea Lublin, Inside/Outside the Museum (1971) 133
1.11 Mierte Lackman Ukeles, Hartford Wash: Washing/Trash/Maintenance: Outside (1973) 149
1.12 Michael Asher, Claire Delevy Gallery, Los Angeles, California, September 21–October 12, 1974 (1974) 169
2.1 Louise Lawler, Three (1964) 169
2.2 Christopher D'Arcangelo, Thirty Days Work (1978) 201
2.3 Christopher D'Arcangelo, Thirty Days Work (1978) 202
2.4 Christopher D'Arcangelo, Thirty Days Work (1978) 203
2.5 Christopher D'Arcangelo, Thirty Days Work (1978) 204
2.6 Christopher D'Arcangelo, Thirty Days Work (1978) 205
2.7 Barbara Kruger, Your Gaze Kills the Side of My Face (1981) 234
2.8 Michael Asher, The Michael Asher Lobby (1983) 240
2.9 Guerrilla Girls, It's Even Worse in Europe (1986) 244
2.10 Barbara Kruger, Untitled (When I Hear the Word Culture I Take Out My Checkbook) (1986) 275
2.11 Barbara Kruger, I Shop Therefore I Am (1987) 289
2.12 Louise Lawler, Leo Castelli Gift Certificate (1983) 250
2.13 Louise Lawler, Brandals (1983) 251
2.14 Louise Lawler, Living Room Corner, Arranged by Mr. & Mrs. Tramaine Sr., NYC (1984) 301
2.15 Guerrilla Girls, When Racism and Sexism Are No Longer Fashionable, What Will Your Art Collectors Be Worth? (1990) 308
This anthology documents the historical development of institutional critique as an artistic concern beginning in the 1960s and continuing to the present. The volume is organized into four roughly chronological thematic sections: "Framing," "Institution of Art," "Institutionalizing," and "Exit Strategies." The entries selected constitute a broad sampling spanning over four decades and representing a myriad of artistic positions. Included in our selection are primary texts and illustrations of projects by some of the best-known artists associated with institutional critique and a number of lesser-known, previously unpublished or untranslated materials and artworks. Our main task as editors has been to sift through a wealth of material for the very selection of texts and illustrations that would best offer a sense of institutional critique’s concerns and importance. And while the material gathered in the present volume is rich, it is by no means comprehensive.

Needless to say, we are well aware that to put together an anthology of institutional critique is to institutionalize institutional critique and therefore is fraught with self-contradictions from the beginning. To a certain extent, many of the criticisms articulated in these writings and projects could be leveled at this very volume, and we bear full responsibility for our selections and organization. But our primary ambition has been to give as rich a sense as possible of the breadth and depth of institutional critique rather than imposing a narrow outline. We have felt it particularly important to plan the volume as a guide, a resource, a base for further work and reading, as well as a self-contained book.

We are grateful to the artists and publishers of the texts and illustrations for granting us permission to reproduce their material. For clerical assistance, we are indebted to Matt Fracasso and Rebecca Arnfield. For recommendations of specific texts and illustrations and the overall scope of the project, we are obliged to Nora M. Alter, Ilia Meta Bauer, Sabine Breitwieser, Ron Clark, Andrea Giunta, Isabelle Graw, James Meyer, Andrzej Przywara, and Stephen Wright. Finally, we would like to thank Roger Conover at the MIT Press, whose consistent patience and guidance throughout every step of this project made the realization of this volume possible.
institutional critique
Our task is to link up the theoretical critique of modern society with the critique of it in acts. By detouring the very propositions of the spectacle, we can directly reveal the implications of present and future revolts. I propose that we pursue . . . the promotion of guerrilla tactics in the mass media—an important form of contestation, not only at the urban guerrilla stage, but even before it.

—René Viénet, “The Situationists and the New Forms of Action against Politics and Art”

Like the institutions of the university and the library or public archive, the art institution was advanced by Enlightenment philosophy as dualistic: the aesthetic, discursively realized in salons and museums through the process of critique, was couched with a promise: the production of public exchange, of a public sphere, of a public subject. It also functioned as a form of self-imaging, as an integral element in the constitution of bourgeois identity.

The artistic practices that in the late 1950s and 1960s came to be referred to as institutional critique revisited that radical promise of the European Enlightenment and they did so precisely by confronting the institution of art with the claim that it was not sufficiently committed to, let alone realizing or fulfilling, the pursuit of publicity that had brought it into being in the first place. Their juxtaposition in a number of ways the immanent, normative (ideal) self-understanding of the art institution with the (material) actuality of the social relations that currently formed it. That juxtaposition sought at once to foreground the tension between the theoretical self-understanding of the institution of art and its actual practice of operation, and to summon the need for a resolution of that tension or contradiction.

Indeed, one of the central characteristics of institutional critique in its moment of formation was that both an analytical and a political position were built into the critical interpretive strategy—that if one problematized and critically assessed the soundness of the claims advanced (often tacitly) by art institutions, then one would be in a better position to instantiate a nonrepressive art context.

That gesture of negation, of negating the established conventions of art, was modernism at its core. It posited that the aesthetic exists in the critical exchange. In the debate, within the context of the art world, it was also dialectical: its aim was to intervene critically in the standing order of things, with an expectation that these interventions would produce actual change in the relations of power and lead to genuine reconciliation. Besides negation, it also sought the possibility of a moment of synthesis. Institutional critique, at least,
in its initial years of development, held out for the ideal institution of art, it hold on to the old promise, and did not rest on the moment of negation as if that was in itself the truth. So when, for instance, artists such as Eduardo Paolozzi or Dierk Kuhn in the late 1960s closed the gallery for the duration of their exhibition, or when Wieland Förster and fine art withdrew from the Documenta 4 exhibition and called for nonconformity with the dominant cultural institutions, they dialectically negated that which was the vehicle of their voice, and yet held not to it at the same time. That kind of critical dialogue is the modernist moment, the Enlightenment moment, the moment of the attempted production of publicness within the established institutions of the public sphere, and is evident in many other early instances of institutional critique. We get a glimpse of it in the 1968 tract "We Must Always Resist the Lure of Complicity," with which Giorgio Agamben and the other authors helped to galvanize their peers in Rosario, Argentina, into an "artists' coalition" that would protest against the questionable values and practices of local museums. It is there in Robert Smithson's call in 1972 for an "investigation of the apparatus the artist is thread through," and in Michael Asher's integration of the bureaucratic and operational activities of the Claire Copley Gallery in Los Angeles in the fall of 1974. We also see it in a large number of art projects (some of which are featured in this volume) that provocatively linked previously unconnected spheres of public experience together in unexpected knots, in unexpected combinations of trajectories, traversing their separateness, breaking their isolations, and pointing to the fact that there is a radical discordance between the ideal presentation—and even the self-understanding of the museum as an autonomous space of neutral cultural experience—and the actuality of what Pierre Bourdieu in The Rules of Art refers to as the "objective relation" that structure it. "These works thus called not only for a critical reassessment of the purportedly autonomous and neutral art museum, but also for public cultural institutions that operate free of political, and ideological interests, in a manner that functions precisely according to the structural logic that is at the core of historical institutional critique."

FRAMING

The parallel increasingly made in the late 1960s between the managers of the museum of art and those who have assumed responsibility for continuing the established cultural order prompted artists to scrutinize and gradually challenge the roles of museum directors, curators, trustees, and the like. One of the most powerful early critiques from this perspective was carried out by the Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers, who in 1968 created his first fictional museum, the Department of Eagles, Museum of Modern Art. The artist recounts in "A Conversation with Freddy de Vree, 1966" (1969) that the idea came to him as a direct result of the highly charged political events of 1968. The upheaval of this period had prompted a group of artists, gallery owners, and collectors to join together to analyze the relations between art and society. Broodthaers recalls that while setting up shipping crates for the group to sit on during a scheduled meeting in his studio, he was struck by the similarity of this process to that of installing artworks for an exhibition, and concluded that "the museum was born, not as a concept, but by way of circumstance; the concept came later." This discovery led him to invert the structure of the establishment. Marcel Duchamp once said, "this is a work of art; all I was saying was, 'This is a museum.'" By creating a fictional museum that rendered all that circled within its part of the art establishment, Broodthaers impliedly critiques the logic of museums, asking not only how museums come into being but also who determines their modus operandi and how their collections are amassed. Somewhat to his surprise, the model of the museum fiction was soon transported and reinstalled several times over, leading Broodthaers to comment, in words that recall those of Julio Le Parc in "Deconstructing Art" (1968), that "at present every art production will be absorbed quickly into the commercial cycle that transforms not only the meaning of art but also the very nature of this art."

As an institution, the museum is multifaceted and can be critiqued from a number of different standpoints. Broodthaers focuses on the museum's frame—a frame that overdetermines what it encompasses, a frame that is inherently ideological and made of a myriad of cultural, social, and political elements. At the same time that Broodthaers developed this incipient critique of museums, which used that institution's internal contradictions to criticize it in its own terms, a number of artists in Buenos Aires, Rosario, Paris, Warsaw, and elsewhere launched what could be termed a prescriptive critique of the museum as institution. These modes of criticism stood outside the objects they criticized, asserting norms against facts—offering judgments from a particular point of view (or cri-ti-co-logic position). The criticism took various forms, including boycotting exhibitions, organizing public meetings and sit-ins, disseminating pamphlets, producing false identification cards to enable free entry into museums, and performing actions and other demonstrations that sought to radically transform the dominant art institutions. For example, in New York
important protests were coordinated in the late 1960s by the Art Workers' Coalition (AWC) and the Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG) against the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in particular. According to the AWC, if the museum truly is a democratic public institution, then the composition of the board of trustees should reflect the general population and not an elite minority. As Jean Toche of GAAG notes in his statement to the AWC Open Hearing in 1969, reform is not enough; there has to be "effective participation in the running of these institutions in the same manner as, today students are fighting for the control of the schools and universities." While in the United States, where museums tend to rely heavily on private funds, artists targeted individual shareholders and corporate patrons, for European artists, working within a context of predominantly state-funded museums, the critique of institutions quickly became a critique of national policy and of the ideological meanings with which the institutions imbued art.

Daniel Buren's "The Function of the Museum" (1970) analyzes the process by which the museum naturalizes what is in fact historical, and endows the objects it exhibits with economic and mystical value. The sovereign status of museums, Buren writes, is supported by the way art is installed and exhibited. Art is hung on walls, carefully framed so that only the image is displayed. "The non-visibility of (deliberate) non-indication/revelation of the various supports of any work," including its stretcher, frame, versus, peddler, and price, is deliberate; it is "a careful camouflage undertaken by the prevalent bourgeois ideology" to conceal the social and political consequences resulting from the museum's machinations. Mieke Bal, Oskar Fischinger, and Marjorie "Choreography" for Critical Work. This site is enabled by the logic of financial speculation and the relative lack of uniformity of interest of the major players of the culture industry. Whereas artists such as Lucile de Haan, Buren, and Broodthaers caution that the institution of art is able to quickly appropriate and instrumentalize anything new, Haacke sees this reality as an opportunity and concludes that the internal contradictions and inconsistencies of the field should be mobilized against it—that whatever is possible "the very mechanisms" of the institution of art, what Bourdieu calls its "objective relations," "should be used without hesitation for a critique of the dominant system of beliefs.

Thus, by the late 1960s and the 1970s it had become especially crucial for artists who took up the challenges of institutional critique to expose the institution of art as a deeply problematic field, making apparent the intersections where political, economic, and ideological interests directly intersect and interfere in the production of public culture. At the same time, however, that reality was countered by a call for a "careful reassessment of what is lost when the museum—which, as I noted earlier, was founded as a democratic site for the articulation of knowledge, historical memory, and self-reflexivity, and as an integral element in the education and social production of civil society—is infiltrated by political and corporate concerns." For, as rigorous as many of these early critiques of the institution of art clearly were in juxtaposing the myths that the institution
perpetuates with the network of social and economic relationships that actually structure it, they ultimately championed and advocated for the institution: the critiques culminated in a demand to straighten up the operation of this central site of the public sphere and to realign its actual function with what it is in theory.

**Institution of Art**

The term "institutional critique," used to describe the politicized art practice of the late 1960s and early 1970s, first appeared in print in Mel Ramsden’s "On Practice" (1975). Here Ramsden, writing as a member of the collective Art & Language, criticized the overall general industrialization of art, and in particular the hegemonic dominance of the New York art world. He observes that “the administrators, dealers, critics, punters” of the time had become "masters;" and the New York artists "imperialist puppets." The capitalist structure of the art market has been totally internalized by all those who participate in it, thereby making resistance close to impossible. Under these conditions, the chasm or disconnection between aesthetic practice and everyday politics is unbridgeable.

Ramsden acknowledges that in the late 1960s there were genuine challenges to the status quo (he mentions the AWC and conceptual art), but he sees these as having fallen short of exacting any significant change because they were either ameliorative, calling for specific changes in the institutions of art, but affirming its basic structure, or opportunistic, allowing themselves to become co-opted by the system to attain commercial success. Nevertheless, he maintains the possibility that radical change might result from a number of initiatives that, working in concert with each other, will alter the capitalist mind-set that has become so internalized. In particular, he stresses the importance of developing a "community"—a base from which to act, that the market pays upon, such as individual subjectivity, can be destroyed, and an art can be produced that evades the恩s of institutional determination.

In "Lookers, Buyers, Dealers, and Makers: Thoughts on Audience" (1979), Martha Rosler shifts the terms of Ramsden’s critique, which is specifically focused on the operative dominance of the New York art world, to question what factors have produced the elitism that characterizes the institution of art more generally. Rosler underscores the importance of social class in the field of art, acknowledging its significant impact on the relationship between artist and audience as well as on "the relation between those who merely visit cultural artifacts and those who are in a position to buy them." The purchasing power of the upper class and the fundamental role it plays in aesthetic production cannot be underestimated. It affects not only the immediate livelihood of individual artists but also the very definition of art by influencing museum exhibitions and collections. Rosler notes that “big collectors, . . . aside from keeping the cash flowing, have a great deal of leverage with museum and gallery directors and curators and often are trustees or board members of museums and granting agencies.” This leads her to push Haacke’s conclusions about gallery-goers in "The Constituency" (1976) one step further by insisting that the relatively affluent visitors to galleries and museums, including those who become directly involved in the art market, reproduce through the art world the very same values and ideologies, formations existing in society at large.

For Rosler, then, the role that class plays in the field of art is much more complicated than merely determining purchasing power. It is also, far more insistently, what determines what is culture and art in the first place. An understanding and appreciation of art is inseparably linked to liberal education, where the cultivation of aesthetic taste occurs. High art, though, has to be carefully monitored, and its social value "depends absolutely on the existence of a distinction between a high culture and a low culture." Rosler traces the foundations of what presently constitutes high art back to Immanuel Kant’s notion that the aesthetic has no purpose other than the cultivation of taste, and the Enlightenment philosopher’s belief that all direct social and political concerns should be excluded from aesthetic contemplation. The impact of this aesthetic ideology is manifest in several areas of artistic production: first and foremost, in the importance of the formal aspects of the artwork; second, in the construction of the romantic figure of the artist (as "utterly alone, "unassimilable within bourgeois social order," "uncomfortable in his own existence"); and third, in the dislocated, even alienated relationship between the artist and the audience, a relationship that Rosler characterizes as being inherently "passive." This passivity and disconnect are reinforced by an exhibition structure that ensures that the "gallery is a space apart from any concern other than Art, just as art’s only rightful milieu is Art;" Lisa Ramsden, Rosler calls for an expansion of the frame of the institution of art, and for a reintegration of art into everyday life. "We must inventively expand our control over production and showing, and we must simultaneously widen our opportunities to work with and for people outside the audiences for high art . . . to rupture the false boundaries between ways of thinking about art and ways of actively changing the world."
The two essays by Adrian Piper included in this volume, both from 1983, pick up the conversation begun by Haacke, Ramusden, and Rosler on the importance of education within the field of art. "Power Relations Within Existing Art Institutions" takes as its springboard the concept of what Piper calls "aesthetic acculturation"—"the process by which individuals are recruited into the ranks of art practitioners as artists (and also, secondarily, as critics, dealers, etc.) within existing art institutions and thereby abet their social, intellectual, economic, and creative autonomy." Like Rosler, Piper sees the economic background or class of the subject as fundamental to this process. The decision to take on the identity of an artist is preconditioned by a degree of economic comfort and privilege; creatively inclined individuals who grew up in conditions of economic hardship are less likely to decide to become artists. As a result, institutions such as art schools are disproportionately composed of students from wealthy backgrounds and thereby reproduce "the artistic values and interests of those socially and economically advantaged individuals." These values include "a concern with beauty, form, abstraction, and innovation in media, and the interests render "the political and social, subject matter...either largely subordinate or completely absent." The result is the reproduction of the status quo, with artists continuing to produce formal, apolitical works that museums will exhibit, dealers will support, and collectors will purchase. As Piper puts it, "The subeconomically determined aesthetic interests" of these fortunate individuals define not only what counts as quality but "what counts as art period."

Piper is also skeptical of the art critic's role. She traces the division of labor between the artist and the critic within art education and concludes that the authorial voice of the critic is yet another aspect of "aesthetic acculturation." What particularly troubles her is that the critic comes to control the meaning of artworks, and in turn the artist's career. Undermining this assessment is the belief that under the prevailing conditions of the institution of art, those whose writings on art are most public work in tandem with collectors and the market. All of these constituencies demand that the artist remain within a well-established formula and develop a signature style. At best, departures from the norm are reprimanded by negative reviews, but they are more likely to meet with complete disregard and disapproval. Piper calls on artists to respond to these adverse conditions by producing work that can be effectively inserted into fields outside of the institution of art and therefore can survive without the support of the art market. But to produce such work, artists must rigorously question the constellation of elements that go into their own self-construction as artistic producers. Piper's concluding remarks are similar to those of Ramusden and Rosler, as well as to the thoughts of Linda Nochlin expressed in her second epigraph. All stress that an education emphasizing the predilections artists face is important to any attempt to transform the conditions of artistic production, exhibition, and distribution.

The institutional critique strategy of shifting the viewer's perspective, or making viewers see what they have previously taken for granted in a new and different light, also informs the work of the artist Rasheed Araeen. As Araeen explains in "Why Third Text?" (1987), which served as the founding statement for the British-based visual culture journal Third Text, the periodical's mission is to expand and redefine the institution of art: To accomplish this, Araeen asserts, the publication will seek to find a third way, an alternative to predominant "models of binary opposition," with an awareness that "considerations of art cannot be separated from questions of politics," binary oppositions, which structure everyday life and the ordering of the world, are inherently limited, for they arrange and classify "cultural practices...in terms of Same or Other." Araeen thus forge a link between art and politics, and proposes the development of critical investigations capable of challenging some of the basic beliefs about culture. One of the most consequential of these is the humanist notion that the value of art is measured by the degree to which it succeeds in conveying human self-expression. This is sheer myth, according to Araeen, for it "is only through its exchange value" that art "assort[s] itself as a valuable product." Art's ideological function, what Haacke in "Museums, Managers of Consciousness" (1984) refers to as art's manner of "channelling consciousness," is therefore posited by Araeen as intrinsically bound up with its exchange value. The important role played by the market in legitimating art's of course an added handicap for those outside of the conventional frame of art, and those adverse circumstances are usually fatal for artists whose gender, race, and ethnicity also place them at a disadvantage. In short, Araeen reiterates Piper's notion that an artist's identity is always "overdetermined by considerations of nationality, race, gender, and class," and "maintained and reproduced within the institutional context of liberal scholarship and the market place," but he adds geographical location to Piper's equation. As visual anthropologist Linda T. Mincha once remarked, the center depends on the periphery in order to maintain its centrality. In striving to eliminate binary models, Araeen and Third Text seek not as much to expand the center to the periphery as to dissolve those established bounds and theoretical impasses.
The Institution of art, as Theodor Adorno writes, is intricately linked to the governing ideology at large. It is its ally, counterpart, and underside, and as such it inevitably rehearses and reiterates the very mechanisms of social control and oppression that ideology performs. The art institution, as much as the works that are made for it, will always be the site of the types of injustice that characterize existing conditions in society. So there is a peculiar moral contradiction in aesthetic production: in that on one hand it often radically denies the reigning dogma, and yet at the same time it articulates, not necessarily in an affirmative manner but as a form of critique, the exact contradictions at the most extreme level. Linda Nochlin's groundbreaking essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" (1971) addressed this question from the perspective of gender inequality or discrimination in the early 1970s. Rather than attempting to resolve the contradiction by constructing a remedial history of art that includes women artists previously excluded from history, she called for a transformation of the institutional structures that have historically functioned to exclude women in the first place.

Many of the art practices that have followed, or have resulted in the reformulation of the institution (as democratic and free of discrimination, partisanship, and, plainly put, ideology) and the highly gendered, raced, and classed ideology that actually permeates it. One of the key questions that confronted artists in the 1980s and 1990s who developed work informed by feminism was how to produce representation without reproducing existing patriarchal or otherwise oppressive conventions. How could artists develop a counter or alternative public sphere with images, if images when rendered into the visual field were as much at the center of the operation as the question of how the governing forms of visibility, seeing, and speech could be dismantled from within.

The urgent quest in the 1980s to position artistic production within the public sphere without resorting to—or relapsing into—the use of monumental structures led to the production of a great deal of art that was articulated within easily accessible distribution formats and distribution media like posters, billboards, newspaper advertisements, and videotapes. But while their intentions for developing these strategies were clearly laudable, in the process of adjusting their work to easily disseminated distribution forms and to the existing conditions of reading and seeing, these artists inadvertently began to produce art that crossed the border into the realm of pure publicity.

The operative method in the work of artists such as Louise Lawler, which critically examines the production, reception, and contextualization of art, is to dismantle the conventional myths that the artist is an autonomous progenitor of meaning and that artistic value is solely located in art's intrinsic qualities. Lawler's photographic and design practice determinedly shows that a complex ensemble of promotional, social, and economic activities sustains the present of the artist today and encodes works of art with value. Her pictures and objects address a range of practices of making, displaying, selling, and viewing art, and ask those who encounter them to consider their place in art's discursive field. But Lawler's approach makes these claims with a sense that, if the institutional boundaries that determine and separate the roles of art are adequately disrupted, and the dependence of works of art on the conventional governing their context is made plainly evident, then the public function of art that was the initial promise of the institution might be preserved. For while her work is meticulous in showing that art is always already contingent and culturally constituted, it also suggests that the aesthetic's historical roles and promises remain residua, and capable of being redefined with the meanings attributed to art today. This dialectic, as I noted earlier, defines the central impulse of historical institutional critique, and is evident in much of the work produced by artists featured in this volume's first three parts. For instance, while the tactical media projects of the Guerrilla Girls have, for several years, now persistently foregrounded the flagrant discrimination and prejudices that construe the art apparatus's skewed equilibriums and lack of bias toward anything but disinterested quality, they do so with a sense of possibility. The underlying belief of these interventions
is that the injustices that presently characterize the institution of art can be altered and corrected if the institution's internal contradictions—the discrepancy between its ideal self-understanding and presentation and the current reality—are exposed for all to see. In other words, the work does not maintain that there is anything fundamentally wrong with the institution itself, but rather that the problems are located in the conventions that currently manage and configure it.

The third section of this book opens with the work of a generation of artists emerging in the late 1980s and early 1990s who questioned all aspects of the process of artistic institutionalization. These artists—Christian Philipp Müller, Faezè Armatly, Benêe Green, Marie Dion, Maria Eschhorn, and Nils Norman—were too young to engage fully in the art-world activities of the late 1960s and 1970s. They represent a plurality of positions that hold in common their exploration of the ways in which artistic (and other) practices become sufficiently regular and continuous to be considered as institutions. Many of these artists attempt to link the identity politics of the new social movements of the period to new forms of artistic subjectivity. This often entails creating connections between art practice and the various democratic struggles against different forms of subordination. A case in point is the work of Fred Wilson, which developed earlier institutional critique practices that radicalized or rearticulated questions of class and gender into critical historical analyses linking institutions of power such as the museum with questions of racial politics. Works such as Wilson’s Guarded View (1991), which features four brown-skinned male mannequins, all headless and each cloaked in a New York City museum uniform, foreground the class and race discrepancies that are still prevalent in the institution of art, and draw connections between the two. Fred Wilson’s focus on the museum by Wilson and his peers suggests that institution’s staying power and relevance for this new generation of artists, as well as its ability both to withstand and to incorporate even the most trenchant of critiques.

Andrea Fraser’s “From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique” (2005) acknowledges the important ways in which institutional critique has been successful in shaking and eroding the foundations of the museum and bringing about significant transformations in the institution of art. The frame that allows something to be called art is now broader than ever. But Fraser concludes that this very success has also led to the appropriation of institutional critique: in their efforts to redefine art and concretize it into everyday life, artists have not escaped the institution of art, she writes, but have brought more of the world into it. The underlying relations of power remain the same. This leads her to conclude that even artists whose work is informed by institutional critique should acknowledge that they are “trapped,” in the field of art, that they themselves constitute the institution and should take responsibility for its design and mode of operation. “It’s not a question of being against the institution... It’s a question of what kind of institution we are, what kind of values we institutionalize, what forms of practice we reward, and what kinds of rewards we aspire to. Because the institution of art is internalized, embodied, and performed by individuals, these are the questions that institutional critique demands we ask, above all, of ourselves.”

**EXIT STRATEGIES**

The final section of this collection brings together art projects and writings that stem from international collectives whose radical agendas and cultural politics resonate with earlier forms of institutional critique but reject significant parts of its legacy. In particular, many of these artists have little patience for the types of critique featured in the third section that can analyze and problematize the institution of art but cannot imagine an alternative to, or an outside of, its framework. Not content with merely dismantling or disarticulating the operation of art institutions, these artists, often more in the activist tradition than in the academy, demand a new model for the way we think about the institution of art and its role in society. As the Vienna-based Wödönklausz writes in “From the Object to the Concrete Intervention” (2005), “Art should no longer be venerated in specially designated spaces... Art should deal with reality, grapple with political circumstances, and work out proposals for improving human coexistence.”

The scope and tactics of these collective movements are broad, ranging from ideology critique to biological engineering, from pamphleteering at public demonstrations to electronic disobedience. For these artists, institutional critique is primarily defined neither by its relationship to traditional exhibition spaces such as museums and galleries, nor by the way it addresses issues of primary concern to the art world. Rather, institutional critique entails finding ways to get out of the frame altogether, evading the offices, art world and the attendant professions and institutions that legitimate it, and developing practices capable of operating outside of the confines of the museum and art market. Art is in these cases
connected to a much larger political and ideological project—it is more of a means than an end. The stated aim is nothing short of confronting and contesting "the dying intensity of authoritarian culture."

In this and other ways, the projects of these new collectives resonate with those developed by the Situationist International in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s. These collectives' counterstrategies are much more indebted to the Situationist understanding of the crucual role that media play in contemporary societies than to the aesthetic games of Marcel Duchamp, which had an important impact on historical institutional critique artists such as Broodthaers and Haacke. As the Critics, Art Ensemble (CAE) explains in "Tactical Media" (1996), the rapid return to order following the political and cultural upsurge in 1989 made evident the power of the spectacle, with its strong corporate hold on media and distribution networks, to resist itself. Thus the logic of renaissance tactics had to change accordingly, continually evolving to remain disruptive. What were required were tactics that were "immediate," could "address a particular real-space situation," were "grounded in a sense of community," and that made "ad hoc art," were self-determining and were not "politicized" into a structure of authority. The aim of CAE's tactics of subversion are critical and diagnostic, seeking, as they put it, "to reveal the explosive ideological imperatives that the spectacle masks; to reveal all that spectacle erases; and to collapse spectacle into its own meaningless rhetoric." Fully aware of the fact that the "corporate state clearly understands that contained, localized activity, even in aggregate form, does not affect general policy construction and deployment," they propose, echoing the Situationist thinking articulated by Rémi Vénot in my fourth epigraph, that art develop up an 'agile form of critique' ("guerrilla tactics") that is perpetually on the move.

The Paris-based Bureau d'Etudes also work just out of the purview of the institution of art. Their text, "Re-shaping Machines: Art after Oryx and Crake" (2004), explores the manner in which the work of the Swedish artist is increasingly stepped out of the institution of art and gained its own autonomy. Oryx and Crake created paintings, maps, and games filled with precise information, analyzing the social, economic, and political situations of the present. The Bureau d'Etudes command Falsbiro's exit strategy but note the strong resistance that such tactics continue to face. "This exodus of artists outside the art system is suppressed today by art critics assuming the role of legislators (and recruiters). With their stunted philosophy of forms, these critics reduce artists to the status of suppliers whose products meet the demands of the market and cultural institutions." The Bureau d'Etudes find Falsbriorn's interest in distribution and broadcasting machines particularly appealing. Like many collectives, they understand the importance of independent media systems, publishers, radio houses, and the like for the creation of a counter-public sphere of information. Yet they realize that it is not enough merely to create such spaces that can produce alternative systems of information. They come as a way to change the capitalist business of these "maps." They propose the creation of "data maps" that connect the structures of capitalism with media concentration, the prison industry, and new industrial technologies, as examples, such as the most effective way to challenge the capitalist behemoth. These "maps" take the form of websites that are continuously maintained and updated, thus providing anyone with access to the Internet the possibility of maneuvering tactically. The use of the internet as a tool and site for interventionist critique opens a whole new range of possibilities with a virtually unlimited public. Art is no longer restricted to material sites of exhibition or to a secondary life in printed catalogues: rather, it now circulates rapidly and more broadly than ever in a world that is becoming "more wired" every minute.

Like many of the artist collectives that have existed in the past two decades, the Institute for Applied Autonomy (IAA) also harnesses the possibilities opened up by the Internet to affect social awareness and produce change. In "Engaging Hillocks: Interventions in Engineering Culture" (2003), the group writes of their hope that by "addressing political issues" their projects may "challenge engineering culture. Their "tactical aesthetics" reconstruct the connections between military research and nongovernmental agencies that have become naturalized in order to break apart the logic of these relationships. The IAA rallying cry is also Situationist: "Refutation of Intervention." They become the visual and rhetorical devices of sanctioned research organizations in alternate performances aimed at "inflating engineering culture". Relying on the performance strategy of simulation honed by artists as diverse as Müller, Fraser, Lawcock, and the Yes Men, the IAA pose as engineers and present their work under the guise of scientific neutrality and expertise. They thus operate as "Trojan horses", carrying our critique through the gates of detachment that guard engineers against taking responsibility for the products of their labor.

While these tactical media strategies make clear is that by the 1990s there were two distinct trajectories of institutions, critique, each with its own critical approach. As Gregg Bordowitz observes in "Tactics Inside and Out" (2004), the strength and effectiveness of the institutional critique of artists such as Fraser and others, who refuse "unbelieving
that the system can be different, better, truly committed to creativity," rely heavily on how their postures are captured by the field of art. Indeed, such critiques are legitimate only within that field, and it is there that they are most corrosive and dangerous. Politics has migrated into the institution of art and nowhere more so than where the institution seems to be politically dead. By contrast, Barthes, writes, tactical media collective such as CAL proceed in altogether different ways. Their work attempts to challenge the near totality of corporate and political institutionalization of social life, and their frame of reference—"often includes places far outside the art world." They mobilize the progressive dimensions of new technologies and develop projects "critical of the modes of production now shaping our lives."

What both of these trajectories share is the conviction that, in the context of a neoliberal economy, the operative logic of institutions of public subject formation is significantly different from what it was in the earlier moments of institutional critique. Today, art institutions, and more broadly speaking the institutions of the public where, do not even pretend to be autonomous from the forces of economic power—a notion that museums claimed to uphold as recently as a couple of decades ago. With the ideals of the institution of art, and of other Enlightenment institutions of public subject formation, in ruins, artists who continue to work in the legacy of institutional critique are left to choose between contemplating the moribund cultural apparatus and the far more radical projects for "critical repositioning" that".

The most interesting art being produced today fuses these irreconcilable positions.

NOTES

I would like to thank my students, and especially those who have offered me the most critical voice, for the support of my research. I would also like to thank several students who have read and commented on my work. I am grateful to them for their insights and suggestions. I am especially grateful to my colleagues at the New School for Social Research, whose support has been invaluable.


what was institutional critique?
blake stimson

Marriage is a wonderful institution, but who wants to live in an institution?
-Groucho Marx

institutional critique, as it will be understood here, was a child of 1968, but a child with a deep-seated soul often at odds with the spirit of its time. If there was one trait that characterized that spirit above all others, it was its suspicion of institutions as such, casting itself variously against the military-industrial complex, patriarchy, the Man, and a host of other such perceived and actual hegemons. Because of this suspicion, little in the way of opposing, counterhegemonic institutional forms emerged except, in the most amorphous sense of “the Movement,” in the more desperate (and generally later) fringe forms of the terrorist cell and armed militia, or in the increasingly self-marginalizing manner of the identity-based advocacy group. As the relatively sober and localized indignation of groups like Students for a Democratic Society or the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in the early and mid-1960s dissipated into the free-spending and increasingly global ecstasy and rage of 1968, no party or clearly defined movement leadership came to take its place, nor was there generally a desire for one. It is commonplace to assume institutions to be “the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, ... the socially defined constraints that shape human interaction.” As one writer has put it, but the institutions born of 1968, if they can even be given that label, rarely admitted to such authority. This is the single most fundamental difference between the new left and the old: by the end of the 1960s, institutionality or identification with a set of rules that governed social interaction was most broadly understood to be an ideological form of social participation left over from the past and not an integral part of the new cultural ideals or a fundamental organizing principle for social change. The geopolitics of this period institutional thinking was further complicated by the cold war, as we will see below, and, as such, it does not turn out to be quite as homogeneous as this, but overall we can speak of a general tendance Groucho governing the conditions of formation for the art practice that would later come to be called institutional critique.

We will turn to the cold war complications in the second part of this essay, but for now we can make the following after-the-fact exchange between leading French authors—Daniel Cohn-Bendit and his Polish equivalent Adam Michnik as a general illustration of how this period sensibility spanned the cold war divide easily and without complication:

Daniel Cohn-Bendit: Yesterday while we were talking, you said that you find it strange that all these people from 1968 who have different or even antagonistic political positions, feel sympathy for each other and display solidarity toward each other. Tom Hayden— who is now part of the Democratic establishment in the United States and used to be a militant in the reformist wing of the American student movement—as well as Rudi Dutschke and myself, both this in Czechoslovakia, Romania in the USSR ... how do you explain this?

Adam Michnik: Yes, in this context I think that “anti-authoritarian” is the key word. We rebelled against different authorities, but the sense of rebellion was the common denominator, ... Cohn-Bendit: It was an anti-authoritarian revolution.

Michnik: Obviously

Cohn-Bendit: And that’s our generation’s common experience.
Michnik: That generation brought something quite specific to the Polish opposition.

Cohn-Bendit: To all contesting oppositions, even if the ideas were at opposite ends of the spectrum. Well, maybe opposite, but different.

Michnik: Yes, Daniel, that's true. It is. And it is no coincidence that I supported the May 1968 movement in France. Which wasn't the case for my father. He used to say, "This Cohn-Bendit is a fascist bastard." And I would say, "No, it's me."—Kravina and his band are a bunch of Stalinist morons. No, it's me.—This Tariq Ali, this Pakistani in England, is a Soviet agent. No, it's me.—This Tom Hayden is a KGB agent. No, it's me. I can really say that on that occasion my father and I argued about principles.

"Anti-authoritarian" describes Michnik and Cohn-Bendit's transideological bond well, of course, but even better for our purposes would be "anti-institutional." There was Nixon, of course, and Brezhnev, and de Gaulle and other individual authorities to oppose, but the focus of the period was in some systematic social—-institutions, in a word—rather than on specific personalities or entities, and it transcended great political divides, that between anti-capitalism and anti-communism being only the most obvious. Institutions were understood to be the means by which authority exercised itself and was thus by definition—regardless of the politics of the institution in question—the embodiment of conservatism and, or the term, that and the state, or illegitimate authority.

Most of the critical-theoretical accounts of institutionalism that we might normally turn to for understanding of the artistic practice of institutional critique emerged out of this same period and simply reframe its tenor Groucho rather than opening out to the sort of historical understanding of the peculiarities of the in the specific forms of artistic critique that concern us here. The examples are legion, so I will only quickly review several of the more influential ones in point, all drawn from that tendency in French theory that, by the mid-1970s, would successfully dominate academic anti-institutionalism on the whole. Think, for example, of the deep-thinking anti-Stalinist author of the 1975 opus The Imaginary Institution of Society, Cornelius Castoriadis, who argued that, once an institution is established it seems to become autonomic and, thus, "outstrip its function, its ends," and its reasons for existing. As a result, all that have been seen as "an ensemble of institutions in the service of society becomes a society in the service of institutions." Or think of Louis Althusser, in his famous 1970 account of ISAs or ideological state apparatuses, which he described as "distinct and specialized institutions" meaning distinct from directly repressive institutions like the army or police, which "function massively and predominantly by ideology." Ideology that was "routinely in institutions, in their rituals and their practices." Here we have "the form in which the ideology of the ruling class must necessarily be realized," he said, and that form was their institutionalism. So too, finally, and most influentially, think of Michel Foucault, who, in characteristic Nietzschean dressing, saw the answer to his well-known critique of the power/knowledge institutional nexus in a 1976 "dream of the intellectual, the destroyer of evidence and universality, the one who, in the inertia and constraints of the present, creates and marks the weak points, the openings, the lines of power, who incessantly displaces himself, doesn't know exactly where he is heading nor what he will think tomorrow because he is too attentive to the present." Let us have fresh air, fresh air, and keep clear of the museums and hospitals of culture! How Nietzsche himself had put the same dream nearly a century before, bringing it home in a manner that already anticipated the relevance Groucho's: that concerns us here: A married philosopher becomes a comedy, not in the serious business of cultural critique, he wrote, that is my proposition.

The gist of all of these critiques and the period's anti-institutionalism as a whole was pretty simple: institutionalism was another name for received thought conglomerated into a social form that veiled or otherwise inhibited the possibility of self-creation. The solution, most agree in one way or another with Nietzsche, was to step outside that institutionalism altogether, outside the "museum and hospitals of culture," into some form of indeterminacy or performative or self-assertion that did not fall into the institutional trap or what Castoriadis called "the autonomization of institutions in relation to society." Understood in such terms, who, indeed, would want to live in an institution?

That said, there was one institution that spoke to the rage of anti-institutionalism of the late 1960s while continuing to provide those "humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction" as it they themselves harbored progressive social change—that is, what Peter Bürger would come to label in 1974 the "institution of art." In one sense modern art has always been a different sort of institution, of course, and the rules of its game have been defined in part by a form of nonparticipation or a manner of institutionalized antiinstitutionalism. On the whole, the art of the 1960s defined itself at a distance from the twin institutional forms of politics and the marketplace—in the camp consumption and camp appropriation of pop, for example, or the quirky industrial specificity and academic phenomenon of minimalism, or in the epistemologically and politically indifferent visions of
conceptual art, or finally the self-reflexive, shoot-yourself-in-the-foot criticality of institutional critique. But that resistance to being folded into market or political obligations does not mean that it did not take on an institutional role as art, thereby providing a very specific set of constraints that did indeed shape human interaction. This, of course, was Bürger’s concern, and he discussed 1960s art for merely playing at stepping outside its own institutionality, calling it “neo-avantgarde,” he cast it with institutionalized art as a whole, variously as “the objectification of the self-understanding of the bourgeois class” or “aestheticism.”

In other words, art institutionalized was art for its own sake and, as such, was a mirror image of the bourgeoisie’s own sense of itself rising up and mortifying it over the culture at large as a universal and transcendental ruling subject for its own sake, no longer in need of divine sanction or authorization by military might. Its principle was housed in the “false” part of the term “aestheticism.” In the becoming institutional or becoming self-authorized of that which had once defined itself back during its own revolutionary epoch in the eighteenth century precisely by its distance from institutional being, by its distance from any sort of identity, by its transcendence of institutionality as such in the heady ether of individual, bodiless experience became universal meaning and purpose.

The transformation of the protopopolitical, extramodular, universal purpose of the revolutionary bourgeoisie to the postpolitical, institutionalized loss of that purpose for the later bourgeois ruling class—this is, from the self-expression of the capitalist class in the eighteenth century to its tactical self-abnegation in the twentieth’s more or less summarizes the history of modern art, but this latter day condition became particularly acute by the end of the 1960s. As Bürger would put it in a later publication, “The singular term ‘institution of art’ highlights the hegemony of one conception of art,” a hegemony that came to be demonstrated, he insisted, by one particularly significant factor: “the struggle against committed art.” The original bourgeois institution of art, with all the baggage of its transformation from a genuine universality to a counterfeit or false one, would carry on through all the experiments with new and different media that characterized the art of the 1960s. The good irony and gross surprise, for our purposes, is that, contrary to Bürger and the period anti-institutionalism that his study grew out of, that institution would come to be most powerfully defended, articulated, and received by the art development that presumed to the greatest degree of institutional self-sufficiency—that is, what we have come to call “institutional critique.”

If we had to put a label on, the anomaly at issue here, we might say that the genre of institutional critique as it took form at the end of the 1960s was more conflicted than most about the period’s emerging lived experience of “Crépuscule and that it remained tied to—or found purpose in returning to—the older, residual tendency Karl. The principle of institutionality itself was always at the heart of the bourgeois concept of modern art, taking its lead, first, from the great historic figures of the bourgeoisie—the various allegories of liberty and equality, the citizen, the parliament, the museum, and the public sphere—and, later, from the great historic figures of industrialization—labor, the factory, the worker, the party, the international, the masses. That dream of becoming social, becoming institutional, of becoming governments in its larger, (post-Foucauldian, post-Crépuscule) sense, ultimately was also always the dream of becoming human, of self-realization: “When the laborer co-creates systemically with others”—that is when he becomes part of an assembly line, a society, a party, a class, an institution—as the original tendency Karl famously had it, “he strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of his species.”

This great human potential, realized by the highly developed social forms and processes of capitalism, always had an end, if not as well as Marx, a vision and a task that neuroscience could not be separated from the historical development of their promise. “If, then, on the one hand, the capitalist mode of production is a historically necessary condition for the transformation of the labor process into a social process, so, on the other hand, this social form of the labor process is a method employed by capital for the more profitable exploitation of labor, by increasing its productive power.” That exploitation was achieved by technological and managerial means, of course, but also through the production of alienation or ideology or commodity fetishism in the institution of art that is, by creating the illusion that the complex social systems and processes that capitalism had enabled were, in fact, the sociality of things rather than people and therefore beyond the control of those they represented. Even as it came to embody that alienation in the principle of art for itself sake, modern art also promised as an alternative to that alienation, an alternative way to experience socially as a person rather than a thing, and in so doing a manner of reconstituting the compromised promise of capitalist modernity. It was never a fully satisfactory or successful redemption, and—like labor—was always already complicit or coextensive with its own exploitation, but
it did—like laws—provide a reminder of the Enlightenment dream of what humanity could be. In this way aesthetics and politics, the bourgeois concept of modern art and socialism, have always been inseparable, and it is that inseparability, that human self-realization in becoming social, that would become the root justification for the artistic practice of institutional critique.

The comedy of institutional belonging, as Nietzsche called it—of being a married philosopher, for example, or a movement artist, or an ivory tower art historian, or a concerned citizen—and its cunning postmodern antitheatrics of always entertaining institutionalization in order to find fresh air of incessantly displacing oneself from social forms as they begin to corrode and cohere into “the mindless and hospitals of culture,” will be familiar to many readers of this volume. I do not mean to downplay the tremendous importance that such ideas have had in defining a critical function for art and critical theory more broadly since 1968. Indeed, it is in-tune with the enervating ideological effects of the classical antisystemic movements in power was negative,” he writes, referring most centrally to the broad historical sweep of communism and affiliated antiestablishment movements.

They ceased to believe that these parties would bring about a glorious future or a more egalitarian world and no longer gave them their legitimacy, and having lost confidence in the movements, they also withdrew their faith in the state as a mechanism of transformation. This did not mean that large sections of the population would no longer vote for such parties in elections; it had become a defensive vote, not an affirmation of ideology or expectations.

That said, however, the artistic practice of institutional critique as it is understood here is something largely different in its critical emphasis from the new left politics that emerged in the wake of these failures and therefore is inseparable to the theoretical musings of the likes of Castoriadis, Althusser, and Foucault, and falls outside of the purview given to us by Wallerstein’s history of legitimacy. Put simply, the anomalous investment in institutional critique had little of the defensive reaction that Wallerstein speaks of and little of the institutional-outsiderism of its contemporaries. Against many of the postmodernists that would emerge subsequently, institutional critique retained its commitment to the old promise of institutionality.

In this way institutional critique as an artistic genre stood opposed to anti-institutionalism as such, not just that of the period tendency Groucho Marx and comrade Engels used with characteristic anti-Scandinavianism: “he evades them wherever it is possible to do so in each individual case, but he wants everyone else to observe them.” What is relevant for our purposes is: the contradiction—If the entire bourgeois, in a mass and at one time, were to evade bourgeois institutions, it would cease to be bourgeois conduct which, of course, never occurs to the bourgeois and by no means depends on their willing or evading—a contradiction that makes itself manifest in various forms.

The dissolve bourgeois evades marriage and secretly commits adultery, the mercantile evades the institution of property by depriving others of property by speculation, bankruptcy, etc. The young bourgeois makes himself independent of his own family, of that is, he evades the institutions of his regime as far as he is concerned. But marriage, property, the family remain untouched in theory, because they are the practical basis on which the bourgeois has erected its domination, and because in their bourgeois form they are the conditions which make the bourgeois a bourgeois, just as the constantly evaded law makes the religious Jew a religious Jew. This attitude of the bourgeois to the conditions of his existence acquires one of its universal forms in bourgeois morality.

To which, of course, Marx and Engels responded with the demand to think all social institutions as such—that is, as types rather than individual instances: marriage, property, family, worker, party, class, etc. Typology was itself social thinking, institutional thinking, and class thinking, and it was only as such that the truth of class could be made available to consciousness, even if it occasionally conceived from a purely abstract international, political, and anthropological fallacy of stereotyping and racisms. All forms of thinking have their limits, including that, "stripped of the fictions of individuality.”

In order to fully appreciate the difference between such typological thinking and the methodological individualism of the bourgeois and its theorists that came to underpin the social meaning of art, we need to trace a history back to its modernist foundations and understand better what it is that Burger called the “institutions of art.” At the outset, we
should put forward a disclaimer that will already be well understood by most readers: the category that concerns us is not simply reducible to the social and economic institutions that house and support visual art—museums, galleries, individual and corporate art collections, universities, academic presses, art magazines, and the like. We might appropriately begin this genealogical endeavor to get at Bürger’s broader understanding, then, not via sociological inquiry but instead by philosophy. In particular, we can start with the bourgeoisie’s now much-sullied claim to universality: that would continue to serve as the foundation for modern art and its larger political aims up through the middle of the twentieth century, even as its legitimacy deteriorated with the process of institutionalization. Here, for example, is how one scholar has painted that original impetus, albeit with the breadth of brushes: “As the European bourgeoisie externally encompassed the whole world and inwardly toward the interiority of the nation but not toward the interiority of the self. As he describes this turn in its founding form, “a deep breach was laid in the subject’s position” such that matters of the heart were kept sharply distinct from matters of politics. “A present man withdraws into the secret chambers of his heart: where he remains his own judge, but external actions are to be submitted to the rule of judgment and jurisdiction.” But in summary form, a manner of separated, autonomous inwardness emerged as the vehicle for the formation of a counterhegemony—initially in the name of universal reason and the “rights of man”—and as such served as a form of polity. This would end in travesty, at least according to Koselleck, writing immediately after World War II, but that is not our concern here. Rather, our focus is on arts distinctive form of institutional thinking and the role that came to play in the genre known as institutional critique.

In this regard, it is important to remember that the modern concept of the humanly derived institution and the modern notion of critique came in concert. Each in its own way and in its own time emerged as a figure for political participation in response to early modern absolutism, first the sovereignty of the state shifted from the body of the king to the body of the Leviathan, and second, the measure of participation in that sovereignty shifted from contracted obedience born of life-threatening necessity to the courage to use one’s reason without direction from another and, therefore, to rethink and renegotiate that contract. “Our age is the genuine age of criticism, to which everything must submit,” boasted Kant famously, but so too and not unrelatedly, of course, would his age become the “genuine age” of institutions: institutions such as assemblies and legislatures and congresses and parliaments, of course, but also the institution of art especially as it came to be lodged in the museum. Moreover, there were the institutions of criticism, of “free and public examination,” that were the condition and purpose for what Kant called (anticipating the central problem of his third critique) the newly “reigned power of judgment.”

Parliaments and museums are different sorts of institutions, of course. One presumes to represent the public will, the other presumes to give occasion for private sentiments and pleasures. Modern art of the sort that anticipated the salons des refusés, the urge to defy its bourgeois, and the like, if it amounts to anything at all, has always been about reconciling these potentials: bringing public and private, parliament and museum, the abstract-collective and the concrete-particular, the exterior and the interior, consensus and critique, the political and the aesthetic, into concert with each other. It has rarely if ever succeeded at this intention; rather its successes have only been fleeting at the very best. But success in the normal sense is not really the point. The goal has never been to make individual desire and the collective will of the democratic process fully isomorphic. Few images of art to be a matter of sustained serious concern for parliaments or for the details of parliamentary matters to be sorted out in museums. Rather, at its best, modern art stages the dialogue between the two—between art and politics, between individuality and collectivity—by serving as occasion for a concrete-particular response to the abstract, utopian experience of collective decision making. Sometimes it does so explicitly, but mostly not. It is always an experience of withdrawing into the secret chambers of one’s heart, for sure but it is so inseparable within the context of the world outside.

This dialogue between outside and inside, politics and aesthetics, has always been achieved by the specific modern: means we have already alluded to but new need to state explicitly. But most simply, that means was realized through a process of self-abstraction or self-abstraction—this is the heart and soul of modern art, of its aim to epitomize bourgeois and embrace its position as refusal. What is sometimes not adequately appreciated is the origin of this tactic—and thus of modernism as a whole—in capitalism itself in experiencing oneself as a commodity, as a quantum of labor defined not by human self-realization but instead by its relational position in “a given state of society, under certain social average conditions of production, with a given social average intensity, and average skill of the labor employed.” Unconstraint, formally, such self-abstraction is the same as that of Kant’s wanted
formulas for the faculty of reason in common causes, "purposiveness without purpose"; of the great philosophical self-abstraction of Hegel's Geist, "One is the whole"; or the historic, revolutionary self-abstraction of Marxian class consciousness.

Thus things have now come to such a pass that the individual must appropriate the existing totality of productive forces, not only to achieve self-activity, but also, merely to safeguard their very existence. This appropriation is first determined by the object to be appropriated, the productive forces, which have been developed to a totality and which only exist within a universal intercourse. From this aspect alone, therefore, this appropriation must have a universal character corresponding to the productive forces and the intercourse.

That universal character, in other words, is the self-abstraction of institutionality itself, of organized, collective expression, of "humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction." The history of the bourgeoisie is a history of the tension between the becoming social and the unbecoming social of that interaction, of becoming conscious and unbecoming consciousness. The substance or purpose or meaning of the institution of art has always been this historical, and institutional critique as a genre—like modernism as a whole—has attempted to reverse that process of unbecoming, to call art back to the sociality of its expression, to wrench it away from the overwhelming, dehumanizing process of becoming a "social micrologic" or "fantastic form of a relation of things." 51

Although it arose in the late 1960s, institutional critique was a distinctive practice in that context because it was modernist in this sense: it had to do with the aim of critical negation: that is, not negation for negation's sake or negation as a means of stepping outside of institutionality altogether, but instead negation, a process of recognition that would be achieved in the resulting debate. In so doing it held firm to the principle of self-abstraction that is the leitmotif of institutionality. The measure of institutional critique is modernism, and thereby the measure of its unmodernism or incompleteness with the postmodernism of Castoriadis, Althusser, Foucault, and their contemporaries, was the degree to which it sought to redeem the institution of art, the degree to which it demanded that the institution live up to its founding ideals, the degree to which it insisted that the abstract-collective will of the museum and other institutions be rendered responsible to concrete-particular human desires. It is in this sense more than any other that we can speak of institutional critique in the past tense—as a modernist impulse in an era when that impulse was no longer believed in or understood—but that is a matter of history now. The more pressing question is what meaning or purpose institutional critique, or its memory, holds for us today.

Institutional critique preserved the institution of art in the context of 1968's broad disavowal of institutionality by holding accountable to its founding ideals—this, more or less, can serve as a summary of my argument so far. The status of institutional critique today is a different matter, however, and, broadly speaking, we can understand it to be structured by a governing antinomy or contradiction defined by two countervailing trends. It is this antinomy that can be said to be our postmodernity and to have pushed the meaning and purpose of institutional critique out of the category of contemporary art and into the past where it sits for us only as a pose.

On the one hand, we can see from our perspective today a general recession or dispersion of institutions as we have known them, that is, of the old hierarchical social organizations that aided and abetted social life, the institutions that were of particular concern for Althusser, Castoriadis, and Foucault. Think, for example, of the church or the party or the university or the civil society institutions considered by Robert Putnam in his book Bowling Alone or think of the old television or radio network or the Hollywood studio or the mass-market publisher or, closer still, to home for some of us, think of the august institutions of higher education. And the art appreciation or arts appreciation or the postmodernist institutions of governance and law at any level from the local to the global. With their imperious Latin sobriquets, dignified chambers of deliberation, dutifully guarded walls, and their allusions to the fantastic realms of the public, the nation, or the world, these great modern bodies now not only seem ideological in the way that Althusser and Foucault and others decried forty years ago but increasingly lack of decay and a sedimented past. Even their marble-and-granite materiality seems surprisingly archaic, surprisingly unable to keep up with the accelerated shape-shifting of our present-day, technologically enabled capitalism globalization.

Depending on how strongly we feel ourselves in the thrall of the postmodern present, these musty old halls of truth, beauty, and justice might as well take on the otherworldly character of institutions of an even more distant time. Listen, for example, to their
resonances with Ernst Kantorowicz’s description of what he sought to be a distinctly medieval form of institutionality.

The Christian...had become the citizen of a city in another world. Ethically, death for the carnal fatherland meant little if compared with that for the spiritual patria, Jerusalem in heaven, or, with the twin models of civic self-sacrifice, the martyrs, confessors, and holy virgins. The saints had given their lives for the invisible community in heaven and the celestial city, the true patria of their desires; and a final return to that fatherland in heaven should be the normal desire of every Christian soul, while wandering in exile on earth."

The university, the museum, the party, or the fourth estate, or the democratic process with large—these were our “spiritual patria,” our “Jerusalem in heaven,” our countinstitutions, and they long provided a cosmopolitan otherworldliness and globalist ethical orientation that grounded a critical relation to abuses of social, political, and economic power in the name of private enterprise or the nation-state. There were, in other words, the levers of publicity that forestalled the forces of privatization by provoking and sanctioning public debate. Now their very institutionality, their centralized organizational structure, with its grand civic spaces and rigorous gatekeeping that endowed, authorized, and empowered the processes of critique and debate, seems to be at risk of evaporating—for good and for bad—under pressure from the new technologically enabled forms of peer-to-peer social organization. This, as Stephen Colebtt called it, "our "wikilization," and we might well see the rise of peer-to-peer networks and the rise of viral marketing and Karl Rove’s spin polling—or, more broadly, the legacy of the 1980s counterculture and the resurgence of Republican laissez-faire, antigovernment activism that began in earnest in the 1980s—to be of a piece in its nature." In a fully realized postinstitutional, peer-to-peer world, consensus replaces truth, beauty, and justice, and the old institutions that supported those ideals—museums, universities, courts of law, and the like—lose their authority to the anti-institutional epistemology of the smear and the fed.

On the other hand, however, we can also speak of another deep structural change occurring during the same period with a symbiotic, if opposite effect—that is, the dramatically increased pervasiveness and power of the corporation, with its limited liability and limited accountability. If the decline in our relationship to institutionality can be traced back most immediately to 1968 and to the resurgence of “big government” critiques that cropped up in response to Johnson’s Great Society programs, as well as to the turn toward a newly euphoriac, extrastitutional counterculture such as articulated by the Whole Earth Catalog, the renewed surge of corporate institutionalism might be dated to 1973 and tied to three significant events that combined to encourage a more proactive, more politically expansive corporatism: the OPEC oil embargo, the Chilean coup, and the founding of the Heritage Foundation. On the most general level, this anatomy of decreased identification with the old institutions of church and state, of higher learning and art appreciation, on the one hand, and a newly expanded geopolitical mission for corporations, on the other, found its resolution in a historic shift of the meaning of institutionality away from the principles of public accountability and public entrenchment and toward private gain and limited accountability.

While this combination of a diminution of public institutionality and an intensification of private institutionality in the wake of the 1960s is part of a larger process of postmodernization tied to the longer history of the cold war, it still amounted to a sea change on its own. Among other more significant effects, it summoned a loss of purpose for institutional critique at the moment of its inception. That purpose, again, was to hold public or quasi-public institutions—museums, universities, and governments—accountable to their public mission, or at least to a public mission for art. We can see this role at work in the early years and up to the present—most directly in the work of Hans Haacke, for example, or in the various demands made by groups like the Art Workers’ Coalition, the Guerrilla Art Action Group, or the Torquemada Ande group in Argentina, or later by Adrian Piper, or the Guerrilla Girls, or Andres Serrano, or Fred Wilson. The role taken by artists engaged in institutional critique was deeply indebted to that old modernistideal of the “spiritual patria” or “Jerusalem in heaven”—our old, dear concept of good, healthy, and just institutionality; our long-held ideal of a good, healthy, and just society. Perhaps the greatest of all these works—a work that might be taken as the capstone of the movement, even—is Haacke’s magisterial Der Beflecker, installed in the Reichstag in the year 2000. Not only does this piece call on the German parliament to account for the publicness of its mission, but it also doesn’t make publicness itself, but in doing so realizes what it calls for rather than simply criticizing an existing institution for its failure to live up to its own founding principles. We might also take Allan Kaprow’s plaintive cry in 1967, “Where art thou, sweet muse?” to speak to this desire for good, healthy, and just institutionality, even though it was intended as mockery. (To my way of thinking, Kaprow said, “the museum is a fuddy-duddy...
semant from another era” best turned into a swimming pool or nightclub or emptied and left as an environmental sculpture." Even his archaic English gives us a useful sense of the rich historical status of this ideal—the old promise of the museum as a founding institution of the public sphere, as a kind of "Thou" in the sense of Martin Buber's great 1933 "On Thou." When Thou is spoken, the speaker has nothing; he has indeed nothing. But he takes his stand in relation." That "stand in relation," or "universal intercourse," is what always distinguished public sovereignty from individual autonomy and was the original meaning of modern art's promised sweetness and light, as well as the lifeblood of the tendency Karl discussed above.

This split between these two tendencies or critical approaches to institutionality can also be located, geographically. Whereas one finds its purpose in neoliberalism's North American base and South American outpost and can be said to have been born in protest against the changes in the way we think about and experience institutions—protesting the loss of that old promise of sweetness and light to privatization—the second tendency, already indicated by Kaprow's mockery, found its purpose elsewhere. Philosophically in line with the broader tendency Gronen, that elsewhere was nowhere: it had no specific conceptual or political housing and instead sought to place itself outside of institutionality as such. Ager-Jorn had summed up this principle already in 1960, before Castoriadis, Althusser, Foucault, and others would make it into period doctrine: "The form of a container is a form contrary to the form of its contents; its function is to prevent the contents from entering into process." Geographically, the heart of anti-institutionalism was located in neoliberalism's main adversary—the late socialist world of Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and China, and, to a lesser degree, in the democratic socialism of Western Europe. There, the old Enlightenment

Hans Haacke, Der Bevölkerung, 2000. Photograph by Stefan Müller 2008, courtesy of Hans Haacke © Hans Haacke/Artists Rights Society (ARS). Haacke set up a 21-by-7-meter garden in the center of the courtyard in the Berlin Reichstag (government building) with the phrase "DER BEVÖLKERUNG" (to the population) inscribed on the ground in neon letters. By invitation from Haacke, parliament representatives have tended the garden with soil from their constituencies (currently the count is up to 275 MPs). Over the years, a dense vegetation has grown on its own in the soil provided. "Der Bevölkerung" refers to the words "Dem Deutschen Volke" (to the German people) inscribed in 1916 on the west portal of the parliament building.
ideals lived on to a degree that they did not in the neoliberal nexus of the Americans; and as the anti-Stalinism of the postwar period matured, the failure of state socialism weeded out even more as the institutional issue of the day. At the end of the 1950s, Albert Camus commented, in words that just as well could have been those of Eastern Europe’s GDRs or of the dissidents who would emerge in the Soviet Union and China in years to come: “Every writer tries to give a form to the passions of his time. Yesterday it was love. Today the great passions of unity and liberty disrupt the world. Yesterday love led to individual death. Today collective passions make us run the risk of universal destruction.”

So it was that the residual threat of colectivization remained more pressing in the old stomping grounds of Hitler and Mussolini through the 1950s and 1960s than it did in the Americas where corporatization reigned, and was even more intense across the sphere of influence still dominated by Brzezinski and Mao. This threat affected artists as much as or more than anyone else, but resulted in a wide-reaching existentialism, as the future artist-president Václav Havel put it a decade after the Prague Spring and a decade prior to the Velvet Revolution, there was a desire to “shed the burden of traditional political categories and habits and open oneself up fully to the world of human existence,” to turn “away from abstract political visions of the future toward concrete human beings.”

That Havel’s anti-institutionalism would turn so readily into the neoliberal “gangster capitalism” (as he called it) of his successor Vaclav Klaus, and thus join the great wave of post-socialist globalization, may not seem so surprising to those of us in the West, but it certainly seemed to surprise Havel and other artists like him in the eastern bloc who rallied to his existentialist position: he came to call his pro-Klaus adversaries in the press the “inside brigade” when he became their principal target “and the expression ‘nonpolitical politics’ became a popular slogan.”

As with any bit of history, we will only really understand what institutional critique was by seeing the ways in which it was bound up deeply with the larger contradictions of its time, and we can only fully understand its historical meaning now by appreciating the legacy of those contradictions in the world we find ourselves in today. “Nonpolitical politics” is certainly one such contradiction, as the inside brigade astutely observed—or they might well have complained about the noninstitutional institution of Havel’s government or his successor Goucho. Some such characterization might equally well describe almost all of the art that falls under Bünker’s rubric of the neo-avantgarde—we might simply call it art that pretends it is not art, or art that disavows its own institutional status. The ultimate realization of the old Enlightenment dream of “purposiveness without purpose”—of art living by its own rules and in so doing setting the terms for society at large, of artistic autonomy as the foundational instance in which man “strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of his species”—had also been the greatest travesty of those same principles. What Bünker missed by focusing narrowly on the nineteenth-century bourgeois institution of art was the way in which its origin in universalism was both realized and corrupted in the Soviet policy of socialist realism and, in turn, the way this latter form served as the motor driving all that he deemed with the term “neo-avantgarde.” After all, the art movements of the late 1950s and 1960s that deserve this label failed by Bünker’s measure because of their refusal of politics, their “struggle against committed art,” and that struggle was born first and foremost from the larger culture of the anti-Stalinist left. As Kuprow described it in one standard piece of periodical wisdom about art’s “deeper predicament,” art could no longer “provide the utopian solutions to the world’s ills that it had once promised.”

This predicament was an understandable reaction to the failure of state socialism, and its resulting tendency Goucho served as the great savior of postmodernity’s “incredulity towards meta-narratives” more generally, its incredulity toward universals, its incredulity, ultimately toward what we have been calling the institution of art. Today we can look back at this predicament and see it as an indicator of the great geopolitical changes that would come in 1989.

By contrast, when viewed as a countercurrent to 1968’s tendency Goucho, institutional critique can be seen not simply as different or out of synch but instead as exceptional and exemplary in serving as a reminder of what the bourgeois project and its proletarian offshoot once promised, in a world that tried to rip us of that memory. That legacy lives on, of course, and not only in the ongoing practices of rapid globalization like Haacke, Houser, and the Guerrilla girls. Perhaps most vital offspring, now, can be found among those who work in the genre broadly known as” “tactical media”—artists and groups like the Yes Men, Critical Art Ensemble, Institute for Applied Autonomy, Natalie Bookchin, and Jacqueline Stevens, Trevor Paglen, Steve Lambert, and others. The investment in institutionality by these artists is different, of course—as a rule they occupy private institutions and redirect them to public ends rather than occupying public institutions and holding them accountable to their founding purpose—but the principle of institutionality as the form of public accountability poses against the powerful privatizing force of neoliberal anti-institutionalism is the same.
We might end then, with another equally revealing (and equally well known) May 1968 graffito in order to further situate the historically specific accomplishment of institutional critique in the context of the debates of its time. This one, memorialized by Lucien Goldmann, was scrawled on a blackboard in the Sorbonne: “Structures,” it said, “do not take to the streets.” The Marxian-cum-existentialist Goldmann used this graffiti to provoke a debate in discussion following Foucault’s 1969 “What Is an Author?” lecture, slamming the structuralism still at that time associated with Foucault. Goldmann concluded with bombast, “It is never structures that make history; it is men.” Foucault marked his own then-emerging shift into poststructuralism and politics by disowning the term “structure” altogether, but fellow audience member Jacques Lacan defended structuralism’s honor against Goldmann’s critique: “I do not believe that it is at all legitimate so have written that structures do not take to the streets,” he countered, “because if there is one thing demonstrated by the events of May, it is precisely that structures did take to the streets.” That these words were written at the Sorbonne where events originated “proves nothing,” he said, “other than, simply, that very often, even most of the time, what is internal to what is called action is that it does not know itself.” We can take this rich period exchange to illustrate three complementary philosophies of history underlying what we have been calling the period’s tendency Graebe: Goldmann’s insistence that individuals make history, Foucault’s structural determinism, in another; and in a third, Lacan’s stepping outside of history-making entirely in the great tricentennial figure “who incessantly displaces himself, doesn’t know exactly where he is heading nor what he’s thinking tomorrow because he is too attentive to the present.”

What none of these positions allowed for as they took stands in relation to each other was a meaningful critical role for institutions, and particularly not for the institution of art as the locus classicus of the public sphere. As one study has stated about the afterlife of these positions, “the new spirit of capitalism shares an often virulent anarcho-capitalism with liberalism,” one that “has its origins in the critique of the state (and its ideological apparatuses and discourses) developed by the ultra-left in the 1960s and 1970s.” Preserving the institutionality of critique given by the tendency Karl against the tendency Graebe’s anti-institutionalism is the great modernist promise that the art practice of institutional critique held out in the rising tide of the various postmodernisms from ultraleft to ultraright since the 1960s. It is the memory of that historically specific charter that might serve us now.
33. See Houel's account of his relationship with Hulda in his excerpt from his 2007 memoir To the Castle and Back at http://www.nybooks.com/arts/2013/12/31.
36. Here is one recent account of something like that promise: "The question of institutions has traditionally turned, not merely on efficiency as something uneventfully but in its legislative and moral, if not corrupt, but capable of very precisely on the inevitable conspiratorial practices. As Heidegger put it, "The breaking into a bank[,] which in a traditional view in American folk wisdom, it has, from time to time also been remembered that businesses is a conspiracy against the public..." The Hippos' dimension of institutions is toward their collective existence and structure, where the conspiracy theory celebrates this collective dynamic and seeks to explore the categories of individual agency with collective ones. It marks a first imperfect step in that direction. Cynical reason, meanwhile, while seeming to strip acts and events of their apparent moral disintention, might well pave the way for some future awareness of collective self-interest as such." Fredric Jameson, "How Not to Historicate Theory," Critical Inquiry (Spring 2008), 481–502.
37. See Didier Eribon, Michel Foucault (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 210–211.
an introduction to the general theory of place
(1966)
wiesław borowski, hanna ptaszkowska, and mariusz tchorek

Art has many times in the course of its history proclaimed itself to be liberal art. But by so doing, art expressed not what it actually was, but rather what it desired to become. In fact, art always remains in the process of self-liberation. As has been stated, more than once in similar circumstances, art is being liberated from its own inherited characteristics; it strips them off and leaves them behind.

Let us not forget all those healers that used to haunt art whenever it took a glance at its own face. The time has arrived, however, when we can no longer refrain from revealing and naming that from which art is now liberating itself. The time has arrived to reveal the present object of hatred. Let us emphasize at the outset, however, that this is a purely internal affair. The hatred of art toward itself is very involved, and only those who are within are entitled thus to hate.

At least one side of the object of hatred is readily apparent. But it is so close at hand that it is valuable to notice it. A radical shift of point of view must be made. Let us for the moment no longer look at works, but let us step instead before the territory occupied by them. Let us not enter the exhibition, but remain at its threshold. What shall we find out?

I. The essence of exhibition is transparency. Exhibition is conceived as nonexistent. It must not act upon the work.

But here are the facts: Exhibition acquires flesh of its own; it becomes an independent reality. It is the exhibition rather than the work of art that becomes a fact. An individual work becomes subject to the independent reality of the exhibition. The work becomes an element of the exhibition. The work conceived as unique is now one among many. Has the work of art been made for any coexistence whatever? Has it ever been thought of as showing up in a flock of others?

II. An exhibition is a post-factum operation. The fact of artistic realization has been fulfilled within the walls of the workshop. The finished, final work begins a completely new existence with the exhibition. The exhibition communicates what is already past. What it makes available are but traces of decisive actions. An exhibition is but a communication of what has past, somewhere and at an indefinite time. Its reality has no relationship at all with the reality of the creative act.

III. The beholder. He appears at the exhibition and endorses final formalities connected with the work's reception. His presence has a merely legal significance. And for all that, too much freedom has been allowed him, while he generally doesn't know how to use it. This freedom releases no activity on his part. For example, the simplest restriction might have done. As a result, all those present at the exhibition choose the way of behaving they contemplate. The contemplative attitude warrants distance toward a work of art, it certifies the legitimacy of the beholder's presence at the exhibition; it allows him to compare, to check, to purchase, etc.

IV. The author. The artist has nothing more to do at the exhibition but hold the flowers. He is now a mere beholder, bored or stimulated by no longer genuine experiences, or else he is an ambassador of his own future designs; his position is that of a servant left standing, without any reason, after he has performed his duties.

The artist's personality is revealed at the exhibition mutilated, artificially portioned, and covered by a rhetoric that is incompatible with his maturity. The artist rings like a cut of beef, while we try in vain to reconstruct the living animal, torn from the cut. The author, persuaded by the learned that sincerity is his essential virtue, feels an awkwardness, a self-consciousness, a foolishness amid the festive splendor of a public show. Why not make this foolishness, the most genuine feature of the event, the event's very object?

The PLACE then? Well, the PLACE. The PLACE, for certain.
The PLACE is an area that arises by virtue of the setting outside of all and any principles obtaining in the universe.

The PLACE is not a category of space; it is not an arena, a scene, a screen, a pedestal, and above all it is not an exhibition.

The PLACE is isolated and at the same time exteriorized. Its existence is not merely a subjective matter and it cannot be called into being by purely private endeavors. It must be conspicuous and significantly objective while, at the same time, it cannot subsist if it falls to protect itself from the impact of the world and from becoming identified with the world.

The PLACE is a sudden gap in the utilitarian approach to the world. All and any standards valid beyond the PLACE no longer hold within it. Therein space is devoid of its utilitarian significance, all its measures, reasons, Euclidean and non-Euclidean interpretations are left behind. Events, if they occur at all, are deprived of any outer meaning whatever.

There is no hesitation within the PLACE, since there is no difference between the wrong and the right, the good and the good for nothing; everything is merely and simply there. The PLACE is neither strange nor common, refined nor vulgar, wise nor stupid. It is neither a dream nor a waking scene.

The PLACE is not transparent. The PLACE is actual presence. There are no criteria for a better or more valuable taking of the PLACE. It may be empty, but its emptiness must be consciously present.

The PLACE is one and unique. It cannot be divided and it does not procreate.

The PLACE is what we are in. Only when we step outside, can we conceive it as one among many places comparable to it. The PLACE can become an object of hatred only from abroad.

Any place in the world may be possessed and thus constituted as the PLACE. From a worldly point of view, it is by no means a peculiar area. The PLACE cannot be recognized by its appearance. It does not modify the world's laws because it has nothing at all to do with them. The PLACE may indeed look exactly like any other fragment of reality. There are areas in the world, however, that are thought of as particularly fit for becoming PLACES.

The PLACE is neither a construction nor a destruction. It comes into being as a result of an indemnified decision. The PLACE has no sufficient reason in the world. It is in the artist that the PLACE's reason subsists. It is he who calls forth the PLACE. It is created by he who steps within it. It is only in the PLACE, and not outside it, that "art is created by all."

The PLACE cannot be mechanically fitted up, but it must be necessarily perpetuated. The slightest moment of inattention may be enough for it to sink into what is around it. There are numerous anonymous forces that professionally destroy the PLACE or produce its false substitutes. These forces take advantage of the PLACE still left and they manipulate by means of elements taken up from within it—with elements restored to real standards and measures.

The PLACE cannot be bought or collected. It cannot be arrested. It cannot be an object of virtue.

Protection of the PLACE is not one more among many endeavors with definite ownership. Nor is it a product of the present. It appears again and again in the course of the history of art, but it only reaches prominence at moments of radical shifts.

Such was the moment of transubstantiation of the picture into the PLACE. In the temple a picture had not or could not have been; the PLACE. Its presence was legitimate only inasmuch as it turned the temple into a contribution to the effort of the incessant perpetuation of this exceptional area that, ever since the expelling of the buyers and sellers, had been by itself the one and only PLACE.

The picture had gained independence, however, and for a while it remained solitary. The frame remained the same as the only witness of the event. The frame, a kind of naive can protecting the picture from the world's impact. Thus began the tendency of the picture to produce an inner bond of its own that would save it as the PLACE without any additional supports.

This is how composition arose.

But composition, at last, a perfect realization of the enclosure, has remained shut off on its own side, while leaving us on the side of the world. The most we can do is to conceive of composition as the PLACE; we always remain on the outside. Since it is finished and closed, since it is indestructible though defenseless, since nothing more can ever happen to it, composition has been sentenced to manipulation from without. Since it has been hung up in architectural space, it has become an inspiration for utilitarian spaces. It used to be thought of as a necessary element of the human environment, as sunk into the world. In its initial and relatively pure form, it has disappeared in the exhibition. But there it has lost its solitary character as the only perfect solution and begun to assemble in flocks.
At an exhibition we thus walk from PLACE to PLACE while performing "illegitimate" procedures, like those of evaluating, comparing, coming and carrying in and out, buying, etc. We try in vain to be somewhere—we are nowhere.

PLACES now represent to each other the strange outer world with all its aggressive force. What is going on is the self-destruction of PLACES. On the ruin feeds the new monster, the exhibition. Intended to be transparent, called forth as a natural reservation of PLACES, the exhibition has turned out to be an illegal, self-sustained product, a false PLACE, a PLACE-deception and a PLACE-treason.

The PLACE is a sudden gap in the utilitarian approach to the world. The PLACE arises when all the laws obtaining in the world are suspended. The PLACE is one and indivisible. PLACE.

This text was written in August 1966 by the critic who founded the Foksal Gallery in Poland. It served as the gallery’s opening manifesto. This translation was first published in October 38 (Autumn 1966): 53–56.
statement (1967)
daniel buren, olivier mosset, michel parmentier,
and niele toroni

Because painting is a game.
Because painting is the application (consciously or otherwise) of the rules of
composition.
Because painting is the freezing of movement.
Because painting is the representation (or interpretation or appropriation or dis-
persual or presentation) of objects.
Because painting is a springboard for the imagination.
Because painting is spiritual illustration.
Because painting is justification.
Because painting serves an end.
Because to paint is to give aesthetic value to flowers, women, eroticaism, the daily
environment: art, clasism, psychoanalysis, and the war in Vietnam.
We are not painters.

This text was issued as a pamphlet at the Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Musée d'art Moderne, Paris, on January 3, 1967.

where art thou, sweet muse? (i'm hung up at the whitney) (1967)
allan kaprow

Discussion about museums can only be academic if limited to the usual questions of function and good looks. The primary question is whether or not museums have any relevance at all for contemporary art.

I once wrote (Art News, September 1964) that “the public museums developed principally as substitutes for the patronage of the Palace and Church. Physically, the museum is a direct parallel in mood, appearance and function to the clustered, unsustainably grand surrounding art once had. In Europe, it was the unused monastery and former chateau that were taken over for the purpose, while in America the style was imitated. Therefore, we have the aristocratic manner of curators, the hushed atmosphere, the reverence with which one is supposed to glide from work to work.”

The modern museum, though up-to-date in architectural style and occupant with rapidly changing shows, movies, concerts, symposia, art classes, and publishing programs—as if it were just another college—still has not been able to shake off this aura of quasi-religion and high rank. It still embraces its contents, still demands a worshipful attitude that reflects benignly on the spectator’s growing cultivation and status. By seeming to talk only to offset and enframe pictures and sculpture from the rest of nature for the sake of focus, the museum environment actually transforms everything into a true nature more because of the kind of history evolved.

Initially it was an appropriate reflection of an aesthetics of detachment born of the social and professional isolation of artists in the last century and a half. The artist, artwork, and house of art grew to share a positive commitment to the notion of separating high culture from low life. The museum-as-temple spoke of specia, sufferings and rare gratifications to a small band of Israelites lost in the wilderness. As such, it served a profound need and one can only be grateful for it.

But today, the middle-class background of the artist, his nonprofessionalized university schooling, his job-oriented attitude (usually toward teaching), his inclination toward raising a family in a neighborhood, together tend to preclude an aesthetic sense of alienation while at the same time opening paths of social mobility and social usefulness.

Similarly, private patronage—relatively limited in cash and still dressed for the nostalgic role it might have played in the past—is steadily losing ground to impersonal corporate stimulation and sponsorship. Federal and municipal subsidies to the arts in much greater amounts, added to funds from large, private foundations established through the machinery of tax relief, are spent on the direct advancement of the nation's high education industry—which says culture is a good buy.

As a result, the patron-to-artist relationship has been eliminated as a major cultural force, and the corresponding concept of the artwork as a hand-made and individualized object seems as quaint as the cobbler's boot. Instead, the vanguard tends to view art as a social process, as an ironic idea per se expressed in vacuities and absurdities; as a multimedia organism extruding into the space of everyday existence; as a slice of life needing no transformation since the mind transforms anyway, as a technological game or a psychological probe into the effects of technology on humans; it even views art as a shifting identity incapable of embodiment beyond elusive words and thus implies total inactivity. Geographically such art can never fit physically into an art temple nor feel comfortable with the latter's mood of sanctity.

To my way of thinking, then, the museum is a fuddy-duddy remnant from another era. It resembles the symphony: no matter how many electronic sounds, power tools, and other unusual noisemakers are used to give it a sense of modernity, there remains the grand conductor leading his grand group of performers on a grand stage of a grand hall, with a
grand audience out in front to grandly applaud or boo. Only the details are altered in a frozen framework. The museum may hire a modern architect, may install jazzy lighting effects and piped-in lectures, may offer entertainment and baby-sitting facilities, but it will always be a "place of the muses" because its directors take for granted the necessary connection between it and art.

One may generalize that the environment context of the artwork today is of greater importance than its specific forms, and that it is this surrounding, furthermore, which will determine the nature and shape of the container of these forms. It leads to the speculation that as a museum is obsolete, so are the kinds of art—pictures and statues—for which it was conceived. I suggested in the article referred to above that in all probability "the spirit and body of the art, is on our TV screens and in our vitamin pills . . . The modern museums should be turned into swimming pools and night clubs," or in the best-looking examples, emptied and left as environmental sculpture.

This text first appeared in Arts Magazine 41, no. 4 (February 1967): 40–43. Courtesy of Alan Kairuz Edriss, Hauser & Wirth, Zurich London.
what is a museum? a dialogue (1967)
allan kaprow and robert smithson

Allan Kaprow: There was once an art which was central for the museums, and the idea that the museums look like mausoleums may actually reveal to us the attitude we’ve had to art in the past. It was a form of paying respect to the dead. Now, I don’t know how much more work there is available from that past that has to be displayed or respected. But if we’re going to talk about the works being produced in the last few years, and which are to be produced in the near future, then the concept of the museum is completely irrelevant. I should like to pursue the question of the environment of the work of art; what kind of work is being done now; where it is best displayed, apart from the museum, or its miniature counterpart, the gallery.

Robert Smithson: Well, it seems to me that there is an attitude that tends toward McLuhanism, and this attitude would tend to see the museum as a null structure. But I think the reality implied in the museum is actually one of its major assets, and that this should be utilized and accentuated. The museum tends to exclude any kind of life-forcing position. But it seems that now there’s a tendency to try to live things up in the museums, and that the whole idea of the museum seems to be tending more toward a kind of specialized entertainment. It’s taking on more and more the aspects of a dissonance and less and less the aspects of art. So, I think that the best thing you can say about museums is that they really are nullifying in regard to action, and I think that this is one of their major virtues. It seems that your position is one that is concerned with what’s happening. I’m interested for the most part in what’s not happening, that area between events which could be called the gap. This gap exists in the blank and void regions of settings that we never look at. A museum devoted to different kinds of emptiness could be developed. The emptiness could be defined by the actual installation of art. Installations should certainly have neither, not fulfill them.

Kaprow: Museums tend to make increasing concessions to the idea of art and life as being related. What’s wrong with their version of this is that they provide owned life, an aesthetized illustration of life. "Life" in the museum is like making love in a crematory. I am attracted to the idea of clearing out the museums and letting better designed ones like the Guggenheim exist as sculptures, as works, as such, almost closed to people. It would be a positive commitment to their function as museums. Yet, such an art would put so many artists out of business. I wonder if there isn’t an alternative on the fringes of life and art, in that marginal or peripheral zone which you’ve spoken so eloquently of, at the edges of cities, along vast highways with their outcroppings of supermarkets and shopping centers, endless lumberyards, discount houses, whether that’s the world that’s for you at least. I mean, can you imagine yourself working in that kind of environment?

Smithson: I’m so remote from that world that it seems unnecessary to me when I go out there; so not being directly involved in the life there, it fascinates me, because I’m sure of a distance from it, and I’m all for fabricating as much distance as possible. It seems that I like to think and look at those suburbs and those fringes, but at the same time, I’m not interested in living there. It’s more of an aspect of time that’s the future—the Morrisian landscape. By a distance, I mean a consciousness devoid of self-projection.

I think that some of the symptoms as to what’s going on in the area of museum building are reflected somewhat in Philip Johnson’s underground museum, which is in a sense buried abstract kinds of art in another kind of abstraction, so that it really becomes a reflection of a negation. I am all for a perpetuation of this kind of distancing and removal, and I think Johnson’s project for Els Island is interesting in that he’s going to get this nineteenth-century building and turn it into a ruin, and he says he’s going to stabilize the ruins, and he’s also building this circular building which is really nothing but a sterilized tomb. And it seems that you find this tendency everywhere, but everywhere is still a bit reluctant to give up their Me-forcing attitudes. They would like to balance them both. But, I think, what’s interesting is the lack of balance. When you have a Happening,
you can't have an absence of happening. There has to be this dualism which I'm afraid upsets a lot of ideas of humanism and unity. I think that the two views, unity and dualism, will never be reconciled and that both of them are valid, but at the same time, I prefer the latter in multiplicity.

Kaprow: There is another alternative. You mentioned building your own monument, up in Alaska, perhaps, or Canada. The more remote it would be the more inconsequential, perhaps the more satisfactory. Is that true?

Smithson: Well, I think ultimately it would be disappointing for everybody including myself. Yet the very disappointment seems to have possibilities.

Kaprow: What disturbs me is the lack of extremity in either of our positions. For instance, I have often made social compromises in my Happenings, while, similarly, you and others who might object to museums nevertheless go on allowing them.

Smithson: Extremity can exist in a vain context too, and I find what's vain more acceptable than what's pure. It seems to me that any tendency toward purity also suggests that there's something to be achieved, and it means that art has some sort of point. I think I agree with Flaubert's idea that art is the pursuit of the useless, and the more vain things are the better I like it, because I'm not burdened by purity.

I actually value indifference. I think it's something that has aesthetic possibilities. But most artists are anything but indifferent; they're trying to get with everything, switch on, turn on.

Kaprow: Do you like waxworks?

Smithson: No, I don't like waxworks. They are actually too lively. A waxwork thing relates back to life, so that actually there's too much life there, and it also suggests death, you know. I think the new tombes will have to avoid any reference to life or death.

Kaprow: Like Forest Lawn?

Smithson: Yes, it's an American tradition.

Kaprow: Realistically speaking, you'll never get anybody to put up the dough for a mausoleum—a mausoleum to emptiness, to nothing—though it might be the most poetic statement of your position. You'll never get anyone to pay for the Guggenheim to stay empty all year, though to me that would be a marvellous idea.

Smithson: I think that's true. I think basically it's an empty proposal. But... eventually there'll be a renaissance in funeral art.

Actually, our older museums are full of fragments, bits and pieces of European art. They were ripped out of total artistic structures, given a whole new classification and then categorized.

The categorizing of art into painting, architecture, and sculpture seems to be one of the most unfortunate things that took place. Now all these categories are splitting into more and more categories, and it's like an innumerable avalanche of categories. You have about forty different kinds of formalism and about a hundred different kinds of expressionism. The museums are being driven into a kind of paralyzation, and I don't think they want to accept it, so they've made a myth out of actine, they've made a myth out of excitement, and there's even a lot of talk about interesting spaces. They're creating exciting spaces and things like that. I never saw an exciting space I didn't know what a space is. Yet, I like the uselessness of the museum.

Kaprow: But on the one side you see it moving away from uselessness toward usefulness.

Smithson: Utility and art don't mix.

Kaprow: Toward education, for example. On the other side, paradoxically, I see it moving away from real usefulness to a bariocness of usefulness. As its sense of life is always aesthetic (cosmic), its sense of usefulness is antiseptic: it tries to assemble all "good" objects and ideas under one roof less they dissipate and degenerate out in the street. It implies an enrichment of the mind. Now, high class (and the high-class come-on) is implicit in the very concept of a museum, whether museum administrators wish it or not, and this is simply unrelated to current issues. I wrote once that this is a country of more or less sophisticated mongrels. My usefulness and my nullity have no status attached to them.

Smithson: I think you touched on an interesting area. It seems that all art is in some way a questioning of what value is, and it seems that there's a great need for people to attribute value, to find a significant value. But this leads to many categories of value or no value. I think this amount all sorts of disorders and fraternities and irregularities. But I don't really care about setting them right or making things in some ideal fashion. I think it's all there independent of any kind of good or bad. The categories of "good art" and "bad art" belong to a commodity value system.

Kaprow: As I said before, you face a social pressure which is hard to reconcile with your ideas. At present, galleries and museums are still the primary agency or "market" for what artists do. As the universities and federal education programs finance culture by building ever more museums, you see the developing picture of contemporary patronage. Therefore, your involvement with 'exhibition people,' however well-meaning they are, is bound to defeat whatever position you take regarding the value of your activity. If you say it's neither good nor bad, the dealers and curators who appropriate it, who support you personally, will say or imply the opposite by what they do with it.

Smithson: Contemporary patronage is getting more public and less private. Good and bad are moral values. What we need are aesthetic values.
Kaprow: How can your position then be anything but ironic, forcing upon you at least a skepticism? How can you become anything except a kind of sly philosopher—a man with a smile of amusement on your face, whose every act is italicized?

Smithson: Well, I think humor is an interesting area. The varieties of humor are pretty foreign to the American temperament. It seems that the American temperament doesn't associate art with humor. Humor is not considered serious. Many structural works really are almost hilarious. You know, the dumber, more stupid ones are really relying on a kind of concrete humor, and also what I find the whole idea of the museum very humorous.

Kaprow: Our comparison of the Guggenheim, as an intestinal metaphor, to what you've called a “waste system” seems quite to the point. But this of course is nothing more than another justification for the museum man, for the museum publicist, for the museum critic. Instead of high seriousness it's high humor.

Smithson: High seriousness and high humor are the same thing.

Kaprow: Nevertheless, the minute you start operating within a cultural context, whether it's the context of a group of artists and critics or whether it's the physical context of the museum or gallery, you automatically associate this certain identity with something certain. Someone assigns to it a new categorical name, usually a variant of some old one, and thus he continues his lineage or family system which makes it all credible. The standard rate of society is to be justified by history. Your position is thus ironic.

Smithson: I would say that it has a contradictory view of things. It's basically a pointless position. But I think to try to make some kind of point right away stops any kind of possibility. I think the more points the better, you know, just an endless amount of points of view.

Kaprow: Well, this article itself is ironic in that it functions within a cultural context, within the context of a fine-arts publication, for instance, and makes its points only within that context. My opinion has been, lately, that there are only two ours: one implying a maximum of inertia, which I call “idea” art, art which is usually only discussed now and then and never executed, and the other existing in a minimum of continuous activity, activity which is of uncertain aesthetic value and which locates itself apart from cultural institutions. The minute we operate in between these extremes we get hung up (in a museum).

In 1960, the Groupe de Recherche d’Art Visuel was a group of painters who wanted to rethink the concept of the artwork, the relationship between work and artist (art that is controlled and no longer inspired), the relationships between artist and society, and the relationships between artwork and public (ideas of respect for culture, message). The transformation of these artist-work, work-spectator, art-public relationships involves a transformation of the social structures that built them, and a systematic debunking of certain myths that helped to establish them.

This means challenging the exclusive role of picture galleries and museums as special places for the sale and sublimation of works, and the role of art critics and aestheticians as the only people qualified to understand and comment upon the artistic message. In return, to offer a lay public the chance to receive the proposed work directly, and react spontaneously to it.

A reconsideration of plastic, formal expression was thus necessary, aiming at the creation of a new category of objects which no longer have any direct relationship with the traditional artwork, be it painting or sculpture.

This program is being undertaken slowly, for the inevitable or unavoidable contradictions and compromises implicit in it are slowing down its execution.

The work of the Group on jointly formulated and analyzed issues permits a greater distancing in relation to the personal work, and a more objective analysis of the results. It strengthens our conviction that the artist's role is overestimated and his work is too often subject to arbitrariness and speculation, and that the distribution of his research is still reliant on galleries and museums, the only places where it is possible for him to show his work.

With each show or event, we stress that no artworks are involved, and that we are not artists; that the Group does not aim to be a super-artist—these terms being used in their traditional sense—and that, by way of objective research, we shall endeavor to establish new relationships with the spectator.

By building a maze in the Musée d’Art Moderne, by introducing games into the elements that we design to be handled, by carrying out surveys among the public, by publishing manifestoes, we are striving to explain and circulate this position.

Here we are in 1963, reviewing our situation. Meanwhile, if we content ourselves, in a consumer society, with protecting within already existing structures, our attempt will be appropriated and destroyed, and we must step outside the traditional circuits if we are to be heard.

We are planning to buy a coach and drive around France, presenting our works and our writings in the street. It will take a few more years to carry out this idea.

This research work is expensive. We are paying for it all ourselves, and we receive no support from foundations and ministries to pursue it.

On the other hand, galleries show an interest in certain results, contract proposals are signed with the inevitable obligation to play the game and reinforce on the one hand what we are denouncing on the other.

Will this denunciation of what provides us with a livelihood be enough to give us a clear conscience?

No, it will not, but wouldn't a purist refusal, resulting in being forced to cease our activities either partly or altogether, and the subsequent impossibility of spreading our convictions and our research, be even more serious?

This is where noble motives come in, the other less glorious ones having to do with the self-esteem and ambition of each one of us. In spite of itself, but because of each one of
its members, the Group is in a contradictory position: it refuses, as a group, what each member accepts as an individual, and appears sometimes like a group of artists whose works are sold at high prices, and who straightforwardly accept their role as (almost) fashionable painters, and at others like a group of rigorous and innocent theorists (more or less), depending on whether you're talking about the GRAV or the people who make up the group.

However, despite its contradictions and because of its compromises, the Group is carrying on its activities.

In 1966–1967 we made playrooms, itineraries, street experiments. Our mazes became clearer, they were no longer ingenuous routes in search of a work hidden within them, but a whole entity, where it was not possible to dissociate work and onlooker. In 1968—at the end of 1967—the question was finally posed: Can the Group accept this more and more blatant contradiction between its aims and the behavior of each one of its members?

Are the conditions that preceded over the Group's founding still the same? Do the goals it has pursued and the research it has conducted over eight years correspond to these basic objectives? Were we to found a group today, would it be the GRAV?

It seems evident to us that the work-public concept is clearly beginning to change, but the traditional structures are stronger than ever, and the favored, over-estimated artists against whom we are up in arms are ourselves!

So we are no longer the Group, but there is now the Group and each one of us.

The Group, as a strictly defined entity, admits only experimental, anonymous, and noncommercial works.

Each one of its members is free to accept all the compromises that come his way, provided that they only involve him.

Where lies the way out?

To do away with the Group?

This would be to reduce eight years of hard work to naught. Certain ideas will be taken up and developed by others; we shall bow to those who saw in the Group nothing more than a personal springboard for each one of us.

Expand it?

This would introduce new elements into the Group, along with new and stimulating ideas, but it would in no way reduce the existing contradictions.

Make it smaller?
demystifying art (1968)

julio le parc

What can an artist of my generation do in the current situation? An artist with an ambiguous situation like mine: an artist compromised within the cultural system, and aware of it. What compromise? An artist like me who sees how easily the bourgeoisie assimilates every new thing that art produces? An artist like me who, despite having tried to transform the condition of the artist and the work, and their relationship to the viewer, remains class-minded with respect to the limited value of his efforts and the contradictions of this process within the art world? What can one do?

I have known for some time that both the Berlin situation may correspond to a two-sided situation: that, although receiving support within the cultural system (recognition, an audience, economic means, etc.), one can attempt to break through the rigid structures of the cultural system by creating conditions for the liquidation of this system. This can be done in two ways.

The first consists of highlighting the contradictions in the art world, the role of art in society, and our own contradictions. This is done via texts, manifestos, declarations, public debate, exchanges of ideas with other artists, and so on. Above all, the goal is to enlighten future generations, so show them the hidden aspect of art. The second way involves attempting to transform, as much as possible, art's essential elements, i.e., the artist, his or her own work of art, and the relationship between the work and the public. Since 1960, working in these two directions, I have developed an entire set of activities within the Cercle de Recherche d'Art Visuel.

Currently, since the final wave of events in May and June (1968) in Paris, the conditions are completely different: even if the situation within the art world remains nearly identical to what it was previously, a conditioning that has been suffered for a long time cannot be undermined in two months of protests. Habits persist. People continue to produce their works, galleries and museums continue to show them, critics to critique them, dealers and collectors to assign a monetary value to them, and the general public, with good reason, remains as indifferent as before. Indifferent and distant from "class" art, from art that is consumed—if that—only by the bourgeoisie: from art that maintains within itself all of the privileges of power, from art that maintains people in a dependent, passive state. Despite everything, the experience of May and June created deeper doubts, and fertilized positive possibilities that may bring about new approaches. As always, it could be a race between the effort to get beyond the current artistic situation; and, on the other hand, society's capacity to assimilate, integrate, and take advantage of this effort.

We must continue to carry out (as in May) a genuine devaluation of myths, myths that those in power use to maintain their hegemony. We find these myths within art: the myth of the unique object, the myth of the one who creates unique objects, the myth of success, or worse—the myth of the possibility of success.

Like "democratic" or dictatorial political power, art shares the same situation in which a minority makes the decisions on which the majority depends. It intervenes in the creation of mental structures by determining what is good and what is not. Thus, it helps to keep people in their current situation of passivity and dependency, creating distance between categories, norms, and values. Every artist and those who entice the art world are implicated. Most are in the service of the bourgeoisie and the system.

Without the possibility of challenging the conditioning that the art world imposes on us, without the possibility of questioning all of the established values around art, without the possibility of carrying out a struggle, even of limited scope, against the extensions of the social
system within art, without the possibility of creating a living relationship with social problems; the attitude of the artist can only be one of unqualified and unthinking support for the system, either that or it is reduced to an individualist activity that is allegedly neutral.

Currently, more than before, the artistic problem cannot be seen as an internal struggle of trends, but rather as a tacit struggle, very nearly declared, between those who, whether consciously or not, talk to the system and seek topreserve and prolong it, and those who, also consciously or not, through their activities and their positions seek to explode the system by seeking openings and changes. This struggle becomes more effective and more radical when we question ourselves. When we question our attitude, our production, our place in society, and thus avoid a split personality that allows for a progressive political position while maintaining individual privileges.

It is exactly this tacit refusal to bring the protest all the way into the artist's studio—in the case of painters and sculptors who protest against the social system—that gives the illusion of contributing something, while avoiding seeing that we are part of that same system.

What is most efficient for profoundly transforming the system (while relying on mass movements at the same time) is seeking to make profound changes within

each domain.

We can no longer hope that change will come about through external forces. Even in the art world, true change can only come from the inside and surface, because it is the socially conditioned rank and file that, through its behavior, accepts the system, and it is the rank and file that, by a change in its behavior, can explode the system. Thus, within the art world, it appears it might be ineffective to attack the cultural system by putting all the blame on something abstract, located who knows where, making it responsible for the state of art today—sometimes it is a Malthusian, sometimes an anti-anti-art, sometimes an art critic, sometimes a museum director, but almost never the artists themselves. For example, to protest against the Salon de Paris, one says that the walls of the Musée d'Art Moderne are disgusting, that there is no enough space, that not enough was done to bring people in, et cetera. But it is very rare to hear the artists say that salons and exhibitions have no social weight because the basic product (the work of art) is itself without weight; that it is a marginal product, with nearly always a cultural neutrality, or else it wants to be both committed and "artistic." It is rare to hear them say that what these salons and exhibitions deserve is the indifference of the public that is its means of defense, or that all the effort that goes into a wider distribution of

these cultural products (art in factories, et cetera) only serves to maintain people's mental conditioning by forcing them to accept more time the decisions made by a minority. For us, artists compromised within the system and aware of these problems, there is a task to be accomplished: by acting above all, as mavericks, to make young people interested in art aware of the trap laid in the art world. The most urgent task is to question: the privilege of individual creation.

This fundamental revolution is the task of future generations, who will have a vision different from ours, and who will be less mentally conditioned and less compromised by the system.

What is there left to do?

Preliminary work: creating the conditions that will make this cultural revolution possible.

Highlighting the contradictions of the art world.

Creating the stages for a change.

Destroying the preconceived concept of the work of art, the artist, and the myths that they give rise to.

Making use of a professional capacity at every occasion when it could call cultural structures into question.

Transforming the pretension of making works of art into a search for transitional means that are able to highlight people's capacity to take action.

Turning our attention towards a transformation of the role of the artist, from an individual creator into a sort of activator to bring people out of their dependence and passivity.

Unveiling, over, on a limited scale, collective experiments that make use of existing means and that create others—outside of museums, galleries, and so on—not for transmitting "culture," but as generators for new situations.

Creating, in a conscious manner, disturbances in the artistic system, using the representative events.

Campaigning for the creation of groups in other cities with similar intentions, and then exchanging experiences.

In this way, a parallel activity can come into being in the art world that, while protesting against it, attempts to have an action based in reality, and that will create the appropriate means on each occasion.
As far as I'm personally concerned, I see my attitude within the art world as three levels:

1. Continuing (until new possibilities arise) to make use of the economic means of this society with the minimum of mystification. As a transitional step, multiples may be the appropriate means.

2. Continuing to demystify art, and highlighting its contradictions as far as I am personally able, or by joining with other people and groups; by making use of a certain prestige that gives me access to existing means of distribution, or by creating others.

3. Continuing to seek (particularly with others) possibilities for creating situations in which the behavior of the public is an occasion for action. It is highly possible that these three levels will be interrupted by the development of my activity and that they will present contradictions. But an activity that is based in reality and that seeks to change that reality must take advantage of existing possibilities by creating conditions for a more radical change. This activity can be neither dogmatic nor rigid.

project for the experimental art series (1968)
eduardo favario

The work [Closed Gallery Piece], is divided into two parts that are related to each other: the shutting down of the exhibition space and the resulting journey taken by the public.

The exhibitor shuts down the gallery space, which has been made to look like an abandoned space. The visitor will find nothing but a sign indicating how he is to proceed through the work, being forced to travel to another part of the city to do so.

The starting point for the journey has been set at the site of the Club de Arte Experimental [Experimental art series], but the participant may enter at any stage of the journey and proceed to its later construction. In the final phase, he will be able to have access to knowledge of this text. In this way, the spectator is induced to "track down" the work and, in this fashion, surrender his state of more or less static contemplation. He is forced into active participation, which turns him into an executing agent of an action that has also been established as an artwork.

This work, as it has been established, is not conceived of merely as a playful, clever idea, but rather as a system whose purpose is to codify a message that fully indicates a positioning of oneself in relation to the work and the form in which it will develop.
On a broader level, it is also thought of as a theoretical proposition that affirms the possibilities of an action that tends to modify our reality.

With the shutting down of the locale, the work signals the impossibility that it might continue to develop within its traditional environment, creating, on the other hand, the necessity to project itself outside, to transform the artwork-spectactor relationship, and to propose that this work is no longer an "object for exhibition"—assimilated as "work of art" and thus mummified—but a living and real event that acts dynamically within reality itself.

This text was first published in a brochure accompanying the artist's project for the "Círculo de Arte Experimental," which ran from September 9 to 21, 1968, in Rosario, Argentina. Translated by Mark Schufer and republished in Jutta Katzenstein, ed., Labour Here Now: Argentine Art of the 1960s: Writings of the Avant-Garde (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004), 301–303.
project for the experimental art series (1968)
graciela carnevale

The work [Lock Up Action] consists of first preparing a totally empty room, with totally empty walls; one of the walls, which was made of glass, had to be covered in order to achieve a suitably neutral space for the work to take place. In this room the participating audience, which had come together by chance for the sporting, has been locked in. The door has been hermetically closed without the audience being aware of it. I have taken prisoners. The point is to allow people to enter and to prevent them from leaving. Here the work comes into being and these people are the actors. There is no possibility of escape, in fact the spectators have no choice; they areiglied, violently, to participate. Their positive or negative reaction is always a form of participation. The end of the work, as unpredictable for the viewer as it is for me, is nevertheless intentional. Will the spectator tolerate the situation passively? Will an unexpected event - help from the outside - rescue him from being locked in? Or will he proceed violently and 'break the glass'?

Through an act of aggression, the work intends to provoke the viewer into awareness of the power with which violence is enacted in everyday life. Daily we submit ourselves, passively, out of fear, or habit, or complicity, to all degrees of violence, from the most subtle and degrading mental coercion from the information media and their false reporting, to the most outrageous and scandalous violence exercised over the life of a student.

The reality of the daily violence in which we are immersed obliges us to be aggressive, to also exercise a degree of violence - just enough to be effective - in the work. If that end, I also have to do violence myself. I wanted each audience member to have the experience of being locked in, of discomfort, anxiety, and ultimately the sensations of asphyxiation and oppression that go with any act of unexpected violence. I made every effort to foresee the reactions, risks, and dangers that might attend this work, and I consciously assumed responsibility for the consequences and implications. I think an important element in the conception of the work was the consideration of the natural impulses that get repressed by a social system designed to create passive beings, to generate resistance to action, to deny, in sum, the possibility of change.

The "lock up" has already been incorporated in the verbal image (literature) and in the visual image (film). Here the gambit is not filtered through anything imaginary; rather it is experienced, at once vitally and artistically. I consider that materializing an aggressive act on the aesthetic level, as an artistic event necessarily implies great risk. But it is precisely this risk that clarifies the art in the work, that gives a clear sense of art, relegating to other levels of meaning whatever psychological or sociological sense the work might have.

This text was first published as a brochure accompanying the artist's project for the "Ciclo de Arte Experimental," which ran from October 7 to 19, 1968, in Rosario, Argentina. Translated by Marguerite Followitz, and republished in Yale University Press, ed., "Listen Here! Raw! Argentine Art of the 1960s: Writings of the Avant-Garde" (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004), 299–301.
we must always resist the lures of complicity
(1968)
osvaldo mateo boglione,aldo bortolotti, et al.

Because our NONPARTICIPATION in this prize is but a small expression of a greater will to NOT PARTICIPATE in any act (official or apparently nonofficial) that signifies complicity with all that represents at various levels the cultural mechanism that the bourgeoisie has put in place to absorb any revolutionary process.

This is why we consider definitively terminated any relationship on our part with those who flaunt the “power” to judge the artistic value of any product (whatever form it may take) made within the geographic and institutional limits proposed by the bourgeoisie.

This text was presented as a manifesto in Rosario, Argentina, in late 1968. The manifest is signed by Osvaldo Mateo Boglione, Aldo Bortolotti, Graciela Carmanez, Victorio E Luise, Naomí Lazaroff, Evaristo Fasano, Fernandez Bonia, Emilio Salmieri, Martha Osorio, Jose M. Lazaretti, Luis Maraver, Ruben Nazaro, Roberto Puezo, Juan Pablo Fosco, and Jaime Rippe. Translated by Margaretta Farrow, it was republished in John Ruhmman, ed., Latin Chile Now: Argentine Art of the 1960s. Writings of the Avant-Garde. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004), 294–296.

The attempt at aesthetic and ideological censorship perpetrated by the representatives of the government of France in Argentina through the requirements for the 1968 Braque Prize, an action that coincides with the climate of police repression that reigns in our country and with the repudiated repression by the French government of the uprising of its own people, has created a situation in which it is possible for artists to arrive at the requisite consciousness for modifying the rules of the game and for subverting the established order.

For this reason we believe that the original motivation for this declaration (our decision to NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE BRAQUE PRIZE) is neither concluded nor ceased in itself, rather, we can consider it the consolidation of a stance that was already latent in our earlier proposals for avant-garde art.

This is why it is possible to say that the response given is indicative of the beginning of a new swirl with higher consciousness of real problems and that, from this point on, we can confront the consequences with more clarity and see them through to their ultimate ramifications.
a conversation with freddy de vree, 1969
(1969)
marcel broodthaers

Freddy de Vree: You mention demystification, that is precisely what you wanted to do with your Department of Eagles, Museum of Modern Art. You installed this museum for a year in your studio in Brussels. You just dismantled it recently. What was your objective with this undertaking? Was it really more or less teaching than a simple...

Marcel Broodthaers: Perhaps it would be easier if I told you about its origins. In 1958, incidentally, that was not long after the wave of sappings, a few friends and I—friends who included gallery owners, collectors, and artists—joined together with the intention of analysing from an artistic standpoint what it was that wasn’t functioning in Belgium. i.e., we analyzed the relations between art and society, and we had been discussing this quite a bit, and finding we were to meet in my studio to continue this analysis. There had been a lot of talk about us and I was expecting sixty or seventy people. The studio was fully empty: there were only two or three chairs in it. I asked myself, “How and where is everyone going to sit?” And I had an idea. I called a fairly well-known transport company and asked if they would lend us crates for people to sit on. For me it made perfect sense to have them sit on crates stampped with art-releses references, in other words, crates used for packing and transporting paintings and sculptures. The crates arrived, I arranged them in one

would arrange artwork, and I said to myself, “But actually, this right here is the museum. This has something to do with the concept of the museum.” Then I added postcards to the display, reproductions of works from the nineteenth century, intended as provocations by producing distance from the plastic medium I had been using. Then I wrote the word “museum” on my window, the words “Département des Aigles” on the garden wall cut back, and “Section 19th Century” on the door leading out to the garden. Thus the museum was born, not via a concept, but by way of circumstance, the concept came later. And as Marcel Duchamp once said “This is a work of art,” all I was saying was “This is a museum,” granted us the not insignificant difference that I returned the stuff to the transport company after a year. After that, this museum evolved. It was in Düsseldorf recently, but in a different form. At between shown at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf and organized by the conservator Jürgen Harin. I was able to display real nineteenth-century sculptures under the same title, Musée d’Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, etc. One could say that I had, in the meantime, established a connection between the empty crates, the empty reproductions.

There is, of course, in this museum an inherent criticism of the State and of museum politics of the cultural hierarchy in Belgium, but there is also the language aspect, which is quite important, too.

This language makes a number of different problems evident, for example that of the concept of sculpture or of the historical concept of the museum in our time, especially in our country.

Freddy de Vree: I’m going to ask you one last, pretty trivial but nevertheless essential question about the position of the artist. By rejecting snobism and the capitalist approach of the collectors of certain genres, certain museums, art fairs, and by turning to a new conception of art, an unsellable art, now then is the artist expected to live in this day and age?

Marcel Broodthaers: Good point, we are witnessing the birth of a . . . even in Belgium, the birth of a new cycle, where the manner of approach prevails of the kind of collectors who are no longer content to speculate about the artist and his production but prefer to speculate through and with him about their own actions. In other words, they financially support adventurous undertakings that seem senseless for their lack of commercial value. Incidentally, this is a fairly natural reaction because you can be sure that at present every art production will be absorbed quickly into the commercial cycle that transforms not only the meaning of art but also the very nature of this art, don’t you agree? This new structure, which exists, is still very fragile, it has just emerged, I think spontaneously. But I think it will play an important role and that it will replace the traditional structure because it is clear that since I have undertaken this adventure . . . whether it is on the level of production of objects that are difficult to sell—not “unsellable,” as you put it—every now and then I have sold something. And the way this museum is run, with someone playing the role of
the conservator, it is obvious that I wouldn't have come this far without financial support. Now, you see this structure that is still pure and innocent, I foresee that it will not stay this way and that other hierarchical references of a capitalist kind will settle at its core. But for the moment everything is fine.

_dé Vree:_ That means a little status quo while waiting for the more aggressive stage after a new capitalist approach?

_Braa dhaers:_ I don't quite understand the question . . .

_dé Vree:_ Is there a certain hope that this status quo will remain, that these collectors will allow you to have a certain degree of freedom? Do you believe in the sincerity of these intentions?

_Braadhaers:_ Of course I believe in the sincerity of these intentions, the same way I believe in the sincerity of my intentions, but it is wise to foresee that we will be capitalist, I would say, and that as collectors and artists or as managers of a new kind of gallery, we will be overcome by the deep-seated structures of the system. And that we will be obliged to restate the capitalist structure.

A CALL FOR THE IMMEDIATE RESIGNATION OF ALL THE ROCKEFELLERS FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

There is a group of extremely wealthy people who are using art as a means of self-righteousness and as a form of social acceptance. They use art as a disguise, a cover for their brutal involvement in all spheres of the war machine.

These people seek to appease their guilt with gifts of blood money and donations of works of art to the Museum of Modern Art. We as artists feel that there is no moral justification whatever for the Museum of Modern Art to exist at all if it must rely solely on the continued acceptance of dirty money. By accepting such donations from these wealthy people, the museum is destroying the integrity of art.

These people have been in actual control of the museum's policies since its founding. With this power they have been able to manipulate artists' ideas; sterilize art of any form of social protest and indictment of the oppressive forces in society; and therefore render art totally irrelevant to the existing social crisis.

1. According to Pauline Niessen in her book, The Rich and the Super-Rich, the Rockefellers own 6% of the Standard Oil Corporation. In 1945, according to Seymour M. Hersh in his book, Chemical and Biological Warfare, the Standard Oil Corporation of California, which is a special interest of David Rockefeller (Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art) - leased one of its plants to United Technology Center (UTC) for the specific purpose of manufacturing napalm.

2. According to Landehe, the Rockefeller brothers own 20% of the McDonnell Aircraft Corporation, manufacturers of the Phantom and Navajo jet fighters which were used in the Korean War. According to Hersh, the McDonnell Corporation has been deeply involved in chemical and biological warfare research.

3. According to George Mayer in his book, The War Business, the Chase Manhattan Bank (of which David Rockefeller is Chairman of the Board) - as well as the McDonnell Aircraft Corporation and North American Airlines (as well Rockefellers' interest) - are represented on the committee of the Defense Industry Advisory Council (DIAC) which serves as a liaison group between the domestic arms manufacturers and the International Logistics Coordinators (ILCO) which reports directly to the International Security Affairs Division in the Pentagon.

Therefore we demand the immediate resignation of all the Rockefellers from the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art.

New York, November 10, 1969
GUERRILLA ART ACTION GROUP
Jon Hendricks
Jean Toche

Guerrilla Art Action Group, A Call for the Immediate Resignation of All the Rockefellers from the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, November 10, 1969. Courtesy of Jon Hendricks.
statement of demands (1969)
art workers' coalition

A. WITH REGARD TO ART MUSEUMS IN GENERAL, THE ART WORKERS' COALITION MAKES THE FOLLOWING DEMANDS:

1. The Board of Trustees of all museums should be made up of one-third museum staff, one-third patrons and one-third artists; if it is to continue to act as the policy-making body of the museum, all means should be explored in the interest of a more open-minded and democratic museum. Artworks are a cultural heritage that belong to the people. No minority has the right to control them; therefore, a board of trustees chosen on a financial basis must be eliminated.

2. Admission to all museums should be free at all times and they should be open evenings to accommodate working people.

3. All museums should decentralize to the extent that their activities and services enter Black, Puerto Rican and all other communities. They should support events with which these communities can identify and control. They should convert existing structures all over the city into relatively cheap, flexible branch-museums or cultural centers that could not carry the stigma of catering only to the wealthier sections of society.

4. A section of all museums under the direction of Black and Puerto Rican artists should be devoted to showing the accomplishments of Black and Puerto Rican artists, particularly in those cities where these (or other) minorities are well represented.

5. Museums should encourage female artists to overcome centuries of damage done to the image of the female as an artist by establishing equal representation of the sexes in exhibitions, museum purchases and on selection committees.

6. At least one museum in each city should maintain an up-to-date registry of all artists in their area, that is available to the public.

7. Museum staffs should take positions publicly and use their political influence in matters concerning the welfare of artists, such as rent control for artists' housing, legislation for artists' rights and whatever else may apply specifically to artists in their area. In particular, museums, as central institutions, should be amused by the crisis threatening man's survival and should make their own demands to the government that ecological problems be put on a par with war and space efforts.

8. Exhibition programs should give special attention to works by artists not represented by a commercial gallery. Museums should also sponsor the production and exhibition of such works outside their own premises.

9. Artists should retain a disposition over the destiny of their work, whether or not it is owned by them, to ensure that it cannot be altered, destroyed, or exhibited without their consent.

B. UNTIL SUCH TIME AS A MINIMUM INCOME IS GUARANTEED FOR ALL PEOPLE, THE ECONOMIC POSITION OF ARTISTS SHOULD BE IMPROVED IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

1. Rental fees should be paid to artists or their heirs for all work exhibited where admissions are charged, whether or not the work is owned by the artist.

2. A percentage of the profit realized on the re-sale of an artist's work should revert to the artist or his heirs.

3. A trust fund should be set up from a tax levied on the sales of the work of dead artists. This fund would provide stipends, health insurance, help for artists' dependants and other social benefits.

This statement was collectively written and distributed as a pamphlet in 1969. This statement was published in Lucy Lippard, "The Art Workers' Coalition: Not a Hickey," in Studio International 189, no. 927 (November 1970): 171–174.
Why do we protest the Museum of Modern Art?

A private institution controlled by an unpaid board of trustees, operating at pleasure of these trustees, has enough problems in bringing art to the public, within the limits of its private institutionalized nature, protest has been termed unwise, ungracious, and misguided. Well, is it?

A museum, operating under guidelines that served perfectly well two hundred years ago is a threat to art now; the museums today such as the Modern, the Whitney (God forgive us), and the Metropolitan are dangerous institutions that, in modern society, have no justification except for the fact that they offer pleasure, amusement, and distraction for the very rich. That's not all they do. If it were, there would be insufficient reason to protest. Today the museum actively supports antiquated values and distorted obsessions that are not simply hypocritical—they are oppressive, reactionary, culturally debilitating, and socially and aesthetically negative.

The simple fact is that those who control the museum—whatever museum you care to consider—are the super-rich who control ALL legitimate communicative agencies.

The trustees of the museums direct NBC and CBS, the New York Times and the Associated Press, and that great cultural travesty of modern times—the Lincoln Center. They own AT&T, Ford, General Motors, the great multinational oil foundations, Columbia University, Alcoa, Minnesota Mining, United Fruit, and AMK, besides sitting on the boards of each others' museums.

The implications of these facts are enormous. Do you realize that it is these allowing, culturally committed trustees of the Metropolitan and Modern museums who are waging the war in Vietnam? Well, they are. They are the very same people who called in the cops at Columbia and Harvard; and they are justifying their sick, disgusting slaughter of millions of people struggling for independence and self-determination by their precious, conscious support of ART. Anyone who lends themselves to this fantastically hypocritical scheme needs their head examined.

It could be no worse if control and administration of the museum were turned over to the department of defense—indeed, it might be a good idea. As long as the museum functions under the guise of an artistic and educational operation, under the control of those same people who won other people into robbing, oppressing, burning, maiming, killing, and brainwashing them, then we must continue our protest and agitate for their complete removal from the art condition. I call upon the directors and trustees of the museum to begin immediate negotiations preparatory to turning the museum, lock, stock, and barrel, over to the department of defense. At least then we will know where we're at.

The other day in the garden of the museum, I suggested that the art research facilities of the museum be turned over to service in the interest of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam. I've changed my mind—that's not nearly enough. I do not think it at all far fetched to suggest that the museum supply its inactive funds to make up the $700,000 bail bond demanded by the corrupt California court for freedom pending trial of Huey Newton, Minister for Defense (I'd prefer to say "Offense") for the Black Panther Party. And this is only one instance of how art can and should begin to find its way back to the mainstream of reality and to supplying the metaphysical and practical demands of the human condition rather than the psychic cravings of the super-rich.

Since the museum, by the grace of its board of trustees, has indirectly supported those many years the international imperialistic conspiracy designed to snuff the appeals from oppressed peoples everywhere, it is only fitting now that we realize what has been happening, that we begin to make some amends. In this view I again insist that Mr. Bates...
Lowry (I got this idea from Mark Rudd, incidentally) disclosed his role in the worldwide imperialist conspiracy—I am perfectly serious—there is so much we don’t know and that he could tell us—and that he could turn himself in for a trial in front of a people’s tribunal. I urge this democratic peoples’ body assembled here to seriously consider the enormous gains toward enlightenment of our knowledge of the contemporary art structure: its reasons, its behaviors, and the far-reaching social, cultural, and ethical implications. In other words, I am convinced that there is a lot to learn, and trying Bates Lowry before a democratic court would be useful, practical; neither Mr. Lowry himself nor anyone else should have anything to fear, other than the truth and knowledge. But have we not been trained to fear, along with god almighty, just these virtues?

I am sick and tired of hearing how the museum cannot afford to give everyone free admission. And, probably as long as it remains a private institution (a private museum is very much like a Catholic university), it probably can’t afford it; but why must it remain a private institution in the first place? Is the administration exploring ways of divesting itself of ownership of the corporation? Has the government been approached to take it over? No, it hasn’t. I call for the resignation of all the trustees from this museum, the Metropolitan, and the scandalously corrupt Whitney Museum (I keep thinking of those chromographs they sell in conspiracy with brentano’s—deliberately attempting to undo what one hundred years of aesthetic cerebral labor has achieved); suddenly one understands perfectly well how they can drop more bombs in Vietnam than have ever been dropped before, anywhere.

Before we can formulate proposals for the future conduct of the museum, we must learn what they have been up to these years. Then we must examine our own position; we are not students disrupting the university from within it, from a position of, at least nominally, some authority and responsibility—rather we are, I certainly hope, outsiders who have nothing to lose. We have truth, understanding, and maybe even hope, to gain.

These comments were first presented at the Art Workers’ Coalition “Open hearing” on April 10, 1969. They were subsequently published in Art Workers’ Coalition, An Open Hearing on the Subject: What Should Be the Program of the Art Workers Regarding Museum Reform and to Establish the Program of an Open Art Workers’ Coalition (New York: Art Workers’ Coalition, 1969), n.p.
art workers' coalition open hearing statement
(1969)
jean toche

First, I would like to suggest that the actions should be directed against all museums and all art institutions, and especially against those—writers, critics, collectors, curators...—who direct, behind the scenes, that art establishment.

Second, I believe that the objective should not be to obtain a series of reforms from the museums, but to get effective participation in the running of these institutions in the same manner as, today, students are fighting for the control of the schools and universities. It should be noted that the directors and curators of the museums have no real power, but mainly carry out the policies of the museums' patrons.

Regarding the structure of the Art Workers' Coalition, it is evident that we need some kind of organization, in order to function efficiently. However, I believe it should take the form of a commune, and not of an authoritarian centralized hierarchy.

1. No leadership and no hierarchy in any form.
2. All ideas and currents among the community must be respected and equally guaranteed, even if they represent only a minority of thinking.
3. All decisions are taken by vote in a public assembly, open to everybody, to be carried out by action committees.
4. All action committees are accountable to the public assembly and their members can be replaced at any time by the public assembly. However, the action committees should have a great flexibility of action, especially at the level of each discipline represented, in order to be able to respond immediately to any urgent situation.
5. Anyone can call a public assembly at any time, on twenty-four-hour notice. The public assembly should meet at least once a week and, in case of emergency, function on a twenty-four-hour basis.
6. Anyone can attend the public assembly, make suggestions, and vote.
7. An information committee should be formed for general research to distribute information, and to inform the public assembly of any new developments.
8. A vigilance committee should be formed, accountable to the public assembly and with access to all committees, to report any attempt to control information or action, or any attempt of any kind to establish an authoritarian dictatorship.
9. Spokesmen for the community should not have any power of action or decision. They are accountable to the public assembly for what they say and write, and they can be replaced at any time by the public assembly.
10. A national and international committee should be formed to support and collaborate with similar organizations of artists, students, and workers from other cities and abroad.
11. An administrative committee should be formed to coordinate all information and action, and to perform secretarial duties. However, this committee should have no power of decision.
12. A treasurer should be selected who is accountable to the public assembly and can be replaced at any time by the public assembly.
13. A library should be constituted, open to anyone at specified times, with free access to all records of the public assembly and other documents and information.

As to tactics, our first objective should be to find out exactly who controls, behind the scenes, the policies of the museums and other art establishment institutions. We should then proceed to tarnish their public image in order to force them to prove publicly who they really are, that is, the bosses of cultural institutions which manipulate people and are
basically at the service of the repressive forces of society. We must not forget, for instance, that the big banks own a great deal of South America and are therefore responsible for some of the misery and slavery of the workers in those countries. The patronage of the arts by such institutions and personalities explains the very process of alienation of the masses by the art establishment, its use for propaganda, its corruption, and its segregation of black and Puerto Rican artists. We can only do this by direct confrontation. By doing this we will gradually get the support of other artists and other progressive revolutionary groups. We should also participate, whenever possible, in the actions of these other groups in order to expand our experience in dealing with such actions and to develop a binding community spirit.

A second objective should be the unions of the museums, which are fascist organizations and very much part of and at the service of the establishment. Their members should be persuaded to ignore the arbitrary orders of their unions and to join us in the fight against all art establishment order, in the same manner as the French workers revolted against the CGT at the time of the French revolution last May.

A third objective should be the federal and local governments which finance the public museums. The prolongation of the war in Vietnam will have, as a direct consequence, a cutback of funds for social development as well as cultural funds, and the eventual closing of all public museums. To fight for control of the museums is also to be against the war in Vietnam.

Another objective should be a direct participation of artists in the art press, i.e., the possibility of an alternative by artists to what the critics write. This should later be extended to all the press media (daily papers, radio, television...). However, we will not obtain that objective by casting the members of the press and by hiding what we really are. We must not forget that they are on the other side and will always try to twist, ignore, or destroy what we are fighting for. On the contrary, we must try to involve them directly in our actions, that is, make sure that these reporters are not immune to the repressive practices of the police any more than we are. Only then will they be on our side, as happened in Chicago, and during the French revolution last May.

Finally, we should have a good system of communications (telephone, voluntary messengers...), especially in times of crisis, and whenever we express ourselves we should use a direct approach, and not a literary one (big posters printed cheaply by serigraphy with the help of art students...).
communique (1969)
guerrilla art action group

Silvana, Poppy Johnson, Jean Tache, and Jan Hendrickx entered the Museum of Modern Art of New York at 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, November 18, 1969. The women were dressed in street clothes and the men wore suits and ties. Concealed inside their garments were two gallons of beef blood distributed in several plastic bags taped on their bodies. The artists casually walked to the center of the lobby gathered around and suddenly threw to the floor a hundred red copies of the demands of the Guerrilla Art Action Group of November 10, 1969.

They immediately started to rip at each other’s clothes, yelling and screaming gibberish with an occasional coherent cry of “Rape.” At the same time the artists burst the sacks of blood concealed under their clothes, creating explosions of blood from their bodies onto each other and the floor, staining the scattered demands.

A crowd, including three or four guards, gathered in a circle around the actions, watching silently and intently.

After a few minutes, the clothes were mostly ripped and blood was splashed all over the ground.
Still ripping at each other's clothes, the artists slowly sank to the floor. The shouting turned into moaning and groaning as the action changed from outward aggressive hostility into individual anguish. The artists writhed in the pool of blood, slowly pulling at their own clothes, emitting painful moans and the sound of heavy breathing, which slowly diminished to silence.

The artists rose together to their feet, and the crowd spontaneously applauded as if for a theater piece. The artists paused a second, without looking at anybody, and together walked to the entrance door where they started to put their overcoats on over the blood-stained remnants of their clothes.

At that point a tall well-dressed man came up and in an unemotional way asked: "Is there a spokesman for this group?" Jon Hendricks said: "Do you have a copy of our demands?" The man said: "Yes, but I haven't read it yet." The artists continued to put on their clothes, ignoring the man, and left the museum.

NEW YORK, November 18, 1969
GUERRILLA ART ACTION GROUP
Jon Hendricks
Poppy Johnson
Silvianna
Jean Toche

The announcement reports on an action, Bloodbath at MoMA, carried out by the Guerrilla Art Action Group in November 1969. Courtesy of Jon Hendricks.
the function of the museum (1970)
Daniel Buren

Privileged place with a triple role:

1. Aesthetic. The Museum is the frame and effective support upon which the work is inscribed/composed. It is at once the center in which the action takes place and the single (topographical and cultural) viewpoint for the work.

2. Economic. The Museum gives a sales value to what it exhibits, has privileged/selected. By preserving or extracting it from the commonplace, the Museum promotes the work socially, thereby assuring its exposure and consumption.

3. Mystical. The Museum/Gallery instantly promotes to "Art" status whatever it exhibits with conviction, i.e., habit, thus diverting in advance any attempt to question the foundations of art without taking into consideration the place from which the question is put. The Museum (the Gallery) constitutes the mystical body of Art.

It is clear that the above three points are only there to give a general idea of the Museum's role. It must be understood that these roles differ in intensity depending on the Museum's/Galleries' considered, for sociopolitical reasons (relating to art or more generally to the system).

1. Preservation

One of the initial (technical) functions of the Museum (or Gallery) is preservation. (Here a distinction can be made between the Museum and the Gallery, although the distinction seems to be becoming less clear-cut: the former generally buys, preserves, collects, in order to exhibit; the latter does the same in view of resale.) This function of preservation perpetuates the idealistic nature of art since it claims that art is (could be) eternal. This idea, among others, dominated the nineteenth century, when public museums were created approximately as they are still known today.

Painted things are generally attitudes, gestures, memories, copies, imitations, transpositions, dreams, symbols, . . . set/ixed on the canvas arbitrarily for an indefinite period of time. To emphasize this fallacy of eternity or timelessness, one has to preserve the work itself (physically fragile: canvas, stretcher, pigments, etc.) from wear. The Museum was designed to assure this task, and by appropriate archival means to preserve the work, as much as possible, from the effects of time—work which would otherwise perish far more rapidly. It was/is a way—another—of obviating the temporality/fragility of a work of art by artificially keeping it "alive," thereby granting it an appearance of immortality which serves remarkably well the discourse that the prevalent bourgeois ideology attaches to it. This takes place, it should be added, with the author's, i.e., the artist's, delighted approval.

Moreover, this conservatory function of the Museum, which reached its highest point during the nineteenth century and with romanticism, is still generally accepted today, adding yet another paralyzing factor in fact nothing is more readily preserved than a work of art. And this is why twentieth-century art is still so dependent on nineteenth-century art since it has accepted, without a break, its system, its mechanisms, and its function (including Cézanne and Duchamp) without revealing one of its main axioms, and furthermore accepting the exhibition framework as self-evident. We can once again declare that the Museum makes its "mark," imposes its "frame" (physical and moral) on everything that is exhibited in it, in a deep and indelible way. It does this all the more easily since everything that the Museum shows is only considered and produced in order of being put in it.

Every work of art already bears, implicitly or not, the trace of a gesture, an image, a portrait, a period, a history, an idea . . . and is subsequently preserved (as a souvenir) by the Museum.
II. COLLECTION

The Museum not only preserves and therefore perpetuates, but also collects. The aesthetic role of the Museum is thus enhanced since it becomes the single viewpoint (cultural and visual) from which works can be considered, an enclosure where art is born and buried, crushed by the very frame which presents and constitutes it. Indeed, collecting makes simplifications possible and guarantees historical and psychological weight which reinforces the predominance of the support (Museum/Gallery) inasmuch as the latter is ignored. In fact, the Museum/Gallery has a history, a volume, a physical presence, a cultural weight quite as important as the support on which one paints or draws. By extension, this naturally applies to any occupied material, transported object, or discourse inscribed in the Museum. On another level, let us say social, collecting serves to display different works together, often very unlike, from different artists. This results in creating or opposing different "schools"/movements, thereby canceling certain interesting questions lost in an exaggerated mass of answers. The collection can also be used to show a single artist's work, thus producing a "flattening" effect to which the work aspired anyway, having been exclusively conceived—willingly or not—in view of the final collection.

In summary, the collection in a Museum operates in two different but parallel ways, depending on whether one considers a group or a one-man show:

(A) In the case of a confrontation of works by different artists, the Museum imposes an amalgam of unrelated things among which chosen works are emphasized. Such chosen works are given an impact which is only due to their context—collection. Let it be clear that the collection we are speaking of and the selection it leads to are obviously economically motivated. The Museum collects, the buyer to isolate. But this distinction is false, as the collection forces into comparison things that are often incomparable, consequently producing a discourse which is warped from the start, and to which no one pays attention (cf. introduction to "Beware!).

(B) In collecting and presenting the work of a single artist (one-man show), the Museum stresses differences within a single body of work and insists (economically) on (presumed) successful works and (presumed) failures. As a result, such shows are: off the "miraculous" aspect of "successful" works. And the latter therefore also give a better sales value to juxtaposed weaker works. This is the "flattening" effect we mentioned above, the aim of which is both cultural and commercial.

III. REFUGE

The above considerations quite naturally lead to the idea, close to the truth, that the Museum acts as a refuge. And that without this refuge, no work can "exist." The Museum is an asylum. The work set in it is sheltered from the weather and all sorts of danger; and most of all protected from any kind of questioning. The Museum selects, collects, and protects. All works of art are made in order to be selected, collected, and protected (among other things from other works which are, for whatever reasons, excluded from the Museum). If the work takes shelter in the Museum—refuge, it is because: (a) finds there its comfort and its frame, a frame which one considers as natural, while it is merely historical; (b) to say, a frame necessary to the work set in it (necessary to their very existence). This frame does not seem to worry artists who exhibit continuously without ever considering the problem of the place in which they exhibit.

Whether the place in which the work is shown impresses and marks this work, whatever it may be, or whether the work itself is directly consciously or not—produced for the Museum, any work presented in that framework, if it does not explicitly examine the influence of the framework upon itself, falls into the illusion of self-sufficiency or idealism. This idealism (which could be compared to Art for Art's sake) shelters and prevents any kind of break.

... In fact every work of art inevitably possesses one or several, extremely precarious frames. The work is always limited in time as well as in space. By forgetting (purposefully) these essential facets, one can pretend that there exists an immortal art, an eternal work.... And one can see how this concept and the mechanisms used to produce it—among other things, the function of the Museum as we have very rapidly examined it—place the work of art once and for all above all: classes and ideologies. The same idealism also poisons to the eternal and apolitical Man which the prevalent bourgeois ideology would like us to believe in and preserve.

The nonvisibility (or deliberate) nonindication/ revelation of the various supports of any work (the work's stretcher, the work's location, the work's frame, the work's stand, the work's price, the work's copy or back, etc....) are therefore neither fortuitous nor accidental as one would like us to think.

What we have here is a careful camouflage undertaken by the prevalent bourgeois ideology, assisted by the artists themselves. A camouflage which has until now made it possible to transform "the reality of the world into an image of the world, and History into Nature."
NOTES

1. It must be quite clear that when we speak of "the Museum," we are also referring to all types of "galleries" in existence and all other places which claim to be cultural centers. A certain distinction between "museum" and "gallery" will be made below; however, the impossibility of escapable the concept of cultural location must also be stressed.

2. We are here referring most particularly to contemporary art and its production of exhibitions.

3. A detailed demonstration of the various limits and frames which generally constitute a work of art - painting, sculpture, object, ready made, concept - has been removed for technical reasons from the original text. However, the subject matter can be found in other texts already published, such as: "Eclisse," Paris, October 1970, "Around and About," Studio International (June 1971), "Before," Studio International (March 1972), "Monotone," Studio International (April 1972); "Exposition d'une exposition," Documenta 5, exh. cat. (Kassel: Neue Gasse & Museum Fridericianum, 1972).

The function of the studio (1971)

Daniel Buren

Of all the frames, envelopes, and limits—usually not perceived and certainly never questioned—which enclose and constitute the work of art (picture frame, niche, pedestal, palace, church, gallery, museum, art, history, economics, power, etc.), there is one rarely even mentioned today that remains of primary importance: the artist’s studio. Less dispensable to the artist than either the gallery or the museum, it precedes both. Moreover, as we shall see, the museum and gallery on the one hand and the studio on the other are linked to form the foundation of the same edifice and the same system. To question one while leaving the other intact accomplishes nothing. Analysis of the art system must inevitably be carried on in terms of the studio as the unique space of production and the museum as the unique space of exposition. Both must be investigated as customs, the ossifying customs of art.

What is the function of the studio?

1. It is the place where the work originates.
2. It is generally a private place, an ivory tower perhaps.
3. It is a stationary place where portable objects are produced.

The importance of the studio should by now be apparent; it is the first frame, the first limit, upon which all subsequent frames/limits will depend.

What does it look like, physically, architecturally? The studio is not just any hideaway, any room. Two specific types may be distinguished:

1. The European type, modeled upon the Parisian studio of the turn of the (twentieth) century. This type is usually rather large and is characterized primarily by its high ceilings (a minimum of four meters). Sometimes there is a balcony, to increase the distance between viewer and work. The door allows large works to enter and exit. Sculptors’ studios are on the ground floor, painters’ on the top floor. In the latter, the lighting is natural, usually diffused by windows oriented toward the north so as to receive the most even and subdued illumination.

2. The American type, of more recent origin. This type is rarely built according to specification, but, located as it is in reclaimed lofts, is generally much larger than its European counterpart, but necessarily higher, but longer and wider. Wall and floor space are abundant. Natural illumination plays a negligible role, since the studio is lit by electricity both night and day if necessary. There is thus equivalence between the products of those lofts and their placement on the walls and floors of modern museums, which are also illuminated day and night by electricity.

This second type of studio has influenced the European studio of today, whether it be in an old country barn or an abandoned urban warehouse. In both cases, the architectural relationship of studio and museum—one inspiring the other and vice versa—is apparent. (We will not discuss those artists who transform part of their studios into exhibition spaces, nor those curators who conceive of the museum as a permanent studio.)

These are some of the studio’s architectural characteristics; let us move on to what usually happens there. A private place, the studio is presided over by the artist-resident, since only that work which he desires and allows to leave his studio will do so. Nevertheless, other operations, indispensable to the functioning of galleries and museums, occur in this private place. For example, it is here that the artist, the exhibition organizer, or the museum director or curator may calmly choose among the works presented by the artist those to be included in this or that exhibition, this or that collection; this or that gallery. The studio is thus a convenience for the organizer: he may compose his exhibition according to his own
The work is made in a specific place which it cannot take into account. All the same, it is there that it was ordered, forged, and only there may it be truly said to be in place. The following contradiction becomes apparent: it is impossible by definition: for a work to be seen in place; still, the place where we see it influences the work even more than the place in which it was made and from which it has been cast out. Thus when the work is in place, it does not take place (for the public), while it takes place (for the public) only when not in place, that is, in the museum.

Expelled from the ivory tower of its production, the work ends up in another which, while foreign, only reinforces the sense of comfort: the work acquires by taking shelter in a citadel which insures that it will survive its passage. The work thus passes—and it can only exist in this way, predestined as it is by the imprint of its place of origin—from one enclosed place/frame, the world of the artist, to another, even more closely confined: the world of art. The alignment of works on museum walls gives the impression of a cemetery: whatever they say, wherever they come from, whatever their meanings may be, this is where they all arrive in the end, where they are lost. This loss is relative, however, compared to the total obliteration of the work that never emerges from the studio.

Thus, the unspeakable compromise of the portable work:

The status of the work that reaches the museum is unclear: it is at the same time in place and in a place which is never its own. Moreover, the place for which the work is destined is not defined by the work, nor is the work specifically intended for a place which pre-exists it and is, for all practical purposes, unknown.

For the work to be in place without being specially placed, it must either be identical to all other existing works, and those works in turn identical among themselves, in which case the work (and all other identical works) may travel and be placed at will; or the frame (museum/gallery) that receives the original work and all other original—that is, fundamentally heterogeneous—works must be adjustable, adapting itself to each work perfectly to the millimeter.

From these two extremes, we can only deduce such extreme, idealizing, yet interesting formulations as:

1. All works of art are absolutely the same, wherever and whenever produced, by whatever artist. This would explain their identical arrangement in thousands of museums around the world, subject to the vagaries of curatorial fashion.
2. All works of art are absolutely different, and if their differences are respected and hence both implicitly and explicitly legible, every museum, every room in every museum, every wall; and every square meter of every wall, is perfectly adapted to every work.

The symmetry of these propositions is only apparent. If we cannot conclude logically that all works of art are the same, we must acknowledge at least that they are all installed in the same manner, according to the prevailing taste of a particular time. If on the other hand we accept the uniqueness of each work of art, we must also admit that no museum ever totally adapts itself to the work, preceding to defend the uniqueness of the work; the museum paradoxically acts as if this did not exist, and handles the work as it pleases.

To edify ourselves with two examples among many, the administration of the Jeu de Paume in Paris has set Impressionist paintings into the museum’s paired walls, which thereby directly frame the paintings. Eight thousand kilometers away at the Art Institute of Chicago, paintings from the same period and by the same artists are exhibited in elaborate carved frames, like onons in a row.

Does this mean that the works in question are absolutely identical, and that they acquire their specific meanings only from the intelligence of those who perceive them? That the “frame” exists precisely to vary the absolute neutrality of all works of art? Or does it mean that the museum adapts itself to the specific meaning of each work? Yet we may ask how it is that, seventy years after being painted, certain canvases by Monet, for example, should be received into a salmon-colored wall in a building in Paris, while others in Chicago are enshrouded in enormous frames and juxtaposed with other impressionist works.

If we reject numbers 1 and 2 proposed above, we are still faced with a third, more common, alternative that presupposes a necessary relationship between the studio and the museum such as we know it today. Since the work which remains in the studio is a nonentity, if the work is to be made not to mention: seen in another place, in any place whatsoever, either of two conditions must apply: either

1. The definitive place of the work must be the work itself. This belief or philosophy is widely held in artistic circles, even though it dispenses with all analysis of the physical space in which the work is viewed, and consequently of the system, the dominant ideology, that controls it; as much as the specific ideology of art. A reactionary theory if ever there was one: While feigning indifference to the system, it reinforces it, without even having to justify itself, since by definition (the definition advanced by this theory’s proponents) the space of the museum has no relation to the space of the work.

2. The artist, imagining the place where his work will come to grief, is led to conceive all possible situations of every work (which is quite impossible) or of a typical space (this he does). The result is the predictable cubic space, uniformly lit, neutralized to the extreme, which characterizes the museum/gallery of today. This state of affairs consciously or unconsciously compels the artist to banalize his own work in order to make it conform to the banality of the space that receives it.

By producing a stereotype, one ends up of course fabricating a stereotype, which explains the rampant academism of contemporary work, dissimilated as it is behind apparent formal diversity.

In conclusion, I would like to substantiate my distrust of the studio and its simulaneously idealizing and objectifying function with two examples that have influenced me. The first is personal, the second, historical.

1. While still very young—I was seventeen at the time—I undertook a study of Provencal painting from Cézanne to Picasso with particular attention given to the influence of geography on: works of art. To accomplish my study, I not only traveled throughout southeastern France but also visited a large number of artists, from the youngest to the oldest, from the obscure to the famous. My visits afforded me the opportunity to view their work in the context of their studios. What struck me about it, their work was first its diversity, then its quality and richness, especially the sense of reality, that is, the "truth," that it possessed, whoever the artist and whatever his reputation. This "reality/truth" existed not only in terms of the artist and his work space but also in relation to the environment, the landscape.

It was when I later visited, one after the other, the exhibitions of these artists that my enthusiasm began to fade, and in some cases disappear, as if the works I had seen were not there, nor even produced by the same hands. Turn from their context, their "environment," they had lost their meaning, and died to be reborn as forgeries. I did not immediately understand what had happened, nor why I felt so disillusioned. One thing was clear, however: deception. More than once I revisited certain artists, and each time the gap between studio and gallery widened, finally making it impossible for me to continue my
visits to either. Although the reasons were unclear, something had irrevocably come to an end for me.

I later experienced the same disillusionment with friends of my own generation, whose work possessed a "reality" that was clearly much closer to me. The loss of the object, the idea that the context of the work corrupted the interest that the work provoked, as if some energy essential to its existence escapes as it passes through the studio door, occupied all my thoughts. This sense that the main point of the work is lost somewhere between its place of production and place of consumption forced me to consider the problem and the significance of the work's place. What I later came to realize was that it was the reality of the work, its "truth," its relationship to its creator and place of creation, that was irreversibly lost; in this transfer. In the studio we generally find finished work, work in progress, abandoned work, sketches—collections of visible evidence viewed simultaneously that allow an understanding of process. It is this aspect of the work that is distinguished by the museum's desire to "install." Hasn't the term "installation" come to replace "exhibition"? In fact, isn't what is installed close to being established?

2. The only artist who has always seemed to me to exhibit real intelligence in his dealings with the museum system and its consequences, and who moreover sought to oppose it by not permitting his works to be fixed or even arranged according to the whim of some departmental curator, is Constantin Brancusi. By disposing of a large part of his work with the stipulation that it be preserved in the studio where it was produced, Brancusi thwarted any attempt to disperse his work, frustrated speculative ventures, and afforded every visitor the same perspective as himself at the moment of creation. He is the only artist who in order to preserve the relationship between the work and its place of production, dared to present his work in the very place where it first saw light, thereby short-circuiting the museum's desire to classify, to embellish, and to select. The work is seen, for better or worse, as it was conceived. Thus, Brancusi is also the only artist to preserve what the museum goes to great lengths to conceal: the banality of tax work.

It might also be said—but this requires a lengthy study of its own—that the way in which the work is anchored in the studio has nothing whatsoever to do with the "archeology" to which the museum submits every work it exhibits. Brancusi also demonstrates that the so-called purity of his works is not less beautiful or interesting when seen amidst the clutter of the studio—various tools, other works, some of them incomplete, others complete—that it is in the immeasurable space of the sterilized museum.

The art of yesterday and today is not only marked by the studio as an essential, often unique, place of production; it proceeds from it. All my work proceeds from its extinction.

NOTES


2. I am well aware that, at least at the beginning of and sometimes throughout their careers, all artists must be content with squalling hovels or ridiculously tiny rooms, but I am describing the studio as an archetype. Artists, who maintain themselves as work spaces despite their drawbacks, are obviously artists for whom the idea of possessing a studio is a necessity. Thus they often dream of recovering a studio very similar to the archetype described here.

3. That the architect must pay more attention to the lighting, orientation, etc., of the studio than most artists ever pay to the exhibition of their works once they leave the studio.

4. We are speaking of New York, a nice, the United States, in its desire to rival and to supplant the long-dreaded "School of Paris," actually reproduced all its defects, including the inverse centralization which, while reducing the market of France or even Europe, is absolutely disastrous on the scale of the United States, and certainly antithetical to the development of art.

5. The American museums with their electric illumination may be contrasted with its European counterpart, usually illuminated by natural light thanks to a profusion of skylights. Some see these as opposites, when in fact they merely represent a stylistic difference between European and American production.

6. Most Brancusi's studio remained in the Imperial Roman, or even in the artist's house (even if removed to another location). Brancusi's argument would only have been strengthened. (This text was written in 1973 and refers to the reconstruction of Brancusi's studio in the Museum of Modern Art, Paris. Since then, the main buildings have been reconstructed in front of the Centre Beaubourg, which render the above observation obsolete. —Author's note.)

This text was translated by Thomas Repassé and published in October 10 (Faut 1979): 51-52.
Question
Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon’s Indochina policy be a reason for you not to vote for him in November?

Answer:

If you agree cast your vote into the left box.
If not into the right box.

In 1963 I built my first weather box. It was a rectangular container, made of clear plastic, in which I sealed some distilled water. Air currents, light entering the container, and changes in temperature made the internal temperature rise above the outside temperature and led to the condensation of the evaporating water on the inside walls of the box. If a condensation droplet gained a certain size, it would fall or run down the pane, erasing all other droplets in its way. The trace left behind eventually would be covered again with a veil of droplets, although their size would differ from that of the older ones. The droplet was not a fixed figure on the temperature scale but is itself dependent on a delicate constellation of ever-changing factors. I was very excited about the subtle communication with a seemingly sealed-off environment and the complexity of interrelated conditions determining the meteorological process. This was an open system, a system responsive to changes in its environment. Ambient climatic changes were answered by a transfer of energy and material inside the box in a self-regulatory way, with the goal of maintaining equilibrium.

Such a system differed essentially from sculpture as I knew it, because its operational program was in no way determined by visual considerations, although the veil of droplets remained visually appealing. It functioned independently of a viewer and thus carried meaning on its own terms, meaning in the sense of an organized, goal-seeking whole. A viewer was relegated to the role of witness to a process that would evolve without him. He was naturally not limited in his associative vagaries, which, in turn, could invest this process with a sign value and a cultural meaning. However, irrespective of what he was reading into it, the dynamic system took its own course. I was dealing with real stuff—on its own terms.

This implied a departure from generally accepted attitudes in the visual arts. Here, no attempt to solve formal "problems" was made. It was the behavior of a meteorological system that determined the appearance. It gave only clues to what was actually happening. The interdependent adjustments and the cause for these adjustments remained invisible. Considerations about the arrangement of visual material, the composition of colors, shapes, textures, and spaces, became irrelevant, and stylistic innovations were without interest. The structuring of the elements, the materials and conditions for this and other systems that I worked with, became a function of their performance. Although my interest and later on the interest of an art-oriented public in such processes was culturally determined, these processes themselves did not share the mythic character of art and were not affected by what was read into them. They were subject only to the laws of nature.

If real-time systems are introduced into an art context, chickens hatching and growing up in a museum, for example, a very strange dialectic of transformation and sameness occurs. The chickens in the museum, naturally, are still the same kind of chickens that would also have been born from these eggs on a chicken farm; and if they are sent to a farm at the end of the exhibition, they are indistinguishable from all other chickens there. Condensation on a car window, for that matter, is physically no different from the condensation in my weather box. As has been said above, these processes follow their own pattern of behavior, which is totally immune to the cultural context into which they are placed. On the other hand, the museum or any other cultural frame invests real-time systems with an additional program (meaning). Such a superstructure for a "ready-made" process is determined by the historical and cultural context in which the system receives attention. In this respect, it does not differ from other culturally impregnated activities and presentations (painting, sculpture, poetry, etc.). The aborigines of the Amazon would attribute value to neither a Raphael nor a Duchamp readymade.

The witness and/or participant in a real-time system that evolves in a cultural context, recognized by him as such, therefore responds in an ambiguous way; he is caught
seeing something that proceeds according to its own terms, at the same time realizing that he is using it as a screen for his own culturally biased projections. This sociotemporal state can exist only with real-time systems; painting and sculpture of the traditional mode operate exclusively as projection screens—they have no life of their own.

I suspect that this is the point at which ‘real-time readymades’ or ‘unassisted readymades’ also differ from the Duchampian premise. Duchamp was probably the first to expose the mechanism that transforms a piece of material into ‘art.’ His elevation of readymade “objects” to a culturally significant level, gave them a new meaning. But in doing so, he diverted them from their original program. Although memories of that program lingered (in fact, without that knowledge, the new meaning would be different) neither he nor the visitors to a Duchamp exhibition, in fact, continued to see the object as usual. In contrast to this, real-time systems are not objects, and the cultural attention directed toward them does not stop or change the ongoing process. As long as no attempt is made to present documentary materials (photographs, verbal, descriptions, maps, and so on) of a real-time system as the thing itself, the same holds true for processes that occur outside and are simultaneously or subsequently reported in a cultural context.

This is not the place to talk about all the other physical and biological situations that I figured with a great variety of elements in a multitude of different environmental circumstances. The principle of real-time systems in which interdependent processes of energy, material, and/or information occur has been indicated, and it pervades all of them. A few remarks should be devoted to my expansion into the field of sociopolitical systems.

Artists as well as other people are operating in a given sociopolitical environment: their immediate group of friends and their family, their jobs, and the art scene. Beyond this parochial environment, they are on a larger and more powerful elements in the larger social fabric of their respective countries and the political and ideological power blocks of the world. It has not been long since artists began to realize the role they have unconsciously been playing as political beings, and a painful learning process seems to still be ahead. Weather boxes seem to have nothing to do with sociopolitical situations; however, even on the superfluous level of figurative speech, there are many similarities. We speak of political currents, pressure, of a political climate and a political balance, political interdependence, a low in relations between two countries, political theses, and the rest. Meteorological terms are abundant. More important, though beyond such analogies, which might be unwarranted symbolism in through the back door, systems analysts seem to be convinced that, on a conceptual level, physical and biological phenomena have their equivalents in the social and behavioral sphere, that the same vocabulary applies, and that conditions in any one of these areas can be described by the same or related equations. In other words, those are not correspondences but real, imaginary languages, but are based on specific isomorphisms.

Having stepped from the perceptually oriented and culturally controlled imagery of the visual arts to the presentation or interference in physical and/or biological systems in a real time, I needed to complete the areas of my activities with work also in the sociopolitical field, which affects our lives at least as much as the physical and biological determinants of our bodies and our environment. I was no doubt pushed in this direction by the general political awakening that followed years of absolute apathy after World War II.

Physical and biological processes are per se political, although human decisions for the structuring of either one are naturally ideologically determined, as, for example, the Bomb and the Pill. Social phenomena are as real as physical or biological. One: we all participate in any number of social systems and are affected by them. Their verifiability, however, seems to be limited because they often elude the measuring stick; and since the researcher himself, a social being, by necessity, influences the object of investigation and is infinitely more encumbered than his colleague in the natural sciences.

Consequently any work done with and in a given social situation cannot remain detached from the cultural and ideological context. It differs essentially, therefore, from the functional self-sufficiency of a weather box. In fact, it is precisely the exchange of necessary information between the members of a social set that provides the energy on which social relations evolve. The injection of any new element into a given social organism will have consequences, no matter how small they may be. Oftentimes repercussions cannot be predicted, or they take a course contrary to what was expected. Laboratory conditions are practically nonexistent. As it is dealing with "the real stuff" in physical and biological systems, perhaps more so, one has to weigh carefully the prospective outcome of undertakings in the field. One's responsibilities increase; however, this also gives the satisfaction of being taken as a bit more than a court jestor, with the danger of not being forgiven anything. Here is a modest example of a work that I produced for a given sociopolitical situation. In response to an invitation to participate in the "Information" show, held by the New York Museum of Modern Art during the summer of 1970, I entered two transparent ballot boxes, each equipped with automatic counting devices, into which visitors to the exhibition were invited.
to drop ballots signifying their response to a yes/no question. The question was: “Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon’s Indochina policy be a reason for you not to vote for him in November?” By the end of the exhibition, the counter of the YES box had made 25,556 registrations; the NO box had a tally of 17,568. For a number of reasons the result has to be taken with a grain of salt, although the general trend seems to be trustworthy.

Early Genuary commented on the MoMA Poll in her review of the “Information” show as follows: “One may wonder at the humor (propriety, obviously, is too artistic a concept even to consider) of such poll-taking in a museum founded by the governor’s mother, headed now by his brother, and served by himself and other members of his family in important financial and administrative capacities since its founding forty years ago. The reviewer succinctly provided the necessary background information for the understanding of the sociopolitical field for which this work was designed.

Naturally, it would be naive to assume that this poll-taking could affect the outcome of the 1970 gubernatorial elections, in which Nelson Rockefeller enjoyed solid conservative support. It should be noted that in this instance the museum acted not only as a cultural backdrop but also as a vital ingredient of the social constellation of the work itself. The museum’s ties to the Rockefellers, Nixon, and, in turn, their involvement in the Indochina war, as much as its policy to present a serene image of itself to an unsuspecting public, were part of this real-time system.

The embarrassment and indignation caused are indicative of the double-agent character of a real-time social system operating in an art context. On one hand, the MoMA Poll was like any other item exhibited by the museum, something invested with the aura of culture and special significance. From experience we know that a process, as much as a painting, can be elevated into the realm of art. On the other hand, as mentioned above, such validation cannot stop the process from continuing. In the case of this particular situation, the museum pedastal not only failed to encapsulate the work but endorsed it with social power that it did not enjoy in the studio. This potential is not restricted to the premises of the museum. Any repercussions that it might have had and might still have beyond West 53rd Street, including those that might derive from this report, are part of the work. This demonstrates that works operating in real time must not be geographically defined, nor can one say when the work is completed. Conceivably the situation into which a new element was injected has passed when the process unleashed at that moment has gained its greatest potential.

The MoMA Poll was harmless. At best it was embarrassing for the museum and its backers and served as a valve for the anger of a surprising large portion of the visitors. Work in the sociopolitical field, however, must not be restricted to the rigging of a satirical setting and dealing with art world figures.

New York: February 1971 (written for the catalogue of a solo exhibition that was to have opened in May 1971 at the Guggenheim Museum)

... Continued (after cancellation of the exhibition)

My experience with the Guggenheim Museum in the spring of 1971 might illustrate this point. Four weeks before the scheduled opening of a one-man exhibition at the museum, the show was canceled. Thomas Messer, the Guggenheim Museum’s director, objected to three social systems that I had prepared for the exhibition.

Two of the three censored pieces were representations of current large Manhattan real-estate holdings, photographs of the facades of the properties, maps indicating their location, and documentary information on ownership and mortgages taken from the public records of the New York County Clerk’s office. The works contained no evaluative content and were legally unassailable.

The third piece was to be a significantly enlarged version of my poll at the Museum of Modern Art, a survey of the Guggenheim Museum’s visitors consisting of ten demographic questions and ten questions on current sociopolitical issues. The answers, given voluntarily and anonymously, were to be tabulated and posted daily.

In a letter giving his reasons for the cancellation, Mr. Messer claimed there was danger that the Guggenheim Museum would be sued for libel by the two real-estate groups. In the judgment of several lawyers intimately familiar with the material in question, however, there were no grounds for a libel suit because the information I planned to display is true, it is on public record, the manner of presentation was non-defamatory, and, while retaining corporate names, I had agreed to replace all names of individuals. The opinion of these lawyers was tested successfully through the subsequent publication of significant
portions of the two real-estate systems in several art magazines. None of them was sucd.
Although Mr. Messer's legal reasoning does not stand up under scrutiny, it duped many
unfamiliar with the law and thus served as a useful smoke screen for the more dubious
reasons behind the cancellation.
In the aforementioned letter Mr. Messer pontificated that "art may have social
and political consequences" but these, he believes, are furthered by indirection and by the
generalized exemplary force that works of art may exert upon the environment," and later
he postulated "symbolic significance" to be a criterion for rendering a work "aesthetically
sensible and thereby a fit subject matter for a museum." His understanding of "symbolic
significance" is, as he also refers to it, "symbolic expression" which "requires the use of a metonymic
language with rather tenuous ties to the object of the metaphor and therefore suitable for
the sublimation of conflicts.
What Mr. Messer is objecting to is obviously the double nature of real-time sys-
tems: their potency both in the art context and on their home turf. Had the substance of the
three words been historically removed or had been coded without the provision of a key,
my exhibition would not have been cancelled. Mr. Messer complained that I had sacrificed the "immunity" of a work of art by my insistence on being specific and presenting topical
and verifiable information.
The very principle of a real-time system, its actuality is considered by Mr. Messer
a poison when he writes, "the choice was between the acceptance of or the rejection of an
alien substance that had entered the art museum organism."
Human communication, and consequently social systems, function only by way
of some sort of language. Like the entries in the public record pointing to real-time property
interests, the signs of the medieval painter, for example, were well defined and intelligible.
Both make unambiguous reference to significates, the existence of which is not doubted by
their contemporary users (the believer fully accepted the stories of the Holy Gospels as
having actually occurred, no distinction between God's time and physical time was made).
In contrast to this clear "symbolic expression," the color code without key that Mr. Messer
suggested was not meant to communicate but to obscure and, by lifting the concept onto an
ideal plane, severed all connections to the actual world. To have real-time systems abide by
the canons developed for works operating in an ideal time and space would, in effect, deny
their right of existence and disregard as Kunstwollen (Alois Riegl's recognition) that each era
chooses the language most appropriate to communicate.

A close examination would probably reveal that Mr. Messer's criterion of "imm-
unity" is not fulfilled by a great number of works and even entire periods and cultures
presently accepted in the history of art. Arguments for abstract art, legitimate at the begin-
ning of the century, are now used to defend attitudes hostile to enlightenment and greater
social awareness.

It is significant that the conflict came to a head over "real stuff" of a sociopoliti-
cal nature, although none of the other twelve biological and physical systems for the show
fulfilled Mr. Messer's criteria of indirection, generalization, and symbolism. Here focusing
on large-scale private property without comment was deemed "inappropriate," and so was
the solicitation and collection of opinions on current sociopolitical issues. Preventing the
free flow of information is the trademark of totalitarian regimes. In Mr. Messer's view, the
accumulation of large capital should remain shrouded under a veil of mystery so that it
will not become subject to public scrutiny. Similar to the poll I conducted at the Museum
of Modern Art, the context in which such a survey is held becomes a vital ingredient of
the system. In withholding the museum context, Mr. Messer protected the interests of those
who might profit from the museum public's lack of awareness of its own role in society as
awareness that might result in changing attitudes and commitments. Concurrent with
this is his aversion to putting the museum and its present constituency into a larger social
perspective with possibly a new self-understanding and different responsibilities and pro-
gramming. The cancellation of the exhibition was not seen as a political act. It cleanly violated
the policy Mr. Messer himself has set for the Guggenheim Museum, which "excludes active
engagement toward social and political ends."

By censoring the show, Mr. Messer furnished one of the vital elements of a real-
time social system, as complex and possibly more consequential than those he tried to
avoid. The complementary element was my own decision to prefer having the exhibition not
take place rather than submit to his ultimatum that I abandon three works. However, there
would have been no consequences to speak of had I pulled in my tail and not immediately
issued a public statement and assured its widespread circulation (a copy of Mr. Messer's
letter giving his reasons for the cancellation was attached). I thus plugged the affair into
the larger environment of the artistically and politically alert public.

Unwittingly, Mr. Messer is playing the role of the protagonist in a large-scale real-
time social system. As with earlier physical and biological systems, the provision of some
key elements set an environmentally controlled process in motion, the ramifications and
consequences of which still remain uncertain. The affair was covered in numerous newspapers, periodicals, on radio and television, both in the United States and in Europe. Edward Fry, the curator of the show, was fired because he publicly denounced the cancellation. An exhibition boycott against the Guggenheim Museum has been declared by more than 130 artists who stated, "Believing that by canceling Hans Haacke's show, Thomas Messer, Director of the Guggenheim Museum, has betrayed the cause of free art and the character of his own institution, we the undersigned artists join in refusing to allow our works to be exhibited in the Guggenheim until the policy of art censorship and its advocates are changed."

Whatever the final outcome of the conflict will be, I am confident it will increase the awareness of all participants aesthetically as much as politically. It will result in changing attitudes and will affect a number of decisions in the future.

Southold, New York, summer 1971

The first part of this text was intended for the catalogue of a show that was to have opened in May 1971 at the Solander R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, and the second part was written in the summer of 1971. The entire text was first published as "Provisorische Bestimmung zur Ausstellung Ausstellung im Guggenheim" in "Edward F. Fry, Hans Haacke: Werkmonographie," ed. cat. Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1972, 61-70. It was reprinted as "Provisorische Bestimmung," in Myth as Hegge, and Robert Fleck, eds., Hans Haacke: For Real Works 1958-2008, ed. cat. (Düsseldorf: Richter Verlag, 2008), 257-260.
On the basis of a new approach to art, this work attempts to uncover the mechanisms suppressed by culture and thus promote a new awareness of all the fields of conflict. Plastic language is not the result of inexplicable chance but has emerged from the interaction of different historical, social, philosophical, and cultural circumstances existing in a certain and decisive era. This work seeks to reveal the relations and contradictions that have emerged between perception and knowledge, art and ideology, culture and society.

This work highlights and analyzes the most crucial and significant ruptures that have appeared in knowledge and the visual arts since the end of the nineteenth century up to our own time.

Each rupture has a contradictory nature that is both intricate and structural. Each is based on fundamental and secondary oppositions, dominant and subordinate aspects, successive transformations, i.e., a vast network of meanings that brings forth a new structure and problems created by it. The discovery of the hidden meaning of internal contradictions, the connections and/or ruptures pose questions and offer possible answers, making visible the inner paths, the course of the network and the development of different levels that are indicated in the work by zones of information, conceptual zones, and the traversal of images, structuring the whole piece as a porous manifested in a number of cross-connections.

Dedance/detors is mode (Inside/Outside the Museum) indicates two different spaces where the artwork is shown along with their mutual correspondence: by means of texts, imagery, and sound points to the simultaneity of conflicts in all of the cultural processes, enabling one to establish links and specific relationships with the living present outside of the museum (social process) and the production of the knowledge and art taking place inside of the museum.

On the basis of a porous that is both articulated and articulating, historical and present, conceptual and visual, the work raises questions on the representation of the world and the constitution of different sculptural and visual idioms that are conveyed here.

The interdisciplinary production team is made up of specialists from different areas:

- Architecture
- Physics
- Visual Arts
- Philosophy
- Linguistics
- Psychoanalysis
- Literature
- Social Sciences
- Mathematics
- Semiology

This text was written to accompany the project Inside/Outside the Museum, which was first exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts in Santiago de Chile in 1971. The project was subsequently presented in Paris in 1974 and New York in 1976. The exhibition was curated by Sabine Breitwieser, Valerie A. Lerner, and Khadansa S. Ali. Experience, exh. cat., Phaeno, German Foundation, 2000, 186–186, from which the present version is taken.
a conversation with freddy de vree, 1971
(1971)
marcel broodthaers

Freddy de Vree: Marcel Broodthaers, could you describe and talk a little about the function of the museum you have just opened in Düsseldorf?

Marcel Broodthaers: At this very moment, have the museum in front of you. I would perhaps prefer to have you begin with a description of your impression because in reality, this museum, which is a structure of fiction, is absolutely no idea how it works for other people. I experience this adventure of the museum of fiction subjectively. As you know, it all started in Brussels three or four years ago. I set up a fictitious museum in my studio which consisted of works that are usually used to transport artwork, reproductions of artwork in the form of postcards, and inscriptions that indicated to the visitor that he/she was in a museum, and to some extent I am experiencing the same situation again here, but with different elements, with different forms, with different ideas. But from a practical point of view, I am not entirely sure that the visitor has the sense of being in a museum, that is to say, in a place like a hospital or a prison, or at the same time in a fiction.

de Vree: But what is the meaning behind this obsession with the museum, the obsession with the abandonment, I believe, of the romantic past, while you at the same time remain committed to the concept that life and art cannot be separated?

Broodthaers: What you mean to say is that on a personal level for me, the museum has always been a place I frequented in my younger days because at the time there were absolutely no people in those museums.

de Vree: And this loneliness, are you trying to recreate it for yourself or for the viewer?

Broodthaers: As far as I'm concerned, I want to get away from it, but it's not working out entirely the way I intended because the place isn't exactly crowded. There are a lot more people a little further on, where things are organized according to the normal structures, where they correspond to the usual procedure of artistic manifestations.

de Vree: What conception do you have of the role of the visitor? Do you want them to be crowded, or do you prefer individuals who have come more or less by chance and have stumbled into your situation?

Broodthaers: It's a little difficult in this interview situation to spontaneously come up with a theoretical answer to your question. I would like to say that I am very happy when I meet friends or people who I know and who have come to pay me a visit. I like this. There's direct contact. On the other hand, I also like the person who comes just by chance, who comes because a friend recommended it. That means that the reference I have here with the visitor is of a personal order, and come to think of it, I ask myself the following question. Can't this place, by virtue of this personal reference alone, exist as museum and fiction at the exact same time, so that ultimately those visitors who are visiting will be happy to simply take this idea? But what disturbs me is how this, despite everything, could be understood by someone who might be completely unfamiliar with personal relationships. If we forget for a moment that you and I are conversing on a communicative level, I would instead ask you: What is this? Is this a museum? Is this fiction? Has this objective been achieved?

de Vree: That's a very difficult question. What I see is a museum dedicated to the subject of the cinema, in which there is an absence of reduction of characters, who in turn are reduced to a certain symbolism, are distributed throughout a space that constitutes the museum. I find the place quite unsettling because I myself am forced to imagine something other than the reality that is presented here, in order to feel more comfortable psychologically.

Broodthaers: Yes, but I think that this is probably also connected with the personal reference. Incidentally, I believe that in order to put an end to this adventure of the museum of fiction that I began quite a long time ago, I will have to objectivize the situation, which is why here in Düsseldorf I have taken on the organization of the exhibit of the museum of fiction in the museum itself.
they be yours or mine, will disappear, for I think it would be interesting to tell out this adventure with romantic character for romantic defeat.

**de Vree:** Marcel Broodthaers, a different question altogether: you are being exceptionally well represented at the ART Cologne in a personal exhibit in the Wide White Space Gallery as well as in two other galleries. What are your views on a fair that is dedicated to the buying and selling of art?

**Broodthaers:** I feel more comfortable at the ART Cologne than in my museum, because at the ART Cologne we are part of today’s social reality, within its system, in its harshest commercial aspect.

**de Vree:** And why do you feel more comfortable?

**Broodthaers:** Because that’s ordinary life, it’s life for almost all artists, all museum directors, and all people who run galleries. When I say “base” and “commercial,” I don’t necessarily want to say that all those representatives themselves are base people, but they sell art, art as a base commodity.

**de Vree:** Do you feel you are being sold there under your value, or does your work in your opinion defy the conception of selling?

**Broodthaers:** At the level of the work itself, and especially in the works shown at the ART Cologne, I tried to incorporate in the works a simultaneous negation of the very situation that I of course expected the works would be in. There are two or three things that, because they are there, allow for the base selling I mentioned earlier, but I hope that in their structure or in the words accompanying them, they will also include an extended forefinger that says, “I humbug, I might be here, but it is not my fault”—that’s the object that’s saying that.

The fictitious museum tries to steal from the official, the real museum, in order to lend its lies more power and credibility.

What is also important is to ascertain whether the fictitious museum sheds new light on the mechanisms of art, artistic life, and society. With my museum I pose the question: I am therefore not required to provide the answer.

I could have sold my museum. But at the moment it is impossible for me to do so. As long as I take refuge in and identify with it, I cannot. This is how I see things, at least for now.

I shall not be caught. I retreat into the hiding place that is my museum. In this sense the museum is a front.

Perhaps the only possibility for me to be an artist is to be a liar because ultimately all economic products, all trade, all communication, are lies. Most artists adapt their production, like industrial goods, to conform to the market.

Cultural confinement takes place when a curator imposes his own limits on an art exhibition, rather than asking an artist to set his limits. Artists are expected to fit into fraudulent categories. Some artists imagine they’ve got a hold on this apparatus, which in fact has got a hold of them. As a result, they end up supporting a cultural prison that is out of their control. Artists themselves are not confined, but their output is. Museums, like asylums and jails, have wards and cells—in other words, neutral rooms called “galleries.” A work of art when placed in a gallery loses its charge, and becomes a portable object or surface disengaged from the outside world. A vacant white room with lights is still a submission to the neutral. Works of art seen in such spaces seem to be going through a kind of aesthetic convalescence. They are looked upon as so many inanimate invalids, waiting for critics to pronounce them curable or incurable. The function of the warden curator is to separate art from the rest of society. Next comes integration. Once the work of art is totally neutralized, ineffective, abstracted, safe, and politicallyRobotomised, it is ready to be consumed by society. All is reduced to visual fodder and transportable merchandise. Innovations are allowed only if they support this kind of confinement.

Oxclot notions of “concept” are in retreat from the physical world. Heaps of private information reduce art to hermeneutics, and fawning metaphysics. Language should find itself in the physical, world, and not end up locked in an idea in somebody’s head. Language should be an ever-developing procedure and not an isolated occurrence. Art shows that have beginnings and ends are confined by unnecessary modes of representation both “abstract” and “realistic.” A face or a grid on a canvas is still a representation. Reducing representations to writing does not bring one closer to the physical world. Writing should generate ideas into matter, and not the other way around. Art’s development should be dialectical and not metaphysical.

I am speaking of a dialectics that seeks a world outside of cultural confinement. Also, I am not interested in artworks that suggest “process” within the metaphysical limits of the neutral room. There is no freedom in that kind of behavioral game-playing. The artist acting like a B. F. Skinner rat doing his “naugh” little tricks is something to be avoided. Confined process is no process at all. It would be better to disclose the confinement rather than make illusions of freedom.

I am for an art that takes into account the direct effect of the elements as they exist from day to day apart from representation. The parks that surround some museums isolate art into objects of formal decoration. Objects in a park suggest static repose rather than any ongoing dialectic. Parks are finished landscapes for finished art. A park carries the values of the final, the absolute, and the sacred. Dialectics have nothing to do with such things. I am talking about a dialectic of nature that interacts with the physical contradictions inherent in natural forces as they are—nature as both sunny and stormy. Parks are idealizations of nature, but nature in fact is not a condition of the ideal. Nature does not proceed in a straight line; it is rather a sprawling development. Nature is never finished. When a finished work of twentieth-century sculpture is placed in an eighteenth-century garden, it is absorbed by the ideal representation of the past, thus reinforcing political and social values that are no longer with us. Many parks and gardens are re-creations of the lost paradise or Eden, and not the dialectical sites of the present. Parks and gardens are pictorial in their origin—landscapes created with natural materials rather than paint. The scenic ideas that surround even our national parks are carriers of a nostalgia for heavenly bliss and eternal calmness.

Apart from the ideal gardens of the past, and their modern counterparts—national and large urban parks—there are the more informal regions—slag heaps, strip mines,
and polluted rivers. Because of the great tendency toward idealism, both pure and abstract, society is confused as to what to do with such places. Nobody wants to go on a vacation to a garbage dump. Our land ethic, especially in that never-never land called the "art world," has become clouded with abstractions and concepts.

Could it be that certain art exhibitions have become metaphysical junkyards? Categorical misrelations? Intellectual rubbish? Specific intervals of visual desolation? The warden-curators still depend on the wreckage of metaphysical principles and structures because they don't know any better. The waned remains of ontology, cosmology, and epistemology still offer a ground for art. Although metaphysics is outmoded and hallowed, it is presented as tough principles and solid reasons for installations of art. The museums and parks are graveyards above the ground—congealed memories of the past that act as a pretext for reality. This causes acute anxiety among artists, (insofar as they challenge, compete, and fight) for the spoiled ideals of lost situations.

mierle laderman ukeles

I. IDEAS

A. The Death Instinct and the Life Instinct:

The Death Instinct: separation; individuality; Avant-Garde par excellence; to follow one’s own path to death—do your own thing; dynamic change.

The Life Instinct: unification; the eternal return; the perpetuation and MAINTENANCE of the species; survival systems and operations; equilibrium.

B. Two basic systems: Development and Maintenance. The scurfal of every revolution: after the revolution, who’s going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?

Development: pure individual creation; the new; change; progress; advance; excitement; flight or fleeing.

Maintenance: keep the dust off the pure individual creation; preserve the new, sustain the change; protect; progress; defend and prolong the advance; renew the excitement; repeat the flight; show your work—show it again; keep the contemporary art museum groovy; keep the home fires burning.

Development systems are partial feedback systems with major room for change. Maintenance systems are direct feedback systems with little room for alteration.

C. Maintenance is a drag, it takes all the fucking time. The mind boggles and chafes at the boredom. The culture confers lousy status on maintenance. Doe = minimum wages, housewives = no pay.

clean your desk, wash the dishes, clean the floor, wash your clothes, wash your toes, change the baby’s diapers, finish the report, correct the types, mend the fence, keep the customer happy, throw out the stinking garbage, watch out don’t put things in your nose, what shall I wear, I have to go, pay your bills, don’t litter, save string, wash your hair, change the sheets, go to the store, I’m out of perfume, say it again—he doesn’t understand, sell it again—it leaks, go to work, this art is dusty, clear the table, call him again, flush the toilet, stay young.

D. Art:

Everything I say is Art is Art. Everything I do is Art is Art. “We have no Art, we try to do everything well.” (Stalin’s saying).

Avant-garde art, which claims utter development, is infected by strains of maintenance ideas, maintenance activities, and maintenance materials. Conceptual & Process art, especially, claim pure development and change, yet employ almost purely maintenance processes.

E. The exhibition of Maintenance Art, “CARE,” would zero in on pure maintenance, exhibiting it as contemporary art, and yield, by utter opposition, clarity of issues.
II. THE MAINTENANCE ART EXHIBITION: "CAKE"

Three parts: Personal, General, and Earth Maintenance.

A. Part One: Personal

I am: an artist. I am a woman. I am a wife. I am a mother. (Random order)

I do a hell of a lot of washing, cleaning, cooking, renewing, supporting, preserving, etc.
Also, (up to now separately!) I "do" Art.

Now I will simply do these maintenance everyday things, and flush them up to consciousess, exhibit them, as Art. I will "live in the museum as I customarily do at home with my husband and my baby for the duration of the exhibition" (Right? or if you can’t want me around at night I would come in every day) and do all these things as public Art activities: I will sweep and wax the floors, dust everything, wash the walls (i.e., "floor paintings, dust works, soap-sculpture, wall-paintings"), cook, invite people to eat, make agglomerations and dispositions of all functional refuse.

The exhibition area might look "empty" of art, but it will be maintained in full public view.

MY WORKING WILL BE THE WORK

B. Part Two: General

Everyone does a hell of a lot of noodling maintenance work. The general part of the exhibition would consist of interviews of two kinds:

1. Previous individual interviews, typed and exhibited.

Interviews come from, say, 50 different classes and kinds of occupations: that run a gamut from maintenance "man," maid, sanitation "man," mail "man," union "man," construction worker, librarian, grocerystore "man," nurse, doctor, teacher, museum director, baseball player, sales "man," child, criminal, bank president, mayor, motorist, artist, etc., about:

— what you think maintenance is;
— how you feel about spending whatever parts of your life you spend on maintenance activities;
— what is in the relationship between maintenance and freedom;
— what is the relationship between maintenance and life’s dreams.

7. Interview Room—for spectators at the Exhibition:

A room of desks and chairs where professional (?) interviewers will interview the spectators at the exhibition along same questions as typed interviews. The responses should be personal.

These interviews are taped and replayed throughout the exhibition area.

C. Part Three: Earth Maintenance

Everyday, containers of the following kinds of refuse will be delivered to the Museum:

— the contents of one sanitation truck;
— a container of polluted air;
— a container of polluted Hudson River;
— a container of ravaged land.

Once at the exhibition, each container will be serviced:

purified, de-polluted, rehabilitated, recycled, and conserved
by various technical (and/or pseudo-technical) procedures either by myself or
scientists.

These servicing procedures are repeated throughout the duration of the exhibition.

The "Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969" includes the proposal for the exhibition "CARE" repeated above. The proposal has yet to be carried out. It is reproduced here from the Roberto Fiedman: Fine Arts website, www.feldmangallery.com, courtesy of the artist.

A year after the exhibition of my work at the Franco Teselli Gallery in Milan, I did an installation for the Claire Copley Gallery in Los Angeles. It was my first individual exhibition in a commercial gallery in North America.

The gallery was located on La Cienega Boulevard, one of the city’s major north-south thoroughfares, where most of the other commercial art galleries in Los Angeles were located at that time, and where there was a constant flow of pedestrian traffic. The gallery space which originally had been a multipurpose storefront, was entered directly at street level. A storefront window facing the street measured 6 feet 8 inches by 5 feet 4 inches. The gallery from front wall to back wall measured 53 feet 7½ inches; its width was 14 feet 4½ inches and height 11 feet 2½ inches.

A partition wall separating an office area from the front exhibition space extended floor-to-ceiling 10 feet 8½ inches across the width of the gallery at a point 16 feet 5½ inches from the back wall. The partition ended 4 feet 2½ inches short of the opposite wall, forming a passage connecting both areas. The office area contained office furniture and equipment, artworks in storage, and a separate utility area. The white wall surfaces of the larger front area were maintained as a backdrop for exhibition purposes.

The work I proposed was the dismantling of the partition wall for the duration of the exhibition. The idea was to integrate two areas, so that the office area and its activities could be viewed from the exhibition area, and the exhibition area opened to the gallery director’s view.

Once the proposal had been accepted, the entire partition was removed. Its drywall surfaces were stripped from its frame, which was then disassembled and stored until reinstallation after the exhibition. Remnants of the partition’s original construction, such as sawn compound, were removed, and a small piece of rug, cut out to make way for the partition, had to be replaced.

Since the work also meant to restore the display surfaces of the gallery to presentation standards, it was necessary to fill in cracks and cover over any features that might have become objects of perception, so that the entire interior would appear to be an integrated and continuous flawless container. The north wall large cracks marred by waterstains had to be caulked from the outside and filled with cement on the inside. In the south wall cracks caused by the joining of plywood against plaster had to be filled in. All cracks were filled with drywall compound before the walls were painted. Wall and ceiling surfaces were then treated to the usual gallery white with an airless sprayer, and they were finished by being ‘frogged’ out. The office and storage area was painted in the same way as the exhibition space, but was otherwise left untouched. Once the wall surfaces were finished and everything was in place, the exhibition area walls seemed to vignetted the office area and its activities and turn them into the content of the exhibition.

A sign over the storefront window identified the gallery by name and served to frame the gallery’s operation for passersby. Once inside, the viewer could hear as well as assimilate more readily the various private and business activities with museum staff, collectors, artists, and friends usually screened from view. Also, artworks could be clearly seen in storage in the exhibition/gallery, as opposed to being placed on the gallery walls for exhibition.

I left instructions with the gallery dealer to inform viewers who requested information about the work that I had produced it, and that by removing the partition wall the day-to-day activities of the gallery were disclosed to the viewer in the unified office/exhibition.
space. In the same way that gallery personnel seemed to become increasingly aware of their activities, viewers also became more aware of themselves as viewers.

The viewers were confronted with the way in which they had been traditionally lulled into viewing works of art and, simultaneously, the unfolding of the gallery structure and its operational procedures. Works had been perceived from a safe cultural distance which generally prevented the viewer from questioning the issues involved. Without that questioning, a work of art could remain enclosed in its abstracted aesthetic context, creating a situation where the viewer could mystify its actual and historical meaning. As a commentary, this work laid bare the contradictions inherent within the gallery structure and its constituent elements.

The gallery dealer is—in the viewer’s understanding—the knowledgeable, responsible mediator of the work in the many steps of its abstraction from its context. The dealer’s prime function is to commodify the work of art, to transform the work’s aesthetic use-value into exchange value.

To accomplish this aim, the works are generally isolated on the white walls of the gallery, clearly separated from the area of business activity. Once they are returned to the storage area, that is, the area of business operation, they have been reduced to their essential commodity function.

Because the gallery dealer must give the work an economic value, the dealer is often unable to reveal its actual function. Paradoxically, the reality of the work can be viewed only through this conduit in which it undergoes the initial abstraction in the accrual of exchange value.

The function of the work at the Claire Copley Gallery was didactic: to represent materially the visible aspects of this process of abstraction. For this reason, the work’s structure was circular in order to reveal its affiliation with the production, the mediation, and the reception of culture. In one sense this could be viewed as a concomitant of economic interest, while other cultural aspects could be seen under scrutiny as well, from the handling of money to the selection of exhibitions. Works in storage—those preserved in cabinets and those leaning against the wall—were now also visible accessible. The material reality of the gallery operations surfaced as questionable and problematic even though the gallery and viewer might find the gallery to be the most ‘efficient’ way for the public reception of works of art. If the viewer saw the Tuselli Gallery display surfaces perhaps as a definition of the architectural structure and, further, what that structure implies, then the work at the Claire Copley Gallery could be defined as an analytic model of the actual operation of a gallery behind those display surfaces.

The removal of the paint at the Tuselli Gallery was part a reference to the traditional concern in painting of the processes of adding and subtracting materials to a two-dimensional plane. The two-dimensional plane was generally determined by its contour and its support structure, which in turn implied further architectural support structures as well as covertly operational support systems. From a similar point of view but in a different way, the volume of the partition determined the actual space and its functional operations; its removal from that space disclosed the office volume and juxtaposed it to the exhibition space, which was necessary for the exhibition to take place. The Claire Copley work was rejecting the conventional functions of the space it occupied to make the space function as an exhibition/presentation.

A critical analysis of the gallery structure was developed by a small number of artists in the late sixties and early seventies, at a time when they viewed their role as artists as that of individual producers with the right to control totally not just the production but also the distribution of their work. They believed that artists of previous generations had accepted uncritically and without qualification a distribution system (the gallery/market) which had often dictated the content and context of their work. These artists found themselves in a paradoxical situation: they either had to suppress the intentions of their work when it intersected with the gallery/market or had to forge the conventional distribution system altogether and give up their role as individual producers, or they could exhibit outside the traditional exhibition context, with the hope that a new production and distribution system could be developed. When their work conflicted with the commodity status required by the gallery system, these artists had no choice but to develop a new cultural context for their work before they could expect to function within the gallery nexus.

Interestingly enough, these works were often seen as ‘nonmaterial’ since they seemed to function outside of the traditional context of the marketplace. Instead of deriving their cultural meaning from the conventional exhibition support, they functioned in a variety of locations. Ultimately, in the late seventies, it was shown that these works had at least an economic materiality of their own and did not, in fact, operate outside of the cultural context. Some younger generation artists considered this discrepancy of theory and practice sufficient proof that once again the interdependence between production and distribution in the work of art could be totally ignored. The work as object reinstated the dealer and the
distribution system to its original status. Some artists of this younger generation, possibly seeking a way out of object-production and the gallery/museum distribution similar to that of artists of the late sixties and early seventies, formed production collectives, which attempted to keep their non-object-oriented production outside of the confines of the cultural industry.

Another phenomenon of the early seventies, deriving from artists' anti-commercialism and concern with the problem of commodification, was the development of the alternative space system, for exhibition although not necessarily for distribution. The alternative space relied for its funding on outside sources rather than the market for which the work was primarily produced. Alternative spaces made more works more frequently accessible than the commercial galleries, yet they falsified the work's commodity status, assuming that visibility alone would complete the reception process and that exchange value was not one of the work's features. The alternative space system provided visibility for the work regardless of specific interest, but it did not necessarily stand behind the work, with the full support necessary for reception within the culture. Paradoxically, the only way for a work to be fully received is through its initial abstraction for exchange value. To resolve these contradictions between the artist's interests and the functions and capacities of the alternative space, these institutions finally had to assume the role of being either a commercial gallery or a museum.

I felt at the time and still feel that the gallery is one essential contest for the cultural reception of my work. What came under scrutiny in the Copley work was the question of whether a work of art whose discourse disclosed the system of economic reproduction could possibly, at the same time, engender that economic reproduction for itself. Just as the work served as a model of how the gallery operated, it also served as a model for its own economic reproduction.

the constituency (1976)
hans haacke

Two polls, conducted respectively in 1972 and 1973 at New York's John Weber Gallery, a commercial gallery for contemporary art, showed that 70 percent of 536 (or the first poll) and 74 percent (second poll) of gallery visitors who responded to a questionnaire during each of two two-and-a-half-week periods declared that they had a “professional interest in art.”

The visitors to commercial galleries of contemporary art in New York seem to be an extremely select audience, which consists itself from the ranks of the college-educated middle and upper-middle classes. The professionally uncommitted public of the gallery can hardly be suspected of representing “the proletariat” or the mythical “man in the street.”

Those who have a professional interest in art are artists, students, critics, the directors, curators, and their assistants in museums and comparable institutions, gallery owners and their assistants, advertising and public-relations executives, government and party bureaucrats in charge of the arts, art advisors of foundations, corporations and collectors, et al. Influence which products and activities are to be considered “art” and how much attention should be paid to each artist and the often competing art “movements.”

Many members of this diverse group are not independent agents but act rather on behalf of employers and clients whose opinions they have internalized or cannot afford to disregard.

By no means is the art quality of a product inherent in its substance. The art certificate is conferred upon it by the culturally powerful social act in which it is to be considered art, and it is only valid there and then. The attribution of value, particularly if this value is not supported by the needs for physical survival and comfort, is determined ideologically. Unless one invokes God or the quasi-divine inspiration of a disembodied party, the settling of norms and their subtle or not so subtle enforcement, throughout history, is performed by particular individuals or groups of people and has no claim to universal acceptance. Their beliefs, emotional needs, goals, and interests, no matter if the particular cultural power elite is aware of and acknowledges it, decide on the ever shifting art criteria.

Usually there is no quarrel about the existence of ideological determination if it emanates from a political or religious authority. The liberal culture mongers do not quite so readily admit the fact that man-made values systems and beliefs, reflecting particular interests, are also at work in liberal surroundings. Ideology, of course, is most effective when it is not experienced as such.

Still, in the liberal environment of the John Weber Gallery the question “Do you think the preference of those who financially back the art world influence the kind of work artists produce?” received a remarkable answer. Thirty percent of the 1,276 respondents of the aforementioned poll answered, “Yes, a lot.” Another 37 percent answered, “Someday.” The answer “Not at all” was chosen by only 9 percent. To fully appreciate the gallery visitors’ feeling of dependence, potential conflict, and, possibly, cynicism and alienation, it is worth noting that 43 percent thought their standard of living would be affected if no more art of living artists were bought.

Apparently a sizable portion of the visitors to the gallery (74 percent of whom declared a professional interest in art) believed, at the same time, that the economic power of private and institutional collectors, foundations, publishers, corporate and private contributors to art institutions, and governmental funding agencies does, indeed, play a decisive role in the production and distribution of contemporary art.

The validation of certain products as contemporary high art, which, of course, guides future production while feeding on the consensus of the past, obviously is not independent of the art industry’s economic base. A cursory look at the art world in liberal
societies might therefore lead to the conclusion that it is, in fact, as stringently controlled as the cultural life in societies where street-cleaning equipment is called out to take care of deviant art, where a palette of blood and earth is used, or an occasional blooming of a thousand flowers is announced with great fanfare.

It is true that the trustees and, perforce, the directors of many big museums probably agree with the declaration of one of their director-colleagues: "we are pursuing aesthetic and educational objectives that are self-sufficient and without ulterior motive. On those grounds the trustees have established policies that exclude active engagement toward social and political ends."

Such policies pretend to be based on the sociologically and philosophically untenable premise of a self-sufficient education and free-floating aesthetics while ignoring that a museum, by its very existence, actively engages in the promotion of social and political ends. Thus many museums that constitute some of the more powerful agents in the validation and distribution of art are closed to a whole range of contemporary work and, if the premise is applied consistently, also to many works of the past. Such a ban has the further effect of seriously impairing the economic viability of the incarcerated works in commercial galleries, another of the major validating agents. Therefore, in effect if not by design, this posture has far-reaching consequences and leaves a politically neutral stance far behind, if such a thing exists at all.

The idealist notion of an art created out of and exclusively for "disinterested pleasure" (Hume), a claim contradicted by history and everyday experience, is upheld by formalist art theory as promulgated and normatively established by Clement Greenberg and his adherents. Formalist thinking, however, is not confined to his accredited followers. It reigns wherever formal qualities are viewed in isolation and their pure demonstration becomes the intended message.

This theory of cultural production and dissemination obviously overlooks the economic and ideological circumstances under which the industry and formalist theory itself operate. Questions as to the content and the audience and beneficiaries of art are hereby for a true formalist. Neither contemporary thinking in the social and political sciences nor psychoanalytic theory supports such views. The pressures and lures of the world do not stop respectfully at the gate to the "temple," Giscard d'Estaing's term for Paris's Centre Pompidou (?), or at the studio door.

It is not surprising, then, that the designers of public spaces and the corporate men who dominate the boards of trustees of cultural institutions in the United States are so fond of these nineteenth-century concepts of art for art's sake. The fact that many works done in this vein today are abstract and enjoy avant-garde status no longer poses a problem and now often is seen as an asset in the hunt for cultural prestige. The corporate state, like governments, has a natural allergy to questions such as "what?" and "for whom?" Unwittingly or not, formalist theory provides an alibi. It induces its clients to believe that they are witnessing and participating in important historic events, as if artworks, purportedly made for their own sake, still performed the liberating role they played in the nineteenth century.

Aside from this powerful ideological allegiance and confluence of interests, the curators, critics, artists, and dealers of the formalist persuasion, like the producers and promoters of any other product or system of messages, also have an economic interest in the maintenance and expansion of their position in the market. The investment of considerable funds is at stake.

In spite of these constraining forces, it is demonstrably false to assume that their control over the art world in liberal societies is complete. Examples could be cited in which certain cultural products are censored outright or discouraged from surfacing in one corner and accepted or even promoted in another corner of the same liberal environment.

Although in all these instances ideology or, more crudely, apparent financial considerations guide the decisions, the individuals and social forces behind them do not necessarily share the same beliefs, value systems, and interests.

The consciousness of which the art industry is an integral but minor small shop operation for a custom-made output, is such a far-flung global operation, with so many potentially conflicting elements, that absolute product control is impossible. It is this lack of total cohesion and the occasional divergence of interests that secures a modicum of "deviant" behavior.

The relative openness to nonconforming products—not to be equated with so-called pluralism—is further aided by the consciousness industry's built-in dialectics. For it to remain viable and profitable, it requires a pool of workers and a clientele with the judgment and the demand for ever-new forms of entertainment, fresh information, and sensual as well as intellectual stimulation. Although rarely in the foreground, it is
the "deviant" elements that provide the necessary dynamic. Without them, the industry would become bureaucratic and stagnate in boredom, which is in fact what happens in repressive environments.

Ironically, the ideological stabilization of power in the hands of a given power elite is predicated on the mobilization of the resources for its potential overthrow. If "repressive tolerance" were as soothing as Herbert Marcuse fears, there would be no need to spend enormous amounts of money for propaganda and the public-relations efforts of big corporations (Mobil Oil Corporation spent $21 million alone for its "Goodwill Umbrella" in '76). These investments attest to the race between an ever more sophisticated public and newly developed techniques of persuasion, in which art is also increasingly used as an instrument.

The millions of white-collar workers of the consciousness industry, the teachers, journalists, priests, art professionals, and all other producers and disseminators of mental products, are engaged in the cementing of the dominant ideological constructs—as well as in dismantling them. In many ways, this group reflects the ambiguous role of the petite bourgeoisie; that amorphous and steadily growing class with a middle and upper-middle income and some form of higher education, oscillating between the owners of the means of production and the "proletariat." This embarrassing and embarrassed class, in doubt about its identity and aspirations and riddled with conflicts and guilt, is the origin of the contemporary innovators and rebels, just as it is the reservoir of those most actively engaged in the preservation of the status quo.

The general public is not to be confused with the relatively small number of collectors, that is to say, the public of museums and art centers, comes from the same social pool. It is a rather young audience, financially at ease but not rich, college-educated and fitting rather with the political left than with the right. Thus there is a remarkable demographic resemblance between the art professionals, the art public at large, and probably the readership of this publication. Apparently art is no longer the exclusive domain of the bourgeoisie and nobility as it was in the past. Decades of deterministic interpretation of only a few aspects of the economic base have prevented us from adequately understanding the complexities of the art world and the more even complex functioning of the consciousness industry, of which the art world appears to be a microscopic model and a part. Nor have we learned to understand the exclusive character of the expanding petite bourgeoisie in industrialized societies, which has become a considerable force in the consciousness industry and among its consumers. It seems to play a more important role in societal change than is normally recognized.

Nothing is gained by denouncing the daily manipulation of our minds or by reacting into a private world supposedly untouched by it. There is no reason to leave the corporate state and its public-relations merceattisfices the service of our sensuous and mental needs, or to allow, by default, the promotion of values that are not in our interest. Given the dialectic nature of the contemporary petit-bourgeois consciousness industry, its vast resources probably can be put to use against the dominant ideology. This, however, seems to be possible only with a matching dialectical approach and may well require a cunning involvement in all the contradictions of the medium and its practitioners.

NOTES

1. Complete results of John Weber Gallery Writers' Profiles 1 and 2, two surveys conducted by the author, are introduced in Hans Haacke, Framing and Being Framed: 7 Works 1970-75 (Haifa: Press of the New School College of Art and Design, 1976). Most visitors to the John Weber Gallery also view exhibits by the David T. Staber, for whom and for whom, all contemporary art galleries in the same building at 420 West Broadway, in New York. The sale are not based on representative samplings. Personal observation of the gallery public, however, suggests that the notion of an is not as excessive as to make the surveys useless. For the purposes of this essay, collector are considered art professionals.

2. A survey by the New York State Council on the Arts, the operating budget of nonprofit art groups in New York State for the fiscal year of 1976-77 is given in $410 million.

3. Thomas Mexico, director of the Guggenheim Museum, in a letter to the author, March 26, 1976, declaring the rejection of works dealing with New York real estate in an exhibition scheduled one no show at the museum. The exhibition was eventually canceled and Edward F. Fry, its curator, dismissed.


5. The Armitstead Museum, a major supporter for nonart in New York, secured advertising in "Artforum" after a two-year pause as soon as its president, William M. Armitstead, assumed the editorship of the magazine. See also the interview with the editors of Artforum, "Armitstead Museum," Artforum, July 1977.
were dismissed or forced to resign by the magazine's owner, Charles Cowles (one of the vice-chairman of the board of trustees at the Museum of Modern Art). In December 1976, other prominent New York galleries had also withheld advertising when Artforum editors did not vacate in the face of the latest round of editorial changes; but the galleries' artists occupy a central place in the art world's avant-garde, so their actions are subject to a broader debate.

6. One example of the author's own experience: In 1971 the Colombe Wallraf Richter Museum banned Munch's PROJEKT '71, a large work, for obvious economic and political reasons. Two years later, it was displayed prominently at the Kunsthalle in Frankfurt. Both institutions are funded by their respective cities, and the Social Democratic Party dominates both city councils at the time. Before the Frankfurt exhibition, the piece had been shown in a commercial gallery in Cologne (Paul Maenz), at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, and at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. It also had been reproduced extensively in various publications, in Germany, France, Italy, and the United States. In short, it was a success by a Belgian collector.

7. Title of an essay by Hans Magnus Enzensberger, in his Enzyklopädie der Bewusstseinsindustrie (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1967)

8. “Exhibit support of the arts serves the arts as a social institution. And if business is to continue in big cities, it needs a more cultivated environment.” Quote from Robert Kingsley, Manager of Urban Affairs, Department of Public Affairs, Exxon Corporation, New York.

9. The contemporary public large-scale is the subject of many recent essays in Kunstbuch 46 (Berlin) (September 1978).


This text, written in 1978, was first published in French as "Les adhérents" in Art actual, Sky, annual 77. 3 (October 1977). The present version, slightly modified from the original, is taken from Matthias Pfeiffer and Robert Flack, eds., Hans Haacke: For Real. Works 1959—2005, exh. cat. (Düsseldorf: Richter Verlag, 2006), 156-169.
the agent (1977)  

hans haacke

Commercial art galleries are powerful agents in that small segment of the consumerism industry which we know as the world of so-called high art. It is apparent that, due to the limited resources of artists for reaching possible clients on their own, the chances for the sale of their products are considerably greater if they are promoted by a gallery. The prestige and consequently the cultural power of an established gallery not only creates a market, it also facilitates the securing of teaching jobs and grants, so that there is often a direct connection between an artist’s affiliation with a commercial gallery and his/her standard of living and command over productive resources.

Obviously, today galleries also hold a key position in the dissemination of the works of an artist. Exhibitions under their auspices generate articles in trade journals and other publications and furnish the grist for the gossip and shop talk of the industry. Above all, it is through such shows and the feedback they receive that an artist is invited to exhibitions in other galleries, in museums, and in international art events, which, in turn, are often organized in collaboration with galleries. Therefore also the access to large audiences through exhibitions in prestigious showplaces with accompanying consecration, press cover-

age, and increase in market value can be gained more easily through the mediation of a gallery than without.

Art dealers, however, are more than merchants; they are also purveyors as well as representatives of ideology and occasionally connoisseurs with emotional ties to their suppliers and clients. The difficulty in fully assessing their role derives from the ambiguous nature of the product they promote and sell.

An item deemed to be a work of art by a cultural power elite is a commodity, an ideological token, and the source for intellectual and emotional gratification, all in one. Although these constitutive qualities relate to each other, their relationships are not proportional or fixed. The evaluation of each, moreover, depends on the ever-changing beliefs, values, and needs of the individual or the social set by which it happens to be judged.

Works of art, like other products of the consciousness industry, are potentially capable of shaping their consumers’ view of the world and of themselves and may lead them to act upon that understanding. Since the exhibition programs of museums and comparable institutions—with large audiences from the middle and upper-middle classes, which predominate in contemporary opinion and decision-making—are influenced by commercial galleries, it is not negligible which ideologies and emotions are traded in these establishments.

Not surprisingly, institutions and galleries are often resistant to products that question generally held opinions and tastes, particularly if the positions they themselves hold are at stake. But the peculiar dialectics of consciousness—bolstered by their potential for financial speculation, and given the relative lack of uniformity of interests within the culture industry and among its consumers—nevertheless promises the surfacing of such critical works, at least in liberal societies.

With this medium of openness, whenever suitable, the galleries’ promotional resources should be used without hesitation for a critique of the dominant system of beliefs while employing the very mechanisms of that system.

New York, May 1977

PART II  institution of art
on practice (1975)
mel ramsden

That was the problem, in fact: to discover the point at which public and private intersect, and
thus be able to attack one by depicting the other.


1. There is a consensus on the part of the editors of the [art] that two or three of us ought
deal with some of the ramifications of the hydra-headed art bureaucracy. So, I’m going to
begin by propagandizing (i.e., adopting a bureaucratic)—one which perhaps brings me peril-
ously close to the foibles of economic determinism. Consider the following, that the admin-
istrators, dealers, critics, patrons, etc., who once seemed the neutral servants of art are now,
especially in New York, becoming its masters. Has adventuristic New York art of the seven-
ties (perhaps uncontrollably) become a function of the market system? Isn’t the way this
market vectors human relations now a massive controlling factor in the way we now vector
human relations? A simplified and possibly even misleading account of how the above has
come about might sound something like this. First, a prevalent in the New York art world a

18
bulldozed by the market. That we now practice with the market mind (and I'm not loftily excepting my own writing here). So, you can't pretend the market doesn't exist if it has been internalized. This means we have vastly more complex and paradoxical vectors than rhetorically contrasting good (us) with evil (them). Remember, I'm talking about Imperialist New York avant-garde. If you learn about art: in an art citizenship school, this is who you learn about. I'm not talking about small-town community art clubs or ever feminist art workshops, though I do agree with Andrew Melnitz that these may offer some sort of alternative to bureaucratic practice. But what the latter really lack is power, and that's what we are really talking about, isn't it? Isn't this power which enames most of us with what we call official culture? Official Culture seems in a number of ways involved with this magazine to be inauthentic (or at least today), imperialist, and sometimes actually strikes us as positively mad. So I want to try and talk about what can be done about this. I hope by the time you've got some way into these notes it will be apparent that I think the only real grounds upon which opposition means looking anew at our social practice, not so stated, that perhaps sounds a little too offhand. Part of what I mean is this: in order to facilitate some "authenticity," we might have to try and presuppose a tradition (community) which does not embody a commodity mode of existence. The possibility of such an "oppositional alternative" (for numerous such alternatives), if it is possible, can only arise within communities whose autonomy (language, grammar) is its own. There is a sense in which exchange value now represents our standard of sociality. I think we must try and provide a context outside of this oppressive social apparatus—in other words, look for another standard of sociality. I think this can only be done by self-consciously developing a small community practice. (Not so incidentally: such a concept has, I suppose, always guided Art & Language. However, I myself first became really self-conscious of its potential after I got involved in the work Michael Baldwin did on the Art & Language/Documenta Index in 1972. See also some of his and others' stuff on "logical implosion." One thing I am sure of—it can't be done, not at present anyway, by making more and more adventurist revolutionary products unless these can be embedded in an "alternate history" wherever that is.) These only end up perpetuating and diversifying the market.

2. I don't of course at all think that New York artists want to be imperialist puppets. However, it is entirely feasible to regard a growing corpus of their work in this way, which does not, and I stress does not, mean the work is at all reducible to such an interpretation. I merely think that even those who profess unique political awareness—having no doubt been "radicalized" at one point or another of their lives—just don't make the connections (they ought to) between their work and (e.g. the spread of a marketing expedient like "international art." This is partly because of the difficulty of getting realism into our problem body (practice). The general pattern seems to be to concentrate on the manipulation of spectacle, keeping your "pleasure" perhaps vocal but always "safe." At the base of this is once again the simplistic model of the private individual in society, once again the split between private freedom and political life. This combination of adventurist New York art with personal politics, sometimes even a professional Marxism, coddles a dialectical paradox. This is to me potentially interesting and even perhaps extremely useful, but usually we never get that far. Usually we are just made aware of compromise. Somehow the "conclusions" turn out not problematic but just dull. Yes of course I acknowledge such a paradox may be difficult to confront and impossible to extricate oneself from and the only thing that seems, finally, realistic is to confront it, to realize it is just part of practice. The conventional double bind of Habermas (et al.) implies retiring from the world and giving up the struggle within it—hence implicitly approving of it. Or, remaining in it, the world whose values you reject is equally a compromise. However, this is much too much a black and white doubling. Whereas the paradox seems fairly realistic, to think it implies a "choice" is not. There is a difference between paradox and impotence. Impotence for example comes when one is, say, perfectly content with our competitive and instrumental social order but in the political structure on which it rests. Now most artists supplying us with adventurist modernism, including myself, have a problem: world which (to different degrees) embodies such a compromise. However, what usually happens is that such compromise is silently forgotten or glossed over. This is a poor show (it would however be interesting if compromise were fully integrated into the work). Some people also adopt a position of nihilistic indignation toward the walled-up institutions of modern art and I don't think this is much good either. Hence we get tract-pot museum—walls-selves involving shipping examples of Picasso and Braque's Analytic Cubism out to people on Habubish Avenue can see it—good grief! "Taking art out into the streets" is to me a more rampant form of consumatism than even museums represent. At least if the work's hidden away, people have the option of ignoring it, even if it is "good for them." Finally though, most current desire for change seems to lead to that swapping their professionalism for "ours," and this is simply to utilize the very same thing. This is that society has screwed up the rest of the world. But anyway, there is at present (as if we didn't know it), a stepped-up politikuffs debate in the art media. No doubt it is
becoming obvious to more and more people that sevenies Modernism isn’t just goddamned anachronistic but as a contribution to our practice, learning, and improvement of mind and society, actually borders on the scandalous. It seems to me however that such a debate lacks theoretical self-consciousness as well as, for that matter, practical-social awareness. Hence it is seriously flawed. Perhaps this is due to it being mostly so far an undertaking for art critics. Because of their function, critics are notoriously serious about words but usually totally lacking in commitment. Or, their commitment is suspect, which isn’t to say that what they write doesn’t often make a lot of (dubious) sense. Anyway, “art and politics” becomes one more thing assumed as part of Modern Art’s internal complexity. One of the best ways to maintain a system’s insular self-preservation is to continually try and increase its internal complexity, hence its steering capacity, while decreasing the complexity of its environment. Look for example at Jean-Huchet’s threat to kidnap Metropolitan Museum personnel which was defended by numerous New York aestheticians, who by this time ought to know better, as “just art” and therefore no “real threat” to property. Also, why does Joseph Beuys’s “society as sculpture” for some reason just strike me as off-the-rails aesthetics? Or, the implications of manipulation seem to be more sinister. Now in Beuys’s case, his art world histories turn what might be some conceivable useful contributions to the debate into statements of truly unsurpassed vacuity—or “social sculpture wins ideal.” The contributions of Beuys and Huchet are the contributions of a lot of others, seem to drag indistinguishably in the Koskueh glamour-careerist-empty-media until they lack any tenacity. And this seems to be what I’m trying to get at: the “media” etc. consume us and sever the ties with practice. This isn’t to say it’s just the middle-world-assessors-in-the-media’s fault. I think that the point is more that the art world takes the edge off everything—that actually Beuys’s work is strangely awful—though, from what I hear, I’m probably still giving him too much too much credit. Anyway, the vested interests are enormous since a trip with money linked with glamorous narcisism can secure most of us. If the French make art domestic, the Americans have made it into a business—the art market is reputedly the tenth largest industry in New York.

3. Seventies Modernism, the embodiment of undialectical idealism, relegates all market relations (etc.) to “incidental” background problems (note the similarities to the academic philosophy still reigning in Western countries). That such seeming “background problems” should come to the fore can be seen as the result of two things: (1) there are other factors more complex historical reasons having to do with the internal collapse of Modernism (2) which is beside the point at the moment); first, the enormous growth and increased power and control of this market over the past fifteen years, corresponding of course to the thrust of late capitalism, is staggering (‘late capitalism’ refers to the increased degree of capitalist centralization, concentration, multinational corporate international market activity, and an ever more controlled and manipulated market.) This means that the stage for what amounts to relentless art imperialism is now simply impossible to overlook. The second reason these market relations have to be addressed is a consequence of playing the materialist. Actually, it’s a bit curious to say “playing” the materialist. Getting some treachery into the debate (on even as basic a level as sorting out cause and effect—insofar as cause and effect can be used to “explain” human activity) depends partly on materialist tools. It would be recondite debating here whether the adoption of materialism leads to an awareness of market relations, or, in fact, whether market relations lead, in the attempt to address them, to materialism. This is a waste of time and we ought to, rather, consider Wittgenstein’s remark: “light enough to go over the whole.” So, consider materialism here not as the wholesale embracing of an entrenched metaphysical theory (the tradition of Marx) but rather a strategic ad hoc device contingent largely on our pragmatically complex index/circumstance here in New York City. I’m getting more and more pissed off with all the social thinkers art has to wear in order to be abolishing. In respect to art, there’s been a lot wrong with a materialist view in the thirties (there was quite a lot of debate between so-called new criticism and left-wing literary criticism. You got bitches like E. P. Thompson insisting on “transcendent” elements and the leftists grandly denying these. Thus what you got was a kind of undialectical idealism versus a kind of dialectical materialism and this sort of thing still carries through to this day. But here materialism is not undialectical materialism, so I don’t think I’m being optimistic about on mechanistic or economic determinism. Ideas reflect reality, so it’s said, but the reflection, like everything else, is dialectical; not often, but active. Very loosely, the dialectical method (partly) implies we must look at things in terms of their history, not just the state in which the object of scrutiny appears at the moment. It also, and again partly, implies our actions are tied to our existence in the world and the people around us, not just to a set of “universal” high-thoughts and precious artifacts, except insofar as these do constitute a segment of “what’s around us.” To say human actions or culture are determined largely by politico-economical factors or to explain in a formula (as Lomas and others did)-consciousness-in-terms-of-existence and not conversely is not to deny the role of the individual of course, but rather the contrary, to see that individual in
dialectical relation to underlying forces. Such an approach is based entirely on the sneaking assumption that this is the most pointed way to free the individual (to act) from being an unwitting functionary of these forces.

4. To dwell perennially on an institutional critique without addressing specific problems within the institutions is to generalize and oversimplify; it may also have the unfortunate consequence of affirming that which you set out to criticize. It may even act as a barrier to eventually setting up a community or practice (language ... sociality ...) which does not just embody a commodity mode of existence. That is to say, I don't want to simplify the present society's mode of intelligibility and affirm market hierarchies. I do think, however, that to neglect this kind of general 'intelligibility' is to sacrifice a crucial (materialist) reference point in teaching. I am committed to teaching as the means of dispensing a portable safe deposit box of wisdom (which is knowledge subject to passive consumption—it's sometimes called 'objectivity') but as creating a context which first facilitates the recognition of our own problems. Perhaps this is a little too glib, saying perhaps no more than that we need to replace training and compartmentalization with practical learning and 'experience.' It's certainly too general since there are times when one does need training. So perhaps all I mean by 'recognition of our own problems.' is the recognition of the possibility of practice. What I mean is that we need not be alienated from your family or your local—your family and locale are at least part of my (as a teacher) problem map. Which is also to say again we need to avoid consumerism—life doesn't follow subject-specificity/categories as a formality. Teaching and learning depend initially on getting you and me to have commonality or shared points of reference. This in a way is a good reason for playing the materialist: you start from things we all have access to. It could also be that the very spontaneity of such a teaching/learning encounter may produce a (partial) alternative. Teaching doesn't merely mean getting others to spout your point of view. This 'point of view' is just an object open to consumption unless it can be transformed by 'learners' and internalized into their own practice. There is a kind of social reflexivity necessary to articulate a language, sociality, outside of dehumanized forms of life. But such a language cannot be sustained unless I can teach, that is, share, and sharing involves a commitment to others on the level of their material problems—I don't just want people to become acquainted with two-handed cradle life. All of which means that making something public is propagandizing of sorts. But it doesn't involve me either snobbishly ignoring people or ramming stuff down their throats. It involves me in strategies which encompass compromise—or could I call it existence? I don't want to go into this here but instead you should read David Gress's article 'Writing Cultural Criticism' in Acta, Summer 1973. He goes into Kierkegaard and Brecht's concern with the ideological and moral consequences of modes of presentation. I'm talking to you here; it involves anything patronizing like 'translating' my elitist language into awful Art courses or mass publicly entrenched art language. (It happens that some specific forms of language aren't easily translated, and that certainly includes a certain amount of Art & Language.) Commitment to teach and learn is a commitment first to dialogue, to commonality, not point of view or authority. Teaching is constituted through a particular person's praxis. This is what we're after. (Otherwise materialist terms like 'existence determines consciousness' don't make sense.)

5. What does an apparent buzzword like 'bureaucracy' mean? Briefly, by 'bureaucracy,' I do not refer to a massive centralised organization but to the fact that real cultural decisions (which for example determine things like the way we learn, the practical relations between people) are out of our control and are, in general, directed through impersonal operation of market institutions(e.g., commercial galleries) and private administrative control (e.g., here Anthropic, the MoMA, etc.). Those individuals who are obedient or unscrupulous functionaries of such bureaucracies, I call bureaucrats. This isn't intended as a definition at all, but it's all we need for now. The hope for oppositional alternatives to this is to be deal with as something of a black box while philosophy of science might be the trouble here with T.S. Kuhn's 'paradigm shift.' Literature is that it seems to imply is 'minimally' move from one institution to another. Again, we exchange their professionalism for ours; thus allowing more for an alternative bureaucracy than for an alternative to bureaucracy. A couple of years ago it was said that we needed not a paradigm shift but a paradigm shift. However, the logic of Kuhn's paradigm shifts are still too binary at this stage. I'm not going to end by swapping one monolith for another. It's much more indeterminate and compromised than that. In fact, rather than seeing such alternatives in terms of Kuhn's academic reasoning, consider instead the spirit of Bakunin's oppositional crankiness in this (1868) essay: 'I shall continue to be an impossible person, so long as those who are now possible remain possible.'

6. Could a critique of avant-garde New York art involve me in acting like an art critic? It seems to me that art criticism provides us with a paradigm case of what art world bureaucracy is really like. Even when it is carried out by those who are not just participating in careerist soldiering, it's still close to totally untenable since it treats most art as rationally
there and as neutral spectacle. This means a lot of it is bourgeois criticism: quite simply, a celebration of the world as diverse but neutral spectacle. But criticism, when you get right down to it, is basically stuck with assessing and grading. The activity of grading derives in sense from both the commodity treatment of persons as well as from the unreflective, unproblematic, and entrenched commodity use of language. The link between this mode of treatment of "things" and our way of relating to each other (the market term of life) isn't accidental. The critic matches market force—the voice of things. Contrary to seeing some sort of uncovering of ideology, the critic veils it. The role of criticism in our present art state is to act as some kind of police force. Unlike radical theory, its task is to keep order by singling out individuals (creating hierarchies) and judging the workiness of things. But it has no program, no method, and makes no declarator of principles and commitments—indeed, to do so would be to destroy its precious "neutrality." In this sense, it makes no promises explicit but relies on a bureaucratic functionality as unassailable. It has authorization insignificance, clearly. For instance, it is assumed as "rational," a right God-given, that the critic should "appropriate" artwork. But suppose the artist should criticize the critic? If so, it is mostly written off as sour grapes. Under this kind of role-formation, there are standards of intelligibility such as experts/laymen, teachers/learners, dominant groups/subservient groups, producers/consumers. These are market points of reference which are maintained as "natural." Almost all art criticism, especially the hack trade journal kind, is incapable of reflexively acknowledging this market function, as epistemologically, not to say morally, all problematic. I may be more or less uninformed on this matter, but I have yet to see such a problem even acknowledged. It also affirms market hierarchy through the separation of being from writing. Its "writing," and, I stress, its existence be wholly in the middle of the market. It talks about problems as if only others had them. It approaches, in other words, a "rational" middleman's overview. This is just typical of the privileged civilization. Looting secure academic, it's also shared by the hip-young movement-dubber. They are both, insofar as they are role-adolescent assessors, cut off from practice. I think it's about time we got together and told them: either see your own status as problematic or shut up. But with our currently pervasive market apparatus there is compensation involved in anyone saying anything at all. Will, for example, my remarks here be too "submissive" and how unproblematically? It's not just me becoming self-conscious about my capacity for mask role-adolescence, there also has to be effort put into understanding even the way my language/grammar conforms market hierarchies. Even so I am writing this, I know we all have to be market speakers since we have to speak rather than remain silent. All speech, even essentially "the controversial," gets consumed by public relations. I think to try and speak differently is in a way to try and live differently. Also, one difference between ordinary criticism and critical theory is that the latter might mean us writing in a way of the impossibility of avoiding market hierarchy.

7. Part of the drive for the disassembling of institutions is to escape from the institutions' topologies and sanctioned problems. Positivism, as Chomsky recently said, has nothing to do with science, it has to do with Capitalism. It reflects the privileges of power in that it involves solving technical problems in the interests of whoever sets those problems and determines what are the right solutions. I mention this since it seems to point to the enormous difficulty of each of us—me included—even locating our own problems/existences. Perhaps I would expand on this institutional dismantling now and also involves dismantling myself. I am part of the problem, which is why I mentioned materialism before—the institutions are not just contingent. It isn't possible to treat problems like this as objects of contemplation any longer. Contemplation must be seen as a particularly comforting ideological relation. To understand the mapping between a prior compartmentalization and our possibility of practice means acknowledging a potentially panodemical existential situation; isn't it a feature of bourgeois "observation" or "appreciation" (I'm not being righteous about the bourgeois)—another outward—either, since I am a member of such a class really. It seems to me that one of the many shortcomings today of holding the classical nineteenth century Marxist view is that it has no way of accounting for the building of the individual in the twentieth-century consumer society. For instance, I think a lot of people firmly believe the more they are able to purchase, the happier they will be. I am vulnerable to this too, it is a feature of my life which I don't just know about and dislike—I actually like it. This is what the internalization (which I suppose is Reich's term really) of capitalist rule really imposes. In the face of a totalitarian social reality such as this, it should at least be open to controversy whether we continue idle deities over the 'nature' of art. This is to say, the 'nature' of art isn't just a positive technical puzzle abstracted from the material conditions of its time. Everybody knows this, I think. For me at least it doesn't go far enough. I don't think it can be unarticulated from particular times, locales, personal pragmatism. That is, I think it is more interesting if isn't and more fulfilling. It is to talk about "its time" as if "time" is apart from any particular individual is reminiscent of academic who always talk about knowledge the same way: apart from anybody having knowledge, that is, undialectically.
always apart from what we do. It seems to me that such an "objectification" is the occupational disease (or rather, the occupational norm) of assessors and bureaucrats. There are other causes of objectification: the Australian art-fair who bought the two-million-dollar Pollock, don't want it competing with Arthur Anybody's fucking pastels. With money on the scene, with assessors on the scene, with a massive social-media bureaucracy in operation, you've got to get hierarchy: not relativization. Or, you can't fit everything in a galaxy or a trade journal, so what you do is select. Most of these selections are done on the basis of "progress," though it appears as if they are just data collections. Again, there's a not a lot wrong with this except that it's a bit superficial. But what's queer is that you've got this funny middle ground of assessors and entrepreneurs (including us artists acting as our own entrepreneurs) which has a tremendous amount of power. The Pollock doesn't compete. It's canonized. That's the whole idea, it enters "history." (Don't you think, reader, that my own grammatical gratuitization enforces the subject-specificity of the status quo?) Just remind the above.) I seem to be getting a long way from my point. So, to resume, the bullshitting of the individual in this society may be a bit misleading than described. As I mentioned before, this society's not infrequently driven by physical coercion, as some societies may be, but there is an intensification of capitalist rule within the very concept of the self. People are quite happy with the ethic of consumption. The hold is secure enough that even though I have a certain amount of anthropocentric ideology over the current economic crunch. I'm not at all certain whether I would like to see this society and its institutions disappear (including even the unjust in this society and its institutions). It seems there is today a gelling of political, economic, and administrative processes within a massive overarching apparatus of control over all aspects of everyday life, which might begin to give us some idea of the kind of thing we're up against. Unless it's here already, we seem to be approaching a moment of ultimate totalitarianism. This is not a totalitarianism of human dictators but one where institutions teratologically and self-destructively rule. However, notwithstanding all this, I still have some kind of hope. Perhaps paradoxically, there may now be opportunity for oppositional alternatives. How might these be initiated? For myself, one way may be to acknowledge that the capitalist apparatus has been internalized and that "disassembling" its relations means disassembling myself. Thus any sort of oppositional or "subversive" activity must not and does not leave me pure, unscathed and free. Quite the reverse: if I accept the problems of this society as not just something going on contingently in the background, but as my own problems, then reflexive theory becomes (maybe) both externally (socially) aggressive as well as individually therapeutic. Or, it may be effectively socially subversive to the extent that it is individually therapeutic, or vice versa—so long as you can connect it all up dialectically. (This kind of contradiction (loosely) related to the way the capitalist brings workers together in order to exploit them but also creates the conditions for unionization.) All this implies acknowledgment that my concept of myself, my role (practice), is the biggest problem of all. This is, I believe, much more effective than snotty pronouncements from some lofty throne of ideological superiority. Insofar as oppositional activity means the gradual deconstruction of many of our internalized assumptions, we seem to be left at present with two choices: either accept the arbitrariness of compartmentalization under capitalist rule or, on the other hand, live quite self-consciously in a state of uproar. That is, "confusion" is the reflection of irrational society, rather than the product of stupidity.

8. But suppose I consider a typical example of art under capitalist rule: formalism, especially in literary criticism, for instance, was easy on in the U.S. developed by those enfranchised in universities and dependent on their living on conservative institutions or an academic audience for their influence. It is rooted in University Academia. It is also not an uncommon thesis to consider formalism as rooted in Capitalism. Nor is it uncommon nowadays to swell it as a stalking horse. It may be useful here however in providing a common point of reference for further discussion of that even more deadly presence: bureaucracy. Very generally, formalism holds that the art object alone is worthy of interest, that it's autonomous, that cultural and social connections are split from "the work." (Under formalism I include all recent "technical" which is routine and standard, dependent on furthering and elaborating the diversification of manipulation and manipulation of spectacle.) Arguments as to what's wrong with formalism ought to be fairly standard by now (e.g., it assumes the cultural supports are uncontroversial and only "the work" is subject to change and development). Thus it never questions productivity as such. This restricts art—just as I think Ad Reinhardt-Ceizler saw in the late Sixties—to endless spectacle. (This has led to a bankruptcy and, in my view, even wholly demented and pompous acceleration of specialization, the real dynamic of avant-garde art in New York today) Formalism (just like positivism) and our lives compartmentalized (fragmented and specialized) by capitalist society go hand in hand. Usually under capitalist rule the worker is alienated from his or her product (the seller of "labor power like the seller of any other commodity realizes its exchange value and parts with its use value"—Capital, Volume 1). I suppose that, in an integrated society, workers, as
skilled craftspeople, control their activities and hence the attributes of their products. Hence the worker's attachment to his or her product results not only from pride in the object of their labor but also and I think, crucially, in their personal regard for the community it serves. Now just contrast this in our lives in New York City, under reigning Capitalism, the worker's hopes, community goals (if indeed there are any), cultural life (if indeed there is any), need not be, and usually are not, compatible with the products of their labor. We reach a state where our work becomes totally alienated from our psyche, and finally our community—and to such an extent that we may eventually be incapable of helping ourselves. Now this may to some of you constitute a tediously familiar Marxist whipping post. I think it's very true, nonetheless. What I'm trying to get at is this is just the effect of formalism (and, I think even more relentlessly, of bureaucracy). It alienates the product from community. Allegedly, the only "real" worth of our activity becomes something "transcendent," that is, "beyond" the community. You take on an alienated mentality in order to further diversify the history of Modern Art—hence you service "big" culture. Your community becomes that of middlemen, you work for career. Career is determined by the way you neatly package and sell yourself—e.g., through commercial galleries, Artforum, Art International; and, finally, we are emulated in the false Valhalla of blue-chip bureaucracy, the MoMA. These have an implicit structure all of their own which also works toward further refining and keeping products external to community. Most artists (and just lately increasingly) see their "real community" as the marketplace or (in New York anyway) the people they know as fellow entrepreneurs. These keep us in touch with a market which is abstract, which is nobody at all in particular. Under such conditions, all of us regard ourselves, in the spirit of free competition, as atomic, which makes us even more vulnerable to market relations. Working for an abstract market (or one whose title is abstract) is then interpreted, somehow, as being the very embodiment of "universality" which is, further, a leak proof guarantee we are in the presence of pure-white shit-hot morality. (Such a model of conduct I think, implicitly motivates a lot of modern art. It is a conception of abstract good, what Lukacs critically called "the icy finality of perfection," and it has been philosophically under question—especially since Kierkegaard.)

3. Because of the last 170 years of art in advanced technological societies, formalism is a point of reference we all share. Also, a critique of formalism is in the air, coming, as it now does, from within the formalist-modernist regime itself (of course it's always been hotly pursued from other quarters, but the fact that it now comes from within I hope augurs something desperate). But wherever it comes from it is promising. An attack on formalism constitutes, if it is "real" and thorough and not just routinely flagging a dead horse, an attack on art imperialism as well as, finally, on the "big" society itself. Lawrence Alloway, for instance, has begun to flirt with a critique like systems theory which perhaps hints at going beyond guffawing at the Greenbergs to view formalism as implicit in the whole adversative and publicly celebrated American postwar tradition. (It is adversative in that in your work you have to "go off" somewhere and be outlandish, you have to stress campy-sixties-cool-embryonic-noninvolvement.) Max Kozloff, in an article already—I think perhaps justifiably—conceives an old chestnut: by the growing art and politics costume, we argue that abstract-expressionists will pop art unwittingly perpetuated, even celebrated, the political cold war climate during the fifties and sixties. These artists were confident their personal activity was independent of, even aggressive to, the sociopolitical base. It wasn't, partly because their ideological strategies were romantic, ill-fitting, and unable to withstand the real power of U.S. foreign policy at that time. In the mid-seventies we are still bickering about the tawdry baggage of all this. Adversative is transparently a function of the prevailing political climate, it's always ideologically and practically conservative, and it will continue to be so long as art ideology/practice remains unexamined—which it will continue to be so long as the work remains formalistic, etc. (Saying it's a function of the prevailing political climate means that it is conservative. It doesn't mean of course that it is reducible to it.) Formalism is also a convenience for bureaucrats of all sorts since our work is subject to administrative assessment much better when it's dependent in the first place on passive product consumption, on alienating pragmatics, intentions, community, etc. just think, it's much easier to flog to corporations, and if it has no intentional problematicity (other than to eagerly be part of the "history of art"), then it's easier to pretend it's "international." In this sense, formalism is a twisted welter of maintaining itself by tenaciously regarding 90 percent of its nexus as unproblematic.

10. I have seen in the U.S. as well as in art schools in England, students whose work resembles (say) Jackson Pollock's or Frank Stella's but who have actually never heard of either. According to my own observations as well as what I read, Burn and others tell me, this is fairly typical. So who is responsible for such a scandal? History, community, intentions, problems of context and society all become incidental—just let the students get on with their products: "objects," "things," then no matter what their intellectuality, their inexhaustible context-bound nature, you can "train" students to be motivated by external rewards,
bureaucratic status. I'm saying that if students' productivity is separable from their intentions (and I think students do have complicated intentions and contexts which don't just add up to 'I want to join art history'), then you can gratuitously subject them to market requirements. That is, you can get comparisons, i.e. whose product is "best"? This means the final problem is grading. Under such circumstances, grading is conducive to the development of alienated and bureaucratic mentalities—good training for the "real" Kunstwurf. Laissez-faire art education may be a liberal "free-for-all," but the goal of chat-free-for-all is exotic to its intentional value (in most cases, that is—when students are not all high enough to become bureaucrats straightaway). The goal is grades by which 'freedom-loving' art educators consider Official market status on students' work (I don't mean to suggest that there are no art teachers aware of this problem: there are a lot). All of which adds up to a set of restraints which are insidious, to say the least (I wouldn't mind quite so much if the grading were explicit, but I can't see a bunch of liberals agreeing on an academy, with overt instead of covert rules). In art education, almost more than in art criticism, we can see people obediently if unwittingly perpetuating the bureaucratic stranglehold. Under the guise of "freedom" we get instead an even more insidious power. Comparisons are dispensed from the view of various beliefs about "composition," "form," "color," "space," and a mishmash of misinformation about art history as an object of consumption: one great-idea after another. This renders "learning" totally useless in terms of a contribution to understanding and community. It becomes completely alienated from these ends and is entered into as a contractual relation with 'big' corporate society.

11. According to Lawrence Alloway's book review in Art in America (September–October 1974), "present opinion in New York often resembles a kind of impulsive or accidental Marxism. Art is alienated when it falls under the general law of capitalist production, that is, when the work of art is regarded as merchandise. Here we are at the threshold of recent complaint and dissent that represent a politicalization of art undreamed of a few years ago." I myself am not of course completely familiar with "present opinion in New York," so I've yet to really see the outward signs of this "politicalization"—so called. On the contrary, I really don't know what Alloway means. Could he be talking about strategically simple incidents such as Jean Toche's kidnap threat or even the related "infantile" scribblings of Tony Shafrazi? You couldn't exactly call these paradigms of art's "politicalization"—or could you? Notwithstanding this, Alloway does attempt to deal with the problem of context, which I assume is part of his "politicalization." (Incidentally, I'm not unduly obsessed with Alloway. I wrote a lot of this on holiday in Maryland, and the Art in America was all I had with me.) As I've been saying, if art isn't just an autonomous object, then it is embedded in the rest of our social experience. Hence it is less a question of "art" and more a question of "culture" (this is probably a bit vulgar). Alloway seems to recognize this. He furthermore attempts to illustrate it: How for instance does Alloway's attempt get, with my (and others') musical animosity toward formalism? He quotes "a well-known example of form-systems analysis": a bomber in flight is part of a system that includes electronic factories (where parts of the plane are manufactured), the training of pilots (the outcome of debate about various methodologies), gas storage, intelligence reports (concerning the target); meteorological reports (weather en route and over the target); and so on. He continues: "a system therefore is a portion of reality composed of related units. If we put a work of art in the place of a plane we may be in a better position to see it in relation to the support system (previous art history, age of the artist, patronage) and to the goal. Now this embodies a kind of anthropological descriptivity. To initiate inquiry into 'culture,' Alloway starts off by treating it as an object of contemplation. This "portion of reality" which has "keep off" signs hung all over it is not in fact a portion of reality at all—its part of our practice. It is not nature (the form of life is subject to controversy, for example, as to whether we ought to have bombers at all). But the above makes it appear that way and in fact subtly bolsters the status quo because that's what quasi-descriptive accounts do. They speak about problems without including the speaker within them. Thus we are left with a kind of middle life, which isn't what 'culture' implies. It does imply practice and learning, saying we ought to do this and not that. Regarding the 'product' as a given and then the 'system' following as determined naturally is of course ideological too. This is the ideology of 'observations.' He treats the problems of formalism, of culture, as a critic's problem, a problem that can be resolved by finding the right interpretation. It is the domain of the middleman, there is no practice. He removes the possibility of himself having to act, to decide: there are only descriptions, there are no commitments, there is only the middle ground of unreal half-baked market assessment, veiled under specious 'neutrality.' This is just an insane surrogate for existence. Perhaps this is unfair? Perhaps Alloway is not unaware of this? However, it isn't just the absence of the speaker and his commitments which is troublesome but (as Terry Smith has remarked and contingent to this tendency) his ending up with a simplistic model of the art world 'system' as akin to a natural organism which, supposedly, you can do anything about. This is another way the status quo, almost automatically, bolsters itself. The causal model goes something like this (1) the artist...
is the prime mover; (2) the artwork, the lifeblood; (3) the critic, the catalyst; (4) the dealer and museum, the distributor; (5) the audience, the lapping, it-all-up folder. Notice here how everything begins from the artist’s “creativity,” to me this is idealistic (and even the separate question as to whether the above ought to be the case is also idealistic; in fact, it’s silly since it’s supposed to transcend practice). The entanglement of such a model acts as an extremely effective ideological device, preventing us from seeing where the real power relations lie. So, the vectoring between art and society can’t without furthering the hegemony of “neutrality” be dealt with descriptively. There is a bureaucratic “rational” necessity to leave yourself out of the picture. Finally, such vectors must be removed from the gray middlemen and regarded as practice. Art and society are subject to material transformation—something which entails that it is “political,” and perhaps political in all sorts of ways. The vectors of “art” and “society” are not just hanging about waiting for us to fall over them (more gray). No, they are (can be) constituted by our conduct, which means they “exist” when we get more; that is, consider the possibility of practice.

32. Webster defines “culture” as “the enlightenment and refinement of taste acquired by intellectual and aesthetic training.” Does this mean it is contingent upon the separation of our practice from our social problems? (Consider the ultimate praise “a masterpiece,” of which “piece” is the more recent, more palatable democratic equivalent.) The power of such culture just turns the majority of people into spectators (consumers or tourists). It promotes passivity and we all imagine all we can do is watch while this wonderful pageant of culture marches by. Here “culture” belongs to people who are “just doing their jobs,” to “professionals,” to “experts.” If you think about the concept of culture in this society, the fact that it is specialized is hardly surprising. However, this specialization is allied with tremendous power. In other words it is allied with mass communication. The whole pernicious theory of mass communication today depends, essentially, on a minority in some way exploiting a majority. This “communication” implies not only reception but an opportunity to reply to answer back, solidarity, not consumerism. But consumerism is an extremely effective narcotic. You consume it because you like it and it’s “good for you.” If you don’t like Modern Art, then—well goodness me—you must be an ignoramus since it’s inconceivable anybody could know about it and still dislike it. This means you learn it by assimilating it (or most of it since you may dislike details). Hence Modern Art becomes essentially a form of unproblematic consumerism. Now how does such consumerism determine something, say, like aesthetics? Most aestheticians, including Marxist aestheticians going on about all that crap about whether art ought or ought not be allied with the working class, treat art only as something we “appreciate,” rarely as something we do. Aesthetics is to me a gratuitous corpus of literature concerned with interpretation, as if that’s the only way art can get “philosophical.” That is the real straitjacket worn by aestheticians—another philosophical “discipline” born from occupying, Janus-faced, the middle ground. But anyway, this whole notion of high culture can be called Official Culture. It is alienating but this alienation is disguised as “universalism,” which is another way a privileged class disguises the particularity of its language. It leads to compartmentalization and, so, long as this gray mechanism persists, your problems are likely to be technical. It seems to me that “art” within such a culture is largely a question of either maintaining or pseudo-problematically merging a bit with subject marginality. Given this, whether something is art or not doesn’t seem to be a question of very much interest, having more to do with enforcing grammatical enculturation. However, it may be interesting as a question if the consideration of such a question can be kept embedded in the relativized “dialectical” exchanges of a small community/society and not from this embedding to be judged by some half-fil, half-styled, standard of “civilized” excellence. This kind of “culture” cannot be separated from our language, our dialogue, our “communicating” and transformed into something which amounts to power over others. It doesn’t exist apart from our talking together or our consideration, our specific social learning needs. Perhaps I can show you what I mean: under such circumstances, a question like “what is art?” may be modified to become “I have this concept of art, how does my concept match yours?” Thus the question becomes socially specific, dialogical, not concerned with matching an a priori standard of excellence or, rather, not merely concerned. Now, the point is, given two or three hours, given perhaps a day or two to talk to each other, we might generate enough points of reference to learn something about the question. Learn, that is, meaning understanding something of our own problem world, not just consuming an existing body of knowledge. Perhaps at this point, I ought to remind you, reader, that this is what I am here in this article trying to suggest: that such an impelled dialogical strategy, regarding “art” not as a definition outside of conversation but as a “social” matter embedded in (our) conversation, may be both an effective opposition to the builder of official culture as well as a way of affirming our own social space outside of “mere” contractual role relations. I want to make it clear that I think unless we first change our sociality we won’t do anything. In my view the small group commune, community, must provide a methodological base—like the family, a sheltered space—(or our sociality outside of
bureaucratic; big culture. A simultaneous implosion and explosion must be consciously developed; “culture” though internalized becomes externally aggressive (i.e., political). In my view this is the only way, at present, to do art in New York—or maybe anywhere else in the West. That is, the only way to proceed is to develop a community, a base from which one can try to destroy the trains the market presses upon. I want to emphasize also that such a belief underlies the critical dimensions of this article.

13. Bureaucracy in the art world is just like bureaucracy everywhere else. It is fundamentally a method of centralizing power and control. I don’t mean to point to the Weberian thesis that bureaucratization is inevitable in the modern world because of the largeness of its organizations. Nor do I think bureaucracy can be characterized by insisting it is just part of an inevitable historical process whereby bureaucratization is just like pollution—the price we must pay for advancing technology. Hug Organizations as well as manic “advancements” are, instead, frightening correlates of bureaucracy, not full descriptions of it. Also, in a lot of recent writings of the left, bureaucracy is often joined with alienation. Alienation, especially in the U.S., however, is popularly located not in the pattern of power under capitalist rule, but merely as some sort of psychological problem solvable by individual means. The literature of reactionary shrinks provides many of us with the illusion that the massive social conditioning which goes on today is really the private problem of individuals. So, here I want to locate alienation at the roots, as a social, not an individual psychological problem. To repeat what I said earlier, “bureaucracy” I do not allude to a massive centralized organization. I allude to a middle-like mode of existence. Its language is that of grading, its raison d’être is market intelligibility. Fundamental problems like the way we map on to each other’s mind, each other’s mind, is how beings are out of the control of us, and in the control of “automatic” market institutions (the ways in which mass communication composes us up). The key to the power of these institutions lies in the case with which they perpetuate and control rules, an ability which extends not only to the increased number of assessors, but also the artist as well. Since the cultural ascendancy of the U.S. in the postwar period, hall fits, but pervasive, has thought grown at its widest (though it was once present long before the postwar period). Anyway, the interests of market intelligibility, the commodity treatment of persons (glaringly apparent in the New York Kiastuvelo), are perpetuated by the art world bureaucrats who claim to be (but are in fact) “impartial administrators” of culture. An important feature is that they hold market power by fusing the lines of power. They make decisions appear rational and universal when they are often whimsical, biased, and quite consistently laissez. Here I am thinking of, for example, the commercial gallery establishment. Among, and the MAM (the latter is also a bureaucracy in the most frequent sense: a ponderous impersonal organization). But as I said before, the artists too may be an administered functionary. What does such a person look like? Our self-image is almost the same as the self-image of the majority of white-collar workers. Our aim becomes to sell ourselves on the market. Thus our success does not stem from community praxis but from our socio-economic role, our function in the bureaucratic system. Our sense of value depends on our success. Our talent (or whatever you might call it) becomes capital, and the task is to invest it favorably, to make a profit of ourselves. In other words, community exchange is seen only as a commodity, turned into assets of the personality package conducive to higher and higher prices on the personality market. Of course, I don’t think there is a conscientious plot at foot by certain moguls of power to “control” culture. This isn’t what I’m trying to get at. What I am trying to get at is that it’s part of the automatic function of the administrative apparatus to further augment the gray-official alienation of culture. It’s a bit like a ship without a captain. This is because the whole art world bureaucracy is a smoothly functioning part of imperialist capitalism. One distinguishing feature of this capitalist society is it is the only society in human history in which neither tradition nor conscious direction supervises the total effort of the community. It is a community where the requirements of the future are largely left to an automatic system. Under such conditions, which are obscuringly conspicuous now in New York and the international scene, reaction is alienation becomes much more than another embarrassing leftist word. It is now an overwhelming everyday feature of our lives.

14. A “search” on the inside the art world bureaucracy magnifies certain difficulties in making our work “public.” If you deny administrative outlets, you may cut your own throat by denying access to a public—is this so? Tied to the problem of “making work public” is the kind of concept of audience you have, and, as I say, in the second half of this century “audience” has become more a question of a manic rational power construct than a question of mutual exchange or encounter. It becomes a power relation between a producer and a consumer (or, from another angle, a power relation between various competing producers), rather than a dialogical exchange between two or more persons with the potential for transformation and (re) socialization (learning) of that encounter. The need for “mass” audience is not just restricted to the rating worries of TV executives—it is a need fundamental to the historiometry of our present public relations world. So, alternatives to the present
However, just consider the (potentially at least) useful opportunity for a problematic learning nexus ("translating" work from one historical/social embedding to another) which is instead turned into a form of gross consumer tourism, a spreading of the product-corpse of static cultural goody two shoes: the reason art can be "international" (a rubric in which, as Ian Burn points out, is correctly a market not a cultural term). And while I think of it, Ian did a certain amount of the groundwork necessary to draw attention to art imperialism: I know this also counts for some of the others) is not the result of any deft McLuhan like the growth of a "global village" but because of a global acquisition system, always needing to expand, automatically operating apart from, and systematically bulldozing, any local practice.

15. Though it was implicit long before 1970, the emptiness of New York art and adventurously Modernist since this time have been, for me, historically quite remarkable. They are not problems that are soluble by acting the snob. It isn't possible, as I think before, to stand outside of our society, since we have actually internalized much of its implicit structure—only critics, bureaucrats, and those who don't know any better can do that. Here alternatives in the Khoisan sense can be seen as a bit simple. We can however call, as Lenin did, for legal and illegal work.) That the crazy commodity structure has sovereignty now (imposing itself on our various relations with each other and finally ruling those relations) is a fact I think many of us are aware of. The trouble is that most artists' conception of their practice quite simply excludes them from dealing with this as a problem. We are stuck in that case with methodology without ideology, we're stuck with Andrew Neiman's "technicians"—birdfarms perpetuating a relentless routine. Thus any reminders of bureaucracy and sociality and the possibility of us acting morally in the face of all that are dismissed as "leftist" or "too philo-philosophical"—or God forbid, "art." Which reminds me that during the present congealing of recession, inflation, and depression, the word "capitalism" is never mentioned in the popular media. The pill of our economic system, its frailty, is never mentioned. All you get on the evening news is a string of "events." This isn't just an isolated neglect, as Harold Rosenberg remarked, notice how the Soviet Union is always part of the "Communist Bloc" whereas we are simply "the West." One characteristic is ideological, the other geographical. It's almost as if the U.S. can't bear to contemplate that its societal relations might not be God-given, and natural. Just mention "capitalism" and people start pigeonholing you as a shit-stirring "leftist." A lot of us react in exactly the same way to art's market relations—a bit like those men who never tell their wives how much they earn—art is above all that. There are a number of artists appreciative of market problems. This has led,
to use the terminology of the treacherous movement-dubbing pundits, to the label "political artist." Within the circle of adventurous modernism such a term is a dead-end. Carl Andre, presumably because of a lot of his cloth-cap art-worker capering, is "political." Daniel Buren is political and so is Hans Haacke. (Though I sometimes think that the work of the latter two, while it interests me to some degree, is political in that it is "about" politics.) Buren is French, which makes it difficult for a lot of us anyway, and although I think some of what he does has to do with gaining advantages (bargain-hunting) for himself, I suppose he is drawing attention to the Krausian power matrix. Haacke's work, too, interests me, though it often comes close to alluding to politics as a kind of alienated subject matter. That is, he always presents us with other people's "politics" (Guggenheim Trustees, etc.). But I have a more serious question: If we all agree that we ought to relentlessly assail militarism, then such an assailing becomes largely a matter of tactics. Or, rather, our tactics should embody alternatives (given my earlier reservations about alternatives), this means "critical" theory must be informed by a (prospect of) "radical" theory. Now to make "art" from a critique of the present power matrix without doing so from the point of view of an alternative seems to me to be opportunistic and foppish, so say the least. Anyway, it's basically impossible. However, usually the "alternative" practice is never apparent, and it ought to be (if it isn't just dandyism). All of which I suppose leads me into trying to say what I mean by "politics." I can't come up with a simple definition. Leaving aside the connotations of "political" which have to do with power and authority over others (though these are not simple but difficult and problematic aspects) as well as "political" in the sense of merely vexing, I think it has to do with emphasis falling on elaborating and advocating what is right, moral, and ethical. Now, to some this may imply going so far as to advocate alternatives and to others simply acceptance of the diversification of the status qua. But of course there is no "politics." To one, this makes the artist's term "political artist" or "political art" superfluous. Unless it simply describes those who are contextually, historically, and practically self-conscious—in which case it ought to describe all of us. (That it seemingly doesn't is some indication of what's going on today in the Kraus carousel.) Now this could go on indefinitely and I don't really want to get into it here. It's enormously complex and hard, in fact impossible, to deal with in isolation. "Politics" constitutes a matrix with ideology; culture; and all of these, in different though overlapping ways, are embodiments of the ought (sometimes of tens). But there is another strange use of politization, I mentioned it before. It refers to a new démarche-style combined with the espousal of "radical" politics. This is a sort of politization which is common but hardly serious. It is always safe, making sure that professional (roles) conduct—the real source of manic-acquisitive hegemony—is quite secure. There was, for example, massive indignation in 1970 over the bombings in Cambodia and the Kent State shootings—as there ought to have been, but barely a murmur over the closer-to-home Koestler plushier. As William Blake said, "He who would go on another must do it in minute particulars; General Good is the plea of the accursed; hypocrite and flatterer, for Art & Science cannot exist but in minutely organized particulars; And not in generalizing Demonstrations of the Rational Power." (Jerusalem). This is a guide to practice. I don't think this means there ought to be so generating demonstrations, just that we better also look closer to home.

15. Earlier on, I looked over one attempt by Lawrence Alloway to "put some hooks into culture." It wasn't a very useful attempt: it simply removed from culture the possibility of practice. My point was you just can't descriptively treat culture as an object of contemplation. It is something you and I do, not something we discover and then contemplate. I also went into the causation of what leads us to believe it is only up for contemplation—e.g., the assumption of consumerism. There were, however, other earlier attempts to deal with the hegemony of market relations. Twice in New York in the late sixties there was the possibility of examining market-political vectoring. There was the formation of the Art Workers' Coalition as well as the leftish ( albeit simplistically so) aspirations of some of what has come to be known as Conceptual Art—that is, before Conceptual Art began to dance along with "narrative art," "body art," and other movements in the pseudo-pluralistic spectacle of the seventies. However, both the AWC as well as Conceptual Art proved much less than trenchant. I don't actually know a lot about the AWC or its history. I didn't think a great deal of the few meetings I attended, but just the fact that people got together was, in the New York arts world, itself fairly remarkable. (Which reminds me of something else. In March of 1974 Lawrence Weiner suggested to me we co-host a series of discussions concerning "Art's relation to critical modification/intercession with the existing social structure." It seemed at the time, and I still think it is, a fairly good idea. But out of about twenty or so persons invited only seven came. Most were "away." some no doubt availing it in Europe. Others stayed away obviously because they just are not interested in talking—which is okay. But the most spectacular absentee was Lawrence Weiner himself. At the very last moment the MoMA asked him to fly to Australia for the MoMA show "Some Recent American Art." He went of course and so would 1—who wouldn't? I point to this incident: not out of perversity but rather because it seems to be a small tableau of the way "international art" demolishes the
possibility of sociality and practice and rewards us with atomization, alienation, and "private" opportunity.) But anyway, the AWC did show that a solid (or almost) group was actually strong enough to make New York's Kunst Valhalla listen a little (I'm thinking of the MoMA). However, the AWC was essentially a liberal coalition. The liberal theory of the state, for example, never sees any troubles as a question of replacing at the root capitalist administrative and economic institutions but as solvable by a turnover of political representatives. Mao's little pamphlet Combat Liberalism puts it this way. "Liberalism rejects ideological struggle and stands for unprincipled peace, thus giving rise to a decadent, philistine attitude and bringing about political degeneration." (Way would anybody want to quote Mao? I refer to Mao as well as to Lenin and others, not because I am committed to or even in the slightest bit enamored with their uniform proletarian society of the future, but because they very often offer insights into ideological as well as methodological problems, historical and moral circumstances, that have a remarkable practical localization in actual events unknown to many perhaps "superior philosophical minds." Certainly I found Mao's On Practice and Lenin's Left-Wing Communism, an Infinitist Dilemma, especially helpful to me.) But anyway, under liberalism, economic problems—for example some of the economic consequences of Kust-star plundering—are never seen as the consequences of an essentially exploitative consumer acquisition ethic, but of political mismanagement. It is thought that this can be cured by electing "progressives," getting your own people in power, replacing the prevailing leaders with ones who have less vested interests. I don't think this kind of liberalism is restricted to Americans by any means whatsoever, but if it is often blithely regarded as totally uncontroversial here, this isn't so surprising. In a country where the only two political parties with a fairly realistic chance of being elected nationally at present stand for almost the same gun-ho capitalism, where all media—appalling inciteful TV advertising, not to mention the programs—for instance, perpetuate this ethic, who can blame people for thinking "politics" is simply a matter of changeovers in personnel? But the AWC gave me the distinct impression that everything would be "just fine" if only the institutions would behave. Thus in their proposal that museum boards of trustees ought to be made up of "one-third artists, one-third patrons, and one-third museum staff," they confirm a fundamental liberal belief that the institutions are "all right" just so long as we can replace those in administrative power with "our people." I think a similar attitude informs co-op galleries and the quest for economic advantage; gaining your "fair share" is the impetus behind most Artists' Unions. It certainly seems to be the aim of at least the National Art Workers Community to gain for their "disadvantaged" members an improvement of the opportunities to compete. (Those unions have traditionally been first social and political movements and secondly economic forces, but a lot of people see unions as an aid to "more" economic bargaining which, in this country, for some reason tends to ally the union with corporate business, and erode a political role except the conservative role.) Don't think I'm misunderstanding the reality of constant pressure to partially surrender our position in order to come to terms with everyday economic "realities." Many labor unions, in Great Britain for example, find themselves in the paradoxical position of needing to improve their economic standing in "the system" while at the same time working for the eventual overthrow of that "system." I heard Hugh Scanlon, president of the Amalgamated Engineering and Forestry Workers Union, one of Britain's largest unions, recognize such a paradox on Feingold (speaking of paradox). I mention this once again, because it seems to be a familiar one and, perhaps, so too was the AWC. That is, it may not have been "merely" liberal. But this notwithstanding and whatever the case really was, I think the key to the Coalition's liberalism actually lies elsewhere. What perplexed me more than anything else when I attended the few Coalition meetings I did attend (and I certainly don't want to leave the impression I was one of the luminaries—I wasn't) was the formal refusal to discuss and debate "work." I assume, under commodity-market rule, that "work" is just what the commodity market says it is. A principal way the hegemony of market institutions may be asserted is to make what is and what is not "work" controversial and to keep it controversial (though the institutions also have the capacity to totally disregard such a strategy). This really makes work (and I suppose I keep harping on this) strategic—indeed (and in an odd way that sounds like Spino Agnewianistic. But according to the Coalition, "the AWC has never offered any opinions on the content or form of art, which we consider the concern of individual artists alone," or, as Lucy Lipsher put it, "The Coalition is neutral; it has always been a nonesthetic group involved in ethics rather than aesthetics" ("The Art Workers' Coalition in Idea Art—Another One of Those Anthologies edited by Gregory-Paradigm-opportunism-punish-Batcock). This remark sums up my real divergence from AWC "politics." Lucy confirms, I think, the fundamental competitive social relations through which the power structure maintains its tightest control on organized protest and so-called spontaneity. She typically assumes a separation of private from public life. They all remain determined to remain "professional" (possessing a positive-technical privileged concept of "work") in the face of a system whose most imperceptible defense is precisely that its attackers do want to stay professionals. Or, to put it another way, they would not
move from the role structures granted to them by that very sure "system." Without the antediluvian separation of "ethics from aesthetics," the AWC would have been a much sharper tool. Panspermia-problematic would have broken out. "Work" may have come from social-practice instead of insular glamour-glitter careerism. This is because practice, that is the art itself, would no longer have been taken for granted. They chose to regard their role as artists as privileged and the institutions as petrified-political—a neutral background temporarily needing knocking into shape. It was perfectly acceptable manufacturing massive canvases as well as bitterly complaining about the need for commercial galleries. Not that such complaints shouldn't have been made, just that when they are made from the standpoint of a prior compartmentalization settled interests-purpose, they don't really seem very serious—do they? Overlooking paradoxes rather than interpreting them into work is part of the shallow logic of the "unprincipled peace" of liberalism. Thus, the impossibility of praxis, amounts in the long run to a surrender to the dead "logic" of bureaucracy. That is, by maintaining the maximum isolation of the individual, the individual finds freedom in "spectacle"—something which leaves the present controlling power roots undisturbed, an exceptionally effective wedge between ourselves and possible social action.

37. I remember finally coming to the conclusion that the impotence of the AWC lay in this refusal to deal with "work"—what we each do that is practice. It appeared sure that part-time politicking wasn't enough, that we now must have a revision of the commodity status of the work itself—at least that's what I thought at the time. More rubbish has been written about Conceptual Art than most other art "movements." This is appropriate since most of it is rubbish. Most of it was really about art history and formalism. Anyway, I say "was" because I only really treat seriously that which is seriously qua "conceptual art," that which was aware of and the aspirations I was aware of, around 1968-70. (Since I am against talking about art movements as manufactured historical niches, seeming to exist only as mainstream media middle life, apart from what any particular artist does, keep in mind [e.g.] Joseph Kosuth's work from this period. Actually it astounds me how even those who pride themselves on being historically minded become remarkably ahistorical when it comes to this period—which is too bad in a way.) Anyway, at this time there were certainly half-baked "critics" aspirations which promised to give the work some access to social practice (instead of the work simply manifesting the social status quo—"taste," "money," "power," "privilege"—it might now have access to society in an ideological way, where we had a choice about the kind of societal, moral, etc. presuppositions our work was going to reflect). However, these aspirations finally missed the point in a revealing way, despite the rabid contortions of the object framework, the power structures of the art world by this time operated totally independent of these. Incidentally, it's logic all of its own. Suppose I try to go into this a little further, as the promotional rant would have it: during the sixties some work was made "questioning the nature of the artwork" as marketable commodity. Of course in actual, fact and in most cases, the fact that this work had caused market relations wasn't conscious and, given some of the work then and since, even conscious. Most of it was paradigm empty stylistics. This is perfectly understandable given that the Modern Art tradition—most "histories" of Dada and Surrealism—not to mention Courbet and the Early Russians—systematically ignore their material-practice problem world. Which I suppose is fortunate for art historians since I suspect that, if these people treated the work as not merely having a bureaucratic art-historical niche but actually meaning something in local temporal-practical terms, they would have to begin to do history differently or even not at all. Actually, art historians could do with a good deal, of malagnishing; they constitute an army of dunces equipped with "astounding" empirical "insights," fodder which will never run out since there's always something more and more and more to say about Courbet or even Arthur Anything's pastels. So it seems to me we have yet another useless device for perpetuating the middle life of the status quo. As George Crumb said in "Ceremony of the New Weak," the worst of the job was "constantly inverting reactions towards books about which one has no spontaneous feeling whatsoever." He didn't like the job but there are plenty of people (with tenure and who are "well known") who find it quite to their liking to prolong their own bureaucratic middle life. But returning to the point: in "early" Conceptual Art there was indeed some (potentially) strategic socio-material meaning—never mind what's happened since. It should be said that "doing without the object" is not necessarily to question the status of the object. The latter would of course involve us in looking at the vectors with galleries and, ultimately, with society—which was partly the course of some of our earlier writings). But I seem again to be driftin' from my point; doing without the object—as I called it above—seemed at first and most obviously to grow from questions raised by the Minimalists (Judd et al.) of the mid-sixties. The need for us all to go on after their utilization of objects in (again as the case goes) an extremely robust "literary" way produced an art form which didn't. In the conventional sense, appear to need objects at all—again in the conventional sense. Now suppose I pursue this line of argument: it could be said that trying to refine and extend the Modern Art tradition after Minimalism produced, in the form of Conceptual Art, a contradiction. This
seems okay. It seems to lead on to noting that, in the Marxist sense, a contradiction is a process wherein the normal operation of a “social or cultural system” produces a condition which tends to undermine normal operation itself. Hence change comes to take place because the system creates, through its own internal contradictions, the conditions for its own breakdown. Such a characterization of revolutionary change is, interestingly enough, also fairly consistent with T. S. Kuhn’s “paradigm shifts”; a system breaks down when “anomalies” in one paradigm model force new paradigms to come into existence. Thus in both dialectical social analysis (Marxism) and an extremely fashionable segment of contemporary philosophy of science, “revolution” is considered sufficiently characterized as a dialectical movement but from a set of entrenched norms. So, it seemed again to pursue this further, that whereas the AWC had been disarmed by an essentially inadequate reform program, Conceptual Art might indeed be such a “revolution.” It wasn’t, and there were reasons. First of all it wasn’t even a contradiction because it was basically limited to insular-technological spectacle. It wasn’t enough; it was a diversification, not a contradiction, because this is the way the institutions make things work today. That is, today institutions have become autonomous. They constitute a bureaucratic tyranny which breaks no opposition. They are in other words hypocritically separate from (our) practice. This implies that the just-doing-my-job artist’s role also severs the ties with social practice insofar as it is bureaucratic. To put all this another way, it may be that the range of maneuvers now available to us under Modern Art are simply out of phase with the institutional conditions inherent under late capitalism. Hence, if our labor and means of production seem to be our own free possessions to do with as we please, “freely” so to speak, it’s not only because we naively operate according to an outmoded model of competitive capitalism. And this is just out of phase today, given the Kundera/mediaday-life which easily and greedily coexists (our) practice. The inability to really bring about change, Conceptual Art notwithstanding, is because our mode of operation is “professionalized,” specialized, autonomous, and essentially quite inartistic (but essential to) the mode of operation of the market structures. The basis of control of such a market is its role-structuring and the artist as a willing-or-not-conscious-or-not-efficient economic unit. Of course we’ve all, moralistically refused to see these problems as anything other than incidental, or, at best, somebody else’s business. The situation becomes, to me, even more vague as we ourselves finally become our own entrepreneurs-pundits, the middle life of the market our sole reality. To increase the frenzied manipulation of spectacle is absolutely fundamental to New York adventurism. The cultural imperialism unwittingly exported ev-

erystory by this adventurism is heinous and alienating—finally even to those who produce the exports. The bureaucracy will subsume even the most persistent iconoclasm unless we begin to act on the realization that its real source of control lies in our very concept of our own “private” individual selves. The far-out and the outlandish is deeply rooted in the U.S. as evidence of freedom and of the truly moral—it is the lack of examination of such a concept that makes most present-day radical art radical-apart instead of radical-fundamental.

This essay was published in The Fox, no. 1 (1975): 66–63.
The Work shown in this space is a response to the existing conditions and or work previously shown within the space.

Nov. 9
30 days work:
1,480 sq. ft.

Function by Peter Nadin
Design by function
Execution by Peter Nadin, Christopher D'Arcangelo and Nick Lawson

We have joined together to execute functional constuctions and to alter or refurbish existing structures as a means of surviving in a capitalist economy.

This Work may be seen every thurs thru sat 1-6pm at Peter Nadin, In 84 West Broadway, N.Y., N.Y. 10007.
The Work shown in this space is a response to the existing conditions and or work previously shown within the space.

Dec 9
30 days work
1 480 sq. ft.
Execution by Peter Nadin
Design by Justin
Exeuction by Peter Nadin, Christopher D'Arcangelo and Nick Lawson

We have joined together to execute functional constructions and to alter or refurbish existing structures as a means of surviving in a capitalist economy.

Dec 12 1978

"FOLLOWING AND TO BE FOLLOWED."

A work in situ by DANIEL BUREN
Opening Tuesday, Dec 12 7-9 pm.

Feb 1 1979

PAINTING FOR ONE PLACE
SHAN DOULEY

This Work may be seen every thurs thru sat 1-6pm at Peter Nadin, 84 West Broadway, N.Y., N.Y. 10007.


The Work shown in this space is a response to the existing conditions and as such may not necessarily be comprehensible without additional context.

Mar 06, 1979
JANE BULBINS

Apr 10-20 1979
A PLACE TO STAY / CONCEIVING A QUALITY OF FUNCTION

APRIL 9-15, 1979
ABRAXAS
DEEP
SAGE
BTVS
WALLER
STUDIO
PETER FEND

MAY 14, 1979
EUNICE CHAMIAN

PERFORMANCE WITH GLENN BRAGAN AND WILD CARL

This Work may be seen every day and at any time at
Peter Fend, 30-3 West Broadway, N.Y. NY 10014
lookers, buyers, dealers, and makers: thoughts on audience (1979)

martha rosler

Prelude

The purpose of this article is to entitle rather than to define the question of audience. It is discursive rather than strictly theoretical. The analytic entity "audience" is meaningfully only in relation to the rest of the art system of which it is a part, and as part of the society to which it belongs. This is not to say that the question of audience must disappear in a welter of other considerations, but rather that there are certain relationships that must be scrutinized if anything interesting is to be learned.

Photography has made what seems to be its final Sisyphean push up the hill into the high-art world, and therefore the photography audience must be considered in terms of its changing relation to the art world system that has engulfed it. The most important distinctions among members of the art audience are those of social class, the weightiest determinant of one's relation to culture; in the mediating role played by the market in the relationship between artist and audience, the network of class relations similarly deter-

mines the relation between those who merely visit cultural artifacts and those who are in a position to buy them.

Historical determinants of the artist's present position in the art system include the loss of direct patronage with the decline of the European aristocracy and artists' resulting entry into free-market status. One ideological consequence of modernism was romanticism and its outgrowths, which are a major source of current attitudes about the artist's proper response to the public. Unconcern with audience has become a necessary feature of art producers' professed attitudes and a central element of the ruling ideology of Western art set out by its critical discourse. It producers attempt to change their relationship to people outside the given "art world," they must become more precise in assessing what art can do and what they want their art to do. This is particularly central to overtly political art.

After wrestling with these questions, artists must still figure out how to reach an audience. Here a discussion of art world institutions is appropriate. As photography enters the high-art world of shows, sales, and criticism, people involved in its production, publication, and distribution must struggle with its changed cultural meaning.

In writing this article, I have avoided assuming a close knowledge of the material on the part of readers. I hope impatience won't turn the more knowledgeable ones away.

Some Features of the Audience

It seems appropriate to begin a discussion of "audience" by taking note of the fact that there is anything to discuss. There are societies, after all, in which the social positioning of (what we call) art is not in question. But segmentation is apparent in the culture of late capitalism, where the myths and realities of social life can be seen to diverge and where there is an unacknowledged struggle between social classes over who determines "truth." In our society, the contradictions between the claims made for art and the actualities of its production and distribution are abundantly clear. While cultural myths actively claim that art is a human universal—transcending its historical moment and the other conditions of its making, and above all the class of its makers and patrons—and that it is the highest expression of spiritual and metaphysical truth, high art is presently exclusory in its appeal, culturally relative in its concerns, and indissolubly wedged to big money and "upper-class" life in general. (See tables 1, 2, 3 on the following pages.)
Table 1. National Endowment Budget, 1978 and 1979

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1978</th>
<th>1979</th>
<th>Percentage Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>$4,016,208</td>
<td>$3,716,000</td>
<td>-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>6,939,231</td>
<td>7,783,700</td>
<td>+11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition arts</td>
<td>7,201,210</td>
<td>8,609,000</td>
<td>+12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk arts</td>
<td>1,532,428</td>
<td>2,876,000</td>
<td>+86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>3,771,800</td>
<td>4,000,270</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media arts</td>
<td>8,071,281</td>
<td>8,312,400</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum aid</td>
<td>11,501,155</td>
<td>11,377,000</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>14,643,364</td>
<td>12,570,000</td>
<td>-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opera</td>
<td>4,074,320</td>
<td>4,774,000</td>
<td>+15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theater</td>
<td>5,577,686</td>
<td>7,089,300</td>
<td>+30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual arts</td>
<td>4,864,770</td>
<td>5,535,500</td>
<td>+14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>5,074,172</td>
<td>5,559,000</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal-state partnership</td>
<td>18,346,980</td>
<td>22,676,700</td>
<td>+23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergovernmental activities</td>
<td>1,250,000</td>
<td>1,300,000</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special projects</td>
<td>2,973,002</td>
<td>3,269,900</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from "NEA to Ask $260M for FY 1978 ..." Art Market News (New York, January 1979), 1:1...

1. Data furnished by the National Endowment for the Arts, Office of the Northeast Regional Coordinator. The columns do not add up to the total figures supplied, presumably administrative costs account for the difference.
2. 1979 showed a 20 percent increase over 1978—from $121 million to $149.6 million—and about a 62 percent increase over 1975’s budget of $59.4 million.
3. Does not reflect money taken out of Music category to establish Opera/Music/Theater category.

Note: The Arts workers News article stated that the NEA was expected to request between $180 and $200 million; the latter figure, if realized, would mean a 54 percent increase over the 1976 budget of $126.3 million. "A spokeswoman ... said that the Endowment expects at least a modest increase..." [sic]...declined to speculate on the chances of receiving the full amount requested." The Carter administration had earlier asked government agencies to limit increases to 7 percent. (The 1979 budget increase of 20 percent over 1978 was 1 percent below that proposed by Carter.)

Note the sizes of music, media, and museum allocations and the grants to states, and compare the relatively small amount available in total to visual arts projects and critics. Symphony, opera, and dance lovers are not very powerful.

Table 2. Museum Attendance and Educational Attainments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level Attained</th>
<th>Percentage of Each Category Who Visit Museums</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than primary</td>
<td>Greece: 0.02, Poland: 0.12, France: 0.15, Holland: 0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary education</td>
<td>Greece: 0.30, Poland: 1.50, France: 0.45, Holland: 0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary education</td>
<td>Greece: 10.5, Poland: 10.4, France: 10, Holland: 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary education</td>
<td>Greece: 11.5, Poland: 11.7, France: 12.5, Holland: 17.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1. The data drawn from European surveys conducted over 10 years ago, can only be suggestive with respect to the United States, but it seems clear that having completed a secondary education (a higher level of education in the societies studied than in the United States) predisposes a person to attend an museum. Taking the opposite path -- surveying art museums about educational background--found these statistics surprising (John Berger's book "Ways of Seeing," Manchester's Oil Paintings 1890--1972). Of about 820 people responding, 80 percent were or had graduated from college (84 percent of all), 7/10 of those with a professional activity, 7/10 of those with a professional interest, 1/10 of those with a professional activity, and 7/10 of those without a professional interest. Of 4,547 replies to a survey of the museum respondents in 1971, 1/10 of people with no professional interest, 1/10 of those with no professional interest, 1/10 of those with no professional interest, and 1/10 of those without a professional interest, and 1/10 of those without a professional interest, and 1/10 of those without a professional interest.

A mere statistical survey of high-culture consumership will delineate the audience and outline its income levels, types of occupation, and attitudes toward the ownership and consumption of high art, thus giving the public a reflection of the social status, and a minimally sophisticated opinion poll will suggest how excluded and intimidated lower-class people feel. [There are, however, no explanations in the present text on income and education, only a theory of culture can account for the composition of the audience. Further, there is a subjective, ideologically determined element in the very meaning of the idea of art, that is essential to people's relations to the various forms of art in their culture. The truth is, that, like all forms of consumerism, the social value of high art depends absolutely on the existence of a distinction between a high culture and a low culture. Although it is part of the logic of domination that ideological accounts of the meaning of high culture proclaim it as the self-evident, the natural, the only real culture of civilized persons, its distinctive features are distinguishable only against the backdrop of the...].

The above statements are taken from John Berger's seminal work "Ways of Seeing," published in 1972. The data from the European surveys conducted over 10 years ago, suggest that having completed a secondary education (a higher level of education in the societies studied than in the United States) predisposes a person to attend an art museum. Taking the opposite path -- surveying art museums about educational background -- found these statistics surprising. Of about 820 people responding, 80 percent were or had graduated from college (84 percent of all), 7/10 of those with a professional activity, 7/10 of those with a professional interest, 1/10 of those with a professional interest, and 1/10 of those without a professional interest, and 1/10 of those without a professional interest, and 1/10 of those without a professional interest, and 1/10 of those without a professional interest, and 1/10 of those without a professional interest. Of 4,547 replies to a survey of the museum respondents in 1971, 1/10 of people with no professional interest, 1/10 of those with no professional interest, 1/10 of those with no professional interest, and 1/10 of those without a professional interest, and 1/10 of those without a professional interest, and 1/10 of those without a professional interest, and 1/10 of those without a professional interest, and 1/10 of those without a professional interest. The above statements are taken from John Berger's seminal work "Ways of Seeing," published in 1972.
Table 3. Occupation and Attitudes toward the Museum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Of the places listed below, which does a museum remind you of most?</th>
<th>Manual Workers</th>
<th>Skilled and White-Color Workers</th>
<th>Professional and Upper Managerial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>30.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture hall</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department store or entrance hall in public building</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church and library</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church and lecture hall</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library and lecture hall</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reply</td>
<td>100 (n = 93)</td>
<td>100 (n = 98)</td>
<td>100 (n = 99)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It can be meaningfully claimed that virtually the entire society is part of the art audience, but in making that claim, we should be aware of what we are saying. The widest audience is made up of observers—people outside the group generally meant by the term "audience." They know of high culture mostly through rumor and report. The vast majority of people in the traditional working class are in this group, as are people in most office, technical, and service jobs; they were probably taught the "value" of high art in school and retain a certain slightly feeling about art but have little real relation to it. Yet their knowledge of the bare elements of high culture plays a part in underlining the seeming naturalness of class distinctions—that is, in maintaining capitalist social order—for the transcendental jetness that is attributed to art artifacts seems attached as well, to those who "understand" and own the things, the art audience. It helps keep people in their place to know that they instinctively do not qualify to participate in high culture.

As to who does own high culture: Everyone knows who they are, those men in white tuxedos, those women in floor-length gowns, the rockstars, the Kennedys, Russian ballet dancers, the international jet set, the Beautiful People, the men who run the world of high finance, government, and giant corporations, and their wives and daughters. They are very good at sniffing the wind, and every time a cultural practice is developed that tends to ostracize them and their ability to turn everything into money, they manage to buy it out sooner or later and turn it into investments. In their own cultural arena they are, by definition, unattainable.

Between the people who own and define the meaning of art as high culture and those who are intimidated by it are those who actively cultivate an "appreciation" of art as evidence of elevated sensibilities. The new "professional and managerial class" sometimes called the new petite bourgeoisie, is marked by strong consciousness of its advantages vis-a-vis the wage-enslaved working class and is as strongly marked by its aspirations toward the cultural privileges of its class superiors, the big bourgeoisie. Although the dimensions of independence that once characterized the class position have been dramatically reduced, the professional and managerial class is still inclined to count its blessings when it compares itself with the working class, and it clings to its cultural pretensions as proof of its unfetteredness in relation to the working class.
THE MARKET AS MEDIATOR BETWEEN ARTIST AND AUDIENCE

It is useful to make a further distinction among members of the actual audience for high culture—that between the audience simple and the market, a smallish subset of that audience. Such a distinction was of little meaning in Western societies when patronage relations existed between the dominant classes and artists, for then buyers closely controlled art production; there was no other audience for secular works until late in the eighteenth century. But artists developed a rhetoric of productive emancipation as patronage declined and they entered into a condition approximating the competitive free market—of which I say more below. Once again, ideological accounts tend to obscure the contours of both audience and market, suggesting that everyone equipped with the right inclinations may choose to belong to either or both. The meaning of art (roughly, its "use value") is both to transcend or even contradict its material existence, and discussions of the economics of art (its exchange relations) are confined to professional seminars and business journals (and there is a formulaic ending for each discussion that is meant to rescue them from paranoia). Taste is the ultimate judge, not only what you like. The actual effects of the market have thus been made mysterious. But we can trace some of the parameters.

Certainly the very rich collectors (including corporate ones) are still the constant, substructural support of the art world. Big collectors, now including photo collectors, aside from keeping the cash flowing, have a great deal of leverage with museum and gallery directors and curators and often are trustees or board members of museums and granting agencies. They also donate (or sell) contemporary works to museums, securing windfall tax savings and driving up the financial value of their other holdings by the same artists. In photography, what is now cast in relief is the collectors' ability to engineer the historiography of the medium to suit their financial advantage. These are clear-cut influences of market on audience at large.

There are, however, many people below the high bourgeoisie who buy art for decoration, entertainment, and status—and very much because of art's investment value. Their influence is not formative, yet they constitute a vital layer of the market. This market segment is far more subject to the fluctuations in capitalist economies than is big money, though both are affected by boom-and-bust cycles.

As capitalist economies experience downturns, changes occur in buying patterns that bring about relatively new changes in what the audience at large gets to see. For example, dealers have lately supported (by means of shows and even artists' salaries) certain types of trendy art, including performance, which sell little or not at all but which get reviewed because of their art world currency and which therefore enhance the dealer's reputation for patronage and knowledgeability. Bread and butter comes from backroom sales of, say, American impressionist paintings. When money is tight, the volume of investment declines and investors fall back further on market-tested items, usually historical material. This, as well as the general fiscal inflation, may cause dealers to decrease support to non-sellers. But when economic conditions are uncertain or a longer term and investors worry about economic and governmental stability—as now—many investors, including institutions with millions of dollars to invest, put their money in art. Small investors avoid the stock market and savings accounts and buy "collectibles" or "antiques."74 Tangibles encompass gems, gold (notoriously, the South African Krugerrand), real estate, old luggage, and objets d'art (vases, antiquities, classical art items such as silver and ceramics, and old art by dead artists)—lately including "vintage" photo prints. People unconnected with art discourse can be comfortable with such work, especially when, thanks to the effects of the big collectors, brand-name paintings and sculptures seem too pricey. Thus, the level of safe, purely investment, buying may rise dramatically while patronage buying diminishes. With the falling dollar, investors from other countries find tried-and-true U.S. art and collectibles to be good buys, thus also enlarging the market for these items—and skewing it toward their particular favorites, such as photo-realism painting. (At the same time, countries such as Britain, that are in worse financial shape are experiencing an outflow of old master paintings to high bidders from everywhere else.)

As dealers concentrate on work that sells and show less of the less saleable, museums and noncommercial galleries also show less. Artists then make less of it, though the newer sorts of institutional funding—teaching jobs and government grants—keep a reduced amount of non-selling work in production and circulation, at least in the short run. The balance begins to tip toward ideologically safe work. At any time, the non-buying audience (except for other artists), seems to have a negative effect on what kind of contemporary art gets supported and produced and therefore on what it gets to see. Popular response no doubt has somewhat more effect on the planning for cultural-artifact museum shows.
such as the very heavily promoted King Tut exhibition at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, providing a convenient reference for moves that granting agencies and corporate sponsors make toward these apparently populist and often wildly popular projects and away from exhibits of contemporary work.

**ART WORLD ATTITUDES**

So far I’ve talked about the actual audience as relatively homogeneous and as beyond the artist’s power to govern. But artists may want to reach a different audience from the usual high-culture-consuming public or different audiences at different times. The idea of discriminating among publics is rare in artistic conversation (though hardly so in marketing), with historical underpinnings. A certain lack of concern with audience took hold with the romantic movement in early-nineteenth-century Europe, a disconnection that was linked to the loss of secure patronage from the declining aristocracy and the state. Production clearly predominated, and marketing was treated as a necessary accommodation to vulgar reality.

The new concept of the artist was of someone whose production cannot rationally be directed toward any particular audience. In one version the artist is a visionary whose springs of creativity, in such as Genius and Inspiration (or, in mid-twentieth-century America, internal psychic forces), lie beyond his conscious control and whose audience is “herself.” Alternatively, the artist is a kind of scientist, motivated to perform investigations, explorations, or experiments to discover objective facts or capabilities of various art, taste, perception, the medium itself, and so on, for presentation to similarly invested peers.

A revolt against the canons of high-art production of the earlier, aristocratic order helped clear the way for artists to choose their subjects and styles more freely. In artists, as a class now petit bourgeois, naturally tended toward a range of subjects and treatments that was more in tune with the outlook of the new bourgeois audience than with that of any other class. Yet artists’ marginality in that class, and their new estrangement from government elites, contributed to a struggle against the wholesale adoption of the bourgeois worldview and against the increasing commodification of culture. Although the new mythology of art denied the centrality of the market, questions of showing and sales remained of great importance, even if successive waves of artists tried to answer them with rejection. The language of liberation began to be heard at just the historical moment in which all social relations were on the verge of domination by market relations. The various bohemian-avant-garde trends in nineteenth- and twentieth-century art have constituted a series of rejections and repudiations with respect to bourgeois culture, a series united by their initial contempt for the market and the bourgeois audience at large. The art movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often were part of a larger oppositional culture (and sometimes related to more direct political practice). That was true of a number of versions of “modernism,” as most post-Cubist art came to be called. Yet, for the most restricted versions of formalist modernism, such as that proposed by the American critic Clement Greenberg at mid-century, there can be no recoverable relation between the work of art and its context other than that composed of similar objects within a specific tradition and the understanding faculty of taste.

In the United States, the dominant high-art discourse from, say, the 1940s on has distorted the history of all forms of oppositional culture, whether explicitly part of a revolutionary project or not, into one grand form-consciousness, with a relentless blindness to the formative influences of larger society and, thus, of the audience. Artists with working-class audiences or who otherwise showed solidarity with revolutionary and protestarian struggles (or, indeed, their opposites, those who resided for the flourishing academic or “bourgeois realist” market) are neutralized in this history. At most, it conceded that passing over the strident thirties in America, against which this history constitutes a reaction) art and politics were finally linked only in revolutionary France and the Soviet Union, and then only briefly, in the transient, euphemistically anarchic moment of liberation.

The preoccupation against a clear-eyed interest in the audience is part of an elaborated discourse on the nature of art that was developed in the period of consolidation of industrial capitalism. Resting on the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, the eighteenth-century German idealist philosopher, modernism has built its house on the base of “artistic freedom” from the audience-market and used as its architect the faculty of taste. “Taste” is the construct Kant used (in The Critique of Judgment) regarding human responses, including appetite and sexual desire, morality, and religious sentiments. In the Kantian tradition, the aesthetic has no object or effect other than the satisfaction of taste, and all other concerns are excluded as contaminant. For the present topic, the signal issue is the impossibility of a sense of responsibility to any audience, a sense that was related to the romantic figure of the artist as utterly alone, perhaps a rebel, unassimilable within bourgeois social order, and, finally,
uncomfortable in his own existence. In the folklore of advanced capitalism this figure lies behind the unsympathetic mass-culture view of the average artist as a louse and a misfit, or at best a lucky (because financially successful) fraud, reinforcing the confinement of a positive relation to high art to the socially elite, specialized audience.

The protocols of taste invoke a curious attitude toward judgment; judgment becomes a kind of noncalculated, innate response to the work, almost a resonance with it. Normal standards of judgment about the meaning of what one sees before one’s eyes are negated, and in particular the referential ties between the work and the world—especially the social world—are broken. The signal system itself becomes the proper subject of conversation. Mass audiences know that there is a restricted body of knowledge that must be used to interpret the codes of art at the same time that they recognize their outsider status. One is left confronting a void of permissible responses out of which the exit line is often an apologetic and self-degrading “I don’t know anything about art, but I know what I don’t like.” For the art world audience, the knowledge that informs their taste recedes into unimportance compared with the compliment to their inborn “sensibilities” (taste) that an appreciation of high art offers.

Modernist American critics with the power to define a discourse and an art practice, such as Clement Greenberg, posted an opposition between bourgeois high culture and a more widely comprehensible culture as that between avant-garde and kitch, and imagined avant-gardism to be magically revolutionary through a liberation of imagination without any need to change social structures. Others, like Harold Rosenberg, deified the value of art informed by “community criticism,” instead favoring discos with an equally unshamed art, and scores and hundreds of critical hacks have emulated, embellished, and popularized these dialogues. Informing this critical line was a militant ‘anti-Stalinist reaction against the thirties’ art world progressivism’.

THE CONCERNS OF ART

How might artists and other cultural workers agitate the gospel of genius, isolation, and formalist concerns? Once we even think to pose the question of how to construct an audience, we are confronted by questions that intervene.” We must, for example, ask ourselves what the point of our art is (despite the injunction against posing this question). For instance, to entertain, amuse, divert, conform, define, incite, educate, edify, mystify, beautify, satisfy, titillate the sensibilities, alienate, make strange, terrify, socialize. Some of these are incidental to other art world purposes, such as turning a profit, getting grants, or making a reputation.

All art, from the crassest mass-media production to the most esoteric art world practice, has a political existence, or, more accurately, an ideological existence. It either challenges or supports (rarely perhaps) the dominant myths a culture calls truth. There was a dry period in the United States from about the Second World War through the McCarthy period to the mid-sixties, during which the art world frequently shut out even mildly socially invested work. But after the cultural heresies of the sixties, the neutralist cultural monolith began to crumble, and art with a conscious political orientation could enter the breach. Theories of culture as opposed to simple ideologies and journalistic promotion that began to gain currency in that period, have proved useful to the development of an informed art practice.

Following a taxonomy of politicized art developed during the brief period of Social cultural experimentation, we may categorize art according to its intentions: to agitate about immediate issues, such as particular strikes, health hazards, tenants’ struggles; to propagate about more general questions, such as personal liberty, institutionalized violence against women, right-wing insurgency, or broad theoretical education, such as the social significance of economic events, the strategies of cultural forms. The words “agitation” and “propaganda” evoke a familiar negative response in us. They call up pictures of clenched fist posters, yet it goes without saying that only crude works of agitation and propaganda are crude, and only those that offend our ideological precepts are dismissed out of hand. Propagandistic and agitational works from earlier periods are often recuperated; photography provides unending examples: in the wholesale legitimation of past photographic practice State-propagandist enterprises theoretically should strike us as most objectionable but in reality may be the most easily recuperated; it is those propagandizing against the State that are the least acceptable. The gigantic State-propagandistic Farm Security Administration corpus, or to choose a less momentous but more recent example, the courthouse survey (in which a coordinated group of documentarians photographed historically significant courthouses), are readily recovered for art—usually in demystified form, saved by some.

The theoretical, which is most similar to the art-theoretical modernist project has the greatest nobility appeal and is most easily assimilable into high culture. It is notoriously prone to turn back on itself and vanish into form-conscious academism. Yet there are
fundamental theoretical issues that deserve airing before a mass audience, even to demonstrate how ideology is rooted in social relations is to advance a theory of culture.

The audiences for each type of work depend not on the category but on the context, including the form. The "audience," then, is a shifting entity whose composition depends not only on who is out there but on who you want to reach with a particular type of work, and why. There is a generalized passivity in artists' relation to their audiences, however, built into the structure of the art world.

ART WORLD INSTITUTIONS AND SUPPORTS

The "art world," revealingly, is the producers of high art, a segment of its regular consumers and supporters, the institutions that bring the consumers and work together, including specialized publications and physical spaces, and the people who run them. Since the art world is fundamentally a set of relations, it also encompasses all the transactions, personal and social, between the sets of participants. The gallery system remains basic to the art world. The conception of the gallery is tailored to the still pervasively modernist view of high art: the gallery is a space apart from any concern other than art, just as art's only rightful milieu is Art. The gallery is a secular temple of Art, just as the art within it is the secular replacement for religion. The invisible motto above the gallery door reads: "Abandon worldly concerns (except if you're buying), ye who enter here." The paradigm is one in which work is made apart from an audience and in which a space is then secured, at the sacrifice of an intermediary, where the audience may "visit" the work (and where the few may appropriately appreciate it physically). This sequential network paradigm of artist/artwork/gallery/audience severing any sense of responsibility or commitment to an audience, and political artists must seriously question whether it isn't against their interest to perpetuate it.

A main arena for art discourse, the art journals—they are actually trade magazines—have played the utterly vital role of binding information (and therefore have helped nail the coffin lid shut on true "regionalism," which could not persist in the face of internationalized communication and marketing). Both the front and the back of the book—both feature articles and reviews—are essential. In the early seventies the major attention given to photography by Artforum, the paramount journal, forged a mighty link in the chain tying photography to the art world. The relations between journals and galleries are close and too often covertly financial. I will pass lightly over the fact that the halo of art criticism and reviewing is peppered with puff pieces written by people enjoying close relationships with dealers, a fact too well known to be explained, and a practice that may be more widespread in Europe than in America. But, journalists payment on their writing—art advertising. The "new" Artforum of 1975 to 1976, which lionized photography and began a hesitant but inauspicious move towards cultural criticism, was slammed by the art world powers-that-be who literally seemed to fear a Martian takeover of the editorial policy, and was immediately faced with the danger of destruction by the withdrawal of art advertising. Dealers felt that reviews, which are what bring the buyers, were becoming more and more stumpy, and that in any case the journal was jeopardizing its imperiously aesthetic vantage point. Except for the editors.

In addition to commercial galleries, there are other places where artists are exhibited. These are the museums, of course, but such institutions as large corporations, schools, and even some unions can operate commercial galleries as well. These galleries typically play only a small part in their organizations, for reasons of existing art ideologies—to satisfy public-relations goals. Large corporations avoid controversial work wanting to appear as patrons of Art-in-general, not as promoters of this or that trend. They want to brand the work rather than have it brand them. This is not patronage but sales and hype. The audience that corporate galleries attract is much like the general gallery-going public, though it may include the more marginal members. The ticket of entry remains some previous incitement in the social import of high art.

State and municipally funded art museums play an intermediate role. Having a democratic mandate, they cater to the broadest audiences they can safely attract, but have special slots for each level of culture in the disquiet of the sixties, many museums opened token "community-oriented" galleries to show meanderings of local work, mass culture, ethnic heritage, and folk-art remants. But the "Harlem on My Mind" fancs of Thomas P. Hoving's tenor at the Metropolitar Museum of Art is. New York demonstrates what trouble high-culture denizens can cause themselves when they attempt large-scale interpretations of "minority" culture.

Museums of modern and contemporary art address a more restricted audience than municipal ones. New York's Museum of Modern Art, a project of the Rockefeller family and the Kemnys of modernism, is the prototype in terms of its architecture, its ideology, and the social group it addresses. Its domination extends to contemporary photography and its purative antecedents as well, thanks to the efforts of John Szarkowski, curator of photography.
Museums and noncommercial galleries are under severe economic pressure, with the dominance of commercial galleries and the increasing reliance on government funding. This has led to a decline in the quality and diversity of art being exhibited. Artists and galleries are increasingly turning to alternative spaces, such as artist-run galleries and community centers, to bypass the traditional gallery system.

Efforts to bypass the gallery system include the formation of artist-run cooperatives and artist-led initiatives. These initiatives are often characterized by a collaborative and democratic approach to art-making and distribution. They challenge the traditional power dynamics within the art world and offer new opportunities for artists to control their own work and reach new audiences.

In general, the art world has become more fragmented and diversified, with a greater number of alternative spaces and a more active role for artists in the creation and distribution of art. This has led to a more democratic and inclusive art world, where artists have more control over their work and a greater ability to reach a wider audience.
artists who wanted to avoid the deadening preciousness and finish of high art and who were moving toward a narrative literalism brought photography and video into the galleries, for pop artists, photography was a form of quotation from mass culture, no more intrinsically respectable than comic books. Conceptual artists, moving away from "object-making," also were attracted by the anonymity and negative valuation attached to those media. But, never far behind, dealers learned to capitalize on the unsellable, at that moment by adopting and reifying "documentation," which relies most heavily on photography and written material.

In the early seventies the lack of an established new style, the escalating prices of traditional art objects, the end of the stranglehold of the modernist critics, and the consequent weakening of the commercial galleries in the face of wider economic crisis helped direct attention toward photography as an art form as a less visible commodity. On a more basic level of society we can look to the restructuring of culture in this period of advanced capitalism into a more homogeneous version of "the society of the spectacle," a process accelerated by the increasing importance of electronic media (in which all, traditional art is represented rather than seen) and the resultant devastation of craft skills, along with the collapsing of all forms and understandings of high social status into celebrity, or "starism." Dominant cultural forms are increasingly able to absorb instances of oppositional culture after a brief moment and convert them into more stylistic mainstreams, thus recuperating them for the market and the celebration of the what-is-in-the-enterprise of celebrity promotion. Of increasing importance in the art world from the time of the abstract expressionists onward and now central to the social meaning of art-the role of photography is fundamental.

It is possible that the meaning structure of art has been undergoing reorganization while the market merely faltered briefly and then regained its stride. The late seventies may turn out to have been a revolutionary period in which the controlling interests within the audience and market elites refigured to reestablish the estrangement of the audience and its objects, thereby regressing, for example, the preeminence of painting as standard bearer and tangible investment. In any case, photography's position is neither threatened nor threatening but rather rationalized within the system.

Whatever its causes, the rapid assimilation of photography into high art has taken place within a continuing series of changes in the place of photography within our broader culture as well as in the meaning assigned to photography as a force within art. The intermingled histories of photography and painting, formerly disavowed, are now paradigms by both sides, though more so by photography people. The following chance quotation from a review reveals the occasional absurdity of using these media to validate each other without acknowledging conditioning factors outside the centre of particular producers: "For all its critical sobriety, [Walker Evans] was one of the fathers of pop art... Evans' famous print of a small-town photographic studio... looks toward Andy Warhol's hundreds of Campbell soup cans, each painted in its little niche on the canvas." As photography has moved closer in and farther out and then back again to the channels circle of high art, it has replaced the ideology and many of the gambits of the more established arts. In the current phase of art world acceptance, the "history of photography" (old prints, called "vintage prints") is doing better than contemporary work, a fact that seems unexplainable. Photography is selling well and getting regular critical attention and therefore attention from the art audience, but its world interest still tends to be confined to dead photographers, to a few unsafely established living ones, and to those closest to conceptual art. There is little interest, indeed, in the photographic discourse that was craft-oriented or a pale version of abstract expressionism, and a new discourse is being developed that can be better assimilated to art world discourse. Photo critics are relying in disgust, outside by New York art critics working hard to create, among others, aspiring to European schools of literary or cultural criticism, which often amount to a mystified language of commentary and analysis in which we couch increasingly esoteric accounts of the supposed essential elements of photography.

For most of the art world the acceptance of photography seems tied to a vision of it as conforming to the modernism, now moribund in the other arts. But that is not accidental; it was necessary to the process of its legitimation that photography pick up the torch of formalism and dissolution from real-world concerns. Photography had to reconstruct its own high culture/low culture split, a central matter for photography, which has penetrated daily life and informed our sense of culture as a form of visual representation that has before. Photographers are very conscious of Szarkowski's controlling influence, as recent photo essays he published in determining whose career shall be advanced and what gets said about contemporary work. Aside from his responsibility for the course of the careers of Abbas, Winogrand, and Friedlander, Szarkowski has chagrined many interesting observers by his recent elevation of William Eggleston, from virtually nowhere, successfully courting color photography before mass-media photographers like Ernst Haas or postcard artists like Eliot Porter.
be slippable into the top spot. The specifics of its influence or discourse affect the most fundamental relations between: the work, the photographer, and the world. They include an insistence on the private nature of photographic meaning (its ineffable mysteries), and on the disjunction between the photo itself and the occasion for its making—well-worn art-world commonplace. It can be argued that these elements of an older art-world discourse still dominate most photographic production and sales promotion, while the new art-critical enterprise is restricted to art journals and anti-Szarkowski production.

Concomitantly with the elaboration of the received doctrines of photography, the picture of the quintessentially modern (art) photographer as a marginally socialized person has formed its outline. It stands in contradistinction to the conception of photojournalists and documentarians as hard-bitten, still artisanal, and rational, and to that of fashion photographers as psychopathic (except the few with good publicity).

I can recapture my astonishment at Dorothy Lange, in an interview filmed very near her death, describing a forgotten wartime photo she had rediscovered when preparing her retrospective at MoMA (held in 1966). Szarkowski hovers nearby throughout the film. We see the photo, showing many men and women filling the frame, frozen; in the artificial light provided by a broad but unseen staircase; they are dressed as industrial workers and they seem to be going off shift. Lange interprets the photo for us, not in terms of the utility of those people in a common purpose (war production), rather she says that each was looking off into a private internal world. There was a terrible appropriateness in this: for someone who had just survived the fifties, the period of the deepest artistic passivity and withdrawal into a phantasmic universe, so the rethinking the meaning of her work was to stand it on its head, converting a tight, utilitarian identification into a gentle atomized individualism. There was no gun at Lange's head; the role of cultural annihilation has been diffused among the multivoced propagandizers, Szarkowski among them. In a fundamental way Lange's account reproduces the changed account of the documentary enterprise itself, from an outward-looking, reportorial, partisan, and collective one to a symbolically expressive, oppositional, and solitary one. We may take Robert Frank's practice to make this transition from metonymy to metaphor.

Artistic solipsism has now advanced farther than: the Lange narrative suggests, yet the incident represents a turning, within the course of development of a single artist, away from social engagement into the psychological interior. The art photographer has taken on some of the baggage of the familiar romantic artist—in this case one bound to the use of apparatuses to mediate between self and world—whose ultimate reference is simply that self. More and more clearly the subject of art has become the self, subjectivity; and what this has meant for photography is that photography has become an object aimed at capturing in images the contours of this central character in the subject's mind, not in relation to its iconoclastic one, but in relation to its "real subject", the producer.

LEVELS OF AUDIENCE AND MARKET FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

For most of the art audience and especially for buyers who want investment that will appreciate in value, the anxiety attaching to investment in photography, to the Kantian rhetoric of removal and final values, to the denial of the relevance of subject and context, offers the reassuring familiarity of a discourse that sounds like art-ten-years-ago, disdaining the rules of painting from the late forties through the sixties. Many photographers produce for this market, and young ones are trained to do so, learning as quickly as young professionals in any field what the road to success is.

So photography penetrated the high-art audience in its moment of hesitation and raised its sights above its previous audience of other, often amateur, photographers. The older, hobby-oriented photo magazines may still concentrate on craft, printing papers, films, lenses, exposure times, but elsewhere the new semiotic discourse appears. The new photo journals are being constructed on the model of art journals and the newer, cheaper newspaper-format publications. A great urge for accessibility emanates from their very presence. Nevertheless, the smallness and neediness of the field is betrayed by the existence of art academic journal calling itself simply The History of Photography.

In the realm of production, a theory-inspired approach referred to as structuralism, a latter-day minimalism, is now borrowed from small filmmaking, appears in art-photo galleries, whereas it could never have entered the photo galleries of an earlier epoch; it has not yet made it into the controlling commercial dealerships such as New York's East or Marlborough galleries. It is usually art audiences and hip critics of the photo audience—mostly interested professionals, including curators and critics—that are the audience and potential market for such work.

While art photography was divorcing its old audience and romanticizing a classier one, the industry was increasing its pursuit of the amateurs. Reports of the new status
of photography are disseminated in versions appropriate to ever-widening circles of the audience. The value of the categories of photographic practice, from high art to advertising to family commemorative, is raised, and all the corresponding markets swell in response. Photo exhibitions and art world attention to photography as camera and darkroom equipment in a way that painting shows never sold brushes and paint. What accident can there be in the fact that the Museum of Modern Art started promoting color photography just when the industry started pushing home color darkroom equipment in a big way? One can imagine the bigness of one-dimensionality in store for us if photo corporations like Kodak can sponsor prestige exhibitions of vintage prints from photographic history that will not only serve as terrific public relations but also lead to an immediate leap in corporate profits. Perhaps Eastman House can have itself declared a national shrine as well.

A new intelligensia of photography is currently developing in university programs. They will be equipped to dispense the correct cultural line on the meaning of the events being used to mark the march of photography and to shape the received utterances about current work. There is a mutual legitimation at work. People are engaged in codifying a body of knowledge, the study of which will lead to the status-conferring professional credentials of persons who will be empowered to grant, by their public utterances and other forms of publicity, a legitimacy to that refined cultural entity "the history of photography" and to specific works within it. As the enterprise of art history (itself codified precisely to validate works for collectors) has amply proven, the effect of this legitimation on the market is direct and immediate.11

The purchases of past greats will surely continue to be enlarged with new "discoveries," to forestall the exhaustion of the stock of vintage prints. Photographers will attend parties at which they can meet art and occasionally photo critics, may read a few art journals, and will learn to control public statements about their work. One may be sure that the former the bold photography geeks in the art world, the more regular will be the attack on photography's truth-telling ability and on its instrumentality. Already there is little distinction between Winogrand, Arbus, and Avedon in their relation to a truth above the street. Further, a belief in the truth value of photography will be ever more explicitly assigned to the uncultured, the naive, and the philistine and will serve to define them out of the audience of art photography.

I confess in looking at the transformation of photography with a mixture of amusement, frustration, and awe, I have no sentimental longings for the clubby days before the surge of the market swept the photo world away; but I am pleased to see the mass-hysterics behavior of those who thought they lived in a comfortable backwater now find themselves at the portals of discovery with only a hinting knowledge of the language of utopias. I won't forget the theory-terror calisthenics at the last meeting of the Society for Photograph: Education (my first), or people's fear of offending anyone at all, on the chance that a job, a show, or a critical notice might walk away from them. I both understand and don't understand the pull of fame as it roars near Artists have had a longer time to learn the game.12

There is a sense in which photography, the most satisfying of representational forms verbal or visual, is a sitting duck for the big guns of art. Even in the earlier moments of photography's gallery life, the craft orientation was pervasive; the tradition of single line prints in white overruns merely replicated the presentational style of paintings and graphics. In Stieglitz's universe, art had to be a proper hot motive, not a belated discovery in work originally meant for use. The conversion of photographs that once did "work" into noninstrumental expression marked the next great leap inward. In the historical moment of its alienation, as I tried to show earlier, this insistence on the uselessness of art meant as a cry of the producers' liberation from the object relations of their product. In an ironic reversal, the denial that the meaning of photographs rests on their socialness in the stream of social life preserves the photograph at the level of object, a more item of value hanging on a wall. It requires quite a lot of audience training to transform the relation between a viewer and a photograph to one primarily of mysteriousness, though the gallery discussion helps. The dual questions of art's instrumentality and of its truth are particularly naked in relation to photography, which can be seen everyday outside the gallery in the act of answering to a utilitarian purpose, in assertions of truth from legal cases to advertising to news reports to home albums. This cultural disjunction, made possible by commodity fetishism, accounts for the desperation with which young photographers snatch at the vulgarity that only lies are art and that the truth of photography must therefore be that it is all ars alia, constructions outside the understanding of the common mind. There is an enchantment to this hermeneutic, a quiet ecstasy that accompanies the purported lift in understanding that slices beyond the world of appearances through the agency of more light, magical light, in a leader culture gone solidly object-bound. But the art world's sleight of hand consists in substituting another mystificatory veil of "meaninglessness" for the naive one of transparency.
Let us now imagine a relation between viewer and photographic project in which the producer actively shares a community with the audience in a different way from the community she or he shares with other producers. I will not make an argument here for a practice that comes closer to this understanding of art and its place in the world. As a polar situation, we can imagine the disappearance of the idea of audience, along with, perhaps, the ubiquitous standard of the single producer. In the real world we can maintain the movement toward this pole as a tendency. Imagine the implication of the audience in the formation of work. It is just this implication of community, so far distant from the meaning of art. Its present lack of disconnection is more polemical than real, and it has left producers at the mercy of everyone but their own audience—a phenomenon that was not an annunciation angle bearing the way of thought of the haute monde, but to rupture the false boundaries between ways of thinking about art and ways of actively changing the world.

NOTES

1. Hans Haacke’s surveys at various locations indicate that the audience for contemporary work seems to be made up of a very high percentage of some who are not acquainted with the art itself, but who feel the need to purchase or display the work. Mark Rosenthall, "The Ideology of the Art Market," in The Image of the Artist, ed. Robert Rosenblum (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1975).


3. There is a dynamic between high and low culture, as well as between elements with a high standing either inceptions or rejections of corresponding elements within the culture, though this does not affect the argument here.


5. For this army of small directors, the project of high culture to reproduce consumption involves, beyond the process of mediation, dubbing all objects with the transcendent combination of imaginary and real ownership. In luxury, the high culture investment born right in value. See note 14.

6. To underscore this point, the law of capital has been increasingly often in business magazines and other publications addressing people with money, especially in the 1970s, a "Total " concept. (See Toulmin's sociological revolution of 1978 in his "Art and the Market," in The Image of the Artist, ed. Robert Rosenblum (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1975).

7. Announced in 1977, the auction brought in $2 million and was considered a "total" success.

8. "The Treasure of King Tutankhamun," the go-ahead mid-1970s Knowles and Associates (Ed. Howard Carter and others in 1922) was the original blockbuster exhibition. The art show in which the term was first applied. Drawing crowds of unprecedented size and composition to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and to its numerous subsequent venues, it set the standard for luxury, and for major forays in the display of luxury.

9. "Theatrical" was the term.

10. "Artists" is a very loose term. We are not talking about the "right" to use the "right," a statement on the dominance of collectors or large networks. Yet while these names can have considerable effect on artistic prices and popularity, they have never had much effect on the art. Nevertheless, it is a complaint that the art is for the exclusive use of the art dealer or the art patron. This is the point to be for motives.
The woman from NEA was positive but cautious. The federal art budget wasn't running much ahead of inflation. The audience shared no pressure over the fact that President Carter's judiciary slimline hadn't affected the arts, and everyone restrained from mentioning what threatened that: social standards and tax offsets. But the gallery director had sketched a picture of slacks' in state and local art budgets, of cutbacks, of museum and gallery closings, of air of tightness. The tension emphasized the work of the House, in which federal control may be consolidated at the expense of state and local control and in which the public sector—with municipalities like New York and Cleveland experiencing the worst cuts—must now find a wider range of funding, services, and arts to their people, which for many resources and geographically Canadian society, see James C. O'Connell: The Fiscal Crisis of the State (New York) St. Martin's Press, 1975.

16. Think of the spring: over the "trailblazer" project of an aluminum production that Newsweek had written "Road's Art Corner" (October 15, 1978). Fortunately, as a part of their story, covering the entire list "Newson Rock City," "Salmon" (October 23, 1978).

17. The largest corporate sponsors include: Fagin, Sagebrush, and American, among them Morita, Mobil, and Ford. On ironing, both companies with many of the mentioned or other wrinkles, but on ironing, New York Times and Mayor John Lindsay denounced the catalogue, which was meticulously well-designed (at least thirty years ago). Paintings emerged in the museum were undervalued, and the show—what's found in an illustrated catalogue—became the one true instance of a lasting influence for the public.


19. For a more comprehensive treatment by the same author, see Durkin and Williams: "Modern Art at L.A. County," Art and Architecture, Number 1, no. 5, Winter 1978, 28-35.}

The woman from NEA was positive but cautious. The federal art budget wasn't running much ahead of inflation. The audience shared no pressure over the fact that President Carter's judiciary slimline hadn't affected the arts, and everyone restrained from mentioning what threatened that: social standards and tax offsets. But the gallery director had sketched a picture of slacks' in state and local art budgets, of cutbacks, of museum and gallery closings, of air of tightness. The tension emphasized the work of the House, in which federal control may be consolidated at the expense of state and local control and in which the public sector—with municipalities like New York and Cleveland experiencing the worst cuts—must now find a wider range of funding, services, and arts to their people, which for many resources and geographically Canadian society, see James C. O'Connell: The Fiscal Crisis of the State (New York St. Martin's Press, 1975).

16. Think of the spring: over the "trailblazer" project of an aluminum production that Newsweek had written "Road's Art Corner" (October 15, 1978). Fortunately, as a part of their story, covering the entire list "Newson Rock City," "Salmon" (October 23, 1978).

17. The largest corporate sponsors include: Fagin, Sagebrush, and American, among them Morita, Mobil, and Ford. On ironing, both companies with many of the mentioned or other wrinkles, but on ironing, New York Times and Mayor John Lindsay denounced the catalogue, which was meticulously well-designed (at least thirty years ago). Paintings emerged in the museum were undervalued, and the show—what's found in an illustrated catalogue—became the one true instance of a lasting influence for the public.


19. For a more comprehensive treatment by the same author, see Durkin and Williams: "Modern Art at L.A. County," Art and Architecture, Number 1, no. 5, Winter 1978, 28-35.
of the John F. Kennedy Library Corporation, as well as former chairman of the board and past chief executive officer of both NBC and RCA, who has numbers among his personal directorates of the New York Stock Exchange, the American Home Products Corporation, the Planning Research Foundation, the American Arthritis Association, and the Major Public Service Opinion Research Center, and executive president of Cowles Publications, and directorships of Manufacturers Hanover Trust, Random House, Bankart Foods, and Herci, who is a board member of the institute of Judicial Administration and director of several colleges and universities, including Harvard and UCLA, and who has many other business and cultural affiliations, speaking in Toronto in an interview broadcasted in March 1979. The history of the world's centralization in that business has been patron and patron of the arts. What's happening in our country is that it's a new phenomenon, business is beginning to take a major share of the arts, particularly over the past decade, and it's taking the place of the individual patron, bequest, legacy, of 1863 and costs. The force of pop-art, for instance, is summarized in the fifteen-story "zip-dub" designed by Ivan Chermayeff of Chermayeff & Geismar Associates, containing one of the effectively and very designed signs with corporate motive into a cultural monument. Arts' role here is to add its irreplaceable authority to that of the corporation.

10. The rejection was of arts' commodity status and its consequent vulnerability to market domination far more than of the ideology of art as a specialized entity within culture. Formalism moved away from the stresses on composition and transcendent symbolism by Bahnsen aesthetics toward the prioritization of the Duchampian antiaesthetics. There was little overt caricature of the idea of art, nor was much attention paid to the role of art within culture. And, except for a sector of the organized masses, few artists really work with audiences with less art education. Finally, the fact that the formation of the new work in collaborative and collaborations was hardly ever seriously considered much about the actuality of consumption.

It can be argued that the turnover by commodity production was an incursion further more into the "newly" once handcrafted art being repositioned in the culture as a large industrial object and images whose existence and power were actual to theirJAQity as objects and also-dependent, on their existence as field, bodies, or artifacts. This pop appears as a continuation of artists' preoccupation with the processes of signification.


13. There are a few relatively fashion photographers recognized for their aspirations to an art practice.

14. For a week in December photographers packed a dozen hotels in Cologne. While commerce Peggy's appetite for more is always getting more, the atmosphere of the medium was revealed across the Rhine with photography exhibitions at the city's art museum and at other galleries. The growth of photography from the mere tool of the trade, to the art form that can now be put in a museum, reflects a change in the culture of photography itself. The interest in this medium is reflected in the number of entries in the art world. That is, it is hard to imagine a more viable cultural practice than that existing in today's photographic marketplace. In Der Spiegel, 1977, "Photography: The End of Photography?" Marketplace section of the Artistic and Commercial Hotel's Clipper Magazine, January 1979. Art and commerce are now seen to work more closely together.

23. Dealers and buyers look up artists and works, part and parcel, "to see what's been said about them, for example: A few further examples of the day-to-day practice within a system. At the recent College Art Association meeting (see 15), there was a scholarly session called "Art and Today," two of whose participants were Sarah Funken and Ann Trechtmann, a respected social historian with an interest in the turn of the century. The back of the fall's young woman handed out discreetly printed cards announcing: "EUGENE ATGET: An exhibition of vintage prints, Reception in honor of the delegates [sic] to the College Art Association . . . Kunsthalle Graphics International Ltd.," with address.

24. For precisely this reason, see Sheldon Noot, "New York: What Price Glory" (Affirmative, January 1979), from which this excerpt is drawn: "It's intimidating to work in an opening where everyone is over 60 and wearing men's shirts and photographers are united in feeling exploited. From this point on, the creative individuals are only the grist for the economic mills. Collectors and potential collectors are now the star of the show."

25. This would be the place to point to the outrageous sense and white skin privilege of the art establishment, despite the large number of women involved in photography and the larger number of known men than we ever get to know about. Professionally, there is also the further problem that the aesthetic partial incorporation of some of women's photography into art work photography is used to obscure both the question of oppositional practice and the other question is minimization of photography. That is, a superficial acceptance of some basic formal demands is used to disarm attention from the same gender and practices that prevail. But in these matters photography seems to agree to art, again, the art world has had the time to construct a better defended facade.

26. Indeed, I refer you to Allen Sekula, "Dismantling Macrophotography," Representing Documentary: Notes on the Politics of Representation, Massachusetts Review 19, no. 4 (Winter 1978), 659-66 (emphasis in the original). That is, a superficial acceptance of some basic formal demands is used to disarm attention from the same gender and practices that prevail. But in these matters photography seems to agree to art, again, the art world has had the time to construct a better defended facade.


This essay was first published in Exposure (Spring 1979). It was republished in Martha Rosler, Decoy and Disillusion: Selected Writings, 1975-2002 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 9-52, from which the present version is taken.
caution! alternative space! (1982)
group material

Group Material started as twelve young artists who wanted to develop an independent group that could organize, exhibit, and promote an art of social change. In the beginning, about two years ago, we met and planned in living rooms after work. We saved money collectively. After a year of this, we were theoretically and financially ready. We looked for a space because this was our dream—to find a place that we could rent, control, and operate in any manner we saw fit. This pressing desire for a room of our own was strategic on both the political and psychological fronts. We knew that in order for our project to be taken seriously by a large public, we had to resemble a “real” organized gallery. Without this justifying reason, our work probably would not be considered art. And in our own minds, the gallery became a security blanket, a second home, a social center in which our politically provocative work was protected in a friendly neighborhood environment. We found such a space in a 600-square-foot storefront on East 13th Street in New York.

We never considered ourselves an “alternative space.” In fact, it seemed to us that the more prominent alternative spaces were actually, in appearance, character, and exhibition policies, the children of the dominant commercial galleries. To distinguish ourselves and to raise art exhibitions as a political issue, we never showed artists as singular entities. Instead, we organized artists, nonartists, children—a broad range of people—to exhibit about special social issues (from Alienation to Gender to “The People’s Choice,” a show of art from the households of the block, to an emergency exhibition on the child murders in Atlanta).

Because of our location, we had in effect limited our audience to East Village passersby and those curious enough to venture out of their own neighborhoods to come and see art outside of Soho. But our most rewarding and warm and fun audience was the people on the block. Because they integrated us into the life of their street, our work, no matter how tedious or unrecognized by a broader public, always had an immediate social meaning.

Exterionally, Group Material’s first public year was an encouraging success. But internally, problems advanced. The maintenance and operation of the storefront was becoming a ball-and-chain on the collective. More and more our energies were swallowed by the space, the space, the space. Repairs, new installations, gallery sitting, hysterically paced curating, fundraising, and personal disputes cut into our very limited time as a creative group who had to work full-time jobs during the day or night. People got broke, frustrated, and very tired. People quit. As Group Material, closed our first season, we knew we could not continue. Everything had to change. The mistake was obvious. Just like the alternative spaces we had set out to criticize, here we were sitting on 13th Street waiting for everyone to rush down and see our shows instead of us taking the initiative of mobilizing into public areas. We had to cease being a space and start becoming a working group once again . . .

If a more inclusive and democratic vision for art is our project, then we cannot possibly rely on winning validation from bright, white rooms and full-color reposts in the art world glossies. To tap into and promote the live aesthetic of a largely “non-art” public—this is our goal, our contradiction, our energy. Group Material wants to occupy the ultimate alternative space—that willless expanse that bars artists and their work from the crucial social concerns of the American public.

This text was not published and distributed as a pamphlet in 1982. The contributors on, an excerpt of the original, was published in Alan Moore and Marc Miller, eds., ABC No Rio Diaries: The Story of a Lower East Side Art Gallery (New York: ABC No Rio, 1985), 23.
Group Material was founded as a constructive response to the unsatisfactory ways in which art has been conceived, produced, distributed, and taught in American society. Group Material is an artist-initiated project. We want to maintain control over our work, directing our energies to the demands of the social conditions as opposed to the demands of the art market.

While most art institutions separate art from the world, neutralizing any abrasive forms and contents, Group Material accentuates the cutting edge of art. We want our work and the work of others to take a role in a broader cultural activism.

Group Material researches work from artists, non-artists, the media, the streets. Our approach is oriented toward both people not well acquainted with the specialized languages of fine art and the audience that has a long-standing interest in questions of art theory and practice. In our exhibitions, Group Material reveals the multiplicity of meanings that surround any vital social issue. Our project is clear. We invite everyone to question the entire culture we have taken for granted.
some thoughts on the political character of this situation (1983)
adrian piper

Galleries and museums are public spaces.
Public spaces are political arenas in which power is gained, recognized, underwritten, disputed, contested, lost, and gained. These interactions are often obscured when power relationships are stable, ideological programming is effective, and the players collaborate in defeating their own best interests.

Galleries and museums are political arenas in which these conditions no longer hold.

1. Fewer relationships are unstable. Many artists are increasingly unwilling to adapt the form and content of their activity to the exploitative requirements of "mainstream" art commodity production and distribution. Many viewers are increasingly impatient with the obfuscations, posturing, and haute-couture double talk that characterize much of this art. Many critics are increasingly uneasy and rebellious in their role as arbiters and disseminators of an art increasingly regarded as faddish and irrelevant.

2. Ideological programming is no longer effective. The principle "art for art's sake" is being gradually replaced by the principle "art for people's sake." The context of high art is being infiltrated by a gradual, painful, shame-faced awareness of a world beyond the art world, a world in which poverty, unemployment, discrimination, starvation, and war illuminate as solipsistic and trivial the concerns of much "mainstream" art.

3. The players, that is, all of us, are increasingly unwilling to collaborate in defeating their own best interests. Many artists are less willing to pay the price of success, that is, to sacrifice their creative autonomy, and are more interested in speaking for the particular social and political constituencies they in fact represent. Many viewers are becoming increasingly receptive to this social and political content and increasingly dissatisfied with politically neutral "interior-decoration-style" high art. Many critics are choosing, actively to encourage and articulate this trend, rather than continuing to disseminate nonsense.

Galleries and museums are political arenas in which strategies of confrontation and avoidance are calculated, diplomacy is practiced, and weaponry is tested, all in the service of divergent, and often conflicting, interests.

We who collaborate in perpetuating the existence of galleries and museums are not spectators but participants, not audiences but players, planning and executing tactics for the pursuit of our own self-interests.

My interest is to fully politicize the existing art-world context to confront you here with the presence of certain representative individuals who are alien and unfamiliar to that context in its current form, and to confront you with your defense mechanisms against them: mechanisms of fear, hostility, nationalization, and withdrawal (four intruders plus Alarm System). If your interest is to enjoy, then our interests diverge. If it is to categorize, then our interests conflict. If it is to be diverted, or to consider new sources of investment, or to get cured, then our interests are irreconcilable.

If your interest is to reintegrate your art consciousness into your social consciousness, then our interests converge.

IT'S EVEN WORSE IN EUROPE.

A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM
GUERRILLA GIRLS
CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD
P.O. BOX 5006 NEW YORK 10014
power relations within existing art institutions
(1983)
adrian piper

My target in this discussion is what I shall call "artsphere asculturation," the process by which individuals are recruited into the ranks of art practitioners as artists (and also, secondarily, as critics, dealers, etc.) within existing art institutions and thereby sublimate their social, intellectual, economic, and creative autonomy. I want to analyze this process genetically, by describing in stages the way it might be experienced by paradigmatic and representative art practitioners. This abstract, genetic analysis is intended to complement, rather than compete with, a more factually and historically oriented one. Thus the very general claims I will make about the workings of this process, and about its mutually victimizing effects, will not apply, nor apply with equal strength, to everyone. Those for whom my analysis does not ring true at all, on reflection, should exempt themselves from my claims. Overwhelming numbers of exceptions to my claims will undermine the plausibility of the analysis. However, I would be surprised if the analysis were found to have no substantive application at all. I shall conclude by suggesting and evaluating some ways in which our autonomy might be restored.

Let's begin by speculating on who is most likely to make a career commitment to art, either as an artist, critic, dealer, or collector. Art institutions in their present incarnation seem to hold out great promise to aspiring art practitioners. They seem to offer the opportunity to achieve the highest standards of one's freely chosen craft, and the valued peer recognition and approval that accompany it. On the other hand, posthumous or belated "discoveries" of unrecognized artists, as well as successful publicity campaigns for prepackaged infatuated talents de la mode, demonstrate the lack of correlation of merit and professional success. Similarly, aspiring dealers and critics may learn all too quickly the economic dangers of staking their professional credibility on a single movement or individual. Hence one must be economically prepared to ensure one's material well-being in some other way, in case one's gamble on an art career is unsuccessful. A commitment to a career as an art practitioner requires that one is financially independent, or that one's family is, or that one possesses other economically remunerative skills, or that a permanently Spartan lifestyle can be regarded as a novelty or virtue, rather than as proof of social failure.

This precondition of professional commitment functions as a mechanism of selection among creatively inclined individuals. It discourages those individuals for whom economic hardship has been, up to that point, a central reality. Typically an individual whose early life has been affected by economic deprivation, social instability, and political prejudice is less likely to choose a career that promises at least as good a chance of perpetuating those conditions as ameliorating them, and is correspondingly more likely to choose a career that promises the social and economic security such an individual has previously lacked. Art institutions in their present incarnations, then, will tend to attract individuals for whom economic and social instability are not sources of anxiety for they have correspondingly less reason to sacrifice the vicarious and satisfactions of self-expression to the necessities of social and economic survival.

One immediate effect of this social and economic preselection is to create a shared presumption in favor of the artistic values and interests of those socially and economically advantaged individuals, that is, a concern with beauty, form, abstraction, and innovations in media, to which political and social subject matter is either largely subordinate or completely absent. Let us roughly characterize these as "formalist values. Because existing art
institutions favor the selection of individuals with such values, it follows that these institutions will be populated primarily by individuals who share these values.

This means that there is a broad consensus, within the interlocking system of art institutions, on the goals viewed as worth achieving. Artists, for example, will strive to realize broadly formalist values in their work; critics will strive to discern and articulate the achievement of such values; dealers will strive to discover and promote artists whose work successfully reflects these standards; and collectors will strive to acquire and exchange such work.

Individuals whose work or aesthetic interests fail to conform to formalist criteria are unlikely to pursue a career successfully within the constraints of existing art institutions. For the commitment of most art practitioners to the standards and values expressed in this consensus is a deep and central one, rooted, as it often is, in the prior socioeconomic balance of resources that engendered and continually reinforces it. For such individuals, these values are a direct expression and idealization of their lifestyles. And their lifestyles, in turn, are justified and validated by the values such art expresses. Thus it is natural that such individuals tend to be less receptive to critical scrutiny of these values and to alternative conventions of art making that violate them. For in questioning their universal legitimacy, such critiques implicitly question the socioeconomic balance that generated them. And for individuals who have a very deep personal investment in that balance, such critiques may seem to question the legitimacy of these very individuals themselves.

The long-range effect of this tightly defended consensus is that the art practitioners who share it determine—through their shared values and practices, and the economic and social factors that determine them—the criteria of critical evaluation for all art that aspires to entry into existing art institutions. I shall describe this as a state of critical hegemony. That is, the socioeconomic-determined aesthetic interests of these individuals define not only what counts as “good” and “bad” art but what counts as art, period. Through art education, criticism, exhibitions, and other practices and institutions devoted to preserving and disseminating what I shall refer to as Eurocentric art, the socioeconomic resources of this class of individuals enable its art practitioners to promulgate its fascinating but ethnocentric artifacts as High Culture on a universal scale. According to these shared criteria, then, these creative products that are dominated by a concern with political and social injustice or economic deprivation, or which use traditional or “folk” media of expression, are often not only not “good” art; they are not art at all. They are, rather, “craft,” “folk art,” or “popular culture,” and individuals for whom these concerns are dominant are correspondingly excluded from the art context.

This exclusion may manifest itself in a number of ways. Recently, for example, a respected mainstream critic with a genuine interest in diversifying the range of work recognized as mainstream art wrote a monograph on black folk art and submitted it to a major art magazine for publication. Because he knew his audience would be drawn primarily from the white upper-middle class, he spent a good deal of time researching and describing in the paper the impact on the work he discussed of the artist’s being poor and black. The paper was rejected on the ground that it had nothing to do with art. This rationale seems not to recognize the extent to which shared socioeconomic and cultural assumptions that also “have nothing to do with art” are presupposed in our criteria for identifying something as art. By dismissing different ones as irrelevant, it effectively dismisses the possibility of scrutinizing and expanding our own.

The consequent invisibility of much nonconformist, ethnically diverse art of high quality may explain the remark, made in good faith by another well-established critic, that if such work didn’t generate sufficient energy to “bring itself to one’s attention,” then it probably did not exist. It would be wrong to attribute this claim to arrogance or dismissiveness. It is not easy to recognize one’s complicity in presenting a state of critical hegemony. That one should be guided in one’s aesthetic interests by conscious and deliberate choice, rather than by one’s socioculturally determined biases, is a great deal to ask. Yet by refusing to test consciously those biases against work that challenges rather than reinforces them, a critic ensures that the only art that is ontologically accessible to him is art that narrows his vision even further. And then it is not difficult to understand the impulse to ascribe to such work the magical power to “generate its own energy” introduce itself to one, garner its own audience and market value, and so on. For nearly all objects of consideration can be experienced as simultaneously and aggressively intrusive if one’s intellectual range is sufficiently salpiscient.

2

Suppose one decides to make a career commitment to becoming a professional artist under these conditions. Typically, this means being nurtured by a fine arts program in art school, college, or university, in which the course of training offered is intensively oriented
toward Eurocentric art. Often the aesthetic standards of Eurocentric art may be implicit in the student's own socioeconomic background. But they may not. If one's socioeconomic background is black or Hispanic or Asian middle class, or white working class, or both working class and immigrant, or if one is a woman, to name just a few possibilities, then the transition into art education may require some sociocultural adaptation; indeed, even the rejection of those concerns and values that generated the original impulse to artistic self-expression to begin with. Artists whose commitment to those background socioeconomic values and conditions is deep are confronted by an unpleasant choice. Either they must modify or reject the kind of art making that is most personally meaningful for them, or else they must largely abandon hopes of professional success.

Now there is a great deal to be said for such a program of training. Often the courses in skill and media development are both comprehensive and intensive. One's self-confidence and motivation are enhanced by the knowledge that one has mastered the essentials of a medium or technique regarded as canonical by the arbiters of mainstream art. The history of formalist art and its roots in Eurocentric art is equally fascinating—if not as a course of self-knowledge about one's heritage, then as an anthropological study of the evolution of an interesting and complex, though alien, culture. Finally, the experience of role confirmation by the art community is, as I suggested earlier, particularly significant for individuals who have decided to devote their lives to self-expression.

However, the critical hegemony of formalist art, and particularly its pretension to transcend its ethnicity, can have a demoralizing effect on art students from different backgrounds, for it is premature to dismiss and indicate universal criteria of fine arts production. It implicitly subordinates and devalues the creative products of other ethnic groups. It thereby encourages the belief that such products are aesthetically or culturally inferior to those of the Eurocentric art tradition. Thus it encourages art students from other ethnic groups to reject their own culturally spontaneous modes of artistic expression, in order to emulate this one. And in so doing, the pretension of formalist art to universality choice off its only sources of cross-cultural enrichment: in this homogeneous atmosphere, it is little wonder that observers of current trends in art conclude that there is nowhere for art to evolve but retrogressively.

Some have attempted to justify this pretension by appeal to purportedly universal and ethnically neutral criteria—claiming, for example, that formalist art is 'high' art because it serves only aesthetic and nonpragmatic ends. But this line of defense is difficult to sustain, in the absence of further argument demonstrating that the aesthetic or expansion of one's perception of reality, the professional success of the artist, the communication of some idea, experience, or insight, receiving a profitable return on one's investment, and so on, are purely aesthetic and nonpragmatic ends. And even if this could be shown (which is unlikely), it would in any case remain a mystery why art that satisfies these criteria should be thought culturally superior to art that does not. For these non-aesthetic criteria are no less ethnocentric than the aesthetic criteria they are invoked to justify.

A second, major disadvantage of art education qua aesthetic acculturation is its specialized division of labor. The intensive training in the skills and history of one's craft as an artist is purchased at the price of other skills needed to be a fully autonomous and responsible practitioner in the art community and society at large. The conceptual articulation and evaluation of an artist's aims and achievements, for example, is a task often relegated to the art critic, who researches the artist's past, interviews him, and finds his activity into the familiar conceptual framework of formalist art discourse. This validation, achieved by the critic's interpretation, is usually a major precondition for the work's validation by the art community at large. Even a negative review, in this regard, is better than no review at all, and the grossest critical misunderstanding is preferable to the most pedantic and self-critical appraisal by the artist. Recently a promising young artist was confronted by the following dilemma. After years of hard work to produce and promote her work to critics and dealers, she encountered a critic whose response to her work was enthusiastic and fervent. He proposed a major, comprehensive article on her work to appear in a major art magazine. Of course, the artist was delighted. Unfortunately she felt that he had completely misunderstood her work. At the same time, she was offered the opportunity to write an article on her work in a much lesser-known, artists-run publication. Of course, she could not do both. She would lose the critic's support, and all the recognition and financial support that would bring, if she made clear her rejection of his reading of her work. If she allowed him to write the article, on the other hand, she would lose control over the public meaning of her work. She decided that economic support for her work was more important, declined the offer to write about her own work, and let him write the article instead.
Usually the interpretive function is one that the critic is eminently well suited to perform. For the critic has usually received the training in verbal and intellectual skills that the artist has not, and often has thereby purchased the ability to interpret conceptually the artist's products at the price of the full development of the critic's own artistic impulses. Thus the phenomenon of the critic as closet artist. Many art critics (as well as dealers and curators) whose views and pronouncements are highly influential in determining standards for the evaluation of art products are themselves artists—whose own artwork, however, is often completely independent of or even in conflict with the views on which their own critical reputations rest. To describe their attitudes toward their own artistic products as self-effacing is an understatement. The process of aesthetic acculturation tends to invest the artist of control over the interpretation and cultural meaning of the work, by relegating that role to the critic. But in accepting it, the critic assumes responsibility for disseminating critical standards from which he himself may be alienated.

There is, however, the related phenomenon of the conflict of interest. Many art practitioners who have achieved recognition within the art community for their critical, writing are justifiably reluctant to promote their own artwork, for both self-interested and ethical reasons. To utilize their own, highly developed critical and political resources to promote their artwork would open them to the charge of opportunism. But many such art practitioners also anticipate that their artwork would be found unsophisticated or unintelligent by comparison with their critical output in any case, by an audience accustomed to expect only a certain kind of output from these individuals. Indeed, such an art practitioner may be led to adopt a pseudonym under which to exhibit his work, merely to get an unbiased hearing for it, but even here the temptation may be great to utilize his political clout in its support. The phenomenon of the closet artist and of conflict of interest derives in the recognition that, as things now stand, the role of cultural interpreter and evaluator of works of art is a source of art-political power that is largely incompatible with the role of creating works of art.

One reason this division of labor is suspect is because—to butcher Kant's observation—words without artworks are empty, artworks without words are dumb. To legitimize the creation and interpretation of art objects to different subjects is to bifurcate the experience of both. Artists are invested of authority and control over the cultural meanings of their own creative impulses by critics, while critics are denied access to theirs in exchange.

This highly specialized division of labor between artists and critics exacerbates the problem of critical hegemony. That art critics and not artists determine the cultural interpretation of an artwork implies that there is no necessary connection between the set of contextualized experiences, associations, beliefs, and intentions an artist brings to the production of a work, and its resulting cultural interpretation. These factors may of course enter into this interpretation, but only at the critic's discretion, and only to the extent that the critic's own theory of the work. This is particularly evident when that theory falls within the constraints of formalism as I have characterized it. Formalism encourages us to abstract from the personal, subject matter of the work, and consider its universal (actually its Eurocentric art-historical) significance. It also encourages us to evaluate the work in terms of such purely formal properties as shape, line, color, and so on, independently of its subject matter.

In some respects the formalist stance can be extraordinarily enriching, for it frees us to view all objects as containing the promise of beauty and meaning, without regard to function or context. On the other hand, it reinforces the alienation of the artwork from that particular meaning intended for it by its creator. If the art-contextually legitimated meaning of the work is both independent of its function and context, and also—therefore—"universally" accessible (that is to anyone schooled in the canons of formalism), then its creator's intended meaning is obviously irrelevant. And indeed, many young artists who seek recognition within existing art institutions quickly learn to discuss their work in the impersonal and decontextualized manner that formalism requires.

Through its very impersonality, formalism can confer the illusion of understanding and accessibility to otherwise unfamiliar and ethnically diverse artifacts (notions, for example, the art community's appropriation of African tribal imagery as a consequence of Picasso's cubist investigations). Here recognition and a genuine appreciation of otherness are sacrificed in order to preserve the appearance of authority and control. But formalism can only achieve this in collaboration with the division of labor earlier described. For of course the purely formal significance of such artifacts can be maintained only if any dissenting interpretation its creator might offer can be safely disregarded. And this, in turn, requires the belief that the artist's own, pre-packaged contribution to critical discourse...
is irrelevant; or at best, of subsidiary importance. Thus formalism itself implies a certain critical hegemony, in subordinating all objects to criteria of evaluation that are independent of their original context, function, and subject matter.

But why, it may be asked, do artists deny access to existing art institutions on these grounds fail to protest this exclusion (or worse, tailor their work accordingly)? Why do they fail to assert the aesthetic value of their own subpolitically informed concerns, and of their pride and creative interest in the ethnocultural artifacts that characterize their own, minority?

Of course I cannot begin to provide a satisfactory answer to this question in this essay. Part of it is that many such artists rightly feel this exclusion as an insult and so want nothing more to do with existing art institutions. They choose to sacrifice professional stability and critical recognition in the preservation of their artistic integrity. But another part of the answer is to be found in the message these aspiring young artists receive from the moment they begin their art educations, that is, that artists are not supposed to talk about art; they're just supposed to make it. The successful assimilation of this message renders many artists largely unable to protest, assert, or argue against any perceived injustice in treatment they may receive from existing art institutions, and not merely the injustice of critical hegemony. In accepting the division of labor prescribed by existing art institutions, artists from other ethnic backgrounds are often invested of a major resource for redressing their exclusion from these institutions.

Similarly there is little room within existing arts' education programs for a course on the management of the economic and legal aspects of art production. The criteria by which a work is priced may seem a mysterious matter indeed. And it is often claimed that only a practical and thorough familiarity with the vicissitudes of the art market, plus a “good business sense,” enable one to do so. Legal control over the distribution, exhibition, or exchange of the work is similarly dependent, in mysterious and astonishing ways, on the trustworthiness and good character of the dealer. Thus the dealer, rather than the artist, becomes the custodian of the market—and so aesthetic—value of the art product, and of its material face as well. To suggest that such control should be shared with the artist then becomes an insult to the relationship of trust and good will that exists between them—and may indeed, lead the dealer to take too initiative in dissolving that relationship.

It is not difficult to see why this should be so. For in addition to the dealer’s obvious financial motivation for controlling the economic and legal fate of the artist’s product, there are social and psychological considerations as well. The dealer’s success in managing the product is also considered an index of his cultivation, taste, and aesthetic discernment, that is, the proof of the legitimacy of his claim to be a dealer. To pick a winner is supposed to demonstrate the breadth of his aesthetic vision and the depths of his art-historical insight, and is it that trained insight, finally, for which a financial reward, as well as social validation, may seem appropriate. Similar considerations apply to the role of critic. Thus the artist releases interpretative, social, and financial control of the producer to the dealer and critic, whose informed judgment and taste are accountable for its fate.

This is an overwhelming responsibility for anyone, even the most highly cultivated and well-informed dealer or critic, to shoulder, and so it is not surprising that dealers may collaborate with critics and collectors in a “gentlemen’s agreement” in order to ensure that an art product gets the critical and financial attention the dealer feels it and, he, deserves. It is a rare dealer indeed, whose vision and insight have been so fully established without the benefit of such collaboration that his decisions of what art to exhibit, himself, function as critical arbiters of what art should be exhibited. Having survived the unpredictability of the art market, often with the help of money, publicity, and timing, such individuals are in the enviable position of having no evaluative criteria, independent of their own socioeconomic conditioned taste, by which to confirm that their taste is, in fact, a reliable index of high-quality art. Thus power to determine aesthetic standards through one’s choices is purchased at the cost of those standards as independent and non-arbitrary criteria of evaluation.

A third feature that is usually absent in the training of artists is attention to the skills and information necessary to analyze and critique the social and economic preconditions for producing art; this is rather the province of the historian of contemporary art. Nor do artists usually learn how to scrutinize and dissect their own ideological, socially determined prepossession; this is the province of the social theorist, who is able to view the complete interlocking network of art institutions as a historically specific, sociocultural phenomenon that engenders its own ideological justification. But this, too, is often thought to be of no pressing concern to artists. I will return to this question later.
Thus the end result of this process of specialization in aesthetic acculturation is a severely splintered division of labor. The artist's function is the bare production of the work alone. He is neither expected nor encouraged to exert any control over the meaning, price, value, social and political impact, or material fate of the object; these are instead the provenance of the critic, dealer, and collector, respectively. Nor is he expected or encouraged to develop broader views about any of these things; these are rather to be relegated to the art historian or social theorist.

When these points were raised at a recent art conference, an influential and well-known museum director responded by saying succinctly that it was quite enough in the way of responsibility for artists to make art, and that the task of the rest of us was to enable the artist to do this without fear, worry, or interruption. Many artists may concur with this opinion, and it is easy to see why. There is something enormously attractive about the idea of having a benevolent parent, or servant, to attend to all one's needs, so that one can be completely free to create. On the other hand, the attitude expressed in this claim seems not very different, in essence, from that which loving husbands used to express with complete sincerity to their wives, when they insisted that all they needed to do was look pretty and make babies, and leave the complicated business of running the world to the men. It is dubious to suppose that a guardian or patron from one to do anything, it is, rather, a condition of bondage, regardless of the activity in which one is then permitted to engage.

The result of this division of labor is, then, the essential feminization of the artist as bare producer of art. Having directed himself of power and control over the work, he can then hardly be expected to participate in the interpretative, economic, and social processes by which the art product is assimilated into the art context—not, therefore, into the political and cultural life of society at large. The artist "just makes the stuff" and therefore is not to be held accountable for its aesthetic, social, or political consequences beyond its bare production.

A recent, disturbing illustration of the sensibility thereby procured was the furore caused by a young white male artist a few years ago who exhibited a set of conventional, fourth-generation abstract expressionist drawings in a well-respected alternative space and incorporated a racial epithet into the title of the show. Of course, this generated sharp protest from minority artists and other politically concerned members of the art community. When asked why he had chosen that title for his drawings, the artist implied, in essence, that it would gain publicity and attention for them. His insensitivity to the political implications of creating a culturally legitimating context for the use of damaging racial epithets may have been the expression of a malevolent character. But it was more likely the consequence of a type of ethical parochialism that was encouraged rather than alleviated by the process of aesthetic acculturation he underwent in art school. For as we have already seen, prevailing art institutions committed to the formalist aesthetics of Eurocentric art are not, as a rule, sensitive to the ethics of political expression, nor conversant with the corrosive effects that seemingly innocuous behavior can have.

This institutionalized naivete was amply demonstrated by the gallery's response to the protest, which was to defend its decision to permit the exhibition, by appealing to the unconditional right to freedom of artistic expression. But this response seems triply inadequate. First, it refused to recognize the claim that the exhibition involved a shaming of the gallery, or the injection of heroic into the artist's arm five times a day for the duration of the exhibition. These are ethically easy cases, in which it is obvious that the right to freedom of artistic expression is not unconditional and is factually outweighed by other values—such as life, health, undisturbed civil peace—that we recognize as more important. The question then arises of why the actual situation was so much less clear-cut for those institutional representatives than for those artists who were outraged by it. That it implied that defending minorities against the insidious effects of a culturally legitimating use of racial epithets simply was not as centrally important to those institutional representatives as defending themselves—and all of us—against the spectacle of violence, murder, or drug addiction would have been, whereas for the protestor, the first was just as important as the second. But it has already been suggested that this bias is a consequence of formalist aesthetics and is largely determined by its socioeconomic preconditions.

Second, the right to freedom of expression is a permissive, granted by the state, to engage in certain activities. But not everything that is permitted is required, nor can everything that is permitted be justified. Technically I am permitted to spend all my evenings howling at the moon if I choose. That doesn't mean it is a good idea, nor that anyone should give me money and a stretch of mountain glade to do so. Individuals who choose to produce or support work that incorporates gratuitous racism do so not just because it
The result of this hopeless division of labor, inherent in the process of aesthetic acculturation within existing art institutions, is a pervasive alienation of the artist, both from his own creative processes and products and also from the background sociocultural environment that engendered them. For by abdicating control over the meaning, value, price, function, and material fate of the artwork after it leaves the artist's studio, he thereby abdicates his claim to have a special relation to that product that is significant and valuable in its own right. The art product is appropriated by the art institutions that legitimate it and is thereafter governed by its cultural and economic laws, rather than the artist's intentions and wishes. This means that ultimately neither the creative process nor the final product is determined by the artist's own aesthetic imperatives.

One manifestation of the alienation that results from this division of labor is the phenomenon of overproduction. For example, a newly discovered artist may contract with a gallery to show new work, say, every two years. For some artists, the rate of production necessary to fulfill the contract may correspond perfectly with their natural rhythm of art production. For others, this rate of production may be far too high, producing stereotyped and superficial work that the artist has been pressured, by the terms of his contract, into producing. Now one might think that the obvious solution would be to contract to exhibit less frequently say once every four or five years rather than once every two. But this is improbable. For the dealer's interest in contracting with the artist at a certain time is predicated primarily on his belief that the work will be financially marketable at that time, not on his faith in the enduring aesthetic value of the work. That is a faith on the basis of which only a few experienced dealers are willing to do business.

Not long ago, a flourishing European gallery contacted a young, unaffiliated artist with the offer of a major exhibition, to be traveled within Europe and the United States. The artist responded enthusiastically, explaining, however, that his beliefs about the importance of maintaining the mutual independence of aesthetic and financial value required the imposition of stringent controls on the pricing and distribution of the work. These controls, he explained, ensured that the financial value of the work was permanently indexed to the labor and material invested in it on which no profit could, in good faith, be made. The gallery responded by professing a continuing interest in the artist's work, but regretting that financial exigencies made it impossible to show it under these conditions, until the gallery had considerably increased its capital resources elsewhere. The artist did not hear from that gallery again.

From the gallery's perspective, the decision was clearly a rational one. A dealer may, by surveying and helping to promote current trends, develop a market analyst's sense of what kind of work is in demand right now. To promote such work without the expectation of economic return would seem to be irrational. And the resources necessary to ensure a continuing demand for that work five years hence would outstrip those of even the most well-equipped stockbroker. And so if an artist desires gallery affiliation, and the prestige and recognition it brings, he must be prepared to adapt his rate of art production to the demands of the economic, not the creative process. Similar conclusions apply to the unaffiliated artist whose work is currently in vogue. That the admittedly grueling rate of production necessary to sustain one's visibility by participating in all the invited exhibitions, performances, lectures, residencies, or conferences, may be seen as an economic and psychological well-being is irrelevant for most artists. For they understand the economic and political workings of existing art institutions well enough to know that their professional success depends upon satisfying the extra-aesthetic demands that are made on them at the time they are made. That they are thereby manipulated by these demands,
and alienated from; their own creative processes, may seem a small price to pay for the recognition and support to which every serious artist aspires.

A related manifestation of this alienation is what I shall call the phenomenon of deformation. Faced with the pressures of overproduction, the artist has few alternatives, besides that of simply refusing to meet all of these demands. He may produce shoddy work, or he may modify the product in ways that make it easier to produce, or he may employ others to make the work for him. He may thereby delegate to others an increasingly large proportion of the creative decisions that need to be made in the process of execution. In all such cases in regarding the final product as a collaborative effort, well and good. If the artist does not, his collaborators' responses, as they conform to an artwork attributed to the artist but that primarily manifests their creative decisions, may be mixed indeed. Each of these alternatives represents ways in which the form and content of the final art can be modified to accommodate the extra-aesthetic demands of the economic process, to which the creative process is subordinate.

Similar deformations of the art product are often required by the artist's own desire to achieve and maintain a certain level of visibility and critical approval, even when the pressures of overproduction are absent. It has already been suggested that critical and social recognition from within the art community is naturally and centrally important to anyone who aspires to professional success as an artist. But if the community's standards of aesthetic excellence are not independent of economic pressures, then the critical approval and economic reinforcement an artist receives for doing economically and critically viable work encourages artists to produce more economically and critically viable work, even if it conflicts with his personal creative dispositions to do so. Thus have we the phenomenon of the artist who produces one kind of work for his gallery and another for himself, and of the artist who is reluctant to risk unprofitable departures from a successful and well-established formula, after having been reprimanded by silence or negative reviews for attempting such departures in the past. The obvious phenomenon is the artist whose output has been so completely constrained by the annals of art history that anything he produces, no matter how unskilled or superficial, automatically acquires aesthetic value and critical approval—in direct proportion to the price it can be expected to command at the next international auction. These are further ways in which the artist's alienation from his product may be manifested by deforming his product in response to extra-aesthetic imperatives.

Art products may also be deformed in response to market forces: for art that is saleable. Art that requires too great an effort at comprehension, or that violates too obtrusively traditional criteria of art, or that seems too difficult to commoditize may be the target of a concerted effort to make it just plain disappear from the annals of art history, through comprehensive survey exhibitions that ignore it or critical writing that marginalizes it. This conveys to artists a less than subtle message that to continue producing such economically convivial work is to court obscurity. Those who take the hint often reform their art production accordingly.

Finally, the artist may reform his product in response to the demand for innovation. In order to preserve the probable functioning of many existing art institutions, a continuous demand for new art must be created. And this can be done only by creating a desire for new art. This, in turn, requires the allegiance of the art community to innovation as an intrinsic value; that is, the recognition of an artwork as good precisely and only because it does what has never been done before, advances some aesthetic step further, offers us a new and exciting experience, or forces us to revise our view of the world. And so artists often compete with one another in their quest for visibility and critical standing by presenting increasingly bizarre and shocking work to an audience whose polite applause is predicated upon their inability to have conscious or predict a demand.

In response to this fundamentally economic imperative of product innovation, artists may deform not only their work but themselves to the point of suicide by hanging, shooting, burning, starving, castrating, or maiming themselves, all in the name of High Culture. Just like the town in Prussia whose inhabitants are known to amputate or maim their own limbs in order to collect the insurance, these artists gradually truncate themselves and their creativity to survive economically as artists. That a recent work of an artist provocateur in this genre consisted in broadcasting an extended plea to his radio audience to send him money is both an ironic comment on and a natural extension of this "esthetic" stance.

Thus the comforting and often self-smugging vision of the artist's studio as a self-contained realm of personal power and creative control in which the artist can retreat from a chaotic and unmanageable external world is a myth. For even his creative activity within that realm is largely determined by external socioeconomic imperatives that are, within the scheme of existing art institutions, beyond the artist's ability to withstand.
The notion of the successful professional artist as one who has been freed, by his gallery affiliation and critical and financial success, to devote all his time to creation, is, then, an ideological fiction. It is ideological because it serves the interests of those who prefer to preserve rather than improve existing art institutions. And it is a fiction because it is false that this brand of success promotes genuine freedom or creative expression. Years ago I was doing research for an article that would have proceeded along somewhat similar lines of analysis as this one but was to have been much more specific and detailed. My plan was to interview certain prominent artists, critics, and curators who had participated long and extensively in the system of existing art institutions and whose visions were both clear and somewhat jaundiced. From these discussions I planned to extrapolate a general analysis based on these recaptured experiences. The article was never completed because, although the artists contacted were generally quite generous with their time and information, they volunteered that information only on the conditions that (1) they not be identified by name, and (2) no information be used in a form that was detailed or specific enough to identify any actual individual, institution, or situation recounted. Their worry about antagonizing the individuals and institutions that supported them, and thereby losing the political and economic support that buttressed their success, was a real and completely rational one. And it made clear with particular poignancy the abdication of power, control, and freedom ultimately required for success.

That this expropriation of power, responsibility, and freedom in exchange for professional success need not be the norm is evidenced by comparing the condition of the artist to those of other creative producers in higher education. Take, for example, the historian. Like the artist, the historian draws upon available information, personal experience, insight, and an internalized set of standards—intellectual and academic ones. In this case—to synthesize an original creative product, that is, a book or article. The standards by which the product is evaluated are themselves created and promulgated through teaching, by that historian and his or her academic peers. And those peers, all equally practicing historians, subject the product to the critical scrutiny of those standards. That an article or book on history should be evaluated by others who do not themselves participate in the creative process is unthinkable. And that the criteria relative to which the product is evaluated should be articulated, amplified, and imposed by equally distanced others is equally unthinkable. Historians create, control, and survey critically their own creative products. They do not recruit others to perform the hard task of intellectual self-evaluation for them. For that is the surest way to abdicate control over the self, and over the expressions of the self, that one can imagine.

Similarly, the pricing and public distribution of the historian’s creative products are controlled by the community of historians. Articles and books submitted for publication are refereed by other historians, who thereby control the vehicles by which such products are brought to the public. A historian does not abdicate economic or legal control over the dissemination of an article or book to a journal editor or publisher, merely for the privilege of having the work disseminated at all. Rather, the product is protected by strict copyright laws, the producer is reimbursed, in part, by royalties, and the audience to whose work is determined by the producer’s conscious, strategic decision as to whom the work shall be addressed (other historians, students, the general public), and to what kind of publication it should therefore be submitted.

Now one might be tempted to think that such a system could never work for artists, because, unlike books, art products are unique objects or events that can never be replicated. I have argued elsewhere that this conviction is false, and that the assumption of uniqueness is, similarly, an ideological fiction, determined largely by economic interests, that serve to legitimate the economic and market criteria for pricing art products by equating those criteria with aesthetic criteria for evaluating them. If art products are not unique, like precious jewels, there is no reason why they should cost so much. If they cost less, artists would be unable to support themselves solely by producing them. They might be more inclined to seek out supplementary jobs as critics, teachers, dealers, or curators of art in order to ensure their livelihood, and thereby encourage critics, teachers, dealers, and curators to experience the artist’s role firsthand. This mutual exchange of roles and skills might engender both more artists who are critically adept, and socially responsible and more critics, dealers, and curators whose interests in art are personal and social, as well as professional. The possibilities for dialogue, cooperation, and collective action among such individuals, who would be both informed and experienced in a multiplicity of roles, seem potentially unlimited. Although artists would then have less time to produce art, the art they produced would be more fully their own. For they would collectively determine its meaning, value, price, public dissemination, and material fate.
Now much of what I have said here should be familiar, in one form or another, to long-standing denizens of existing art institutions, and there are certain stock responses to the problems I have mentioned. One frequently suggested solution for the critical hegemony and social alienation of existing art institutions is that artists should simply abandon these institutions and reintegrate themselves into society at large, by producing socially and politically effective art. Quite independently of the objectionable implication that artists as such are sociocultural free variables who can be flexibly positioned in any convenient sociocultural niche according to the requirements of some prevailing political program, this solution is woefully unrealistic. Artists whose personal and professional investments in existing art institutions have been sufficient to yield them substantial professional returns are typically rendered socially and economically powerless in the ways already described. They are, for those reasons, frequently incapable of creating art that can be genuinely socially and politically effective in society at large—that is, the society that includes art practitioners in their socioeconomic dimensions, as well as others, its ranks. In order to do so realistically requires that they have not invested so heavily in those art institutions to begin with.

To see this, consider the distinction between those artists who deploy the medium of art, and their professional roles as artists, as politically effective instruments, and those who deploy their politics as an artistically and professionally effective instrument. Some artists identify themselves primarily as members of particular political groups, such as women, blacks, artists, or the working class, and utilize their creative talents in the service of political goals they share with other members of those groups. These artists can be distinguished by the fact that their politics and their political identities, rather than their professional aspirations, determine the aesthetics of their work. This is not to deny that their work meets stringent and intrinsically valuable aesthetic standards, but if their chosen artistic medium and content do not happen to meet the aesthetic standards imposed by existing art institutions, they will nevertheless refuse to modify them. They will tend to sacrifice professional, art-contextual acceptance for the sake of social and political effectiveness.

For example, a Chicana artist has put her formidable creative and organizational resources in the service of collaborating with disadvantaged Chicano youths to reclaim and publically disseminate their common cultural heritage, through public wall murals that

portray their own, otherwise largely neglected, social and political history in an artistic medium that is indigenous to Chicano culture. Similarly, a prominent white male artist has utilized the photodocumentary medium to present acutely and highly revealing analyses of corporate exploitation of existing art institutions for its own ideological ends; analyses so effective that they have succeeded in provoking overt political confrontations within the art context that reveal the compliance of these institutions in their exploitation of art.

The work, subject matter, and aims of both these artists’ work express their identities as political, and politically committed, rather than professionally ambitious, individuals. Neither the Chicana nor the white male artist utilizes the work primarily as a vehicle for art-contextual success. Instead, it functions as a means or medium for the attainment of social and political goals—the recognition, legitimation, and social integration of Chicano culture and the exposure of the ideological and socioeconomic underpinnings of “High Culture,” respectively—to which its producer has a prior and overriding commitment. Neither artist sacrifices the form of his or her work to the imperatives of art-contextual legitimation; for this would be to destroy its integrity, as well as its political effectiveness. Artists who refuse to make this sacrifice are enabled to do so by psychological, socioeconomic, or professional resources that are largely independent of existing art institutions. Thus they are, by definition, those whose investment in the continued benefit of art-contextual legitimation is comparatively small to begin with. Hence they are not: the artists to whom the suggestion to abandon the quest for legitimation, for the sake of politically effective art, properly applies.

By contrast, some political art, ostensibly collaborative or in the service of shared political goals, seems to function primarily as a means to the professional artistic success of its producer within existing art institutions, irrespective of its political effectiveness. This is not to deny that some such work may be politically effective. But often this effectiveness may seem a rather haphazard affair. A single work may exhibit, seemingly fortuitously, a degree of political depth or insight that is lacking in the artist’s statement or other work; or the artist’s commitment to a political project may require, as a necessary precondition for his participation, a position of professional visibility or authority, or the work may be formally sophisticated or interesting, but politically naïve, ambiguous, or downright damaging in its effects on its audience; or it may communicate political views or experiences that are general enough to be innocuous or platitudinous on the one hand, or to carefully avoid application to the artist’s personal situation on the other. What all such cases have in common
is the subordination of the artist's political effectiveness to the demands of professional and artistic success. For to increase the work's political effectiveness would require sacrificing the likelihood of art-contextual legitimation. And this is a sacrifice that most artists who desire entry to existing art institutions simply are not willing to make.

Artists whose political effectiveness in society at large is thus constrained by their allegiance to the professional and aesthetic imperatives of existing art institutions are often accused of opportunism—as though it were a crime, or at least a moral flaw, to aspire to success and recognition by one's peers as an artist. As though, indeed, they were morally and politically suspect to affiliate and identify oneself primarily as an artist, rather than as a member of some other political group. But this critical stance is itself morally suspect, for it encourages artists to ignore the political dimensions of their own roles as artists, and thereby to perpetuate their institutionalized powerlessness and dependence on existing art institutions. And, in turn, further vitrates their capacity to be politically effective in society at large. For in conceiving art practice itself as politically neutral, or unworthy of serious attention, both these so-called opportunists and their politically correct critics seem implicitly to accept the same ideological fictions, generated by existing art institutions, that often obscure the artist's complicity in defending and perpetuating the very system of social institutions he purports through his art, to criticize.

For example, one effect of the purported political neutrality of art practice within existing art institutions is that artists tend to have trouble getting other people to take their political views seriously. This is to be expected. If art practice is politically neutral, then art practitioners as such must have no firsthand experience of political oppression, or exploitation. So what gives them the authority to pronounce on anyone else's? Moreover, artists themselves exacerbate the misleading impression of political neutrality by abdicating responsibility (for the social and political) implications of their work. If an artist's primary responsibility really is just to "make the stuff," rather than to control its critical and material destiny as well, why should the political subject matter of the "stuff" he happens to make count as evidence of his political credibility? If artists are not to be held responsible for the consequences of their own creative authority, it is hard to see why they should be recognized as socially and politically responsible agents at all. Thus the ideological fiction of art practice as politically neutral reinforces the powerlessness and dependence of artists on existing art institutions and vitrates their capacity effectively to change those institutions.

And since, as we saw, these institutions themselves are founded on a particular politically selective distribution of socioeconomic resources, it thereby vitrates artists' capacities to change that distribution as well.

A second effect of the ideological fiction of the political neutrality of art-making is that the ability of professionally committed artists to make politically effective art is undermined in ways that are rendered invisible by their allegiance to this fiction. For politically effective art requires, at the very least, an understanding of the audience; it is most politically effective for an artist to address, of the internal, socioeconomic dynamics of that audience; of what it is most politically effective to communicate to that audience, and of what media would be most effectively utilized to that end. These requirements are extremely difficult to satisfy, and it is harder still to know whether one has done so or not. But what can be said, at least, is that it is much harder to ascertain which audience it is in fact most politically effective for one to address, when one has a strong, unexamined—but purportedly inexorable—attachment to that audience or audiences that are most likely to confer upon one the professional or aesthetic approval that every artist needs.

Similarly, it is harder to become sufficiently familiar with the internal, socioeconomic dynamics of one's politically targeted audience to communicate with it successfully, when one is laboring under the delusion that the internal dynamics of the audience with which one has the greatest personal familiarity—that is, the art audience—is not socioeconomically determined at all but is rather responding to purely aesthetic imperatives. For this delusion ignores a major ingredient in an artist's successful communication with the art audience, that is, the extended, firsthand experience of the internal, socioeconomic dynamics of that audience and the strategic skills of proscription he develops in response to its demands. This blindness to his own resources may, in turn, lead him to suppose it unnecessary to acquire a comparable familiarity with the internal socioeconomic dynamics of his politically targeted audience; or to develop comparable strategies for communicating successfully with it. Thus he may attribute any problems of communication to his insufficiently developed aesthetic sensibility, when in fact it is his own provincial aesthetic sensibility that needs to be developed. The result of such insensitivity is likely to be political art that strikes its targeted audience as condescending, manipulative, naïve, or irrelevant, and so further alienates the artist from the community at large, rather than integrating him.

Finally, it is harder to decide what media would be most socially and politically effective in communicating with one's targeted audience when one is influenced by a politically unexamined concern with those media and that content which define the dominant
or currently fashionable standards of art production within existing art institutions, for
then one's medium and content, in attempting to satisfy a set of criteria that typically
are likely to satisfy neither.

Thus the reason for much politically oriented but ineffective art is that it
it is opportunistic; this complaint only means an implicit assumption that aspiring to
professional artistic success is politically illegitimate. The real objection is that it is
from a position of institutionalized powerlessness and ideological self-deception. That such
work should be politically ineffective or naive is to be expected.

The problem, then, is that many art practitioners who know sincerely the thesis that artists
should overcome their social alienation by working in the community for political reform
through their art; that they are often in the grip of ideological fictions earlier described,
and thus believe it unnecessary to scrutinize their own positions as exploiters and victims
within the art context. This leads them to believe that their positions, as artists, critics, and
so on, are privileged in the ways those fictions prescribe. And this belief disposes them to
protect and preserve their positions within existing art institutions, by excusing those
positions from political criticism and deflecting attention exclusively to other communities.
Thus, for example, a prominent and influential art practitioner whose political commitment
is genuine and long-standing once expressed the opinion that artists should abandon their
obessions with the art world (however, the dependent and helpless are invariably obsessed
with those who control them). Instead, it was claimed, artists should develop a more socially
responsive art practice. This same art practitioner failed to appreciate the political implica-
tions of using an available photodocumentation of an artist's work as a book illustration of
an entirely different genre: without soliciting the artist's permission beforehand, and then
plotting the pressure of a publication deadline as the excuse for not having done so. Of
course this brand of exploitation of artists' work in the service of putatively overriding pro-
fessional and aesthetic imperatives is a familiar story. But when coupled with an explicit
conviction that artists should forget about such things and turn their attention instead to
more important matters, it is a very revealing one.

This studied obliviousness to one's own politically manipulative or manipulated
behavior within the art context has certain obvious advantages. For considered attention to
its broader implication may require one to change it, or redefine some of the powers or pre-
rogative one has thereby enjoyed. A professionally ambitious art practitioner who also happens
to make art with political subject matter, or whose reputation is predicated on his political
and moral integrity, cannot, in good conscience, continue to exploit all the professional oppor-
tunities offered by existing art institutions, once he has acknowledged his complicity in
maintaining the inherent inequities of these institutions. To choose to ignore that complicity
in order to get on with the important business of making socially responsive art is thus the
in fact to put one's professional ambitions ahead of one's political and moral convictions. It is
like throwing stones at a glass house from the safety of its inner courtyard.

Acknowledging or altering such priorities may have severe and violent repercussions
in one's personal and social as well as one's professional relationships. Indeed, one
index of one's real embeddedness in and commitment to existing art institutions is the
degree to which explicit scrutiny of one's political role within them might endanger not
only one's professional status but one's personal, attachments as well. Thus it is not hard
to understand why such scrutiny is usually resisted, or performed hesitantly and self-
deceptively. For it is finally one's self-deception, and the personal and social relations that
business, that are at stake.

This sort of ideological doublethink will be familiar to many women whose
straightforward commitment to the civil rights and antiwar movements of the sixties were
gradually transformed by their dawning awareness that they were being exploited primarily
as waitresses, nurses, and camp followers by men who professed a radical political concern
for the truly pressing issues at hand. Nor will it seem unfamiliar to those blacks or their
children whose later years were embittered by the realization that their patriotic defense of
the United States in the First and Second World Wars merely deflected their attention,
temporarily from the ongoing racism they experienced at home, rather than ameliorating it.
That immediate and pressing political resentments can be made to seem trivial by focusing
un distant objects of political concern is not news. That politically concerned art practition-
ners might practice this form of ideological evasion on themselves and others would not be
surprising either. For I have suggested that this lack of self-awareness not only short-circuits
their effectiveness in the social community at large but also perpetuates an ethically and
socioeconomically monolithic system of art institutions that tends to discourage or sur-
press the creativity of those who are denied access to them. Hence it would be surprising
indeed if the exogenous art-political activity of individuals wedded to that system were
effective in political reform or revolution over the long term, when their own interests are so inherently conservative.

Many young artists respond to the apparent hypocrisy of politically committed art practitioners with disillusionment and cynicism, and it is easy to understand why. It is a general feature of ideological self-deception as I have described it that the more precarious one's actual position becomes relative to one's stated ideology, the more dogmatically one insists upon it, and the more defensively it functions to preserve one's self-esteem. Just as, for example, many members of the Progressive Labor Party, politically committed art practitioners often seem to become increasingly dogmatic, self-righteous, and impervious to rational argument, the more seeming inconsistencies in their positions come to light. The more completely they conceal their professional ambitions and self-interests from their own critical scrutiny, the more and more politically correct than they seem to become, the more institutional rewards they garner, the more pristine their aura of political incorruptibility, the same time that their political rhetoric becomes increasingly stultifying, moralistic, and inflexible. This can be an alienating and demoralizing spectacle for artists whose moral and political concerns are both inchoate and extend naturally to questions about their own personal integrity. That political commitment in art is the best game in town, or just another self-serving scam that one may as well play for what it's worth, may seem to be the obvious conclusion. Indeed, it may seem that the only way of genuinely preserving one's personal moral integrity in the face of this apparent hypocrisy is to shrug one's shoulders at the inevitability of co-optation, or retreat from any active political involvement altogether.

But shrugging one's shoulders is disingenuous. It is co-optation too willingly embraced and responsibility too easily abdicated. We have already seen that the factors determining this kind of social irresponsibility are deeply embedded within the structure of existing art institutions, regardless of how it is rationalized by those who benefit from it. In the final analysis, there can be no retreat. For the issues raised are not false or superficial ones, regardless of who raises them. I have already tried to suggest some of the questions about creative autonomy that most artists habitually encounter, regardless of their political orientation. The only alternative to confronting them head-on is the creation of some other, conservative ideological fiction that rationalizes one's dismissal of them—the value of art for art's sake, for example, or of the pursuit of self-interest, or of free enterprise, or of learned helplessness as an adaptive survival strategy—that is just as precarious and self-deceptive as its ideological opponent.

This is to suggest, that sustained, apolitical cynicism as such is not a psychologically viable position for an moderately socialized individual. It engenders the same brand of defensive, self-protective rationalization as any other stance that requires us to ignore obvious facts about our position. It requires that we insulate ourselves not only from interaction with our politically correct nemeses but also from our own sense of self-respect. For that is the only perspective from which the politically hypocritical behavior of others gives us anything to deplore. If we had no psychological investment in the ideals of genuine political reform to begin with, there would be nothing in their behavior to disgust us. And this would require us to deny that the original issues of concern to us were deserving of concern in the first place. Of course I do not mean to claim that people never abandon their political and ethical ideals, but merely that the consequent feelings of self-dislike and mistrust are a high price to pay for doing so. They are hardly conducive to long-standing personal or professional attachments of any kind.

Rather than risk the degree of psychological alienation sustained apolitical cynicism would bring in its path, many disillusioned artists consequently replace those initial feelings with some variant on the conservative ideology already described, or perhaps merely with the uneasy Neoplatonic conviction that being a true servant of Art is incompatible with sectarian political involvement. But all of these stories are ideological fictions in that they are both false and serve the interests of an institutionally conservative political program. They are thus no less political than those they oppose. And since these institutions function to vitiate the creative autonomy of their practitioners in the ways already described, such ideological fictions are particularly unconvincing when adopted by artists whose own creative autonomy is at stake.

A variant on the suggestion that artists should abandon the art context for the "real" world, in order to ameliorate their alienation from society, is that art practitioners should work to bring the art preserved and engendered by existing art institutions into the surrounding communities. There should be more funding for public and open-air projects, as
well as programs to "bring culture to the masses." This formulation of the proposal makes clear, I think, one major objection to it. It is the condescending assumption of critical hegemony that those outside of existing art institutions require cultural environment, merely by virtue of lacking access to what we are often pleased to refer to as High Art. Having effectively collaborated to deny them access to begin with, we are now to confer it: a disinterested display of charity and moral concern. But Eurocentric culture is but one among many, all of which are similarly enriching. The "masses" often targeted for enrichment have their own rich, highly developed ethnic cultures, and therefore do not need Eurocentric art for the imprimatur of aesthetic cultivation. What they do need is more economic and social legitimation of their indigenous cultures from existing art institutions, so that they will be more disposed to protect and develop rather than abandon them as they increasingly achieve political and economic parity. And this socioeconomic legitimation is a cultural resource that art practitioners within existing art institutions are in the unique position to redistribute.

Again, this is not to maintain that Eurocentric art is not worthy of dissemination in the culture at large, but rather to point out that there is much other ethnic art that is already out in the surrounding society and has an even greater claim to be brought into existing art institutions and appreciated on its own terms. The idea that formalist art should hold a preeminent place in the absolute scale of values, and so appropriate preeminent space in our ethnocentric and socioeconomic venerated cultural schemes, is another ideological fiction, generated by existing art institutions, that is difficult to justify objectively.

Finally, then, we delve onto the function of various ideological fictions themselves, which prevent us from seeing clearly our own conditions and acting intelligently to improve them, which delude us as to what our best interests are and how they are to be achieved, and which reinforce our involuntary allegiance to practices and conventions that distort our vision and stunt our creativity as political and artistic individuals. Our preservative or unquestioning acceptance of these fictions would seem to be at least one primary culprit in perpetuating the shared illusion of power, responsibility, and value within existing art institutions. The question then naturally arises of what to do about this situation.

I should like to conclude this discussion by suggesting that one necessary condition of effective political reform of any social institution is a clear understanding of how that institution functions, and of one's own role in perpetuating it. Just as blacks and women needed to have a clear enough understanding of their own rights and best interests to recognize that they were being exploited by racist and sexist institutions and how, in order to take effective political action to combat that oppression, similarly with art practitioners, regardless of their particular political affiliation. As surveyors and custodians of contemporary culture, art practitioners have a tremendous potential for influencing the course of social change. But as long as they fail to recognize the ways in which that potential is being hampered by their own self-defeating ideological alliances, they will be unable to utilize it in the service of their aesthetic and political interests.

Yet artists, unlike blacks and women, it may be said, are conditioned by their art production to be active agents, not passive contemplators, and their ego-investment in their work is in any case too great to change that orientation. But there is no biological necessity about a socially conditioned disinclination to perform the difficult and often thankless task of political self-analysis. It is not so, though artists are congenially incapacitated by having right cerebral hemispheres the size of a watermelon and left cerebral hemispheres the size of a peanut. As women who have experienced the benefits of consciousness-raising collectives already know, too, the discovery that one's ostensibly unique experiences in a certain role are in fact universal, is itself a major step toward altering those experiences for the better. I believe that artists, and other concerned art practitioners, would benefit by taking seriously the consciousness-raising model with respect to their participation in existing art institutions. For if we do not spend more time collectively contemplating our socioeconomic navel, we will continue to be led by our unblinding considerations in the wrong direction.

NOTES

1. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the NEA Conference on Visual Arts in Los Angeles (October 1982), the Rentfou School of Fine Arts and the National Exhibition Centre of Calgary (November 1982), the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (March 1983), and the NEA Seminar on Art Criticism (September 1983). I have benefited from comments received at those occasions, and from Jeffrey Evans and Rings/Sixty.


3. In general I use the masculine pronoun gender-specifically, as the system of art institutions I am referring primarily (though not exclusively) by white middle-class men of European descent.

4. Of course this aesthetic vision can be taken too far, as when it finds one to the contest significance of such objects. It was this vision, presumably, that led to a famous art critic at a panel discussion on art and politics in the early 1970s to dismiss publicly the activities of the Black Panthers on the ground that they were without aesthetic merit.
5. The economic exigencies that lead naturally to such agreements are resistibly described in John Bernhard Myrick, "The Art Biz," New York Review of Books 33, no. 16 (October 13, 1986), 32–34.


9. At this point, artists’ control of these factors seems to be largely limited to their participation in peer-review funding panels, where they are required to exercise a degree of critical and financial responsibility for the art to be supported, that is, largely absent elsewhere in their professional lives.

10. The latter art project has described itself as taking a pragmatic stance toward its own status in the art world. It feels it must sometimes accommodate its political concerns in order to maintain its position (although it must be noted that this position is still increased the visibility and attractiveness of this critique), while at other times to simply refuse to cooperate when this seems best.

11. This point is discussed at greater length in part 3 of my Rationality and the Structure of the Social project [not available at http://www.adrianpiper.com/r/w/index.shtml].

This essay was written in October 1986. It was first published in Adrian Piper, Out of Order, Out of Sight, vol. 2, Selected Writings in Art: Criticism, 1967–1993 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 63–89.
museums, managers of consciousness (1984)

hans haacke

The art world as a whole, and museums in particular, belong to what has aptly been called the "consciousness industry." More than twenty years ago, the German writer Hans Magnus Enzensberger gave us some insight into the nature of this industry in an article which used that phrase as its title. Although he did not specifically elaborate on the art world, his article did refer to it in passing. It seems worthwhile here to extrapolate from and to expand upon Enzensberger's thoughts for a discussion of the role museums and other art-exhibiting institutions play.

Like Enzensberger, I believe the use of the term "industry" for the entire range of activities of those who are employed or working on a freelance basis in the art field has a salutary effect. With one stroke that term cuts through the romantic clouds that envelop the often misleading and mythical notions widely held about the production, distribution, and consumption of art. Artists, as much as galleries, museums, and journalists, not excluding art historians, hesitate to discuss the industrial aspect of their activities. An unequivocal acknowledgment might endanger the cherished romantic ideas with which most entered the field, and which still sustain them emotionally today. Supplanting the traditional bu-

hemián image of the art world with that of a business operation could also negatively affect the marketability of its products and interfere with fundraising efforts. Those who in fact plan and execute industrial strategies tend, whether by inclination or need, to mystify art and conceal its industrial aspects and often fall for their own propaganda. Given the prevalent marketability of myths, it may sound almost sacrilegious to insist on using the term "industry."

On the other hand, a new breed has recently appeared on the industrial landscape: the arts managers. Trained by prestigious business schools, they are convinced that art can and should be managed like the production and marketing of other goods. They make no apologies and have few romantic hang-ups. They do not blithely dismiss the receptivity and potential development of an audience for their product. As a natural part of their education, they are conversant with budgeting, investment, and price-setting strategies. They have studied organization goals, managerial structures, and the peculiar social and political environment of their organization. Even the intricacies of labor relations and the ways in which interpersonal issues might affect the organization are part of their curriculum.

Of course, all these and other skills have been employed for decades by art world denizens of the old school. Instead of enrolling in arts administration courses taught according to the Harvard Business School's case method, they have "learned their skills on the job." Following their instincts, they have often been more successful managers that the new graduates promise to be, since the latter are mainly taught by professors with little or no direct knowledge of the peculiarities of the art world. Traditionally, however, the old-timers are shy in admitting to themselves and others the industrial character of their activities and most still do not view themselves as managers. It is to be expected that the lack of delusions and aspirations among the new art administrators will have a noticeable impact on the state of the industry. Being trained primarily as technocrats, they are less likely to have an emotional attachment to the peculiar nature of the product they are promoting. And this attitude, in turn, will have an effect on the type of products we will soon begin to see.

My insistence on the term "industry" is not motivated by sympathy for the new technocrats. As a matter of fact, I have serious reservations about their training, the mentality it fosters, and the consequences it will have. What the emergence of arts administration departments in business schools demonstrates, however, is the fact that in spite of the mystique surrounding the production and distribution of art, we are now—and indeed have been all along—dealing with social organizations that follow industrial modes of operation.
and that range in size from the cottage industry to national and multinational conglomerates. Supervisory boards are becoming aware of this fact; given current financial problems, they try to streamline their operation. Consequently, the present director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York has a management background, and the boards of trustees of other U.S. museums have or are planning to split the position of director into that of a business manager and an artistic director. The Metropolitan Museum in New York is one case where this split has already occurred. The debate often centers merely on which of the two executives should and will in fact have the last word.

Traditionally, the boards of trustees of U.S. museums are dominated by members who come from the world of business and high finance. The board is legally responsible for the institution and consequently the trustees are the ultimate authority. Thus the business mentality has always been conspicuously strong at the decision-making level of private museums in the United States. However, the state of affairs is not essentially different in public museums in other parts of the world. Whether the directors have an art-historical background or not, they perform, in fact, the tasks of the chief executive officer of a business organization. Like their peers in other industries, they prepare budgets and development plans and present them for approval to their respective public supervising bodies and funding agencies. The staging of large international exhibitions such as a Biennale or a Documenta presents a major managerial challenge with repercussions not only for what is being managed, but also for the future career of the executive in charge.

Responding to a realistic appraisal of their lot, even artists are now acquiring managerial training in workshops funded by public agencies in the United States. Such sessions are usually well attended, as artists recognize that the managerial skills for running a small business could have a bearing on their own survival. Some of the more successful artists employ their own business managers. As for art dealers, it goes without saying that they are engaged in running businesses. The success of their enterprises and the future of the artists in their stables obviously depend on a great deal on their managerial skills. They are assisted by paid advisors, accountants, lawyers, and public relations agents. Furthermore, collectors too often do their collecting with the assistance of a paid staff.

At least in passing, I should mention that numerous other industries depend on the economic vitality of the art branch of the consciousness industry. Arts administrators do not exaggerate when they defend their claims for public support by pointing to the number of jobs that are affected not only in their own institutions, but also in communications and, particularly, in the hotel and restaurant industry. The Triennale show at the Metropolitan Museum is estimated to have generated $111 million for the economy of New York City. In New York and possibly elsewhere, real-estate speculators follow with great interest the move of artists into low-rent commercial and residential areas. From experience they know that artists unwittingly open these areas for gentrification and lucrative development. New York's SoHo district is a striking example. Mayor Koch, always a friend to the residents who staff his campaign, recently tried to plant artists into particular streets on the Lower East Side to accomplish what is euphemistically called the "habitation" of a neighborhood, but what is, in fact, means squeezing out an indigenous poor population, in order to attract developers of high-rent housing. The recent "Terminal Show" was a brainchild of the city's Public Development Corporation. It was meant to draw attention to the industrial potential of the former Brooklyn Army Terminal building. The Museum of Modern Art, having erected a luxury apartment tower over its own building, is also now actively involved in real estate.

Elsewhere, city governments have recognized the importance of the art industry. The city of Hannover in West Germany, for example, sponsored several widely publicized art events in an attempt to improve its dull image. As large corporations point to the cultural life of their location in order to attract sophisticated personnel, so Hannover speculated that the outlet for art would be amortized many times by the attraction the city would gain for businesses seeking sites for relocation. It is well documented that Documenta is held in an out-of-the-way place like Kassel and given economic support by the state, city, and federal government: because it was assumed that Kassel would be put on the map by an international art exhibition. It was hoped that the event would revitalize the economically depressed region close to the German border and that it would prop up the local tourist industry.

Another German example of the way in which direct industrial benefits flow from investment in art may be seen in the activities of the collector Peter Ludwig. It is widely believed that the motive behind his buying a large chunk of government-sanctioned Soviet art and displaying it in his "musée" was to open the Soviet market for his chocolate company. Ludwig may have risked his reputation as a connoisseur of art, but by buying into the Soviet consciousness industry he proved his taste for sweet deals. More recently, Ludwig recapitalized his company by selling a collection of medieval manuscripts to the J. Paul Getty Museum for an estimated price of $40 to $60 million (see Art in America, Summer 1989). As a shrewd businessman, Ludwig used the money to establish a foundation that owns shares in
his company. Thus the income from this capital remains untaxed and, in effect, the ordinary taxpayer winds up subsidizing Ludwig's power ambitions in the art world.

Aside from the reasons already mentioned, the discomfort in applying industrial nomenclature to works of art may also have to do with the fact that these products are not entirely physical in nature. Although transmitted in one material form or another, they are developed in and by consciousness and have meaning only for another consciousness. In addition, it is possible to argue over the extent to which the physical object determines the manner in which the receiver decodes it. Such interpretive work is in turn a product of consciousness, performed gratis by each viewer but potentially suitable if uncertainly by curators, historians, critics, appreciators, teachers, etc. The hostility to use industrial concepts and language can probably also be attributed to our lingering idealist tradition, which associates such work with the "spirit," a term with religious overtones and one that indicates the avoidance of mundane considerations.

The tax authorities, however, have no compunction in assessing the income derived from the "spiritual" activities. Conversely, the taxpayers so affected do not shy away from deducting relevant business expenses. They normally protest against tax rulings which declare their work to be nothing but a hobby, or to put it in Kierlian terms, the pursuit of "dissatisfied pleasure." Economists consider the consciousness industry as part of the ever-growing service sector and include it as a matter of course in the computation of the gross national product.

The product of the consciousness industry, however, is not only elusive because of its seemingly nonorganic nature and its aspects of intangibility. More disconcerting, perhaps, is the fact that we do not even totally command our individual consciousness. As Karl Marx observed in "The German Ideology," consciousness is a social product. It is, in fact, not our private property, hometown and home to retire to. It is the result of a collective historical endeavor, embedded in and reflecting particular value systems, aspirations, and goals. And these do not by any means represent the interests of everybody. Nor are we dealing with a universally accepted body of knowledge or beliefs. Work has gone into that material and the ideological context in which an individual grows up and lives determines to a considerable extent his or her consciousness. As has been pointed out, and not only by Marxist social scientists and psychologists, consciousness is not a pure, independent, value-free entity, evolving according to internal, self-sufficient, and universal rules. It is contingent, an open system, responsive to the crosscurrents of the environment. It is, in fact, a battleground of conflicting interests. Correspondingly, the products of consciousness represent interests and interpretations of the world that are potentially at odds with each other. The products of the means of production, like those means themselves, are not neutral. As they were shaped by their respective environments and social relations, so do they in turn influence our view of the human condition.

Currently we are witnessing a great retreat to the private cocoon. We see a lot of noncommittal, sometimes cynical playing on naively perceived social forces, along with other forms of contemporary dancyism and updated versions of art for art's sake. Some artists and promoters may reject any commitment and refuse to accept the notion that their work presents a point of view beyond itself or that it fosters certain attitudes. Nevertheless, as soon as work enjoys larger exposure it inevitably participates in public discourse, advances particular systems of belief, and has reverberations in the social arena. At that point, artworks are no longer a private affair. The producer and the distributor must then weigh the impact.

But it is important to recognize that the codes employed by artists are often not as clear and unambiguous as those in other fields of communication. Controlled ambiguity may, in fact, be one of the characteristics of much Western art since the Renaissance. It is not uncommon that messages are received in a garbled, distorted form; they may even relay the opposite of what was intended—not to mention the kinds of creative confusion and muddle-headedness that can accompany the artwork's production. To compound these problems, there are the historical contingencies of the codes and the unavoidable biases of those who decipher them. With so many variables, there is ample room for exegesis and a livelihood is thus guaranteed for many workers in the consciousness industry.

Although the product under discussion appears to be quite slippery, it is by no means inconsequential, as cultural functionaries from Moscow to Washington make clear day by day. It is recognized in both capitals that not only the mass media deserve monitoring, but also those activities which are normally relegated to special sections at the back of newspapers. The New York Times calls its weekend section "Arts and Leisure" and covers under this heading theater, dance, film, art, numismatics, gardening, and other ostensibly harmless activities. Other papers carry these items under equally innocuous titles, such as "culture," "entertainment," or "lifestyle." Why should governments, and for that matter corporations which are not themselves in the communications industry, pay attention to such seeming trivia? I think they do so for good reason. They have understood, sometimes
better than the people who work in the leisure suits of culture, that the term "culture" connotes the social and political consequences resulting from the industrial distribution of consciousness.

The channelling of consciousness is pervasive not only under dictatorships, but also in liberal societies. To make such an assertion may sound outrageous because, according to popular myth, liberal regimes do not behave this way. Such an assertion could also be misunderstood as an attempt to downplay the brutality with which mainstream conduct is enforced in totalitarian regimes, or as a claim that coercion of the same viciousness is practiced elsewhere, too. In nondictatorial societies, the induction into and the maintenance of a particular way of thinking and seeing must be performed with subtlety in order to succeed. Staying within the acceptable range of divergent views must be perceived as the natural thing to do.

Within the art world, museums and other institutions that stage exhibitions play an important role in the inculcation of opinions and attitudes. Indeed, they usually present themselves as educational organizations and consider education as one of their primary responsibilities. Naturally, museums work in the vineyards of consciousness. To state that obvious fact, however, is not an accusation of devious conduct. An institution's intellectual and moral position becomes tenacious only if it claims to be free of ideological bias. And such an institution should be challenged if it refuses to acknowledge that it operates under constraints deriving from its sources of funding and from the authority to which it reports.

It is perhaps not surprising that many museums indignantly object the notion that they provide a biased view of the works in their custody. Indeed, museums usually claim to subscribe to the canons of impartial scholarship. As honorable as such an endeavor is—and it is still a valid goal to strive for—it suffers from idealist delusions about the nonpartisan character of consciousness. A theoretical prop for this worthy but untenable position is the nineteenth-century doctrine of art for art's sake. That doctrine has an avant-garde historical veneer and in its time did perform a liberating role. Even today, in countries where artists are openly compelled to serve prescribed policies, it still has an emancipatory ring. The gospel of art for art's sake isolates art and postulates its self-sufficiency, as if art had or followed rules which are impervious to the social environment. Adherents of the doctrine believe that art does not and should not reflect the squabbles of the day. Obviously, they are mistaken in their assumption that products of consciousness can be created in isolation. Their stance and what is crafted under its auspices have not only theoretical but also definite social implications. American formation updated the doctrine and associated it with the political concepts of the "free world" and individualism. Under Clement Greenberg's tutelage, every thing that made worldly reference was simply excommunicated from art so as to shield the Grail of taste from contamination. What started out as a liberating move turned into its opposite. The doctrine now provides museums with an alibi for ignoring the ideological aspects of artworks and the equally ideological implications of the way those works are presented to the public. Whether such neutralizing is performed with deliberation or merely out of habit or lack of resources is irrelevant: practiced over many years it constitutes a powerful form of indoctrination.

Every museum is a political institution, no matter whether it is privately run or maintained and supervised by governmental agencies. Those who hold the purse strings and have the authority over hiring and firing are, in effect, in charge of every element of the organization, if they choose to use their powers. While the rule of the boards of trustees of museums in the United States is generally uncontested, the supervisory bodies of public institutions everywhere have to contend with much more with public opinion and the prevailing political climate. It follows that political considerations play a role in the appointment of museum directors. Once they are in office and have civil service status with tenure, such officials can enjoy more independence than their colleagues in the United States, who can be dismissed from one day to the next, as occurred with Davis Lowery and John Hightower at the Museum of Modern Art within a few years' time. But it is advisable, of course, to be a political animal in both settings. Funding, as much as one's prospect for promotion to more prestigious posts, depends on how well one can play the game.

Directors in private U.S. museums need to be attuned primarily to the frame of mind represented by the Wall Street Journal, the daily source of edification of the board members. They are affected less by who happens to be the occupant of the White House or the mayor's office, although this is not totally irrelevant for the success of applications for public grants. In other countries the outcome of elections can have a direct bearing on museum policies. Agility in dealing with political parties, possibly even membership in a party, can be an asset. The arrival, of Margaret Thatcher in Downing Street and of François Mitterrand at the Elysée noticeably affected the art institutions in their respective countries. Whetber in private or in public museums, disregard of political realities, among them the political needs of the supervising bodies and the ideological complexion of their members, is a guarantee of managerial failure.
It is usually required that, at least to the public, institutions appear nonpartisan. This does not exclude the sub rosa promotion of the interests of the ultimate boss. As in other walks of life, the consciousness industry also knows the hidden agenda which is more likely to succeed if it is not perceived as such. It would be wrong, however, to assume that the objective and the mentality of every art executive are or should be at odds with those on whose support his organization depends. There are natural and honorable allegiances as much as there are forced marriages and marriages of convenience. All players, though, usually see to it that the serene facade of the art temple is preserved.

During the past twenty years, the power relations between art institutions and their sources of funding have become more complex. Museums used to be maintained either by public agencies—the tradition in Europe—or through donations from private individuals and philanthropic organizations, as has been the pattern in the United States. When Congress established the National Endowment for the Arts in 1965, U.S. museums gained an additional source of funding. In accepting public grants, however, they became accountable, even if in practice only to a limited degree, to government agencies.

Some public museums in Europe went the road of mixed support, too, although in the opposite direction. Private donors came on board with attractive collections. As has been customary in U.S. museums, however, some of these donors demanded a part in policy making. One of the most spectacular recent examples has been the de facto takeover of museums (among others, museums in Cologne, Vienna, and Aachen) that received or believed they would receive gifts from the German collector Peter Ludwig. As is well known, in the Rhineland, Count Hans von der Marwitz who holds 30%-shares in the new museum of Münchgladbach, down the Rhine from Ludwig’s headquarters, was successfully rebuffed by the director, Kranes Gladders, who is both resolute and a good poker player in his own right. How far the Saatchis in London will go in dominating the Tate Gallery’s Patrons of New Art—and thereby the museum’s policies for contemporary art—is currently watched with the same fascination and nervousness as developments in the Kremlin. A recent, much-noticed instance of Saatchi influence was the Tate’s 1982 Schneidewir show, which consisted almost entirely of works from the Saatchi collection. In addition to his position on the steering committee of the Tate’s Patrons of New Art, Charles Saatchi is also a trustee of the Whitechapel Gallery. Furthermore, the Saatchi’s advertising agency has just begun handling publicity for the Victoria and Albert, the Royal Academy, the National Portrait Gallery, the Serpentine Gallery, and the British Crafts Council. Certainly the election victory of Mrs. Thatcher, in which the Saatchis played a part as the advertising agency of the Conservative Party, did not weaken their position (and may in turn have provided the Conservatives with a powerful agent within the hallowed halls of the Tate).

If such collectors seem to be acting primarily in their own self-interest and to be building pyramids to themselves when they attempt to impose their will on “chosen” institutions, their moves are in fact less troublesome in the long run than the disconcerting arrival on the scene of corporate funding for the arts—even though the latter at first appears to be more innocuous. Starting on a large scale toward the end of the 1960s in the United States and expanding rapidly ever since, corporate funding has spread during the last five years to Britain and to the Continent. Ambitious exhibition programs that could not be financed through traditional sources led museums to turn to corporations for support. The larger, more lavishly endowed these shows and their catalogues became, however, the more glamorous the audiences began to expect. In an ever-advancing spiral the public was made to believe that only Hollywood-style extravaganzas were worth seeing and that only they could give an accurate sense of the world of art. The resulting box-office pressure made the museums still more dependent on corporate funding. Then came the recessions of the 1970s and 1980s. Many individual donors could no longer contribute at the accustomed rate and inflation eroded the purchasing power of funds. To compound the financial problems, many governments, faced huge deficits, often due to sizable expansion of military budgets, cut their support for social services as well as their arts funding. Again museums felt they had no choice but to turn to corporations for a bailout. Following their own ideological inclinations and making them national policy, President Reagan and Mrs. Thatcher encouraged the so-called private sector to pick up the slack in financial support.

Why have business executives been receptive to the museums’ pleas for money? During the rest of the 1980s and 1990s the more astute ones began to understand that corporate involvement in the arts is too important to be left to the chairman’s wife. Irrespective of their own love for or indifference toward art, they recognized that a company’s association with art could yield benefits far out of proportion to a specific financial investment. Not only could such a policy attract sophisticated personnel, but it also projected an image of the company as a good corporate citizen and advertised its products—all things which impress investors. Executives with a longer vision also saw that the association of their company,
and by implication of business in general, with the high prestige of art was a subtle but effective means for lobbying in the corridors of government. It could open doors, facilitate passage of favorable legislation, and serve as a shield against scrutiny and criticism of corporate conduct.

Museums, of course, are not blind to the attractions for business of lobbying through art. For example, in a pamphlet with the title "The Business Behind Art Knows the Art of Good Business," the Metropolitan Museum in New York wooed prospective corporate sponsors by assuring them: "Many public relations opportunities are available through the sponsorship of programs, special exhibitions and services. These can often provide a creative and cost-effective answer to a specific marketing objective, particularly where international, governmental or consumer relations may be a fundamental concern."

A public relations executive of Mobil in New York aptly called the company's art support a "good will umbrella," and his colleague from Exxon referred to it as a "social lubricant." It is liberals in particular who need to be greased, because they are the most likely and sophisticated critics of corporations and they are often in positions of influence. They also happen to be more interested in culture than other groups on the political spectrum. Duke Bittner, who as outgoing director of the British Association of Business Sponsorship of the Arts should know, recently explained: "A few years ago companies thought sponsoring the arts was charitable. Now they realize there is also another aspect; it is a tool they can use for corporate promotion in one form or another." Bittner, obviously in tune with his prime minister, has been appointed the new secretary general on the British Arts Council.

Corporate public relations officers know that the greater publicity benefits can be derived from high-visibility events, shows that draw crowds and are covered extensively by the popular media. These are shows that are based on and create myths—in short, blockbusters. As long as an institution is not squeamish about company involvement in press releases, posters, advertisements, and its exhibition catalogue, its grant proposal for such an extravaganza is likely to be examined with sympathy. Some companies are happy to underwrite publicity for the event (which usually includes the company logo) as a rate almost matching the funds they make available for the exhibition itself. Generally, such companies look for events that are "exciting," a word that pops up in museum press releases and catalogue prefaces more often than any other.

Museum managers have learned, of course, what kinds of shows are likely to attract corporate funding. And they also know that they have to keep their institution in the limelight. Most shows in large New York museums are now sponsored by corporations. Institutions in London will soon be catching up with them. The Whitney Museum has even gone one step further. It has established branches—almost literally a merger—on the premises of two companies. It is fair to assume that exhibition proposals that do not fulfill the necessary criteria for corporate sponsorship risk not being considered, and we never hear about them. Certainly, shows that could promote critical awareness, present products of consciousness dialectically and in relation to the social world, or question relations of power have a slim chance of being approved—not only because they are unlikely to attract corporate funding, but also because they could sour relations with potential sponsors for other shows. Consequently, self-censorship is having a boom. Without exiling any direct pressure, corporations have effectively gained a veto in museums, even though their financial contribution often covers only a fraction of the costs of an exhibition. Depending on circumstance, these contributions are tax-deductible as a business expense or a charitable contribution. Ordinary taxpayers are thus footing part of the bill. In effect, they are unwitting sponsors of private corporate policies, which in many cases are detrimental to their health and safety and to the general welfare, and in conflict with their personal ethics.

Since the corporate blanket is so warm, glaring examples of direct interference are rare, and the increasing dominance of the museums' development offices hard to trace, the change of climate is hardly perceptible, nor is it taken as a threat. To say that this change might have consequences beyond the confines of the institution and that it affects the type of art that is and will be produced therefore can sound like overtransformation. Through ravine, need, or Addiction to corporate financing, museums are now on the slippery road to becoming public relations agents for the interests of big business and its ideological allies. The adjustments that museums make in the selection and promotion of works for exhibition and in the way they present them create a climate that supports prevailing distributions of power and capital and persuades the populace that the status quo is the natural and best order of things. Rather than sponsoring intelligent, critical, awareness, museums thus tend to foster appeasement.

Those engaged in collaboration with the public relations offices of companies rarely see themselves as promoters of acquisitiveness. On the contrary, they are usually convinced that their activities are in the best interests of art. Such a well-intentioned illusion can survive only as long as art is perceived as a mythical entity above mundane interests and ideological conflict. And it is, of course, this misunderstanding of the role that products
of the consciousness industry play which constitutes the indispensable base for all corporate strategies of persuasion.

Whether museums contend with governments, power trips of individuals, or the corporate steamroller, they are in the business of molding and channeling consciousness. Even though they may not agree with the system of beliefs dominant at the time, their options not to subscribe to them and instead to promote an alternative consciousness are limited. The survival of the institution and personal careers are often at stake. But in nondictatorial societies the means of the production of consciousness are not all in one hand. The sophistication required to promote a particular interpretation of the world is potentially also available to question that interpretation and to offer other versions. As the need to spend enormous sums for public relations and government propaganda indicates, things are not frozen. Political constellations shift and unincorporated zones exist—sufficient numbers to disturb the mainstream.

It was never easy for museums to preserve or regain a degree of maneuverability and intellectual integrity. It takes wealth, intelligence, determination—and some luck. But a democratic society demands nothing less than that.

This essay was initially published in Art in America 72, no. 2 (February 1984). The present version, slightly modified from the original, is taken from Brian Wallis, Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business, exh. cat. (New York, New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1986), 60–77.
NO. 253  $ .00

THIS GIFT CERTIFICATE
MAY BE REDEEMED IN THE AMOUNT OF

_______________________________
DOLLARS
FOR THE PURCHASE OF ART

LEO CASTELLI
420 WEST BROADWAY
142 GREENE STREET
NEW YORK, NY 10012

LOUISE LAWLER 1983

VITO ACCONCI
CARL ANDRE
RICHARD ARTSCHWAGER
JOHN BALDESSARI
ROBERT BARRY
JOSEPH BEUYS
DANIEL BUREN
SANDRO CHIA
FRANCESCO CLEMENTE
ENZO CUCCHI
GILBERT and GEORGE
DAN GRAHAM
HANS HAACKE
NEIL JENNEY
DONALD JUDD
ANSELM KIEFER
JOSEPH KOSUTH
SOL LEWITT
RICHARD LONG
GORDON MATTA-CLARK
MARIO MERZ
SIGMAR POLKE
GERHARD RICHTER
ED RUSCHA
JULIAN SCHNABEL
CY TWOMBLY
ANDY WARHOL
LAWRENCE WEINER

BIRDCALLS BY LOUISE LAWLER
RECORDED AND MIXED BY TERRY WILSON

In and out of place (1985)
andrea fraser

In 1980 Louise Lawler asked three art critics to collaborate with her on the production of a matchbook by submitting short texts to be printed on its cover. The critics—all of whom are involved in critical analysis not simply of works of art, but of the institutional apparatus in which they circulate—apparently thought matchbooks too vulgar a format for their texts. Perhaps resisting the impropriety of being presented by rather than presenting the artist, they opted to preserve their proper place of publication, their proper function. Consequently, this particular matchbook was never realized.

Produced for specific contexts, distributed in galleries and at cultural events, Lawler’s matchbooks do not remain in their place of origin, but are continually placed, replaced, displaced. While only one aspect of her practice, they are characteristic of much of her work. For Lawler, consistently challenges the proprieties both of place (the divisions of art world labor that assign artists, dealers, and critics proper places and functions) and of objects (the ideological mechanisms which establish the authorship and ownership of art). Although she frequently collaborates with other artists, for Lawler, artistic production is always a collective endeavor. It isn’t simply artists who produce aesthetic signification and value, but an often anonymous contingent of collectors, viewers, museum and gallery workers—and ultimately the cultural apparatus in which these positions are delineated.

I will generalize and say that Lawler operates primarily from three different yet interdependent positions within this apparatus: that of an artist who exhibits in galleries and museums, that of a publicist/museum worker who produces the kind of material which usually supplements cultural objects and events, and that of an art consultant/curator who arrange works by other artists (for example, her 1984 show at the Wadsworth Atheneum’s Matrix gallery in Hartford, “A Selection of Objects from the Collections of the Wadsworth Atheneum, Sol LeWitt and Louise Lawler”.

For an artist to write reviews, curate exhibitions, or run a gallery is a contemporary art world commonplace. But these occupations are usually regarded as secondary; the artist is identified primarily as a producer of a body of works, which other activities only supplement. By abdicating this privileged place of artistic identity, Lawler manages to escape institutional definitions of artistic activity as an autonomous aesthetic exploration. Her objective is not so much to uncover hidden ideological agendas, but to disrupt the institutional boundaries which determine and separate the discrete identities of artist and artwork from an apparatus which supposedly merely supplements them.

Lawler transforms the seemingly irrelevant plethora of supplements—captions which name, proper names which identify, invocations which advertise (to a select community), installation photos which document, catalogues which historicize, “arrangements” which position, critical texts which function in most of these capacities—into the objects of an art practice. Her use of these formats constitutes a double displacement: she brings the often invisible, marginal supports of art into the gallery and situates her own practice at the margins, in the production, elaboration, and critique of the frame.

Engagement with the institutional determination and articulation of art can be traced back to the historical avant-garde: Duchamp, Dada, and Surrealism on one hand, the Soviet avant-garde on the other. Lawler’s work has a more immediate relationship, however, with the post-studio practices of the ’70s, particularly the work of Michael Asher, Marcel Broodthaers, Daniel Buren, and Hans Haacke. While very different, all these artists engaged in institutional critique, ranging from Asher’s and Buren’s situational constructions (or deconstructions) of architectural frameworks in galleries and museums, to Broodthaers’s directorship of a fictional museum, to Haacke’s documentation of high art’s corporate affiliations.
But Lawler can also be differentiated from these artists, for rather than situate institutional power in a centralized building (such as a museum) or a powerful elite which can be named, she locates it instead in a systematized set of presentationary procedures which name, situate, centralize. Unlike Asher's constructions of exhibition spaces within exhibition spaces, which critically contemplate the frame but continue to function within it as sculpture, Lawler's work is often conceived as a functional insert into a network of supports which is exterior to the gallery. Unlike Broadstairs, Lawler doesn't occupy even fictional positions of institutional authority but works instead to dissipate all such concentrations of power. Unlike Haacke, Lawler's relationship with corporate and market structures is one of ironic collaboration, simultaneously revealing the place of high art in a market economy and moving toward a repositioning of the artist within it.

In both her early installations and her later "arrangements" of pictures, Lawler selects and presents work by other artists as well as her own. Her main contribution to a 1978 group show at Artists Space was the installation of a painting of a racehorse borrowed from the New York Racing Association. Placed high on windows in a wall dividing two galleries, the painting was flanked by two theatrical spotlights directed not at the painting but at the viewer, thereby interfering with the painting's visibility and, at night, projecting viewers' shadows onto the facade of the Citibank across the street (a Bunuel-like strategy of connecting the inside and outside of an exhibition space).

While her Artists Space installation is in many ways reminiscent of post-studio meditations on institutional context, on this occasion Lawler also dealt more productively with the frame, presenting the gallery rather than being passively presented by it. Instead of supplying the catalogue with the customary reproductions of her work, she designed a Artists Space logo which was printed on the catalogue's cover and also distributed as a poster around lower Manhattan.

Two subsequent shows in Los Angeles accomplished a similar reversal of presentational positions. For a 1979 nine-person show in a loft in an abandoned department store, Lawler did another installation employing theatrical lights, again not directed at a picture she had painted of the exhibition's invitation—a gray, hard-edged Roman numeral nine in the New York School masking tape tradition. Blue and pink gels and a tree branch silhouette template on the lights emphasized the theatricality of the presentation. (A similar lighting scheme was used in a 1984 show at the Diane Brown gallery in New York, "For Presentation and Display: Ideal Settings," done in collaboration with Allan McCollum. Ruthing 100 Hydrocal sculpture-bases in the idyllic atmosphere of corporate never-never land, the subdued but dramatic lighting indexed the commodity showcase.)

In her 1981 one-woman, one-everything show in Los Angeles, "Louise Lawler - Jancar/Kiefer/Keitel/Rearden, Jancar/Kiefer/Keitel/Rearden Gallery," Lawler presented the gallery more explicitly, spelling out its name on the wall in individual postcard-size photographs of dramatically lit three-dimensional letters. She also directed the dealers to stand behind the reception desk (since they could not sit down in the tiny office) and show interested visitors other Lawler photographs contained in a small black box.

Lawler's literalization and reversal of presentational positions was also apparent in the first room of her 1982 exhibition at Metro Pictures in New York, where she presented an "arrangement" of works by gallery artists (Sherman, Simmons, Welling, Goldstein, Longo). Despite its somewhat unconventional hanging, Lawler's "arrangement" might have been mistaken for another anonymous group show of the Metro stable. But upon realizing (or remembering) that this was a "one-woman" show, viewers were confronted with an ambiguity of occupation, a shift in position which illuminated the role of the often unnamed "arrangers" in the exhibition and exchange of art. (Photographs documenting the "arrangement" of art in museums, homes, and offices were exhibited in the gallery's main space.) Lawler's "arrangement" also ironically revealed the economic subtext of the Metro artists' aesthetic of appropriation: her "arrangement" was for sale at the combined price of all the individual works plus 10 percent for Lawler (the fee customarily charged by art consultants).

Because it continues to function within a traditional gallery context, the reversal Lawler's installations enact is primarily symbolic: the artist-institution relationship is contemplated, questioned, but remains intact. However, her matchbooks and invitations (like her Artists Space poster and catalogue cover) come closer to subverting mechanisms of institutional presentation and to constituting a counterpractice, inasmuch as they do not depend upon an exhibition for distribution and do not even claim the status of art objects; in these works Lawler manages to resist the tendency of many contemporary artists to parody or criticize but nevertheless conform to the traditional position of artists in exchange relations.

One of Lawler's matchbooks was inspired by the media hype surrounding a 1982 lecture by Julian Schnabel in Los Angeles. Occupying the position of "publicist"—unknown,
to the lecture's sponsor. Lawler printed matchbooks with the event's title and distributed them at the audiotorium. Using a publicity tool against itself, also encapsulated the exaggerated spectacle of 'An Evening with Julian Schnabel' in a disposable souvenir:

For the 1983 'Borrowed Time' exhibition, a group show at Santee & Walker in New York, Lawler produced a matchbook which advertised the show with a quote which emphasizes the relation of aesthetic to economic value: 'Every time I hear the word culture I take out my checkbook —Jack Palance.' The immediate effect of such matchbooks is one of vulgarization by employing a format usually used to promote restaurants and driving schools. Lawler amplifies polite art-market mechanisms into travesties of consumer culture.

Unlike matchbooks, which are made available to a general audience, invitations are distributed on the basis of mailing lists which consolidate a small art audience into an even smaller circle of cultural initiates for whose patronage a specific desire is expressed. The series of invitations to private "salon-type" exhibitions Lawler organized with Santee Levine under the title 'A Picture Is No Substitute for Anything' (1983-84) called attention to this function, as did the 1981 event Louise Lawler and Santee Levine invite you to the studio of Dimitri Merruff....' (a Russian emigre figurative expressionist whose New York studio had been kept intact since his death). At times, however, Lawler dispenses the kind of privileged reception which such private events imply; for example, in her invitation to a performance of Susan Lakey by the City College Ballet, the "readymade" spectacle Lawler appropriated remains a thoroughly public event. (In the lower right hand corner, where one would expect to read "RSVP," Lawler specified instead "Tickets to be purchased at the box office.")

Excerpts from a letter to the Participating Artists by the Director of Documenta 7, R. H. Fuchs, Edited and Published by Louise Lawler (1982) situated the artist as invitee rather than inviter. Not invited to participate in 'Documenta 7,' Lawler reprinted the invited, romantic, heraldic image of the curator's letter to invited artists as tiny mint green type at the top of two sheets of stationery and an envelope, below at Fashion Moda is art; and outside the galleries at Kassel. In Lawler's ironic commodification, the curatorial address was displaced literally to the margins, where it became little more than an institutional letterhead, an authorizing corporate-like logo disputed as aesthetic rhetoric.

If Lawler's 'Documenta' stationery reduces high-art discourse to a supplement of institutions and the market, her gift certificate for the Leo Castelli gallery, 'authorised' and exhibited there in a 1983 group show, reduces the artwork itself to a similar status. Although it was printed in a limited edition (of 500), the certificate's value isn't contingent upon its singularity (or lack thereof) or the presence of the artist's signature, but on the amount for which it is purchased and for which it could be used toward the purchase of a Warhol or a Rauschenberg. As Jean Baudrillard formulates in 'The Art: Auction,' the value of an art object is produced not by the artist, but by the collector in his or her "sumptuary expenditure" or "economic sacrifice" for art. "Good Investment" and "Love of Art" engage in mutual rationalization; wealth is legitimized in its dissipation for the sake of aesthetic quality, while economic sacrifice pays homage to the transcendental value of high art.

The collection and presentation of art has always been a display of social and economic standing before it is an exhibition of aesthetic value. Lawler's photographs documenting 'Arrangements of Pictures' in private, corporate, and museum collections demonstrate the social uses to which art is put after it leaves the artist's studio. These "installation" photographs have been exhibited in galleries and museums, where the documentation of art objects is substituted for the objects themselves; they have also been published, both as independent photo-features and as subdly satirical illustrations for critical texts.

In Lawler's photographs of private collections, art is represented as simply one object among many in a chase of accumulation; in the domestic interior, art is "tastefully" arranged or indifferently juxtaposed—is assimilated into a backdrop of decorative commodities. Living Room Corner, Arranged by John & Jane, Tremaine St., NYC, 1984, is more than a picture of a picture hanging over the couch. Lawler includes the television set in front of a Robert Delaunay, next to a Lichtenstein sculpture head used as a lamp base on the coffee table. And in Pool and Terrace, also 1984, the artist's last painting (at least its bottom edge—which is all Lawler photographed) is little more than apocalyptic wallpaper behind an antique china dish.

Lawler's photographs of corporate collections document how art is used to express relative position in the corporate hierarchy: if large paintings and sculpture in the reception area establish a corporation's desired public image, in Arranged by Donald Marion, Susan Brodie, Cheryl Bishop at Prince Weber, Inc., too Lichtenstein's silk-screened establish the position of office workers (who are quite oblivious to the presence of 'art'). As the black uniformed guard in Long, Stella, Hunt at Prince Weber Mitchell Hutchins somehow seems part of the corporate collection, the artists' names in the title mimic the name of the Wall Street brokerage firm.
Even after art objects are withdrawn from exchange, the legacy of privileged expenditure is never severed from their pedigree. In museums, the labels which supplement every object always begin with the author and end by citing its previous owner; it establishing art’s value, these two genealogies are inseparable. Such informational labels are often the subject of Lawler’s “Arrangements of Pictures” in museum collections, raising the question of whether institutional authority and an exclusive taste of collectors aren’t actually the primary exhibits.

Establishing authorship, ownership, pedigree, and, ultimately, value, such museum labels are the most conspicuous instance of the institutional exhibition of proper names. Yet even in these titles there is an ambiguity: Is the object “proper” to the artist or to the collector? In the captions for her own photographs, Lawler extends this ambiguous poly-ownership to include an indeterminate list of curators, art consultants, museums and office workers. At the same time, she often withdraws or displaces her own name: for example, in a 1980 group show at Castelli Graphics, in which, as usual, artist’s names were lettraed on the wall next to their works, Lawler’s own photograph of a text by another author was accompanied by the attribution “Anonymous.”

Lawler’s work often involves an interference with the proper name. In her Patriarch doll Cal, for example, she plays with artists’ names, turning them into bird calls. Recorded in 1983, Lawler’s bird calls are based only on male artists’ names, calling attention to the fact that the proper name is always a patriarchal designation (the name of the father), they also parody the viewer’s desire to recognize, in a work of art, not a gesture or a style but the name “itself,” here disguised as a call of the wild.

Signifying the essential yet imaginary identity of a unified ego, the proper name establishes the subject as such, in language, under the law. Through the proper name, individuals are inscribed within power relations and come to identify with and be identified by positions therein. The conventional organization of art practice around a signature—everything which allows a work of art to be identified as a “Pollock” or a “Warhol,” etc.—institutes the proper name as interior to the act itself; thus, artists are locked in a structure of institutionalized subjectivity. And the institutional exhibition of proper names, designating the authors and owners of objects, denies that subjectivity in terms of consumption and ownership.

Because Lawler’s work isn’t reducible to a single theme, mode of production, or place of functioning, it often seems anonymous, or at least difficult to identify without a caption. Her January 1985 slide show at Metro Pictures—Slides by Night: Now That We Have Your Attention What Are We Going to Say?—confronted the institutionally organized desire to recognize a unified subject in an artist’s work. It also addressed the demands placed on production by the gallery’s new space. Rather than exhibiting prints of her “Arrangements of Pictures” (as in her previous show at Metro), Lawler supplied the walls with the enormous images the gallery’s vast space seems to require—but immaterial ones (slides) projected on the gallery’s back wall and visible only after gallery hours from the street.

The program began with slot-machine signs—plums, oranges, cherries, apples, baseballs, and bells—in random combinations of three until... Jackpot! The “payoffs” were pictures from a plaster-cast museum, copies of classical sculpture in various states of storage, decomposition, restoration (Augustus of Primaporta in a plastic bag). These images faded into one another in slow dissolve, finally giving way to another random exchange of one-arm-bandit signs and another jackpot. This time Lawler’s own “Arrangements of Pictures” in homes, museums, and corporate offices.

Thus, Lawler included her own production within the same structure of indiscernible accumulation which her “Arrangements of Pictures” document, perhaps in order to refuse the audience what it is looking for in an artist’s work: a naming identity which seems to transcend but which is actually constructed by the arbitrary exchange and circulation of aesthetic signs. The fact that Lawler included her own work does not mean that she has finally acceded to the market or passively accepted its mechanisms (her own place within them). By representing her own photographs in flat form, she symbolically withdraws them from market exchange. Once again, her position is double: that of a producer of images, and that of one who actively organizes not simply their presentation, but perhaps a new chain, a countergenealogy in which they are only elements.

I began this essay with Lawler’s unrealized “critical” machine in order to introduce, at the start, a certain self-consciousness about my own critical project of presenting the work of an artist who engages in a critique of institutional presentation. Lawler’s practice implicates art criticism as well, especially monographic art criticism, which often functions retroactively to instill unruly objects within an institution’s acceptable position, to recover from a heterogeneous practice a unified ego; the subject of a signature.

However, Lawler’s work suggests a strategy of resistance, of functioning differently within an institution which reduces difference to a sign, tips for consumption. As long as artists continue to subscribe to traditional modes of production and places of...
functioning—whether or not they engage in critique, appropriation, or the uncovering of hidden agendas—aesthetic signification will continue to be locked in an order of institutionalized subjectivity and legitimizing consumption. If Lawler manages to escape both marginalization and incorporation, it is because, whatever position she may happen to occupy, she is always also somewhere/something else.

NOTES

1. This remark appears primarily to Avram's work of the '70s (see: occurred in Michael Asher: Writings 1973–1988, Texts 1989–1979, ed. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh (Haus Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1980)). His more recent production, like Lawler's, tests the institution as a set of social relations (a notion that is only implicit in his earlier work) rather than as a architecture. The work may be a response to the expansion of the information industry and the service sector of the economy, which has resulted in a further ideological effacement of productive labor. If symbolic intervention in the conditions of material production is characteristic of modernist art, Lawler and Avram engage with the institutional services and institutional mechanisms which position and define cultural production.

2. This statement originates with Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels, who said, "Every time I hear the word 'culture,' I reach for my gun." Maloney read the line, now thin by Gosford, in the '90s. Fantast.


4. Lawler's photographs of Mundaners were juxtaposed with those of Pierre Levee and published in Wngs, no. 1 (1981), under the title "A Picture Is No Substitute for Anything." A series of the "Arrangements of Pictures" appeared in October 30 (1983). Lawler's photographs were also used in Susan Brownstein's "The Art of Exhibition" in October 30 (1984). Most recently, Lawler acted as photo editor for the New Museum's anthology Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation (1994), a position which informed yet another format for her "work."

5. As Baudrian writes, "We need to see that the true value of the painting is its genealogical value (as 'both', the signifier and the signified), and the aura of its successive translations (as 'itself'), just as the cycle of successive gifts in primitive societies changes the object with more and more value, so the painting replicates from intuition to intuition as a little of nobility, being charged with meaning throughout its history" (Baudrian, "The Art Auction," 120–121).

This essay was first published in Art in America 73 (June 1985): 122–129.

2.14 Louise Lawler, Living Room Corner, Arranged by Mr. & Mrs. Tremaine Sr., NYC, 1984. Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures.
why third text? (1987)
rasheed araeen

Why "Third" Text? Without wanting to repeat or preempt what is going to be said in the magazine, we feel that this question demands some initial clarification. The aim then is to unravel it, without reproducing the familiar intellectual closures of neat explanations and "ready to wear" definitions. The consideration of issues which are socially, economically, politically, culturally, and philosophically interwoven brings us face to face with a complexity we cannot ignore. At the same time, this complexity can only be addressed in its specific manifestations in particular cultural practices.

The function of a magazine like Third Text does not (and cannot) operate according to the logic whereby a "solution"—aims and objectives—is applied to a problem. We refuse to draw a boundary line around something which is already perceived as marginal and "contained" outside of the dominant discourses of art and culture. As far as slogans, accusations, and denunciations are concerned, they will be left to those who are traditionally good at them, the functionaries and administrators.

From cultural essentialism to vulgar Marxism, from black power rhetoric to the biologism of radical feminism, from the elitism of the North-South dialogue to the patronization of Intermediate Technology, from the dedication of the community social worker to the populism of fundamentalists, there is no need to further add to the numerous prescriptions and solutions on offer.

But what do we mean, by the word "Third," if not what it obviously refers to: the Third World? If "Third" signifies Third World, which it does, what is the nature of this representation? Is it already defined? If so, by whom? And is it possible to conceive of something around which one can no longer draw a definite line? If we understand Third World as a geographical area, as is implied in the slogans of the North-South dialogue, is the economic disparity between the rich nations of the West and the poverty of most Third World countries enough to define them separately and differently? How do we deal with the influence of the oil-rich countries, as well as the economic success of Japan, within a concept of the Third World as an underdeveloped entity? Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh, for instance, represent two opposite extremes, and yet they are related through the shared experience of colonialism and neocolonial domination.

Nevertheless, after thirty-five years, when the term "Third World" was coined, it is generally accepted that it refers to certain geographical areas and certain peoples and cultures. It has to be stressed, however, that despite the fact that those peoples and cultures share a history of colonialism and are now subject to neocolonial domination, they still fail to fall into a unified category, or to form a monolithic entity. This is the result not only of economic contradictions but also of cultural differences.

It is imperative to abandon the models of binary opposition which impose fixed ordering systems, and according to which cultural practices are classified in terms of Same or Other. And it is to this end that considerations of art cannot be separated from questions of politics.

If the original understanding of the Third World as that underdeveloped entity which was only aspiring to Western models and standards can no longer be sustained—not that those aspirations have disappeared, but they have become problematized—can "culture" be privileged as a more authentic representation? The latter assumption appears equally problematic since it relies on a notion of equivalence whereby cultures are seen as simply different without attention being paid to the nature of these differences in relation to the globalized and dominant culture of the West. Without recognizing the hierarchical structure underpinning definitions of cultural difference, however, it is impossible to account for the almost total exclusion of non-Western artists from the history of modern...
art. The analysis of the relationships between Western imperialism and cultural identity has for some time been pursued by a number of Third World intellectuals.

Can a national culture really be achieved in countries where the material foundations of power are not national or depend on foreign centers?

Eduardo Galeano

Having included Indian society into the historical process of modernization, the West tends to deny us the consciousness of it.

Geeta Kapur

It seems essential to locate the specific determinations of domination in the particular characteristics and functions of the cultural practices concerned. What are the effects of specific power relations on the production, recognition, and valuation of works of art? Contrary to humanist belief, art is not about human self-expression per se but requires a market for its assertion as a commodity; only through its exchange value does it assert itself as a valuable product. Its ideological function is intrinsically bound up with its exchange value. It is both constitutive of and constituted by the position of an artistic practice within its respective discourse. The artist equally occupies a particular position which is complexly overdetermined by considerations of nationality, race, gender, and class. Specific identities thus established are maintained and reproduced within the institutional context of liberal scholarship and the marketplace.

Historically, modern art became truly international with American Abstract expressionism, and the resulting global homogenization of art practices in terms of style, movements, etc., also led to the first critiques, in several Third World countries, of international modernism. In many countries this resulted in a return to nationalist/realist/romantic art, but, at the same time, it also produced a critical discourse of the globalization of modernism, which played (and still plays) an important role in the struggle against cultural imperialism.

The struggle against postwar high modernism was not confined to the Third World countries. It also emerged in the Western metropolis. Not only were black/Third World artists denied access to modernism in terms of recognition and legitimation; women and blacks realized that their position in the dominant culture is marginal. It is no coincidence that the black power and women's movements first emerged in America with the backdrop of anticolonial struggles (particularly in Vietnam). It is no coincidence, either, that at this time the "crisis of legitimation" within Western culture began to be generically recognized.

The "crisis of legitimation" in Western culture has a long history, but what is new in its postwar manifestation is a recognition of the lack of (positive) representations of both women and colonial peoples. This recognition is a direct result of anticolonial/antiracist struggles and the women's movement. Neither of these interventions can be reduced to or subsumed within the other, as regularly happens both in feminism and the black movement. While the former tends to sweep the question of imperialism under the carpet of universal patriarchy, the latter easily dismisses the whole issue of sexual oppression as the hobbyhorse of white middle-class women. This obscures the significance of the historical meeting point of the struggles against colonialism, racism, and patriarchy. We hope to develop a common platform for those who are positioned as marginal by the dominant culture.

The first issue of Black Phoenix was published almost ten years ago in January 1978. The three issues of the magazine which were published included important contributions by, among others, Eduardo Galeano, Ariel Dorfman, and Kenneth Coates-Smith, but at the time the publication faced tremendous hostility and consistent underfunding. It seems, however, that the situation has somewhat changed over the last years and that now there is enough support for, and awareness of, the issues concerned to produce a magazine with the aim of providing a critical forum for Third World perspectives on the visual arts. Third Text offers a platform, not only for the contestation of the racism and sexism inherent in the dominant discourses on art and culture, but also of those essentialist assumptions which define "black art" as simply the work of artists who happen to be black, analogous to the notion of feministic art, as any work produced by a woman artist.

Third Text represents a historical shift away from the center of the dominant culture to its periphery in order to consider the center critically. This does not imply a fixed distance. The movement can be repeated or reversed as long as a critical relationship with the dominant discourses is maintained. In view of the crisis of Western corporate culture, it appears necessary to develop a constructive international communication beyond the
intellectual paralysis which has characterized much of Western critical discourse in the '80s. Focusing on the visual arts, Third Text foregrounds theoretical debates and historical analyses of art practice.

This text served as a founding statement of the journal Third Text (Autumn 1987), 3-5, from which the present version is taken.
WHEN RACISM & SEXISM ARE NO LONGER FASHIONABLE, WHAT WILL YOUR ART COLLECTION BE WORTH?

The art market won't bestow mega-buck prices on the work of a few white males forever. For the $17.7 million you just spent on a single Jasper Johns painting, you could have bought at least one work by all of these women and artists of color:

Barbara Abbott
Anni Albers
Sandra Angulo
Dee Reaves
Zoe Fells
Buick Biskop
Rose Beeler
Elizabeth Bussiere
Margaret Bourke-White
Katherine Brooks
Kathryn Cameron
Emily Carr
Tamika Cantrell
Marcia Carritt
Constance Marie Cavagnari
Samuel Caplin
Sandra De Cavan

Please send 5 and comments to: Box 1006 Cooper St. 1470010.976

GUERRILLAGIRLS.COM - CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD

HOW MANY WOMEN HAD ONE-PERSON EXHIBITIONS AT NYC MUSEUMS LAST YEAR?

Guggenheim 0
Metropolitan 0
Modern 0
Whitney 0

HOW MANY WOMEN HAD ONE-PERSON EXHIBITIONS AT NYC MUSEUMS LAST YEAR?

Guggenheim 0
Metropolitan 0
Modern 0
Whitney 0

2.15

2.16
enlarged from the catalogue: the art of pre columbian gold, the jan mitchell collection
(1990)
silvia kolbowski

Produced for a group exhibition at Postmasters Gallery, this project used a springboard
to the catalogue of an exhibition held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in 1985,

The gallery was located in a retail storefront space in the East Village section of
New York, a neighborhood of low-income private and public housing and small businesses
in storefront spaces, as well as other galleries in similar spaces which opened as part of the
wave of 1980s gentrification.

The installation involved cutting a hole the size of a small-scale framed work of
art into an existing wall, which was situated parallel to the glass storefront of the gallery.
Into this wall, which blocked the view through the glass into the gallery, was fitted an ex-
tended Plexiglas box frame with no backing. On the front of the box was silk-screened an
image which I selected (from the catalogue of the Metropolitan Museum exhibition) for its
simultaneously abstract and referential look: an electron microscope photograph of core
material from a pre columbian cast necklace ornament. This image played two different
roles. Read as an abstract image, a design of sorts, it garnered the brief attention generally
accorded to such artworks in group exhibitions. On the other hand, if the specificity of the
image was read, the potential existed for its acting as a catalyst, compelling the viewer to
seek out additional materials. The viewer-as-sleuth or -researcher found information on the
image, along with several short quotations on the contradictions of taste, authenticity, and
collecting, under the data on the work in the gallery’s list of works, which was displayed on
a wall near the reception desk, as well as in its more conventional location on the desk. A
text compiled from writings by different authors on the classification of identity, the identity
of classification, and the stakes of the art viewer’s or collector’s gaze was silk-screened onto
the window (visible from inside the gallery but only readable from the street), and an
announcement was produced in addition to the official one. This announcement listed the
first and last letters, which had been deleted, of every sentence in the window text. Unintell-
ligible in and of itself, the announcement lost its classificatory function, and instead acted
as a momento of the exhibition.

The dispersal of the elements of the installation throughout the inside and out-
side of the gallery, so that neither inside nor outside was addressed as a privileged space
for art, with the window conceived as a permeable membrane (neither a shield nor a lens),
expressed a fundamental ambivalence or skepticism about the mandated necessity of pro-
jecting art into the street.

enlarged from the catalogue: The United States of America can be seen as a critical
reading in installation form of an existing catalogue of the American Wing collection of the
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, titled The United States of America. A catalogue of a
catalogue. An overlay (at unmatched scales) of the plan of the American Wing of the Metro-
politan Museum of Art and the plan of Postmasters Gallery generated both the layout and
the reading of the exhibition; and was reproduced on both a wall plaque and an exhibition
announcement. In addition, nine display cases were placed within the gallery in relation to
specific sites on the plan of the American Wing denoting areas of contemplation, informa-
tion, and thresholds. Each case exhibits two superimposed silkscreened images, which I
selected from the documentation of the museum catalogue to represent a chronological and
typological survey of objects both decorative and fine art in the American Wing collec-
tion. A red-leather-covered museum bench, a catalogue, and a print were also integrated
into the installation.

The placement of the display cases within one—private—space, but in relation
to the plan of another, public space, creates a theoretical and spatial disjunction; the
The placement of objects is theoretically logical yet visually eccentric, bypassing the conventional criteria of display-efficient circulation, neutral diachronism, good design composition, and so on. The catalogue, like the installation in general, was formulated through an overlay—in this case of the museum catalogue's introduction, data, and extended captions pertaining to the eighteen selected objects from the museum collection, and of four additional texts: an introduction written in fictional mode; a table of contents from the 1961 American slave narrative of Linda Brent ('authentically' by a white abolitionist); a discussion by a white feminist legal theorist, Catharine A. MacKinnon, of the case of a Native American woman, Julia Martinez, who sued her tribe over their patrimony; although preservationalist property rules; and an excerpt from a book entitled An Intensive Course in English for Chinese Students. Catalogues were installed in wall display units in the large exhibition room next to the museum bench, and situated at the entry to the gallery's secondary exhibition space, which contained a framed silk-screened print.

This installation, intended as site transferable, rather than site specific, was reinstalled in 1989 as part of the group exhibition 'The Desire of the Museum' at the Whitney Museum of American Art, downtown at Federal Reserve Plaza, New York. In this instance, the plan of the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum was overlaid onto the plan of the Whitney Museum in alignment with the forced perspective of one side of an entry staircase in that space. I chose this positioning because it was impossible to overlay the plans as in the previous case, given that the scale of the space and the nature of the other works in the exhibition would have dispersed the configuration of the cases beyond readability. Therefore, the decision was made to choose a placement which would emphasize the distortion of spatial reading created by the design of the staircase.

The display cases and other elements were placed within the Whitney Museum, but according to the plan of the Whitney in relation to the previously chosen sites at the Metropolitan Museum. At a point of entry into the institution, normally a point of orientation and flow of movement, disorientation, disruption, and disjunction were offered.

This text was written to accompany a project for a group exhibition at Postmasters Gallery, New York, in 1988. It was republished in Silvia Kolbowski: Projects, exh. cat. (New York: Border Editions, 1997), 41–43. From which the present version is taken.

**PART III** institutionalizing
Christian Philipp Müller, *Kleiner Führer durch die ehemalige Kurfürstliche Gemäldegalerie Düsseldorf*, 1986. Every day at 4:00 p.m. during the 1986 exhibition at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, the artist hosted a tour of the painting gallery of 1778 in the hall of the academy of 1966. Billboards suspended in the space provided information about the exhibited artists, while panels mounted on the walls cautioned viewers “Not to touch pictures or frames.” Courtesy of the artist.

Farrokh Seraydarian, *Exchange Rates*, 1988. Installation detail, altered “tourist-snowglobe” each linked to one European Union member nation. The following was inscribed on the base of each snowglobe: “In the perfect market at equilibrium, every exchange is possible.” Courtesy of the artist.
Freud might say, the point is not to repeat or reproduce those relations, but to try to free oneself and others from them, with an intervention—an intervention which may include an interpretation, but the effectiveness of which is limited to the things made "actual and manifest" in the particular site of its operation.

This limit also defines the ethical dimension of site specificity. It marks the boundary not only between the effective and the ineffective, but between repetition and intervention: between the reproduction of relations and their possible transformation.

"No one can be slain in absentia or in effigy."

Freud is certainly writing of himself in this statement, or rather, of the position of the analyst, who is authorized by the institutions of psychoanalysis and of medicine to be called upon to exercise the functions of authority from which his or her patients suffer: the authority to represent them, to represent their histories, their future, their wants, their appropriate demands, the criteria according to which they might be able to see themselves as acceptable.

Jacques Lacan wrote that Freud "recognized at once that the principle of his power lay there... but also that this power gave him a way out of the problem only on the condition that he did not use it."

Any intervention or interpretation, to the extent that it depends on this power, will reproduce it.

The limit imposed by the ethics of psychoanalysis on the things made "actual and manifest" in the site of its operation is thus, first, a limit on the uses to which this power can be put—as any appeal to an outside would not only reproduce it, but extend its field of authority— and, secondly, a limit imposed on the analyst to the position determined for her within that site, as any attempt at displacement would only obscure it.

This is how I would like to understand artistic practice, that is, as a form of counterpractice within the field of cultural production.

The relations I might want to transform may be relations in which I feel myself to be dominated, or they may be relations in which I feel myself to be dominant. The ethical dimension of the imperative of site specificity, however, pertains entirely to my status as dominant: that is, to the agency and authority accorded to me as a producer and as the subject of discourse, by the institutions in which function and of whose authority I become the representative. It doesn't really matter whether I'm an author or not, whether my status
as an agent: is actual or ideological. The position that I occupy in the execution of the functions of my profession is that of a producer, an author, an agent. And this position is one of privilege. I am the institution's representative and the agent of its reproduction.

So, when it comes to institutional critique, I am the Institution. And I cannot be slain in absentia in effigy.

I am an artist. As an artist, I have the double role of engaging in the specialized production of bourgeois domestic culture on one hand and, on the other, the relatively autonomous reproduction of my own professional subculture.

To say that this activity is relatively autonomous is to say that it exists within a field 'capable of imposing its own norms on both the production and the consumption of its products'. These norms are determined by the history of that field and express, above all, the primacy of the particular capacities that define the specialization of my activity: that is, the manipulation of the form of, or the formal relations in, and between, objects, representations, and discourse.

Although the fact that the culture I produce functions as bourgeois domestic culture is a historical fact of economic patronage, it does not depend on this patronage. To the extent that the knowledge, propensity, and capacities that it demands constitute a 'specific cultural competence' acquired largely by the 'implicit learning' of prolonged contact, the culture I produce is inseparable from the economic and educational capital required to consume it.

Museums abstract this culture from its social location. The primary operation of art museums is the turning of bourgeois domestic culture into public culture. The induction of those not already disposed to this culture into the habits and manners of its appropriation is what constitutes the public education that defines museums, at least in the United States, as educational institutions. This displacement is the mechanism through which the cultural dispositions acquired in economic privilege are imposed in the public sphere, and thus across the social field, as exclusively legitimate cultural competencies.

However, the displacement that museums effect is not really an abstraction. The autonomy of my field of activity and its specialization within divisions of cultural labor—that is, my distance from the class whose culture I produce—are the conditions of its possibility.

Museums realize this possibility by authorizing my activity within the public sphere. Museums define legitimate culture and legitimate cultural discourse and accord me, and other authorized individuals, an exclusive prerogative to produce legitimate culture and to possess legitimate opinion. They divide the field of material culture into legitimate culture and illegitimate culture—or rather, nonulture, to the extent that the illegitimate is denied a representative function in the public sphere owned by these institutions. And they divide the public created by this sphere into producers and nonproducers of culture.

While museums in some cases appropriate objects, I produce objects for them. They privilege this latter group—those works produced within their privileged discourse and which, directly accord that discourse its authority to describe them. These are the objects produced as the common culture of the subjects of that discourse—the domestic culture of the patrons who appropriate them materially and the more or less professional culture of the class, defined by educational capital, that appropriates them symbolically.

Some museums privilege the mode of appropriation defined by economic class, the domestic learning systematized as connoisseurship, offering up for emulation a manner of being in relation to art objects: how and how long one looks, the accent in which one pronounces the names of artists and works, posture and expression. Some museums privilege the scholastic learning defined by educational capital, ways of knowing about art objects which may change according to developments in contemporary art and art history as well as other academic disciplines. The relationship between these two modes of appropriation is always antagonistic.

The struggle between domestic and scholastic relations to culture and the modes of appropriation they privilege is continuously waged in art museums in the United States. It's played out between the voluntary sector of a museum (its patrons and board of trustees) and its professional staff. Although the former group is clearly the locus of economic power in museums, I would say that it is the struggle between these two sectors that constitutes the museum's discourse, the conditions of its reproduction, and the mechanism of its power. This is not only because professionals, in a competition to impose their mode of appropriation, take bourgeois domestic culture as their stake, investing in this 'privileged cultural capital' and thereby increase its value. It is because this competition constitutes the discourse of museums as a discourse of affirmation and negation, putting the culture it presents into play within a system of differentiated consumption that represents and objectifies the class hierarchies on which it is based.

Taste, Pierre Bourdieu writes, 'are the practical affirmation of an inevitable difference ... when they have to be justified, they are asserted purely negatively, by the
refusal of other tastes. In manners of taste, more than anywhere else, all determination is negation."

In a video essay called Masterpieces of the Met, Philippe de Montebello, the director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, guides us through an encounter with art.

We tend to enter a gallery like this and exclaim, "Here are the Rembrandts," as the mindset of admiration clicks on. But are we really liking what we see? Sure, the pictures have a Rembrandt-esque look. They are dark and brooding and the faces are dramatically lit. So we exclaim, "Here are the Rembrandts." But we must go beyond this factor of recognition to really savor them.

[This self-portrait] is a picture that for a long time I only glanced at in passing. After all, it’s not a canvas raiser. One day, I don’t remember when, I sat on the gallery bench in this room and absently let my eyes rest on this particular portrait. I think I must have sat here for a full ten or fifteen minutes, which is a long time, you know. I couldn’t leave.

Please look straight into his eyes. Don’t waiver, if you please. I was hypnotized. This is a picture that compels us to attend to its silence, and since I am now speaking to you I recognize that I may well be breaking its spell. But try to experience it on your own. You may find, as I did, that for a brief moment, Rembrandt intrudes into your life. . . . Out of all on canvas he proclaims . . . “You, whoever you are, look into my eyes.” And what causes our chest to swell up is the realization that our existence will pass while his will survive for as long as the picture is preserved. It’s hard to pinpoint to what extent all this is due, but it has much to do with the fact that Rembrandt was not an ordinary man. . . . It is a lifetime of experience and changing expressions that have shaped and molded that . . . . face. . . . Although comparatively speaking, one could show all the ties that this picture has to the northern baroque, it is hard to speak of style here. Perhaps Rembrandt’s ultimate triumph of style is that he seems to have none.

It’s relatively easy to interpret this description as a manifestation of a struggle between "biologic" and "scholastic" relations to culture. Philippe de Montebello exemplifies an effortlessly elegant relationship to cultural objects; those capacities produced of longer and more sustained looking that transcend superficial attribution of "style," much less the vulgar recognition of "a certain raiser."

But it’s not these capacities that he is teaching, because these capacities are the status-derived product of a "lifetime of experience" of "familiar family property," as Bourdieu has written, of "the precocious acquisition of legitimate culture . . . acquired in the course of time, by means of time, against time, that is, by inheritance," they are strictly speaking, not transferable. Even by speaking of it, he "may be breaking its spell."

What he is teaching is something else. He is guiding us, through the discourse of museums, to the individuals to whom we should apply to represent the museum’s objects: those who are represented by them, as their exclusively legitimate spokesmen, who will call on us, as they call, "You, whoever you are, look into my eyes."

The imperative of identification with these spokesmen is established in the foreclosure of other identifications. De Montebello’s rejection of the legitimacy of those other spokesmen—the representatives of the scholastic relation to culture—is purely rhetorical. His speech, after all, is not addressed to them. If it were, they could easily respond. His speech, rather, is addressed to the museum’s public. And in it, it is they who must stand as the potential proxies for the phantom others of dismissed dispositions.

The stakes in the struggle between domestic and scholastic relations to culture as it’s played out in art institutions are not really art objects or even the dispositions they objectify, but are, rather, the museum’s public. It’s the recognition by this public that will establish the primacy of those dispositions, and their subjects, as that to which this public should aspire.

As an artist I may be situated on one side or the other of this struggle, depending on the mode of appropriation demanded by the objects and discourse I produce, and according to which I position myself within an institution.

My rejection of the museum’s patron class and the familial, familial relation to culture that it privileges is expressed in my use of Philippe de Montebello’s speech. Providing interpretations of such speech is what I do as a practitioner of institutional critique. In the past, when I conducted gallery-talk performances based on such interpretations, the museum’s professional staff tended to identify with me in this rejection, against the museum’s voluntary sector—its patrons and trustees, but also the volunteer museum guides whose function I took up. It was really this latter group that they tended to see as the object of my rejection, and rightly so, as that was the position that I put to use.

What was being rejected in this constellation, however, was actually the museum’s public. Museum guides represent the most extreme form of an attempt to satisfy the contradictory and impossible demands the museum addresses to that public. In the United States, museum guides usually have no formal art-historical training. They are trained only by the museum’s professional staff and thus acquire a certain quantity of knowledge about
art objects. But this knowledge, as it's usually limited to the particular museum's collection, leaves the museum guide entirely dependent on its particular source and without the means to generate a legitimate opinion independently of the institution. In the United States, museum guides are almost always volunteers. As such, their position is defined by an identification with the philanthropy of the board of trustees. They invent their bodies and time in an identification with the status of the high-level patron, but for lack of economic and familial cultural capital, they continuously and necessarily fall short.

Museum guides are the embodiment of the domination museums effect. Again, to quote Bourdieu, "the imposition of legitimacy which occurs through competitive struggle and is enhanced by the gentle violence of cultural missionary work tends to produce pretension, in the sense of a need which pre-exists the means of adequately satisfying it. A museum is a domain which works the institution as a cultural alchemist. The museum defines,表扬s, and disapproves of discrimination and false recognition which delays the gap between acknowledgment and knowledge—between the heterodoxy experienced as if it were extraordinary...embodied in...undifferentiated reverence, in which anxiety combines with anxiety."

This is why I stopped conducting gallery-talk performances—or at least posting as a museum guide in doing so. While I have the basis for identifying with museum guides—being a woman, an autodidact, and someone short on economic and objectified familial cultural capital—such an identification remains a misidentification, and a displacement of my status within art institutions. And, like all such displacements, its function is to obscure the relations of domination at which museums are the sites and which its recognized agents produce and reproduce.

Now I perform as an artist.

As an artist, I may try to situate myself outside of the struggle between domestic and aesthetic relations to culture, rejecting the rejections that constitute the dynamics of art institutions, perhaps refusing, as I refuse to produce objects for them; perhaps attempting to position myself more directly in relation to their real state: the museum's public, or at least those not already disposed to the culture that I produce and that museums present.

I may try to produce other forms of culture: popular culture (as it's usually understood as the products of mass culture industries), or the domestic culture of individuals within other communities, or the common culture of those communities.

In the United States, the first art museums were founded quite explicitly within a struggle to establish a cultural orthodoxy against: developing forms of mass popular culture and against the reproduction of the domestic and common culture of immigrant communities. In the early publications of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, for example, jazz, burlesque, comic books, and pulp fiction are identified as the threats against which the museum must protect the city's citizens. The Philadelphia Museum of Art holds classes and exhibitions on "Americanization through art" while the founders of the Metropolitan Museum of Art were engaged in direct confrontation with New York's Tammany Hall, whose power was based on immigrant constituencies.

Museums and the mass popular culture industry developed contemporaneously as two spheres of specialized culture to be offered up for appropriation: as domestic and common culture. In the competition between them, museums, by and large, lost out.

For the most part, museums and their patrons are no longer in an antagonistic relationship to mass popular culture. They now exist alongside it, dividing it up into new hierarchies capable of creating and representing new as well as old privileges, introducing into it exclusive modes of appropriation, and taking from it new material to be put into play in struggles for distinction.

The power of the economic and cultural capital embodied in museums is represented, above all, by its ability to appropriate objects produced outside its sphere. There it gains autonomy, universalizes itself, asserts its authority beyond itself across the cultural field much more effectively than in competitive struggles over cultural orthodoxy in which the subjects of that power must recognize a stake in common with their adversary in such appropriation its subjects become the agents and masters of culture as such and not, just the new owners of a particular, privileged cultural production.

My power as an artist or would be intellectual, to appropriate objects, texts, representations, and practices symbolically—conferring value and interest—where before there was none—is always linked to the economic power to appropriate materiality. I am the intermediary. The link between these forms of power does not depend on whether or not I offer my products up for material appropriation. It derives rather from homologies between monopolies of economic capital, and those of cultural capital, which accords me the exclusive prerogative of a producer of culture by defining those outside my field as nonproducers.

The appropriation of mass popular culture has become less probable, in symbolic terms, in the past few years as the increasing incorporation of its forms within art and academic discourse has led to an individualization of its authors and the recognition that they,
too, are Cultural Producers. Appropriation becomes competition, and now, like Jeff Koons, I am liable to be sued.

Abandoning popular culture, I may instead, like some of my other colleagues, offer up for bourgeois consumption forms derived from domestic and common culture of non-specialized production—my own from an earlier age or that of others, defined by ethnicity and geographical location as well as economic class.

If this apparent affirmation of the culture of others and the fact that high culture, too, is the material culture of everyday lives is turned into dispensable as it is returned back to those others, professionalized and rarefied in museums, I may once again attempt to situate myself outside. I may seek those institutions and produce public art, that is, art presented in public space other than that of the museums.

Most public art carries with it, outside of art institutions, a demand for an aesthetic disposition and aesthetic competence that has been defined within them: demands, for example, for an attention to form—when there is nothing else, or when the formal organization of the work takes precedence over, or is autonomous from, the themes. It seemingly seeks to engage, or demands for familiarity with a field of artistic or academic reference that constitutes the condition of the work's legibility as a text or as an object of value justifying the prestige of its placement.

I refer my viewers back to the museum.

Public art imposes itself on a public to a greater extent than art presented in public institutions. Whereas museum visitors enter the institution voluntarily—if seduced by the promise of beauty and betterment—the audience of public art is a captive audience. To the extent that the spaces in which works are situated must be used, their audience cannot choose to enter into a relationship with them. Public art thus imposes aesthetic competencies as a condition, not just for self-education or social advancement, but of living in a city, of using its parks and streets.

Beyond these demands there may be other demands. I may, for example, identify with this public. I may attempt to articulate the interests of the pedestrians in the plaza or the workers in the buildings that surround them, for them, to them, in a critical engagement with the social as well as aesthetic conditions of the organization of public space.

In public space, the social character of the negations and rejections implicit in the autonomy of artistic forms of critical engagement may be remembered by its public when they have been forgotten by the artist. As with Richard Serra's Tilted Arc, behind the avowed critique of the rhetoric of monuments and the organization of public space deployed in the name of its users is an implicit critique of those users, as users, in the formal autonomy of the work, which developed historically as a rejection of the heteronomous function of popular as well as bourgeois realism. While that rejection has cost its force within the discourse of art over the development of a hundred years, displaced onto public space it retains its power still. The work's public may recognize itself as the real object of a critical discourse that radically excludes it.

To the extent that art situated in public space continues to function in an art context as well, where it is described and documented, the evolution of an other audience within it may be appropriated, just as other cultural objects, representations, and practices may be appropriated in a work. "They"—the other public, the noninterested, the nonprofessional—become an object and a stake in a struggle among professionals.

Finally, with all these displacements closed to me, instead of producing bourgeois domestic culture I may opt to produce intellectual culture.

Incorporating academic discourse with an aim to produce an artwork as a theoretical text, whether this text is purely linguistic or presented in the form of a rebuff to be decoded (I won't say, as I can't believe, "produced") by the viewer, I produce a work that demands a double competence in the perception of aesthetic form and a knowledge of, or mastery of, the logic of discourse out of which the text is constituted. The work is thus doubly alienating, doubly exclusive.

This again can only be situated within a struggle for legitimacy within the artistic field in which an appropriation of academic expertise functions to produce an additional distinction. Such appropriation must be seen as the result of a partial rejection of specifically aesthetic criteria and the institutions that privilege them, without recognizing that, in social terms, these institutions are strictly homologous to those of academia.

Every demand for a particular competence addressed to a viewer is more or less a disguised demand that the addressees recognize the producer as being in possession of precisely that competence. In my attempts at intellectual production, this demand for recognition is addressed to the holders of academic titles.

This addressee is immanent in what I present, offer up, for recognition, and constitutes the real, present viewer, listener, reader as such. The difference between the real, present addressee and the addressee contained in the statement is more or less all but annulled depending on the social conditions of legitimacy of the latter.

What makes you the other to whom I would address a demand for recognition?
If you don't experience yourself as being in possession of the particular authority for which I ask, then my demand for recognition turns into a demand simply that you have it, or rather, have the competence that defines it.

Here in this context, as in any other context, I make certain assumptions about who you are, but these assumptions will, only ever be my fantasy.

To say that they are a fantasy is not to say that I only imagine them. Because they are determined by the professional and institutional norms of the context that constitutes their form, I don't have to imagine them at all. They are articulated for me — here for example, in the statements of the organizers or in the list of the other participants. To say that they are a fantasy is rather to say that in them — in you — I have invested my aspirations and this context becomes the potential source of their accomplishment.

It's a fantasy that drives me to try to make my arguments even more complex, as I have to say is certainly too simplistic. Too simplistic for whom? Not for myself, as I envision in my difficulty in thinking these things through, but for whatever I suppose you to be.

The text I am presently reading demands knowledge of my field of intellectual and artistic reference. In presenting it, I ask for recognition of my intellectual competence. As it is written in the first person, it contains a partial rejection of academic speech. But as a theoretical text, it also contains a much more complete rejection of my prerogative as an artist to simply present my work.

I ask for these things. Perhaps I cannot do otherwise if, as Iacono would have it, such demands are a condition of speech, and the aspirations produced within them are a condition of subjectivity. But those demands are historically determined and institutionally organized to particular social use. They reproduce themselves in aspirations that one is always already facing.

No one asks according to the interests. What I want are other things. Their object is elsewhere: in my history, in the material conditions that determine my social experience. But those objects are foreclosed in the competitive symbolic struggles that constitute the culture. Still. The stakes of those struggles are not what I want. But I invest in them anyway because, in the absence of another object, they are offered to me by the institutions I accept as the sphere of my activity.

And I ask you for these things. In so doing I become the agent of the reproduction of this institution — and the negations and exclusions through which it imposes relations of domination — by forcing you to aspire to the competencies it demands. Adequacy becomes the condition of listening. There are no other positions provided for.

Yet other positions are possible. There are other struggles not subsumed in such individualized and individualizing symbolic struggles for legitimacy. There are collective symbolic struggles, and there are collective and perhaps individual material struggles.

Arguments that there is no outside of institutions are often, alibi for cynicism. However, the topography of inside and outside very often also functions as an alibi for not recognizing one's position within the extended culture, field in which those institutions are situated and the relations of power and privilege by which that field is constructed. These relations traverse the topography of inside and outside and put to precise use, the boundaries of the field and its institutions being one of the primary objects of struggles within them.

The transformation of those relations will not be accomplished by displacement. The mis- and dis-identifications of partial axes and entrances, the appropriation of objects, texts, practices constructed as other or outside, the changing of location, or the exchanging of criteria of one institution for another: such strategies may transform the "nature" of conditions, but they will only reproduce the structure of positions.

NOTES


4. Ibid., 56.


7. Ibid., 103.

8. Ibid., 139.

This text was written to combine the academic performance of the conference lecture and the artistic performance of self-presentation in "artist's talks." It was first presented at the symposium "Place, Image, Presentation, Public" at the Jan van Eyck Akademie, Maastricht, in April 1992, and was published in this issue, as "Place, Image, Presentation, Public" (Maastricht, Jan van Eyck Akademie, 1993).
constructing the spectacle of culture in
museums (1992)
ivan karp and fred wilson

Fred Wilson: I'm going to set the stage for what I'm doing now; then discuss Mining the Museum. I'll begin with the Longwood Arts Project in the Bronx, housed in a former public school. As an artist living and working in New York, I had to support myself one way or another, and I found I enjoyed working with artists, so I worked in several alternative spaces in downtown Manhattan. Prior to that I had been working with several museums—I worked at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the American Museum of Natural History, and the American Craft Museum—and this experience, I realized later, was the basis for my way of making artwork. Working in the educational department of these three institutions simultaneously made me wonder about how the environment in which cultural production is placed affects the way the viewer feels about the artwork and the artist who made these things. Being an artist and being African-American and Native American and actually working in the museum at that time, I was in a position to notice some of the incongruities in these spaces. So with that background I worked in alternative spaces and then was offered the directanship of Longwood in the Bronx.

At that time I decided to try some ideas that I had that had been brewing when I worked at these museums. Once I went to a dance concert with a dancer, and while I was enjoying the


...general performance, the dancer I was with was constantly looking at how the person's toe was pointed. When you're in a field you notice the smaller aspects that the average person does not see.

It's the same with someone working in museums and galleries—you notice when the lighting is not right, you notice when the labels are not right in a museum. As an artist who had had work on the walls and also looked at work, I had questions about what those spaces were really doing to the artwork and to viewers.

So one of the first shows I did in the Bronx, in the late eighties, was called "Rooms with a View: The Struggle between Cultural Context and the Context of Art." I took three rooms, one room looked like a contemporary gallery, the white cube, one I redesigned to look like a small ethnographic museum, not very well appointed, the third I made to look like a turn-of-the-century saloon space. I asked thirty artists to be a part of that experiment. All thirty had work in the white cube, half had work in the ethnographic space, and half had work in the turn-of-the-century space. I chose the work according to how it might look in those spaces. Many artists at that time were making work that seemed to fit in an ethnographic museum, because they were working on Third World cultural idioms. There were other artists who were working more with the history of Western art in their work. When I placed the work in the ethnographic space, I would have visiting curators say with surprise, "Oh, you have a collection of primitive art." And I had to tell one curator, "No, Valerie, that work you're staring at was in your gallery a month ago." The environment really changed the work; the labels just had the materials, not the names, because in most ethnographic museums—jun can bear me out or jump on me for saying this—the labels don't have any names because the works were collected at a time when the names of the people who made the objects were not important. The labels just gave the materials and things like "Found, Williamsburg section, Brooklyn, late 20th century." Students would walk up to the barrier around the installation by Linda Peer—and the barrier of course is mine, it's the museum's presence on the artwork—go up to the label, read it, look at the object, and think they know what they were looking at, when actually they knew very little. I didn't say anything false, but they really had a totally different view of what that object was about. The works became exotic, they looked like something made by someone you could never know, the works in many instances were dehumanized because of the way they were installed. In the turn-of-the-century space, the works looked like they had a certain authority that the works didn't have in the white cube. The white cube also had a way of affecting you: it looked cold, it looked sort of scientific.

For me, this was a watershed event. If the work was being manipulated that much, that was the area I wanted to work in. From that point on, I didn't want to ask artists to be involved

with this, since I was actually manipulating their work. I figured I'd just do it with my own work. I made an installation called "The Other Museum"—one part, the Colonial Collection; I wrapped French and British flags around African masks. There were all trade pieces, but when you put something under that beautiful lighting, it looks, whatever the word means, "authentic." I had this urn made which looks somewhat like a turn-of-the-century urn, in which I placed Harper's illustrations from the turn of the century of the punitive expeditions between the Danus and the British and the Ashanti and the British. I wrapped the masks because they're part of hostages to the museum. I think they've been in the museum since the turn of the century—and many of the collections do date from that time—they were taken out during these wars. So I consider them hostages in these institutions. There are a lot of questions surrounding this—should they go back, shouldn't they go back. I used to bring history to the museum, because I feel that the aesthetic amnesties the historic and keeps the impulse within the museum and continues the dislocation of what those objects are about. One object I didn't change except for the label: "Stolen from the Zande tribe, 1899. Private collection." I got a lot of collections upset, but indeed, if it came out of the African country in 1899, more than likely it had been just taken. In a newly installed space in one museum, a Zande went to an object and said, "Acquired by Colonel So-and-so in 1896." How does a colonel acquire something? He gives up there and says, "Give that to me or I'll shoot you."

So use the museum as my palette. Curators, whether they think it's or not, really create how you are to view and how about these objects, as I figured, "If they can do it, I can do it too." Everything in the exhibition environment is mine, whenever I organize the space I painted one contemporary gallery a dark color, and it felt like the Truth, like the real, this has got to be serious.

My exhibition at Metro Pictures, Panta Rhei, was a gallery of classical and ancient art. It consisted of the plaster casts. I painted the walls a light-blue color that I have over and over again in many museums that still have plaster casts. Rooms of plaster casts were common in American museums at the turn of the century; though they couldn't get the actual objects from Europe, they wanted the people of the United States to experience these objects. Since they're not getting the same aesthetic experience from plaster they would get from the original objects if they traveled to Greece or Rome or what have you, to my mind what they were actually getting was the symbolization of having these objects. In many museums, you begin with the roots of ancient art, then you go from there to early European art, and from there to late modern art, then to contemporary art. So what the museum tries to do is attach our culture to this ancient culture in a way that goes beyond influence. It really tries to say that this is our culture and this is why our culture is great, because...
of the relationship with this ancient important culture. This is not a new phenomenon. Hitler did this as well, if you go to any state capital or to Washington, D.C., you will find references to ancient Greece, which is about democracy but also about attachment to a culture and about presenting our culture as above other cultures on planet because of its relationship with this ancient culture. In my travels, I've studied in West Africa, I've been in Peru, I've been to Egypt, and I do a lot of research around my exhibitions. One of the things I learned was that most of the ancient Greek gods had Egyptian predecessors. There was a lot of trade going on between the two countries, and this is written in all the scholarly texts, but it's not generally known. So what I did was give the Greek statues their Egyptian names. Hermes was Amun, Dionysus was Osiris, Artemis was Bast, and so on. In addition, I made forced combinations of the two. Bast was exploding from the head of Artemis, and Hathor was coming out of the head of Artemis also. In addition to combining objects by smashing them, I like to place things side by side, because objects speak to one another and speak to you about their relations to one another just by placing them next to one another.

I was asked by the Contemporary Museum to organize an exhibition anywhere in Baltimore, and I chose the Maryland Historical Society, which has got to be the most conservative environment in the city. I needed a studio, so I took up residence in the president's office. I was there for a concentrated period of six weeks, though I kept on coming and going for a year. That allowed me to work on the staff of the Historical Society, who had worked with art objects. It had not been a real artist and really didn't know what was going on. They would keep walking by the studio and ask, "Is it art yet?" I didn't curate the show—this is my artwork. I made that distinction. Although people looked at the exhibition and saw it as a curated exhibition, which is fine, for me it's something else entirely, it's my work. Going through the museum, I saw it as a very alien environment. Prior to this project, I would never even go into a place like this, let alone look at anything for very long. I had to ask myself, "Where am I in this space, what is this space about, and why am I having this reaction to it?" After spending some time there, I realized it wasn't so much the objects as the way the things were placed that really offended me. The process that I go through in creating my installation is to speak with everybody in the museum, from the maintenance people through the executive director, and find out what they feel about the institution, what they feel about the city they're in, and what the relationship is between the two. I looked at every object in the Historical Society collection, which is a vast one. They've been collecting since 1840, and it was a museum in the early days, so they really have some old objects in the collection. But those things aren't on view. And there are many of the things that I have put on view, because what they put on view says a lot about the museum, but what they don't put on view says even more. I didn't know what I was going to do, but I really wanted the objects to speak to me, and I called the installation Missing the Museum because it could mean "missing" us in gold mine, digging up something, or it could mean blowing up something, or it could mean making nothing, or it could mean making it more. So I just look at every object, and tried to pull from the objects what they were about, what they told me about the institution and about the museum. They gave me the entire third floor to do this. One thing they told me was that I had to have complete autonomy to do whatever I wanted, or else I would walk. That was exactly what I got, and I'm still amazed that they allowed me to do it.

The first thing you saw when you walked into the third floor was a globe that I found in silver storage that says "TRUTH" on it. It was something made in the 1870s, but it seemed very contemporary. Barbara Kruger could have made it if she wanted to work in silver. It was actually a truth in advertising globe; they stopped making it in 1938, which I guess is when people stopped believing there was any truth in advertising! With the truth goblet, I placed empty plastic mounds. The label speaks the truth trophy and where and where it was made, and then says, "Plastic mounds, first made in the 1960s," where they were made, and off we, because for a historical society, every object will have some historical significance. I wanted to point out that everybody in our environment had meaning, though it may be so much a part of our environment that we're not really aware of it. By having the truth be the first thing you saw, it was speaking to the notion of truth, and if there is truth, and whose truth, so on either side of this vitrine are two sets of pedestals, one set with busts and another set with no busts. The three busts are ones I found in the Historical Society collection of people who apparently had a great impact on Maryland, none of them from Maryland, by the way. Napoleon, Henry Clay, and Andrew Jackson. The pedestals without busts were labeled Horace Tiger, Benjamin Barnecker, and Frederick Douglass—three very important people from Maryland, and there's nothing in the Historical Society collection about them at all.

The whole exhibition was about looking at objects found in the museums, just taking them out and putting them on view. The so-called cigar-store Indians were really compelling objects, really beautiful, but I couldn't face having them face me, because my mother's Native American, and they don't look like any Indians I ever knew. In actuality, these Indians represent the society's idea of what an Indian is. In many cases, the models were other Americans. One sculpture is actually of the daughter of the German immigrant who made the statue—her physique, her stance, and her face have no connection to a Native American. So what I did was make them give you their busts, so you couldn't look in their faces and accept the stereotype. What they were facing was a
wall of photographs of contemporary Native Americans in Maryland, one of the few things that are not from the institution. I brought them in, because when I asked at the Historical Society, I was told, "There are no Indians in Maryland."

I chose a good many paintings for the third floor. In one painting, there are five children, and two black children are clearly there only for the sake of being part of the composition. Given the time frame, these children were slaves, but I actually found out their names and who they were. So in this installation, you would walk up to the painting, and the children would light up and speak to you. They'd say things like, "Who am I going to be? Who is going to love me?"

Another one said, "Am I your friend? Am I your brother? Am I your pet?" By looking up close in this painting, you can see the black child holding a bird actually has a metal collar around his neck, and he actually was the "golden retriever" for the white boy.

Sometimes I took paintings and just renamed them. In most museums, as for the paintings done in the last thirty or forty years, the paintings were not named. So all the titles you see in museums were assigned by the curators. I figured, if you can do it, I can do it too. So for a painting of a wealthy plantation scene, one label gave the title the museum had assigned it: Country Life. The other side of the painting had a label going it my own title: Frederick Servick, Fruit—trying to change the meaning of the work and what was important in it.

There is a lot of silver in this museum. I created one vitrine of repousse silver with the label "Metalwork 1793-1890." But also made of metal, hidden deep in the storage rooms at the Historical Society, were slave shackles. So I placed them together, because normally you have one museum for beautiful things and one museum for horrific things. Actually, they did a lot to do with one another; the production of the one was made possible by the subjugation enforced by the other. Quite possibly, both of these could have been made by the same hand. To my mind, how things are displayed in galleries and museums makes a huge difference in how one sees the world.

I also covered many lithographs with glassine paper, exposing only the black person in the picture. The viewer became acutely aware of African-Americans in the landscape or city scene. I had a section called "Quilts of Transport," with the sticky chair of the last royal governor and a painting on the wall just carrying it, and a model ship with account logs of various slaveholders with names of the slaves and other "fireproof" placed two old baby carriages in the space; one had, instead of the baby's bed, a black child, a Fu Khue Xian. Next to it on the wall, I had an early photograph on the wall of black names with a white baby in a baby carriage.

Under the heading "Cabinet Making," I placed baroque chairs facing a public whipping post which was still used by the city jail in the 1950s and had been hidden in the basement of the Maryland Historical Society since 1963. I used doll houses to depict a slave revolt beside it: a manuscript by a young woman who was writing of her fear at the time of the slave uprisings.

"The final section was about dreams and aspirations; in the recreations of the museum, totally unnoticed. I found things made by Africans and African-Americans, including American-made pottery and baskervill and personal adornments that came from Liberia, circa 1867. A book by Benjamin Banneker, a mathematician and freeman, who surveyed Washington, D.C., for Jefferson, and also was an amateur astronomer. He made a book of all his astronomy charts that he figured out mathematically. I made slides of these charts and projected them on the wall; in addition to his charts, he wrote about his dreams and mentioned in diary fashion who wanted to kill him.

"By bringing things out of storage and shifting things already on view. I believe I created a new public persona for the Historical Society, one that they were not likely to come to, nor will the Baltimore community allow them to forget. To my mind, for this to happen in America, where local community residents are not empowered to chart the course of their local museum, is a huge success."

Jean Kent: Some of my friends have told me recently that I'm in an anecdote, so that means I can begin by telling you three stories. The first of them is about a curator who wants to see Fred Wilson's exhibits. The Other Museum, actually the room that had the colonial gallery, the masks with their national flags over them. I'm the curator, and I had just finished signing some papers for loans, and I walked in and I said, "How did he do this?" The labels said, "Loans courtesy of the British Museum, Loans courtesy of the British Museum." How many did he do that? How did he get permission? The British Museum doesn't do that. They insist on curators who carry everything, and then control precisely how the objects are displayed. So I think what we have here is testimony to Fred's ability to manipulate his audience, which was the world he used.

The second story I want to tell you is about the founding of the Metropolitan Museum in New York. The Metropolitan was originally founded as a museum of reproductions, plaster-of-paris reproductions-most of them, put in place by the founders to elevate the case of the working class of New York City. They run into a little problem, however, because in deference to the religious sensibilities of the founders, the museum was not open on Sundays. Which of course was the only day the working class of New York City had off. Some people might say that the Metropolitan Museum of Art hasn't changed a great deal in the interim period.

The third story is about the founding of the Museum of African Art at the Smithsonian Institution, a sister institution to my institution, the Natural History Museum. When I came aboard, we sat at the Smithsonian (we're very big on nautical terms—that's government: the
ship of state), I started going through the papers of my predecessor as curator, and found a letter from the founding director of the Museum of African Art. He wrote a very friendly letter saying that there really should be a division of labor at the Smithsonian, now that there were two museums which had exhibitions about Africa. The Museum of African Art would take all the art that was in the Museum of Natural History's collection, and in return would send over all the material culture that was in their collection, leading me to wonder whether art was made out of material or not.

The process of making, appreciating, and exhibiting art, particularly in the kind of institutions we call museums, is itself an intensely political process. This is not necessarily a process which is learned one and again when people visit museums, but is in fact understood and appreciated in terms of the accumulated knowledge and received wisdom about what museums are, and what exhibits are, and what exhibits mean.

There are two comfortable fantasies in our society: I'm sure there are more than two; perhaps there are three or four. One is that there are no classes in our society. The second comfortable fantasy is that we are a society which is becoming multicultural or has to be multicultural, as if there were such a thing as a monocultural society. Societies are composed of people from diverse backgrounds and origins, even though societies think of themselves as the most "pristine," which is not my word. Societies are made up of people of different ages who have different life experiences but who also have the capacity to understand one another. We are a multicultural society. There is no such thing as making it or becoming it. It's a fact of life. The problem we have to face, which is one I think much of contemporary life is attempting to face, is how to think about the nature of the multicultural life we live; how to turn our multiculturalism into something different, namely a society based on another pluralism—another society in which people can be different things, and sometimes can be more than one thing, without suffering censorship. The sense that art hasn't been political has emerged only recently. Art has always been political and always will be. It's a recent Western modernist fantasy that it isn't. But in 1983, at least, Hans Haacke issued a kind of clarion call to artists in his article "Museums, Managers of Consciousness":

Every museum is a political institution, no matter whether it is privately run or maintained and supervised by government agencies. ... Whether museums contend with governments, power trips of individuals, or tame corporate steamrollers, they are in the business of molding and canceling consciousness. Even though they may not agree with the system of beliefs dominant at the time, their options to not subscribe to them and instead to promote an alternative consciousness are limited. The survival of the institution and personal careers are often at stake. But in nondictatorial societies the means for the production of consciousness are not all in one hand.

Which indicates that societies, at least nondictatorial ones, are diverse, and culturally diverse at that.

The sophistication required to promote a particular interpretation of the world is potentially also available to those who interpret and to offer other versions. As the need to spend enormous sums for public relations and government propaganda indicates, things are not frozen. ...

It was never easy for museums to preserve or regain a degree of maneuverability and intellectual integrity. It takes stealth, intelligence, determination—and some luck. But a democratic society demands nothing less than that.

A democratic society demands, in Hans Haacke's sense, dissent and challenge. And the very institutions which should be, as he says, havens of dissent and challenge are the most vulnerable to an intolerance of dissent and challenge. These institutions which are charged with preserving cultural values, which are charged with preserving the canon—museums, schools, even entertainment and leisure activities—are part of public culture. If Haacke is right, as I think he is, they are inevitably political institutions. However, they are also institutions which we understand not as neutral spaces entering into them, but by virtue of the knowledge and experience we bring to them. And that knowledge and experience is not our own; it's secondhand.

The first rule for understanding the human condition is that people live in secondhand worlds and are aware of much more than they have personally experienced. If we only know what we alone experienced, we would be limited creatures indeed. Our own experience is always indirect. The quality of our lives is determined by "received" meanings we receive from others. Everyone lives in a world of such meanings; no person stands alone confronting a world of solid fact. No such world is available. The closest man come to it is when they're infants, or when people become insane. Then in a terrifying sense of meaningless events and senseless confusion, people are relieved with a panic of non-total insecurity. In everyday life, people do not experience a world of solid fact. Their experience itself is selected by stereotyped meanings and shaped by ready-made interpretations, many of them embodied in museums. The images of the world and of themselves are offered by crowds of witnesses never met and never to be met. Yet for every person...
these images provided by strangers, and by the dead, are the very basis of life us a human being. What we know about the world is not only conventional, it also appears to us as he natural, and not only does it appear to be natural, but think about it - if you had to question all the knowledge you had, from the moment you got out of bed to the moment you went to bed, you’d never get up with it. You’d never get to breakfast. There is a story one of my professors once told me about the centipede and the crow. The crow looked at the centipede from a crow’s point of view, and asked, “How do you know which leg to move, and which to move it?” And the centipede never thought about that before, started thinking about it, and remained frozen in place.

However, the absence of self-consciousness about our categories and social processes is not always such a good thing. Let’s look at some conventions and images. A cartoon appeared in the Miami Herald a couple of years ago by Dan Wright, a wonderful cartoonist. In it, Ronald and Nancy Reagan performing a sacrifice in the way that these two primitives were discovered using anthropologists in the White House, Ronald says to Nancy, “What are we supposed to do now, Nancy?” and she says, “Sacrifice the goat, since the chickens, and pound the lard to powder.” Ronald and Nancy are shown dressed in the stereotypical garb of the African savage. Their poses are very much like the drawing of a sham doctor in Five Years with the Congo Cannibals by Herband Ward (1890), who gave the bulk of the early collection to the National Museum of Natural History, (and who acquired it in the Congo manning a relief station for Stanley. That drawing was added to Ward’s book by the publisher. Ward didn’t even draw it, though he drew all the other areas. Here is not another witch doctor is a characteristic pose, and you realize suddenly: “These people are being.cz” The very way we understand otherness is through our conventions, even if in the process of understanding it we misunderstand it. At the same time someone is being made different and exotic, they’re being made the same. Our understandings of different people are both different and the same, and museums are repositories of images, organized in characteristic ways that tell us something about the nature of diversity in the societies in which we find them.

The signature statue of the Eurohistorisches Museum in Vienna, the imperial museum in an imperial city, is Canova’s Theseus Subduing the Centaurs. It’s placed on the stairs as you go up—the entrance to the imperial collection of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. When you look into your classical dictionary, you discover that in ancient Greece, the centaurs were barbaric half-animals who lived on the edge of ancient Rome. They had to be subdued by Theseus at a feast for their bad behavior—which shows that punishment isn’t just what it used to be—but also indicates you are entering a room which contains art, not of the centuries, but of classical inheritors of Theseus, imperial heirs of tradition.

The conventions by which we understand objects and otherwise are conventions produced, at least in part, by museums. But as we noted earlier, one way to express these are places that both instruct us and reinforce silences, both reveal and conceal, some of what museums tell us about the nature of society, of culture, and of diversity is shared, but some is not. I think we have a good understanding of the differences among types of museums even if we can’t articulate it. Just look at the behavior of children in an art museum and the behavior of children in a natural history or a science museum; clearly they are being invited to act in very different ways.

Consider a headress displayed in a museum of African art. It’s displayed as what it is in one sense: a work of abstract art, one in which we are invited to appreciate and contemplate the combinations of colors and textures. But this is not necessarily how the user of the mask view it. A field photograph of a headress cannot do what it was designed to do. It reveals it as a semantic modification of the head for various kinds of social purposes, so these social and cultural aesthetics are not the aesthetics of another time and place. Yet most museums, especially great museums in the Western tradition, make claims about the universality of what they’re doing. In art museums the non-Western cultures are displayed on the ground floor, as kind of receptacle into which the great stream of Western civilization flows. This story tells us not just the story of the Western canon, but the story of the evolution of art and appreciation in terms of, very often, abstraction and separation. Other museums, such as the National History Museum of which I am a part, offer a hall of Western civilization. There’s only one hall of Western civilization in the National Museum of Natural History: it begins with a prehistoric man from Europe, goes through ancient Greece, and ends with a window that looks out, deliberately, on the Internal Revenue Service Building. Because the IRS building has Doric columns, which would seem to indicate that government functionaries have a sense of humor. I promised that I would bring in as many classical allusions as I could.

What else do natural history museums do that is distinctive of the genre? They create dioramas. Consider a diorama from the American Museum of Natural History, which is probably the high point of the art of diorama-making. What’s curious about these dioramas, as Donna Haraway has pointed out, is that they all show dominant male figures in the front, and shy females and children in the rear, even when that doesn’t conform to animal behavior.

Now consider the Bushmen diorama at the hall for which I am responsible. It’s entitled ""The Bushmen and depicts a San hunter (South Africa) in a desert scene with a bow and ar-
new aimed over the head of a squatting woman. This domino reproduces the male-dominant/female-subservient posture that Donna Haraway argues is found in most animal dominas. No one would know from looking at the domino that Bushmen kinship systems and religion are among some of the most complex in the world—and we don't call them Bushmen anymore. The very way that they're put in the domino—the use of lines, color patterns, trompe l'oeil sorts of devices—assimilates them to nature, and even makes the claim that we may know these people the way we know animals. This domino is next to a human evolution display, which makes an even stronger assertion. We have had extensive debates in the museum about whether the juxtaposition is deliberate.

If natural history museums make these sorts of powerful but implicit comparisons, what do cultural history museums do, such as the Maryland Historical Society? They define, through assertion and silence, the changing shape of societies and what people do. They tell you, as indeed all histories do—and that's one of the reasons history is so contested in universities—who was important, and who wasn't, whose experiences are important, and which aren't. Museums leave some objects in the collections while exhibiting others. But remember, as Hans Haacke also points out, that museums are places where these kinds of political messages can be countered. They are places in which not just politics are enforced, but within which politics in the sense of the process by which people make decisions about who they are and who they will be, is played out, at least in terms of our fantasies and visions of who we are and what we may be. That's one reason there's been a reaction in recent years against museums, almost a hostility toward museums, because some people enter museums with an attitude of fear. Others enter them with an attitude of hostility and skepticism. And recently, certain kinds of art have tried to play with the very nature of those implicit attitudes.

I think we can talk about three kinds of reactions. The first of them is the multicultural exhibit. A massive Persian show putting Western and non-Western art side by side. "Magicians de la Terre," was to be the answer to the great "Frenemies" show at the Museum of Modern Art. The assertion of the "Magicians" show was that all artists are magicians of the earth; it was a kind of whole-earth show, as one person called it, and tried to show that all artists were in touch with the fundamentals. One of the ways they did it was by pairing a characteristic Richard Long piece, in which he tries to illustrate the nature of certain elements in the world, and an Australian Aboriginal sand painting. The sand painting was reproduced in front of Long's piece, so you were left with the feeling that there were two artists from extraordinarily different places trying to reproduce the elements of the world. But for Long, the elements are base materials themselves, and for the Australian Aboriginal painting they're visible signs of the hidden world called the Dreamtime. The show utilized the cultural specificity of artists from traditions different from those of the curators.

That's one kind of multicultural exhibit. A second kind is the exhibit that reflects upon how exhibits determine what we know. A distinguished example is the exhibit "Art/Artifact," put on by the Center for African Art in New York. The same objects were shown in a "cabinet of curiosities," a Hampton University natural history museum, an art museum, and a gallery, so that viewers were forced to question what they were seeing and how the very frame of the exhibit affected it.

The third kind of art exhibit is what I call the site-specific form of art that challenges the nature of the frame itself. James Luna, a Luiseno Indian performance artist, does what he calls The Artifact Piece where he puts himself in a coffin-like structure and surrounds himself with the artifacts of his life—some plastic things and other objects. Another kind of site-specific piece is represented by the kinds of art that Fred Wilson himself creates. I regard Mining the Museum as one of the most extraordinary things that I've ever seen, even if I wasn't fooled as much as I was by The Other Museum. It is a wonderful example of art as a political challenge linked to a specific site, not only because of the specific displays but because of the way it works within the museum itself. This is an exhibit that you cannot fully appreciate unless you see the rest of the museum as well as the exhibit. Too many people go up stairs to Mining the Museum. As you view the video, Fred quietly says, "Now I want you to go see the rest of the museum, because I put pieces in there." He has reproduced the genres and categories of the museum itself in the exhibit. One of the striking things about the museum, although you wouldn't notice it unless you'd seen Mining the Museum and then gone back, is the degree to which other services appear in almost every room. I stopped counting after see—and the degree to which doll houses are a compulsory form of exhibiting in the museum, cut open, in an almost surgical kind of way. Fred has opened up what the museum tells us, and many of the exhibits why tell us about Maryland history, and conversely when the museum is silent.

Let me give you one more example. When you visit Mining the Museum, you know you're visiting something that has to do with the museum. It's framed that way. At the Museum of Natural History last September, we presented a performance piece called The Year of the White Bear. Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West. The performance artists Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco put themselves into a glass cage in the round of the museum and presented themselves as two Indians whose cultures gave them a degree of familiarity with the
West, since their tribe had for one hundred years been masquerading as English pirates and rais- ing ships. Inside the museum, they typed on computers, they were fed Coca-Cola and bananas, and when you gave them three coins and said, "Poka, poka, poka," they posed for their photographs with you. Guerrera's Common Pete put up and down, wearing a mask, Guatemalan shorts, and leather with spikes, and carrying a briefcase. People were utterly perplexed. At the insistence of the artists, we did not say who they were. A Smithsonian staff person summarizing visitor response reported that many people thought that they supposedly did not speak English. A Chilean couple were in disbelief that the artists were from Mexico; their bodies were the wrong shape. Most visi- tors insisted that what they saw was authentic; viewers' comments were mostly positive, but one kept insisting that this was actually a hidden video screen, and wanted to know why he was going to bring TV. One anthropology professor was going to call her students up and insist that they come down to the museum. A Cherokee woman left the museum outraged before reading the newsletter. Many other visitors liked the piece, but did not want to be reminded, particularly black visitors, of issues of slavery. They and many Native American visitors appeared to like the concept but were disturbed by the reality. I spoke to a dentist from Akron who spent an hour questioning people; I've never seen anyone so caught up in a display before.

These events illustrate both the political nature of the artistic process and the degree to which politics can be transformed into an issue within a context. One was in chal- lenge the secondhand worlds in which we live by focusing—on site-specific art does—or a way of seeing, which brings us back to Hans Haacke's project. Museums become sites where one not only presents things but where there is also the possibility of questioning those very assumptions. This is the only way in which we can build a multicultural society, one in which we not only have many cultures, but in which it is possible to be part of more than one culture.

This text is drawn from the lecture series "Art in Context: Native and the New World," sponsored in the Fall of 1993 by the Atlanta College of Art Gallery and Continuing Education Department. It was originally published in Antiques 17, no. 3 (May June 1993): 2-9, and republished in Rina Greenberg et al., eds., Thinking about Exhibitions (London: Routledge, 1996), 231-258, from which the present version is taken.
a conversation with martha buskirk (1994)
fred wilson

Martha Buskirk: The intersection of the work of art and the museum is an issue of increasing importance for twentieth-century artists—both for Duchamp and for contemporary work. You have focused very specifically on how the museum is assembled and how meaning is constructed in that context. I'm also interested in the conjunction between being an artist and being a curator, and the degree to which the two overlap.

Fred Wilson: I've been asked if my work came from various theoretical discussions, but actually it didn't. It came from my experience in museums. Having worked as both a curator and an artist, there is a big difference between the two. With curating, the whole notion of irony is not involved, often for good reason—because the public in the museum space often expects some form of universal truth or knowledge, a notion I hold suspect. The fact that I'm an artist in an institution gives the viewer a certain legibility in how to respond to this work. My work is extremely personal in curating, but is forced more to the background because of the emphasis on so called objective scholarship, which tends to make the viewers passive in their experience of the exhibition. I'm always trying to push the exhibitions farther than I would expect a museum curator to go.

Buskirk: Though of course some of what could be understood as personal vision in making the Museum was really based on scholarship, on a close examination of the details of the collection and its archive, which allowed you to come up with identifications and other information that had not been found, or perhaps sought, before.

Wilson: I have nothing against scholarship. It's important that, in my work, I'm not making grandiose claims from nowhere. But I do like the audience to think about scholarship in a more open way. In making the Museum, I'm not trying to say that this is the history that you should be paying attention to. I'm just pointing out that, in an environment that supposedly has the history of Maryland, it's possible that there's another history that's not being talked about. It would be possible to do an exhibition about women's history, about Jewish history, about immigrant history based on looking at things in the collection. I chose African-American and Native American information because that was impossible for me to overlook. But it was never to say that this was the history you had to be looking at. And certainly that exhibition was not about a straight black history. If I'd wanted to, I could have borrowed things from other museums around Maryland and around the country and made a more cohesive black history in the linear fashion, the way museums do. But that's not what I was trying to do.

Buskirk: There seems to be a foregone conclusion in your work that you are working from within the institutional space—that you are not trying to make a gesture that exists entirely in another space, but that you're working with histories that have to some degree already been constructed. Did that always seem self-evident to you as a direction?

Wilson: After Making the Museum and the work in Seattle, it seemed to make the most sense, I'm really interested in surprise and how one reacts on an emotional and intuitive level before the intellectual self kicks in. That syncope seems to happen best when you feel that you understand the situation that you're involved in, and the museum setting is one where people feel that they know what to expect and how they're supposed to act. It's a way, once I have people disoriented, to get them to push past their comfort zone. Otherwise, if they walk into a space that's already an environment where they're on their guard, you can lose a lot.

Buskirk: What you've done in working with the rhetoric of already established spaces has been related by critics to Conceptual art. I was wondering how self-consciously you were positioning yourself in relation to Conceptual art of the 1960s and '70s, or to art of earlier periods.

Wilson: Being schooled in college in the mid-1970s, Conceptual art was in the dialogue of the art school, and I had an interest in it. But more recently I've seen a lot that I was not familiar with them. So I guess I could say that I was generally familiar with it, but not immersed in it.
Buskirk: Yes, whether or not you were referring explicitly to Conceptual art, one could say that Conceptual art created a space in which people could understand the issues that you have dealt with in your work.

Wilson: In being a curator for a number of years, I heard this particular craft. Certainly people like [Redacted] were doing work based on the museum, but I wasn't aware of it until later, so I really came to this from my experience. Even though I do consider myself a Conceptual artist, I also work totally from the visual—how the things relate to me, and how the environment that I'm in works with me. Every environment that I do is for me very much a visual relationship of objects, and how they are placed in the space.

Buskirk: There's been a great deal written about your installation in Baltimore, and less about the one in Seattle [The Museum: Mixed Metaphors, 1993]. Obviously there were different types of museums, a differentiation that is the product of a historical process that separated the fine arts from natural history, ethnography, historical documentation, and so on. I'm interested in how you have put that question—how you research the idea of the artifact and its interpretation. But I'm also curious about your expectations in Seattle, where you were working on a historical society but not in an art museum.

Wilson: What I loved about Seattle was that it was the exact opposite of what I had been working with in Baltimore. We were a totally new museum, which hadn't been open a year, as opposed to the Historical Society, which had been there since the mid-nineteenth century. It was not the emotional experience of entering the museum, because they didn't have that kind of visual American history that so closely relates to my personal history. This museum, like the Metropolitan, and all museums that have general collections of art from around the world, have all jumped into saying that they're multicultural. And to me, they're about as multicultural as the British Empire: all the cultures are there, but who decides what they have to say, what's next to what, and what's important? So I decided to look at it in terms of the history is created in the linear nature of the floor plan of the museum, which takes you from the ancient world, Egypt, Greece, and Rome, through medieval Europe, the Renaissance, and so on, until you end up in twentieth-century American art. Then the other collections are elsewhere in the museum, and not really part of that march of history. So I tried to mix the collections together in a way that made sense to me, and tried to point to the fact that these things are set up in a very specific kind of way. What was also different was the fact that those things were interrelated throughout the institution. I was a little concerned, because I'm very much interested in controlling the space. But what I lost in being able to arrange the exact space I gained in that notion of surprise, that ability to catch the viewers off guard so that they look at everything more closely. Another reason I liked Seattle was because I didn't want to be a person who only did things about African-American history, even though it's very important to me.

Buskirk: You've worked with the rhetoric of museums, but you've also done exhibitions in galleries. Even though a gallery of contemporary art does have a history, and does carry associations, it is in some ways a less heavily loaded space than the museum.

Wilson: When I do a piece at Metro Pictures, or even the Whitney Biennial, you're going to that space and you know that you're expecting something unusual or unexpected. I can't fool you to think that it's a museum.

Buskirk: I am interested in this idea of taking the objects that are already in the fine art museum and reconfiguring them to create a sense of surprise. There have been so many other moments already in the twentieth century when artists have attempted to raise questions or to create a sense of shock by bringing objects or images that would not normally be considered art into the space of the exhibition or gallery, and later the museum. On the other hand, you are trying to work with what is already in the museum.

Wilson: That's true. I am in many ways responding to the history of art and trying not to do what has been done before, which has a lot to do with notions of the exotic. If anything, I'm trying to expose that notion for what it is by choosing things that are familiar and making people see them differently. What can you bring into a museum now that wouldn't belong in a museum? There's basically nothing. So that whole approach is out the window. To me it's much more rigorous to look at the museum itself and to pull out relationships that are invisibly there and to make them visible. That, to me, is much more exciting.

This conversation took place on June 14, 1994. It was first published in October 70 (Fall 1994): 106-112.
Renee Green, *Bequest*, 1991. Produced for the Worcester Art Museum in Massachusetts, this installation investigated the bequest of Stephen Salisbury III, the founder of the museum, as well as the fascination with the symbols of blackness and whiteness in the writings of New England authors Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Edgar Allan Poe, and W. E. B. Du Bois. Courtesy of the artist and Free Agent Media.

symbolic capital management, or what to do with the good, the true, and the beautiful (1997)
hans haacke

When I looked up the key word "culture" in Bartlett's, some while ago, I discovered the startling phrase "When I hear the word 'culture,' I reach for my revolver."

I did not find the decidedly less militant phrase "When I hear the word 'culture,' I reach for my checkbook," which I vaguely remembered. I had set out to research the latter quotation, because it seemed pertinent to the topic of symbolic capital management. After my initial disappointment, I realised that the quotation I had found by accident was not without relevance and, in fact, complemented the one I was looking for.

The gun-toting speaker is one of the heroes of a play that premiered in Berlin on Hitler's birthday, a short month after he seized power in Germany in 1933. The author, Hanns Johst, had earlier made a name as an expressionist writer and poet. With a pledge of unyielding loyalty, he dedicated his new play to Hitler, and in due course, two years later, Johst was put in charge of the literature section in Goebbels's propaganda ministry.

High culture was recognized by both the protagonist off-stage as well as the playwright's new house as something to be watched, as potentially threatening and, if need be, to be regulated or even suppressed. However, as Johst's personal career demonstrates, the new masters also recognized, as others had before and would do later, that the symbolic power of the arts could be put to good use.

Not least the Medici in Florence knew of the persuasive powers of the arts. But the relations between sponsors and sponsored have never been tension-free. The Inquisition in Venice, for example, was suspicious enough of Veronese's treatment of the "Last Supper" to summon him before its tribunal. As a matter of fact, they were right, to be wary of him.

Mistrust, hostility, and an urge to ridicule or censor the arts are not foreign to our time. Nor are we unaccustomed to seeing them used as instruments for the promotion of particular interests. We hardly remember that only forty years ago, abstract art was suspected by influential Americans of being part of a communist conspiracy, and that shortly thereafter, in an ironical twist, abstract expressionist paintings were sent to Europe to play a combat role in the ideological battle of the cold war. We have fortunately been spared the degree of fundamentalist fervor that calls for the killing of artists accused of blasphemy, but we have not had our share of incendiary speeches in Congress. One indicator of the intensity of our contemporary culture wars are the fortunes of the National Endowment for the Arts. For good measure, Morley Safer, the Sunday painter of sudden fame, reported the 32 million viewers of 60 Minutes, not too long ago, that contemporary art, the kind shown in museums like the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum, was nothing but a hoax.

These examples, uneven as they are, and coming from varied historical periods and diverse social contexts, illustrate a theme of the sociology of culture: Artworks do not represent universally accepted notions of the good, the true, and the beautiful. Whether they are viewed as uplifting, destructive, or nothing more than a profitable investment depends on who looks at them. In extreme situations, as the quotation that triggered these thoughts suggests, culture is silenced with guns. Contrary to Kant's dictum of "disinterested pleasure," the arts are not ideologically neutral. They are, in fact, one of the many arenas where conflicting ideas about who we are, and what our social relations should be, are played against each other. Enfolded in cultural productions are interests, beliefs, and goals. And, in turn, they affect our interests, beliefs, and goals. Artists and arts institutions—like the media and schools—are part of what has been called the consciousness industry. They participate to varying degrees in a symbolic struggle over the perception of the social world, and thereby shape society. Pierre Bourdieu, one of the eminent contemporary sociologists of culture, puts us on the alert: "The most successful ideological effects," he says, "are those which have no need for words, and ask no more than complicitous silence. It follows... that
any analysis of ideologies, in the narrow sense of 'legitimizing discourses,' which fails to include an analysis of the corresponding institutional mechanisms is liable to be no more than a contribution to the efficacy of these ideologies."

As for notions of what is good, true, and beautiful, the classical triad, are contingent, endlessly negotiated, or fought over, so is the encoded meaning of cultural productions not something permanent, comparable to the genetic code. The context in which they appear has a signifying power of its own. As the context changes, so does the way audiences respond. The same artifact can elicit rather varied reactions, depending on the historical period, the cultural and social circumstances, or for that matter, its exchange value.

The phrase "When I hear the word 'culture,' I reach for my checkbook" could make us think that the speaker understands that high culture is an expensive enterprise, which needs not only moral but also financial backing, and that he is willing to chip in. It conjures up the image of the altruistic private patron who has been the proverbial mainspring of the arts in this country. However, the comment also has a cold, cynical ring. In fact, it was this ambiguity which led me to research its origin. With the help of knowledgeable friends I eventually traced it.

Like the "revolver" quotation, this phrase is uttered by an actor, Jean-Luc Godard, in his 1963 screenplay Le Mépris (Contempt), put it into the mouth of Jack Balance in Godard's film. Palance plays the role of a movie producer. Working for him is Fritz Lang, who plays himself as a film director. In the opening sequence, Lang and the producer look at rushes from the Odyssey film Lang is shooting. The scene of an: altering nude sirens languorously swimming underwater prompts the producer to ask the director, "What will go with this?" Lang answers with a recitation of a passage from Dante, whereupon the producer jumps up in a rage, tears down the projection screen, smashes it on, and screams, "This is what I'll do with your films! When Lang mumbles something like 'culture' or 'crime against culture,' the producer cuts him off: "When I hear the word 'culture,' I reach for my checkbook." In effect, he pulls out his checkbook, writes out a check on the back of his attractive young secretary and gives it to the scenewriter, who pockets it, presumably with the understanding that he will rewrite the script.

The parallelism of the two quotations is probably not accidental. Fritz Lang certainly knew of the outbreak on the Berlin stage in 1933. What we know about Jean-Luc Godard suggests that he had heard the phrase too, perhaps even from Fritz Lang. It is fair to assume Godard not only saw a linguistic connection but invented this scene as a parable.

that allowed him to link the violence of the gun with economic violence. Lang's symbolic capital, i.e., his reputation as a film director, proves not to be a match for the producer's economic capital, although the producer is nothing without Fritz Lang. Symbolic and economic capital constitute power. They are linked in a complex, sometimes strained, sometimes even violent, but inseparable relationship. They are rarely equal partners.

Twenty-five years ago, in 1972, Marcel Broodthaers presented the Eagle Department of his Museum of Modern Art at the Kunsthalle in Düsseldorf. In his preface to the catalogue, Broodthaers wrote:

At a foreign artist, I am glad that, for the purpose of an analytical (in contrast to an emotional) consideration of the concept of art, I was able to benefit from the freedom of expression in the Federal Republic.

What are the limits to the freedom of expression an artist is granted? In practical terms, it is where the political leadership of a country draws the line. Therefore it is only natural that I express my gratitude to the chancellor of the Federal Republic, Willy Brandt.

Such a catalogue statement is unusual. All the more did it intrigue me, as did the exhibition "The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present."

In his fictional museum, Broodthaers equates the power popularly attributed to the eagle with the aura surrounding art. He suggests that neither the authority of the state nor the symbolic power of art, interchangeably represented by the eagle in his metaphorical universe, is innate, god-given, and universally recognized. Rather, as in the story of the Wizard of Oz, they are projections of power, social constructs, to which Broodthaers alludes using the term "ideology." His catalogue preface implies that public analysis of the ideological underpinnings of power, like those of art, has political ramifications which may test a society's limits to freedom of expression.

Indeed, museums are institutions which contribute to the shaping and promotion of the ideas governing our social relations. Consequently, whether intended or not, as managers of consciousness, museums are agents in the political arena. It is perhaps for this reason that Broodthaers paid tribute to Willy Brandt for having created a climate favoring freedom of expression.

In my view, however, Broodthaers may have overstated the power of the central political leadership in democratic societies and perhaps underestimated the degree to which
local and regional powers, as well as powerful private individuals and pressure groups, are able to control the public discourse.

But Broodthaers was, in fact, quite aware that power relationships in the world of symbolic capital were much more complex than the catalogue surface, isolated from his work and other writings, seems to suggest. In fact, at the occasion of his entry into the art world in 1956 he unmistakably alluded to the connection between the symbolic value of artworks and their exchange value. He also knew, of course, that the reputation of artists is subject to currency fluctuations and that the art market, like markets of other goods of fictional value, invite the manipulation of the price for which ornithological commodities are traded.

In one of the four installation photos in the retrospective volume of the Düsseldorf catalogue, connoisseurs of the German art scene of the 1970s can identify Willy Bongard, the inventor of the Art Concept. Actually since the 1970s and continuing today, this art stock market analysis has been published in the German business magazine Capital. In the catalogue photo, one can discern that Bongard is carrying a copy of the first volume of the Broodthaers catalogue. He is looking to the left, the direction in which a slide projector is pointed. However, one cannot see what is being projected. On the wall behind the projector hangs a banner with a double-headed eagle as part of the coat of arms of Cologne, the city of the first postwar art fair. Reflecting on his own enterprise, this photo of 1972 seems to suggest the artist's understanding that the symbolic and the economic capital of what Broodthaers, in 1964, called 'insincere' products, affect each other. But contrary to the perennial suggestions of the Art Concept, their respective ratios do not match.

In spite of his professed 'insincerity', Broodthaers was not particularly interested in being a big player in the high-stakes game of the art stock market. On the contrary, in his postexhibition volume of the catalogue, he expressed with pride that he had plucked some feathers from the mythical bird. But he also acknowledged a degree of failure: "The language of advertising aims for the unconscious of the consumer/viewer; that is how the magic eagle regains its power." Closing, in a tone of resignation, he described a world which, at the time, appeared to many readers to be the bitter fruit of a paranoid imagination: "Art is used in advertising with enormous success. It rules over bright horizons. It represents the dreams of mankind."

Twenty-five years later, marketing is firmly established as a high art. While sponsors usually underwrite only a small part of the costs of an exhibition and never contribute to the operating budget, they have been gaining indirect veto power over programming in many institutions. Obvious to what is at stake, and averted by an equally insidious press, the political class is shrinking its democratic responsibilities by allowing or even advocating the de facto takeover of the institutions by business interests. More and more, exhibition programs are determined by the degree to which they lead themselves to positive image transfer for a sponsoring corporation. As a consequence, crowd pleasing, usually uncritical blockbusters become the order of the day, not feather plucking events. Under these pressures, programs with low entertainment value and events planned with critical, analytic, and experimental ambitions increasingly fall victim to institutional self-censorship. The press, in guileful collusion with the sponsors, pays little attention to these glamorous and usually underfunded projects, because they are not toured by a big publicity machine like the one that corporations often pay for at the same rate as for the sponsored events. In effect, the public is given the impression that only blockbusters are worth seeing, and it stays away, of other times. Caught in a vicious circle, the financial health of risk-taking institutions is endangered by poor box office figures.

Since the arts are no longer seen as the pastime of "fickle snobs" and, in effect, have become fashionable, public relations experts are convinced that the association with art improves their clients' standing in the arena of public opinion and facilitates their dealings with legislators and the press. Without studying sociology—the P.R. wizards have understood high culture's symbolic power. They have reason to intone: 'It is the aura, stupid!' The instrumentalization of the good, the true, and the beautiful is to affect tax rates, trade rules, health, safety, and environmental legislation, as well as labor relations in favor of the sponsors and their industries. And it is to subtly dissuade elected officials and the press from scrutinizing their clients' corporate conduct and to deflect public criticism.

A P.R. man from Mobil once explained his company's rationale for supporting the arts: 'These programs build enough acceptance to allow us to get tough on substantive issues.' One of the Mobil ads on the Op-Ed page of The New York Times put it more bluntly: 'Art for the sake of business.' This includes, according to Alain-Dominique Perrin, the CEO of Cartier, using art to "neutralize critics." Monsieur Perrin is an enthusiastic practitioner. In an interview he confided: 'Art's sponsorship is not just a tremendous tool of corporate communications. It is much more than that: It is a tool for the seduction of public opinion.'

Art institutions, in turn, have learned to woo prospective sponsors with attractive packages and to assure them, as the Metropolitan Museum did: 'The business behind art
knows the art of good business." For the CEOs who had no taste for word plays, the museum spelled out what it meant. "Many public relations opportunities are available through the sponsorship of programs, special exhibitions and services. These can often provide a creative and cost-effective answer to a specific marketing objective, particularly where international, governmental or consumer relations may be a fundamental concern." Art professionals now use their colleagues in the development office as "reality check."

Philippe de Montebello, the director of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, is certainly a connoisseur in these matters. He has no delusions. "It's an inherent, insidious, hidden form of censorship," he admits. But the imposition of the sponsor's agenda not only has an effect on what we get to see and hear. Mr. de Montebello's president at the Met explained, "To a large degree, we're accepting a certain principle about funding that, in passing through our illustrous hall, the money is cleansed.""11

His suggestion that the sponsor's money is dirty came in response to a question about his museum's collaboration with Philip Morris. The world's largest maker of carcinogenic consumer products also happens to be the most conspicuous corporate sponsor of the arts in the United States, but not only of the arts. Philip Morris also gives hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Jesse Helms Center in North Carolina, and it sponsors the Bill of Rights. As contradictory as this may sound, it makes perfect corporate sense. Jesse Helms was instrumental in breaking down trade barriers against the import of American cigarettes in Asia, and he battled singlemindedly against tobacco tax increases. The Marlboro men paid the National Archives $600,000 for the permission to "sponsor" the Bill of Rights in a two-year, $50 million campaign. The campaign was designed to frame the cowboys' arguments against smoking restrictions as a civil rights issue. Support for the arts is meant to build constituencies in this struggle and to keep the lines open to the movers and shakers in the media and in politics. When the New York City Council deliberated, two years ago, over restrictions on smoking in public places, Philip Morris threatened to stop sponsoring cultural programs in the city and to move its headquarters to more hospitable environs. Nevertheless, the City Council passed the restrictions. The company's bluff was called: It stays, and continues to believe in the business rationale of sponsoring art events in New York.

California's penchant to discourage indulgence in carcinogenic pleasures probably was also the reason, in 1995, for Philip Morris to sponsor the exhibition "1968-1975: Reconsidering the Object of Art" at the Museum of Contemporary Art's Temporary Contemporary in Los Angeles. This investment was not an unqualified success. A number of the artists in the exhibition, discovering as late as the show's opening that Philip Morris was its sponsor, protested vociferously and managed to have the national press amplify their anger. Adrian Piper withdrew her works when the museum was not willing to substitute them with a work commemorating her patients, who both died from smoking-related diseases. A few months later, Sol LeWitt, one of the MOCA protesters, rejected a major commission from the Guggenheim Museum when he learned that the survey show "Abstraction in the Twentieth Century: Total Risk, Freedom, Discipline," for which it was intended, was sponsored by Philip Morris. The exhibition had to do without him.

Since corporate contributions to museums are tax-deductible, we, in effect, pay for the campaigns that are to affect how we live and what we think, i.e., we underwrite the expenses of our own seduction. This strategy succeeds as long as we are convinced that we get something for nothing—and believe in "disinterested pleasure."

As the first illustration of volume 2 of his postexhibition catalogue, Broadstairs chose the gold-framed painting of a castle nestled in a romantic mountain landscape. He supplied the following caption: "Oh melancholy, brittle castle of eagles."

NOTES

2. Morley Safer, "Yes . . . but is it Art?", 60 Minutes, CBS Television, September 19, 1993. Transcribed in Donnelley Information Services, Livingston, N.J.
5. Ibid.
10. Ibid.

This essay began as a public lecture at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1997. A revised version of the lecture was presented at the Kulturhalle Zürich in 1996, and the final draft was published in Stephan Dillemuth, ed., The Academy and the Corporate Public (Zürich: Permanent Press Verlag, 2002), 28–39.

INTRODUCTION

Painting and Sculpture from The Museum of Modern Art: Catalog of Deaccessions 1929 through 1998 is my contribution to the group exhibitions The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, from March 14 to June 1, 1999. It is a listing of 403 artworks sold or exchanged for new acquisitions. The list of artworks deaccessioned from The Museum of Modern Art collection was compiled from collection files and object cards in the Department of Registration and the Department of Painting and Sculpture and represents all deaccessions of painting and sculpture known from cross-referencing the existing records. The Museum of Modern Art has published in its holdings of painting and sculpture in Painting and Sculpture in The Museum of Modern Art, 1920-1967, which was followed by a companion catalog, Painting and Sculpture in The Museum of Modern Art, with Selected Works on Paper: Catalog of the Collection, January 1, 1977, which included these works acquired between 1967 and 1977. Likewise, two more catalogs were published: Painting and Sculpture in The Museum of Modern Art, with Selected Works on Paper: Catalog of the Collection, to January 1988, and Works of Art Acquired by The Department of Painting and Sculpture since January 1988 (unpublished supplement January 1997), which together contain a complete listing of the holdings of paintings, and sculpture for the subsequent twenty years.

A NOTE ON DEACCESSION AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The sale or exchange of works of art from the collection in order to purchase other works of art has been the inception of The Museum of Modern Art. Art has been a key strategy for improving our holdings of modern masterworks. The list of crucial works acquired by this process is exceptionally impressive—headed by Picasso’s Les Demoiselles d’Avignon, whose purchase was aided by the sale of a Degas pastel. A major benefit of these deacquisitions at The Museum of Modern Art has been the ability of the curators to work with the same artists, both in art, period, or area of the collection as the new acquisitions. Except in cases of deaccession for exchange work by the same artist, it is not policy to sell the work of living artists. In the present instance, we have tried to cooperate with Michael Asher’s request to have a list of works of painting and sculpture sold or exchanged by the Museum over the years. Given the time limitations of the project however, we have not been able to assure ourselves that the present list meets the criteria of comprehensiveness or accuracy; we would request in a Museum publication that readers are discouraged to be aware of possible flaws and inaccuracies in this listing of titles.

Kirk Varnedoe, Chief Curator
Department of Painting and Sculpture

the museum as muse—asher reflects (1999)
michael asher and stephan pascher

Who knows if we won’t end up converting works of art into mortgages, and draw banknotes on antique sculptures?
—Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremer de Quincy, Lettres à Miranda sur le déplacement des monuments de l’art de l’Italie, 1796

... during the twentieth century the museum has expanded its function as simply a home or repository for art to become a locus for artistic inspiration and activity,
- Brochure, Kristen Erickson, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Painting and Sculpture, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1999

I first heard about "The Museum as Muse" almost two years ago from Michael Asher. He told me about an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York that he had been invited to participate in, but it was unclear as to whether or not it would work out. He seemed to be engaged in a protracted series of negotiations with the museum. Well, it turned out that he did participate.

Michael’s work for the "Museum as Muse" exhibition deals with the accessioning and deaccessioning of artworks, that is, the transfer of objects into and out of the museum’s collection. This is the way the museum constructs a canon, manipulates the market, writes and rewrites history, as well as careers. Questions arise, however. For example: To whom are museums accountable? Is there no remaining currency to the idea that works of art are somehow part of a public domain? Do they not in a sense belong to the consciousness, the memory, the knowledge, and the sensory experience of a particular community? How can they be so arbitrarily introduced, and then just as arbitrarily removed? These are some of the questions: posed to Michael. The following is an edited transcript of that discussion.

Stephan Pascher: How did you come to participate in "The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect"?
Michael Asher: I received an invitation through the mail.
Pascher: What did you understand as the premise or thesis of the exhibition?
Asher: The invitation was very general. It didn’t go into any detail. I got the impression when I traveled to New York to meet the curator that the exhibition was predominantly limited to the museum as subject, but the type of subject he was interested in did not include inquiry.
Pascher: Could you explain a little?
Asher: I asked the curator what he meant by "the museum as subject." He gave the example of Ed Ruscha’s The Los Angeles County Museum on Fire (an oil painting from 1965–1968). From this I understood that he was interested in works that dealt with the museum as image, whether real or imaginary.
Pascher: You mean the purely visual—representations of the museum, rather than any form of analysis ... ?
Asher: Right, exactly. I asked the curator if the exhibition would include works that included institutional criticism. I felt that any examination or inquiry into the museum would be much closer to revealing its function or operation. The curator’s response was no. I should say, however, that as it got closer to the time of the opening, I became aware that there were artists included whose practices involved strategies that exposed the workings of the museum.
Pascher: So how, then, did you think about your participation once you understood what was intended?
Asher: Examination of a situation is always part of my practice. Given the conceptual philosophy, it was a great challenge to develop a project. The premise of the exhibition didn’t allow for the kind of inquiry that would demonstrate the most significant way in which a museum constructs itself. I couldn’t help but see this exhibition as an opportunity to articulate this ideological difference.

Pascher: It seems that your work is the only one in the show that actually attempts to isolate a problem with respect to the museum. In that sense, it’s a Museum of Modern Art in New York. Perhaps the one exception would be Hans Haacke’s Cowboy with Cigarrette (1966), which comments on Philip Morris’s sponsorship of the museum’s Picasso and Braque exhibition of 1989-1990! Your work was a unique aspect of the museum’s practice of “decomposition.” This is a rather uncommon term. I’ve really never heard it before. Could you explain a little about the practice of decomposition, and how you became interested in it?

Asher: I was responding to the myth of the Museum of Modern Art: how the museum is thought of as the repository of modernist art objects. It represents many of the canonical Modernist art objects. I had so many questions ... questions about this construction. Particularly at this point in time, how could there be a canon really, after all we’ve been through, and what we’ve seen! Of course, what we learn in school is that there is a canon. The problem with this way of thinking is that it doesn’t allow for any other possibilities. So one way of approaching the exhibition was to try to determine in what ways the museum had built the canon. I seemed to me necessary to look into the ways the museum worked over the years and out of the collection—whether the canon resulted from the piecing together of works acquired over the years; or whether the canon was actually shaped through a process of accession or de accession as well. One always reads stories in periodicals and newspapers about new acquisitions. If just as much shaping goes on through de accession, why does one rarely read or hear about it?

Pascher: How did you learn about the museum’s policy of deaccession? I wouldn’t think the museum advertises it.

Asher: I had a hunch that this was the case, knowing a few other museums’ policies. Specifically, I was informed in a short passage I read in the MoMA catalogue, Imagining the Future of the Museum of Modern Art (which is about the new building that they’re planning).

Pascher: How accessible was the information, et cetera, the particular data you used to make the work?

Asher: It wasn’t accessible to me at all. And it wasn’t accessible to the public. They didn’t have a list of deaccessions. It was through a certain amount of cross referencing that they put together this list. They had tracked all of their sales and exchanges, and from collection files and object cards they were able to put together a list of deaccessions.

Pascher: Object cards?

Asher: I asked my assistant curator the same thing. She replied that this was where all the deaccession information was to be found. This came as a surprise because originally I was told that compiling such a list involved a difficult job of cross-referencing many different sources.

Pascher: They put together the list for you?

Asher: I was interested in doing it myself . . . (laughing) . . . They wanted an intern to do it for me.

Pascher: In the catalogue that you produced for the exhibition, there is a sort of disclaimer from the museum’s chief curator, Kirk Varnedoe. How did this come about?

Asher: That happened about six weeks before the opening. I was told they wanted to print the museum’s policy on deaccession in the catalogue. I was told that this was a nonnegotiable matter, that it had to go in. At first I certainly didn’t want it. But when I finally read it, I realized it could be quite revealing. In principle I didn’t want it because I don’t believe a curator should modify the work of an artist. They may think that there’s a problem with the work, but that’s really the artist’s problem—not the curator’s. To me it was quite an amazing request.

Pascher: The gift of Varnedoe’s letter is that he wants to discuss the list. He makes it clear that, for him, the list does not represent legitimate research. He states, ‘We have not been able to assure ourselves that the present list meets the criteria of completeness or accuracy we would require in a museum publication.’

Asher: Right. It’s a curious statement since they had almost half a year to assemble this list. Originally there was a passage in Varnedoe’s statement which, in effect, stated that this was not an official museum catalogue. I was told that the editor of the catalogue asked him if the museum had official catalogues. He pointed out that they didn’t. The editor then added, “Then, how could it (the ‘Asher catalogue’) be unofficial?”

Pascher: Unofficial . . . (laughing) . . .

Asher: (laughing) . . . Unofficial . . . yes. It’s fascinating that Varnedoe would take the complication. Not so highly since the museum takes deaccession extremely seriously. It is a selection process that is quite lengthy and complex. I don’t know what’s going through their heads. His statement might have been made to assuage donors, or something like that. I really don’t know. These are things I asked about . . . but they weren’t filled out.

Pascher: We may have answered this question already, but I noticed your name is not among the artists listed in the invitation. Your name, however, does appear in the catalogue. Could you say something about this?
Asher: When the curator of the exhibition (Kynaston McShine) first told me that they wanted to make modifications on my work, I wrote to him, insisting that either my work be finished the way I had proposed, or asked that my name be taken out of the exhibition catalogue, off the invitation and the poster, because I didn't see any use in doing a work that was modified. The assistant curator phoned, encouraging me to remain in the exhibition. She sent me the (Vanessa's) statement, and for the first time I had the opportunity of examining its contents. By the time the invitation went to press, I didn't know if I wanted to be in the exhibition or not. But judging from the response my work has had so far, I'm glad I stayed... (laughter).

Pascher: You make it sound as if they were in control of your work.

Asher: It's most unusual... but I only saw the finished catalogue for the first time when I picked one up at the opening. I didn't see a proof until just before it went to press.

Pascher: But the catalogue is the thing that constitutes your work for the exhibition.

Asher: Yes.

Pascher: You mentioned the insistence of the inclusion of a statement of policy by the head curator. What else did they modify or want to modify?

Asher: They wanted to put a gray screen graphic X on each page across the type, so that people would know it was not one of the catalogues they [MoMA] would ordinarily produce. They also wanted to put a banner across the typeface of the title on the cover that would read "A Michael Asher Project."

Pascher: You did agree to allow them to print "by Michael Asher" on the cover. I thought this was unnecessary. Was that their idea?

Asher: That's what they wanted me to do, which was an odd formulation since they were the ones who had compiled the list... (laughter).

Pascher: You mentioned that they changed the location of the work within the exhibition.

Asher: It was exactly the opposite of what I wanted. Not only was it in a different location, but I was forced to redesign the shape and form (of the installation). But, like the inclusion of Vanessa's essay, it turned out there was a way to make it work.

Pascher: Yes, they installed your work opposite the Buren, which happens to include some of the museum's de Chirico acquisitions. I wonder if any of these works were acquired by the deaccessioning of other de Chiricos. You weren't able to pursue that information, do a sort of genealogy, were you?

Asher: No, I wasn't. I wouldn't mind finding out how we would read the quality of past exchanges. Perhaps this is an area for historical research.

Pascher: It's tricky because you've mentioned that this was about establishing a canon. Through this process they are actually able to manipulate the market.

Asher: Absolutely. One of the reasons I wanted to do this work was that I wanted to propose the idea that the museum is very involved in the market; not only by offering models of what ideal forms of production look like, but also by deaccessioning works of art—selling or exchanging art objects for income or other works of art. For me, 413 works from 1929 to the present... for me, it's quite a few.

Pascher: In addition to the market there is the historical aspect; the manipulation of history itself. Deaccessioning, it seems, would be a way of rewriting artists out of the history book altogether... the canon.

Asher: There are so many unanswered questions here, and I don't know how to answer them. But I agree with you, everything within the museum does substantiate the artist's market. In the case of contemporary art, the market has been a short-sighted measure of these artworks which have made a contribution to the practice of art production. In an exhibition such as "The Museum as Muse," MoMA selects artists who are recognized as having a market value. Such a process, not limited to the Museum of Modern Art, produces and reproduces cultural and economic stability.

Pascher: It's about the writing and the rewriting of history... ...

Asher: I don't know, I mean, I would like to say that from my own experience, and what I sometimes think about, that is: it's about something other than money.

Pascher: What is it?

Asher: Art... but this museum experience doesn't make me believe it's different from economic exchange. And that's unfortunate.

Pascher: Do you think of yourself as having "market value"?

Asher: I wonder what the museum thinks.

Pascher: This is not the first time you have appeared in a Museum of Modern Art exhibition.

Asher: In 1965 I was in the "Spaces" exhibition. My god, it was quite amazing. The curator Jennifer Lipton supported everything we did. And this was regardless of whether she agreed or didn't agree. It was a totally different experience. She was almost in ways ahead of her time.

Pascher: Didn't MoMA once work more frequently with contemporary artists, whereas now we see it as more of a historical museum? That is, wasn't this part of Alfred Barr's program from the start, in 1929? It was a different kind of institution...
Asher: Yes, I would think so. They had to think about the present time. They were dealing with people who were actively producing in the 1930s, ’40s, and ’50s. . . . This seemed to continue even into the ’70s.

Pascher: I noticed in your catalogue that many of the deaccessioned works were acquired shortly after they were produced.

Asher: One of the interesting things about the Vormedne statement, if you don’t mind returning to it, is that he never talks about the deaccessions of works that were initially purchased by the museum. He seems to be talking mostly about gifts and donations. From the acquisition lists you can see that they bought plenty of work on their own.

Pascher: As noted above, this particular museum is becoming more committed to exhibiting past art than it is to presenting contemporary work. So the question of accessions and deaccessions becomes much more an issue at an institution like this. You wouldn’t ask the same questions about a contemporary museum. In relation to this, we might take a look at the things a museum chooses to show from its “permanent” collection at a particular time. In other words, about the selection of its collection?

Asher: An amazing question . . . also, one of the things that encouraged me to pursue this list. The most explicit aspects of my project are the idea of the shaping of the collection, the history of its selection, and the commerce that is going on within the museum—which isn’t discussed very much. One of the more intriguing areas of my work stems from the debate around how the money from deaccessions is utilized. I believe most museums deaccession an art to trade for, or purchase, new works for the collection, although, it appears, more and more people are suggesting that proceeds from deaccessions go to pay for building costs or for services. I came across an article by Glenn Lowry [director of MoMA] that spoke about the necessity for this. I’m sure, he gave examples of where it was being done. I wonder what dooms thought of this idea?

Another succinct aspect of my work deals with the relationship between the working classes and acquisitions and deaccessions of works of art by museums. I wondered why these classes oppose deaccession—of course, they are not the only ones. It’s one of the things I find very complicated and really interesting. I think one of the reasons is conscious. Unconsciously, they are aware that or they identify with the fact that their labor made possible the purchase of these works of art.

Pascher: How do you mean?

Asher: I mean that their labor was responsible for generating enough profit for company owners to purchase art. Gifts to museums are often the result of these purchases. Once these works of art become public, that is, part of a museum collection, they become part of the culture of that community, and when institutions deaccession a work or sell it off, they are taking it away from that community. Removing it from the consciousness of the community in which the works have become valued possessions. And that’s a speculation, but I really think it’s true, that people have a close bond and relationship with these works of art, not only due to their own labor, but due to the fact that they live in these communities, and the works become a part of the communities, and that’s why it’s very hard to take them away, and why there is opposition.

Pascher: What you say is interesting. It would seem to lead to a certain distrust of the museum by the community, if the museum assembled a collection of works and concentrated on them a certain value, and then took them away as if to say these works are no longer valuable . . .

Asher: Yes.

Pascher: It would seem to me that it is to lay out one history and some years later change it into something different.

Asher: Don’t forget, the museum—I have the feeling at times—that the public forgets really easily. So they just very easy to change things around and tell different histories.

Pascher: So then, there is some resistance to deaccessioning among a given constituency.

Asher: I think so very much. For example, when the Lincoln Center, though, it is not a museum, it was getting rid of the former a few months ago, there was so much opposition. In the end, they couldn’t possibly get rid of them.

Pascher: People grew accustomed to them.

Asher: Yes. You can’t expect people to forget. It becomes a part of their knowledge. We have to understand that the things that are on view are part of the circulation of knowledge, and you can’t take people’s knowledge away from them without them questioning it.

POSTSCRIPT

After the Museum of Modern Art, the exhibition traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego (La Jolla), where it ran from September 25, 1999, until January 9, 2000. Curiously, Asher was not asked to participate in San Diego, although it was his understanding that his work, Catalog of Deaccessions 1929 through 1988, was “accepted as a piece that would continue.” The idea was that he would produce a similar work (a deaccession catalogue) for each venue of the exhibition. According to the curator, Kynaston McShine, such a continuation had never been proposed. When asked to question his “removal” from the exhibition,
he was told that "it would have been unethical for him to participate in San Diego because that would have made him the only commissioned artist to show there." In fact, MoMA commissioned works specifically for "The Museum as Muse" by six artists: Michael Asher, Daniel Buren, Janet Cardiff, Mark Dion, Louise Lawler, and Fred Wilson. Of the six, only Asher and Buren were not invited to participate in San Diego. After San Diego, the show was supposed to travel to the Museo Reina Sofía in Madrid. However, at the time of writing this text, I was told by the communications office at MoMA that Madrid was "no longer on the schedule."

NOTES

2. The interview was published in its entirety in Merge Magazine 5 (Summer 1999), as an article entitled "Dee Nickerson."
5. Ibid.

This interview was first published in Merge Magazine 5 (Summer 1999), and subsequently in Christian Keesing, ed., The Museum as Arena: Artists on Institutional Critique (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 106–112, from which the present version is taken. All quotations in brackets are Pencher's words.
Renée Green. Secret. 1993. Scenes from a group show, 1993/2006. Unité d’habitation building. Courtesy of the artist and Free Agent Media. Invited to produce an installation in Le Corbusier’s Unité d’habitation, a large modular apartment complex in Firminy, France, the artist inhabited the now derelict building for seven days and documented her stay with photographs and video.


Fundamental to my work as an artist is an attempt to chart the evolution of the natural history museum, as an exploration of what gets to stand for nature at a particular time for a distinct group of people. Some of my projects have been forays into how early private collections (cabinets of curiosities) develop into the Enlightenment museum, which evolves into the public space we recognize as the modern didactic institution. It is a complex, gradual process with numerous false starts, aberrations, and dead ends.

Arriving in a new city, Ibarcarly allow my baggage to be stored at the hotel before I'm back in a taxi speeding toward the local museum of natural history. I collect experiences in such institutions as tangibly as a bird watcher ticks off a name on a list or a stamp collector fills a gasoline envelope. The details of the journey are usually known long before the encounter through fellow enthusiasts or guidebooks. Each exhibition space ranks according to a rigid set of criteria: how many type specimens (or individual for which a species is named) does the collection contain, which extinct animals are represented in the collection (the Natural History Museum's equivalent of a Vermeer), which eminent biologists have worked at the museum and how have they left their stamp on it? The museums are then carefully classified based on when and how they were organized, which master narratives they employ, systematics (orthodox taxonomy or cladistics), biogeography, evolution, pure spectacle, realism (dioramas), ecology, the story of human progress, etc. Accumulating the experiences of these museums, I gain insight not so much into nature itself but into the ontology of the story of nature—modern society's cosmology.

There is a sense of urgency in my pursuit, since at any moment a perfectly remarkable dusty old collection and arrangement might be turned into a banal scientific video arcade passing off hackneyed facts as miraculous discoveries. I have witnessed so many cities give up unforgettable and historically priceless spaces for Forum, steel, and text-gorged push-button shopping malls of information. No words are more heartrending than "closed for renovation." Still, many natural history museums are time machines, stepping through their portals vividly evokes the obsessions, conventions, and projections of the past. In Paris one can visit the Gallery of Comparative Anatomy and find it virtually unchanged since it opened in 1853. One can see the Teyler's Museum in Haarlem in much the same way as Napoleon did on his visit. These have become museums of museums.

My interest in natural science museums is not about connoisseurship. I approach them to help me conceptualize problems in the representation of nature or, rather, to trace the development of the social construction of nature. What better place to painstakingly explore how ideas about nature shift than the didactic institutions mandated to explain the science to the general public? These spaces generate and distribute the official story. By critically analyzing the master narratives and techniques of display employed by the institutions, I can dissect the ideology embedded in them. Being critical may also be yet another way to love these museums. That contradiction is what I try to explore through my production of art work. I don't lose a step over the fact that the contradiction may be irresolvable. Work should be pleasure.

In order to investigate the social construction of "Nature" through the natural history museum, I try to use some of the institution's own tactics, particularly the microcosm and the macrocosm. To better understand the museum, I have at various times had to become the museum, taking on duties of collecting, archiving, classifying, arranging, conserving, and displaying. Personifying the museum condenses its activities and articulates how the museum's various departments function like vital organs in a living being. This organism lives in an ecological relationship with other institutions, which have their own functions, their own niches.
How is the story of life told? What are the principles of organization, the master narratives, employed to construct the tale of nature? What does each set of assumptions, each conceit, promote or conceal? What fantasies or dreary fictions are indulged when one attempts to tell “the truth” about nature? Each museum, and every textbook and nature show on television possess a narrative skeleton. One of the most persistent and pernicious of these is the Great Chain of Being, or the Scale of Nature. This ancient visual metacriton, rooted in Aristotle’s zoological works, dominated natural history thought until well into the nineteenth century. The Great Chain of Being depicts life as a one-dimensional progression from the simplest of forms (sometimes even minerals) to the most complex, almost always to humans, who construct the hierarchy, but sometimes even beyond to the invisible realm of angels, archangels, etc. The imagery of this progression has become such a ubiquitous feature in biological language that even today its tenacity is demonstrated in numerous popular expressions of evolution. The Scale of Nature became bound to the Enlightenment development of orthodox hierarchical taxonomy, which remained until the middle of this century the dominant principle of arrangement for most natural history museums. The Great Chain of Being, and the easy taxonomic arrangements and nomenclature firmly seat humankind on the throne of the animal kingdom. This powerful idea demands particular scrutiny, since the chain of being is a crucial conceptual footprint, which helps to retrace the path of where we have been in order to get a better bearing on where we are and where we are going.

A joint-stock or public limited company (Aktiengesellschaft) constitutes the purest form of corporation. It is a legal person with a subscribed capital made up of shares where the company's assets alone are liable to claims by creditors. It is characterized by the limited liability of shareholders, its fixed initial capital, its organization as a corporation, and its members' exemption from personal liability. The subscribed capital of a public limited company whose nominal value at the time the company is formed must be at least 50,000 euros (Paragraph 7, German Law on Public Limited Companies). A fixed number which indicates the value of the total assets.

A public limited company is a production and trading undertaking. It issues shares to increase its capital. Its primary interest is profit.

As a matter of principle, a public limited company is to be formed for an indefinite period. Within the structure of the company, its functions are to be adapted and its attributes rewritten, that is, to say, the form and content are to be developed and established in ways that differ from those usually practiced in companies. The assets assigned to the company when it is founded are to remain unchanged. The assets are not to become part of the macro-economic circulation of money and accumulation of capital or be used to create surplus value. All of the shares will be transferred to the company itself. The company will thereby be the owner of its own shares—all of its shares. The money assigned to the company in the form of contributions at the time of its formation continues to belong to the company. However, the company no longer belongs to the shareholders, because they have transferred their shares to the company. The company belongs to itself, as it were. That is to say, it ultimately belongs to no one. Therefore, the company's assets—its money—no longer have any relation to the shareholders or to anyone else. The concept of property disappears in this case.

To form a public limited company, one or more individuals lay down the articles of association of the future company in a notarized deed. The articles set out the company's name, its place of establishment, and the object of the undertaking. The founders elect the members of the supervisory board, which in turn appoints the chairperson. A formation report provides information on how the company was founded. The founders of the company and the members of its management board and supervisory board register the company with the court for the place where it is established for entry in the commercial register.

**JOINT-STOCK COMPANY**

Development, function, structure, and meaning of the joint-stock company. How does a joint-stock company function internally? How does it function in the market economy and the global financial market? What sort of instrument of economic and sociopolitical power does it represent?

Raising capital, mobility of capital. With the development of the joint-stock company and the stock market, the restrictions on capital accumulations of private wealth were overcome through access to the financial sources of society as a whole; and at the same time this eliminated the discrepancy between the need of capitalist production for long-term investment, on the one hand, and its need for great mobility of capital, on the other.

Stock market. The joint-stock company is the only legal form which enables capital to be raised through the stock market. The first stock market is attributed to the city of Bruges (1409). It was followed by one in Antwerp in 1460. The colonization of large parts of Asia, Africa, and South America played a decisive role in the development of new financial markets. For example, the two great shipping companies, the British East India Company.
(1600) and the Dutch East India Company (1602), founded what are known as "ventures" and issued stock. The Dutch company made the stock market in Amsterdam one of the most important stock markets for a considerable time.

Corporate responsibility. The history of business is one of the reduction of responsibility and the expansion of legal privileges for undertakings. The creation of the joint-stock company accelerated this development. When it is entered in the commercial register, the company becomes a legal person with the result that the shareholders are relieved of personal liability. Therefore, under the law, a joint-stock company's primary responsibility is not to its employees or customers but to its shareholders, since it is they who own the company.

Trade, speculation. "The development of a market in which property rights and claims to surplus value are traded gives capital an opportunity to increase its value through trade on this market. To attain ever greater profits, finance capital needs ever more speculative undertakings, as demonstrated by the extreme rise in stock-market prices in the 1920s and the further acceleration in the late 1990s.

Law. The law is vital. One of the most enduring successes on this front was achieved by companies in 1886, when the Supreme Court of the United States ruled in Sante Clara v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company that a private company was a person under the framework of the United States constitution and therefore had the right to complete protection of its fundamental rights. Since these undertakings had the financial means to defend and apply these rights, they could act more freely and with fewer restrictions than any citizen could. Since that time, other than under Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, the United States has been ruled by an alliance of corporations and the state.

Legal obligation to disclose results. Joint decision-making. The German Law on Public Limited Companies is constantly being amended and adapted to the needs of corporations. For example, the ruling Socialists/Green coalition in Germany wants to adopt a "law on transparency and disclosure" which would eliminate the obligation to give all shareholders written notification of countermotions. In the future all motions and the reasons stated for them are to be published only on public limited companies' webpages. The shareholders would then not have to make the effort to examine the countermotions themselves. Shareholders without Internet access would be cut off entirely from information on countermotions."

Self-determination. Public limited companies are also founded to counter the effects of privatization and to free themselves from the whims of financially powerful companies. In 1997 the Genoa dockworkers association CULM (Compagnia Unita del Lavoro Mercurio Varie) founded a joint-stock company so that it could continue to exercise its self-determination following many months of industrial dispute. Another example is the institutional structure of the Hungarian public broadcasting system. In order to safeguard public programming and protect its independence, three public foundations and single-member public limited companies were established in respect of each broadcaster. The trustees of the foundations are at the same time the governing bodies of the corresponding company. The Communist daily E Manifesto in Italy has been a public limited company since 1999. "Nachtzeit" was a left-wing publishing house in Switzerland, was transformed into a public limited company by its union so that it could operate more independently with the support of its shareholders.

THE QUESTION OF THE CONCEPT OF VALUE

The concept of value. Since money is used as value for capital accumulation, it is impossible to avoid a loss of monetary value if this law of values is not applied. Money loses its value when the capitalist laws of value are not applied. Why does money lose its value when the capitalist laws of value are not applied?

Money commodity. The value of money mirrors the relationships of society, such as unemployment, inflation, and deflation. If money is not turned into capital, its value declines. Turning money into commodities that are appreciated in value affirms the status quo of capitalism.

Capital gain by destroying (liquidating) capital. "It's to do with controlling the money and the money not controlling us," says Jimmy Caunt of the band KLF (Copyright Liberation Front). In August 1994 Bill Drummond and Jimmy Caunt burned a million quid. The documentary film made at the time, Watch the K Foundation Burn a Million Quid, toured England for several months a year later. The screenings, with Drummond and Caunt present, provoked both acts of violence and great boredom, which resulted from the munificent display lasting over an hour, of the banknotes being set aflame.

Accumulation (increase, growth) of value and the reduction (loss) of value. A work of art is seen in terms of its ability to accumulate monetary value and its reproductive form. When a
work is purchased—when it becomes property—it can become reproducing capital. As soon as it is acquired, all effort is focused on increasing its value. If a work cannot be possessed (in material terms), how can the accumulation of value be assured? Are the mechanisms and structures of the growth or loss of value explored and published? Is the economic value of a work congruent with its aesthetic and art-historical values?  

Public nature / accessibility of a work. What makes a work public, accessible, open to appropriation? When it is exhibited in a public space, when it is reproduced, when it is reported on, when it is discussed, when it enters a canon? How does a work enter which canon? Is a work in a state institution more public, more accessible? How do the mechanisms for producing and reproducing capital function in the art market? Do public institutions display works from the art trade, from collections and institutions, in order to make them accessible to the public or to produce capital from them? Are works in private collections less public than works in state collections? By what gradual stages of public versus nonpublic/private are cultural institutions formed in capitalist or state-socialist systems of society?  

Possibility versus controllability, the relations of ownership of a work, copyright. If a work is set free from the idea of ownership in both material and nonmaterial terms, it cannot be traced. The mechanisms of circulation have no way of exploiting it and have no effect. How is such a work created? Forms or media such as lectures, texts, statements, attitudes, experiences, and events are treated as commodities. They are traded, and not only where they are available on an exclusive basis. What form must a work assume in order to render it unmarketable? Can works be rendered unmarketable by tying them to a specific location, by making them ephemeral or processes, by leaving the author anonymous, or by abandoning copyright?  

Ownership of knowledge. Do nonmaterial goods and commodities circulate the concepts of property, ownership, and wealth as manifest in law? In paragraph 266 of the German Commercial Code, which relates to the structure of the balance sheet, the following "nonmaterial assets" are listed under the heading "Fixed Assets": 1. Concessions, industrial property rights and similar rights and assets and also licenses to exploit such rights and assets; 2. Goodwill; 3. Payments on account; 4. Knowledge and information do not yet appear in the balance sheets of corporations. The possession of specific knowledge or particular information creates power. Power is eliminated where the possession of knowledge is spread and where knowledge and information are published.  

Conditions governing artistic theory and practice and the elimination of such conditions. What conditions are artistic working practices subject to? What are their requirements? Why, how, and by what means are the products of art used as instruments? How and by what means can products in the cultural, social, political, and scientific fields escape economic and political appropriation?  

NOTES


3. "In the context of purpose, however, emphasis should be on the thinking of an age, by means of joint-stock companies." Originally published in Oskar Roehl, editionen, vol. 1 (1957).

4. The example of nuclear energy. The German state subsidizes the nuclear industry to the tune of 2 billion marks a year. On December 14, 2001, after many years of negotiation with the nuclear industry, the German government passed a law phasing out the nuclear industry. The decision (GOBKAU, 7D5200) announced that it would be reached by the law when the government changed. The law is valid. In 1997 the municipality of Schwerin in the Black Forest purchased its power supply system in order to establish its own nuclear-free energy supply. In 1996 Ursula and Michael Strypkov sold over 2 million deutsche marks as part of their campaign "Ich bin ein Schweriner, "I am a Schweriner," to make up the shortfall in buying the system back from the former energy supplier. Iron only, the magazine Capital advised them as social workers as the social workers.  

5. "The dissenters: Corporations are persons within the reach of the clause in section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which forbids a State to deny to any person within its jurisdiction on the equal protection of the law." Quotation from the Supreme Court ruling in the case of Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company, 1886, available at www.tourlaw.com/supct/santaclara.html.

6. The Dachverband der Kritischen Akademikerin und Akademiker Association of Critical Shareholders in Germany is calling on the retention of the existing rights of minority shareholders and full access to all information with or without Internet access. Together with the Critical Shareholders of Europe United, they want to preserve jobs and educational opportunities. To provide environmental friendly products and services, they propose that the credit societies and cooperative banks (the green cooperative banks). Their campaign against the bailout of the junior banks, energy, nuclear power, and companies which harm the environment. In the United Kingdom of the United Kint Kingdom the Dachverband der Kritischen Akademikerin und Akademiker organizes the joint campaigns of 11 member organizations. In addition, it is the central contact point for the representatives of thousands of small shareholders who have transferred their voting rights to the association in order to exercise social and ecological responsibility.  

7. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Labor of Divisions: A Critique of the State-Form (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 21. Just like money, law which helps to consolidate the capital system many of the figures assumed by
money) raises an issue that is prior to it, but only threat that social conflicts and the succession of the reproduction of capitalist society, its division of labor, and exploitation produce every day.

In 1993 the K. Foundation established by the NF endowed a prize to "Gustav Stresemann's worst artists." Rachel Whiteread wins this prize, which at 40,000 pounds was worth twice as much as the Turner Prize, at the same time that she won the Turner Prize.


In the interviews I conducted from 1997 to 1999 of the history and significance of the Artist's Reserved Rights Transfer and Sale Agreement by Seth Siegelaub and Robert Fink projects, the question of the economic valuation that a work of art can have more readily. In this regard David Green retained: "When before my works were ever sold, I was against auctioning. An auction is one of the ugliest things in the modern history of a work... the market price is increased as decreed by tricks and manipulations, for example, in the 1950s when certain works that aren't worth anything today were getting high prices. ... Particularly in the 1960s, a lot of artists, especially in America, thought they weren't taking part in this boom, and they thought that if you have no market value, you have no other value either. That isn't right, because things change quickly, and market value has nothing to do with value as such." (Inscribed in Maria Lichiner, "The Artist's Reserved Rights Transfer and Sale Agreement" by Seth Siegelaub and Seth Siegelaub [Berlin: Kstiteller Verlag, 1988].)

10. An interesting moment is when the artist Robert Browning's installation Seven Rooms was created for an exhibition at the Anthony d'Offay Gallery in London. When the work was presented at Documenta X, the exhibition space of the gallery was reconstructed exactly. Who sponsored the work in this case? Are public institutions dependent on financial support from the art trade, sponsors, or private collectors? And is this dependence evident in the exhibitions?

BIBLIOGRAPHY


This text is a report of the event relating to Maxi Osthoff-M bending: Wirtschaft, Documenta 11, 2002, which was contributed to the Documents 11 exhibition in Kassel, Germany, in 2002.
Little Warsaw, *The Body of Nefertiti*, 2003. Little Warsaw is a collaboration between Balint Havas and András Gálik. These photographs document the artists’ project for the Hungarian pavilion at the 2003 Venice Biennale. The project sought to add a cast bronze body to the famous Nefertiti bust, which had been taken to Berlin from Egypt in the early twentieth century, and to exhibit the newly completed sculpture in Venice. The German government permitted the artists to unite the body and bust long enough for the new whole body to be documented, but did not allow the bust to leave the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung in Berlin. Ultimately, the artists exhibited the headless body at the Biennale along with a video projection documenting Nefertiti’s momentary wholeness. Courtesy of the artists.
who's afraid of jk? (2005)
john knight with benjamin h. d. buchloh and isabelle graw

Isabelle Graw: When reading about your work, I noticed that it is often classified under the label “institutional critique.” This concept is based on the assumption that art is supposedly capable of “critiquing” either the literal institutional site or cultural confinement in general and can thereby attain an epistemological function. I was wondering what both the notions of “critique” and of “institution” mean in relation to your work. Is it the institution in the narrow sense of an art institution addressed as topographical entity? Or is it rather an enlarged notion of the institution as an abstract continuity of corporate structures that cannot be pinned down to the literal site only?

John Knight: Those texts that you refer to are coming from the art institutional site of exchange, where the term “institutional critique” derives as well. My interest, however, is to participate in the larger cultural critical discourse and not in the defined site of my own construction. That does not mean that my practice resides outside of the art world, but that the subjects I find interesting may

Graw: What I like about your work is exactly that: it doesn’t seem to be fixed on the art apparatus. The “journal series,” first initiated in 1977, is a work that anticipates how the laws of so-called celebrity culture actually entered the art world in order to take over and reign today. When you literally forced subscriptions of lifestyle magazines onto members of the art world, changed cultural hierarchies were addressed as much as the impossibility of an idealized belief in art became obvious. Your work has diagnostic and prophetic potential in pointing to the dramatic shifts whose consequences we are dealing with today.

Benjamin H. D. Buchloh: Which may have been one of the reasons why the work was sometimes hard to accept.

Knight: Yes, but because I was never really interested in that kind of belief systems that come from the art world. Certainly, the majority of my work is derived from sources other than aesthetic models within art history and seems to manifest themselves in many different ways, which may be why the work is less acceptable. After all, when you grow up inside the spectacle apparatus of Los Angeles, celebrity culture becomes one’s naturalized base of understanding.

Graw: How would you characterize the difference between your project and Michael Asher’s and Daniel Buren’s?

Knight: Well, although we agree about many things, I think there is something fundamentally different between my practice and theirs. There seems to be based on a keenly developed interest in the radical expansion of the problems of sculpture and painting, respectively—on quite extraordinary ways. I have never shared, to the same degree of interest or depth of understanding, a project that is initiated from within an art-historical perspective. For that reason, I’ve always felt somewhat outside of the sociopolitical level of that institution—let’s say it’s a bit of a foreign body to me.

Graw: But aren’t you, as soon as you have had a series of exhibitions as you did, deeply entangled in the microcosmos of the art world? Even if you don’t want to invest in it?

Knight: I don’t say that I’m not practicing in that world. I’ve never had an investment in the internal structural characteristics of any of its historical problems. I’m absolutely working in the art world, but I think there is a difference between that and working on the causality conditions of art history.

Buchloh: The bicycle series you did in The Hague in 1994, what kind of work is that? How do you see that now? Is it positioned itself in what kind of discourse interactions?

Knight: Well, I would say that is located or, more accurately, operates between the two registers of the micro-institution of art, where the opportunity begins, and the larger discourse site of genealogies.

Buchloh: One could start by describing it as a project that situates itself explicitly in the specificity of a nation-state cultural issue, and another way is that it situates itself in the specificity of...
Knight: Absolutely not. In those terms, it clearly had to be in the Netherlands. What else I can say is that it’s a very good example of dropping into the art world by invitation in order to produce a work with a subject that refers to a geopolitical location outside the metropolitan boundaries of the art world.

Grau: So you step in, in order to point in another direction.

Knight: I step in, in order to receive the opportunities to function. For whatever geopolitical reasons, this subculture seems to be the most compatible for the formulation of a base of operation.

Buchloh: If only it still were a subculture . . .

Knight: What would you call it?

Grau: A visual industry . . .

Buchloh: Monolithic . . .

Knight: Actually, I think it operates like a small-town meeting.

Buchloh: Right.

Grau: It has both characteristics: It is an overlappable marketplace with archaic transactions and has corporate dimensions.

Knight: I agree. There is something very interesting about the fact that it remains so archaic and at the same time totally subsumed by the metabolism of the day with little real understanding, or care, by those at the top, for a notion of political resistance.

Buchloh: The bicycle bell. What I really liked about that work is it redefines in a single gesture every model of site specificity that we had possibly thought about until that moment, and it’s compelling reversing every aspect of site specificity. And nevertheless it does so as it gives a completely new model of the absolute necessity for specific interventions. It’s not like going into some fake globalization or some mythical opening-up, but it really rediscovers the levels of intervention in the different types of site specific approaches, and these are geopolitical, ecological, and nation-state-specific.

Knight: It would refer to it as a form of discursive specificity, but certainly not the institutional model of site specificity that has been proposed by Misson Koon and others that tends to legitimate a generation of 90's fashion production, the likes of Pando, etc., which are essentially designer knockknocks disguised as 'installation art.'

Grau: So in what way is the way you legitimize your practice through a site different from that type of practice you just criticized, like Pando?

Knight: Because I don’t think my project is constructed for or received in the same way. It’s not reflexed under the conditions of the already twisted institutional frame like those projects are. I try not to reproduce the actual model of production that I’m attempting to interrogate, as I think others do with impunity.

Buchloh: You were the first artist that I’ve known who, for many, many years, without even understanding what you meant at the time, said that all artistic decisions are design decisions. Your interest in design as a language, as one language among many systems within an ideological apparatus, has become very clear by now. Your understanding of design history and of design traditions in their transformation from the 1920s to the 1950s is a very integral part of that. Why would you then not welcome an artist like Pando who supposedly does exactly that in the most programmatic ways? He’s the gay who brought this out of the foreground and made a mega project out of it.

Knight: Well, I welcome the illustration of the problem I think it represents, but don’t equate up to projects so politically bankrupted. It is exactly the block hole of consumption that it wants to be and it questions precisely nothing.

Grau: His work is not about posing or causing problems.

Knight: There are no problems, but I would take this back to the Bauhaus, and the inherent problems in designing for a better world, which carries itself over to Crankbrook and spreads about the globe as it enters into the marketplace, vis-a-vis Design for Better Living, Design Research, Design Within Reach, and of course, the grandaddy of them all, IDEE. Product design, interior design, and installation design are all deeply implicated in capitalist ideology. It is the primary lexicon for substantiating neoliberalism. It’s the off the shelf language of hegemony.

Buchloh: But it has long complicated history with gradations; at the same time, for example, you are deeply interested, as are I know, in James, What’s your interest in James? I never really understood if it was a critical interest or an interest in the James effect. I think it was both, probably, because the Jameses are kind of a design-historic turning point where it departs from the emancipatory promises of Bauhaus practices and International Style to the initiation of the massively operated consumer culture via design. We now see the consequences of it in ways that we had never anticipated.

Knight: The day after they made the opium and bentwood research was the day they took a political slice. Although they did appear to have a partial review of the moment the house was completed, but in the end it all added up to a career of corporate expression—IBM megalopolis—producing under the guise of multinationalism, slide installations and film projects, It’s a small world, etc. These projects represent the epitome of corporate propaganda.
Buchloh: When they go to the Soviet Union, most evidently so.

Grau: I’m interested in coming to terms with different types of site reflexivity or contexts specificity. There are cases—as in Liam Gillick’s work—where the supposedly given context or site simply functions as a legitimization for a work that is ultimately formalist and doesn’t address or pose problems. Is a context something that is given for you? Or do you construct it yourself to a certain degree?

Knight: I think of context as a multidimensional condition. The initial context is provided by invitation, which acts as an index, and operates as the basis for any number of other considerations that are drawn from a larger discursive site.

Grau: But the choice of bicycle bells doesn’t seem completely evident to me. There is a moment of playfulness, of an arbitrary decision or even of something that you didn’t deliberately choose but that came to you.

Knight: I would say that it seems to come from a process of trial and error, and is located some time between consideration and its manifest realization, at which time it becomes intentional. Many artists attribute it to a mysterious act that takes place in the studio process… this idea truly fascinates me.

Buchloh: The credit card project from World Debt is also a good example because it indicates strategies of defining your work that clearly interrelate different geopolitical systems or expanded notions of geopolitical distribution, and construct at an early moment a sense of the inseparability of culture as being suspended within globalized forms of conflict and interest and exchanges, way before the whole talk of globalization became an issue in cultural practices. First of all I’m surprised that no one has really recognized your work for having gone to that issue early on and taken such a position, and secondly I would like to know how your position, your own investigation with regard to what has now become a tendency or a trend or a compulsory dimension of all curatorial operations—to position themselves in international hierarchies or to position themselves as globalist—wasn’t recognized within that tendency as having anticipated or uncovered the necessity to see those intersections when it comes to cultural production.

Knight: The institution that you are referring to is deeply implicated in the dominant ideology of Western hegemony, and therefore blinding by its own power structure. So it should not come as a surprise to see global culture being presented as commodity. On the other hand, it was immediately recognized by the Cuban participants in the bell project, for example. I was stunned by the clarity of their understanding and support for my engagement in geopolitical exchange.

Buchloh: And a follow-up question: Why did Olwen Evans not include you in the last Documenta? Why did he not understand what you were doing?

Knight: I don’t know, but I would suspect that it’s because there are not exhibitions designated for a real political discourse, after all, they’re constructed from within the art institution and are by nature looking more than political pastiche. I did go to the effort to make an unsolicited proposal to the Documenta committee, to which I received no response. Being in young yet another Documenta inspired me very little, but the program of this particular exhibition was of great interest to me. As you know, there was this structure of five “platforms” scattered about the globe, in places of real social crisis, with the fifth operating as the actual exhibition in Kassel. Global crisis exacerbated by the World Bank and IMF policies. So I thought the ideal conditions for my World Debt project would be to be streaming back to the art world from the four initial sites, via the World Wide Web, without any representation in Kassel itself. As we knew at the time, those invited to participate in the five other platforms were made up of the Prada set with absolutely no real representation at all. All in all, it seemed to be an ideal opportunity to drug a larger discerning condition into an intersection with the institutional art.

Grau: While you were describing the work, I was thinking of a particular explanation for its not being taken into consideration. Curators tend to have a list of names, the usual suspects, in their minds—a list that is being reproduced, and is also very fixed. The reason that your work doesn’t figure on it could be that it doesn’t fit into a general desire for thematically inductivist, so-called social political works, works that are supposedly “dealing with” a certain subject matter.

Knight: I would agree with you and say that in addition to not participating in the institutional food chain—which equates to dropping off the institutional radar—my project not only disagrees with the recent curator-as-meta-artist trend, it challenges the very nature of such an action by insistently inducing the organizing body, each and every time, within the critical status of the work.

Buchloh: Globalism in the art world is kind of a missionary venture. It disguises the search for new markets and the search for new resources as this project of disseminating liberal, advanced forms of cultural representation. But in fact it doesn’t analyze the real ideology of global intermediaries within the cultural sphere at all as being primarily centered within the very power and economic centers of our own empire, and that’s what your work does and therefore it upholds itself completely from being absorbed in the globalist ideology of contemporary cultural institutions. That would be my answer to my own question.
Knight: I would agree with you, and the exhibition histories are there to prove it, from the Centre Pompidou exhibition a number of years ago, "Magiciens de la terre," to the Documenta 11, "The Museum as Muse," and historically "Primitivism in Twentieth-Century Art" at MoMA.

Graw: I am just thinking back to what we said before, about the odd existence between an archaic structure of transactions on the one hand and corporate structure defining what used to be called the art world. I think that this condition is materialized in your work for American Time Art. Your work anticipates the situation we are facing today, where there is a seamless continuity between the art gallery, the boîte, and the lobbies of corporations. If you go to Cagias or Matthew Marks, they are decorated with these same types of bouchets.

Knight: And restaurants.

Graw: And restaurants, as you pointed out in your exhibition. So this continuity, which has become even more pronounced since then, is really addressed in that work. On the other hand, there is the archaic networking in the restaurant, the importation and sale of personal [connections] that are also metaphorically addressed in that show. For me, it's a work that already in 1998 anticipated a condition that we only start to fully understand now.

Knight: I must say I've always been a bit disappointed that it was not realized when I first proposed it to an upscale gallery in 1988, which at the time elicited the infamous moment of silence.

Graw: Too early, she didn't get it.

Knight: In any event, Colin de Land had known about the proposal from that time and always had it in his mind to do it someday. I must say that the way in which the work was ultimately realized was an extraordinary experience, to say the least. There were, in the street, two missionaries, going from restaurant to restaurant proselytizing in sevraut and sunglasses. What a wonderful way to produce! There is a fabulous picture of the two of us posed in front of a potential client.

Graw: Were you interested in the increasing structural analogies between what used to be called the art world, the fashion industry, and corporate logic—spheres that are now very deeply overlapping—and was this something you saw coming?

Knight: Well, there are some of the larger cultural considerations that I've been referring to when I speak about work within the greater discursive site of influence. This is how I think something like the Journals could be considered a tangible site of production—utilizing myself, so to speak, in order to understand the consumer condition.

Graw: Didn't you also utilize others by forcing a subscription onto them?

Knight: Actually, I gave them a work of art that by its critical nature reconfigured the receiver's position in relationship to the conventions of the consumption and exchange process, which makes them a partner in the indiscernment of the work's intention.

Buchloh: I have one question that has to have been with me for a long time, as you know, which is about your principle of only producing a work when receiving a commission.

Knight: The origins of that are rather mysterious to me—why I would insist on the point of self-determination.

Buchloh: It's also a strange concept of creativity. It's an anachronism, that's what's interesting about it. No artist in our history would have let their creativity be defined in terms of an external request. In the countercreativity model, creativity is defined as a dialogic intervention, but not as a logic of appropriation.

Knight: In modernity, yes, but once the sterile of immaculate conception is put to question . . .

Buchloh: When is that?

Knight: At the moment the studio is no longer the primary site of production. But I don't speak about it in the same way as I would refer to the human effect, which, as I understand it, was to see the need to question the studio function in order to open up the possibilities for a radical expansion of an art-historical problem. Mine was based, at least initially, on a keen interest in models of production—architecture, etc.—that are primarily grounded, once again, in larger sociopolitical discourses. Of course, in order to maintain one's sanity, there exists a closet practice, missing endearingly with propositions with the hopes that somebody finds out.

Graw: Everybody has something in the drawer.

Buchloh: Is that what you do?

Knight: Yes. I must say again that I never understood that idea of something happening again and again in the same specific place. It just makes no sense to me.

Buchloh: What are you referring to in something happening again and again in the same place?

Knight: Studio production. The continuous generation of work out of the same monastic site.

Graw: How about the commodity status of your works? On the one hand I feel that your work is consistently emphasizing a nonideal understanding of art as commodity, for instance in the flower bouquet project. On the other hand it seems to emphasize that art is a commodity, but a commodity of a special kind, especially as your works don't circulate as much as others do as pure exchange value on the market. So the commodity status is addressed—your work has no illusions about it—but then again you produce works that don't circulate on the market. It's a paradox
Knight: Is it a paradox? I would call it a moment of resistance in the commodity exchange, when the receiver is given the task to figure out how, if at all, to commodify a product, which might define the terms of its own unique commodity status. Not to say that this is something that hasn’t been clearly thought through, but it is a position that I desire for my work... Something that has every means available to it and every reason to be consumed yet remains a product suggests that the possibility for an interrogation exists. As Adorno would say, the moment of negation.

Graw: And now exactly does it happen in a work like the JK relief?

Buchloh: Or the mirrors?

Knight: I don’t know if it does happen.

Buchloh: It doesn’t because they’re objects.

Knight: But they’re all objects.

Buchloh: I would say that the mirrors and the JK reliefs are traditional objects: you can put them in an auction, you can sell them as a painting or a relief or a sculpture.

Knight: You could put the bells or the credit cards for the World Debt project in auction as well.

Graw: They’re less suitable to this market sensibility because they correspond less to the longing for a signature style.

Knight: I’ve had numerous mirrors returned.

Buchloh: Numerous mirrors returned because of what?

Knight: Maybe they are overdesigned.

Buchloh: Or really, people didn’t like them anymore? What can they trade them for?

Knight: Presumably other art.

Graw: In what way is this related to your notion of career? Faced with a situation where young artists have very positivist and unbroken models of career, your model seems to be the noncareer as career.

Buchloh: This relates very well to the previous question: how can one define one’s practice as externally determined by commission, only to speak for lack of more...”

Knight: This notion of career, or should we say careerism, is certainly the bankrupted idea that allows for a seamless trajectory through a set of predetermined goals that provides the producer with the skills necessary to navigate the neoliberal global marketplace.

Buchloh: And so your model, and I think in this case it’s comparable to Michael Asher’s approach as well, is a theoretical model that defines the artist as nonproducer. But it’s not just a case of refusal or negation only, it’s much more complicated than this, and you were just about to elaborate on it in a very interesting way, that it’s not a withholding position, it’s not a position of pure negation, it’s
John Knight, 87th, 1999. View of water tower, Storm King Art Center. In response to a request for a project that brought together both site specificity and institutional critique, the artist positioned a telescope that, when positioned at 87th, brought into view the water tower located on the grounds of the company run by the initial patrons of the sculpture garden. Courtesy of the artist.
from the critique of institutions to an institution of critique (2005)
andrea fraser

Nearly forty years after their first appearance, the practices now associated with "institutional critique" have for many come to seem, well, institutionalized. Last spring alone, Daniel Buren resumed his major installation to the Guggenheim Museum (which famously censored both his and Hans Haacke's work in 1973). Buren and Olatunji Keneke discussed the problem of "the institution" in these pages [of Artforum], and the LA County Museum of Art hosted a conference called "Institutional Critique and Alienation." More symposia planned for the Getty and the College Art Association's annual conference, a show with a special issue of Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte, may very well see the further reduction of institutional critique to its acronyms: IC, etc.

In the context of museum exhibitions and art history symposia such as these, one increasingly finds institutional critique accorded the unquestioning respect often granted artistic phenomena that have achieved a certain historical status. That recognition, however, quickly becomes an occasion to dismiss the critical claims associated with it, as resentment of its perceived exclusivity and high-mindedness rushes to the surface. How can artists who have become art-historical institutions themselves claim to critique the institution of art? Michael Kimmelman provided a ready example of such scepticism in his critical New York Times review of Buren's Guggenheim show. While the "critique of the institution of the museum" and the "commodity status of art" were "counterrevolutionary ideas" when, like Mr. Buren, they emerged forty or so years ago, Kimmelman contends, Buren is now an "official artist of France," a role that does not seem to trouble some of his once-radical fans. Nor, apparently, does the fact that his brand of institutional critique... invariably depends on the largesse of institutions like the Guggenheim. Kimmelman goes on to compare Buren unfavorably to Warhol and Jean-Claude, who "operate, for the most part, outside traditional institutions, with fiscal independence, in a public sphere beyond the legislative control of art exports."

Further doubts about the historic and present-day efficacy of institutional critique arise when we reflect on how bad things have become in an arts world in which MoMA opened its new temporary-exhibition galleries with a corporate collection, and art hedge funds own shares of single paintings. In these discussions, one finds a certain nostalgia for institutional critique as a now-anachronistic artifact of an era before the corporate megamuseum and the 24/7 global art market, the time when artists could still conceivably take up a critical position against or outside the institution. Today the argument goes, there is no longer an outside. How then, can we imagine much less accomplish, a critique of art institutions; when museum and market have grown into an all-encompassing apparatus of cultural seduction? Now, when we need it most, institutional critique is dead, a victim of its own success or failure, swallowed up by the institution it stood against.

But assessments of the institutionalization of institutional critique and charges of its obsolescence in an era of megamuseums and global, markers founded on a mistaken conception of what institutional critique is, at least in light of the practices that have come to define it. They necessitate a reexamination of its history and aims, and a restatement of its urgent stakes in the present.

I recently discovered that none of the half-dozen people often considered the "founding" of institutional critique claim to use the term. I first used it in print in a 1985 essay on Louise Lawler, "In and Out of Place," when I ran off the now-familiar list of Michael Asher, Marcel Broodthaers, Daniel Buren, and Hans Haacke, adding that, "while very different, all these artists engaged in institutional critique."

I probably first encountered that list of names coupled with the term "institution," in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh's 1982 essay "Allegorical Procedures," where he describes Buren's
and Asner's analysis of the historical place and function of aesthetic constructs within institutions, or Haacke's and Brodie's opinions, revealing the material conditions of those institutions as ideological." The essay concludes with references to institutionalized language," institutional frameworks," institutional exhibition topics," and describes one of the "essential features of Modernism" as the "impulse to criticize itself from within, to question its institutionalization." But the term "institutional critique" never appears.

By 1983, I had also read Peter Bürger's Theory of the Avant-Garde, which was published in Germany in 1974 and finally appeared in English translation in 1984. One of Bürger's central theses is that "with the historical avant-garde movements, the social substratum that is art enters the stage of self-criticism. Davism ... no longer criticizes schools that preceded it, but criticizes art as an institution, and the course of its development taken in bourgeois society."

Having studied with Buchloh as well as Craig Owens, who edited my essay on Lawler, I think it's quite possible that one of them let the phrase "institutional critique" slip out. It's also possible that their students in the mid-'80's, the School of Visual Arts and the Whitney Independent Study Program (where Haacke and Martha Rosler also lectured)—inciting Gregg Bordowitz, Joshua Decker, Mark Dion, and me—just started using the term as a shorthand for "the critique of institutions" in our after class debates. Not having found an earlier published appearance of the term, it is curious to consider that the established canon we thought we were recasting may have just been forming at the time. It could even be that some very recent, let's or fifteen-year-old works, reprinted texts, and early translations (by the likes of Douglas Crimp, Asher, Buren, Haacke, Rosler, Buchloh, and Bürger) and our perception of those works and texts as canonical, was a central moment in the process of institutional critique's so-called institutionalization. And so I find myself immersed in the contradictions and complexities, ambivalences and ambiguities that institutional critique is often accused of, caught between: the self-flattering possibility that I was the first person to put the term in print and the critically shameful prospect of having played a role in the reduction of certain radical practices to a pithy catchphrase, packaged for co-optation.

If, indeed, the term "institutional critique" emerges as shorthand for "the critique of institutions," today that catchphrase has even been further reduced by restrictive interpretations of its constituent parts: "institution" and "critique." The practice of institutional critique is generally defined by its apparent object: "the institution," which is, in turn, taken to refer primarily to established, organized sites for the presentation of art. As the flyer for the symposium at LACMA put it, institutional critique is an act that exposes "the structures and logic of museums and art galleries." Critique appears even less specific than "institution," vacillating between a rather timid "exposing," "reflecting," or "revealing," on the one hand, and visions of the revolutionary overthrow of the existing museologies on the other, with the institutional critic as a guerrilla fighter engaging in acts of subversion and sabotage, breaking through walls and floors and doors, provoking censorship, bringing down the powers that be. In either case, "art" and "artist" generally figure as antagonistically opposed to an "institution" that incorporates, co-opts, commodifies, and otherwise misappropriates one-radical—and uninstitutionalized—practices.

These representations can admittedly be found in the terms of criticism associated with institutional critique. However, the idea that institutional critique opposes art to institution, or supposes that radical artistic practices can or ever did exist outside of the institution of art before being "institutionalized" by museums, is contradicted by every turn in the writings and work of Asner, Buren, Haacke, and Rosler. From Brodie's account of his land gallery exhibition in 1964—when he begins by confessing that the "idea of inventing something inconsiderable finally crossed my mind" and then informing us that his dealer will "take thirty percent"—the critique of the apparatus that produces, presents, and collects art has been inseparable from a critique of artistic practice itself. As Buren put it in "The Function of the Museum" in 1970, if "the museum makes its mark, imposes its frame... on everything that is exhibited in it, in a deep and indelible way it does so easily because "everything that the Museum shows is only considered and produced in view of being set in it." In "The Function of the Studio" from the following year, he couldn't be more clear, arguing that the "analysis of the art system must inevitably be carried out" by investigating both the studio and the museum "as customs, the operating customs of art."

Indeed, the critique most consistently in evidence in the post-Studia work of Buren and Asner is aimed at artistic practice itself (a point that may not have been lost on other artists in the Sixth Guggenheim International Exhibition, since it was they, not museum officials or trustees, who demanded the removal of Buren's work in 1971). As their writings make clear, the institutionalization of art in museums or its commodification in galleries cannot be conceived of as the co-optation or misappropriation of studio art, whose portable form predetermines it to a life of circulation and exchange, and which is never incorporated. Their rigorously site-specific interventions developed as a means not only to reflect on these and other institutional conditions but also to resist the very forms of
appropriation on which they reflect. As transitory, these works further acknowledge the historical specificity of any critical intervention, whose effectiveness will always be limited to a particular time and place. Broadthwaite, however, was the supreme master of performing critical reenactment in his gestures of melancholic complicity. Just three years after founding the Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Arts, in his Brussels studio in 1968, he put his "museum fiction" up for sale, "for reasons of bankruptcy." In a prospectus that served as a wrapper for the catalogue of the Cologne Art Fair—with a limited edition sold through Gisbert Michael Werner. Finally, the most explicit statement of the exclusively role of artists in the institution of the art may have been made by Haacke. "Artists," he wrote in 1974, "as much as their supporters and their enemies, no matter of what ideological complexion, are unwilling partners. . . . They participate jointly in the maintenance of its survival and the ideological make-up of their society. They work within that frame, act the frame and arc being framed."

From 1968 on, a conception of the "institution of art" begins to emerge that includes not just the museum, not even only the sites of production, distribution, and reception of art, but the entire field of art as a social universe. In the works of artists associated with institutional critique, it came to encompass all the sites in which art is shown—from museums and galleries to corporate offices and collectors' homes, and even public space when art is installed there. It also includes the sites of the production of art, studio as well as office, and the sites of the production of art discourse: art magazines, catalogues, art columns in the popular press, symposia, and lectures. And it also includes the sites of the production of the producers of art and art discourse: studio art, art history, and, now, curatorial studies programs. And finally, as Rosler put it in the title of her seminal 1979 essay, it also includes all "the lookers, buyers, dealers, and makers" themselves.

This conception of "institution" can be seen most clearly in the work of Haacke, who came to institutional critique through a turn from physical and environmental systems in the 1960s to social systems, starting with his gallery visitor polls of 1963 to 1973. Beyond the most encompassing list of substantive spaces, places, people, and things, the "institution" engaged by Haacke can best be defined as the network of social and economic relationships between them. As in his Conservation Cube (1963–1967), and his MoMA Poll (1970), the gallery and museum figure less as objects of critique themselves than as containers in which the largely abstract and invisible forces and relations that traverse particular social spaces can be made visible.

Moving from a substantive understanding of "the institution" as specific places, organizations, and individuals to a conception of it as a social field, the question of what is inside and what is outside becomes much more complex. Engaging those boundaries has been a consistent concern of artists associated with institutional critique. Beginning in 1969 with a show in situ at Artists Space in New York, Buren realized many works that bridged interior and exterior, artistic and non-artistic sites, revealing how the perception of the same material, the same sign, can change radically depending on where it is viewed.

However, it was Asher who may have realized with the greatest precision Buren's early understanding that even a concept, as soon as it is announced, and especially when it is "exhibited as art," . . . becomes an ideal object, which brings us once again to art."

With his installation Munich (Caravan), Asher demonstrated that the institutionalization of art as art depends not on its location in the physical frame of an institution, but in conceptual or perceptual frames. First presented in the 1977 edition of Skulptur Projekte in Münster, the work consisted of a rented recreational trailer, or caravan, parked in different parts of the city each week during the exhibition. As the museum serving as a reference point for the show, visitors could find information about how the caravan could be viewed in situ that week. At the site itself, however, nothing indicated that the caravan was art or had any connection to the exhibition. To casual passersby, it was nothing but a caravan.

Ascher took Duchamp one step further. Art is not art because it is signed by an artist or shown in a museum or any other "institutional" site. Art is art when it exists for discourses and practices that recognize it as art, value and evaluate it as art, and consume it as art, whether as object, gesture, representation, or only idea. The institution of art is not something external to any work of art but the irreducible condition of its existence as art. No matter how public in placement, immaterial, transitory, relational, everyday, or even invisible, what is announced and perceived as art is always already institutionalized, simply because it exists within the perception of participants in the field of art as art, a perception not necessarily aesthetic but fundamentally social in its determination.

What Asher thus demonstrated is that the institution of art is not only "institutionalized" in organizations like museums and objectified in art objects: it is also internalized and embodied in people. It is internalized in the competences, conceptual models, and modes of perception that allow us to produce, write about, and understand art, or simply to recognize art as art, whether as artists, critics, curators, art historians, dealers, collectors, or museum visitors. And above all, it exists in the interests, aspirations, and criteria of value.
that orient our actions and define our sense of worth. These competencies and dispositions determine our own institutionalization as members of the field of art. They make up what Pierre Bourdieu called habitus: the "social made body," the "institution: made mind."

There is, of course, an "outside" of the institution, but it has no fixed, substantive characteristics. It is only what, at any given moment, does not exist as an object of art and art discourse and practice. But just as art cannot exist outside the field of art, we cannot exist outside the field of art, at least not as artists, critics, curators, etc. And what we do outside the field, to the extent that it remains outside, can have no effect within it. So if there is no outside for us, it is not because the institution is perfectly closed, or exists as an apparatus in a "totally administered society," or has grown all-encompassing in size and scope. It is because the institution is inside of us, and we can't get outside of ourselves.

Has institutional critique been institutionalized? Institutional critique has always been institutionalized. It could only have emerged within and, like other art, can only function within the institution of art. The insistence of institutional critique on the inescapability of institutional determination may, in fact, be what distinguish it most precisely from other legacies of the historical avant-garde. It may be unique among those legacies in its recognition of the effect of avant-garde movements and the consequences of that effect; that is, the destruction of the institution of art, but its explosion beyond the traditional boundaries of specifically artistic objects and aesthetic criteria. The institutionalization of Duchamp's negation of artistic competence with its readymade transformed that negation into a superior affirmation of the omnipotence of the artistic gaze and its limitless incorrigible power. It opened the way for the artistic conceptualization—and commodification—of everything. As Walter Benjamin already wrote in 1934: "It is artists—those who, in their very efforts to escape the institution of art, have driven its expansion. With each attempt to evade the limits of institutional determination, to embrace an outside, to redefine art or recontextualize it into everyday life, to reach everyday people and work in the "real" world, we expand our frame and bring more of the world into it. But we never escape it."

Of course, that frame has also been transformed in the process. The question is how? Discussions of that transformation have tended to revolve around oppositions like inside and outside, public and private, citism and populism. But when these arguments are used to assign political value to substantive conditions, they often fail to account for the underlying distributions of power that are reproduced even as conditions change, and they thus end up serving to legitimate that reproduction. In the more obvious example, the enormous expansion of museum audiences, celebrated under the banner of populism, has proceeded hand in hand with the continuous rise of entrance fees, excluding more and more lower-income visitors, and the creation of new forms of elite participation with increasingly differentiated hierarchies of membership, viewings, and gays, the exclusivity of which is broadly advertised in fashion magazines and society pages. Far from becoming less elitist, even more popular museums have become vehicles for the mass-marketing of elite tastes and practices. While perhaps less rarified in terms of the aesthetic competencies they demand, are ever more rarified, economically as prices rise. All of which also increases the demand for the products and services of art professionals.

However, the fact that we are trapped in our held does not mean that we have no effect on, and are not affected by, what takes place beyond its boundaries. Once again, Haacke may have been the first to understand and represent the full extent of the interplay between what is inside and outside the field of art. While Asher and Buren examined how an object or sign is transformed as it travels physica and conceptually, Haacke engages the "institution" as a network of social and economic relations, making visible the complexities among the apparently opposed spheres of art, the state, and corporations. It may be Haacke, above all, who evokes the characteristics of the institutional critique as a heroic challenge, fearlessly speaking truth to power—and justifiably so, as his work has been subject to censorship, and administrative showdowns. However, anyone familiar with his work should recognize that, far from trying to tear down the museum, Haacke's project has been an attempt to defend the institution of art from instrumentalization by political and economic interests.

That the art world, now a global multibillion-dollar industry, is not part of the "real world" is one of the most absurd heresies of art discourse. The current market boom, to mention only the most obvious example, is a direct product of neoliberal economic policies. It belongs, first of all, to the luxury consumption boom that has gone along with growing income disparities and concentrations of wealth—the beneficiaries of Bush's tax cuts are our patrons—and, secondly, to the same economic forces that have created the global real estate bubble: lack of confidence in the stock market due to falling prices and corporate
accounting scandals, lack of confidence in the bond market due to the rising national debt, low interest rates, and regressive tax cuts. And the art market is not the only art world site where the growing economic disparities of our society are reproduced. They can also be seen in what are now only nominally "nonprofit" organizations like universities—where MFA programs rely on cheap adjunct labor—and museums, where unfair policies have produced compensation ratios between the highest- and lowest-paid employees that now surpass forty to one.

Representations of the "art world" as wholly distinct from the "real world," like representations of the "institution" as discrete and separate from "us," serve specific functions in art discourse. They maintain an imaginary distance between the social and economic interests we invest in through our activities and the euphemized artistic, intellectual, and even political "interests" (or disinterests) that provide those activities with context and justify their existence. And with these representations, we also reproduce the mythologies of voluntary freedom and creative omnipotence that have made art and artists such attractive emblems for neoliberalism's entrepreneurial, "ownership-society" optimism. That such optimism has found perfect artistic expression in neo-Fluxus practices like relational aesthetics, which are now in perpetual vogue, demonstrates the degree to which what Bürkle called the avant-garde's "aim to integrate 'art into life practices'" has evolved into a highly ideological form of escapism. But this is not just about ideology. We are not only symbols of the rewards of the current regime in this art market, we are its direct material beneficiaries.

Every time we speak of the "institution" as other than "us," we disavow our role in the creation and perpetuation of its conditions. We avoid responsibility for or action against, the everyday complicity, compromises, and censorships—above all, self-censorship—which are driven by our own interests in the field and the benefits we derive from it. It's not a question of inside or outside, or the number and scale of various organized sites for the production, presentation, and distribution of art. It's not a question of being against the institution. We are the institution. It's a question of what kind of institution we are, what kind of values we institutionalize, what forms of practice we reward, and what kind of rewards we aspire to. Because the institution of art is internalized, embodied, and performed by individuals, these are the questions that institutional critique demands we ask, above all, of ourselves.

Finally, it is this self-questioning—not a thematic like "the institution," no matter how broadly conceived—that defines institutional critique as a practice. If, as Bürkle put it, the self-criticism of the historical avant-garde intended "the abolition of autonomous art" and its integration "into the praxis of life," it failed in both its aims and its strategies. However, the very institutionalization that marked this failure became the condition of institutional critique. Recognizing that failure and its consequences, institutional critique turned from the increasingly bad-faith efforts of neo-avant-gardes at dismantling or escaping the institution of art and aimed instead to defend the very institution that the institutionalization of the avant-garde's "self-criticism" had created the potential for an institution of critique. And it may be this very institutionalization that allows institutional critique to judge the institution of art against the critical claims of its legitimizing discourses, against its self-representation as a site of resistance and contestation, and against its mythologies of radicality and symbolic revolution.

NOTES

2. Andrea Fraser, "In and Out of Place," Art in America (June 1995): 124.
8. Hans Haacke, "All the Art That's Fit to Be Show," in Bronson and Gale, Museums by Artists, 152.
9. In this, Haacke's work parallels the theory of art as a social field developed by Pierre Bourdieu.
12. Ibid., 54.

This text was published in Artforum, no. 3 (September 2009): 278–280; 332.
Andreas Siekmann, *Trickle Down: Public Space in the Era of Its Privatization*, 2007. Courtesy of the artist. This project, exhibited at "Skulptur Projekte Münster 2007," presents side by side in the courtyard of a local palace a trash compactor and a large sphere of more than a dozen shredded fiberglass figures. The figures are of the type commonly advanced as public art by city marketing schemes. Pictograms that advance capitalism's primitive accumulation of public space run along the inner courtyard and cover the compactor as well as the remains of the mostly animal-shaped plastic figures.
PART IV exit strategies
10 items of the covenant (1983)
Laibach

1. Laibach works as a team (the collective spirit), according to the principle of industrial production and totalitarianism, which means that the individual does not speak: the organization does. Our work is 'industrial', our language political.

2. Laibach analyzes the relation between ideology and culture in a late phase, present in every conflict, regarding art. Laibach subordinates the tension between them to the existing disharmonies (social unrest, individual frustrations, ideological oppositions) and thus eliminates every direct ideological and systematic dissonance. The very name and the emblem are visible materializations of the idea of a level of a collective symbol. The name LAIBACH is a suggestion of the actual possibility of establishing a policed system (ideological art) because of the influence of politics and ideology.

3. All art is subject to political manipulation (indirectly—consciousness, directly), except for that which speaks the language of this same manipulation: to speak in political terms means to reveal and acknowledge the omnipresence of politics. The role of the most humane form of politics is the bridging of the gap between reality and the mobilizing spirit. Ideology takes the place of authentic forms of social consciousness. The subject in modern society assumes the role of the politicized subject by acknowledging these facts. LAIBACH reveals and expresses the link of politics and ideology with industrial production and the unbridgeable gap between this link and the spirit.

4. The triumph of anonymity and facelessness has been intensified to the absolute through a technological process. All individual differences of the authors are annihilated, every trace of individuality erased. The technological process is a method of reprogramming function. It represents development, i.e., perpetual change. To isolate a particle of this process and form it radically means to reveal man's negation of any kind of evolution which is foreign to and inadequate for his biological function.

Laibach adopts the organizational system of industrial production and the identification with the ideology as its working method. In accordance with this, each member personally rejects his individuality, thereby expressing the relationship between the particular form of production system and ideology and the individual. The form of social production appears in the manner of production of LAIBACH music itself and the relations within the group. The group functions operationally according to the principle of rational transformation, and its (hierarchical) structure is coherent.

5. The internal structure functions on the directive principle and symbolizes the relation of ideology towards the individual. The idea is concentrated in one (and the same) person, who is prevented from any kind of deviation. The quadruple principle acts by the same
key (EBER—SALINGER—KELLER—DACHAU), which—predestined—conceals in itself an arbitrary number of sub-objects (depending on theilos).

The flexibility of anonymity of the members prevents possible individual deviations and allows a permanent revitalization of the internal juices of life. A subject who can identify himself with the extreme position of contemporary industrial production automatically becomes a LAIBACH member (and is simultaneously condemned for his objectivation).

6.

The basis of LAIBACH's activity lies in its concept of unity, which expresses itself in each media according to appropriate laws (art, music, film...).

The material of LAIBACH manipulation: Taylorism, brutalism, Nazi Kunst, disco...

The principle of work is totally constructed and the compositional process is a dictated "ready-made". Industrial production is rationally developmental, but if we extract from this process the element of the moment and emphasize it, we also designate it the mystical dimension of alienation, which reveals the magical component of the industrial process. Depression of the industrial ritual is transformed into a compositional dictate and the politicization of sound can become absolute tonality.

7.

LAIBACH excludes any evolution of the original idea, the original concept is not evolutionary but teleological, and the presentation is only a link between this static and the changing determinant: unit. We take the same stand towards the direct influence of the development of music on the LAIBACH concept; of course, this influence is a material necessity but it is of secondary importance and appears only as a historical, musical, foundation of the moment which, in its choice, is unlimited. LAIBACH expresses its timelessness with the artifacts of the present and it is thus necessary that at the intersection of politics and industrial production (the culture of art, ideology, consciousness) it encounters the elements of both, although it wants to be both. This wide range allows LAIBACH to oscillate, creating the illusion of movement (development).

8.

LAIBACH practices provocation on the revolted state of the alienated consciousness (which must necessarily find itself an enemy) and unites warriors and opponents into an expression of a static totalitarian scream.

It acts as a creative illusion of strict institutionality, as a social theater of popular culture, and communicates only through noncommunication.

9.

Besides LAIBACH, which concerns itself with the manner of industrial production in totalitarianism, there also exist two other groups in the concept of LAIBACH KUNST aesthetes: GERMANIA studies the emotional side, which is outlined in relation to the general ways of emotional, erotic, and family life, lauding the foundations of the state functioning of emotions on the old classical form of new social ideologies.

DREIHUNDERT TAUSEND VERSCHIEDENE KRAWALLE is a retrospective futurist negative utopia. (The era of peace has ended.)

10.

LAIBACH is the knowledge of the universality of the moment. It is the revelation of the absence of balance between sex and work, between servitude and activity. It uses all expressions of history to mark this imbalance. This work is not limited; God has one face, the soul: infinitely many. LAIBACH is the return of action on behalf of the idea.
tactical media (1996)
critical art ensemble

Many traditional practitioners of anti-authoritarian resistance tend to dwell on the micro-phenomena of tactics. This is understandable, since tactical activity has many of the characteristics that are valued by this variety of activist. Tactics are immediate; they address a particular real-space situation; they are grounded in a sense of “community”; they can deliver moments of empirical freedom; and their ad hoc nature prevents them from transforming and solidifying into a structure of authority. At the same time, the very elements which make tactics a focal point for some resistant groups also reveal the weakness of over-emphasizing this particular category of struggle. Real-space tactics alone tend to remove a situation from the continuity of space and time, and treat the event as an independent unit. The problem here is that tactical planning and activity in real space is far too localized and limited in time marked by nomadic multinational power.

Consequently, the apparatus of punishment has easily designed countertactics not only to contain a resistant situation, but also to control the representation of the event after it has come to an end. Fascialism, using a strategy of continuous counterinsurgency, has constructed a sight machine that not only allows for the total visualization of its theater of operations, but also facilitates either a rapid distribution of its interpretation of the meaning of a given situation, or an accelerated seduction of an event into invisibility. Resistance thus becomes imprisoned in a particular moment in space, and locked into a particular area in space. The corporate state clearly understands that contained localized activity, even in aggregate form, does not affect general policy construction and deployment.

CIA believes that one does not understand the unfortunate condition of traditional tactics and their fetishization better than radical electronic media activists, artists, and theorists. Hence, these groups must ask: What are we to do now? Resistance in the age of the virtual requires extreme reorganization if it is to be successful at this crucial moment in history. All the tactics of the past must be reviewed with an intensely skeptical eye, and in addition, all other elements of struggle must also be reconsidered. The radical left cannot afford to focus solely on tactics in real or even in virtual space, nor can it act as if tactical planning and activity exist in a vacuum. Strategy, logistics, resistant social organization, and even radical subjectivity itself should all be re-evaluated. The reason for such extreme measures is clear. The radical left is losing the means to appropriate, distort, or even blind the vision of the sight machine; however, on the virtual battlefield of the new media apparatus, resistant powers are finding the means for visual disruption, as well as the methods for disturbing the construction and deployment of authoritarian policy. Through the use of critique, resistance can map the virtual terrain, and from this information, new tactics of resistance can be deduced. However, possibilities are also needed other than reactive tactics filtered through instrumental aims. Tactics which spring from nontraditional, nonauthoritarian, purportive, and reasonable consciousness, as well as from absurd and delirious social currents, should also be investigated with equal vigor.

Bwo NOW, Bwo NOW, Bwo NOW,

Imperfect flesh is the foundation of screen economics. The frenzy of the electronic sign outstrips between perfection and excess, production and counterproduction, panic and hysteria. Bwo now. The electronic body is the perfect body. The electronic body is the complete body. It reduces all who see it into the bits of the surface. It rewrites the flesh as the sight of the object, the disgusting. Bwo now. The electronic body is the perfect body. The electronic body is a body without organs. It is both self and mirror of self. The electronic body does not decay; it does not need the plastic surgeon's scalpel, liposuction, make-up, or deodorant. The electronic body cannot suffer, not physically, not psychologically, not sociologically. It is not conscious of separation.
The electronic body reduces all who see it into the bliss of counterproduction by offering the hope of a bodily unity that will transcend consumption. But the poor pathetic organic body, always in a state of becoming. Perhaps if it consumed just one more product, it too could become whole, perhaps it too could become a body without organs, sliding in screen space. The electronic body oscillates between panic perfection and hysterical decay. The electronic body renews the flesh as the sex of the object. At any moment the organic body could fracture and its surface could decay with sickness, ozone, and the spitting of artificial fluids. The electronic body has consistently shown the splitting of skin, the invasion of plex, the projecting of vomit, the spilling of guts. Any sign of the organic in screen space exists only to instill fear, contempt, and embarrassment.

But O dreams of a body that never existed. But O dreams of a body that never existed.

Deep spectacle began with the advent of urban planning in the nineteenth century, when all the architectural micro-phonomena of spectacle were networked into a unified manifestation of bourgeois ideology. Shortly after this development, spectacle took increasingly huge leaps forward by incorporating generations of electronic mass media (television, radio, cinema, television) into the visual apparatus. What the race and the innocent function of the spectacle was finally strategically identified and articulated in the 1960s, an understandable error was made in assessing the overall use of the media apparatus. Rather than being developed as a great homogenizer of populations, it was constructed as a means to narrowcast specialized identities to various social aggregates, as well as to articulate social boundaries beneficial to a multinational ruling class, and to generate nationalist illusions of welfare capitalism. On the other hand, the early critics of spectacle were quite correct when they argued that the media apparatus is the primary means of mediating social relationships. The response to this development emerged in the form of the tactics of subversion.

The power of counter spectacle to subvert authoritarian representation rests on three strategies: The first intends to reveal the exploitative ideological imperatives that the spectacle masks, the second intends to reveal all that spectacle erases, and the third intends to collapse spectacle onto its own meaningless rhetoric. Very quickly, tactics for subverting spectacle took on the shape of more radical, decentralized, and insurgent forms such as counter-communication, subversion, and generalization. These strategies were combined with research into alternative means of distribution, such as guerrilla and invisible theater and graphics, pirate radio, and television, and even the hostile appropriation of mainstream media distribution centers. It was soon realized (after 1968) that the successes of such actions were temporary, because the power of the spectacle to resist itself and recursively resist disposable action, and because of the weak corporate hold in distribution networks. A realization quickly emerged that absent tactics had to continually evolve to remain disruptive, and that the idea of achieving social utopia had to be surrendered once and for all. To complicate the problem further, just as the strategies of subversion began to bloom, spectacle lost its place as the key to power. It was rapidly reduced to a hollow regional vacation—a mere trace of the anticipated notion of power as possession. A new decentralized communication apparatus arose, made possible by the ascendency of computer and satellite technologies, that allows multinational power to retreat into obscurity, where it is free from the theater of subversive operations because it can be everywhere yet nowhere simultaneously. From this moment on, the tactics of subversion have survived primarily to support virtual strategies and tactics that have yet to be fully developed.

Cyborg as Bureaucrat

You know, always thought technology was going to make my life easier. I'm told that the dawn of the Information Age is upon us, and that information technology will be designed for premium convenience. But what convenience? Not mine. Convenience really means "efficiency," and that always means more work. I've turned into a computer for a powerful computer, believing that I would move more free time to spend with family and friends. Then I realized that the rate of production. Not only do I have to work harder, but I have to use my holiday time to attend computer classes in order to keep up with the latest software.

The corporate futurologists talk of evolution, revolution, new horizons, and global vision. Well, their global vision is blinding me. My computer has a program that counts my keystrokes. It watches me all the time, and tells me when I am not working hard enough. It's like the computer is my boss. Every time I leave my computer, I return to find the message "inadequate data entry" posted on the screen. What's really frightening is that I've actually come to care. I hesitate to leave my workstation for any reason. I question, and even ignore, my own needs and desires, and instead concern myself with the demands of my computer.

Perhaps if I go online I'll find someone to talk to, and commiserate with. But this technology connects me to a thousand voices I cannot hear. I reach out and touch no one. Sure, it's a world without borders. But it's a void without people too. I am separated from others more than I've ever been. Text on a screen is poor company. This new day isn't exactly how I imagined it, it
The resistant situation has deteriorated, and not just on the sociological level. Since the emergence of the virtual sweatshop, individuals caught in the labor machine have experienced a sharp increase in the intensity of alienation in their everyday lives. The corporate desire to attach the worker or the bureaucratic to the tools of production has certainly nothing new; however, what has changed is the design of the machine to which the worker can be attached. The current generation of machines now simulates authoritarian consciousness. Not only is the boundary between flesh and machine continuing to erode, but organic consciousness is being invaded and colonized by alien mental structures. The sight machine not only scars the surface of the body, but it also penetrates the mind, and infects it with data-driven consciousness and machinic intelligence. In support of this development, the spectacular wing of the sight machine barrages populations with seductive double-edged promises of convenience, body reconfiguration, new spirituality, re-emergent community, and democratic access to knowledge and speech. Thus far, this spectacular media campaign has managed to convince increasing numbers of individuals that technology exists solely for their liberation. But anyone who has spent even a moment at a virtual workstation knows that these machines were not designed or deployed out of any intention to liberate, but as a means to increase control of an individual (while simultaneously making considerable profit) through increased mediation of social interaction, and by implanting mechanisms of interior self-surveillance. The consequence is an intensified form of social alienation that corrodes feelings of loneliness and separation so profound that consciousness is leaped back into now-purified cycles of production and consumption. Having lost the primary pleasures of sexuality, sociality, mind-alteration, and other nonmediation possibilities, individuals have no choice but to engage in work (alienated production) and in forced leisure (alienated consumption) in a futile attempt to find pleasure and self-satisfaction.

This situation has been met first and foremost by the tactics of refusal. In its most naïve form, refusal to be a cyborg drone manifests itself in reactive and desperate forms of neo-Luddism, such as smashing televisions or blindly crippling computers. At a more sophisticated level of resistance are the tactics of selective refusal: that is, some develop a philosophy of technology that allows them to separate the more utopian characteristics from those detrimental to individual autonomy, and then they act accordingly. Representation to assist individuals in this consciousness-raising process is one of the most significant contributions that producers of counterspectacle can presently make. The final level, which is limited due to inequalities: distribution of education, hardware, and software, is not negating, but affirming. Those with the ability to do so should continue to imagine and create hardware, software, and networking strategies that resist, to the highest degree possible, the pan-capitalist imperatives of control, consumption, and production. The difficulties of achieving such ends cannot be overestimated, but such is the task for a new generation of visionaries.

Data Body

I am not real. I am redundant. I am simulation living in physical space. My function is to mediate the intersection between information and production. What is real? Real is the information that validates my existence as cyborg. Real is my data body—the flow of files which represent me. Correction: I represent them. The data is the original; I am the counterfeit. Look at all the files that intersect my organic subjectivity: credit files, travel files, education files, medical files, employment files, communication files, political files, tax files, investment files, consumption files, files into infinity. Were I not for these digital abstractions, I would have no existence in the realm of the social. These files explain to others the nature of my social role and cultural identity. As an individual, my input is considered contaminated. Desires are to be programmed into my life by those who control my data body. My being-in-the-world is reduced to the political and economic result of my daily activities. All my actions are carefully surveilled and statistically scrutinized to make certain that I follow the commands of my program, and that I do not exceed the program’s parameters.

When I came to this territory, I was stopped by an official at the airport. He took my passport, and scanned it. I cannot say specifically what he discovered, but I am sure that my data body assured him that I, this organic mass before you, was permitted to cross geographic borders. Nothing I might say was of the least significance to the official. Cyborgs have no common language. But we can interface with the data body, so we are never alone. Is this not better living through technology?

The appearance of the mature form of the data body is an indicator of two problems that plague resistant culture. The first is a micro-level problem, of concern to all people (whether they know it or not), living in technologically saturated societies. Now that the data body
has appropriated and defines one's social being in the world, how can control of this virtual twin be returned to the individual so he or she can again have the sovereignty to construct and control personal representation in the realm of the social? The second concern is a macro-level problem: if the data body is indicative of an absent virtual power which controls information and constructs social policy for purposes of domination, how can this virtual power be confronted (made present) and challenged by resistant forces?

There is no choice but to meet this two-pronged menace with the tactics of direct attack. Unfortunately, such tactics are severely underdeveloped. Much like the tactics of refusal, electronic resistance seems to be reactive and blindly destructive. Typical of this situation are offenses such as electronic assassination (electronic attacks on the data bodies of offensive individuals), random release of viruses, idiosyncratic security breaches, and other adolescent pranks. While these actions do offer the perpetrators moments of amusement, they too often hurt the undeserving, or alert members of the elite virtual class to weaknesses in their security systems, which in turn helps strengthen virtual bunkers. Individualized attacks should focus on reappropriating one's own data body, using the tactic of data corruption or deletion. This way the individual can maintain relative control of his or her own virtual representation.

The tactics needed to attack the policies and practices of the elite virtual class are much different. Here, there is a profound need for informed strategic action. This means that, first, the elite must be returned to sedentary status (as opposed to its current nomadic status), and second, that something of value to virtual power must be appropriated and withheld. CAFE suggests that nomadic power can be found in presence in the virtual environments of cyberspace, and second, that the object of value must be appropriated is vital information (such as research and development databases) or the conduits of information transfer themselves. Without local information access, or deprived of high-velocity information transfer, the networks of vision and production collapse under the weight of their own inertia. In the end, it will be cheaper for virtual power to negotiate its policies rather than for it to sustain unrelenting hits on its communication system. Resistant forces no longer require violence nor destruction to obtain their goals. All that is needed are courageous virtual activists with the skills to slow the velocity of the system. This is the heart of the tactics of electronic civil disobedience.

This essay was published in Radical Image, ed. cit. (Cen. Aust. Inst. of Photography, 1996).
tactics inside and out (2004)
gregg bordowitz

To the Research Labs, Sirs: You may be proud
As peacocks. You've endowed
Us from the start with freedoms that entrap.
We are the red-eyed mice on whom your maze
Is printed. At its heart a little cloud
Thins and dwindles—zap!—
To nothing in one blink of rays.
—James Merrill, from The Changing Light at Sandover

"in the 1990s, many artists used the term 'intervention' to describe their interdisciplinary approaches. While intervention specifically means to stand between things, or to bridge a situation, in the case of the arts, it points to practices that use the strategies of art to engage a larger public." So wrote Nate Thompson in his curator's statement accompanying "The Interventionists: Art in the Social Sphere," a show currently on view at Mass MOCA that includes work by such artists and artists' collectives as the Atlas Group, William Pope, L. the Yes Men, subRosa, and Critical Art Ensemble (CAE). An exhibition that embraces overly political art is an anomaly at this moment, purposely curated against the grain of contemporary trends, but "The Interventionists" ended up becoming political in a way that couldn't have been anticipated by its organizers or participants. Weeks before the opening, CAE founding member Steven Kurtz became the target of an FBI investigation that led to his detention. His house was searched and condemned as a biohazard. This was followed by a flurry of grand-jury subpoenas to Kurtz's colleagues under the Biological Weapons Anti-Terrorism Act. The FBI impounded Kurtz's personal property, including lab equipment and materials to be included in Free Range Ducks (2004), CAE's project for the Mass MOCA show. When "The Interventionists" opened on May 30, it did so without CAE's contribution being fully realized. Their half-finished installation stands eerily in place, with statements explaining the circumstances posted around an empty refrigeration unit. Prevented from participating in a major museum show and advised by legal counsel to remain silent, CAE were effectively gagged by the government's wildly incommensurate response to the discovery of bacteria-laden pet dishes in an artist's home. But the group's tactical politics, on the other hand, proved itself irrepressible, as a network of activists operating both within and outside the art world mounted almost spontaneously an impressive, immediate, and highly effective publicity campaign on behalf of Kurtz and CAE. No one could deny that these "Interventionists" had successfully penetrated the social sphere, and in a way not encountered in more than a decade.

CAE make experimental art. Formed by Kurtz and Steven Barnes in 1986, CAE was from the start intended to be, in their own words, "a collective of five artists at various specializations dedicated to exploring the intersections between art, technology, radical politics, and critical theory." The job of the contemporary artist is too large for any single individual, they reasoned. The labor entailed—planning, writing, planning, funding, executing the work, travel—could be competently handled only by a team. (After all, the proper nouns under which so many artists' oeuvres appear are merely brand names, backed by office workers, assistants, and sponsors.) So the five original members of CAE—though membership is no secret, they prefer anonymity—organized into one entity.

Like many groups that formed in the late '80s, CAE is a descendant of the leftist political struggles that ran aground in the '70s. Those of us left searching arms that wreckage to formulate novel, pragmatic, and effective approaches to activism. Co-arising
with the emergence of the term "tactical media," CAE defined their projects largely through their practice: "Tactical Media is situational, ephemeral and self-terminating." Tacticians address short-term goals and achievable aims. They work collaboratively, in small autonomous groups, loosely aligned with similar constellations of actors. Their approach comes out of a distinction drawn from military theory: Strategy is how you win a war; tactics are how battles are decided. The AIDS-activist movement, which also arose in the late 1980s, likewise adopted tactical approaches to achieve its aims. It is interesting to note that CAE's Cultural Vaccines (1989), a work that addressed HIV infection in the U.S., led to the formation of Florida's first ACT UP chapter, and several CAE members were instrumental in its founding.

Writing theory is a central feature of CAE's project. Their first two books, The Electronic Disturbance (1994) and Electronic Culture: Readings and Other Dispopular Ideas (1999), are benchmarks in discussions linking art to activism on the playing field of the virtual. These treatises argued that mass demonstrations and picket lines no longer seemed effective Extensive TV coverage of the civil rights struggles in the '50s led the Yippies and the Black Panthers to greater spectacular extremes in the '60s. By the end of the '70s, all of it—the previous two decades of upheaval—had been reduced to mass entertainment cliché. In the '80s, emergent technologies—from consumer camcorders to personal computers—created a new ground: a global network society in which information became the primary commodity. On this new terrain, online coalitions of hackers, artists, and 'cyborgs'-without-organs of all kinds might possibly succeed where past efforts failed. The digital revolution not only affected electronic media; it worked directly at the level of biology. In the mid-'90s, CAE shifted attention from infotech to biotech. Questioning corporate science's reach deep into the human body became the aim. Flash Machine (1999–96)—a tool as well as a project combining performance and audience participation in scientific procedures—investigated how the industry of human reproductive technology revitalized eugenic theories. The on-site lab was an invitation to "assess the potential value of their bodies as commodities and hence their place in the new biotic market economy." With Digital Resistance: Explorations in Tactical Media (2008), much of what was written in the early books was rethought and extended, based on assessments of past practice. Molecular Invasion (2002) moved the tactics into countergeneomic science, speculating on the possibilities of biowarfare—what well-informed "unauthorized" researchers could accomplish. CAE offer models for "direct biological action," reasoning that people have limited resources to resist domination by corporate forces and that the food industries have been rapidly and quietly overtaken by big-business biotech. It seems increasingly unlikely that consumers will be able to stop the unquestioned introduction of genetically modified foods into their daily diet. Considering this challenge, CAE ask, "How can we develop tactics using biological materials and processes?" Some are horrified by the idea of people taking science into their own hands, but consider that there are millions of amateur scientists around the world. Artists must be able to take ownership of new technologies and produce work critical of the modes of production now shaping our lives. (Walker Benjamin argued that) Is the home chemistry set very different from the digital camera or the PC?

CAE investigate "official" science, which—not to ignore its many positive contributions to living standards around the globe—has throughout modern history been commanded by governments and corporate interests for the purposes of militarism, social control, and even genocide. The history of science's collusion with the gods of war is what motivates this group of proudly "amateur" scientists. Thoughtfully, carefully, and with great skill, CAE perform scientific work outside the arena of official research, which is too often written under the pressure of ideology hostile to the needs of people. CAE's practice is not a new paradigm; they actually develop and perform research that tests their ideas in the world. They're interested in the failures as much as their successes. The work raises consciousness by practical example.

Another tactic within the CAE tool kit is live participatory theater (as we saw with Flash Machine). At their exhibitions they often perform in the guise of a corporation or, in one instance, a CIA (Cut the Net Roe, 1999). One can trace lines of their genealogy back to the Living Theater and Bertolt Brecht. CAE's installations are therefore in some ways backdrops to a theatrical production. Walking into the gallery, a viewer is immersed in a manifold environment—computer screens, surveys, projections, the wall, a working lab with microscopes, DNA typing, petri dishes—all mediated by flesh-and-blood performers. Of the utmost importance is the presence of the viewer's body in close proximity to the bacteria, organisms, and biological processes moving beneath the glass surface on the table before her. Art becomes science dismantled, made real.

One CAE installation (Geneteka, 2001), which investigated issues around the release of lab-altered organisms into public space, featured a machine with a robotic arm that would randomly expose one of ten plates of bacteria to the air at the viewer's push of a button. The apparatus resembled a high-tech roulette wheel. One of the ten plates on the wheel contained a transgenically altered substance. Of course, the transgenic bacteria exposed in
GenTerra—a harmless strain of F. coli, most commonly found in our intestines—posed absolutely no public-safety threat. But the audience would have no way of knowing this. Beatriz da Costa, an engineer, artist, and assistant professor at UC Irvine who worked with CAE on this project, joined several other CAE members impersonating lab technicians from a fake, environmentally friendly biotech company, GenTerra, and they engaged the audience in dialogue about the science behind and safety concerns surrounding transgenically altered bacteria. “The ability to mix the genomes of unrelated species has opened the possibility for a variety of new organic technologies. New transgenic applications will have a profound impact on the environment, health, and even on evolutionary processes,” she warned. “Some of these applications are solely for profit and function against the public interest.”

CAE frighten us like an episode of Creature Feature—make us cringe and laugh at the same time. They bring us in contact with material reality—largely unexplainable, increasingly abstract, and yet not at all remote from our bodies. Fear and laughter is a critically productive combination. It strikes us with wonder. Art’s organic relation to activism lives in the germ of a poetic act. Inspired by Breton, whom Kurz often cites, CAE know that imagination is the substance of poetry, and poetry is always revolutionary. Turns us around.

Turns us over. Returns us to ourselves never the same, always somehow different. That’s the modernist ideal. Art gives rise to experiments born of the longing for something else, something new. In that longing, utopian potential always risks proximity to horror.

What makes a work of art “political”? I asked the artist Andrea Fraser in an e-mail.

She responded:

That’s a difficult question. One answer is that all art is political. The problem is that most of it is reactionary, that is, passively affirmative of the relations of power in which it is produced. This includes most symbolically transgressive art, which is perfectly suited to express and legitimate the freedom afforded by social and economic power: freedom from need, constraint, inhibition, rule, even laws. But if all art is political, how do we define political art? I would define political art as art that consciously sets out to intervene in (and not just reflect on) the relations of power, and this necessarily means on relations of power in which it exists. And there’s one more condition: This intervention must be the organizing principle of the work in all its aspects, not only its “form” and its “content” but also its mode of production and circulation. This kind of intervention can be attempted either self-effectively, within the field of art, or through an effective insertion into another field. However, I’m rather pessimistic about the latter approach, except in cases of cultural activism based in collective movements. Most other artistic “excursions” into the so-called “real-world” end up reducing that world to signifiers to be appropriated as a form of capital within art discourse.

I owe the idea of pairing Fraser with Kurz (CAE) to circumstance: I am simultaneously engaged in conversations with both artists, and I feel somewhat torn between the two models they employ—though I don’t think their differences need to be reconciled. One is has, the other is not. They are not opposed. Both labor hard to extend the still-relevant (and urgent) concerns for artistic autonomy. CAE and Fraser occupy two positions along a continuum that extends from the historical avant-garde, which both recognize as no longer existing. In this vacuum, “political art” becomes popular under circumstances of pressure, when it’s absolutely necessary even unavoidable, to recognize the inherently political nature of culture. There is no work that is more or less political than any other. Rather movements within history necessitate the framing of all cultural production as politically consequential. We are entering a crisis moment when what is pictured and what is said carry great weight, determining the kind of life we want to lead. Fraser cares mainly about the question. How do we continue to make genuine art in an increasingly moribund cultural apparatus? CAE’s passion burns hot around the question. How do we think and respond to a culture nationally organized toward irrational ends? Both of these questions reveal the shared inherited problematic of the Frankfurt School, and both practices are struggling to get beyond that legacy. Fraser and CAE link up theoretically around the use of science. Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology is Fraser’s guiding light, while the writings of Paul Farmer and Richard Lewin are inspiring CAE. For the artists in question, like their Frankfurt School predecessors, Marxism—in and of itself—is not sufficient.

An unresolved tension animates Andrea Fraser’s corpus. Over the course of two decades, she seems to have cycled through all the tactics available to creative practice in the twentieth century: irony, mimicry, collage, scientific method, withdrawal from nineteenth-century notions of “aesthetics” (which lingered long into the twentieth century). She has presented herself, in live events and on videotape, as a museum docent, a revolutionary, a samba dancer, a gallery viewer, and, most recently, a prostitute in Official/Welcome (2001). She emptied her own body of unique substance and collapsed the effects and emotions of many art world figures into one monologue. Through this twenty-year-long accretion of poses, affects, and tactics, Fraser has attempted to capture in a single practice all the feints and gestures of the historical avant-garde. She has led us to contemplate the figure of the artist...
arrested in the face of seemingly insoluble problems. As artists continue to be alienated from our labor, our work, our art continues to be captured from our intentions. Our efforts are used to make profits for others in a system largely hostile to creativity, a system that institutes conformity by reducing the meaning of our work and the products of our labor to an exchange-value equivalent of countless products in a vast market. These problems are no less familiar to many of us, and I criticise as I once again list them for publication, yet I trust, regardless of their seemingly permanent and intractable nature, they outline the features of an intensifying impasse that remains central to the very definition of modern art. We cannot ignore them because we are not beyond them. To pretend that we are is tantamount to accepting our own irrelevance. We are at the very least relevant, even vital to the perpetuation of culture.

For tactical artists like C.A.E., artistic autonomy must be addressed according to the situation confronted. I recently discussed these problems with Kurtz, who maintains that for C.A.E. institutional critique is only one tool in their kit. Sometimes it's not appropriate to entirely give over focus to the surrounding institutions of exhibition. Genera was once staged in a fruit market. Should C.A.E. shape their efforts to the venue and explain political economy to the fruit sellers and farmers who are themselves all too painfully aware of the forces constraining their productions? Institutions can be useful, and the tactical approach to art relies on a shifting set of methods deployed according to context. C.A.E.'s work that context often includes places far outside the art world. Or one might say that there are many art worlds at the moment operating independently of one another and that C.A.E. and like-minded artists operate within an art world far removed from the international art market and the attendant professions and institutions that legitimate it. C.A.E. require that all their works have apparent politics. Kurtz says that you have only five minutes with most viewers, what gets conveyed in that brief span is crucial to the work's lasting effect.

Situation is also a key term for Fraser. The strength and effectiveness of her institutional critique rely heavily on how her gestures are captured by a commodity system. Indeed, her critique is legible only within that system. She denounces her firework in the commercial world, and it is there that her work is most risky and dangerous. To wage battle in the commercial field, Fraser must necessarily exclude all references to social conflicts beyond it. The burden of her framework necessarily limit the ability to directly engage currents outside the gallery. Fraser resists against the homogenizing conformity of the art world apparatus by using a time-honored tactic of factory workers: she works to rule. She gives the art world exactly what it requires and demands, unmitigated and unaltered. By confronting directly to the demands of the situation, her performance foregrounds an unacknowledged excess of emotion. Fraser's pathos: her impatience, her desire to be freed. Fraser refuses toCompound impossible questions. What do you want? Only someone who truly loves art (as Fraser does) someone who passionately rejects the latent violence against creativity (barely hidden beneath the surface of the market), can possess the concentration required to reformulate, repeatedly and insistently, an incisively precise, cogent, and uncompromising critique. There's an enormous amount of optimism here. Fraser refuses to stop believing that the system can change. Better, truly committed to creativity. She remains one of the great experimental artists of her generation.

C.A.E., proceeding in altogether different ways, can also be counted among the signatory experimenters of their time. They are included in Fraser's understanding of critical art as an example of genuine "cultural activism." Their interventions draw impetus from Felix Guattari and poststructuralism. Unlike Fraser, they reject psychoanalytic theory. Instead, they practice what William James termed "radical empiricism." They respond to what they can directly observe while retaining a healthy humility with regard to the limits of knowledge. Fraser, the limit of conscious knowledge is the starting point. Where political economy fails, psychoanalytic theory holds explanatory promise, but not exhaustively. The lessons of psychoanalysis are often the real source of the inarticulate, inexpressible conflicts at the core of each psyche—difficult, not impossible, to mobilize politically. That is exactly why C.A.E. have little use for psychoanalysis.

Fraser's methodology allows for exploration into areas where pragmatism fetters C.A.E. Although they are committed feminists, gender difference, sexuality, and desire are necessarily suspended problematic for C.A.E. Their front-burner concern is epistemology. The nonontological areas of the psyche are referred to and sometimes engaged, but not thoroughly analyzed in C.A.E. Truax is not their mission.

Their project is a protest against institutionalized forms of violence, against, for example, weapons research being at the center of our national scientific enterprise. Threat of annihilation of autonomy or of life itself—is what motivates these artists. Freedom is a myth; liberty is not. Freedom is an existential category. We don't get to choose the circumstances of our birth, and unless one opts for suicide, death takes us regardless of act of our own volition. What unfolds between birth and death may be a small act of minor navigations that appear hugely significant only to the living. Liberty exists, however, as a matter
of the social. The choices open to us, whatever their import or abundance, are determined by rules and the latitude they provide. The public sphere and the choices allowed within it are all defined by politics.

If the artist who operates within the power structure of the official art world is necessarily compromised and the artist who operates outside it is marginalized, are the efforts of artists futile? No. The tactics may have changed over the past century to account for structural shifts under capitalism, but the stakes remain the same, and the existential quandaries are no less complicated. Art and culture endure as vital arenas where fundamental social and political problems are answered provisionally. These answers provide momentary resolutions to largely irresolvable conflicts. What matters more than any particular resolution, however, is the manner in which we negotiate the conflict, whether old or new. Negotiation is basic to liberty. And negotiation is not the same as compromise.

This text was published in Artforum 43, no. 1 (September 2004): 212-215, 292.
resymbolizing machines: art after öyvind fahlström (2004)
bureau d'études

In the 1960s and 1970s, the artist Öyvind Fahlström created paintings, maps, and games filled with precise information, analyzing the social, economic, and political situations of the present. These aesthetic and cognitive objects, initially produced by museums and collectors, gradually put a foot outside the art system and gained their own autonomy. For that, considerations of technical reproduction and distribution had to be included in the conception of the objects, and the public associated with them had to go suddenly into action—to start speaking. This exodus of artists outside the art system is suppressed today by art critics assuming the role of legislators (and recruiters). With their stunted philosophy of forms, these critics reduce artists to the status of suppliers whose products meet the demands of the market and the cultural institutions. But the artists sometimes go beyond the experts’ control, bringing their autonomy into play beyond the limits authorized by the guardians of the temple.

Fahlström put an end to Saint Simon’s utopian hierarchy: “Artists in the lead, followed by scholars, and only then by industrialists, after the first two classes.” Instead, he sparked cooperation between autonomous agents dealing with knowledge, art, production, and distribution, and also critical reception. First, he opened up aesthetic creation to the inventions of expert knowledge and vice versa, with his maps and paintings depicting social, economic, and political situations. He then attempted an exit from the feudal system of art, with the idea of autonomous production and distribution. Painting, sculpture, etc., today represent the most archaic art media, depending on feudal patrons who pay exorbitantly for uniqueness and fetish magic... It is time to incorporate advances in technology to create mass-produced works of art, obtainable by the rich or the not rich. He envisaged the creation of a system of “alternative, autonomous distribution” and worked with various political movements.

Nonetheless, Fahlström did not really succeed in his project. Looking at his work, it is quite clear that he could not realize his aims: there was no large production of his images (which most often remained in the state of prototypes), nor did the works carry out the critique of the means of expression (henceforth rationalized and industrialized). The imaginary and narrative profusion of his work, escaping at a run from the disciplinary censorship of pre-1968 culture, can no longer stand up against the galloping normalization of the unconscious itself, the industrialisation of desires and affects, the massive consumption of fictional beings that has been installed since the 1970s. The point of convergence between art, knowledge, practices and struggles, production and distribution—in other words, the project, implicit in his entire approach, of a popular university or parliament (allowing for a collective reworking of narrative, representations, and shared rules)—did not find any enduring form. There would not be any technological and political assemblages between the different agents of symbolization (from conception to reception). Above all, Fahlström maintained the category of “artist,” even though his project cut through the professional identity of symbol producers.

INVENTING THE COMMONS

Let us just imagine what Fahlström would be like if he left the nineteenth century behind and abandoned the romantic postures. Let us imagine the practical realization of his popular university or parliament, at the crossroads of the aesthetic and the cognitive, of practice and struggle, of production and distribution.

Take the question of distribution and broadcasting, for example. Once autonomous symbolic production has left the artausal realms of the feudal system of art (with
its institutional chateaux, its private and public barriers, its obsequious culture, its commodification, its exploitation of subjectivities, its embedded critics, its rhythms run up against the well-guarded fortresses of the culture industry. If we just take the Lagardère empire—with Payot and Fayard press, Elle and Marie-Claire magazines, Bouviller toys, the NKPP and Relais H outlets, Hatier, Bordas, Helin, and Nathan, publishers, Europe 1, RFI, Canal Satellite and Club Internet media networks (just a tiny part of this arms manufacturer’s holdings)—it adds up not only to almost all the big French publishing houses, but also the distribution and broadcasting machines that keep them running. The task appears impossible. To become autonomous from this feudalism, a collective symbol producer would have to assemble nothing less than publishing, distribution, and broadcasting machines, independent media, audience, bookstores. Strike forces (unions) would also have to be created to oppose the machine of the adversaries, or to protect the exodus of the autonomous assemblies.

Such an assemblage of publications, broadcast, and distribution machines, with the creation of unions for protection from and in opposition to the cultural feudals, would be a full-fledged machine of reassemblage. It would be a site of social transmission and mutualization of expressions, knowledge, and skills. This machine would stand apart from its feudal enemy through its way of feeling, of coordinating its forces and producing meaning. It would also stand apart by virtue of its ethics, its aesthetics, and even by its epistemology.

Looking around us we see lots of these kinds of machines. Sometimes they are small, other times more complex, more articulated, giving hope that the double refusal of the culture industry and the art system might survive and grow in an enduring way. We came across a particularly interesting machine of this kind, which invited us to associate ourselves with it. Wishing to gain some autonomy, our amists’ group became part of the distribution collective Co-erences.

Such a cooperative is a necessary piece in an autonomous assemblage: it allows for the articulation of publishers, journals, filmmakers, and producers, each one symbolizing in its own way, outside the cultural feudalism. It also articulates bookstores, art house cinemas, and other self-styled projection spaces and associations. To function coherently over time, the Co-erences cooperative not only has to fulfill its task (distribution), but it also has to create or give rise to a few complementary pieces, essential to the life and survival of autonomous machines.

Are small and medium-sized publishers not worth a damn, and fated to disappear? Do distribution companies only belong to the feudal lords? Then let us create an economic interest group for independent distribution. What we should do is create a union of small and medium-sized publishers (actually numerous in France), very close to what might be called "the creativity of the multitude." These publishers ought to meet just before the Salon du Livre, which is monopolized up to 75 percent by the manufacturer of signs and information. Lagardère. Are the audiences hypnotized? Well, public munitions (of which there are seven in the course of formation) allow the latter to come out of their passive, desocialized, and depoliticized role as cultural consumers. Are independent cinemas with unique projections on the way out?

Not at all. There are many informal projection spaces that can be supported with your participation, they will have to meet some day, to become numerous of their own strength.

All these machines have different schematics or different ways of functioning from the feudal machines. They refuse the imperative of the "latest thing" and the "instant" distinction. Such a consumerist vanguard is too costly and enslaving. The autonomous production of symbols looks twice at the autonomy that a form allows and at the cost it imposes on a producer/receiver. A machine tool is more autonomous than a computer-controlled machine, as people saw with the self-managed Lip factory in France, or with the self-managed businesses in Argentina. In this sense, an autonomous producer prefers to smash certain machines that destroy autonomy (without displacement elsewhere). The same producer also salvages inventions cast aside by technological "progress" (noncommercialized seeds, patents that have fallen back into the public domain).

The autonomous production of symbols requires a machinic ecology, but it also requires an informational ecology. The continuous simulation of information, and of new fictional beings that fascinate and befuddle the brain. In the worst of cases, disorientation becomes complete. Hence, there is a problem of vision, an ecological question specific to the information society. This ecology particularly needs to situate the trajectory and industrial origins of information and the figures of desire. Why are they massively produced, and by whom? In other words, maps should allow you to locate yourself, to identify the clouds of industrializing information, as well as the sewage pipes that eject them into the information space. But circuit-breakers too must be created to stop the forward march of these psychic
steamrollers (here we might think of the way the anti-advertising collective turn the publicity around inside out, or the way certain ecological actions cover every advertisement in a city with black paint).

Still, these kinds of maps and circuit-breakers are not enough. They are not up to the point. The big businesses and the major public administrations have perceptive organs, thanks to their megalomachines for the invention, collection, refinement, synthesis, transformation, and selective destruction of existing information. These megalomachines help the governments or businesses in question to make decisions. They also allow them to manipulate collective representations by satisfying memory, implementing fake memories or false information, rumors, or pseudo-arguments (the Pragmatische System, etc.). Alongside these psychological war-machines, there exist other symbolization machines creating the desire for submission, narcissistic prisons, serene adherence, coercion via the figures of desire. And so, megalomachines that reinforce autonomy must also be conceived.

In the 1960s, there was still the dream of creating an ideal society, and the artistic avant-garde sometimes wanted to be its prophet. Fahlström dreamed of a postindustrial Swedish welfare-state extended to the entire planet, and of a guaranteed income within the control society. "Judging, communications and basic food supply are supposed to be guaranteed for everyone, whether they work or not." Widespread access to consumer products in the Athenian democracies of Northern Europe and the United States, along with the foreseeable shrinkage of available resources, were fated to cool down this utopia of abundance: there would be no further expansion of the middle class. And even less any escape from salaries, labor, or ability to choose not to work.

Specializations on the possible models of a planetary society were developed by various artists in the 1960s. There was the famous "World Game" by Buckminster Fuller, which used a mix of modulated information flows to help people reflect on possible paths of evolution for the planet, or for particular countries or regions. These possible evolutions would take more or less the following form: "Given that region x has a demographic growth rate y for a total agricultural production z, with a development of the road system at k kilometers per year, how much agricultural importation is necessary, what are the ecological impacts, etc.?" The multiplication of parameters defined the quality of the questions that could be asked of the universal symbolization machine. But this machine had the likely disadvantage of its own quantitative presuppositions. Such a symbolization machine, freed from its magic touch (the "crystal ball" aspect whose effects in the hands of the technocrats are well known),

would then bring into operation a process of critical re-symbolization (by visualizing the different powers, the capacities of production, consumption, and their consequences) and also of positive re-symbolization, reinforcing autonomy and cooperation by rendering the rules of the productive game at once visible and transformable.

**Mapping Production Lines**

We have produced data maps on the structures of capitalism, media concentration, the prison industry, the new military technologies, etc., and will continue to create such maps using artisanal techniques (see online maps at http://utangere.free.fr). With these maps, we seek to produce a diagnosis of the present, based not on a denunciation of the so-called "dictatorship of the financial markets" or the "neoliberal regime," but rather on an analysis of the oligarchy and the oligopolies which, through small decisions taken at the dominant points and through the successive delegation of responsibilities throughout the entire set of organizations they control, bring into play strategies and push toward goals on the scale of a country, a region, or the entire planet.

The insufficiencies of our artisanal approach to information and the meeting of friendly minds have led us to associate ourselves with them in order to create a map generator. The generator will be a machine allowing everyone to generate the maps they need for their actions, by entering data concerning the business or administration in which they work, or about which they have found some information. The accumulation and coordination of all the information should gradually permit the visualization of the immense lines of production which link, for example, the places where raw materials are extracted, where petroleum products are processed, where electronic components are assembled, where industrial or software design is carried out, all contributing to the design/production/distribution/use of a computer. The map generator would allow people to name all the agents of a particular production line and to identify their spatial arrangement, along with the trees of ownership and the regulatory commissions that control them. Finally, it would allow one to use the community of production lines within a given field of activity. It would draw the technical, social, and political "schematic" that brings together both the producers and the component parts of a product. And it would open up the possibility of a double usage: finding the places where cuts in the networks can be carried out, and sketching a potential schematic that would assemble diverse, widely disseminated producers. It would trace the
In the nineteenth century, people imagined the octopus as a figure of the power of transnational firms; the vampire, the pig, and the fat man as figures of the capitalist; the pyramid and the man in the top hat in contrast with the man with a cap. In the 1960s, Patrimonio imagined obsessive monads (cook with legs or cash with legs, permanently galloping around under the compulsion of perpetual motion); hands (hands without bodies, the hands of power, shaking each other, moving signs or goods, fighting, slapping, or catching); a hydraulic system of capitalist secretions (flows of money, of information, of raw materials); political authority has long been built on symbols allowing the political communities to rally together: flags, emblems, texts, songs. These symbols, in their symmetry with the dominant forms (the national flag, the salute, the patriotic hymn), have been voided by history and now belong to the past.

If we think of a production line as a republic, then each object becomes a flag, a global sociopolitical assembly. In other words, a symbol. But this symbol needs to be resemanticalized: its meaning must be reenacted, the relations of production must become visible. Only then would the most ordinary supermarket catalogue appear for what it really is: a world social atlas, an atlas of possible struggles and paths of escape, a machine of planetary political recomposition.

NOTES

3. For more information on this cooperative strategy game, deliberately conceived as the metaphorical mirror of military games, see Bundesstiller Frank, The World Game: Integrative Resource Planning Tool, 1971. Available at www.wt-i.org/wwt-i/ifw/10416.pml

Transcribed by Brian Holmes, this text was published in Third Text 18, no. 8 (2004), 509–516.
The understanding of art changes very slowly. The work character of art was already being questioned one hundred years ago. Since then artists have attempted to perform functions that go far beyond the production of objects.

The demonic has been coming up again and again for a long time now. Art should no longer be venerated in specially designated spaces. Art should be a parallel world. Art should not act as if it could exist of itself and for itself. Art should not deal with reality, grapple with political circumstances, and work out proposals for improving human coexistence. Unconventional ideas, innovative spirit and energy, which for centuries were wrapped up in formal glass bead games, could thus contribute to the solution of real problems.

Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the demands are slowly starting to take effect. The formal-aesthetic discussion has run its course. Its myriad self-referential somersaults have become inflationary, and the worship of virtuosity has given way to other qualities. In the process, a fundamental discussion of the functions of art has arisen: Who does what in art, and why?

Art can perform many functions. For pages and pages, the various functions could be listed like a catalogue of stylistic forms: Art can represent its commissioners and producers; it can be a defender and caretaker of identity; it can affect snobby illusions and satiate the bourgeois hunger for knowledge and possession. Art can fan the leisure time of the bored masses; it can serve as an object of financial speculation; it can transmit feelings and cause one’s heart to vibrate. Furthermore, the many functions are also entwined in one another. Abstract Expressionism, served Cold War Americans as a political instrument of culturalization just as much as it served the spiritual need for expression of the young painters that created it.

One of the functions of art has always been the transformation of living conditions. Since the advent of Modernism, with its rejection of religious-founded authority, art has been an especially fertile domain for querying irrational taboos and arbitrary value standards and for correcting social imbalances. This function was first put into practice by the Russian Constructivists. Simultaneously with the 1917 change of regime in Russia, an art was introduced which for the first time sought to directly influence the people’s consciousness and living conditions through agitation and activism. Thus a new chapter was opened in the history of art.

In Germany the Bauhaus cultivated these developments. Science, architecture, technology, and the visual arts were all working toward one another so as to shape as many aspects of life as possible. Books and posters, vehicles, landscapes, and clothing took on new forms corresponding to function and ideology in order to establish the new philosophies of life with a centurial merging of evidence. Every formal renewal of the world—as thought the artists of that time—would also have to bring about a corresponding change of attitude.

For many decades it seemed that society actually could be manipulated through alteration of the visual surroundings and of habits of seeing and hearing. This view still had its supporters as recently as the sixties, and the question of whether that era’s youth revolt was influenced or even triggered by rock and pop music, or if conversely the music was merely a part of the release of long-accumulated dissatisfaction, is a source of material for sociological seminars up to the present day. Looking back, the idea of “altering social relationships by altering form” appears a little naïve. Of course attitudes and habits, thinking patterns and value standards can be marginally influenced through forms. The whole advertising field is sustained by this thesis. But people’s ideological principles, their worldviews...
and values cannot really be changed through colors, sounds, and forms. Clothes, one could say, only make the man in romantic novels.

Following the Second World War, "socially engaged art" experienced several high-points. First of all, we think the word must be changed," stands at the beginning of the Situationist Manifesto from the late fifties. Similar proclamations of and demands for change in politics, sexuality, the economy, and culture are to be found in numerous initiatives and organizations. In heated discussions with like-minded individuals, the Lettrists and Activists discussed the most basic method of destroying every aspect of tradition, constantly on the lookout against their own institutionalization. What came after the destruction was of lesser importance. The path was the goal, and the goal was conflict with high culture, whose forms of expression were suspected of being co-opted by the economic ruling class for its own ends. "Artists who withdraw into the reserve of their own areas of specialization are just as much functionaries of an ossified society as skilled workers and file clerks," wrote Subversive Action. These activists, who classified themselves as "para-elites," wanted to achieve that which others did not even dare to think. And yet, when seen from a certain historical distance, they left behind little more than manifestos. It remained at the level of suspicions declarations of intention and maxims. However, the methods of "constructing situations" have found successors to this day.

Simultaneously with the Situationists and Lettrists came the development of Conceptual Art. No longer the object but rather the idea behind it was what counted in art. Aside from early forerunners like the Austrian poet H.C. Arntzmann in the fifties, the first important phase of Conceptual Art coincided with the Vietnam War and the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. It was the time of the student revolts, the continuing struggle for civil rights, and the growth of feminism. In addition to giving rise to all sorts of playful escapades and self-referential "art industry analyses," the general questioning of value standards and authority primarily led to a marked interest in the political. Starting from the "classical" position, the Post-Conceptualists thus developed their forms of dealing with issues like race, class, racism, and gender. They too remained within the traditional context of art in that they transmitted their cause using conventional forms of exhibition and presentation, thus merely pleasuring a specialized art public, whose majority shared their views anyway. Diligently staged and photographed statements on racism, feminism, and homosexuality always reached the same few people, who nonetheless enjoyed an opportunity to prove their correctness to one another. Still, this conception of art must be understood as an important precursor of today's political activism.

In the seventies, the demand for sociopolitical relevance in art was finally put into concrete action—in a variety of ways. Unlike Rosenbach's alternative television program was to emancipate the people from the media cartels' monopolies; video technology was used by Richard Elsas in the rehabilitation of disabled children (long before medicine came upon the idea). Barbara Steiner and John Lamson of the Artists Placement Group presented suggestions for improving educational policy to their government. Joseph Beuys redefined the position of art in society with the concept of the Social Plastic. Hans Haacke showed how political processes can be influenced through intervention; Klaus Staeck's antipropaganda posters elucidated the relationships between business and power. And groups like the Art Workers' Coalition declared war on the conventional art establishment and its rigid admission criteria.

Filled with a euphoria not lacking a measure of hubris (the artist as social shaman, healer, and revolutionary guru), these artists—and here avant-garde circles were in agreement—wanted to make contributions to improving conditions in psychology and sociology, utilizing methods of social intervention. The avant-garde wanted to choose living localities for their creation, to stop working for eternity, and to address more than just the educated classes of the public.

In the end, it did not work without the old institutions. The museums, the art journals, the galleries, and the art academies had no problem whatsoever integrating the myriad forms of so-called anti-art. Even the most subversive forms of Actionism and Neo-Dada were co-opted into collections. Ultimately, objects were still all that remained. Relics of actions, photos, and sketches became fetishes for veneration and for sale. Far more people at that time—and this still applies today—art had to do with works. It must be something that can be seen, touched, and packed away. Everything else cannot be solo, cannot be collected and preserved.

Qualities other than those that are immediately sensorially perceivable, which nonetheless are always tied to objects, took on increasing significance, but only at a slow pace. The seventies did show how art could develop after abandoning mimeticism, after abandoning the need for expression, after abandoning the variants of abstraction, and after abandoning the question of form. With Happenings, Fluxus, Performances, and Actions,
with ironic variants of Ready-mades and with Conceptual Art, a profound doubt of the notion that art can only be fixed in the object became clear. Concept and idea, which were discussed as the actual artistic achievement behind every material realization—even painting—gained ground against a conception of art that only manifests itself in material. The entire complex of production conditions was of course called into question as well.

Action Art also made a significant contribution to the developments leading to Actionism. Originally conceived as cathartic satisfaction of the individual's unfulfilled drives and a liberation of the subject from the bonds of convention, Actionism soon came not to thinking and recognized the costs of many individual and psychological problems in social injustices. The desire for catharsis could often not be fulfilled because those involved soon became aware of the senselessness of every primal scream, regardless of the depths from which it may emerge, when social conditions leave no room for an improvement in subjective well-being.

In the eighties it seemed like it was all over. All of the successes and efforts of sociopolitically committed art were pushed to the side. Repeatedly and with growing success, these aspirations were confronted by an art fully devoid of purpose. Contemplation again came to the fore, and with it the objects that were to evoke it: the art shrines. The reversal did not really come so much from the artists' ranks, where there continued to be an interest in utopia. It also did not come from criticism. It came from the powerful scene that viewed art as a commodity, because it earned a living from this sort of art. It was the huge swarm of speculators and collectors, who saw their precious canvases being replaced by forms of art that they could not sell and could not exhibit. They were joined by conservative art teachers who did not want to change their well-rehearsed old opinions, and by all of the institutions that would have liked to sell their exhibition halls with visitors once again. Alternate conceptions of art were nothing they wanted to follow. They preferred one hundred more variations for repeating already-been-there, and they preferred to keep packing and unpacking their wares all the while entitling them for all they were worth. Art was nothing more in mind than using its potential to improve obvious conditions was not suitable for making a profit. It could not delight the aesthetically seductive eye or awaken any lofty sentiments.

In Poland those times were different. An Actionist group dressed in orange went out on the streets in 1988. Through megaphones they proclaimed the governing General Jaruzelski king. This was not a call against communism, but rather a refined strategy that these artists were using to unveil the regime's hypocrisy. They also proclaimed an 'International Day of the Spy', on which they appeared by the hundreds with dark glasses and turned-up collars, stopping passersby and forcing the secret police to check their papers. On another occasion they sang pathetic hymns in praise of the Red Army and read out the orange manifest of socialists: 'repression'. In this manifesto, the police officer declared a war of art, as an individual, is better yet deployed in masse in charge against the activists: the wider the better the art.

In the West, the phase of self-satisfied, market-oriented art production did not last forever. With the function came a change of thinking and in fact a renewal of reflection on the social responsibility of art. Postmodernism's celebratory autonomy revealed itself to be an anathema to which countless palaces and new museums had been erected. They brought dealers dirtying profits at first but soon enough inflation and losses followed. Political reality was outside of this art's field of interest. The effects of conservative economic policy, creeping social cutsbacks, increasing immigration conflicts, and a general insecurity following the dissolution of the East-West power balance first became determining factors in the production of art after the collapse of the market and the disappearance of art. Since then visual art has developed in two directions: into an art that is defined by economic interests and bottom-line thinking, that lusts the masses with spectacles and lots of hoopla, and conversely into an art that acts—indispensably of profit and populism—in possibilities, that seeks to examine and improve the conditions of coexistence.

The latter sounds a bit altruistic and visionary. Too altruistic for the art that just wants to hang loose and easy beyond the daily grind. And yet more and more artists are finding that the decision is not so difficult: when, in view of the numerous functions of art, their choice leads to the satisfaction of leisure-time needs and toward the cooperative shaping of life in society.

In contrast to the thinking of the seventies, today's activists are no longer concerned with changing the world in its entirety. It is no longer a matter of mercilessly implementing an ideological line, as it was in Joseph Beuys's idea of transformizing a whole society into a Social Plastic. or as it was in the thinking of the Russian Constructivists, the Futurists, and many other manifesto writers of the modern era. At the end of the century activist art no longer overestimates its capabilities. But it does not underestimate them either. It
makes modest contributions. It would be wrong, in a society in which every discussion of basic principles has been lost, to expect that something like art can make decisive changes. Folk songs don’t rescue whales. “Stop AIDS” posters don’t stop the spread of the disease, and Klaus Staeck’s greenpeace posters have hardly hindered speculation in the housing market. Did Picasso’s Guernica do anything for the tormented residents of that city? It remains a monument, a ritual of grief, and an admission that the power to affect anything with art is limited.

And yet, in the proper dose art can change more than is assumed. Art must devote itself to very concrete strategies of effecting change. Wishing patients in hospitals a quick recovery through artistic decoration of the walls, reusing Austrian literature (aloud to asylum seekers, of having “Mutter Courage” appear on stage consumed as a Kosovo Albanian are nothing more than easy absolutions for a guilty conscience. The series can be continued—with “Homeless Art,” for example. Tania Mouraud sprayed windowpanes with the symbols used by vagabonds: “Here there is food,” and “A hospitable woman works here.” Then she demonstratively gave out free cassettes before returning to her everyday life. There is “Rock Music with Lyrics on Housing Shortage” in which “tenants’ needs” rhyme with “speculator’s greed,” and there is a designer, the New York artist Krzysztof Wodiczko, who was always inventing vehicles for New York’s winos and homeless. Utopian—cooking all-purpose vehicles built on supermarket cart chassis that hobos could push around, with storage space for returnable cans and bottles, were designed so that the whole device could be converted into a cot for the night. Wodiczko’s approach—he looks for solutions within the realm of existing possibilities, even if they do seem a little utopian—is certainly worthy of mention. Still, his carts are only presented in museums. This could even give rise to the suspicion that he is utilizing social destitution for the purpose of creating “valuable exhibition pieces.” It is unimaginable that they would ever actually be employed by their intended users. Even the most banal problems, like storage, would arise.

Social renewal is a function of art after the art of treating surfaces. It makes more sense to improve the carrying structure before improving the surface. This art’s big chance lies in its ability to offer the community something that also achieves an effect. The motives for concrete intervention based in art should not be confused with an excess of moralistic fervor. As a potential base for action, art has political capital at its disposal that should not be underestimated. The use of this potential to manipulate social circumstances is a practice of art just as valid as the manipulation of traditional materials. The group

WochenKlausur takes this function of art and its historic precursors as its point of departure. WochenKlausur sets precise tasks for itself and, in recursive actions that are limited in time, attempts to work out solutions to the problems it has recognized. Widespread interest in the theoretical foundations and practical working methods as well as the concrete results of projects in Austria and abroad have encouraged WochenKlausur to continue working in this direction.

This text was published on WochenKlausur’s website, http://www.wochenklausur.at.
The most significant underwriter of engineering research in the United States is the Department of Defense, largely through the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). DARPA exists to channel funds from the military to academic and corporate research labs in exchange for technological innovations that serve the needs of its clients—the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. As DARPA public relations officers are fond of pointing out, innovations funded by DARPA grants may also find expression in civilian applications, particularly in the communications and aerospace industries.

Researchers ("principal investigators") are held accountable to DARPA program managers via aggressive schedules of milestones, deliverables, and administrative review. Framing this process as a form of cultural co-production implicates both researchers and military officers as active participants in constructing military-funded civilian research, and highlights tensions between martial and academic approaches to knowledge production. This depiction reveals opportunities for interventions that pose deep challenges to engineering culture.

DARPA’s mission, "to maintain the technological superiority of the U.S. military and prevent technological surprise from harming our national security by sponsoring revolutionary, high-payoff research that bridges the gap between fundamental discoveries and their military use," is a narrative of transgression (DARPA 2004). As the titles of two of its recent DARPAtech conferences suggest, the agency is concerned with "Bridging the Gap" (2004) between laboratory research and battlefield application or, more poetically, with "Transforming Fantasy" (2003) into martial reality.

Like other institutions that employ "fantasy into reality" imagery (e.g., Disney, the pornography industry), DARPA is in the business of creating and satisfying desire. DARPA program managers enliven academics with fanciful visions of future scenarios informed by science fiction and video games. These solicitations are cryptic pronouncements to be interpreted by principal investigators at competing research laboratories and presented back to DARPA in the form of proposals and prototypes. The most stimulating submissions are selected for further development; the rest are abandoned, unworthy of further attention. Principal investigators who keep their program managers satisfied are in turn nourished, with DARPA funding and the support of their host institutions. Researchers who fail to satisfy DARPA managers must look to other, less well-endowed, funding sources or be denied resources and, often, tenure.

Research prototypes thus become the "world made flesh" (or, more accurately, silicon and steel), embodiments of desire created through a cyclical process of co-creation by researchers and program managers. Through proposal solicitations, review sessions, and demonstration milestones, researchers continually labor to engage DARPA managers in the co-construction of technologically enabled martial fantasy, enjoying the luxury of continued funding where they succeed and adjusting their products where they fall short.

**Reinterpretation as Intervention**

Because their operations depend on the unstedied flow of DARPA funding, research and development labs generally rely on literal interpretation strategies when deciphering DARPA solicitations. Artists and artisans, on the other hand, have much more latitude in their
reading of DARPA texts and are free to explore the metaphorical value of DARPA concepts. For example, our "contextual robotics" (2004) initiative proceeds from a loose reading of DARPA's Tactical Mobile Robotics program. The Tactical Mobile Robotics program is developing robotics technologies and platforms designed to revolutionize dismounted operations by projecting operational influence and situational awareness into previously denied areas (DARPA 2004).

Recognizing the references to "denied areas" as a metaphor for the privatization of public space, we developed several devices that allow artists, activists, and juveniles delinquents to "project operational influence in ways that humans cannot by using reliable semi-autonomous robotic platforms" (DARPA 2004). Like their military counterparts, our graffiti writing and humanoid propaganda machines are intended to perform actions too risky for human actors—even in our case, the "operations" include spray painting slogans and distributing subversive literature, and the "denied areas" are government buildings, shopping malls, and public streets.

Similarly, our metaphorical reading of the Small Unit Operations: Situational Awareness System concept (i.e., a "mobile communication system ... optimized for restrictive terrains" that relies on "wearable computing" to "maintain communications and situational awareness in a difficult urban environment") substitutes civilians for soldiers and cities for battlefields. Taking this concept further reveals a need to monitor and avoid surveillance camera networks, and the utility of a cell phone text messaging service that allows demonstrators to coordinate actions and track police movements during political protests.

NORMALIZED AMBIVALENCE

By explicitly addressing political issues, our projects challenge engineering culture. As a practice, engineering proceeds through a highly productive ambivalence about the relationship between engineers and the society in which they operate. On the one hand, engineers are fundamentally concerned with acting on a world that they perceive as "essentially problemic...an opportunity for continuous useful, material development." (Holt 1994). We may call this the Da Vinci impulse—the capacity for innovative material production that draws upon all of the arts and sciences to increase understanding and improve the human condition. At the same time, engineering views itself as a service industry whose primary responsibility is to provide technical expertise to its employers (CoEE 2003). This is the DIBERT impulse—the tendency to myopically focus on technical problems and leave consideration of a product's ultimate use to marketers and end-users.

While the Da Vinci impulse generates a highly skilled workforce dedicated to solving "hard problems" the DIBERT impulse provides ethical justification when those problems arise in conjunction with morally dubious applications. The ambivalence embodied in these contradictory formulations of engineering practice is enabled by a conception of technology as a value-neutral tool that, by extension, implies technological development is an ethically indifferent activity. This instrumental view of technology (Feenberg 1991) and ambivalence toward the world are normalized through immersion in engineering culture—primarily in technical universities.

In addition to providing technical innovation for the military, DARPA involvement in academia normalizes ambivalence among students and researchers. Although the agency's motivation is to enhance the military's ability to win wars and kill enemies, open declarations of martial efficacy are rare within academia. Instead, DARPA-sponsored research is presented to the academic community (including the students working on military projects) in abstract terms, as "optimization algorithms" and "enabling technologies." Civilian applications are highlighted, thus fostering a sense that the particular (and, by extension, all) technologies are neutral. The rhetorical work done by this positioning of military research relies on the slippery concept of "dual use" technologies, which have a varied but limited set of military and civilian applications, and "generally purpose" tools, which can be brought to bear on virtually any problem. While it may be argued that in practice there can be no such thing as a general purpose tool (Weilerbaun 1970), emphasizing civilian applications for a DARPA-funded research project downplays the particular application for which it has been designed and "free[s] the engineer from responsibility for the uses to which it will most likely be put. The culture that celebrates technology's neutrality thus mobilizes ambivalence as a mechanism that enables thoughtful, well-intentioned individuals to work on projects they would otherwise find morally repugnant.

INFILTRATION AND TACTICAL AESTHETICS

As an organization, the IIA is an exercise in tactical aesthetics—we use the visual and rhetorical devices of sanctioned research organizations in an elaborate performance aimed at infiltrating engineering culture. By demonstrating technical competence, we earn the righ
to speak to engineers not as activists or theorists, but rather as an "institute" of fellow travelers, indistinguishable in many respects from the research organizations where our audience toils every day. Our projects are presented as "research findings" at university lectures and technical conferences, and are reported on in engineering journals and trade publications. Our critique of engineering practice thus comes from within engineering culture, and is given material weight by the production of working artifacts.

While there is a long history of artists and social theorists questioning relationships between technology and society, there is an equally long history of engineers ignoring art and social theory. By acting as engineers who address contentious political issues, we undermine the normalized ambivalence that characterizes engineering practice. The works thus act as Trojan horses, carrying our critique through the gates of detachment that guard engineers against taking responsibility for the products of their labor. In lieu of ambivalence, we offer the engineering community the image of an "engaged engineering" that works diligently in the service of freedom and human dignity, and takes responsibility for the world it helps create.

REFERENCES


The text was published in GeoT. Cox and Jason Kryza, Engineering Culture: On "The Author as (Digital) Producer." (New York: Autonomedia, 2005), 95–103.
The Lower Manhattan Sign Project consists of 34 signs, each representing an area site on a map of the lower Manhattan's historic district. The selected signs are linked by a two-dimensional map that shows the relationship of the sites to one another or to a series of significant events or periods. The map serves as a guide to the visitor, providing a visual representation of the area's history and development.

KEY
1. Astor Place riots - New York University
2. Blackstock House - 1857-1858
3. The Brooklyn Heights Plan of 1874
4. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
5. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
6. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
7. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
8. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
9. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
10. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
11. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
12. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
13. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
14. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
15. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
16. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
17. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
18. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
19. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
20. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
21. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
22. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
23. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
24. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
25. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
26. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
27. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
28. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
29. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
30. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
31. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
32. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
33. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
34. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
35. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
36. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
37. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
38. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
39. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890
40. The City Beautiful Movement - 1890

The map suggests the route for a walking tour starting from Battery Park at the southern tip of Manhattan, north to Central Park, and above City Hall. It is designed to help visitors explore the history and culture of the area, focusing on significant events and landmarks.
Jude Finisterra interviewed (2004)
the yes men

The twentieth anniversary of the Bhopal gas tragedy was a day of trepidation for Dow Chemical, the present owner of Union Carbide, and for the major news media around the world.

On Friday the BBC World Satellite television channel broadcast an interview with a man identified as Jude Finisterra, who claimed to represent Dow Chemical.

Dow, which bought Union Carbide three years ago, has always maintained it "has no responsibility" for the 1984 disaster, when tons of lethal gases leaked from a Union Carbide pesticide factory in the city of Bhopal, India. Seven thousand people lost their lives within days. Fifteen thousand more died in the following years. Around 300,000 others are still suffering chronic and debilitating illnesses. It was one of the worst industrial disasters in history, and for years activists have called on Dow to take full responsibility for the disaster and to clean up the contaminated site.

In the interview, Finisterra said Dow had accepted responsibility for the accident and had set up a multimillion-dollar compensation package. The hoax ran twice on BBC World and was picked up by the major news wires before the BBC determined that no man named Jude Finisterra worked at Dow and he was an impostor. The company was forced to remind the world it did not take responsibility for the disaster and said there was no compensation fund set up for the victims.

In Frankfurt, Dow's share price fell 4.2 percent in twenty three minutes, wiping two billion dollars off its market value before recovering all the day's losses three hours later. The BBC is continuing to apologise for running the interview today and says it has launched an internal investigation. Later the man calling himself Finisterra told BBC radio he was part of the Yes Men—Jude Finisterra, aka Andy Bichlbaum.

Amy Goodman: We're going to turn now... to Jude Finisterra, or so he identifies himself. We welcome you to Democracy Now!

Andy Bichlbaum: Thanks a lot, Amy.

Amy Goodman: First of all, can you tell us who you are with?

Bichlbaum: Yes, Jude Finisterra is actually a made-up name. Jude is the patron saint of impossible causes, and Finisterra means "end of the earth," which kind of represents the situation here. I think, in some way, I'm with the Yes Men and we have done this, sort of, what we call identity correction on a number of different targets. This represents our latest effort.

Goodman: And what exactly did you do? Have you done any being called for an interview with the BBC?

Bichlbaum: A couple of years ago we set up a website that lacked a lot like the real Dow Chemical website but was intended to raise questions about its refusal to do anything about the Bhopal situation, you know, eighteen years ago then after the catastrophe. Dow, who owns Union Carbide, refuses to clean up the site, still doesn't—two years after that—refuses to compensate the victims. No one received five hundred dollars, despite, and Dow, actually, the head of the Dow P.R. team went on record saying that's plenty good for an Indian, whereas in reality it only pays for a year of medical care. So with this site, we intended to explain from Dow's perspective exactly why they wouldn't do anything and we sent out a press release saying that in fact I was responsible only to its shareholders, and no Bhopal is a shareholder. So about a week and a half after we received an email at this website, Dowethics.com, from somebody who hadn't read it very carefully, and she wanted Dow's official statement on the Bhopal situation, and she wanted it on December 3, the twentieth anniversary of the catastrophe. So we, of course, obliged and spent quite a while trying...
to figure out what our approach would be and settled on this, the approach we actually took, because we figured it would result in the least media and possibly a lot of media getting in the United States, which often completely ignores the anniversary.

Goodman: So you went into a studio in Paris?

Bichbaum: That's right, yes. Because I live in Paris, and MENK is here, as well—and another Yes No—and so we couldn't afford to go to London, which was the result and the dollar. So they set up a studio here in Paris and went in on the morning of December 3, I was hooked up with the host in London, and it was a live interview, and I announced the good news.

Goodman: Well, why don't we listen to and watch what happened and right after this Dow's share price fell 4.2 percent in twenty-three minutes, wiping two billion dollars off its market value. This is, well, he identified himself as Jude Finisterra, a Dow spokesperson being interviewed by BBC television last Friday.

BBC World: Well, joining us live from Paris is Jude Finisterra. He's a spokesman for Dow Chemical, which took over Union Carabde. Good morning to you. A day of commemoration in Bhopal. Do you now accept responsibility for what happened?

Jude Finisterra: Yes, yes. Today is a great day for all of us at Dow, and I think for millions of people around the world, as well. It is twenty years since the disaster, and today I am very happy to announce that for the first time Dow is accepting full responsibility for the Bhopal catastrophe. We have two billion dollar plan to finally, at long last, fully compensate the victims, including the 120,000 who need medical care for their entire lives, and to fully and swiftly remediate the Bhopal plant site. Now, when we acquired Union Carabde three years ago, we knew what we were getting, and it is worth twelve billion dollars. Twelve billion dollars. We have resolved to liquidate Union Carabde, this nightmare for the world and this headache for Dow, and are the twelve billion dollars to provide more than five hundred dollars per victim, which is all that they have seen. A maximum of just about five hundred dollars per victim. It is "plenty good for an Indian," as one of our spokespeople unfortunately said a couple of years ago. In fact, it pays for one year of medical care. We will adequately compensate the victims. Furthermore, we will perform a full and complete remediation of the Bhopal site, which, as you mentioned, has not been cleaned up. When Union Carabde abandoned the site twenty years ago, or sixteen years ago, they left tons of toxic waste which continues to be used as a playground by children. Water continues to be drunk from the ground water underneath. It is a mess, Steve, and we need a Dow -

BBC World: It's a mess, certainly, Jude. That's good news that you have finally accepted responsibility. Some people would say too late, three years, almost four years on. How soon is your money going to make a difference to the people in Bhopal?

Finisterra: Well, as soon as we can get it to them, Steve. We have begun the process of liquidating Union Carabde. This is, as you mentioned, late, but it is the only thing we can do. When we acquired Union Carabde, we did settle their liabilities in the United States immediately. And we are now, three years later, prepared to do the same in India. We should have done it three years ago. We are doing it now. I would say that it is better late than never, and I would also like to say that this is not a small matter, Steve. This is the first time in history that a publicly owned company of anything near the size of Dow has performed an action which is significantly against its bottom line simply because it's the right thing to do, and our shareholders may take a bit of a hit, Steve, but I think that if they are anything like me they will be ecstatic to be part of such a historic occasion of doing right by those that we have wronged.

BBC World: And does this mean you will also cooperate in any future legal actions in India or the USA?

Finisterra: Absolutely, Steve. One of our non-financial commitments is to press the United States government to finally extradite Warren Anderson, who fled India after being arrested in 1984. He posted two thousand dollars but on multiple homicide charges and fled India promptly. We are going to press the United States government to extradite Mr. Anderson, who is living in Long Island, to India to finally face the charges, and I believe, they may be lenient. We are also going to engage in unprecedented transparency. We are going to release finally the full composition of the chemicals and the studies that were performed by Union Carabde shortly after the catastrophe. This information has never been released, Steve, and it's time for it to be released in case of any that information can be of use to medical professionals. And finally, we're going to perform—what our goal is to fund research. Any interested researcher can contact Dow's ethics and compliance office. We are going to fund, with no strings attached, research into the safety of any Dow product whose safety—many competent scientists have raised doubts about many Dow products, and we do not want to be a company that sells products that may have
long-term negative effects on the world. This is a momentous occasion and our new CEO, Andrew Liveris, who has been our CEO for just a month, less than a month, has decided to take Dow in this unprecedented direction.

**BBC World:** Jude, we will leave it there. Thank you for joining us. Just to elaborate what Jude Finisterra, the spokesperson for Dow Chemical, has just said, he says Dow Chemical now fully accepts responsibility for the events in Bhopal twenty years ago. And they will cooperate in future legal action.

**Amy Goodman:** That was the BBC television on Friday with the anchor interviewing Jude Finisterra, spokesperson for Dow. In fact, this was all a hoax and the real Jude Finisterra, or I should say the man who was passing as the person who doesn’t exist, a member of the Yes Men, joins us on the phone from Paris, where he lives and from where he did that interview. Tell us what your real name is.

**Andy Bichlbaum:** Andy Bichlbaum is my real name, and I’m with, as you said, the Yes Men.

**Goodman:** Is that your real name?

**Bichlbaum:** Oh, sure. As close as it gets.

**Goodman:** Well, let’s go to the BBC apologizing for their report.

**BBC:** The world’s worst industrial accident is being remembered in India today. This morning at 9:00 GMT and 10:00 GMT, BBC World ran an interview with someone purporting to be from the Dow Chemical Company about Bhopal. This interview was inaccurate and part of a deception. The person interviewed didn’t represent the company. We want to make clear that the information he gave was entirely inaccurate. We apologize to Dow and to anyone who watched the interview who may have been misled by it.

**Amy Goodman:** Again that was from BBC, their apology. Then there was Dow, well, correcting the apology that their supposed spokesperson had issued earlier that day.

**Marina Ashman:** This morning a false statement was carried by BBC World regarding responsibility for the Bhopal tragedy. The individual who made the statement identified himself as a Dow spokesperson named Jude Finisterra. Dow confirms that there was no J.Jed Finistera for this report, and we also confirm that Jude Finistrya is neither an employee nor a spokesperson for Dow.

**Amy Goodman:** That’s the spokesperson of Dow. Again, Dow’s share price fell 4.2 percent in twenty-three minutes, losing two billion dollars off its market value before recovering all the day’s losses hours later. What are your thoughts today, Andy, after having done this? And how far did this news go? I mean, BBC takes it pretty far. Who else picked up the story?

**Andy Bichlbaum:** Well, Amy, it seemed to get picked up pretty much everywhere. Reuters immediately wrote about the apology by Dow and then, of course, issued a retraction itself. That was picked up by a number of places. The retraction traveled very, very far, and a lot of the articles were sympathetic and brought Bhopal and Dow into the, into the subject again and again and again, so I think probably dozens of articles that wouldn’t have been written were written about it, which was the inception, really. It was unfortunate that it had to be the BBC because we thought the BBC was covering Bhopal rather extensively and well. We would have much rather heard Fox or NBC or ABC or CBS, but it was the BBC that was covering the issue. Those other places couldn’t give a rat’s ass about Bhopal.

**Goodman:** Well, if you had done this hoax on Fox, you would soon be heard on as many more stations than even they’re heard now, because Fox has just made an agreement with Clear Channel, which owns over 1,200 radio stations in the country, that Clear Channel stations will run Fox Network headlines every hour for five minutes.

**Bichlbaum:** They are clearly the correct target.

**Goodman:** Is it true that you issued another press release later in the day?

**Bichlbaum:** Yes, we felt that we owed Dow some public relations work, so we issued an explanation by Dow that is in fact the Jude Finisterra fellow in the morning had not been their representative and that in fact everything he said was incorrect. Then we proceeded to outline exactly what was incorrect. Dow was not going to redistribute the site even though it wouldn’t cost very much; they were not going to compensate people to more than five hundred dollars; five hundred dollars was in fact enough for an Indian, plenty good for an Indian, etc., etc. Everything they were not going to do, we just spelled it out for them, since all they had said was he was not their spokesperson. We thought that was insufficient.

**Goodman:** So this was a press release that you put out under Dow’s letterhead?

**Bichlbaum:** Right. Exactly. Well, we sent it from Downt宣传片.com and signed it Dow.

**Goodman:** And how many picked up that story?

**Bichlbaum:** Well, it was the top story on news.google.com, as was the original apology by Dow and the retraction of the apology. Our own retraction of our own, of Dow’s apology was also for a brief
time, maybe an hour or so, the top story on news.google.com, so—I don't know if it was printed in
anything or broadcast on anything, but it was at least there.

Goodman: And the feelings of giving false hope to people in Bhopal who perhaps read these reports
in the Indian newspapers?

Richtbaum: Right, that is the most difficult thing about this. And, in fact, we didn't expect it to
run as long as it would. We really thought that the BBC would catch on pretty much immediately
or Dow would react even more likely immediately. They didn't react for at least an hour, so there
was a much longer time when people thought it was real.

Goodman: That would mean that Dow would have had to jump in and say, no, we are not sorry.

Richtbaum: Right, and they did eventually, but they took at least an hour to do that, and we
thought that they would immediately contact the BBC, even perhaps as it was running. I kept
hearing voices in the background and thinking I was about to get cut off during the interview, but
two hours later it was still a story. So that was sad. Also, at the same time, we are talking
about two hours of false hopes versus twenty years of unrealized ones. And suffering for those who
are still alive and weren't killed. And all hopes are false until they are realized. So, you know, any
protest sort of brings false hopes, any protest against something, as monastic as Dow. Like, Dow is
not likely to do anything about this, and so anytime you hope that it is, it's false in a way.

Goodman: Well, Jude, I want to thank you for being with us, or Andy Richtbaum, or whoever you
are. I want to thank you for joining us. Jude Finsterbus, Andy Richtbaum of the Yes Man, speaking
to us from Paris. This is Democracy Now.

This interview was broadcast by Democracy Now on December 7, 2004. It is taken from http://www.couriermonk.org.

the institution of critique (2006)
hito steyerl

In speaking about the critique of the institution, the problem we ought to consider is the opposite one: the institution of critique. Is there anything like an institution of critique, and what does it mean? Isn’t it pretty absurd to argue that something like this exists, at a moment when critical cultural institutions are undoubtedly being dismantled, underfunded, and subjected to the demands of a neoliberal event economy? However, I would like to pose the question on a much more fundamental level. The question is: What is the internal relationship between critique and institution? What sort of relation exists between the institution and its critique on the other hand—the institutionalization of critique? And what is the historical and political background for this relationship?

To get a clearer picture of this relationship, we must first consider the function of criticism in general. On a very general level, certain political, social, or individual subjects are formed through the critique of the institution. The bourgeois subjectivity as such was formed through such a process of critique, and encouraged to "exit ... [their] self-inflicted immaturity," to quote Kant’s famous aphorism. This critical subjectivity was of course ambivalent, since it entailed the use of reason only in those situations we would consider as apolitical today, namely in the deliberation of abstract problems, but not in the criticism of authority. Critique produces a subject which should make use of his reason in public circumstances, but not in private ones. While this sounds emancipatory, the opposite is the case. The criticism of authority is, according to Kant, futile and private. Freedom consists in accepting that authority should not be questioned. Thus, this form of criticism produces a very ambivalent and governable subject. It is in fact a tool of governance just as much as it is the tool of resistance, as it is often understood. But the bourgeois subjectivity which was thus created was very efficient. And in a certain sense, institutional criticism is integrated into this subjectivity, something which Marx and Engels explicitly refer to in their Communist Manifesto, namely as the capacity of the bourgeoisie to abolish and to melt down outdated institutions, everything useless and petrified, as long as the general form of authority itself isn’t threatened. The bourgeois class had formed through a limited, so to speak, institutionalized critique and also maintained and reproduced itself through this form of institutional critique. And thus, critique had become an institution in itself, a governmental tool which produces streamlined subjects.

SUBJECT TO CRITIQUE

But there is another form of subjectivity which is produced by criticism and also institutional criticism. For example, most obviously the political subject of French citizens was formed through an institutional critique of the French monarchy. This institution was eventually abolished and even beheaded. In this process, an appeal was already realized that Karl Marx was to launch much later: the weapons of critique should be replaced by the critique of weapons. In this way one could say that the prioritas as a political subject was produced through the critique of the bourgeoisie as an institution. This second form produces probably just as ambivalent subjectivities, but there is a crucial difference: it abolishes the institution which it criticizes instead of reforming or improving it.

So in this sense institutional critique serves as a tool of subjection of certain social groups or political subjects. And which sort of different subjects does it produce? Let’s take a look at different modes of institutional critique within the art field of the last decades.

To simplify a complex development: the first wave of institutional critique in the art sphere in the seventies questioned the authoritarian role of the cultural institution. It
challenged the authority which had accumulated in cultural institutions within the framework of the nation-state. Cultural institutions such as museums have taken on a complex governmental function. This role has been brilliantly described by Benedict Anderson in his seminal work Imagined Communities, where he analyzes the role of the museum in the formation of colonized nation-states. In his view, the museum, in creating a national past, retroactively created the origin and foundation of the nation and that was its main function. But this colonial situation, as in many other cases, points to the pressure of the cultural institution within the nation-state in general. And this situation, the authoritarian legitimation of the nation-state by the cultural institution through the construction of a history, a patrimony, a heritage, a canon, and so on, was the one that the first waves of institutional critique set out to criticize in the 1970s.

Their legitimation in doing so was an ultimately political one. Most nation-states considered themselves as democracies which were founded on the political mandate of the people or the citizens. But if the political national sphere was at least in theory—based on democratic participation, why should the cultural national sphere and its construction of histories and canons be any different? Why shouldn't the cultural institution be at least as representative as parliamentary democracy? Why shouldn't it include, for example, women in its canon, if women were at least in theory accepted in parliament? In that sense the claims that the first wave of institutional critique voiced were founded in contemporary theories of the public sphere, and based on an interpretation of the cultural institution as a potential public sphere. Implicitly they relied on two fundamental assumptions: firstly, this public sphere was implicitly a national one and secondly, it was funded by the state. Thus, this form of institutional critique relied on a model based on the structure of political participation within the nation-state and a Fordist economy, in which taxes could be collected for such purposes.

Institutional critique of this period related to these phenomena in different ways. Either by radically negating institutions altogether, by trying to build alternative institutions, or by trying to be included in mainstream ones. Just as in the political arena, the most effective strategy was a combination of the second and third models, which claimed for example the inclusion into the cultural institution of minorities or dispossessed majorities such as women. In that sense institutional critique functioned like the related paradigms of multiculturalism, reformist feminism, ecological movements, and so on. It was a new social movement within the arts circle, propelled and inspired by social movements outside of the art field.

NEOLIBERAL INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE

But during the next wave of institutional critique which happened in the nineties, the situation was a bit different. It wasn't so much different from the point of view of the artists or those who tried to challenge and criticize the institutions which, in their view, were still authoritarian. Rather, the main problem was that they had been overtaken by a right-wing form of bourgeois institutional critique, precisely the one that Marx and Engels described and that melts down; everything that is solid. Thus, the claim that the cultural institution ought to be a public sphere was no longer unchallenged. The bourgeoisie had sort of decided that in their view a cultural institution was primarily an economic one and as such had to be subjected to the laws of the market. The belief that cultural institutions ought to provide a representative public sphere broke down with Fordism, and it is not by chance that institutions which still adhere to the idea of creating a public sphere have been in place for a much longer time in places where Fordism is still lingering. Thus, the second wave of institutional critique was in a sense unilateral since claims were made which at that time had at least partially lost their legitimate power.

The next factor was the relative transformation of the national cultural sphere. First of all, the nation-state is no longer the only framework of cultural representation; there are also supranational bodies like the EU. And secondly, their mode of political representation is very complicated and only partly representative. It represents its constituencies rather symbolically than materially. To use a German differentiation of the word "representation": Sie stellen sie dar, aber sie verfehlen. Thus, why should a cultural institution materially represent its constituency? Isn't it somehow sufficient to symbolically represent it? And although the production of a national cultural identity and heritage is still important, it is not only important for the interior or social cohesion of the nation, but also very much to provide it with international selling points in an increasingly globalized cultural economy. Thus, in a sense, a process was initiated which is still going on today. That is the process of the cultural or symbolic integration of critique into the institution or rather on the surface of the institution without any material consequences within the institution itself. This
mirrors a similar process on the political level: the symbolic integration, for example of minorities, while keeping up political and social inequality, the symbolic representation of constituencies into supranational political bodies, and so on. In this sense the bond of material representation was broken, and replaced with a more symbolic one.

This shift in representational techniques by the cultural institution also mirrored a trend in criticism itself, namely the shift from a critique of institution toward a critique of representation. This trend, which was informed by Cultural Studies, feminist, and postcolonial epistemologies, somewhat continued in the vein of the previous institutional critique by comprehending the whole sphere of representation as a public sphere, where democratic representation ought to be implemented, for example in the form of the unbiased and proportional display of images of black persons or women. But the realm of visual representation is not a parliament. It doesn’t represent constituencies or subjectivities but creates them. It articulates bodies, affects, and desires. But it was rather seen as a sphere where one has to achieve a hegemony, a way to speak majority on the level of symbolic representation, in order to achieve an improvement of a diffuse area, which hovers between politics and economy between the state and the market, between the subject as citizen and the subject as consumer, and between representation and representation. Since criticism could no longer establish clear antagonisms in this sphere, it started to fragment and to atomize it and to support a politics of identity which led to the fragmentation of public spheres, markets, to the culturalization of identity, and so on.

This representational critique pointed at another aspect, namely the worsening of the seemingly stable relation between the cultural institution and the nation-state. Unfortunately for institutional critics of that period, a model of purely symbolic representation gained legitimacy in this field as well. Institutions no longer aimed to materially represent the nation-state and its constituency, but only claimed to represent it symbolically. And thus, while one could say that the former institutional critics were either integrated into the institution or not, the second wave of institutional criticism was integrated not into the institution but into representation as such. Thus, again, a Derridean subject was formed. This subject was interested in diversity in representation, less homogeneous than its predecessor. But in trying to create this diversity, it also created niche markets, specialized consumer profiles, and an overall spectacle of “difference”—without effectuating much structural change.

**Integration into Precarity**

But which conditions are prevailing today, during what might tentatively be called an extension of the second wave of institutional critique? Artistic strategies of institutional critique have become increasingly complex. They have, in fact, developed far beyond the ethnographic urge to indiscriminately drag underprivileged or unusual constituencies into museums, even against their will—just for the sake of “representation.” They include detailed investigations, such as for example Allan Sekula’s Fish Story, which connects a phenomenology of new cultural industries, like the Bilbao Guggenheim, with documents of other institutional constraints, such as those imposed by the WTO or other global economic organizations. They have learned to walk the tightrope between the local and the global, without becoming either indigenous or ethnographic or else unscrupulous and unlabelled. Unfortunately this cannot be said of most cultural institutions which would have to react to the same challenge of having to perform both within a national cultural sphere and an increasingly globalizing market.

If you look at them from one side, then you will see that they are under pressure from indigenist, nationalist, and postcolonial claims. If you look from the other side, then you will see that they are under pressure from neoliberal, institutional critique, that is under the pressure of the market. Now the problem is—and this is indeed a very widespread attitude—that when a cultural institution comes under pressure from the market, it then tries to retreat into a position which claims that it is the guarantor of the nation-state to fund it and to keep it alive. The problem with that position is that it is an ultimately protectionist one, that it ultimately reinforces the constriction of national public spheres, and that under this perspective the cultural institutions can only be sustained by trying to retreat into the ruins of a deconstructed national welfare state and its cultural infrastructures and to defend them against all intruders. That is, it tends to defend itself ultimately from the perspective of its other enemies, namely the nativist and indigenist critique of institution, who want to transform it into a sort of sacredized ethnographic park, but there is no going back to the old liberal nation-state protectionism with its cultural nationalism, at least not in any emancipatory perspective.

On the other hand, when the cultural institution is attacked from this native, indigenist perspective, it also tries to defend itself by appealing to universal values like freedom of speech or the cosmopolitanism of the arts, which are so utterly commodified...
that they hardly exist beyond this form of commodification. Or it might even earnestly try to reconstruct a public sphere within market conditions, for example with the massive temporary spectacles of criticism funded by certain state agencies. But under the ruling economic circumstances, the main effect achieved is to integrate the critics into precarity, into flexibilized working structures within temporary project structures and freelance work within cultural industries. And in the worst case, these spectacles of criticism are the decoration of large enterprises of economic colonization such as in the colonization of Eastern Europe by the same institutions which are collecting conceptual art in these regions.

In the first wave of institutional critique, criticism produced integration into the institution, the second one only achieved integration into representation. But in the third phase the only integration which seems to be easily achieved is the one into precarity. And in this sense we can nowadays answer the question concerning the function of the institution of critique as follows: While critical institutions are being dismantled by neoliberal institutional criticism, this produces an ambivalent subject which develops multiple strategies for dealing with its dislocation. It is on the one side being adapted to the needs of ever more precarious living conditions. On the other, there seems to have hardly ever been more need for organizing the new struggles and desires that this constituency might embrace.

NOTES


2. As Anthony Davies has remarked, this raises the question of conflict between uncertain workers and administrators within institutions as well as the severity in the long-term conditions of labor. "Take Me Im Yours: New Desiring the Cultural Institution," Mute Magazine 2, no. 5 (May 2007).

This text was published without attribution in the online journal of the European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies (EIPCP), Transnational January 2006. It is stored at http://transform.ruth.net.