rasheed aareen • fareed armaly • art workers' coalition • michael asher
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wieslaw borowski • aldo bortolotti • marcel broodthaers • bureau
d'études • daniel buren • graciela carnevale • critical art en-
semble • christopher d'arcangelo • mark dion • maria eichhorn
eduardo favario • andrea fraser • renée green • groupe de
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group • guerrilla girls • hans haacke • institute for applied au-
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institutional critique

an anthology of artists' writings

edited by alexander alberro and blake stimson

The MIT Press Cambridge, Massachusetts London, England

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This book was set in Caecilia Light and Trade Gothic by Graphic Composition, Inc., Bogart, Georgia.
Printed and bound in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Institutional critique : an anthology of artists' writings / edited by Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-262-01316-1 (hardcover : alk. paper)
1. Institutional Critique (Art movement). 2. Artists' writings. I. Alberro, Alexander. II. Stimson, Blake.
N6494.I565I57 2009
708—dc22

2009003619

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

contents

II. INSTITUTION OF ART

III. INSTITUTIONALIZING

IV. EXIT STRATEGIES

illustrations

preface

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by some of the best-known artists associated with institutional critique and a number of lesser-known, previously unpublished or untranslated materials and artworks.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 tiny 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 Fricano and Rebecca Arnfeld. For recommendations of specific texts and illustrations and the overall scope of the project, we are obliged to Nora M. Alter, Uta Meta Bauer, Sabine Breitweiser, 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

institutions, critique, and institutional critique

alexander alberro

The field is a network of objective relations (of domination or subordination, of complementarity or antagonism, etc.) between positions. . . . All positions depend, in their very existence, and in the determinations they impose on their occupants, on the actual and potential situation in the structure of the field.

—Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*

In actuality, as we all know, things as they are and as they have been, in the arts as in a hundred other areas, are stultifying, oppressive, and discouraging to all those, women among them, who did not have the good fortune to be born white, preferably middle class and, above all, male. The fault lies not in our stars . . . but in our institutions and our education.

—Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?"

Art . . . always was, and is, a force of protest of the humane against the pressure of domineering institutions . . . no less than it reflects their substance.

—Theodor W. Adorno, "Theses upon Art and Religion Today"

Our task is to link up the theoretical critique of modern society with the critique of it in acts. By detourning 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 coupled with a promise: the production of public exchange, of a public sphere, of a public subject. It also functioned as a form of self-imagining, as an integral element in the constitution of bourgeois identity.

The artistic practices that in the late 1960s and 1970s 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 publicness that had brought it into being in the first place. They juxtaposed 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 modernist 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 held 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 Favario or Daniel Buren in the late 1960s closed the gallery for the duration of their exhibition, or when Julio Le Parc and Enzo Mari withdrew from the Documenta 4 exhibition and called for noncomplicity with the dominant cultural institutions, they dialectically negated that which was the vehicle of their voice, and yet held on to it at the same time.[1] 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 it 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 Lures of Complicity," with which Osvaldo Mateo Boglione and the other authors helped to galvanize their peers in Rosario, Argentina, to organize into an artists' coalition that would protest against the questionable values and practices of local museums.[2] It is there in Robert Smithson's call in 1972 for an "investigation of the apparatus the artist is threaded 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.[3] 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 disjuncture 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 relations" that structure it.[4] 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.[5]

FRAMING

The parallel increasingly made in the late 1960s between the managers of the institution 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, 1969" (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 via a concept, but by way of circumstance; the concept came later." This discovery led him to invert the structure of the readymade: "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 circulated within it part of the art institution, Broodthaers implicitly critiqued 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 "Demystifying 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 immanent 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 criteriological 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 become 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 or (deliberate) non-indication/revelation of the various supports of any work," including its stretcher, frame, verso, pedigree, 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. Mierle Laderman Ukeles's "Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969!" also focuses on the hidden orders of the museum, but more specifically from the perspective of labor. Ukeles emphasizes the indispensable labor of installing and maintaining the site of an art exhibition, such as painting and washing walls, sweeping and polishing floors, cleaning windows and vitrines—labor that is often gendered and/or raced, and always carefully kept out of sight.

Since the late 1960s Hans Haacke has also produced works and written texts that probe the breadth of the field of art and call into question the many unspoken and yet fundamental tenets of the art world. In "Provisional Remarks" (1971), he notes that he "was no doubt pushed in this direction by the general political awakening that followed years of absolute apathy after World War II." Describing his projects of the late 1960s and early 1970s as "real-time social system[s] operating in an art context," Haacke claims that they function as snares to capture the concealed machinations and assumptions of museums—as "double-agents" that enter into the institution of art to show that much of what it presents as natural is actually historical and socially constructed.[6] His immanent critique of the operating logic of museums and galleries soon expanded to reflect on the part that the art public played in maintaining the status quo, and on the instrumentalization of the institution of art by political and economic interests. As Haacke writes in "The Agent" (1977), "the corporate state, like governments, has a natural allergy to questions such as 'what?' and 'for whom?'" Its influence is capable of coalescing a whole range of constituencies, including museum directors, curators, critics, artists, and dealers, who together form a block to support only art that is neutral, unproblematic, and unthreatening to their economic interests. Haacke also observes that the impact that commercial galleries have on the art world and artists extends far beyond the sale of art and success in the market: "Commercial art galleries are powerful agents in that small segment of the consciousness industry which we know as the world of so-called high art," influencing which artists receive important grants and influential academic positions. Fortunately, Haacke writes, "the peculiar dialectics of consciousness" in "liberal societies" provides a space (what Wieslaw Borowski, Hanna Ptaszkowska, and Mariusz Tchorek theorize as a "PLACE") for critical work. This site is enabled by the logic of financial speculation and the relative lack of uniformity of interests of the major players of the culture industry. Whereas artists such as Le Parc, Buren, and Broodthaers caution that the institution of art is able to quickly appropriate and instrumentalize anything new, Haacke seizes this reality as an opportunity and concludes that the internal contradictions and inconsistencies of the field should be mobilized against it—that wherever 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 problematical field, making apparent the intersections where political, economic, and ideological interests directly intervened and interfered 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, criticizes the overall general instrumentalization of art, and in particular the hegemonic dominance of the New York art world. He observes that "the administrators, dealers, critics, pundits" of his time had become "masters," and the New York artists "imperialist puppets." The capitalist structure of the art market has been completely internalized by all those who participate in it, thereby making resistance close to impossible. Under these conditions, the chasm or disconnect between aesthetic practice and everyday politics is unbreachable.

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 institution 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 careerist mindset that has become so internalized. In particular, he stresses the importance of developing a "community"—a base from which traits that the market preys upon, such as individual subjecthood, can be destroyed, and an art can be produced that evades the limits 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 ideological formations existent 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 insidiously, what determines what is culture and art in the first place. An understanding and appreciation of art is intricately linked to a 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 also in the distanced, 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." Like 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, Ramsden, 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*"—i.e., "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 abdicate 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 "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 formalist apolitical works that museums will exhibit, dealers will support, and collectors will purchase. As Piper puts it, "The socioeconomically 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. Underpinning 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 disavowal. 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 first 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 Ramsden and Rosler, as well as to the thoughts of Linda Nochlin expressed in my second epigraph. All stress that an education emphasizing the predicaments 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 had 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 forges 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 "assert[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 "channeling consciousness," is therefore posited by Araeen as intrinsically bound up with its exchange value. The important role played by the market in legitimating art is of course an added handicap for those outside of the conventional frame of art, and these 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 Trinh T. Minh-ha once remarked, the center depends on the periphery in order to maintain its centrality.[1] 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 boundaries and theoretical impasses.

The institution of art, as Theodor Adorno writes, is intricately linked to the governing ideology at large.[4] 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 the one hand it often radically denies the reigning doxa, and yet at the same time it articulates, not necessarily in an affirmative manner but as a form of critique, the extant contradictions at the most extreme level. Linda Nochlin's groundbreaking essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" (1971) addressed this paradox from the perspective of gender inequality or discrimination in the early 1970s.[5] Rather than attempting to resolve the contradiction by constructing a remedial history of art that includes women artists previously excluded from that 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 on historical institutional critique function in a similar manner, putting pressure on the disjuncture between the self-presentation of the art 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 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 rehearse and reiterate precisely those forms of domination against which the new visuality was to be posited? For instance, artworks such as Barbara Kruger's *Your Gaze Hits the Side of My Face* (1981) very specifically refer to something that artists and art historians informed by feminism and institutional critique (and I am linking the two here because I think the dynamic is essentially the same) then theorized, namely the concept of the gaze, which posits that all acts of looking are inextricably bound up with patriarchal forms of control, domination, and behavior. So the very question of how representation could be constructed to transcend the parameters of oppressive culture within the visual field was as much at the center of the operation as the question of how the governing forms of visuality, 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 forms of communication (such as language) and representation (e.g., smart graphic design), and publicly distributed as fliers, billboards, newspaper advertisements, and videotapes. But while their motivations for developing these strategies were obviously laudable, in the process of adjusting their work to easily disseminated distribution forms and to the existing conditions of reading and seeing competence, 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 position of the artist today and endows works of art with value. Her pictures and objects address an array 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 work 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 conventions governing their context is made plainly evident, then the public function of art that was the initial promise of the institution might be regained. 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 residual and capable of negotiating 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 decades now persistently foregrounded the flagrant discrimination and prejudices that contradict the art apparatus's avowed equitableness 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, Fareed Armaly, Renée Green, Mark Dion, Maria Eichhorn, 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 reradicalized 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 clothed 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. But the continued 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 reintegrate 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 disposition 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 institution sites from within, that is to say, the immanent critique part of the institutional critique equation, artist groups such as ®™ark, RepoHistory, the Yes Men, subRosa, Raqs Media Collective, and the Electronic Disturbance Theater develop tactical media strategies to intervene effectively in an array of fields that are far removed from the institution of art. As the Vienna-based WochenKlausur 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 official 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 rising intensity of authoritarian culture."[10]

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' counterspectacle strategies are much more indebted to the Situationist understanding of the crucial 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 Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) explains in "Tactical Media" (1996), the rapid return to order following the political and cultural upheaval of 1968 made evident the power of the spectacle, with its strong corporate hold on media and distribution networks, to resituate itself. Thus the logic of resistance 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, due to their "ad hoc nature," were self-terminating and would not "[solidify] into a structure of authority." The aims of CAE's tactics of subversion are critical and diagnostic, seeking, as they put it, "to reveal the exploitive 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 René Viénet in my fourth epigraph, that artists develop an agile form of critique ("guerrilla tactics") that is perpetually on the move.[11]

The Paris-based Bureau d'Études also work just outside of the purview of the institution of art. Their text, "Resymbolizing Machines: Art after Öyvind Fahlström" (2004), explores the manner in which the work of the Swedish artist increasingly stepped out of the institution of art and gained its own autonomy. Fahlström "created paintings, maps, and games filled with precise information, analyzing the social, economic, and political situations of the present." The Bureau d'Études commend Fahlström'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'Études find Fahlström's interest in distribution and broadcasting machines particularly appealing. Like many collectives, they understand the importance of independent media systems, publishers, movie 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 the machines that can produce alternative systems of information, for capitalism can synthesize, appropriate, and selectively destroy all new information. Thus they consider the creation of "data maps" that connect the structures of capitalism with media concentration, the prison industry, and new military technologies, for example, 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.[12] 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 coalesced in the past two decades, the Institute for Applied Autonomy (IAA) also harnesses the possibilities opened up by the Internet to effect social awareness and produce change. In "Engaging Ambivalence: Interventions in Engineering Culture" (2005), the group writes of their hope that by "addressing political issues" their projects may "challenge engineering culture." Their "tactical aesthetics" deconstruct the connections between military research and nongovernmental agencies that have become naturalized in order to break apart the logic of these relationships. The IAA's rallying cry is also Situationist: "Re interpretation as Intervention." They détourne the visual and rhetorical devices of sanctioned research organizations in elaborate performances aimed at "infiltrating engineering culture." Relying on the performance strategy of simulation honed by artists as diverse as Müller, Fraser, Laibach, 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."

What these tactical media strategies make clear is that by the 1990s there were two distinct trajectories of institutional 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 "to stop believing

that the system can be different, better, truly committed to creativity," rely heavily on how their gestures are captured by the field of art. Indeed, such critiques are legible 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, Bordowitz writes, tactical media collectives such as CAE proceed in altogether different ways. Their work attempts to challenge the near totality of corporate and political instrumentalization 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 sphere, 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 engaging with social conflicts far beyond it. The most interesting art being produced today fuses these irreconcilable positions.

NOTES

I would like to thank Nora M. Alter for her editorial advice.

1. Le Parc and Marl withdrew the works they submitted to Documenta 4 on June 25, 1968, the day before the exhibition opened and released the following statement: "At Documenta we note once more that the main function of 'cultural institutions' resides in the process that renders art sacred, and consequentially in its mystification and its purpose, the marketing of cultural product. As artists, it is hard for us to sidestep this compromise in the current situation, and we are well aware of this. We have thus decided to withdraw our works from Documenta for good, thus making our symbolic contribution to the collective awareness about the cultural revolution." Reprinted and translated in *Stratégies de participation: GRAV, Groupe de recherche d'art visuel, 1960–1968* (Grenoble: Magasin—Centre National d'Art Contemporain de Grenoble, 1998), 244.

2. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations and references made in this introduction come from or refer to texts or works of art featured in this anthology.

3. Bruce Kurtz, "'Conversation with Robert Smithson' on April 22nd 1972," in Nancy Holt, ed., *The Writings of Robert Smithson* (New York: New York University Press, 1979), 200.

4. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art* (1992), trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 231.

5. Here I should acknowledge the importance of the writings of Benjamin H. D. Buchloh in establishing the framework of what has come to be called institutional critique. See in particular Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 105–143, and the essays featured in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000). The writings of Craig Owens, Douglas Crimp, and Rosalyn Deutsche should also be noted, especially Owens's "From Work to Frame, or, Is There Life after 'The Death of the Author,'" in Owens, *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture*, ed. Scott Bryson et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 122–139; Crimp's *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993); and Deutsche's "Lawler's Rude Museum," in *Twice Untitled and Other Pictures (Looking Back)* (Columbus, OH: Wexner Center for the Arts; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 123–133.

6. Pierre Bourdieu uses snares as a metaphor to describe Haacke's work in Pierre Bourdieu and Hans Haacke, *Free Exchange* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 20: "You make symbolic machines that function like snares and make the public act." Haacke agrees with Bourdieu's assessment of the catalytic role his work has played.

7. "In the colonial periphery (as in elsewhere), we are often two as well. Colored skins, white masks; colored masks, white skins. Reversal strategies have reigned for some time. *They* accept the margins; so do *we*. For without the margin, there is no center, no heart. . . . Thus, while we turn around and reclaim [the margins] as our exclusive territory, they happily approve, for the divisions between margin and center should be preserved, and as clearly demarcated as possible, if the two positions are to remain intact in their power relations." Trinh T. Minh-ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 16–17.

8. Theodor W. Adorno, "Theses upon Art and Religion Today" (1945), in *Theodor W. Adorno: Notes to Literature*, 2 vols., ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Sherry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 2:293.

9. Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" (1971), in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 145–178.

10. This definition comes from the Critical Art Ensemble (CAE) website, http://www.critical-art.net: "Tactical media is situational, ephemeral, and self-terminating. It encourages the use of any media that will engage a particular sociopolitical context in order to create molecular interventions and semiotic shocks that will contribute to the regalion of the rising intensity of authoritarian culture."

11. René Viénet, "The Situationists and the New Forms of Action against Politics and Art" (1967), in Ken Knabb, ed. and trans., *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), 213, 214.

12. See the Bureau d'Études's online maps at http://utangente.free.fr.

what was institutional critique?

blake stimson

Je suis marxiste, tendance Groucho.

—May 1968 graffito

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-rooted 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 Jim Crow, 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-floating and increasingly global ecstasy and rage of 1968, no party or clearly defined movement leadership came to take their 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 humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction," as one writer has put it;[1] 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 itself 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 so 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 take the following after-the-fact exchange between leading French *soixante-huitard* 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, Petr Uhl in Czechoslovakia, Bukovsky in the USSR . . . how do you explain it?*

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 not opposite, but different.*

Michnik: *Yes, Dany, that's how 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."—Krivine 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.*[2]

"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 critique was on systemic social forms—institutions, in a word—rather than on specific personalities or entities, and it transcended great political divides, that between anticapitalism and antisocialism being only the most obvious. Institutions were understood to be the means by which authority exercised itself and were thus by definition—regardless of the politics of the institution in question—the embodiment of conservation and constriction, of untruth and unfreedom, of illegitimate authority.

Most of the critical-theoretical accounts of institutionality that we might normally turn to for understanding of the artistic practice of institutional critique emerged out of this same period and simply reaffirm its *tendance Groucho* rather than opening out to the sort of historical understanding of the peculiarities of the specific form of artistic criticality that concerns us here. The examples are legion, so I will only quickly review several of the more influential cases 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 autonomous" and, thus, "outstrips its function, its 'ends,' and its reasons for existing." As a result, what could have been seen as "an ensemble of institutions in the service of society becomes a society in the service of institutions."[3] 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 "realized in institutions, in their rituals and their practices." ISAs were "the *form* in which the ideology of the ruling class must *necessarily* be realized," he said, and that form was their institutionality.[4] 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 1977 "dream of the intellectual destroyer of evidence and universalities, the one who, in the inertias and constraints of the present, locates 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'll think tomorrow because he is too attentive to the present."[5] Let "us have fresh air! fresh air! and keep clear of the madhouses and hospitals of culture!" is how Nietzsche himself had put the same dream nearly a century before, bringing it home in a manner that already anticipated the *tendance Groucho* that concerns us here: "A married philosopher belongs *in comedy*," not in the serious business of cultural critique, he wrote, "that is my proposition."[6]

The gist of all of these critiques and the period's anti-institutionalism as a whole was pretty simple: institutionality was another name for received thought congealed into a social form that veils or otherwise inhibits the possibility of self-creation. The solution, most agreed in one way or another with Nietzsche, was to step outside that institutionality altogether, outside the "madhouses and hospitals of culture," into some form of indeterminacy or performativity or self-assertion that did not fall into the institutional trap or what Castoriadis called "the *autonomization* of institutions in relation to society."[7] Understood in such terms, who, indeed, would want to live in an institution?

That said, there was one institution that spoke to the surge of anti-institutionalism of the late 1960s while continuing to provide those "humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction" as if they themselves embodied 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 noninstitutionality. 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 consumerism and camp agitprop of pop, for example, or the quirky industrial "specificity" and academic phenomenality of minimalism, or in the epistemologically and politically indifferent semiosis 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 derided 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."[3] 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 lording it over the culture at large as a universal and translucent ruling subject for its own sake, no longer in need of divine sanction or authorization by military might. Its principle was housed in the "ism" 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 bodily experience become universal meaning and purpose.

The transformation from the protopolitical, extrainstitutional, universal purpose of the revolutionary bourgeoisie to the postpolitical, institutionalized loss of that purpose for the later bourgeois ruling class—that is, from the self-expression of the capitalist class in the eighteenth century to its tactical self-abnegation in the twentieth—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."[4] The original bourgeois institution of art, with all the baggage of its transformation from a genuine universalism 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 great irony and great 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 renewed by the art development that presumed to the greatest degree of institutional self-reflexivity—that is, what we have come to call "institutional critique."

I

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 *tendance Groucho* and that it remained tied to—or found purpose in returning to—the older, residual *tendance 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 socialism—the laborer, the factory, the soviet, the party, the international, the masses. That dream of becoming social, becoming institutional, of becoming *governmental* in its larger (pre-Foucauldian, pre-*tendance Groucho*) sense, ultimately, was also always the dream of becoming human, of self-realization: "When the laborer co-operates systematically with others"—that is, when he becomes part of an assembly line, a soviet, a party, a class, an institution—as the original *tendance Karl* famously had it, "he strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of his species."[5]

This great human potential, realized by the highly developed social forms and processes of capitalism, always had an evil underside as well in Marx's view, and that travesty 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."[6] That exploitation was achieved by technological and managerial means, of course, but also through the production of alienation or ideology or commodity fetishism or 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 its own sake, modern art also promised an alternative to that alienation, an alternative way to experience sociality as a person rather than a thing, and in so doing a manner of redeeming 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 labor—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 antidote of always sidestepping institutionalization in order to find fresh air, of incessantly displacing oneself from social forms as they begin to congeal and cohere into "the madhouses and hospitals of culture," will be familiar to many readers of this volume. I do not mean to downplay the tremendous importance that such ideals have had in defining a critical function for art and criticality more broadly since 1968. Indeed, I take Immanuel Wallerstein to be largely right in his assessment of recent history: "The conclusion that the world's populations drew from the performance of the classical antisystemic movements in power was negative," he writes, referring most centrally to the broad historical sweep of communism and affiliated anticapitalist 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 legitimation; 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; but it had become a defensive vote, for lesser evils, not an affirmation of ideology or expectations.*[11]

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 unavailable 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 postmodernisms 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-institutionality as such, not just that of the period *tendance Groucho* but also to that which had come to be the trademark of the bourgeoisie soon after it came to power. "The attitude of the bourgeois to the institutions of his regime is like that of the Jew to the law" is the analogy Marx and comrade Engels used with characteristic anti-Semitism; "he evades them whenever it is possible to do so in each individual case, but he wants everyone else to observe them."[12] What is relevant for our purposes is the contradiction—"If the entire bourgeoisie, 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 cunning"—a contradiction that makes itself manifest in various forms:

> *The dissolute bourgeois evades marriage and secretly commits adultery; the merchant evades the institution of property by depriving others of property by speculation, bankruptcy, etc.; the young bourgeois makes himself independent of his own family, if he can by in fact abolishing the family as far as he is concerned. But marriage, property, the family remain untouched in theory, because they are the practical basis on which the bourgeoisie 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.*[13]

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, class thinking, and it was only as such that the truth of class could be made available to consciousness, even if it occasionally devolved from meaningful abstraction into the philosophical, political, and anthropological falsity of stereotyping and racism. All forms of thinking have their limits, including that "stripped of the fetters of individuality."

In order to fully appreciate the difference between such typological thinking and the methodological individualism of the bourgeoisie and its theorists that came to undercut the social meaning of art, we will need to trace a history back to its modernist foundations and understand better what it is that Bürger called the "institution 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 universalism 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 broadest of brushes: "As the European bourgeoisie externally encompassed the whole world and in so doing postulated one mankind, it set out inwardly, in the name of the same argumentation, to shatter the Absolutist order."[14] The inwardliness that Reinhart Koselleck wrote of here, in his 1959 *Critique and Crisis*, is not inwardliness toward the interiority of the nation but instead 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 prudent man withdraws into the secret chambers of his heart, where he remains his own judge, but external actions are to be submitted to the ruler's judgment and jurisdiction."[15] Put in summary form, a manner of separated, autonomous inwardliness 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 protopolitics. This would end in travesty, at least according to Koselleck, writing immediately after World War II, but that is not our concern here.[16] Rather, our focus is on art's 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 of age 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. Together these 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 "ripened *power of judgment*."[18]

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 *épater les bourgeois*, and the like, if it amounts to anything of value at all, has always been about reconciling these opposites: 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, or 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 imagine 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, statistical 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 inseparably 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 now need to state explicitly. Put most simply, that means was realized through a process of *self-negation* or *self-abstraction*—this is the heart and soul of modern art, of its aim to *épater les bourgeois* and embrace its position as *refusé*. 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."[19] Understood formally, such self-abstraction is the same as that of Kant's vaunted

formula for the bodily experience that binds the different faculties of reason in common cause, "purposiveness without purpose"; or the great philosophical self-abstraction of Hegel's *Geist*, "The true is the whole"; or the historic, revolutionary self-abstraction of Marxian class consciousness:

> *Thus things have now come to such a pass that the individuals 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.*[20]

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 conscious. The substance or purpose or meaning of the institution of art has always been this battle line, and institutional critique as a genre—like modernism as a whole—routinely 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 hieroglyphic" or "fantastic form of a relation of things."[21]

Although it arose in the late 1960s, institutional critique was a distinctive practice in that context because it was modernist in this sense: it held on to 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 expected a process of reconciliation that would be achieved in the resulting debate. In so doing it held firm to the principle of self-abstraction that is the lifeblood of institutionality. The measure of institutional critique's modernism, and thereby the measure of its anomalousness or incompatibility with the postmodernism of Castoriadis, Althusser, Foucault, and their contemporaries, was thus 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.

II

Institutional critique preserved the institution of art in the context of 1968's broad disavowal of institutionality by holding it accountable to its founding ideals—this, more or less, can serve as a summary of my argument so far. The status of institutionality 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 in *posse*.

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 sundry civil-social institutions considered by Robert Putnam in his book *Bowling Alone*;[22] 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 learning or fine art appreciation or investigative journalism, or even the weighty institutions of governance and law at any level, from the local to the global. With their imperious Latin pediment inscriptions, dignified chambers of deliberation, dutifully guarded wall decorations, and with 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 ways that Althusser and Foucault and others decried forty years ago, but increasingly reek of decay and a sedimented past. Even their marble-and-mortar materiality seems surprisingly archaic, surprisingly unable to keep up with the accelerated shape-shifting of our present-day, technologically enabled capitalist 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 took 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 true 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.[34]

The university, or the museum, or the party, or the fourth estate, or the democratic process writ large—these were our "spiritual patria," our "Jerusalem in Heaven," our counterinstitutions, 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. These 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 collapsing—for good and for bad—under pressure from the new technologically enabled forms of peer-to-peer social organization. This is, as Stephen Colbert called it, our "wikiality," and we might well see the rise of peer-to-peer networks and the rise of viral marketing and Karl Rove's push polling—or, more broadly, the legacy of the 1960s counterculture and the reemergence of Republican laissez-faire, antigovernment activism that began in earnest in the 1980s—to be of a piece in its name.[35] 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 fad.

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 extrapolitical, extrainstitutional counterculturalism such as articulated by the *Whole Earth Catalog*,[36] the renewed surge of corporate institutionality 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.[37] On the most general level, this antinomy 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 enfranchisement 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.[38] That purpose, again, was to hold public or quasi-public institutions—institutions like 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 Tucumán Arde group in Argentina, or later by Adrian Piper, or the Guerrilla Girls, or Andrea Fraser, or Fred Wilson. The role taken by artists engaged in institutional critique was deeply indebted to that old modernist ideal 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 Bevölkerung*, 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 enacts that publicness itself, and in so doing 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, or just institutionality, even though it was intended as mockery. ("To my way of thinking," Kaprow said, "the museum is a fuddy-duddy

remnant from another era" best turned into a swimming pool or nightclub or emptied and left as an environmental sculpture.)[28] 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 1923 *I and Thou*: "When *Thou* is spoken, the speaker has no *thing*; he has indeed nothing. But he takes his stand in relation."[29] 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 *tendance Kurt* discussed above.

This split between these two *tendances* or critical approaches to institutionality can also be located geopolitically. Whereas one found 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 *tendance Groucho*, that elsewhere was nowhere: it had no specific conceptual or political housing and instead sought to place itself outside of institutionality as such. Asger 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."[30] 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

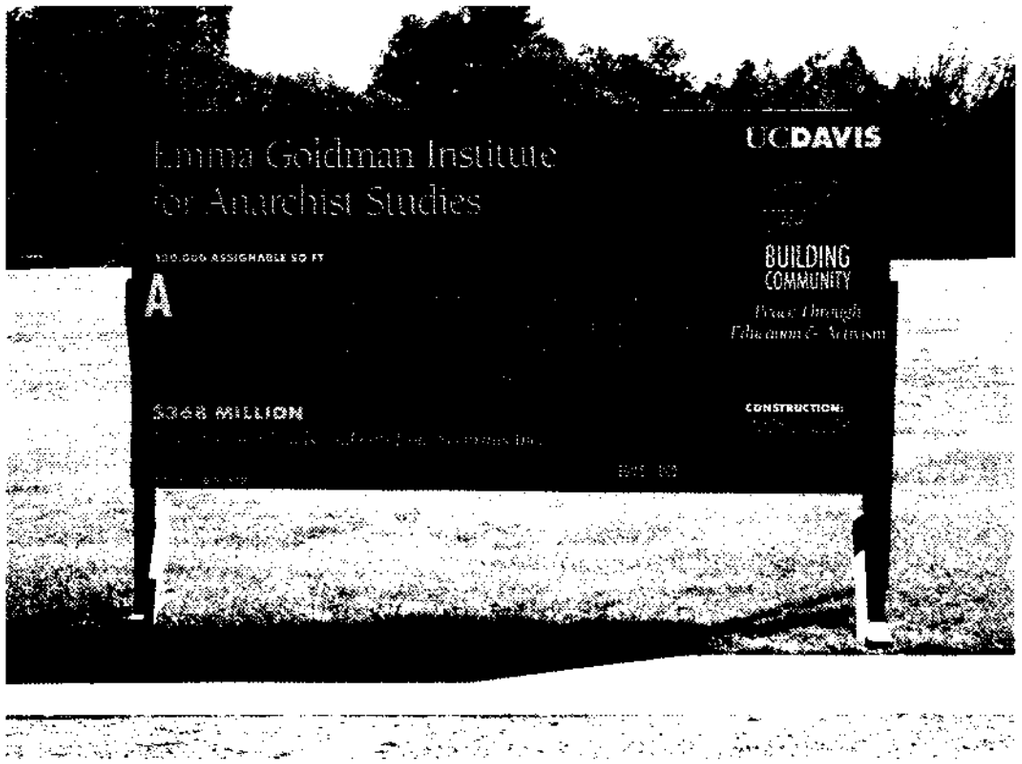
0.1 Hans Haacke, *Der Bevölkerung*, 2000. Photograph by Stefan Müller 2008, courtesy of Hans Haacke. © Hans Haacke/Artists Rights Society (ARS). Haacke set up a 21-by-7-meter garden in the center of the courtyard in the Berlin Reichstag (government building) with the phrase "DER BEVÖLKERUNG" (to the population) inscribed on the ground in neon letters. By invitation from Haacke, parliament representatives have filled 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 Americas; and as the anti-Stalinism of the postwar period matured, the failure of state socialism welled up 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 68ers 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. Today, just as yesterday, art wants to save from death a living image of our passions and our sufferings."[31]

So it was that the residual threat of collectivization remained more pressing in the old stomping grounds of Hitler and Mussolini through the 1960s and 1970s than it did in the Americas where corporatization reigned, and was even more intense across the spheres of influence still dominated by Brezhnev 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."[32] That Havel's anti-institutionalism would turn so readily into the neoliberal "gangster capitalism" (as he called it) of his successor Václav Klaus, and thus join the great wave of postsocialist globalization, may not seem so surprising to those of us in the west, but it certainly seemed to surprise Havel and other 68ers like him in the eastern bloc who had rallied to his existentialist position: he came to call his pro-Klaus adversaries in the press the "snide brigade" when he became their principal target "and the expression 'nonpolitical politics' became a popular sneer."[33]

As with any bit of history, we will really only 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 snide brigade astutely observed—or they might well have complained about the noninstitutional institution of Havel's government or his *tendance Groucho*. Some such characterization might equally well describe almost all of the art that falls under Bürger'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 Bürger 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 later form served as the motor driving all that he decried with the term "neo-avantgarde." After all, the art movements of the later 1950s and 1960s that deserve this label failed by Bürger'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 Kaprow described it in one standard piece of period wisdom about art's "deeper predicament," art could no longer "provide the utopian solutions to the world's ills that it had once promised."[34] This predicament was an understandable reaction to the failure of state socialism, and its resulting *tendance Groucho* served as the great lever of postmodernism's "incredulity towards meta-narratives" more generally, its incredulity toward universals, its incredulity, ultimately, toward what we have been calling the institution of art.[35] Today we can look back at this predicament and see that it was an indicator of the great geopolitical changes that would come in 1989.

By contrast, when viewed as a countercurrent to 1968's *tendance Groucho*, 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 tries to rid us of that memory.[36] That legacy lives on, of course, and not only in the ongoing practices of intrepid stalwarts like Haacke, Fraser, and the Guerrilla Girls. Perhaps its most vital offspring, now, can be found among those who work in the genre loosely known as "tactical media"—artists and groups like the Yes Men, Critical Art Ensemble, Institute for Applied Autonomy, Natalie Bookchin and Jacqueline Stevens, Trevor Paglin, 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 posed against the powerful privatizing force of neoliberal anti-institutionalism is the same.



0.2 Steve Lambert, *Emma Goldman Institute for Anarchist Studies*, 2005. Sign 7 feet high by 10 feet wide, placed on the University of California–Davis campus. 2005 Creative Commons Licensed. Throughout the UC Davis campus there are state-mandated signs announcing construction of new buildings. Oddly, some of the signs are for buildings for which funding has changed priorities, or which are so early in the planning stages that no one knows whether or when they will be constructed. Lambert created his own sign for a building that was not part of any official plan.

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 Marxist-cum-existentialist Goldmann used this graffito 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 to 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 often, what is internal to what is called action is that it does not know itself."[27] We can take this rich period exchange to illustrate three complementary philosophies of history underlying what we have been calling the period's *tendance Groucho*: Goldmann's insistence that individuals make history, in one corner; Lacan's structural determinism, in another; and in a third, Foucault's stepping outside of history-making entirely in the great trickster figure "who incessantly displaces himself, doesn't know exactly where he is heading nor what he'll think tomorrow because he is too attentive to the present."[28]

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 anti-statism 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."[29] Preserving the institutionality of critique given by the *tendance Karl* against the *tendance Groucho*'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.

NOTES

1. Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 3.

2. Adam Michnik, *Letters from Freedom: Post-Cold War Realities and Perspectives*, ed. Irena Grudzińska-Gross, trans. Jane Cave (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 66–67, 37.

3. Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 110.

4. Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 143–145, 184–185.

5. Michel Foucault, "The End of the Monarchy of Sex," in *Foucault Live: Interviews, 1966–1984*, trans. John Johnston, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989), 155.

6. Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals," in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, Modern Library, 2000), 561, 543.

7. Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, 115.

8. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 47, 17.

9. Peter Bürger, "The Institution of Art as a Category of the Sociology of Literature: Toward a Theory of the Historical Transformation of the Social Function of Literature," in Peter Bürger and Christa Bürger, *The Institutions of Art*, trans. Loren Kruger (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 6–7.

10. Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume 1: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books in Association with New Left Review, 1990), 447.

11. Ibid., 453.

12. Immanuel Wallerstein, "New Revolts against the System," *New Left Review* 18 (November–December 2002), 34.

13. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998), 194–195.

14. Ibid.

15. Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 6.

16. Ibid., 19.

17. As one reviewer summarizes the "pathogenesis" argument in 1976, "Koselleck's thesis, briefly stated, is the following: absolute monarchy created a supraconfessional, rational sphere of action which helped Europe overcome the state of permanent religious civil war. However, the inner sphere of private life, left vacant by the state, became a new source of disturbance that constantly extended its frontiers until it sucked the state, the embodiment of reason, into a vortex of ideological civil war." Bedrich Loewenstein, in *Journal of Modern History* 48, no. 1 (March 1976), 122.

18. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 100–101n.

19. Karl Marx, *Value, Price and Profit* (1865), chapter VI, "Value and Labor," reproduced at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1865/value-price-profit/ch02.htm#c6.

20. Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 96.

21. Marx, *Capital*, 167, 165.

22. Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

23. Ernst H. Kantorowicz, "Pro Patria Mori in Medieval Political Thought," *American Historical Review* 56, no. 3 (April 1951): 475.

24. Stephen Colbert first used this term on *The Colbert Report* on July 31, 2006. For thoughtful (perhaps overly optimistic) accounts of the technologically enabled minimizing of gatekeeping and management in institution building, see Clay Shirkey, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organization* (New York: Penguin, 2008), and Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006). For more sober accounts, see Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), and, for example, this summary passage: "To those who think of the 1960s primarily as a break with the decades that came before, the coming together of former countercultural ists, corporate executives, and right-wing politicians and pundits may appear impossibly contradictory. But as the history of the Whole Earth network suggests, it isn't. As they turned away from agnostic politics and towards technology, consciousness and entrepreneurship as the principles of the new society, the communards of the 1960s developed a utopian vision that was in many ways quite congenial to the insurgent Republicans of the 1990s" (p. 8). One source, writing in the Center for Media and Democracy's wiki and stretching the definition somewhat, cites Hans Haacke as the originator of push polling: http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Push_poll.

25. As Simon Sadler notes, "where particularity matters the most—in the political realm—the Whole Earth network constantly moved attention away from particular sufferings, inequities, and identities," but it took very seriously its charge to articulate and organize a new peer-to-peer "vastly expanded realm of nonexpertise" toward a network of knowledge and social creation outside the existing institutional framework. Simon Sadler, "An Architecture of the Whole," *Journal of Architectural Education* 61 (May 2008): 118, 127.

26. See David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007); and Joel Bakan, *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power* (New York: Free Press, 2004).

27. For more on this larger process of postmodernization and its ties to the longer history of the cold war, see my study *The Pivot of the World: Photography and Its Nation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

28. Allan Kaprow, "Where Art Thou, Sweet Muse? (I'm Hung Up at the Whitney)," *Arts Magazine* (February 1967): 40–41.

29. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 20.

30. Asger Jorn, "The End of the Economy and the Realization of Art," first published in *Internationale Situationniste* 4 (June 1960), available excerpted and in translation at http://www.infopool.org.uk/6002.html.

31. Albert Camus, "The Wager of Our Generation," in *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), 257–258.

32. Václav Havel et al., *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central-Eastern Europe* (London: Hutchinson, 1985), 52, 71.

33. See Havel's account of his relationship with Klaus in the excerpt from his 2007 memoir *To the Castle and Back* at http://www.nybooks.com/articles/20153.

34. Allan Kaprow, "Experimental Art" (1966), in his *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 71.

35. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv.

36. Here is one recent account of something like that promise: "The suspicion of institutions has traditionally turned, not merely on bureaucracy as something unremittingly felt to be legalistic and inhuman, if not corrupt, but above all very precisely on their inevitably conspiratorial procedures. As Brecht put it, 'what's breaking into a bank compared with founding a bank?' while in a time-honored piece of American folk wisdom, it has from time to time also been remembered that business is a conspiracy against the public. . . . The Utopian dimension of institutions is however their collective existence and structure. Insofar as conspiracy theory celebrates this collective dynamic and seeks to replace 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 appearance of disinterestedness, might well pave the way for some ultimate awareness of collective self-interest as such." Fredric Jameson, "How Not to Historicize Theory," *Critical Inquiry* (Spring 2008): 581–582.

37. See Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 210–211.

38. Foucault, "The End of the Monarchy of Sex," 155.

39. Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2007), 202.

PART I framing

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 hatreds 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 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 stop 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 transparence. 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 to endorse 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 as, for example, the simplest restriction might have done. As a result, all those present at the exhibition choose one 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 doused by a rhythm that is incompatible with his maturity. The artist hangs like a cut of beef, while we try in vain to reconstruct the living animal from the cut. The author, persuaded by the learned that sincerity is his essential virtue, feels an awkward uneasiness self-consciously observing his frankness amidst the festive splendor of a public show. Why not make this uneasiness, 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 fails 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 state.

The PLACE is not transparent. The PLACE is actual presence. There are no criteria for a better or more valuable filling of the PLACE. It may be empty, but its emptiness must be conspicuously 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 some 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 incessantly 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 authorship, 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 served the temple and contributed 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 dam 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 ramparts.

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 space. It used to be adopted and readjusted. It used to be thought of as a necessary element of the human environment; it has sunk into the world. In its initial and relatively pure form, it has appeared 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 here 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-heresy 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 critics who founded the Foksal Ga lery in Poland. It served as the gallery's opening manifesto. This translation was first published in *October* 38 (Autumn 1986): 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 disputation or presentation) of objects,

Because painting is a springboard for the imagination,

Because painting is spiritual illustration,

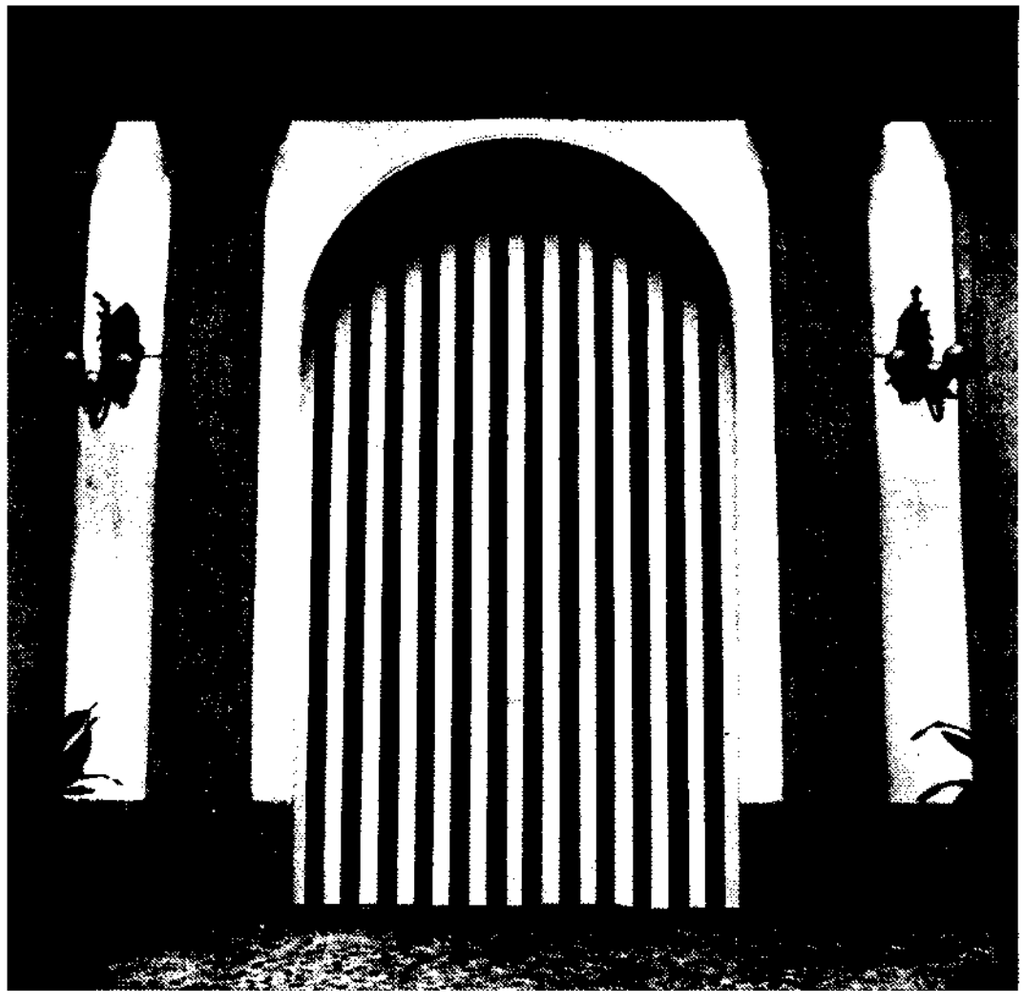
Because painting is justification,

Because painting serves an end,

Because to paint is to give aesthetic value to flowers, women, eroticism, the daily environment, art, dadaism, 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.



1.1 Daniel Buren, *Untitled,* 1968. Photo-souvenir of the work made at the Galerie Apollinaire, Milan, October 1968. Courtesy of the artist.

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 cloistered, unattainably 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' manners 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 occupied 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 enshrines its contents, still demands a worshipful attitude that reflects benignly on the spectator's growing cultivation and status. By seeming to wish 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 morte* because of the kind of history evoked.

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 special 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 authentic 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 advisement 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 extending into the space of daily 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 allusive words and thus implies total inactivity. Clearly, such art can neither 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 our [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): 40–41. Courtesy of Allan Kaprow Estate, Hauser & Wirth Zürich London.

what is a museum? a dialogue (1967)

allan kaprow and robert smithson

Allan Kaprow: There was once an art which was conceived for the museums, and the fact that the museums look like mausolea 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 the 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 nullity implied in the museum is actually one of its major assets, and that this should be realized 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 liven 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 discotheque 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 or 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 empty rooms, not fill 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 canned life, an aestheticized illustration of life. "Life" in the museum is like making love in a cemetery. 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 mausolea. Yet, such an act 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 penumbral 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 isn't 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 uncanny 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. It is the future—the Martian 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 in a sense buries abstract kinds of art in another kind of abstraction, so that it really becomes a negation of a negation. I am all for a perpetuation of this kind of distancing and removal, and I think Johnson's project for Ellis Island is interesting in that he's going to gut this nineteenth-century building and turn it into a ruin, and he says that he's going to stabilize the ruins, and he's also building this circular building which is really nothing but a stabilized void. And it seems that you find this tendency everywhere, but everybody 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 inaccessible, 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 must often make social compromises in my Happenings, while, similarly, you and others who might object to museums nevertheless go on showing in 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 supposes 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 tombs 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 marvelous 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 splintering into more and more categories, and it's like an interminable 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 paralyzed position, and I don't think they want to accept it, so they've made a myth out of action; 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 don'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 fullness to a burlesque of fullness. As its sense of life is always aesthetic (cosmetic), its sense of fullness is aristocratic: it tries to assemble all "good" objects and ideas under one roof lest 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 fullness and your 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 shows all sorts of disorders and fractures and irrationalities. 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 "marked" for what artists do. As the universities and federal education programs finance culture by building even more museums, you see the developing picture of contemporary patronage. Therefore, your involvement with "exhibition people," however well-meant they are, is bound to defeat whatever position you take regarding the nonvalue 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 verging on a kind of concrete humor, and actually I find the whole idea of the mausoleum 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 uncertain 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 fate of novelty 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 outs: 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 maximum 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).*

This dialogue was first published in *Arts Yearbook* 9 (1967): 94–101. Courtesy of Allan Kaprow Estate, Hauser & Wirth Zürich London, and Estate of Robert Smithson / Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

new commitment (1968)

groupe de recherche d'art visuel

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 order, 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 unavoided contradictions and compromises implicit in it are slowing down its execution.

The work of the Group on jointly formulated and analyzed bases 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 manifestos, 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 protesting 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 intransigent 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 ingenious 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 presided 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?

Effectiveness and the time devoted to works may be a criterion of vitality, but the changes must be more far-reaching. For 1968, the Group is planning to sign only experimental group works, like the program "A la recherche d'un nouveau spectateur" [In search of a new audience], or the environments in Buffalo and St. Paul-de-Vence. It is planning public discussions about its situation and about the changes that have emerged since the Group was founded, in the relationships between art and public. In every instance, the Group will endeavor to contribute to the modification of work-spectator relationships, which are still based on criteria to do with culture, genius, and money.

The Group is ready to collaborate in any program developed in this direction. It is also prepared to accept the outside collaboration of researchers in groups which are keen to be involved in these experiments.

This text was first published and distributed by the artists as a pamphlet in April 1968. The present translation is by Simon Pleasance and Charles Penwarden. It is taken from the exhibition catalogue *Stratégies de participation: GRAV, Groupe de recherche d'art visuel, 1960–1968* (Grenoble: Magasin—Centre National d'Art Contemporain de Grenoble, 1998), 234–236.

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 this 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 clear-sighted 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 our two-sided situation may correspond to a two-sided attitude. That, although receiving support within the cultural system (recognition, an audience, economic means, et cetera), 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, to 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 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 Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel.

Currently, since the tidal 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. Painters 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 reasserts 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 availabilities 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 distances, categories, norms, and values. Every artist and those who encircle 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, hold to the system and seek to preserve 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 rank and file, 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 to me 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 Malraux, sometimes art dealers, sometimes art critics, sometimes museum directors, 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 not 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 collusive 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 one 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 traps 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.

Envisaging, even 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 detonators for new situations.

Creating, in a conscious manner, disturbances in the artistic system, using the most 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 on 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.

This text was first published in *Opus International* 8 (October 1968): 46–49. The present translation is taken from the artist's website: www.ju ioleparc.org.

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 *Ciclo 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 is 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.

1.2 Eduardo Favario, *Closed Gallery Piece*, 1968. Photograph by Graciela Carnevale.

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-spectator 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 as a brochure accompanying the artist's project for the "Ciclo de Arte Experimental," which ran from September 9 to 21, 1968, in Rosario, Argentina. Translated by Mark Schafer and republished in Inés Katzenstein, ed., *Listen 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 has come together by chance for the opening, 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 are obliged, 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 intentioned: 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 me to be aggressive, to also exercise a degree of violence—just enough to be effective—in the work. To that end, I also had 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 Feitlowitz, and republished in Inés Katzenstein, ed., *Listen Here Now! Argentine Art of the 1960s: Writings of the Avant-Garde* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004), 299–301.

1.3 Graciela Carnevale, *Lock-Up Action*, 1968. Courtesy of the artist.

we must always resist the lures of complicity (1968)

osvaldo mateo boglione, aldo bortolotti, et al.

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 closed in itself; rather, we can consider it the consolidation of a stance that was already latent in our earlier proposals for an avant-garde art.

This is why it is possible to say that the response given is indicative of the beginning of a new spirit 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.

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 June 1968. The manifesto is signed by Osvaldo Mateo Boglione, Aldo Bortolotti, Graciela Carnevale, Rodolfo Elizalde, Noemí Escandell, Eduardo Favario, Fernández Bonina, Emilio Ghilioni, Martha Greiner, José M. Lavarello, Lía Maisonnave, Rubén Naranjo, Norberto Puzzolo, Juan Pablo Renzi, and Jaime Rioja. Translated by Marguerite Feitlowitz, it was republished in Inés Katzenstein, ed., *Listen Here Now! Argentine Art of the 1960s: Writings of the Avant-Garde* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004), 294–295.

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 an undertaking than a simple . . .

Marcel Broodthaers: Perhaps it would be easier if I told you about its origins. In 1968, incidentally that was not long after the wave of uprisings, a few friends and I—friends who included gallery owners, collectors, and artists—joined together with the intention of analyzing 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 finally 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 is fairly empty: there are 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 stamped with art-related references, in other words, crates used for packing and transporting paintings and sculptures. The crates arrived, I arranged them as 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 a little as provocation 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 out back, and "Section 19e Siècle" 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 with 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 a between shown at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf and organized by the conservator Jürgen Harten, 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.

de Vree: I'm going to ask you one last, pretty trivial but nevertheless essential question about the position of the artist. By rejecting snobbism and the capitalistic approach of the collectors of certain galleries, certain museums, most museums, and by turning to a new conception of art, an unsaleable art, how then is the artist expected to live in this day and age?

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 "unsaleable," 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 hierarchic references of a capitalistic kind will settle at its core. But for the moment everything is fine.

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

Broodthaers: *I don't quite understand the question . . .*

de 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?*

Broodthaers: *Of course I believe in the sincerity of these intentions, the same way I believe in the sincerity of my intentions, but it is wiser to foresee that we will be capitalistic, 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 reinstate the capitalistic structure.*

This text is the transcripoon of an interview with Broodthaers that de Vree conducted in Brussels in 1969. It was first published in *Marcel Broodthaers: Interviews und Dialoge 1946–76*, comp. Wilfried Dickhoff, Kunst Heute, no. 12 (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1994), 75–81. The present translation is taker from Christian Kravagna, ed., *The Museum as Arena: Institutional-Critical Statements by Artists* (Cologne: Walther König, 2001), 35–36.

a call for the immediate resignation of all of the rockefellers from the board of trustees of the museum of modern art (1969)

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

There is a group of extremely wealthy people who are using art as a means of self-glorification and as a form of social acceptability. 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 whatsoever for the Museum of Modern Art to exist at all if it must rely solely on the continued acceptance of dirty money. By accepting soiled 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 Ferdinand Lundberg in his book, The Rich and the Super-Rich, the Rockefellers own 65% of the Standard Oil Corporations. In 1966, 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 Lundberg, the Rockefeller brothers own 20% of the McDonnell Aircraft Corporation (manufacturers of the Phantom and Banshee 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 Thayer 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 (another Rockefeller 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 Negotiations (ILN) 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

Jon Hendricks, Jean Toche

1.4 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 aroused 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. The statement was published in Lucy Lippard, "The Art Workers' Coalition: Not a History," in *Studio International* 180, no. 927 (November 1970): 171–174.

art workers' coalition open hearing presentation (1969)

gregory battcock

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 misdirected. 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 solace, 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 greatest cultural travesty of modern times—the Lincoln Center. They own AT&T, Ford, General Motors, the great multibillion-dollar foundations, Columbia University, Alcoa, Minnesota Mining, United Fruit, and AM.K, besides sitting on the boards of each others' museums.

The implications of these facts are enormous. Do you realize that it is those art-loving, 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 peoples 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—in fact, 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 con other people into robbing, oppressing, burning, maiming, killing, and brainwashing for 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 $700.00 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 psychotic caprices of the super-rich.

Since the museum, by the grace of its board of trustees, has indirectly supported these many years the international imperialist conspiracy designed to smother 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) disclose 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 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, anyplace.

Before we can formulate proposals for the future conduct of the museum, we must learn what they have been up to all 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 fascistic 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 cajoling 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. . .).

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communique (1969)

guerrilla art action group

Silvianna, Poppy Johnson, Jean Toche, and Jon Hendricks entered the Museum of Modern Art of New York at 3:10 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.

1.5 Guerrilla Art Action Group, *Bloodbath at MoMA*, 1969.

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.

NB: —According to one witness, about two minutes into the performance one of the guards was overheard to say: "I am calling the police!"
—According to another witness, two policemen arrived on the scene after the artists had left.

New York, November 18, 1969
GUERRILLA ART ACTION GROUP
Jon Hendricks
Poppy Johnson
Silvianna
Jean Toche

This 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[1] (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 Museums (Galleries) considered, for sociopolitical reasons (relating to art or more generally to the system).

I. 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 perpetrates the idealistic nature of all 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/fixed on the canvas arbitrarily for an indefinite period of time. To emphasize this illusion of eternity or timelessness, one has to preserve the work itself (physically fragile: canvas, stretcher, pigments, etc.) from wear. The Museum was designed to assume this task, and by appropriate artificial 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 alibis, 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 view of being set 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 perpetrates, 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 sculpted 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 unalike, from different artists. This results in creating or opposing different "schools"/"movements," thereby cancelling 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.[2]

(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. These 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 better 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 set 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 dangers, 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 it finds there its comfort and its frame; a frame which one considers as natural, while it is merely historical. That is to say, a frame necessary to the works set in it (necessary to their very existence). This frame does not seem to worry artists who exhibit continually without ever considering the problem of the place in which they exhibit.

Whether the place in which the work is shown imprints 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.[3]

. . . In fact every work of art inevitably possesses one or several extremely precise frames. The work is always limited in time as well as in space. By forgetting (purposefully) these essential facts, 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 points 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 verso 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."

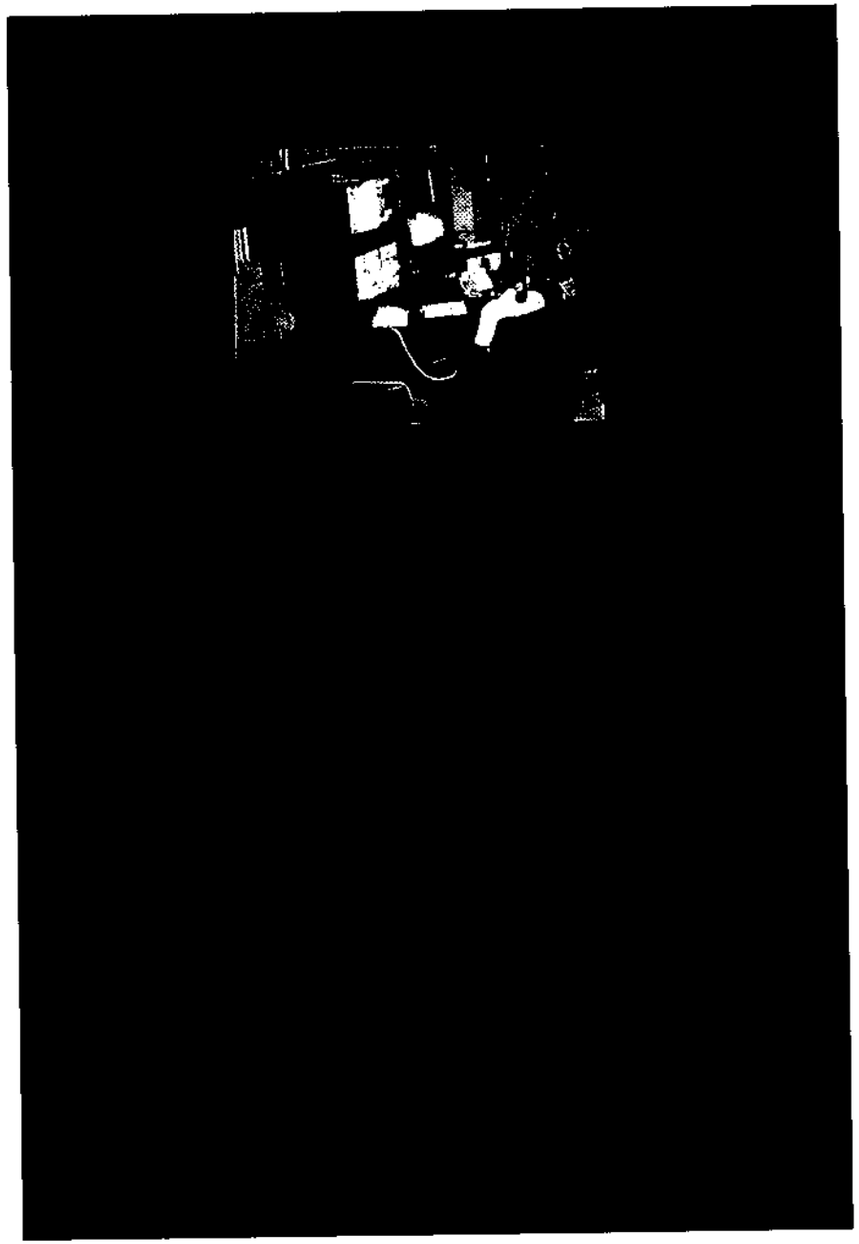
NOTES

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 escaping the concept of cultural location must also be stressed.

2. We are here referring more particularly to contemporary art and its profusion of exhibitions.

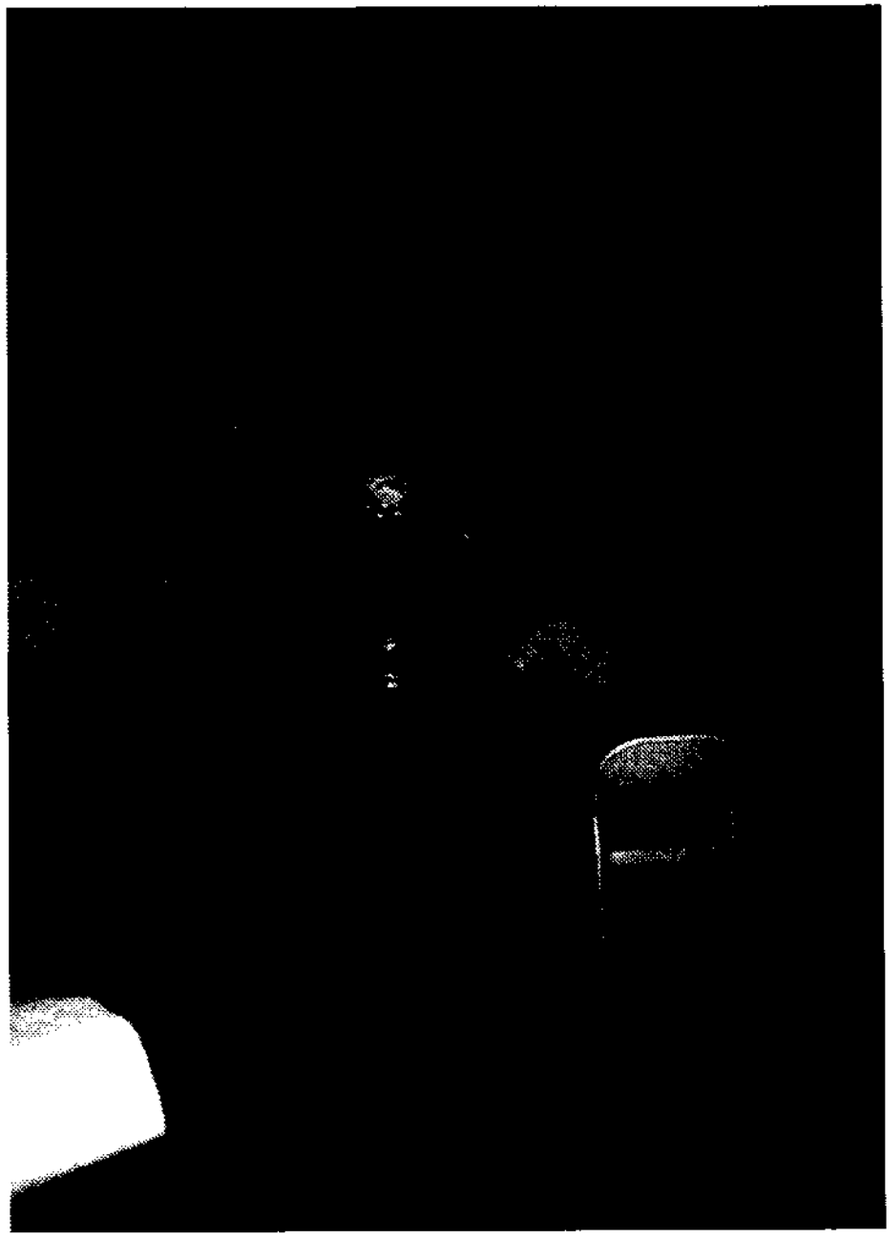
3. A detailed demonstration of the various limits and frames which generally constitute a work of art—painting, sculpture, object, ready made, concept—has been removed for technical reasons from the original text. However, this subject matter can be found in other texts already published, such as "Critical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

This text, written in 1970, was first published in *Daniel Buren* (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1973), n.p. The present translation, by Laurent Sauerwein, first appeared in A. A. Bronson and Peggy Gale, eds., *Museums by Artists* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), 57–74.



1.6

John Knight, *Closed Circuit Video Project*, 1970, as reconstructed for the exhibition "Reconsidering the Object in Art: 1965–1975," Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1995. Courtesy of the artist.



1.7

the function of the studio[1] (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.[2] 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 to 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.[3]

2. The American type,[4] 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, not 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 these 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.[5] (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 art critic, 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

desire (and not that of the artist, although the artist is usually perfectly content to leave well enough alone, satisfied with the prospect of an exhibition). Thus chance is minimized, since the organizer has not only selected the artist in advance, but also selects the works he desires in the studio itself. The studio is thus also a boutique where we find ready-to-wear art.

Before a work of art is publicly exhibited in a museum or gallery, the studio is also the place to which critics and other specialists may be invited in the hope that their visits will release certain works from this, their purgatory, so that they may accede to a state of grace on public (museum/gallery) or private (collection) walls. Thus the studio is a place of multiple activities: production, storage, and finally, if all goes well, distribution. It is a kind of commercial depot.

Thus the first frame, the studio, proves to be a filter which allows the artist to select his work screened from public view, and curators and dealers to select in turn that work to be seen by others. Work produced in this way makes its passage, in order to exist, from one refuge to another. It should therefore be portable, manipulable if possible, by whoever (except the artist himself) assumes the responsibility of removing it from its place of origin to its place of promotion. A work produced in the studio must be seen, therefore, as an object subject to infinite manipulation. In order for this to occur, from the moment of its production the work must be isolated from the real world. All the same, it is in the studio and only in the studio that it is closest to its own reality, a reality from which it will continue to distance itself. It may become what even its creator had not anticipated, serving instead, as is usually the case, the greater profit of financial interests and the dominant ideology. It is therefore only in the studio that the work may be said to belong.

The work thus falls victim to a mortal paradox from which it cannot escape, since its purpose implies a progressive removal from its own reality, from its origin. If the work of art remains in the studio, however, it is the artist that risks death . . . from starvation.

The work is thus totally foreign to the world into which it is welcomed (museum, gallery, collection). This gives rise to the ever-widening gap between the work and its place (and not its *placement*), an abyss which, were it to become apparent, as sooner or later it must, would hurl the entire parade of art (art as we know it today and, 99 percent of the time, as it is made) into historical oblivion. This gap is tentatively bridged, however, by the system which makes acceptable to ourselves, as public, artist, historian, and critic, the convention that establishes the museum and the gallery as inevitable neutral frames, the unique and definitive locales of art. Eternal realms for eternal art!

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 oblivion 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; pretending 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 painted 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 onions 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 present 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 recessed into a salmon-colored wall in a building in Paris, while others in Chicago are encased 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; or

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 for a stereotype, one ends up of course fabricating a stereotype, which explains the rampant academicism of contemporary work, dissimulated as it is behind apparent formal diversity.

In conclusion, I would like to substantiate my distrust of the studio and its simultaneously idealizing and ossifying 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 Provençal 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 all 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 these, nor even produced by the same hands. Torn 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 disillusion with friends of my own generation, whose work possessed a "reality/truth" that was clearly much closer to me. The loss of the object, the idea that the context of the work corrupts the interest that the work provokes, 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 irretrievably lost in this transfer. In the studio we generally find finished work, work in progress, abandoned work, sketches—a collection of visible evidence viewed simultaneously that allows an understanding of process; it is this aspect of the work that is extinguished 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 the 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 "anchorage" to which the museum submits every work it exhibits. Brancusi also demonstrates that the so-called purity of his works is no less beautiful or interesting when seen amidst the clutter of the studio—various tools; other works, some of them incomplete, others complete—than it is in the immaculate space of the sterilized museum.[6]

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

1. This essay, written in 1971, is one of three texts dealing with the art system. The others were "The Function of the Museum," published first by the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, and subsequently in *Artforum*, September 1973; and "Function of an Exhibition," *Studio International*, December 1973.

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

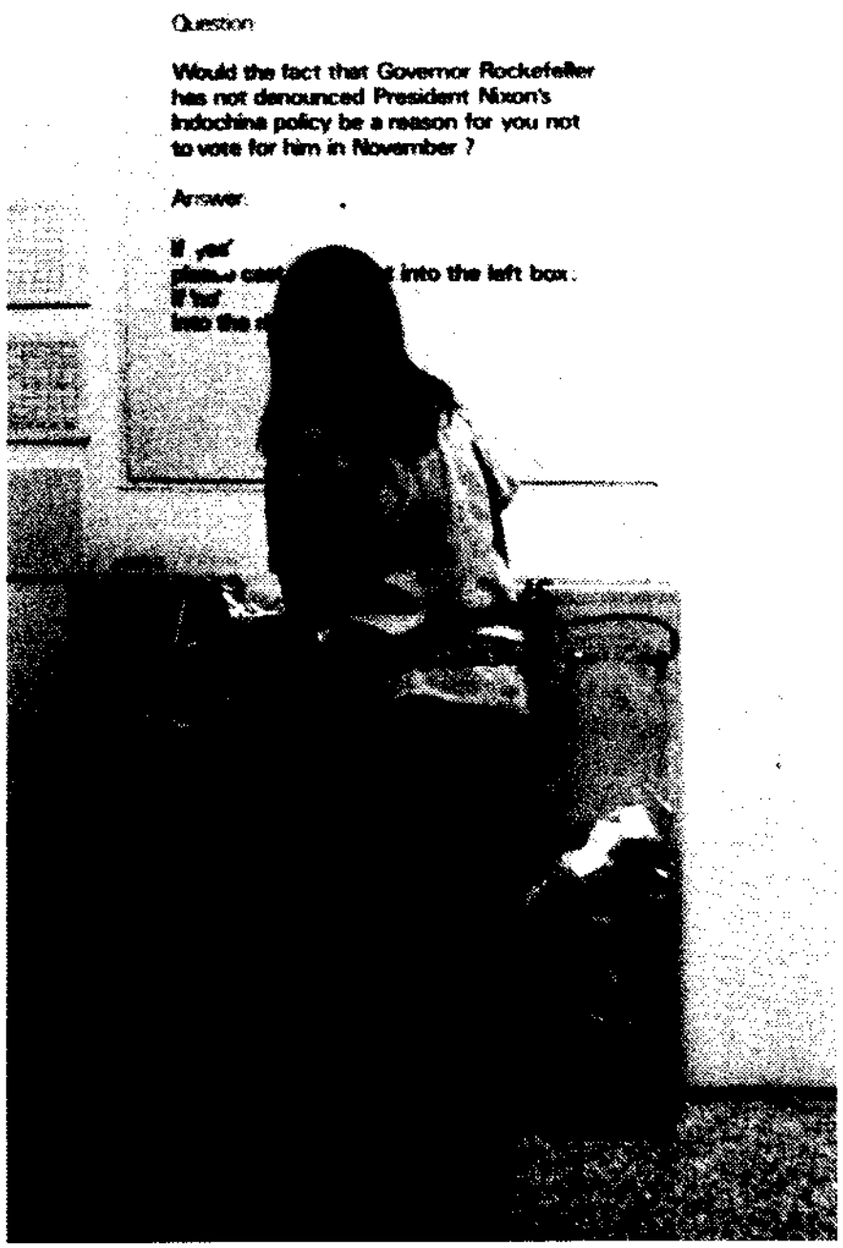
3. Thus the architect must pay more attention to the lighting, orientation, etc., of the studio than most artists ever pay to the exhibition of their works once they leave the studio!

4. We are speaking of New York, since the United States, in its desire to rival and to supplant the long-lamented "School of Paris," actually reproduced all its defects, including the insane centralization which, while ridiculous on the scale of France or even Europe, is absolutely grotesque on the scale of the United States, and certainly antithetical to the development of art.

5. The American museum with its 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. Had Brancusi's studio remained in the Impasse Ronsin, 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 1971 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 renders the above observation obsolete.—Author's note.)

This text was translated by Thomas Repensek and published in *October* 10 (Fall 1979): 51–52.



1.8 Hans Haacke, *MoMA Poll*, 1970. Courtesy of the artist.

provisional remarks (1971)

hans haacke

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 drops 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 dew point is 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 boxes 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, the processes themselves did not share the mythical 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 also 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 oscillatory 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 "assisted 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 divested them of 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 use the urinal as usual. In contrast to this, real-time systems are not objects, and the cultural attention directed to 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 rigged 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 naturally are also infinitesimally small and powerless 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 seemingly have nothing to do with sociopolitical situations; however, even on the superficial 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 thaw, and the rest. Meteorological terms are abundant. More important, though beyond such analogies, which might let unwanted 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 supplies, and that conditions in any one of these areas can be described by, the same or related equations. In other words, these are not correspondences due to an imaginary language, but are based on specifiable 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 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 apolitical, 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 ones; 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 is, himself, a social being, he, 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 its 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 necessarily biased 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. Often the repercussions cannot be predicted, or they take a course contrary to what was expected. Laboratory conditions are practically nonexistent. As in 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 jester, 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 25,566 registrations; the NO box had a tally of 1[illegible],563. For a number of reasons the result has to be taken with a grain of salt, although the general trend seems to be trustworthy.

Emily Genauer commented on the MoMA Poll in her review of the "Information" show as follows: "One may wonder at the humor (propriety, obviously, is too archaic 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 have been 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 the 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 benediction cannot stop the process from continuing. In the case of this particular situation, the museum pedestal not only failed to emasculate the work but endowed 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 surprisingly 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 culled 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 not 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 sued. 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, we believe, 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 susceptible and thereby a fit subject matter for a museum." His understanding of "symbolic significance" or, as he also refers to it, "symbolic expression" requires the use of a metaphoric 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 systems, their potency both in the art context and on their home turf. Had the substance of the three works been historically removed or had it 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 signifieds, the existence of which is not doubted by their contemporary users (the believer fully accepted the stories of the *biblia pauperum* 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 content 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 das 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 "immunity" 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 beginning 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 sociopolitical nature, although none of the other twelve biological and physical systems for the show fulfilled Mr. Messer's criteria of indirection, generalization, and symbolism. Mere 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, an awareness that might result in changing attitudes and commitments. Concomitant with this is his avoidance of putting the museum and its present constituency into a larger social perspective with possibly a new self-understanding and different responsibilities and programming. The cancellation of the exhibition no doubt was a political act. It clearly 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 widest possible 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 solo show that was to have opened in May 1971 at the Solomon 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 Bemerkungen zur Absage meiner Ausstellung im Guggenheim," in Edward F. Fry, *Hans Haacke: Werkmonographie*, exh. cat. (Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1972), 60–70. It was republished as "Provisional Remarks," in Matthias Haegge and Robert Fleck, eds., *Hans Haacke: For Real; Works 1959–2006*, exh. cat. (Düsseldorf: Richter Verlag, 2006), 257–260.

project: inside/outside the museum (1971)

lea lublin

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 *parcours* manifested in a number of cross-connections.

Dedans/dehors le musée (Inside/Outside the Museum) indicates two different spaces where the artwork is shown along with their mutual correspondences: by means of texts, imagery, and sound it 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 *parcours* 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 then featured in Sabine Breitwieser, *Vivências/Lebenserfahrung/Life Experience*, exh. cat. (Vienna: General Foundation, 2000), 184–186, from which the present version is taken.

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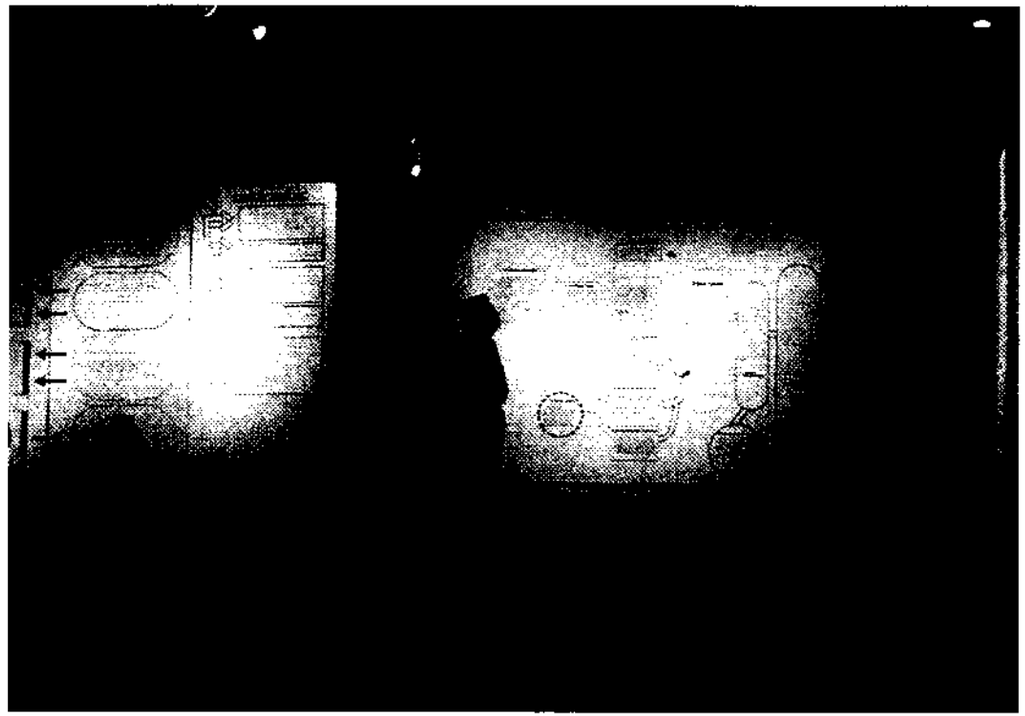

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Lea Lublin, *Inside/Outside the Museum*, 1971.

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: *You, 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, I have 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 crates 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, and 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 conception 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 to have crowds, 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'm always 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 that, 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 willing will be happy to simply take on 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 a 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 or 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 reduced facts 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. I think that from this moment on, the personal contacts and the subjective impressions, whether*

they be yours or mine, will disappear, for I think it would be interesting to sell 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 basest 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 these 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, "Humbug, I might be here, but it's not my fault"—that's the object that's saying that.*

This text is the transcription of an interview with Broodthaers that de Vree conducted in Düsseldorf on the occasion of the exhibition "Marcel Broodthaers: Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, Section Cinéma," in 1971. It was first published in *Marcel Broodthaers: Interviews und Dialoge 1946–76*, comp. Wilfried Dickhoff, Kunst Heute, no. 12 (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1994), 89–93. The present translation is taken from Christian Kravagna, ed., *The Museum as Arena: Institutional Critical Statements by Artists* (Cologne: Walther König, 2001), 37–38.

musée d'art moderne, département des aigles (1972)

marcel broodthaers

The *Museum of Modern Art, Département des Aigles* is quite simply a lie, a deception. But it has endured over the course of four years in the most diverse forms and manifestations: in publications, discussions, postcards, real artistic objects, paintings and sculptures, and in publicity objects.

To talk about this museum, my museum, means to talk about how to analyze the deception. The ordinary museum and its exponents merely represent a form of the truth. To talk about this museum means to discuss the conditions of truth.

The truth of the lie exists. This determines my consciousness. If a work of art is conditioned by lie or deception, is it still a work of art? I have no answer.

A museum that is a deception has something to hide. There is a Freudian aspect to the personal lie. But what the personal museum seeks to hide is the real museum.

The motivation of every artist, in truth, is narcissism, and perhaps also the "will to power" (Nietzsche). For me, however, the motivation is less interesting than the actual topic.

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.

This text was taken from an interview with Marcel Broodthaers by Johannes Cladders in January 1972. It was first published in *Marcel Broodthaers: Interviews und Dialoge 1946–76*, comp. Wilfried Dickhoff, Kunst Heute, no. 12 (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Wilsch, 1994). The present translation is taken from Christian Kravagna, ed., *The Museum as Arena: Institutional-Critical Statements by Artists* (Cologne: Walther König, 2001), 39.

cultural confinement (1972)

robert smithson

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 politically lobotomized, 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.

Occult notions of "concept" are in retreat from the physical world. Heaps of private information reduce art to hermeticism and fatuous 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 "tough" 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 delectation. 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 ideals 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 infernal 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 miasmas? 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 wasted remains of ontology, cosmology, and epistemology still offer a ground for art. Although metaphysics is outmoded and blighted, 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.

This statement was originally published in *Documenta 5*, exh. cat. (Kassel: Neue Galerie and Museum Fridericianum, 1972). It subsequently appeared in *Artforum* 11, no. 2 (October 1972): 32.

manifesto for maintenance art 1969! proposal for an exhibition "care" (1969)

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 sourball 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-artmuseum 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 (lit.): The mind boggles and chafes at the boredom. The culture confers lousy status on maintenance jobs = minimum wages, housewives = no pay.

clean your desk, wash the dishes, clean the floor, wash your clothes, wash your toes, change the baby's diaper, finish the report, correct the typos, 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 no sox, 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, seal 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." (Balinese 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, exhibit it as contemporary art, and yield, by utter opposition, clarity of issues.

II. THE MAINTENANCE ART EXHIBITION: "CARE"
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 consciousness, 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 don'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.

   Interviewees 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, moviestar, 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 the relationship between maintenance and freedom;
   —what is the relationship between maintenance and life's dreams.

2. 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!" included the proposal for the exhibition "CARE," reprinted above. The proposal has yet to be carried out. It is reprinted here from the Ronald Feldman Fine Arts website, http://feldmangallery.com, courtesy of the artist.

1.11 Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Hartford Wash: Washing/Tracks/Maintenance: Outside,* 1973. Performance at Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT. © Mierle Laderman Ukeles. Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York / www.feldmangallery.com.

september 21–october 12, 1974, claire copley gallery, inc., los angeles, california (1974)

michael asher

A year after the exhibition of my work at the Franco Toselli 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 7⅛ inches; its width was 14 feet 4½ inches and height 11 feet 2¾ inches.

A partition wall separating an office area from the front exhibition space extended floor-to-ceiling 10 feet 8⅛ inches across the width of the gallery at a point 16 feet 5¼ inches from the back wall. The partition ended 4 feet 2⅛ 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 seam 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. In the north wall large cracks marked by water-stains 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 also had to be filled in. All cracks were finished 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 "fogged" 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 vignette 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 come 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 visibly accessible. The material reality of the gallery operations surfaced as questionable and problematic even though the author 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 Toselli 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 Toselli Gallery was in 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 volume, 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 only 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 forgo 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.

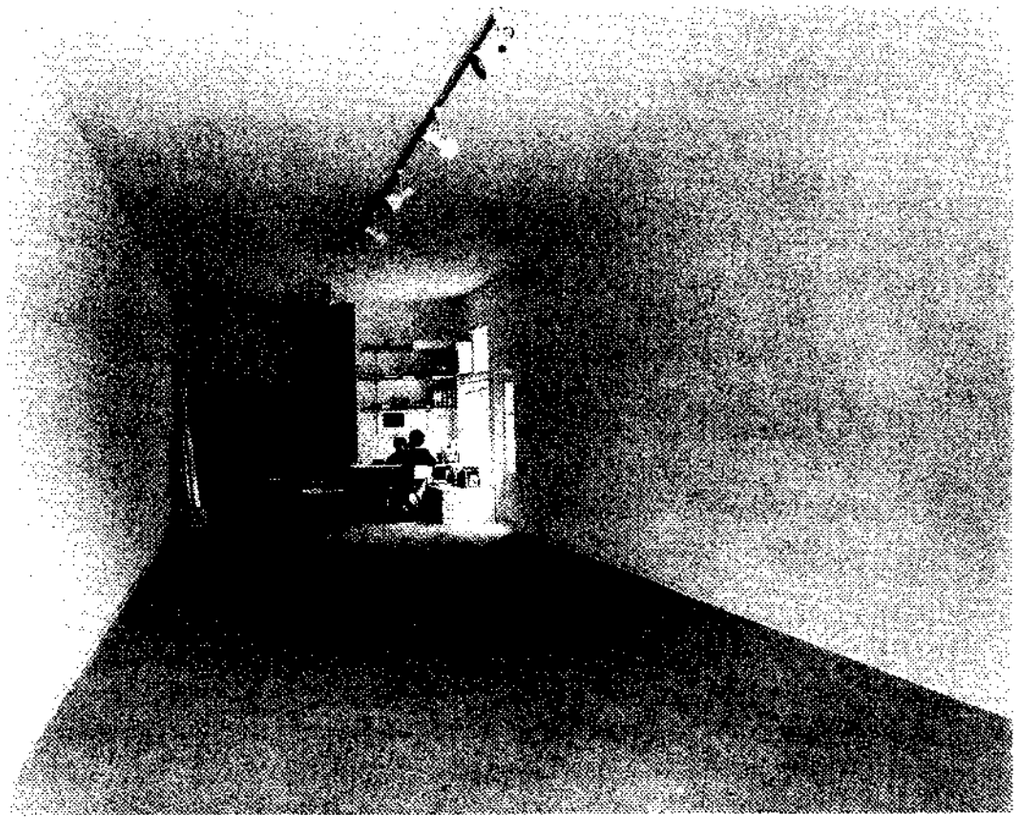
Interestingly enough these works were often seen as "nonmaterial," since they seemed to function outside of the traditional context of the marketplace. Instead of deriving their cultural meaning from the conventional exhibition support, they functioned in a variety of locations. Ultimately, in the late 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' anticommercialism 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 context for the cultural reception of my work. What came under scrutiny in the Claire 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.

This text was written by Michael Asher in collaboration with Benjamin H. D. Buchloh. It was published in *Michael Asher: Writings 1973–1983 on Works 1969–1979*, ed. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), 94–100.



1.12 Michael Asher, *Claire Copley Gallery, Los Angeles, California, September 21–October 12, 1974*, 1974. Installation at Claire Copley Gallery. Viewing through gallery toward office and storage area. Courtesy of the artist. Photograph by Gary Kruger.

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 858 (in 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."[1]

The visitors to commercial galleries of contemporary art in New York seem to be an extremely select audience, which recruits 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 (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 set 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 as readily admit the fact that man-made value 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 preferences of those who financially back the art world influence the kind of work artists produce?" received a remarkable answer. Thirty percent of the 1,324 respondents of the aforementioned poll answered, "Yes, a lot." Another 37 percent answered, "Somewhat." 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.[2] 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."[3]

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 incriminated 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" (Kant), 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 heresy 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[4] 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.[5]

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.[6]

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 industry,[7] 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 dynamics. Without them the industry would bureaucratize 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 smothering 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 1976). 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.[8]

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,[9] 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 art public (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 flirting rather with the political left than with the right.[10] 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 doctrinaire interpretation of only a few aspects of the economic base have prevented us from adequately understanding the complexities of the art world and the even more 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 decrying the daily manipulation of our minds or by retreating into a private world supposedly untouched by it. There is no reason to leave to the corporate state and its public-relations mercenaries 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 very well require a cunning involvement in all the contradictions of the medium and its practitioners.

NOTES

1. Complete results of John Weber Gallery Visitors' Profile 1 and 2, two surveys conducted by the author, are reproduced in Hans Haacke, *Framing and Being Framed: 7 Works 1970–75* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; New York: New York University Press, 1975). Most visitors to the John Weber Gallery also view exhibits at the Castelli, Sonnabend, and Emmerich galleries, all contemporary art galleries in the same building at 420 West Broadway, in New York. The polls are not based on representative samplings. Personal observation of the gallery public, however, suggests that the margin of error is not so excessive as to make the survey useless. For the purpose of this essay, collectors are not considered art professionals.

2. In a survey by the New York State Council on the Arts, the operating budget of nonprofit arts groups in New York State for the fiscal year of 1976–77 is given as $410 million.

3. Thomas Messer, director of the Guggenheim Museum, in a letter to the author, March 19, 1971, explaining the rejection of works dealing with New York real estate for exhibition in a scheduled one man show at the museum. The exhibition was eventually canceled and Edward F. Fry, its curator, dismissed.

4. Boards of trustees of New York museums: Guggenheim Museum: president, Peter O. Lawson-Johnston (mining company executive, represents Guggenheim family interests on numerous corporate boards). Metropolitan Museum: chairman, C. Douglas Dillon (prominent investment banker); vice presidents, Daniel P. Davison (banker, Morgan Guaranty Trust Co.), J. Richardson Dilworth (investment banker, Rockefeller & Family Associates), Roswell L. Gilpatrick (corporate lawyer, partner at Cravath, Swaine & Moore, prominent N.Y. law firm). Museum of Modern Art: president, Mrs. John D. Rockefeller 3rd; chairman, William S. Paley (chairman of CBS); vice chairmen, Gardner Cowles (publisher, Chairman Cowles Communications Inc.), David Rockefeller (chairman, Chase Manhattan Bank). Whitney Museum: president, Flora Miller Irving (granddaughter of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney); chairman, Howard Lipman (managing partner of Neuberger & Berman, securities company).

5. The André Emmerich Gallery, a major outpost for formalist art in New York, resumed advertising in *Artforum* after a two-year pause as soon as the antiformalist editor-publisher John Coplans and his executive editor, Max Kozloff,

were dismissed or forced to resign by the magazine's owner, Charles Cowles (son 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 abide by the tacit understanding that their galleries' artists receive ample attention and that the art world's infrastructure remain a taboo subject.

6. One example from the author's own experience: In 1974 the Cologne Wallraf Richartz-Museum banned *Manet-PROJEKT '74,* a large work, for obvious economic and political reasons. Two years later, it was displayed prominently at the Kunstverein in Frankfurt. Both institutions are funded by their respective cities, and the Social Democratic Party dominated 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 or in its entirety and covered in German, Belgian, Italian, and U.S. art magazines. It was acquired by a Belgian collector.

7. Title of an essay by Hans Magnus Enzensberger, in his *Einzelheiten I: Bewusstseinsindustrie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1962).

8. "Exxon's support of the arts serves the arts as a social lubricant. And if business is to continue in big cities, it needs a more lubricated environment." Quote from Robert Kingsley, Manager of Urban Affairs, Department of Public Affairs, Exxon Corporation, New York.

9. The contemporary petite bourgeoisie is the subject of many relevant essays in *Kursbuch* 45 (Berlin) (September 1976).

10. Supported by data from polls conducted by the author at Milwaukee Art Center, 1971; Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld, Germany, 1972; Documenta 5, 1972; and Kunstverein Hannover, 1973.

This text, written in 1976, was first published in French as "Les adhérants" in *Art actuel: Skira annuel 77,* 3 (Geneva 1977). The present version, slightly modified from the original, is taken from Matthias Flügge and Robert Fleck, eds., *Hans Haacke: For Real; Works 1959–2006,* exh. cat. (Düsseldorf: Richter Verlag, 2006), 266–269.

the agent (1977)

hans haacke

Commercial art galleries are powerful agents in that small segment of the consciousness 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 coverage, 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 promotes the surfacing of such critical works, at least in liberal societies.

With this modicum of openness, wherever 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

This text was first published in Christine Bernhard, ed., *Was erwartest Du . . . ? / What Do You Expect . . . ?* (Cologne: Paul Maenz, 1977). The present version is taken from Matthias Flügge and Robert Fleck, eds., *Hans Haacke: For Real; Works 1959–2006*, exh. cat. (Düsseldorf: Richter Verlag, 2006), 272.

PART II institution of art

2.1 Louise Lawler, *Three,* 1984. Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures.

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.

—T. J. Clark, *The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France, 1848–1851*

1. There is a consensus on the part of the editors [of *The Fox*] 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 heuristic)—one which perhaps brings me perilously close to the foibles of economic determinism. Consider the following: that the administrators, dealers, critics, pundits, 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 seventies (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: There is prevalent in the New York art world a ludicrous model of the individual in society. (I say the New York art world, but it does hold, I am sure, for other places too, no matter how far-flung. This is because most art "centers" and art schools (etc.) fall for modernist hegemony—this can be known as "The New York connection.") This model may be generally and partially characterized as the idealist separation of private from political-social life. Such a separation has led to the celebration of indulgent individual "freedom." This appears to me to have had two alarming results: adventuristic art of the seventies has become an insular and boring spectacle of fads, intoxications, diversions, infatuations, and even the odd pseudo-revolution, all under the platitudinous guise of massive evidence of "creativity" and "artistic freedom." (This "freedom" some will always persist in citing as evidence that in this society the artist suffers no overt governmental controls and hence may still be "a rebel"; a freedom which, on the other hand, others cite as fundamental to "bourgeois ideology" and its "illusion of freedom.") Tied intimately to all this, as an essential part of the same "form of life," is the astonishing increase in art world *assessors*: entrepreneurs, critics, curators, gallery staff, etc. In other words, *bureaucrats*. These bureaucrats administer the above "manifestations of freedom" by alienating them, treating them as a kind of gloss for the mode of existence of middle-life market relations. This is a mode of existence in which we become prices on the media market, in which we become commodities, a mode of existence in which what counts is the demand for *what the market defines* as your talents, in which all relationships have their monetary value, and it is their monetary value that *matters*. It is a mode of existence in which we become slaves to the "blind urge" to production-consumption and are thus assessed and administered by the bureaucrats only because the latter are closer to the sources of control (are higher in the market hierarchy). The above may be a bit vulgar, but under these conditions I still think our activities become (except insofar as they perpetuate-stabilize the market) largely arbitrary. The reason is that the bureaucrats are able to subsume anything, even the rare cranky-iconoclastic work. The products may change, modifications occur all the time (an endless spectacle), but the form of life remains the same: the ruling market provides the standard of intelligibility. One question to raise about this standard of intelligibility is whether the market relations are really *separate* from what we do? That is to say, just how far has market standing been *internalized*? I know, for example, that rabid ambition and careerism — almost the New York art world's raison d'être —are present in myself, even though I'm perfectly aware of their presence. This would lead me to believe, assuming there are others like me, and I know there are, that the market isn't just contingently there, that we don't just create freely and only afterwards get

bulldozed by the market. That we now practice with the market in 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 vectoring than rhetorically contrasting good (us) with evil (them). Remember, I'm talking about Imperialistic New York adventurism. If you learn about art in an art citizenship school, this is what you "learn" about. I'm not talking about small-town community art clubs or even feminist art workshops, though I do agree with Andrew Menard 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 it this power which enamors most of us with what we can call Official Culture? Official Culture seems to a number of us involved with this magazine to be inauthentic (at least today), imperialistic, 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 road to change-opposition means looking anew at our social practice. But so stated, that perhaps sounds a little too offhand. Part of what I mean is this: in order to facilitate some hope of "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" (or numerous such alternatives), if it is possible, can only arise within communities whose sociality (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 but aggressive to this 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 adventuristic-revolutionary products (unless these can be embedded in an "alternate history," whatever 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 "politics" 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 haute adventuristic New York art with vocal politics, sometimes even a professed 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 "confusions" turn out not problematically but just dull. Yes of course I acknowledge such a paradox may be difficult and even 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 (etc.) implies retiring from the world and giving up the struggle within it—hence implicitly approving of it. Or, remaining in the world whose values you reject is equally a compromise. However, this is much too much a black and white dubbing. 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 egotistical civil society but against the political structure on which it rests. Now most artists supplying us with adventuristic modernism, including myself, have a problem world which (to different degrees) embodies such a compromise. However, what usually happens is that such compromise is glibly 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 snobbish indignation toward the walled-up institutions of Modern Art and I don't think this is much good either. Hence we get crackpot museum-without-walls schemes involving shipping examples of Picasso and Braque's Analytic Cubism out so the people on Flatbush Avenue can see it—good grief! "Taking art out into the streets" is to me a more rampant form of consumerism 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 "them" swapping "their" professionalism for "ours," and this is simply to utilize the very same them/us sociality that has screwed up the rest of the world. But anyway, there is at present (as if we didn't know it), a stepped-up politikkunst debate in the art media. No doubt it is

becoming obvious to more and more people that seventies 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 subsumed 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 Toche's threat to kidnap Metropolitan Museum personnel which was defended by numerous New York aesthetes, 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 ineffectual aestheticism? Or, the implications of manipulation seem to be quite sinister. Now in Beuys's case, his art world histrionics turn what might be some conceivably useful contributions to the debate into statements of truly unsurpassed vapidity—cf. "Social sculpture with ideas." The contributions of Beuys and Toche, like the contributions of a lot of others, seem to drift indigestibly about in the *Kunstwelt* glamour-careerist-empty-media until they lack any *trenchancy*. And this seems to be what I'm trying to get at: the "media" (etc.) coerces us and severs the ties with practice. Though 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 strategically awful—though, from what I hear, I'm probably still giving him much too much credit. Anyway, the vested interests are enormous since a trip with money linked with glamorous narcissism can coerce most of us. If the French made 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 (actually there are other more complex historical reasons having to do with the internal collapse of Modernism itself, but this 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 museum 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 cute to say "playing" the materialist. Getting some trenchancy 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 dawns gradually 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 my (our) pragmatically complex index/circumstances here in New York City. I'm getting more and more pissed off with all the social blinkers art has to wear in order to be ambitious. 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 blokes like T. S. Eliot insisting on "transcendent" elements and the leftists grandiosely denying these. Thus what you got was a kind of undialectical idealism versus a kind of undialectical 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 need bother going on about mechanism or economic determinism. Ideas reflect things, so it's said, but the reflection, like everything else, is dialectical; not inert, but active. Very loosely, the dialectical method (partly) implies we must look at things in terms of their histories, 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-economic factors or to explain in a formula (as Lenin 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 steering 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 sloganize. 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 practice (language . . . sociality . . .) which does not just embody a commodity mode of existence. That is to say, I don't want to simply reiterate 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 not as the means of dispensing a petrified 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 teach need not a priori be alienating from your family or your locale—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) oppositional 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 acute 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 *Kunstwelt* middle 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 Gross's article "Writing Cultural Criticism" in *Telos*, Summer 1973. He goes into Kierkegaard and Brecht's concern with the ideological and moral consequences of modes of presentation. Me talking to you doesn't involve anything patronizing like "translating" my "elitist" language into awful Artforumese or more publicly entrenched art language. (It happens that some speech, some forms of language *can't* be "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 tenets like "existence determines consciousness" don't make sense (?).)

5. What does an apparent buzzword like "bureaucracy" mean? Briefly, by "bureaucracy," I do not allude to a massive centralized organization but to the fact that major cultural decisions (which for example determine fundamental things like the way we learn, the practical relations between people) lie out *of our control* and are now all basically directed through the impersonal operation of market institutions (e.g., commercial galleries) and private administrative control (e.g., here *Artforum*, the MoMA, etc.). Those individuals who are obedient or unselfconscious 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 has tended to be dealt with as something of a black and white philosophy of science *blik*. The trouble here with T. S. Kuhn's "paradigm change" literature is that it seems to imply we "rationally" move from one institution to another. Again, we exchange "their" professionalism for "ours," thus allowing more for an alternate bureaucracy than for an alternative to bureaucracy. A couple of years ago it was said that we needed not a paradigm shift *to* but a paradigm shift *from*. However, the logics 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 so-called alternatives in terms of Kuhn's academic reasonableness, consider instead the spirit of Bakunin's oppositional crankiness in this (1868) edict: "I shall continue to be an impossible person so long as those who are now possible remain possible."

6. Could a critique of adventuristic 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 really is. 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 its sense from both the commodity treatment of persons as well as from the unreflexive, 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 form of life) isn't accidental. The critic matches market force—the voice of things. Contrary to seeking 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 worthiness of things. But it has no program, no method, and makes no declaration of principles and commitments—indeed, to do so would be to destroy its specious "neutrality." It thus appears, since it makes none of its premises explicit but relies on being a bureaucratic functionary, as unassailable. It has authoritarian significance, clearly. For instance, it is assumed as "rational," a right God-given, that the critic should "appraise" artwork. But suppose the artist should criticize the critic? If so, it is mostly written off as sour grapes. Under this kind of role-dogmatism, there are standards of intelligibility such as experts/laymen, teachers/learners, dominant class/subservient class, 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, at all problematic. I may be more or less uninformed on this matter, but I have yet to read such a problem even acknowledged. It also affirms market hierarchy through the separation of being from writing. Its "writing" and, I stress, its *existence* lie wholly in the middle life of the market. It talks about problems as if only others had them. It approaches, in other words, a "rational" middleman's overview. This isn't just typical of the privileged civilization touting secure academic; it's also shared by the hip young movement-dubber. They are both, insofar as they are role-obedient 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 compromise involved in anyone saying anything at all. Will for example my remarks here also be subsumed—and how unproblematically? It's not just me becoming self-conscious about my capacity for meek role-obedience, there also has to be effort put into understanding even the way my language/grammar confirms market hierarchies. Even as 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 awe of the impossibility of avoiding market hierarchy.

7. Part of the drive for the disassembling of institutions is to escape from the institutions' topicalizations 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/existence. Perhaps I should expand on this: institutional dismantling now 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 priori compartmentalization and my/our possibility of practice means acknowledging a potentially pandemoniacal existential situation; it isn't a feature of bourgeois "observation" or "appreciation" (I'm not being righteous about the bourgeoisie—another buzzword—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 it really has no way of accounting for the bulldozing of the individual in 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's 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 implies. In the face of a totalitarian social reality such as this, it should at least be open to controversy whether we continue idle debate over the "nature" of art. That 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 it simply doesn't go far enough; I don't think it can be abstracted from particular times, locales, personal pragmatics. That is, I think it is more interesting if it isn't and more dull if it is. To talk about "its time" as if "time" is apart from any particular individual is reminiscent of academics 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 "objectivization" is the occupational disease (or rather the occupational norm) of assessors and bureaucrats. There are other causes of objectification: the Australian art-farts 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 hydra-headed bureaucracy in operation, you've got to get hierarchy, not relativization. Oh sure, you can't fit everything in a gallery or in 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 not a lot wrong with this except that it's a bit superficial. But what's queer is again 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 enculturation enforces the subject-specificity of the status quo? Just reread the above.) I seem to be getting a long way from my point: So to restate, the bulldozing of the individual in this society may be a bit misleading thus described. As I mentioned before, this society is not merely forced upon us by physical coercion, as some societies may be, but there is an *internalization* of capitalist rule within the very concept of the self. People do equate happiness with the ethic of consumption. The hold is secure enough that even though I have a certain amount of masochistic glee 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 tenaciously and self-correctively 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" critical 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 is (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 own 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 early on in the U.S. developed by those enshrined in universities and dependent for 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 dwell on 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: bureaucratization. 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 result." (Under formalism I include all recent "technical" work which is routine and stylistic, dependent on furthering and stabilizing the diversification 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 product" is subject to change and development). Thus it never questions productivity as such. This restricts art—just as I think Ad Reinhardt clearly saw in the late fifties—to endless spectacle. (This has led to a bankrupted and, in my view, even wholly demented and pompous acceleration of specialization, the real dynamic of adventuristic 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 I). 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 to 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 enthroned in the Kunst Valhalla of blue-chip bureaucracy, the MoMA. These have an implicit structure all of their own which also works toward further reifying 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 atoms, which makes us *even more* vulnerable to market relations. Working for an abstract market (or one whose *telos* is abstract) is then interpreted, somehow, as being the very embodiment of "universality" which is, further, a leakproof 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 Lukács critically called "the icy finality of perfection," and it has been philosophically under question--especially since Kierkegaard.)

9. Because of the last 120 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 flogging 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 exotica like systems theory which perhaps hints at going beyond guffawing at the Greenbergers to view formalism as implicit in the whole adventuristic and publicly celebrated American postwar tradition. (It is adventuristic in that in your work you have to "go off" somewhere and be outlandish, you have to stress campy-sixties-cool-snobbery-noninvolvement.) Max Kozloff, in an article already—I think perhaps justifiably—considered an old chestnut by the growing art and politics coterie, has argued that abstract expressionist and pop artists 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 carting about the tawdry baggage of all this. Adventurism 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 that 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 muzzled *weltanschauung*, 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 Ian 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 intentionality, their indexical 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" *Kunstwelt*. Laissez-faire art education may be a liberal "free-for-all," but the goal of that free-for-all is external to its intentional value (in most cases, that is—when students are not all hip enough to become bureaucrats straightaway). The goal is grades by which "freedom-loving" art educators confer Official market status on students' work (I don't mean to suggest 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 dispersed 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-object-after-another. All this renders "learning" totally useless in terms of a contribution to understanding and community. It becomes completely alienated from these 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 gel with my (and others') manic 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 enquiry 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—it's 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-lit 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't 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 fodder. 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 entrenchment 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 "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 moral; that is, consider the possibility of practice.

12. 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 perfidious theory of mass communication today depends, essentially, on a minority in some way exploiting a majority. True "communication" implies not only reception but an opportunity to reply, to answer back, sociality, 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" about it by assenting to 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 my mind 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 "universality," which is another way a privileged class disguises the particularity of its language. It leads to compartmentalization and, so long as this gray mechanism perseveres, 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 messing about 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 torn from this embedding to be judged by some half-lit external 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 imploded 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 bulldozer of Official Culture as well as a way of affirming our own sociality 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—for (our) sociality outside of

bureaucratic big culture. A simultaneous implosion and explosion must be conscientiously developed; "culture" though internalized becomes externally aggressive (i.e., political). In my view this is the only way left 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 traits the market preys 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 every place 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 all pay for advancing technology. Huge organizations as well as manic "advancements" are, instead, frightening correlatives of bureaucracy, not full descriptions of it. Also, in a lot of recent writings of the left, bureaucracy is often linked 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 individual psychological problem. To repeat what I said earlier, by "bureaucracy" I do not allude to a massive centralized organization. I allude to a middle-life 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 (learn from each other) as human beings lie *out of the control* of us, and in the control of "automatic" market institutions (the ways in which mass communication chops us up). The key to the power of these institutions lies in the ease with which they perpetuate and control *roles*, 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. this spectral administrative world, half-lit but pervasive, has I think grown at its widest (though it was of course present long before the postwar-U.S. period). Anyway, the interests of market intelligibility, the commodity treatment of persons (glaringly apparent in the New York *Kunstwelt*), are perpetuated by art world bureaucrats who claim to be (but are in fact not) "impartial administrators" of culture. An important feature is that they hold market power by fuzzing the lines of power. They make decisions appear rational and universal when they are often whimsical, biased, and quite consistently *insane*. Here I am thinking of, for example, the commercial gallery establishment, *Artforum*, and the MoMA (the latter is also a bureaucracy in the most frequent sense: a ponderous impersonal organization). But as I said before, the artist 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 afoot 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 probably 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 obtrusively conspicuous now in New York and the international *Kunstwelt* carousel, alienation becomes much more than another embarrassing leftist buzzword: it is now an overwhelming everyday feature of our lives.

14. A "search" "outside" the art 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 problematicity 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 potentiality for transformation and (re) socialization (learning) of that encounter. The need for a "mass" audience is not just restricted to the rating worries of TV executives—it is a need fundamental to the histrionics of our present public relations world. So, alternatives to the present

system of distribution, if they are to *challenge* that system, cannot challenge this concept of mass audience, since such a concept means power and, at present, without this power one can't be an "alternative." All of which is reminiscent of some philosophy of science controversies (Feyerabend and others). This further suggests there are even more difficulties with the concept of "alternatives." If alternatives just mean the diversification of present power relations, we're stuck with a sort of mass-communicative hegemony—unless we can work out some "strategic" way of communication which isn't oppressive. Furthermore, this means it might not be an alternative anymore—and I don't know what to say anymore about all this (except that I find it frustrating and so forth). I mean there have been "alternatives"—not necessarily conscientious ones- -but alternatives of sorts, which I suppose is all we can hope for at present. One was Seth Siegelaub's so-called "network of booksellers and mailing lists." But in this case there was a nasty guiding art-imperialistic concept of spreading "information" globally as if it existed impersonally somehow, independent of anybody in particular having practical needs (frailty). This is typical de-authored "objectified" information and it ought to be seen for what it is by this time. (I'm overlooking the most obvious "alternatives": Art *Language* and *The Fox*. They are at least mouthpieces of a community, supposedly not functionaries of a market, although they could/may be.) I don't fully fathom the above and I don't even know whether it has all that much applicability here. Obviously a lot of what I am arguing against actually forms my own writing at present—I know that. Is it important that we ask about the relation between audience as rational construct (i.e., one which overrules the diversity of different social formations) and the need for systematic market growth? Perhaps the root of such difficulties lies in the "technocratic" abstract umbrella nature of the market itself. We now work not for our particular "practical" community needs nor for specific individuals, but for "history" and an abstract market. (They used to work for individual patrons during the Renaissance and they used to work for the Church earlier on—they at least knew who the patrons were.) Actually, a paradigm case of regarding audience "rationally" is the International Program of the MoMA. The International Program, according to my mood, often strikes me as foolish, though I mostly find it insulting. It ships "culture" to (e.g.) Southeast Asia under the patronizing guise of making it available to those who "lack its benefits." The MoMA thus presents "neutral" spectacle, torn from context. The relation between art as a "specialized" language and its social and historical environment raises broader and "real" questions as to the relationship between mind, language, and society. MoMA traveling shows get reduced to a genealogy of things (masterpieces, no doubt).

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-corpses of static cultural goodies. The reason art can be "international" (a rubric 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 daft McLunacy 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 adventuristic Modernism since this time have been, for me, historically quite remarkable. They are not problems that are solvable by acting the snob. It isn't possible, as I said 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 Kuhnian 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 (impinging on our very 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're stuck in that case with methodology without ideology; we're stuck with Andrew Menard's "technicians"—birdbrains 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 philosophical"—or, God forbid, "not 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 pillar 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 characterization 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 adventuristic modernism such a term is faddish. 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 *Kunstwelt* 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 art imperialism, 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 career opportunistic and foppish to 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 voting, 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 simple acceptance of the diversification of the status quo. But of course both are "political." To me, this makes the pundit'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 *Kunst* 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 telos). But there is another strange use of politicalization. I mentioned it before. It refers to a *haute* adventuristic style combined with the espousal of "radical" politics. This is a sort of politicalization which is common but hardly serious. It is always *safe*, making sure that professional (roles) conduct—the real source of manic-acquisition 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 *Kunst*-star plundering. As William Blake said, "He who would do good to another must do it in Minute particulars; General Good is the plea of the scoundrel, 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 no generalizing demonstrations, just that we better also look closer to home.

16. 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 descriptivistically 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 causes 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 simplemindedly 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 art 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/coexistence 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 *avantgarding* 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 I—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

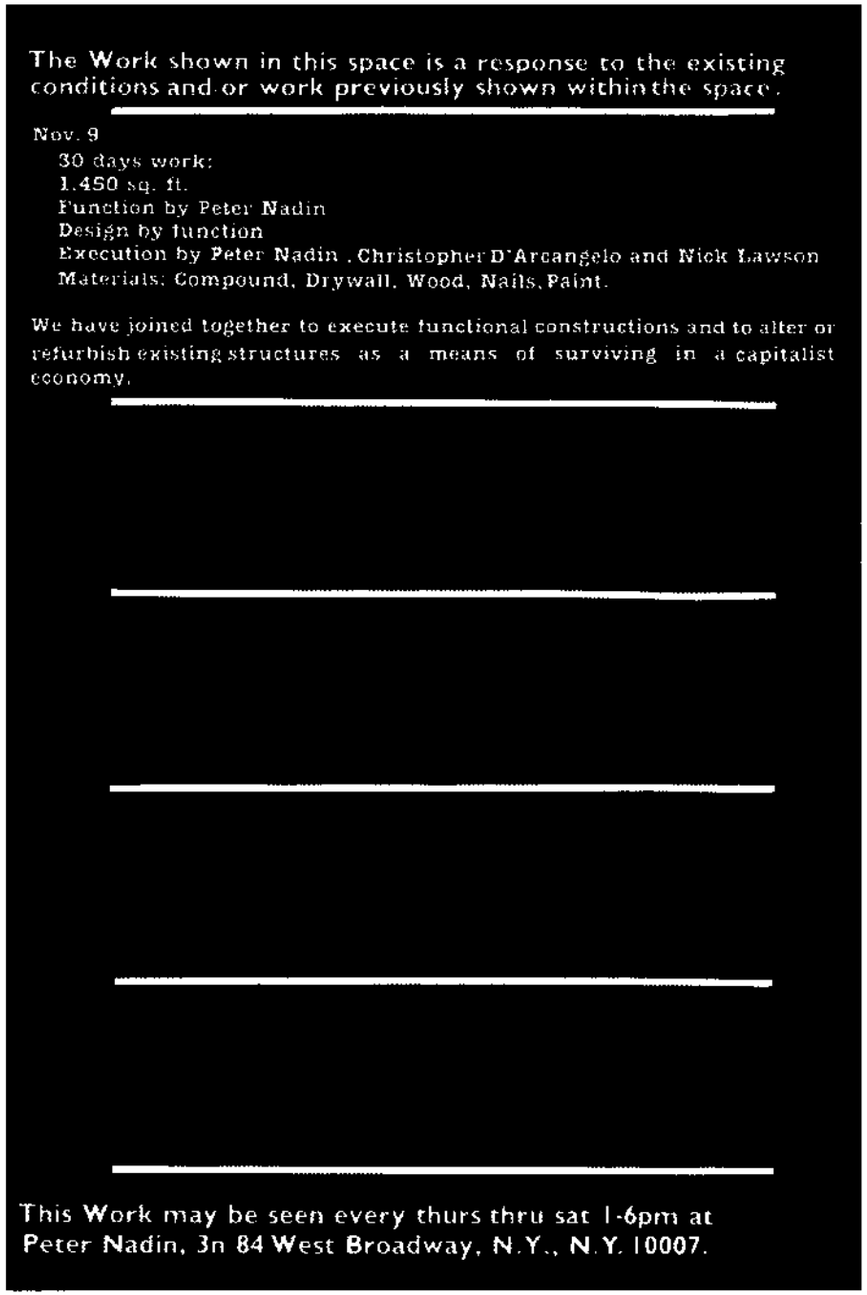
possibility of sociality and practice and rewards us with atomization, alienation, and "private" opportunism.) But anyway, the AWC did show that a solid (or almost) group was actually strong enough to make New York's *Kunst* Valhalla listen a little (I'm thinking of the MoMA). However, the AWC was essentially 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." (Why would anybody want to quote Mao? I refer to Mao as well as to Lenin and others, not because I am committed or even in the slightest bit enamored with their uniform proletariat 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 Infantile Disorder*, especially helpful to me). But anyway, under liberalism, economic problems—for example some of the economic consequences of *Kunst*-star plundering -are never seen as the consequences of an essentially exploitive consumer acquisition ethic, but of political mismanagement. It is thought 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 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 faintly realistic chance of being elected nationally at present stand for almost the same gung-ho capitalism; where all media —appallingly insidious TV advertisements, 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 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 "dissatisfied" members an improvement of the opportunities to *compete*. (Trade unions have traditionally been first social and political movements and secondly economic forces, but a lot of people see unionism as an aid to "mere" economic bargain-hunting 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 underestimating 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 Foundry Worker's union, one of Britain's largest unions) recognize such a paradox on *Firing Line* (speaking of paradox). I mention this since all of us seem to be caught in a similar bind 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 (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 is "work." A principal way the hegemony of market institutions may be assailed 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, not effete- (and in an odd way that sounds like Spiro Agnew) stylistic. 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 Lippard put it: "The Coalition is neutral; it has always been a nonaesthetic group involved in ethics rather than aesthetics" ("The Art Workers' Coalition" in *Idea Art*—another one of those anthologies edited by Gregory-paradigm-opportunist-pundit-Battcock). 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 tightest control on organized protest and so-called spontaneity. She typically assumes a separation of private from public life. They were all determined to remain "professionals" (possessing a positive-technical privileged concept of "work") in the face of a system whose *most impenetrable 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 same* "system." Without the antediluvian separation of "ethics from aesthetics," the AWC would have been a much sharper tool. Pandemonium-problematicity would have broken out. "Work" may have come from sociality-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 priori compartmentalization settled interests-purposes, they don't really seem very serious—do they? *Overlooking* paradoxes rather than *integrating them into work* is part of the shallow logic, the "unprincipled peace" of liberalism. This, 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.

17. 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 *politiking* 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 is seriously qua "conceptual art," that which I 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 certain half-baked "leftish" 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*. In fact with a "higher" logic all of its own. Suppose I try to go into this a little further: as the promotional cant 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 could have assailed market relations wasn't conscientious and, given some of the work then and since, not 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 this 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 maligning: they constitute an army of drones equipped with "astounding" empirical "insights," fodder which will never run out since there's always something more and more and more to say about Corot or even Arthur Anybody's pastels. So it seems to me we have yet another useful device for perpetuating the middle life of the status quo. As George Orwell said in *Confessions of a Book Reviewer*, the worst of the job was "constantly *inventing* 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 drifting 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 Minimalism (Judd et al.) of the mid-sixties. The need for us all to go on after their utilization of objects in (again as the cant goes) an extremely robust "literal" 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 out 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-tautological 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 brooks no opposition. They are in other words logically *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 Kunst-star media-life which easily and greedily coerces (our) practice. The inability to really bring about change, Conceptual Art notwithstanding, is because our mode of operation is "professionalized," specialized, autonomous, and essentially quaintly harmless (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 vain 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 everywhere 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-daft instead of radical-fundamental.

This essay was published in *The Fox* 1, no. 1 (1975): 66–83.



2.2

Christopher D'Arcangelo, *Thirty Days Work*, 1978. In October 1978, Peter Nadin, in collaboration with Christopher D'Arcangelo and Nick Lawson, renovated his loft space at 84 West Broadway, New York, in order to show a series of works over a period of seven months. Each of these works followed from, and added to, the previous one in a progressive accumulation. The series began with the presentation of *Thirty Days Work* and ended in May of the following year with a collaborative installation by Dan Graham, Louise Lawler, Peter Nadin, and Lawrence Weiner in homage to D'Arcangelo, who had died the previous month. Courtesy of D'Arcangelo Family Partnership.

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.
1,450 sq. ft.
Function by Peter Nadin
Design by function
Execution by Peter Nadin, Christopher D'Arcangelo and Nick Lawson
Materials: Compound, Drywall, Wood, Nails, Paint.

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.

This Work may be seen every thurs thru sat 1-6pm at
Peter Nadin, 3n 84 West Broadway, N.Y., N.Y. 10007.

2.3

The Work shown in this space is a response to the existing conditions and or work previously shown within the space.

Nov. 9 -
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1,450 sq. ft.
Function by Peter Nadin
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Feb 1 1979—

PAINTING FOR ONE PLACE
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2.4

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Dec 12 1978

FOLLOWING AND TO BE FOLLOWED
A work in progress by DANIEL BUREN
Opening Sat. Dec 9 2-9 pm

Feb 1 1979

PAINTING FOR ONE PLACE
SEAN SCULLY

Mar 88 1979—

JANE REYNOLDS

Apr 19-88 1979

A PLACE TO STAY / CONCERNING A DUALITY OF FUNCTION

APRIL 88, 1979 — AROOM
DEFIR
EDMOT
BYIZS
WALLS
BUTRY
APUMP
PETER FEND

MAY 16, 1979
8PM
REYS CHATHAM
performances with
GLENN BRANCA
and NINA CANAL

This Work may be seen every thurs thru sat 1-6pm at Peter Nadin, 3n 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.

Nov 9
30 days work
1,450 sq. ft.
Function by Peter Nadin
Design by function
Execution by Peter Nadin, Christopher D'Arcangelo and Nick Lawson
Materials: Compound, Drywall, Wood, Nails, Paint.

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 progress by DANIEL BUREN
Opening Sat. Dec 9 2-9 pm

Feb 1 1979

PAINTING FOR ONE PLACE
SEAN SCULLY

Mar [illegible] 1979

JANE REYNOLDS

Apr 19-28 1979

A PLACE TO STAY / CONCERNING A DUALITY OF FUNCTION

APRIL 28, 1979 — AROOM
DEFIR
EDMOT
BYIZS
WALLS
BUTRY
APUMP
PETER FEND

MAY 16, 1979
8PM
REYS CHATHAM
performances with
GLENN BRANCA
and NINA CANAL

MAY 30 1979

DAN GRAHAM — [illegible]

PETER NADIN — [illegible]

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lookers, buyers, dealers, and makers: thoughts on audience (1979)

martha rosler

PRELUDE

The purpose of this article is to encircle rather than to define the question of audience. It is discursive rather than strictly theoretical. The analytic entity "audience" is meaningful 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 determines 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 modernity 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. If 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 myth actively claims 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 patently exclusionary in its appeal, culturally relative in its concerns, and indissolubly wedded 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[1]

Category	1978	1979	Percentage Change[2]
Architecture	$4,018,268	$3,718,000	-8
Dance	6,939,231	7,783,700	+11
Exhibition arts	7,201,210	8,005,000	+11
Folk arts	1,532,428	2,376,500	+36
Literature	3,772,800	4,000,070	+6
Media arts	8,077,281	8,412,400	+4
Museum aid	11,501,155	11,377,000	-2
Music	14,642,364	12,570,000	-15[3]
Opera	4,074,320	4,774,000	+15
Theater	6,577,686	7,098,300	+8
Visual arts	4,884,750	4,533,000	-8
Education	5,074,172	5,559,000	+9
Federal-state partnership	18,946,060	22,678,500	+17
Intergovernmental activities	—	1,250,000	
Special projects	2,973,002	3,369,000	+12

Source: Adapted from "NEA to Ask $200M for FY 1980 . . . ." *Art Workers News* (New York, January 1979), 1, 11.

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 60 percent increase over 1977's budget of $94 million.

3. Drop reflects money taken out of Music category to establish Opera-Music/Theater category.

Note: The *Art Workers News* article clarified that the NEA was expected to request between $180 and $200 million; the latter figure, if accepted, would mean a 34 percent increase over the 1979 budget of $149.6 million: "A spokesman . . . said that the Endowment expects at least a modest increase . . . though [he] 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 all visual arts producers and critics. Symphony, opera, and dance lobbies are reputedly very powerful.

Table 2. Museum Attendance and Educational Attainment[1]

	Percentage of Each Category Who Visit Museums			
Educational Level Attained	Greece	Poland	France	Holland
Less than primary	0.02	0.12	0.15	
Primary education	0.30	1.50	0.45	0.50
Secondary education	10.5	10.4	10	20
Post-secondary education	11.5	11.7	12.5	17.3

Source: Adapted from John Berger et al., *Ways of Seeing* (London and Harmondsworth: BBC and Penguin, 1972), 24; data originally drawn from Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, *L'amour de l'art* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1969), appendix 5, table 4.

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 art museums. Taking the opposite tack—querying art audiences about educational background—Hans Haacke polled visitors to the John Weber Gallery in Manhattan's SoHo (art district) in 1972. Of about 820 people responding, 80 percent were in or had graduated from college (84 percent of artists, 77 percent of others with a professional art interest, and 73 percent of those without such interest). Of 4,547 replies to Haacke's query at the Milwaukee Art Center in 1971, 39 percent of people with a professional interest in art and 59 percent of those without were in or had graduated from college. See Hans Haacke, *Framing and Being Framed* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; New York: New York University Press, 1975).

A mere statistical survey of high-culture consumership will delineate the audience and outline its income level, types of occupation, and attitudes toward the ownership of "culture," serving quite nicely to show how limited the audience really is to definable segments of the educated bourgeoisie,[1] and a minimally sophisticated opinion poll will suggest how excluded and intimidated lower-class people feel.[2] There are, however, no *explanations* in the brute facts of income and class; 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 connoisseurship, the social value of high art depends *absolutely* on the existence of a distinction between a high culture and a low culture.[3] 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

Table 3. Occupation and Attitudes toward the Museum[1]

Of the places listed below, which does a museum remind you of most?	Manual Workers	Skilled and White-Collar Workers	Professional and Upper Managerial
Church	66%	45%	30.20%
Library	9	34	28
Lecture hall	—	4	28
Department store or entrance hall in public building	—	7	2
Church and library	9	2	4.5
Church and lecture hall	4	2	—
Library and lecture hall	—	—	2
None of these	4	2	19.5
No reply	8	4	9
	100 (n – 53)	100 (n = 98)	100 (n = 99)

Source: Adapted from John Berger et al., *Ways of Seeing* (London and Harmondsworth: BBC and Penguin, 1972), 24; data originally drawn from Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, *L'amour de l'art* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1969), appendix 4, table 8.

1. Presumably in France. The occupational categories given do not reflect clear-cut class divisions, to my way of thinking, except that "manual worker" clearly represents the tracitional working class.

When Hans Haacke polled visitors to the John Weber Gallery in SoHo (see table 2 for a complete reference) in 1973, he asked about their *parents'* estimated "socioeconomic background" (offering a vague set of categories having more relation to income than social class). Of the 1,324 replies, 3 percent chose "poverty"; 18 percent, "lower middle-income"; 34 percent, "upper middle-income"; 4 percent, "wealthy"; 11 percent gave no answer. (And 65 percent reported their own 1972 gross income as under $10,000.) In the 1973 poll and in one Haacke carried out in the same circumstances in 1972 (858 replies), the following responses were obtained with respect to occupation (46 percent reported an annual gross income under $10,000):

Artists	30%
Professional, technical, and kindred workers (including art professionals other than dealers)	28
Managers, officials, proprietors (including dealers)	4
Clerical workers	<1
Sales workers	0
Craftsmen and foremen	1
Operatives	<1
Housewives	3
Students	19
Others	2
None	1
No answer	6

rest of culture. What is obscured is the *acquired* nature of the attitudes necessary for partaking in that culture, the *complexity* of the conditions under which one may acquire them, and the *restrictedness* of access to the means for doing so.

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 onlookers—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 churchly feeling[4] about art but have little real relation to it. Yet their knowledge of the bare lineaments of high culture plays a part in underlining the seeming naturalness of class distinctions—that is, in maintaining capitalist social order—for the transcendental loftiness that is attributed to art artifacts seems attached as well to those who "understand" and own them, the *actual* audience. It helps keep people in their place to know that they intrinsically do not qualify to participate in high culture.

As to who does own high culture: Everyone knows who they are, those men in white ties and tuxes, those women in floor-length furs, the Rockefellers, the Whitneys, 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 tries to outrun 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, unbeatable.

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-à-vis the wage-enslaved working class and is just 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 this 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 workaday world.

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 held 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 such discussions that is meant to rescue them from philistinism: Taste is the ultimate judge, buy 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 downward swings, changes occur in buying patterns that bring about specifiable 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 over 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 "tangibles."[5] Tangibles encompass gems, gold (notoriously, the South African *krugerrand*), real estate, old luggage, and *objets d'art*: vases, antiques, classy craft items such as silver and ceramics, and old art by dead artists—lately including "vintage" photo prints. People unconcerned with art discourse can be comfortable with such work, especially when, thanks to the effects of the big collectors, brand-name paintings and sculpture seem far too pricey. Thus, the level of safe, purely investment, buying may rise dramatically while patronage buying diminishes.[6] 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 those items—and skewing it toward their particular favorites, such as photo-realist 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 it 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 negligible 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,[7] 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 determine. 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 art 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 conception 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, such as Genius and Inspiration (or, in mid-twentieth-century America, internal psychic forces), lie beyond his conscious control and whose audience is "himself."[8] Alternatively, the artist is a kind of scientist, motivated to perform "investigations," "explorations," or "experiments" to discover objective facts or capabilities of, variously, 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. But 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-market 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-gardist trends in nineteenth- and twentieth-century art have constituted a series of rejections and repatriations 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 propounded by the American critic Clement Greenberg at midcentury, there can be no recoverable relation between the work of art and its context other than that composed of similar objects within the aesthetic tradition and the answering 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-conscious trend, 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 proletarian struggles (or, indeed, their opposites, those who produced 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 fruitfully linked only in revolutionary France and the Soviet Union, and then but briefly, in the transient, euphorically anarchic moment of liberation.

The proscription 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 contaminants. For the present topic, the signal issue is the impossibility of a sense of responsibility to any audience, a ban 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 kook 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 involve 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-derogating "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, posited an opposition between bourgeois high culture and a more widely comprehensible culture as that between avant-garde and kitsch, and imagined avant-gardism to be magically revolutionary through a liberation of imagination without any need to change social structures; others, like Harold Rosenberg, derided the value of art informed by "community criticism," instead favoring idiosyncrasy and unwilled art; and scores and hundreds of critical hacks have emulated, embellished, and popularized these dogmas.[9] 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 abrogate 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.[10] 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, confuse, defuse, inculcate, educate, edify, mystify, beautify, satisfy, tickle the sensibilities, alienate, make strange, terrorize, 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 (tacitly 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 slammed shut to even mildly socially invested work.[11] 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 Soviet cultural experimentation, we may categorize art according to its intentions: to agitate about immediate issues, such as particular strikes, health hazards, tenants' struggles; to propagandize about more general questions, such as personal liberties, 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 should go 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-propagandist 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 dismembered form, *auteur* by *auteur*.

The theoretical, which is most similar to the art-theoretical modernist project, has the greatest snob appeal and is most easily assimilable into high culture. It is notoriously prone to turn back on itself and vanish into form-conscious academicism. 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 content, including the form. The "audience," then, is a shifting entity whose composition depends not only on who is out there but on whom 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" (revealing term!) includes 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 sufferance of an intermediary, where the audience may "visit" the work (and where the few may appropriate it physically). This sequential network paradigm of artist/artwork/gallery/audience severs 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 unifying 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 field 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 belabored, and a practice that may be more widespread in Europe than in America. But journals patently live on their advertising—gallery advertising. The "new" *Artforum* of 1975 to 1976, which lionized photography and began a hesitant but injudiciously trumpeted foray into cultural criticism, was slammed by the art world powers-that-be (who literally seemed to fear a Marxian takeover of the editorial policy), and was immediately faced with the danger of destruction by the withdrawal of gallery advertising. Dealers felt that reviews, which are what bring the buyers, were becoming sparse and sloppy and that in any case the journal was jeopardizing its imperiously aesthetic vantage point. Exeunt the editors.

In addition to commercial galleries there are other places where art is exhibited. There are the museums, of course, but such institutions as large corporations, schools, and even some unions run noncommercial galleries as well. These galleries typically play only a small part in those organizations; their reasons for existing are ideological—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.[12] 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 inculcation 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 melanges of local work, mass culture, ethnic heritage, and folk-art remnants. But the "Harlem on My Mind" fiasco of Thomas P. F. Hoving's tenure at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York demonstrates what trouble high-culture denizens can cause themselves when they attempt large-scale interpretations of "minority" culture.[13]

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 Kremlin of modernism, is the prototype in terms of its architecture, its ideology, and the social group it addresses.[14] Its domination extends to contemporary photography and its putative antecedents as well, thanks to the efforts of John Szarkowski, curator of photography.

Museums and noncommercial galleries are under the Damoclean sword of censorship in the form of dismissal of curators and directors or withheld financial support from powerful donors or board members with conservative tastes.[15] As I suggested earlier, the cultural climate for the showing of "advanced" work (thus, likely to be of low market value) darkens in times of economic constriction. As museums are generally conceded to be in some trouble, many have even opened boutiques selling copies and cultural artifacts within their walls; these thriving businesses create rips in the seamless ideology of museology and have upset many art world observers. The December 6, 1976, issue of *Newsweek* reported that "*New York Times* art critic Hilton Kramer has accused them of destroying the 'sacred hush' that should pervade museums by distracting patrons with 'counterfeit materials.'"[16] The advancing bureaucratization in its corporate-sponsorship form is ominous, for here audience taste may have its strongest negative influence. Corporate sponsors want their names to reach the widest museum-going audience and, as in their own galleries, wish to support only sure winners, art that poses the least challenge to entrenched points of view. Corporations sponsor exhibitions of securely commodified art and that which is most acceptable to mass culture.[17]

Perhaps only the few union-run and community spaces, especially those of and for "minority" communities, regularly draw audiences that are solidly working class. In many cases the art shown is art made within the community (which, of course, is also true of the art world community), and the work has some chance of being topical or even polemical. Of all gallery situations it may be here that radical, oppositional work has the best likelihood of realization. Although junior-college and library galleries may also take chances, most are more likely to show work that reveals a missionary intention to bring a warmed-over high art down to the viewers.

In general the gallery system helps keep art directed toward the making of products, toward individual authorship, toward a consistency of medium and style, and toward a generalized content. In the art world of the mid-sixties, there was a wholesale rejection of the tiny but hegemonic New York gallery system.[18] Some artists attempted to contradict the commodity status of art by making work that seemed unsaleable or that was multiply reproducible; some began doing "performance" art. But in the succeeding years, the scores of new commercial galleries that opened, and the older ones that reoriented themselves (later opening outposts in SoHo, and so on) to cash in on the boom in the art market, provided potent reminders of how closely art has remained tied to commodity production.

Efforts to bypass the gallery system included the formation of militantly insurgent artists' cooperative galleries, especially by women; the increasing use of electronic and print media, which could be distributed by artists themselves at little cost; and the creation of "alternative spaces" for showing work. The formation of cooperatives was born of feminists' resolve to reach audiences both outside and within the art world, despite the exclusion of most women from established institutions, as evidenced by the minuscule percentage of women in exhibitions. More fundamentally, they meant to shake the profoundly male-suprematist orthodoxies of the art world. Cooperatives avoid the domination of an intermediary but often require a prohibitive amount of time and money; and some are simply alternate routes to glory—and the same old audience. As for electronic and print media, they can be quite expensive and are also now well along in the process of commodification; of course, their potential for doing something different isn't exhausted.

So-called alternative spaces embodied a reaction against curatorial hierarchies, often a certain contempt for the glamorous upper reaches of the audience and, outside New York, sometimes a rejection of New York's domination. Begun as a democratized way of circulating work and ideas among a smaller rather than a larger audience (producers rather than shoppers or browsers—they are sometimes called "artists' spaces"), they pose no inherent challenge to art world ideologies, and some have already undergone a fair degree of institutionalization, having latterly been adapted to provide a funnel for government grant money. Those run by artists tend to have a more-or-less explicit anarchic philosophy but, contradictorily, often rely on state funding. They often serve as a testing ground for dealers and generate publicity that may lead to sales. They have been manipulated, by clever dealers and others playing on the issue of artistic freedom, into showing work too controversial for a more mainstream gallery. But again, fiscal conservatism is taking its toll on alternative spaces (a few of which are known to have run through astounding sums with small results), and many venues may become less brave as they also become less numerous and hungrier.

THE ASSIMILATION OF PHOTOGRAPHY

The late sixties and early seventies were the high period of the insurgency efforts I just described, which were fueled by a largely antiwar, antiracist, and feminist energy. That was also the moment in which photography entered the art world. Conceptual and pop

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 these 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 and as a less exalted 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,"[3] a process accelerated by the increasing importance of electronic media (in which all traditional art is represented rather than seen) and the consequent devaluation of craft skills, along with the collapsing of all forms and understandings of high social status into celebrityhood, or "stardom." Dominant cultural forms are increasingly able to absorb instances of oppositional culture after a brief moment and convert them into mere stylistic mannerisms, 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 revanchist period in which the controlling interests within the audience and market elites regrouped to reestablish the stratification of the audience and its objects, thereby reasserting, 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 paraded 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 oeuvre of particular producers: "For all his critical sobriety, [Walker Evans] was one of the fathers of pop art. . . . Evans' famous print of a small-town photographic studio . . . looks forward to Andy Warhol's hundreds of Campbell soup cans, each painted in its little niche on the canvas."[4] As photography has moved closer in and farther out and then back again to the charmed circle of high art, it has replicated 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 unarguably market-determined. Photography is selling well and getting regular critical attention (and therefore attention from the art audience); art world interest still tends to be confined to dead photographers, to a few unassailably established living ones, and to those closest to conceptual art.[5] 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 retiring in disgust, outclassed by New York art critics working hard to create, borrowing from opposite European schools of literary or cultural criticism, what often amounts to a mystified language of commentary and analysis in which to 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. That is not accidental; it was necessary to the process of its legitimation that photography pick up the torch of formalism and distantiation from real-world concerns. Photography had to reconfigure its own high culture/low culture split: a central matter for photography, which has penetrated daily life and informed our sense of culture as no form of visual representation has before. Photographers are very conscious of Szarkowski's controlling influence, as regnant photo czar, 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 Arbus, Winogrand, and Friedlander, Szarkowski has chagrined many interested observers by his recent elevation of William Eggleston from virtually nowhere, successfully cornering color photography before mass-media photographers like Ernst Haas or postcard artists like Eliot Porter might

be slipped into the top spot. The specifics of his influence on 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 mysteriousness) and on the disjuncture between the photo itself and the occasion for its making—well-worn art world commonplaces. 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-Szarkowskian 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 firmed its outlines. 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 sycophantic (except the few with good publicity).

I can recapture my astonishment at Dorothea 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 ranks 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 unity 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 to rethink the meaning of her project was to stand it on its head, converting a tight, utilitarian identification into a grossly atomized individualism. There was no gun at Lange's head; the role of cultural commissar has been diffused among the multivoiced 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 mark 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 heading for the galleries must be reseen in terms of its revelatory character not in relation to its iconic subject 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 certainly attaching to elevated sentiments, to the Kantian rhetoric of removal and formal 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, dishing up again the ruling ideas 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 is to success.

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 semiological 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 respectability emanates from their very typefaces and layouts. Nevertheless, the smallness and newness of the field is betrayed by the existence of an 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 minimalist modernism 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 made it into the controlling commercial dealerships such as New York's Light or Marlborough galleries. It is usually art audiences and hip fringes 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 romancing a classier one, the industry was increasing its pursuit of the amateurs.[12] 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 sell 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 bonanza of one-dimensionality in store for us if photo corporations like Kodak can sponsor prestigious exhibitions of auratic 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 intelligentsia 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 credentialing of persons who will be empowered to grant, by their public utterances and other forms of publicity, a legitimacy to that reified 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.[23]

The pantheon 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 also that the firmer the hold photography gains 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 to 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;[24] but I am pained to see the mass-hypnotic behavior of those who thought they lived in a comfortable backwater but now find themselves at the portals of discovery with only a halting knowledge of the language of utopia. I won't forget the theory-terror exhibited at the last meeting of the Society for Photographic 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.[25]

There is a sense in which photography, the most reifying 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 fine prints in white overmats merely replicated the presentational style of paintings and graphics. In Stieglitz's universe, art had to be a *propter hoc* 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 into art. In the historical moment of its utterance, as I tried to show earlier, this insistence on the uselessness of art was 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 rootedness in the stream of social life preserves the photograph at the level of object, a mere 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 dislocation helps. The dual questions of art's instrumentality and of its truth are particularly naked in relation to photography, which can be seen every day 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 vulgarism that only lies are art and that the truth of photography must therefore be that it is all artful lies, constructions outside the understanding of the common mind. There is an exquisiteness to this hermeneutic, a quiet ecstasy that accompanies the purported lift in understanding that sees beyond the world of appearances through the agency of mere light, magical light, in a leaden culture gone unidimensionally 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 far closer to this understanding of art and its place in the world.[26] 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 that is profoundly embedded in the meaning of art. Its present lack of disconnectedness is more polemical than real, and it has left producers at the mercy of everyone but their wider –nonpurchasing—audience. It was art historian Arnold Hauser's observation that the doctrine of art's uselessness was the result of the fear of the upper classes after the French Revolution that they would lose control of art.

The lie of official culture is that socially invested art is sullied, deficient in its conception, deformed in its gestation, brutalized by the conditions of its birth, and abused in its lifetime. To rescue ourselves from this damaging fiction surely requires a new emancipation from market relations, and it demands a rethinking of all the facets of the production of art within culture. The leveling effect of money, of commodity relations, so that all photographs are equal regardless of what they depict and in which standards of quality are external to iconographic statement and intent, cannot go unchallenged:

> *To supply a productive apparatus without trying . . . to change it is a highly disputable activity even when the material supplied appears to be of a revolutionary nature. For we are confronted with the fact . . . that the bourgeois apparatus of production and publication is capable of assimilating, indeed, of propagating, an astonishing amount of revolutionary themes without ever seriously putting into question its own continued existence or that of the class which owns it.*[27]

To make this argument is not to call for artists to change masters but to effect a break with preceding practice in a strong and meaningful way. We are in a period in which oppositional practice is regaining strength and taking on international aspects. 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, not as annunciatory angels 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 people who are occupationally involved in art—museum and gallery professionals, artists, art teachers, art students, critics, and art historians. See Haacke, *Framing and Being Framed* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1975).

2. Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, *L'amour de l'art: Les musées d'art européens et leur public* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1969).

3. There is a dynamic between high and low culture, as well, in which elements within each represent either incorporations or rejections of corresponding elements within the other, though that does not affect the argument here.

4. Bourdieu and Darbel, *L'amour de l'art*, 18.

5. For this army of small collectors, the project of the late Nelson Rockefeller to produce up-market imitations held out the promise of limited-edition, classy looking art objects with the tantalizing combination of imaginary and real ownership: imaginary company with the rich, the hint of solid investment bound to rise in value. See note 16.

6. To underline this point: Investment in art has been discussed increasingly often in business magazines and other periodicals addressing people with money, especially in light of the stock market's "October massacre" devaluation of 1978. In "The Art Market: Investors Beware," in the *Atlantic Monthly* for January 1979, Deborah Trustman addresses the market's incredible boom: "Art is big business. Sotheby Parke Bernet, the international auction house . . . announced sales [in America] of $112 million for . . . 1977–78, an increase of $32 million over the previous year. . . . More Americans have become wary of inflation and have begun putting more capital into works of art." She quotes a vice president of Sotheby's in New York who cited a market survey showing that "the young professionals, the high-salaried lawyers and business executives" make up a large segment of the newer buyers.

7. "The Treasures of King Tutankhamen," the gold-heavy mid-1970s traveling exhibition of loot from the tomb of the 18th Dynasty pharaoh (the tomb famously opened by English archaeologist Howard Carter and others in 1922), was the original blockbuster exhibition, the art show to 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 museum attendance, and perhaps for popular hype, to the dismay of many.

8. "Herself" was very rare.

9. From a randomly selected book and page: "critics and historians are tempted to blame the [unsatisfactory] situation on the dominance of collectors' or tastemakers' whims. Yet while these factors can have considerable effect on momentary prices and popularity, they have never had much effect on the real artist. Rembrandt and Cezanne are famous for their disdain of social pressures . . . sculptor David Hare has remarked, 'It is a classical complaint that the artist is forced into certain actions by society. The artist need not be so forced, unless it is his desire to be so for motives

outside art." In John P. Sedgwick Jr., *Discovering Modern Art: The Intelligent Layman's Guide to Painting, from Impressionism to Pop* (New York: Random House, 1966), 199.

10. There are always plenty of people who have their markets well staked out. It remains to be seen who the *pompier* photographers will be, beyond the predictable sexual panderers like David Hamilton and Helmut Newton.

11. The simplest expedient was the forgoing of representation in favor of abstraction. "The art of Ben Shahn or Leonard Baskin may have a quicker and easier appeal, but in time it seems to have less 'content'—that is, less meaningful experience—than the paintings of Mark Rothko or Clyfford Still, which at first glance might look almost empty" (Sedgwick, *Discovering Modern Art*, 196).

12. The invention of minimal art in the sixties proved fortunate: having no generally intelligible meaning and looking remarkably like nothing other than stray bits of modular architecture, it has sold very well to big companies as appropriate decoration for corporate offices and lobbies, which reflect the same Bauhaus-derived sensibilities. It seems there must be appropriately lofty photographs to serve where smaller work is desired—weak-kneed surrealism, say, might be the right choice.

13. In January 1969, the Metropolitan Museum opened what was likely the first major exhibition in the United States to chronicle the cultural richness of Harlem in the twentieth century up until that point. With its huge photo blowups and projections but no original works of art on the order of paintings or sculpture, it managed to evoke storms of rage from several powerful constituencies. African-American artists picketed to protest their exclusion and the fact that the show was organized without significant assistance from the black community. In fact, at this time of rising tensions between New York's African-American and Jewish communities, the main organizer was a Jewish man, Allon Schoener—but that did not save the institution from the rage of the Jewish community (whose militant right wing also picketed), incensed over what it perceived to be anti-Jewish slights in the preface of the catalogue. That the remarks, according to Schoener, were unattributed quotations from Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's famous study of immigration, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, mollified no one; the *New York Times* and Mayor John Lindsay denounced the catalogue, which was belatedly withdrawn (but reissued almost thirty years later). Paintings elsewhere in the museum were vandalized, and the show—which featured photography in an early instance of visual culture—became the signal instance of incautiously speaking for others.

14. On the ideological role of the modern-day museum, see Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, "Ritual and Ideology at the Museum," in *Proceedings of the Caucus for Marxism and Art* (Los Angeles, January 1978). For a more extensive treatment by the same authors, see Duncan and Wallach's "Museum of Modern Art as Late Capitalist Ritual: An Iconographic Analysis," *Marxist Perspectives* 1, no. 4 (Winter 1978), 28–51 [and Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals* (London: Routledge, 1995)].

15. On a panel about funding at the 1979 meeting of the College Art Association held in Washington, D.C., some of the human meaning of art emerged. On the panel were a representative of Exxon, Robert Kingsley (now dead), needled by Hans Haacke in his work *On Social Grease* for calling art a "social lubricant" necessary for the maintenance of business executives in big cities; someone from the Rockefeller Foundation; someone from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA); someone from a state granting agency; and a gallery director at a huge California state university. The Exxon and Rockefeller men suavely offered facts, figures, and descriptions of their expanding underwriting of art. The woman from NEA was positive but cautious; the federal art budget wasn't running much ahead of inflation. The audience shared her pleasure over the fact that President Carter's budgetary stringency hadn't affected the arts, and everyone refrained from mentioning what *did* feel that ax: social services and aid to cities. But the gallery director acidly sketched a picture of slashes in state and local art budgets, of canceled shows, of museum and gallery closings, of abrupt firings. The session encapsulated the working of the fiscal crisis, 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 crisis most acutely—must cede a wide range of funding, services, and jobs to the private sector. For a powerful analysis of the more general relationship between the state and the private sector in advanced capitalist society, see James O'Connor, *The Fiscal Crisis of the State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973).

16. Think of the uproar over the "traitorous" project of simulacrum production that *Newsweek* headlined as "Rocky's Art Clones" (October 16, 1978). *Fortune* had it as their cover story, captioning the cover photo "Nelson Rockefeller, Salesman" (October 23, 1978).

17. The largest corporate sponsors include giant conglomerates and multinationals, among them Xerox, Mobil, Exxon, Rothman's, and Philip Morris, for whom patronage is part of a campaign to counter negative publicity (over the social cost of their products or industrial practices) by constructing a corporate "personality," replacing a threatening facelessness with a human image. Philip Morris has also used art to create a culturally valorized workplace to "motivate" and pacify workers. I will dwell on this awhile, because it represents in concrete form the instrumental relation that corporations have to art, here not merely for "image building" but also in attempting to manage productivity and workers' satisfaction.

In 1974, when massive corporate financial incursions into art had become a subject of talk, a pair of articles by Marylin Bender appeared side by side in the Sunday *New York Times* (October 20, 1974): "Business Aids the Arts . . . And Itself" and "Blending Automation and Aesthetics." The first ties the rise of corporate spending to the severe effects of the bearish market on the portfolios of arts foundations and museums during a period of rapidly rising profits in certain industries. The second describes Philip Morris's new plant in Richmond, Virginia, designed around pop art. It provides, among other lessons, a textbook example of how a shift in audiences immediately destroys irony. The loss of the art world frame (which had occurred long before 1974, with the reincorporation of postmodern, pop imagery in its new, validated form back into mass culture) meant an airlessness between the visual artifact and its representation, a collapse that destroyed the whispered critique of mass culture apprehended by high-art audiences and replaced it with adulatory monumentalization. Oversize graphics as art were, at the Philip Morris plant—"the world's biggest and most highly automated cigarette factory"—strategically placed to contradict the utilitarian character of the jobs done within; to drown out symbolically workers' alienation and its psychological manifestations; to argue the existence of a shared cultural unity between owners, managers, and workers; and to slap a veneer of civilized décor over material issues of health and safety, wage demands, and the desire for self-determination. Bender writes, "The plant represents a striving for maximum aesthetic return to help attain such mundane business objectives as increasing productivity and edging out competitors in a tight labor market."

To quote Robert W. Sarnoff, collector of contemporary art, vice chairman of the Business Committee for the Arts, council member of the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, formerly a trustee of the Whitney Museum of American Art and currently

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 numbered among his positions directorships of the New York Stock Exchange, the American Home Products Corporation, the Planning Research Foundation, the American Arbitration Association, and the Roper Public Service Opinion Research Center, and executive positions at Cowles Publications, and directorships of Manufacturers Hanover Trust, Random House, Banquet Foods, and Hertz; who is a board member of the Institute of Judicial Administration and of several colleges and universities, including Harvard and UCLA; and who has many other business and cultural affiliations, speaking in Toronto in an interview broadcast in March 1979: "The history of Western civilization is that business has been patron and sponsor of the arts. What's happening in our country is that it's a new phenomenon. Business is *beginning* to be a major support of the arts, particularly over the past decade, and it's taking the place of the individual patron, because, frankly, of size and cost." The force of pop-as-art-form is summarized in the fifteen-story "pop obelisk" (designed by Ivan Chermayeff of Chermayeff & Geismar Associates) converting the plant's merely artily designed sign covered with corporate trademarks into a cultural monument. Art's role here is to add its implacable authority to that of the corporation.

18. The rejection was of art's 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 stress on composition and transcendence symbolized by Bauhaus aesthetics in favor of the formalism of the Duchampian art-as-idea. There was little overt politicization of the idea of art, nor was much attention paid to the role of art within class society. And except for a sector of the organized feminists, few artists really went after audiences with less art education. Finally, the fact that the formation of true *work collectives* or collaborations was hardly ever seriously considered reveals much about the retention of auteurship.

It can be argued that the turn away from commodity production was an inevitable further move into the "twentieth century," since handicrafts had long been superseded in the culture at large by industrial objects and images whose existence and power were unrelated to their saleability as artifacts and depended, rather, on their existence as texts, bodies, or signifiers. Thus pop appears as a continuation of artists' preoccupation with the processes of signification.

19. See Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, rev. English trans. (Detroit: Black & Red, 1977) [reprinted, ed. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994)]; and Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

20. Alfred Frankenstein, in *San Francisco Examiner & Chronicle Sunday World* magazine, January 21, 1979, 56.

21. There are a few celebrity fashion photographers recognized for their aspirations to an art practice.

22. "For a wild week in December *photokina* packed a dozen halls in Cologne. . . . While commerce reigned supreme in the football-field-sized halls, the aesthetic side of the medium was revealed across the Rhine with photography exhibitions at the city's art museum and at other galleries. The growth of *photokina*, from sleepy trade show to big-time world's fair, reflects the surge in popularity of photography itself. Today photography is a boundless industry with millions of dollars in annual sales. . . . Indeed, it is hard to imagine a more insatiable buying public than that existing in today's photographic marketplace." In Jörn von Hartz, "*Photokina*: World's Fair of Photography," Marketplace section of Pan Am/Intercontinental Hotel's *Clipper Magazine*, January 1979. Art and commerce are here seen to march in step.

23. Dealers and buyers look up artists and works, past and present, to see what (anything) has been said about them, for example. A tiny further example of the day-to-day relations within a system: At the recent College Art Association meeting (see note 15), there was a scholarly session called "Atget and Today," two of whose participants were Szarkowski and Alan Trachtenberg, a respected social historian with an interest in turn-of-the-century photography. At the back of the hall a 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 . . . Lunn Gallery/Graphics International Ltd.," with address.

24. For precisely this lament, see Shelley Rice, "New York: What Price Glory" (*Afterimage*, January 1978), from which this excerpt is drawn: "It's intimidating to walk into an opening where everyone is over 60 and wearing mink and photographers are justified in feeling co-opted. 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 sexism and white-skin privilege of the photo establishment, despite the large number of women involved in photography and the far greater number of nonwhites than we ever get to know about professionally. There is also the further problem that the tokenistic partial incorporation of some of women's photography into art world photography is used to obscure both the question of *oppositional* practice and the dismal inattention to minority-culture photography. That is, a superficial acceptance of some basic feminist demands is used to divert attention from the retrograde practices that prevail. But in these matters photography seems about equal to art; again, the art world has had the time to construct a better defended façade.

26. Instead, I refer you to Allan Sekula's "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)," *Massachusetts Review* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1978): 859–83 [reprinted in *Photography against the Grain* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984)], which defines an oppositional practice emerging from a conscious break with the late-modernist paradigm.

27. Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," in *Understanding Brecht*, trans. Anna Bostock (London: New Left Books, 1973), 93–94.

This essay was first published in *Exposure* (Spring 1979). It was republished in Martha Rosler, *Decoys and Disruptions: Selected Writings, 1975–2001* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 9–52, from which the present version is taken.

2.7 Barbara Kruger, *Your Gaze Hits the Side of My Face,* 1981. Courtesy of the artist.

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 room, our work would probably 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 a Hispanic block 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 exhibition 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.

Externally, 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 its first season, we knew we could not continue this course. 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 repros in the art world glossies. To tap into and promote the lived 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 wall-less expanse that bars artists and their work from the crucial social concerns of the American public.

This text was first published and distributed as a pamphlet in 1982. The present version, an excerpt of the original, was published in Alan Moore and Marc Miller, eds., *ABC No Rio Dinero: The Story of a Lower East Side Art Gallery* (New York: ABC No Rio, 1985), 23.

statement (1983)

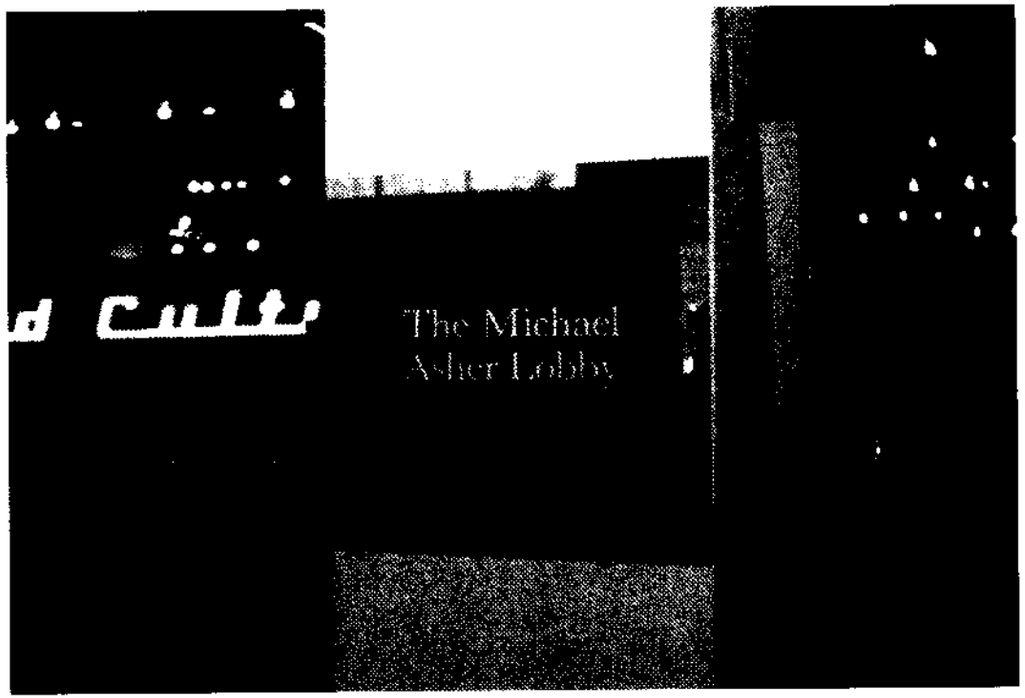
group material

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.

This statement was written in 1983 by Douglas Ashford, Julie Ault, Mundy MacLaughlin, and Tim Rollins. It was republished in Alan Moore and Marc Miller, eds., *ABC No Rio Dinero: The Story of a Lower East Side Art Gallery* (New York: ABC No Rio, 1985), 22.



2.8 Michael Asher, *The Michael Asher Lobby,* 1983. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. "In Context," November 18, 1983–July 18, 1985. Plastic sign designating *The Michael Asher Lobby* in the museum's characteristic type. Courtesy of the artist. Photograph by Michael Asher.

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, attacked, 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. Power 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 fatuous 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, shamefaced 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.

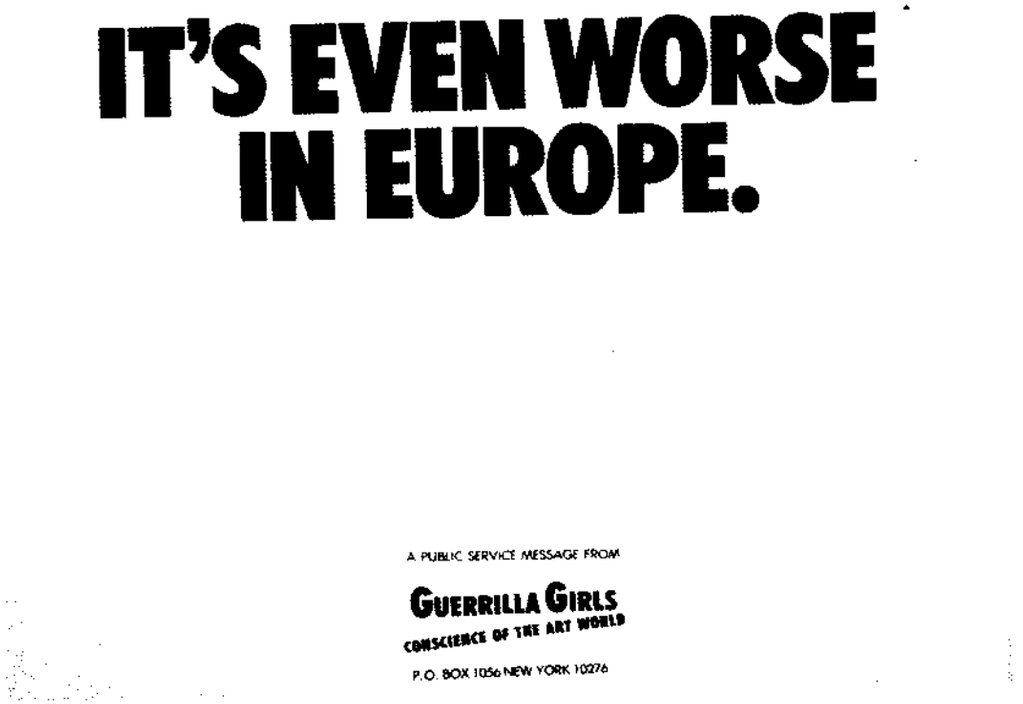
Galleries and museums are political arenas in which strategies of confrontation and avoidance are calculated, diplomacy is practiced, and weaponry is tested, all in the service of divergent, and often conflicting, interests.

We who collaborate in perpetrating 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, rationalization, and withdrawal (*Four Intruders plus Alarm Systems*). 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 cultured, then our interests are irreconcilable.

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

This essay was first published in *Art of Conscience: The Lost Decade* (Dayton, OH: Wright University, 1980). It was republished in Adrian Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 2, *Selected Writings in Art Criticism 1967–1992* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 43–44, from which the present version is taken.



2.9 Guerrilla Girls, *It's Even Worse in Europe*, 1986. © Guerrilla Girls. Courtesy www.guerrillagirls.com.

power relations within existing art institutions (1983)

adrian piper

My target in this discussion is what I shall call *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 abdicate their social, intellectual, economic, and creative autonomy.[1] 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.

1

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 *enfants terribles de la minute*, 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. For 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 vicissitudes 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 popularized 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 reconfirms 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 than receptive to critical scrutiny of those 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 socioeconomically 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 *Euroethnic* 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, those 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.[1]

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 dismissed the possibility of scrutinizing and expanding our own.

The consequent invisibility of much nonformalist, 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 disingenuousness. It is not easy to recognize one's complicity in preserving 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. But 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[2] 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 animately and aggressively intrusive if one's intellectual range is sufficiently solipsistic.

2

Suppose one decides to make a career commitment to becoming a professional artist under these conditions. Typically, this means being acculturated by a fine arts program in art school, college, or university, in which the course of training offered is intensively oriented

toward Euroethnic art. Often the aesthetic standards of Euroethnic 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 Euroethnic 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 in presuming to furnish and inculcate 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 Euroethnic 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 chokes off its only sources of cross-cultural enrichment. In this hothouse 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 alteration 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 meta-aesthetic criteria are no less ethnocentric than the aesthetic criteria they are invoked to justify.

3

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 in 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 fits his activity into the familiar conceptual framework of formalist art discourse. This validation, yielded 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 pellucid and self-critical appraisal by the artist. Recently a promising young artist was confronted by the following dilemma. After years of working hard 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 divest 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.

Then there is the related phenomenon of the conflict of interest. Many art practitioners who have achieved recognition within the art community for their critical writings 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 phenomena of closet artist and of conflict of interest dovetail 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 relegate the creation and interpretation of art objects to different subjects is to bifurcate the experience of both. Artists are divested 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 art product 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 insofar as it serves 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 Euroethnic 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.[7] 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 (witness, 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, preacculturated 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 denied 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 sociopolitically informed concerns, and of their pride and creative interest in the ethnocultural artifacts that characterize their own milieus?

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 to 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 divested of a major resource for redressing their exclusion from these institutions.

5

Similarly, there is little room within existing artists' 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 mystifying 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 fate 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 the 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 at 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 it is 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 relegates 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 "gentleman's agreement" in order to ensure that an art product gets the critical and financial attention the dealer feels it, and he, deserves.[5] 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 themselves function as critical arbiters of what art *should* be exhibited. Having survived the unpredictableness of the art market, often with the help of money, publicity, and timing, such individuals are in the unenviable position of having no evaluative criteria, independent of their own socioeconomically 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 nonarbitrary 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 provenance of the historian of contemporary art. Nor do artists usually learn how to scrutinize and dissect their own ideological, socially determined presuppositions; this is the provenance of the social theorist, who is able to view the entire 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 lopsided 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 avowing sincerely 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 fuss, 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 custodian frees 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 infantilization of the artist as bare producer of art. Having divested 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—nor, 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 produced was the furor 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.[6] 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 Euroethnic art are not, as a rule, sensitive to the ethics of political oppression, nor conversant with the damaging effects that seemingly innocuous behavior can have.

This institutionalized naiveté 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, suppose the exhibition had involved a shooting or lynching in the gallery, or the injection of heroin 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 in fact easily 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 was implies that defending minorities against the insidious effects of a culturally legitimated 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 physical violence, murder, or drug addiction would have been; whereas for the protestors, 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 *permission*, 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 so 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

is permitted to do so (they are permitted to do many things they don't bother to do) but because they actively *want* and *choose* to do so. It is the values and impulses that motivate such choices that are objectionable.

Third, the right to unlimited freedom of artistic expression in any case can only have application to a legitimate subject of rights. We normally grant such rights only to fully mature and responsible adults, who understand in some sense the difference between right and wrong, and who can be relied upon not to abuse their freedom. For this reason, we do not normally grant such rights to children, imbeciles, or the mentally disturbed. The gallery and the protestors indicated in their behavior that they understood this practice perfectly. For it was, after all, the gallery and not the artist who was held accountable for the exhibit, and the gallery, not the artist, who defended it. Thus both parties to the dispute seemed to agree, finally, that the artist whose aesthetic decision caused the controversy was nevertheless not to be held accountable for having made it, and the artist's own statements lent credence to this view. There seems to be something amiss with a set of cultural conventions that validates this degree of irresponsibility for artists.

The result of this lopsided 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 her 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, she 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 her 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 nonaffiliated 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 so extreme as to endanger the artist's physical or 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.

8

A related manifestation of this alienation is what I shall call the phenomenon of deformation. Faced with the pressures of overproduction, the artist has a 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. If all concur in regarding the final product as a collaborative effort, well and good. If the artist does not, his collaborators' responses, as they confront 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 product 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 that artist to produce more economically and critically viable work, even if it conflicts with his natural creative dispositions to do so. Thus we have 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 unfashionable 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 obverse phenomenon is the artist whose output has been so completely canonized for 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 imperatives from dealers for art that is sellable. 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 nonviable work is to court obscurity. Those who take the hint often reform their art production accordingly.

Finally, the artist may deform his product in response to the demand for innovation. In order to preserve the profitable 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 a 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 professional standing by presenting increasingly bizarre and shocking work to an audience whose polite applause is predicated upon their inability to have conceived or predicted its advent.

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 Florida 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 proficient 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 "aesthetic" stance.

Thus the comforting and often self-sustaining vision of the artist's studio as a self-contained realm of personal power and creative control, to 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.

9

The notion of the successful professional artist as one who has been freed, by his gallery affiliation and critical and financial successes, 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 their recounted 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 mentioned 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 the 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 publisher 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 serves to legitimate the economic and market criteria for pricing art products by equating those criteria with aesthetic criteria for evaluating them.[8] 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.[9]

10

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, in 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 these 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 emphatically 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 publicly 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 photodocumentation medium to present acute and highly revealing analyses of corporate exploitation of existing art institutions for their 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 form, 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.[9] Neither artist sacrifices the form of her or his 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 benefits 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 statements 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 naive, 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, it 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 this, in turn, further vitiates 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 vitiates their capacity effectively to change those institutions. And since, as we saw, those institutions themselves are founded on a particular politically selective distribution of socioeconomic resources, it thereby vitiates 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—because purportedly innocuous—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, his extended, firsthand experience of the internal socioeconomic dynamics of that audience and the strategic skills of presentation 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 ascribe any problems of communication to its 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, naive, 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 two sets of criteria that typically conflict, are more likely to satisfy neither.

Thus the real objection to much politically oriented but ineffective art is not that it is opportunistic; this complaint only masks an implicit assumption that aspiring to professional artistic success is politically illegitimate. The real objection is that it is generated from a position of institutionalized powerlessness and ideological self-deception. That such work should be politically ineffective or naive is to be expected.

11

The problem, then, with many art practitioners who avow sincerely the thesis that artists should overcome their social alienation by working in the community for political reform through their art is that they are often in the grip of the 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 exempting 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 obsessions 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 implications 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 pleading 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 professional 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 abdicate some of the power or prestige 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 opportunities 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 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 desultorily and self-deceptively. For it is finally one's self-conception, and the personal and social relations that buttress it, 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 on distant objects of political concern is not news. That politically concerned art practitioners might practice this form of ideological evasion on themselves and others should 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 ethnically and socioeconomically monolithic system of art institutions that tends to discourage or suppress 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.

12

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 like, 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 thou they seem to become; the more institutional rewards they garner, the more pristine their aura of political incorruptibility, at the same time that their political rhetoric becomes increasingly strident, 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 invariably 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 any 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.[12] 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 disillusion 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 misanthropy 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.

13

A variant on the suggestion that artists should abandon the art context for the "real" world, in order to ameliorate their alienation from society at large, 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 enrichment, 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 in a disinterested display of charity and moral concern. But Euroethnic 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 Euroethnic 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 Euroethnic 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 ethnically and socioeconomically variegated cultural scheme, is another ideological fiction, generated by existing art institutions, that is difficult to justify objectively.

Finally, then, we devolve 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 prereflective 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 purveyors 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 allegiances, 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 as though artists are congenitally 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, the mere 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 navels, we will continue to be led by our umbilical cords 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 Banff 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 on those occasions, and from Jeffrey Evans and Ingrid Sischy.

2. Richard Goldstein makes essentially this point in "Art Beat: Race and the State of the Arts," *Village Voice*, August 23, 1983, 31; and in "Art Beat: 'Darkly' Chic," *Village Voice*, March 31, 1980, 34. Also see Robert Pear, "Reagan's Arts Chairman Brings Subtle Changes to the Endowment," *New York Times*, April 10, 1983.

3. In general I use the masculine pronoun gender-specifically, as the system of art institutions I target is populated 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 blinds one to the central significance of such objects. It was this vision, presumably, that led 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 grounds that they were without aesthetic merit.

5. The economic exigencies that lead naturally to such agreements are realistically described in John Bernard Myers, "The Art Biz," *New York Review of Books* 30, no. 15 (October 13, 1983), 32–34.

6. See the artist's comments in Richard Goldstein, "Art Beat: The Romance of Racism," *Village Voice*, April 2, 1979; and Grace Glueck, "'Racism' Protest Slated over Title of Art Show," *New York Times*, April 14, 1979.

7. See Michael Brenson, "Artists Grapple with New Realities," *New York Times*, May 15, 1983.

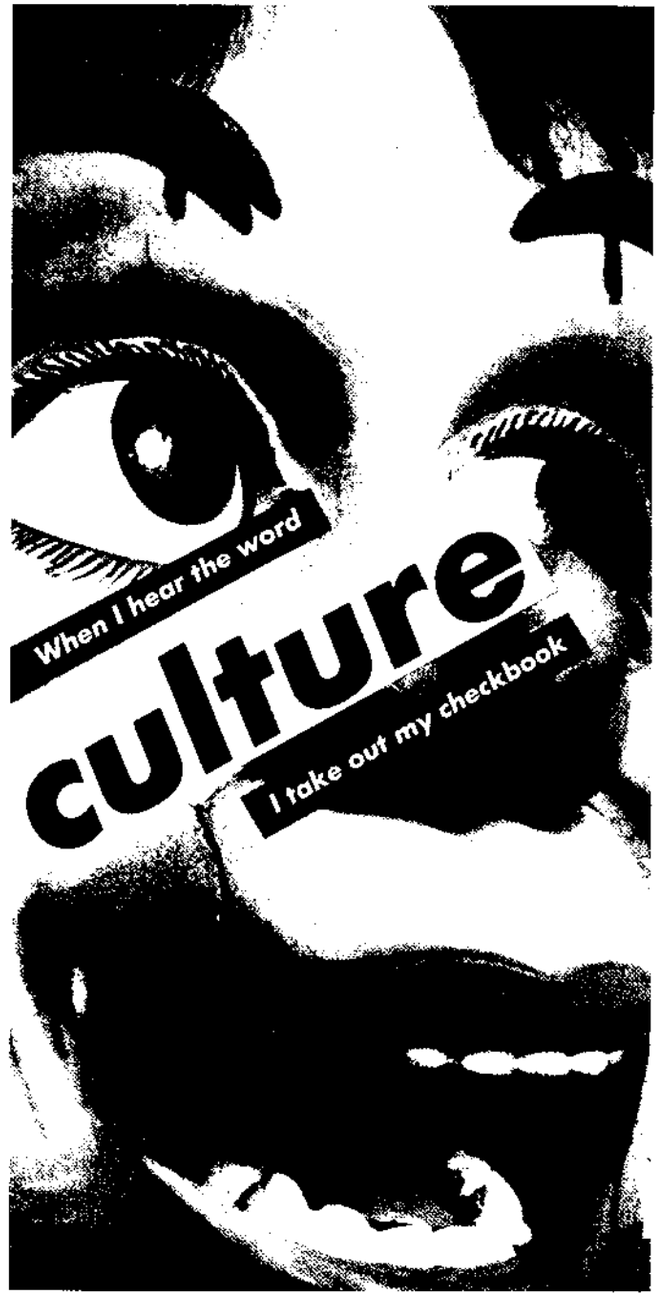
8. Adrian Piper, "Performance and the Fetishism of the Art Object," *Vanguard* 10, no. 10, (December 1981–January 1982): 16–19; and "A Proposal for Pricing Works of Art," *The Fox* 1, no. 2 (1975).

9. At this point, artists' control of these factors seems to be largely limited to their participation on 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 producer has described himself as taking a pragmatic stance toward his own status in the art world: He feels he sometimes compromises his political convictions in order to maintain his position (although it must be noted that this position itself increases the visibility and effectiveness of his critiques), while at other times he simply refuses 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 Self* (in progress) [now available at http://www.adrianpiper.com/rss/index.shtml].

This essay was written in October 1983. It was first published in Adrian Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, vol. 2, *Selected Writings in Art Criticism 1967–1992* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 63–89.



2.10 Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (When I Hear the Word Culture I Take Out My Checkbook)*, 1985. Courtesy of the artist.

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 bohemian 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 blush in assessing 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 than 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 an international exhibition 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 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 industries. The Tut 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 realtors who stuff his campaign chest, tried recently to plant artists into particular streets on the Lower East Side to accomplish what is euphemistically called the "rehabilitation" of a neighborhood, but what 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. And 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 outlay 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 city, state, 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" museums 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 1983]. 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 salable if undertaken by curators, historians, critics, appraisers, teachers, etc. The hesitancy 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 Kantian terms, the pursuit of "disinterested 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 nonsecular 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, homegrown 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. Word has gotten around that material conditions 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 dandyism 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 every 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" camouflages the social and political consequences resulting from the industrial distribution of consciousness.

The channeling 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 tenuous 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 reject 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 formalism updated the doctrine and associated it with the political concepts of the "free world" and individualism. Under Clement Greenberg's tutelage, everything that made worldly references was simply excommunicated from art so as to shield the Grail of taste from contamination. What started out as a liberating drive 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 perforce 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 elsewhere have to contend 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 often enjoy more independence than their colleagues in the United States, who can be dismissed from one day to the next, as occurred with Bates Lowry 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. Whether 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 Panza di Biumo's attempt to get his way in the new museum of Mönchengladbach, down the Rhine from Ludwig's headquarters, was successfully rebuffed by the director, Johannes Cladders, who is both resolute and a good poker player in his own right. How far the Saatchis in London will get 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 Schnabel show, which consisted almost entirely of works from the Saatchis' 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 Saatchis' 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 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 appointed these shows and their catalogues became, however, the more glamour 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, facing 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 restive 1960s 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 telling title "The Business Behind Art Knows the Art of Good Business," the Metropolitan Museum in New York woos 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. Luke Rittner, 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." Rittner, 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 greatest 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) at 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 exerting 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 circumstances, 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 rare, and the increasing dominance of the museums' development offices hard to trace, the change of climate is hardly perceived, 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 overdramatization. Through naiveté, 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.

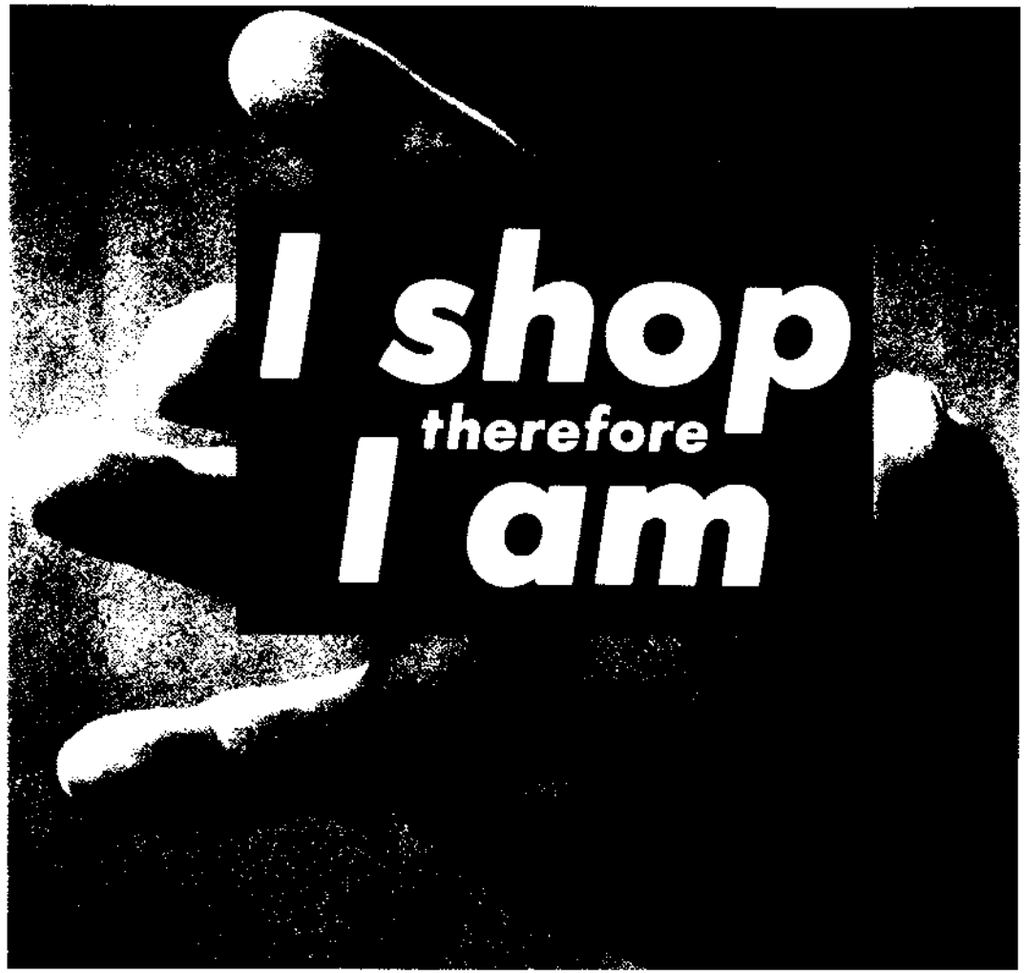
Those engaged in collaboration with the public relations officers of companies rarely see themselves as promoters of acquiescence. On the contrary, they are usually convinced that their activities are in the best interests of art. Such a well-intentioned delusion can survive only as long as art is perceived 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.

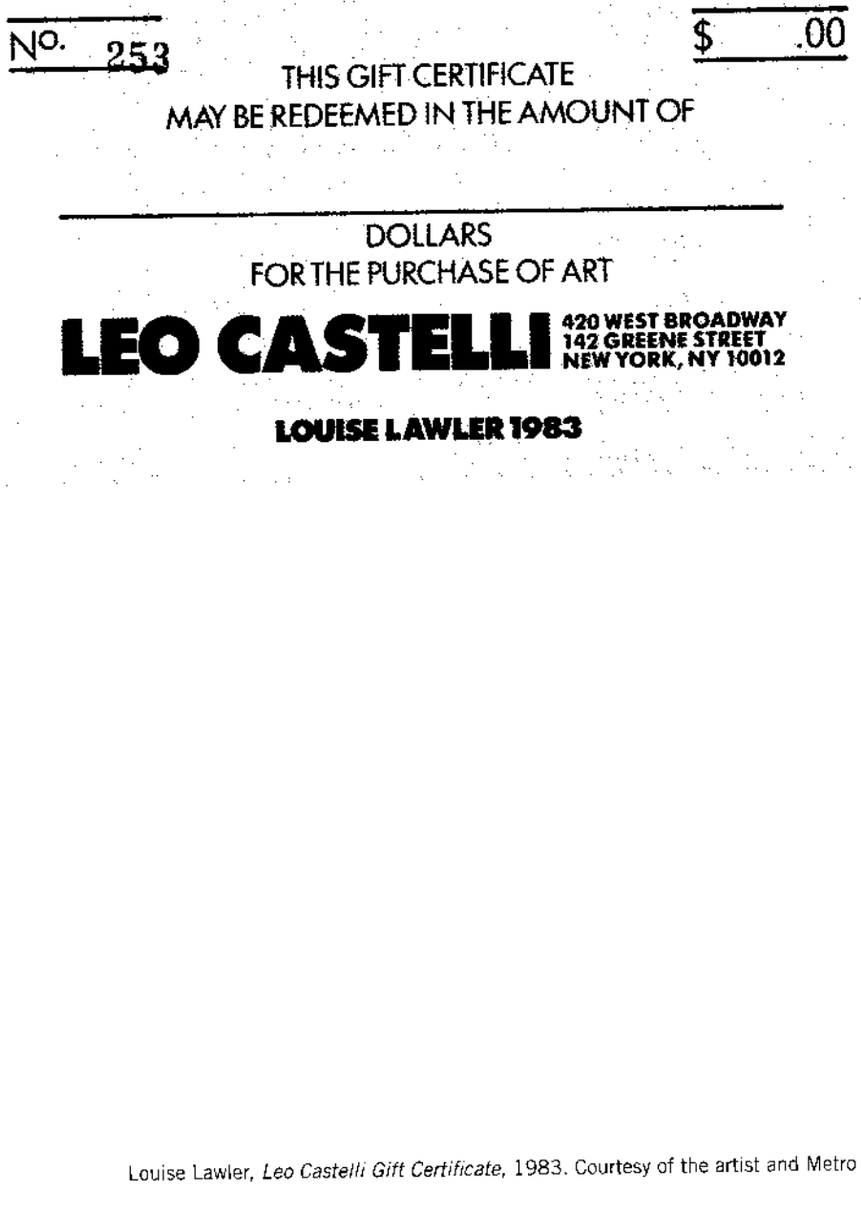
Whether museums contend with governments, power trips of individuals, or the corporate steamroller, they are in the business of molding and channeling consciousness. Even though they may not agree with the system of beliefs dominant at the time, their options not to subscribe to them and instead to promote 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 in 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 stealth, 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), 60–72.



2.11 Barbara Kruger, *I Shop Therefore I Am*, 1987. Courtesy of the artist.



2.12 Louise Lawler, *Leo Castelli Gift Certificate*, 1983. Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures.

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

2.13 Louise Lawler, *Birdcalls*, 1983. Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures.

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 arranges 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, invitations 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 acculturation of art can be traced back to the historical avant gardes—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 engage(d) 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 presentational 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,[4] Lawler's work is often conceived as a functional insert into a network of supports which is exterior to the gallery. Unlike Broodthaers, Lawler doesn't occupy even fictional positions of institutional authority, but works instead to dissipate all such concentrations of power. Unlike Haacke's, 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 Buren-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 an 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-edge 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. Bathing 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-evening show in Los Angeles, "Louise Lawler – Jancar/Kuhlenschmidt, Jancar/Kuhlenschmidt 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" unbeknownst

to the lecture's sponsors, Lawler printed matchbooks with the event's title and distributed them at the auditorium. Using a publicity tool against itself, she encapsulated the exaggerated spectacle of "An Evening with Julian Schnabel" in a disposable souvenir.

For the 1983 "Borrowed Time" exhibition, a group show at Baskerville + Watson 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."[2] 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 Sherrie Levine under the title "A Picture Is No Substitute for Anything" (1981–82) called attention to this function, as did the 1981 event "Louise Lawler and Sherrie Levine invite you to the studio of Dimitri Merinoff . . ." (a Russian émigré figurative expressionist whose New York studio had been kept intact since his death). At times, however, Lawler displaces the kind of privileged reception which such private events imply; for example, in her invitation to a performance of *Swan Lake* by the New York City Ballet, the "readymade" spectacle Lawler appropriated remained 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 inflated, romantic, heroicizing rhetoric of the curator's letter to invited artists as tiny raised green type at the top of two sheets of stationery and an envelope, sold at Fashion Moda's art stand 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 disguised 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, "authorized" 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.[3]

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 subtly sardonic illustrations for critical texts.[4]

In Lawler's photographs of private collections, art is represented as simply one object among many in a chaos of accumulation; in the domestic interior, art — whether "tastefully" arranged or indifferently juxtaposed—is assimilated into a backdrop of decorative commodities. *Living Room Corner, Arranged by Mr. & Mrs. Tremaine Sr., 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 *Pollock and Tureen*, also 1984, the artist's last painting (or 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 Marron, Susan Brundage, Cheryl Bishop at Paine Webber, Inc.*, two Lichtenstein silk-screens establish the position of office workers (who are quite oblivious to the presence of "art"). As the black uniformed guard in *Longo, Stella, Hunt at Paine Webber 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; in establishing art's value, these two genealogies are inseparable.[9] 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 caste 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 the collector? In the captions for her own photographs, Lawler extends this ambiguous poly-ownership to include an indefinite list of curators, art consultants, museum and office workers, etc. 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, artists' names were Letraset 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 *Patriarchal Roll Call*, 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 patronymic (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 practices 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 art object; thus, artists are locked in a structure of institutionalized subjectivity. And the institutional exhibition of proper names, designating the authors and owners of objects, defines 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 dissolves, 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 indifferent 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 lasting 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 acquiesced to the market or passively accepted its mechanisms (and her own place within them). By representing her own photographs in slide 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 counterdiscourse in which they are only elements.

I began this essay with Lawler's unrealized "critical" matchbook 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 inscribe unruly objects within an institutionally 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, ripe 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 applies primarily to Asher's work of the '70s (documented in *Michael Asher: Writings 1973–1983 on Works 1969–1979*, ed. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh [Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1983]). His more recent production, like Lawler's, treats the institution as a set of social relations (a notion that is only implicit in his earlier work) rather than as architecture. This shift 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 Asher engage with the institutional services and informational mechanisms which position and define cultural production.

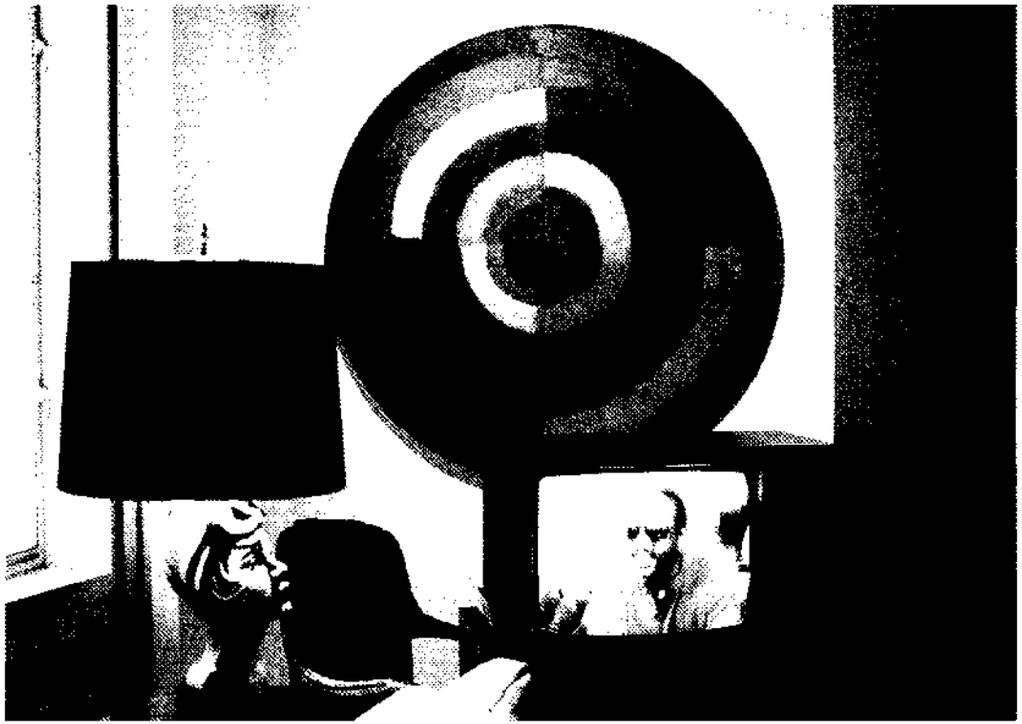
2. This statement originates with Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels, who said, "Every time I hear the word 'culture,' I reach for my gun." Palance read the line, rewritten by Godard, in the film *Contempt*.

3. Jean Baudrillard, "The Art Auction," in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin (St. Louis: Telos, 1981).

4. Lawler's photographs of Mondrians were juxtaposed with those of Sherrie Levine and published in *Wedge*, no. 1 (1981), under the title "A Picture Is No Substitute for Anything." A series of the "Arrangements of Pictures" appeared in *October* 26 (1983). Lawler's photographs were also used to illustrate Douglas Crimp'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* (1984), a position which offered yet another format for her "work."

5. As Baudrillard writes, "We have seen that the true value of the painting is its genealogical value (its 'birth': the signature and the aura of its successive transactions: its pedigree). Just as the cycle of successive gifts in primitive societies charges the object with more and more value, so the painting circulates from inheritor to inheritor as a title of nobility, being charged with prestige throughout its history" (Baudrillard, "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 intertwined 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 paternalism 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 affluence 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 these 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 as 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 induced 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 validation 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 styles, 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/traditionalist 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 the women's movements first emerged in America, with the backdrop of anticolonial struggle (particularly in Vietnam). It is no coincidence, either, that at this time the "crisis of legitimation" within Western culture began to be generally 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 Coutts-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 feminist 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* 1 (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?

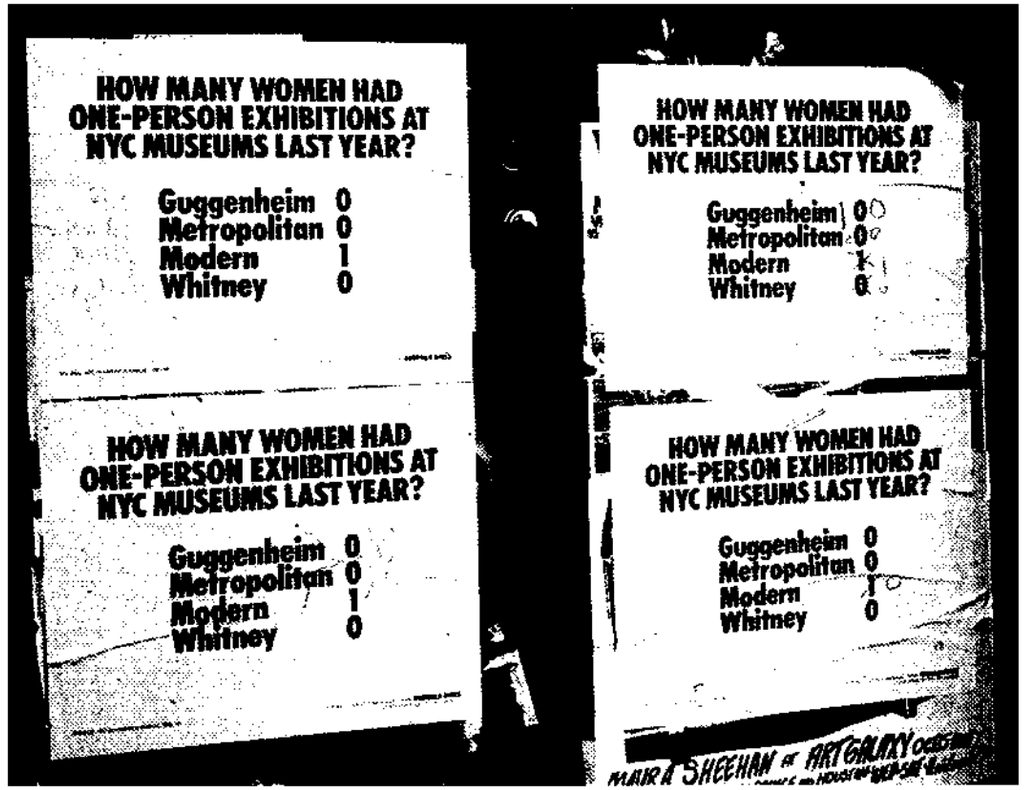
The art market won't bestow mega-buck prices on the work of a few white males forever. For the 17.7 million you just spent on a single Jasper Johns painting, you could have bought at least one work by all of these women and artists of color:

Bernice Abbott
Anni Albers
Sofonisba Anguissola
Diane Arbus
Vanessa Bell
Isabel Bishop
Rosa Bonheur
Elizabeth Bougereau
Margaret Bourke-White
Romaine Brooks
Julia Margaret Cameron
Emily Carr
Rosalba Carriera
Mary Cassatt
Constance Marie Charpentier
Imogen Cunningham
Sonia Delaunay
Elaine de Kooning
Lavinia Fontana
Meta Warwick Fuller
Artemisia Gentileschi
Marguerite Gérard
Natalia Goncharova
Kate Greenaway
Barbara Hepworth
Eva Hesse
Hannah Hoch
Anna Huntingdon
May Howard Jackson
Frida Kahlo
Angelica Kauffmann
Hilma af Klint
Kathe Kollwitz
Lee Krasner
Dorothea Lange
Marie Laurencin
Edmonia Lewis
Judith Leyster
Barbara Longhi
Dora Maar
Lee Miller
Lisette Model
Paula Modersohn-Becker
Tina Modotti
Berthe Morisot
Grandma Moses
Gabriele Münter
Alice Neel
Louise Nevelson
Georgia O'Keeffe
Meret Oppenheim
Sarah Peale
Ljubova Popova
Olga Rosanova
Nellie Mae Rowe
Rachel Ruysch
Kay Sage
Augusta Savage
Vavara Stepanova
Florine Stettheimer
Sophie Taeuber-Arp
Alma Thomas
Marietta Robusti Tintoretto
Suzanne Valadon
Remedios Varo
Elizabeth Vigée Le Brun
Laura Wheeling Waring

Information courtesy of Christie's, Sotheby's, Meyer's International Auction Records and Leonard's Annual Price Index of Auctions.

Please send $ and comments to: Box 1056 Cooper Sta. NY, NY 10276 **GUERRILLA GIRLS** CONSCIENCE OF THE ART WORLD

2.15 Guerrilla Girls, *When Racism and Sexism Are No Longer Fashionable, What Will Your Art Collection Be Worth?*, 1989. © Guerrilla Girls. Courtesy www.guerrillagirls.com.



2.16 Guerrilla Girls, *How Many Women Had One-Person Exhibitions at NYC Museums Last Year?*, 1989. © Guerrilla Girls. Courtesy www.guerrillagirls.com.

enlarged from the catalogue: *the art of precolumbian gold, the jan mitchell collection* (1990)

silvia kolbowski

Produced for a group exhibition at Postmasters Gallery, this project used as a springboard the catalogue of an exhibition held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in 1985, entitled *The Art of Precolumbian Gold, The Jan Mitchell Collection.*

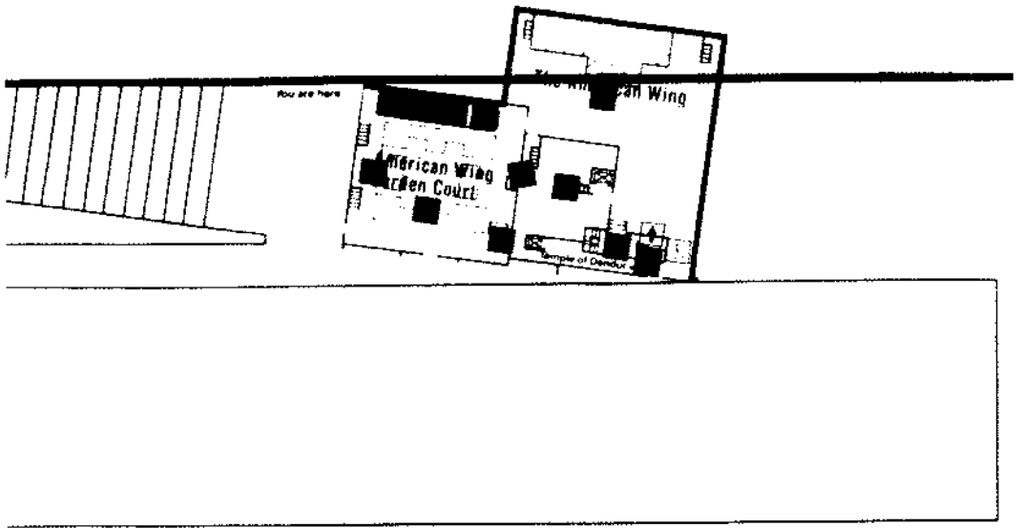
The gallery was located in a retail storefront space in the East Village section of New York, a neighborhood of low-income private and public housing and small businesses in storefront spaces, as well as other galleries in similar spaces which opened as part of the wave of 1980s gentrification.

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 extruded 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 precolumbian 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 material. 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 (viewable 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. Unintelligible in and of itself, the announcement lost its classificatory function, and instead acted as a memento of the exhibition.

The dispersal of the elements of the installation throughout the inside and outside 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 projecting 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 Metropolitan 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, information, and thresholds. Each case exhibits two superimposed silk-screened 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 collection. 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



2.17

Silvia Kolbowski, *Enlarged from the Catalogue*, 1990.

2.18

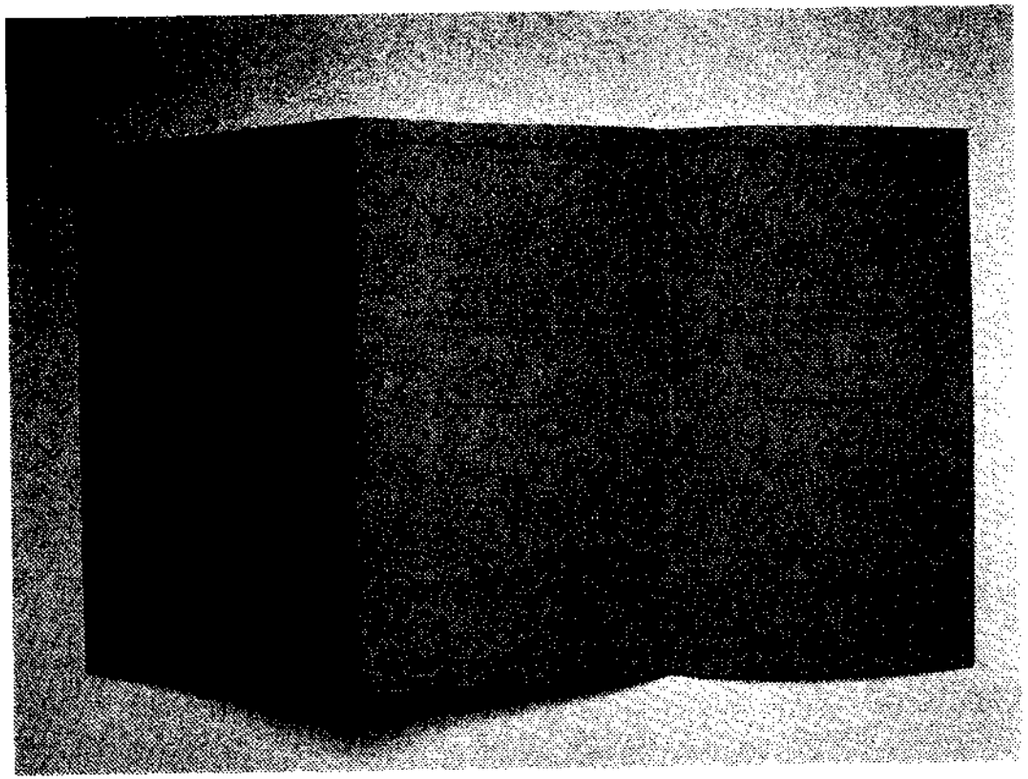
placement of objects is theoretically logical yet visually eccentric, bypassing the conventional criteria of display-efficient circulation, neutral didacticism, good design composition, and so on. The catalogue, like the installation in general, was formulated through an overlay—in this case of the museum 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 1861 American slave narrative of Linda Brent ("authenticated" 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 patrilineal, although preservationist, 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.

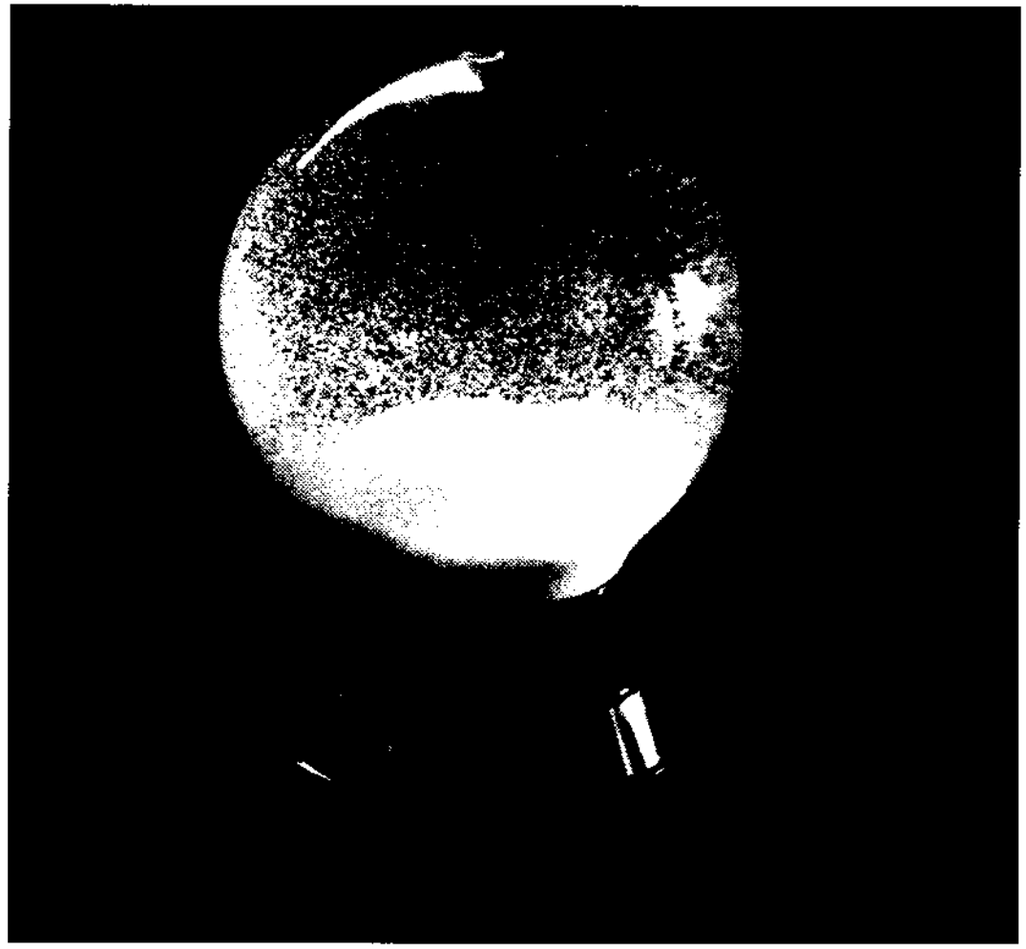
The display cases and other elements were placed within the Whitney Museum, but according to the plan of the Whitney in relation to the previously chosen sites at the Metropolitan Museum. At a point of entry into the institution, normally a point of orientation and flow of movement, disorientation, disruption, 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, 1987), 26–43, from which the present version is taken.

PART III institutionalizing



3.1 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 1986. Banners 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.



3.2 Fareed Armaly, *Exchange Rates*, 1988. Installation detail, altered "tourist-snowglobes," 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.

an artist's statement (1992)

andrea fraser

Freud ended a paper called "The Dynamics of the Transference" with this statement: "in the last resort no one can be slain *in absentia* or *in effigie*."[1]

My investment in site specificity is motivated by this idea. My engagement in institutional critique follows from the fact that as an artist and as a writer, to the extent that I write, art and academic institutions are the sites where my activity is located. Psychoanalysis largely determines my conception of those sites as sets of relations, although I think of those relations as social and economic as well as subjective. And psychoanalysis also defines, largely, what is for me both a practical and an ethical imperative to work site-specifically.

The practical imperative is well represented by Freud's statement. If one considers practice—that is, critical practice, counterpractice—as the transformation of social, subjective, or economic relations, then the best, and perhaps only, point of engagement is with those relations in their enactment. The point is not to interpret those relations, as they exist elsewhere; the point is to change them.

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 effectivity 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 effigie*."

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 execute 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."[2]

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 I 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."[3] 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, nonculture, to the extent that the illegitimate is denied a representative function in the public sphere framed 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 accents 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's based.

Tastes, 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."[4]

In a videotape 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 Rembrandtesque look. They are dark and brownish 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 curtain 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 waver, 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 oil on canvas he proclaims . . . "You, whoever you are, look into my eyes." And what causes our chest to constrict is that we are acutely aware that our reality, our existence will pass while his will survive for as long as the picture is preserved. It's hard to pinpoint to what all of 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.[5]

It's relatively easy to interpret this description as a manifestation of a struggle between "domestic" 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 curtain 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.[6] 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 where I position myself within an institution.

My rejection of the museum's patron class and the familiar, 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 invest 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."[7] It leaves the museum guide victim to what Bourdieu calls "cultural allodoxia, that is, all the mistaken identifications and false recognitions which betray the gap between acknowledgment and knowledge . . . the heterodoxy experienced as if it were orthodoxy . . . engendered by . . . undifferentiated reverence, in which avidity combines with anxiety."[8]

This is why I stopped conducting gallery-talk performances -or at least posing 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 of 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 scholastic relations to culture, rejecting both 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 stake: 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 held 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 in 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, if 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 them materially. 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 profitable, 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 dispossession as it's returned back to those others, professionalized and rarefied in museums, I may again attempt to situate myself outside. I may exit those institutions and produce public art, that is, art presented in public space other than that of public art institutions.

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 apparently 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 plazas 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 lost its force within the discourse of art over the developments 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 evocation 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 rebus to be decoded (I won't say, as I don'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 field 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, reader, or listener is also a more or less displaced demand that the addressee 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 alienating 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 those 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 *scene*, 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 scene of their accomplishment.

It's a fantasy that drives me to try to make my arguments ever more complex, as what I have to say is certainly too simplistic. Too simplistic for whom? Not for myself, as is evident in my difficulty in thinking these things through, but for whomever 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 Lacan 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 failing.

No one asks according to their 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 cultural field.

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/I demand(s). 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 alibis 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 cultural field in which those institutions are situated and the relations of power and privilege by which that field is constructed. Those relations traverse the topography of inside and outside and put it 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 exits 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

1. Sigmund Freud, "The Dynamics of the Transference," in *Therapy and Technique*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Collier Books, 1963), 115.
2. Jacques Lacan, "The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power," in *Ecrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), 236.
3. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 3.
4. Ibid., 56.
5. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Masterpieces of the Met*, hosted by Philippe de Montebello, directed by John Goberman and Marc Bauman (New York: Office of Film and Television at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988).
6. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 70–71.
7. Ibid., 163.
8. Ibid., 323.

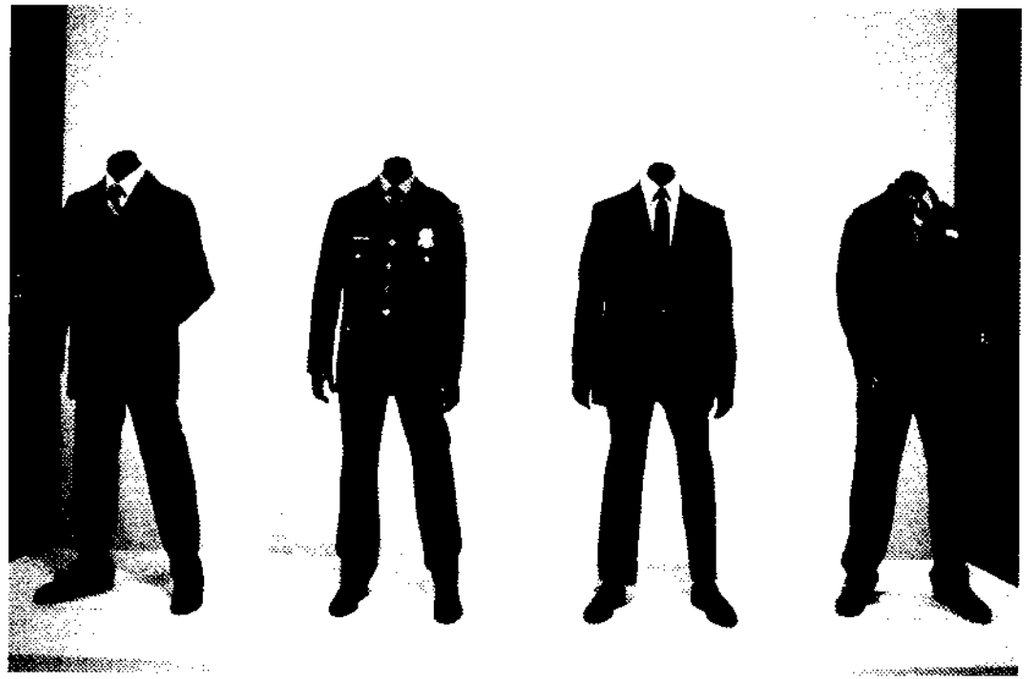
This text was written to combine the academic performance of the conference lecture and the artistic performance of self-presentation in "artist's talks." It was first presented at the symposium "Place Position Presentation Public" at the Jan van Eyck Akademie, Maastricht, in April 1992, and was published in Ine Gevers, ed., *Place Position 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 directorship 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



3.3 Fred Wilson, *Guarded View*, 1991. Courtesy of the artist.

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 artists.

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 Content 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 salon space. I asked thirty artists to be a part of my 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—Ivan 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 knew 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—in one part, The Colonial Collection, I wrapped French and British flags around African masks. These were all trade pieces, but when you put something under that beautiful lighting, it looks, whatever the word means, "authentic." I had this vitrine made which looks somewhat like a turn-of-the-century vitrine, in which I placed Harper's lithographs from the turn of the century of the punitive expeditions between the Zulus and the British and the Ashanti and the British. I wrapped the masks because they're sort of hostages to the museum. If they had been in the museum since the turn of the century—and many of the collections do date from this 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- but I like to bring history to the museum, because I feel that the aesthetic anesthetizes the historic and keeps this imperial view within the museum and continues the dislocation of what these objects are about. One object I didn't change except for the label: "Stolen from the Zonge tribe, 1899. Private collection." This got a lot of collectors upset, but indeed, if it came out of the African country in 1899, more than likely it had been just swiped. In a newly installed space in one museum, a label next to an object read, "Acquired by Colonel So-and-so in 1898." How does a colonel acquire something? He goes up there and says, "Give that to me or I'll shoot you."

So I use the museum as my palette. Curators, whether they think about it or not, really create how you are to view and think about these objects, so 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 "well, this has got to be serious." My exhibition at Metro Pictures, Panta Rhei, was a gallery of classical and ancient art. What it consisted of were plaster casts. I painted the walls a light-blue color that I saw over and over again in many museums that still had 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 symbolism of having these objects. In many museums, you begin with the room 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 the 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 Anubis, 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 relation 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 alone opened up the staff of the Historical Society, who had worked with art objects but had never met a real artist and really didn't know what that was about. They would keep walking by the studio and ask, "Is it art yet?" I didn't curate the show —this is my artwork. I make 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 men's club in the early days, so they really have some odd objects in the collection. But those things aren't on view. And those 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 Mining the Museum because it could mean "mining" as in gold mine, digging up something, or it could mean blowing up something, or it could mean making it mine. So I just looked 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 were told 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 trophy, I placed empty plastic mounts. The label speaks of the truth trophy and when and where it was made, and then says, "Plastic mounts, first made in the 1960s," where they were made, and so on, because for a historical society, every object will have some historical significance. I wanted to point out that everything 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 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 Harriet Tubman, Benjamin Banneker, 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 backs, 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 calms me when I'm afraid? Who washes my back?" 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, except 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 they can do it, I can do it too, so for a painting of a wealthy plantation picnic, one label gave the title the museum had assigned it: Country Life. The other side of the painting had a label giving it my own title: Frederick Serving 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 repoussé silver with the label "Metalwork 1793–1880." 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 had 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 "Modes of Transport," with the sedan chair of the last royal governor and a painting of who was carrying it, and a model ship with account logs of various slaveholders with names of the slaves and other "livestock." I placed two old baby carriages in the space; one had, instead of the baby's bedding, a Ku Klux Klan hood. Next to it on the wall I had an early photograph on the wall of black nannies 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 is 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 crevices of the museum, totally unnoticed, I found things made by Africans and African-Americans, including American-made pottery and basketry 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 soon forget, 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.

Ivan Karp: Some of my friends have told me recently that I'm in my anecdotage, so that means I can begin by telling you three stories. The first of them is about a curator who went to see Fred Wilson's exhibit The Other Museum – actually the room that had the colonial gallery, the masks with their national flags over them. I'm the curator, I had just finished signing some papers for loans, and I walked in and I said, "How the hell did he do that?" The labels said "Loan courtesy of the Musée de l'Homme," "Loan courtesy of the British Museum" "How the hell did he do that? How did he get permission? The British Museum doesn't do that, they insist on couriers 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 word 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 taste of the working class of New York City. They ran 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, as we say 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 time 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 those societies we think of as the most "primitive," 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 cultural pluralism– a 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 perforce 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 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 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 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. . . .

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, he says, hotbeds of dissent and challenge are the most vulnerable to an intolerance of dissent and challenge. Those 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 newborn babes 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 knew 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 have received from others. Everyone lives in a world of such meanings; no person stands alone directly confronting a world of solid fact. No such world is available. The closest men come to it is when they're infants, or when people become insane. Then in a terrifying scene of meaningless events and senseless confusion, people are seized with a panic of near-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 exhibited 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 as a human being. What we know about the world is not only conventional, it also appears to us to be 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 on 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 when 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 Don Wright, a wonderful cartoonist. It represents Ronald and Nancy Reagan performing a sacrifice, at about the time these two primitives were discovered using astrologers in the White House. Ronald says to Nancy, "What are we supposed to do now, Nancy?" and she says, "Sacrifice the goat, singe the chickens, and pound the lizard 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 charm doctor in Five Years with the Congo Cannibals by Herbert 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. This drawing was added to Ward's book by the publisher. Ward didn't even draw it, though he drew all the other ones. Here is yet another witch doctor in a characteristic pose, and you realize suddenly, "These people are ballet dancers!" 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 Kunsthistorisches 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 Austro-Hungarian Empire. When you look in your classical dictionary, you discover that in ancient Greece, the centaurs were barbaric half-others 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 what it used to be –but also indicates you are entering a room which contains art, not of the centaurs, but of classical inheritors of Theseus, imperial heirs of tradition.

The conventions by which we understand objects and otherness are conventions produced, at least in part, by museums. But let us not make the mistake of thinking that all museums are the same. There are types and genres of museums, and they do different kinds of things. If museums, as Fred told us earlier and I want to assert now, are places that both instruct us and enforce silences, both reveal and conceal, some of what museums tell us about the nature of society, of cultures, 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 headdress 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 users of the mask view it. A field photograph of a headdress doing what it was designed to do reveals it as an aesthetic 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 nebulous tributaries into the great stream culminating in Western civilization. The story this tells is 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 Natural 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 diorama with Caucasian features, 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 Fred 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-

row aimed over the head of a squatting woman. This diorama reproduces the male-dominant/female-subservient posture that Donna Haraway argues is found in most animal dioramas. No one would know from looking at the diorama that Bushman 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 diorama—the use of tones, color, pattern, 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 diorama 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, what 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 is enforced, but in 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 faith. 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 Parisian show putting Western and non-Western art side by side, "Magiciens de la Terre," was to be the answer to the great "Primitivism" show at the Museum of Modern Art. The assertion of the "Magiciens" 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 here 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 obliterated 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 Luiseño 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 only go upstairs 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 silver services appear in almost every room—I stopped counting after ten—and the degree to which doll houses are a compulsive 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 ably 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 gilded cage in the rotunda 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 raiding ships. Inside the museum, they typed on computers, they were fed Coca-Cola and bananas, and when you gave them three coins and said, "Pho-to, pho-to, pho-to," they posed for their photographs with you. Guillermo Gómez Peña paced up and down, wearing a mask, Guatemalan shorts, and leather with spikes, and carrying a briefcase. People were utterly nonplussed. At the insistence of the artists, we did not say who they were. A Smithsonian staffperson 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 visitors insisted that what they saw was authentic; viewers' comments were mostly positive, but one kept insisting that this was actually a hidden video show, and wanted to know when he was going to be on 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 chronology. 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 dietician from Akron who spent an hour questioning people; I've never seen anyone so caught up in a display before.

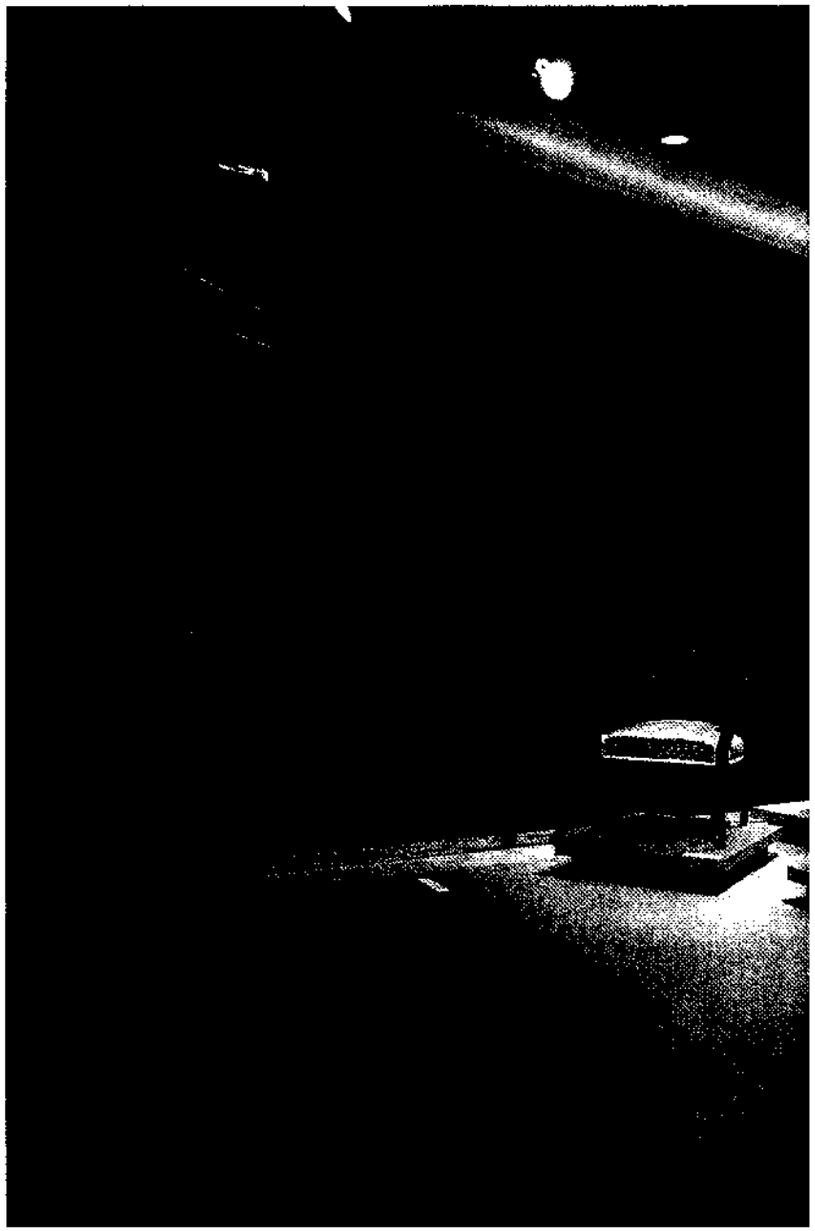
These exhibits illustrate both the political nature of the artistic process and the degree to which politics can be transformed from an imposition into more of a contest. One has to challenge the secondhand worlds in which we live by focusing—as site-specific art does—on a way of seeing, which brings us back to Hans Haacke's project. Museums become sites where one not only asserts 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 polity, 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: Rethinking the New World," sponsored in the Fall of 1992 by the Atlanta College of Art Gallery and Continuing Education Department. It was originally published in *Artpapers* 17, no. 3 (May–June 1993): 2–9, and republished in Reesa Greenberg et al., eds., *Thinking about Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 1996), 251–258, from which the present version is taken.

3.4

Fred Wilson, *Mining the Museum*, 1992. Courtesy of the artist.

3.5



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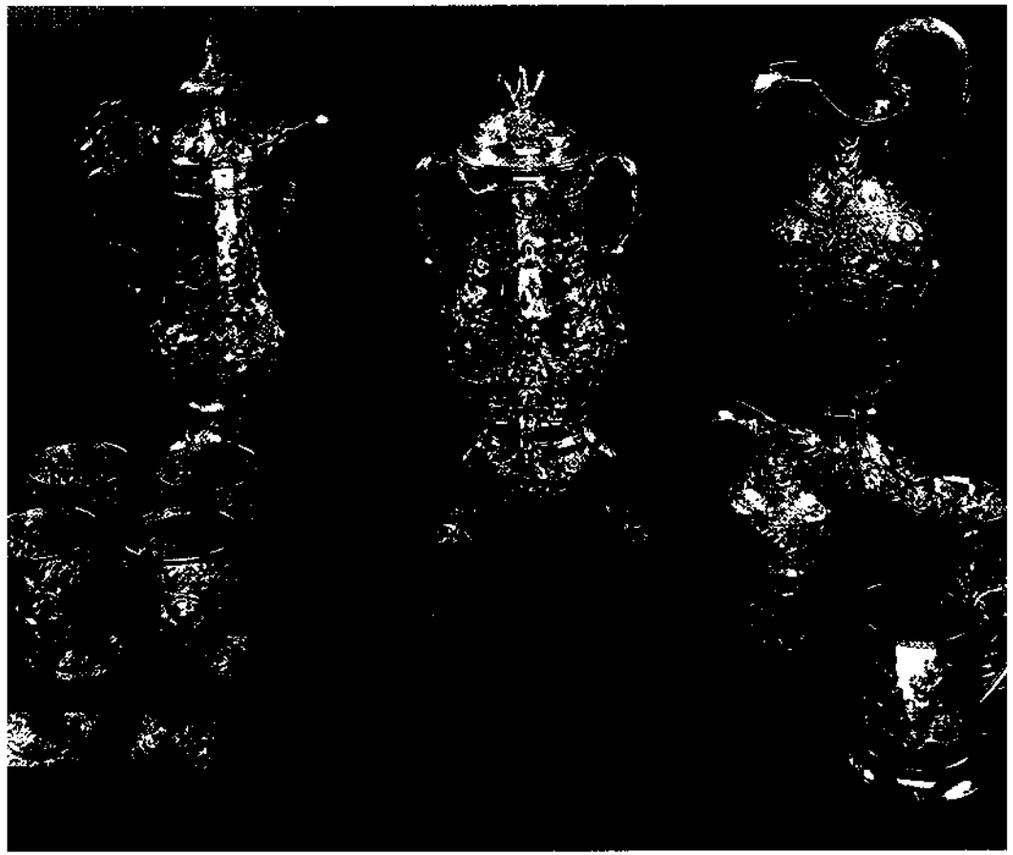


3.7

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 leeway in how to respond to this work. All my work is extremely personal. In curating, that 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 Mining 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 Mining 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 Mining 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 synapse 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 disarmed, 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 then. So I guess I could say that I was generally familiar with it, but not immersed in it.*

Buskirk: Yet, 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 honed this particular craft. Certain people like Broodthaers 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 these 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 into question, in Baltimore, the idea of the artifact and its interpretation. But I'm also curious about your expectations in Seattle, where you were working not in a historical society but 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. It was 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 Mining the Museum, because they didn't have that kind of visceral 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 how 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 these things were interspersed 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.

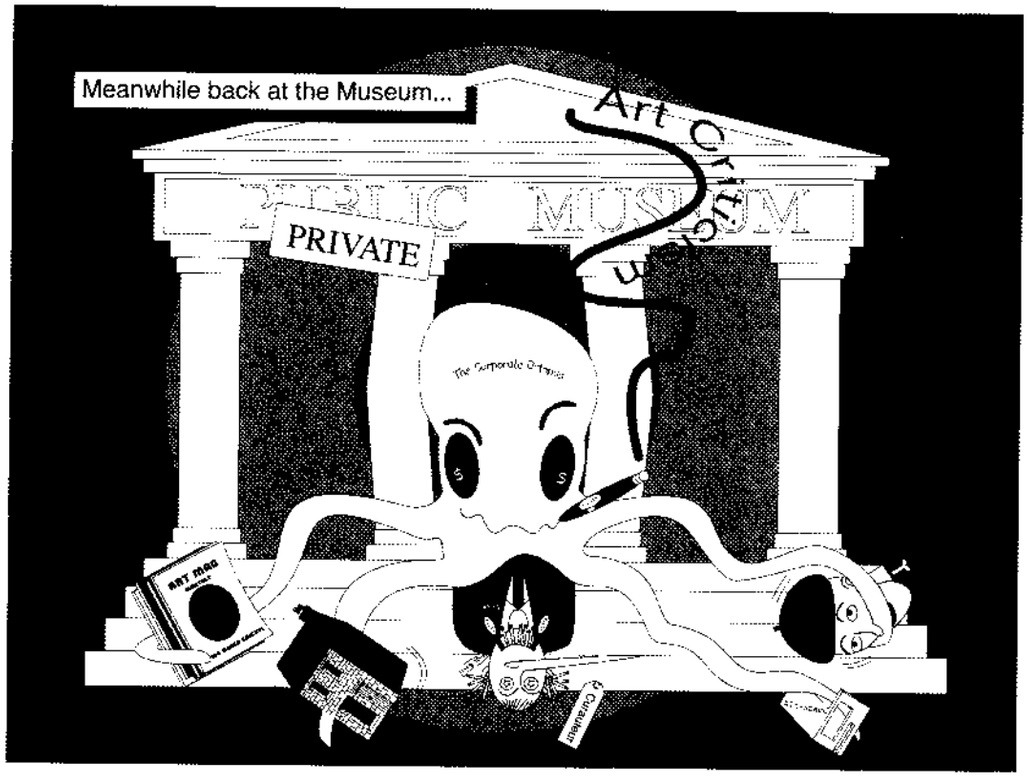
Wilson: When I do a piece at Metro Pictures, or even the Whitney Biennial, you're going to that space and you know that you're expecting something unusual or unexpected. I can't fool you to think that it's a museum.

Buskirk: I am interested in this idea of taking the objects that are already in the fine art museum and recombining 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 showing 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): 109–112.

3.8 Renée 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.



3.9 Nils Norman, *Meanwhile Back at the Museum,* 1999. Courtesy of the artist.

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 realized that the martial 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 had seized power in Germany in 1933.[1] The author, Hanns Johst, had earlier made a name as an expressionist writer and poet. With a pledge of undying 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 on-stage as well as the playwright's new bosses 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 afterwards, in an ironical twist, abstract expressionist paintings were sent to Europe to play a combat role in the ideological battles 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 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, lectured the 31 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.[2]

These examples, uneven as they are, and coming from varied historical periods and diverse social contexts, illustrate a truism 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 pitted against each other. Encoded 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 'legitimating 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 those ideologies."[3]

As our notions of the good, the true, and the 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 mainstay 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), puts it into the mouth of Jack Palance.[4] 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 Ulysses film Lang is shooting. The scene of an alluring nude siren 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, tramples on it, 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 screenwriter, who pockets it, presumably with the understanding that he will rewrite the script.[5]

The parallelism of the two quotations is probably not accidental. Fritz Lang certainly knew of the outburst 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, often strained, sometimes even violent, but inescapable 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:

As 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.[6]

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 metaphoric 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 preface, isolated from his work and other writings, seems to suggest. In fact, at the occasion of his entry into the art world in 1964 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 2 of the Düsseldorf catalogue, connoisseurs of the German art scene of the 1970s can identify Willy Bongard, the inventor of the *Art Compass*. Annually, since the 1970s and continuing today, this art stock market analysis has been published in the German business magazine *Capital*.[7] 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 restate the artist's understanding that the symbolic and the economic capital of what Broodthaers, in 1964, called "insincere"[8] products, do affect each other. But contrary to the perennial suggestions of the *Art Compass*, their respective ratings 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."[9] 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."[10]

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. Oblivious to what is at stake, and abetted by an equally insouciant press, the political class is shirking 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 lend 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 gullible collusion with the sponsors, pays little attention to less glamorous and usually underfunded projects, because they are not touted 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, at 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 "effete 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's 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."[11] 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: "Arts 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."[2] Art professionals now use their colleagues in the development office as a "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.[3] 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've accepted a certain principle about funding that, in passing through our illustrious hall, the money is cleansed."[4]

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 battles untiringly 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, $60 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 "1966–1975: 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 parents, 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, Broodthaers 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

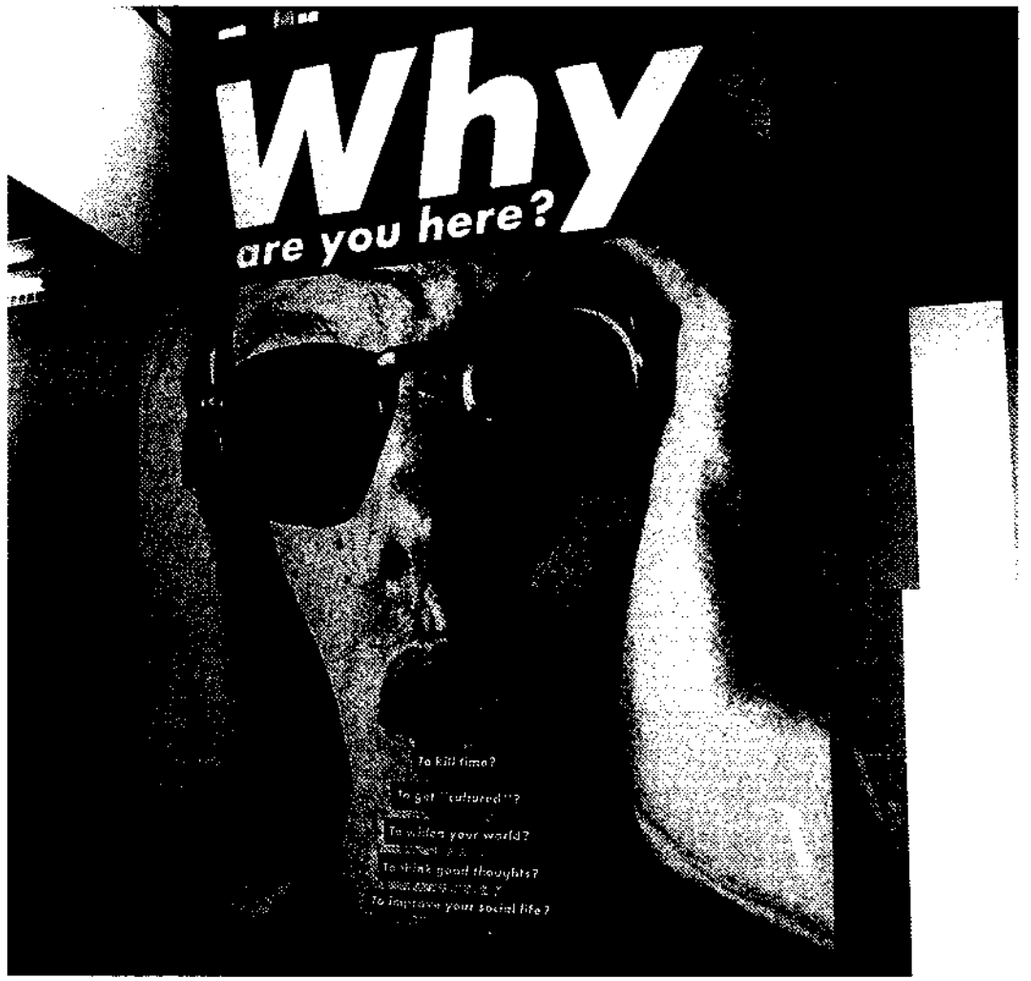
1. Hanns Johst, *Schlageter* (Munich: Albert Langen/Georg Müller, 1933), 26.
2. Morley Safer, "Yes . . . but Is It Art?", *60 Minutes*, CBS television, September 19, 1993. Transcript from Burrelle's Information Services, Livingston, NJ.
3. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 188.
4. Jean Collet, ed., *Jean-Luc Godard*, Collection Cinéma d'aujourd'hui, no. 18 (Paris: Seghers, 1963), 140–142.
5. Ibid.
6. Marcel Broodthaers, *Museum: Der Adler vom Oligozän bis heute*, 2 vols. (Düsseldorf: Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 1972), 1:4.
7. Latest installment: Linde Rohr-Bongard, "Kunst gleich Kapital," *Capital* (Cologne), November 1993, 212–242.
8. Cited in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Open Letters, Industrial Poems," *October* 42 (Fall 1987): 71.
9. Broodthaers, *Museum: Der Adler vom Oligozän bis heute*, 2:19.
10. Ibid.
11. Raymond D'Argenio, "Farewell to the Low Profile," address to the Eastern Annual Conference of the American Association of Advertising Agencies, New York, November 18, 1975, typewritten manuscript, 3.

12. *The Business behind Art Knows the Art of Good Business,* leaflet addressed to corporations, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, undated (approx. 1984).

13. "A Word from Our Sponsor," *Newsweek,* November 25, 1985, 98.

14. Amei Wallach, "Keeping Corporate Funds, in the Name of Art," *New York Newsday,* August 8, 1990, II:2.

This essay began as a public lecture at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1977. A revised version of the lecture was presented at the Kunsthalle Zürich in 1996, and the final draft was published in Stephan Dillemuth, ed., *The Academy and the Corporate Public* (Cologne: Permanent Press Verlag, 2002), 28–39.



3.10 Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (Why Are You Here?),* 1990. Courtesy of the artist.

INTRODUCTION

Painting and Sculpture from The Museum of Modern Art: Catalog of Deaccessions 1929 through 1998 is my contribution to the group exhibition *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 represent all deaccessions of painting and sculpture known from cross-referencing the existing records.

The Museum of Modern Art has published its holdings of painting and sculpture in *Painting and Sculpture in The Museum of Modern Art, 1929–1967*, 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 those works acquired between 1967 and 1977. Likewise, two more catalogs were produced: *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 painting and sculpture for the subsequent twenty years.

The 1977 companion catalog was used as a model for the format and arrangement of this project. The information in this deaccession catalogue includes artists' names, titles of works, dimensions, and accession numbers. The catalog is arranged alphabetically by artist and chronologically for works of each artist. Dimensions are given in feet and inches, with height preceding width, and followed by depth. The second part of each accession number designates the year an artwork was acquired, while the part before the decimal point indicates its place in the sequence of acquisitions that year.

I wish to thank Kynaston McShine for inviting me to participate in *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*. I also wish to thank all those on the museum staff as well as interns who have helped make this catalog possible. Among those who assisted were Mary Kiplock, intern, who cross-referenced the original files to assemble the greater part of these listings; Wendell Hafner, Administrative Assistant; Mattias Herold, Executive Secretary; the staff of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, where the list circulated for any additions or deletions; Jasmine Moorhead, editor; Gina Rossi, designer; and Christina Grillo, who produced the publication. In particular I would like to thank Lilian Tone, for coordinating this project and whose support was most vital for its realization.

Michael Asher

A NOTE ON DEACCESSIONING 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 from the inception of The Museum of Modern Art 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 from the bequest of Lillie P. Bliss. When a curator proposes to deaccession a work, it is always in the context of enabling a proposed acquisition. A committee of Museum Trustees and other Museum patrons votes on the matter; the deaccessioning, if approved, must then also be approved by the full Board of Trustees. Each time a work is sold or exchanged, the name of the donor of that work is transferred to the credit line of the new work purchased as a result, and whenever possible the consent of donors or their heirs is solicited in advance. It is our general practice to swap like-for-like—deaccessioning work from the same artist, period, or area of the collection as the new acquisition. Except in cases of exchange for another work by the same artist, it is our policy not 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 completeness or accuracy we would require in a Museum publication. Readers are thus cautioned to be aware of possible flaws and limitations in this listing of titles.

Kirk Varnedoe, Chief Curator,
Department of Painting and Sculpture

3.11 Michael Asher, *Painting and Sculpture from The Museum of Modern Art: Catalog of Deaccessions 1929 through 1998*, 1999, introduction. This booklet was the artist's contribution to the exhibition "The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect," held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, March 14–June 1, 1999. Courtesy of the artist.

CÉZANNE, Paul.

CHOCQUET IN AN ARMCHAIR. (1877?). Oil on canvas, 17⅛ x 14¼". 20.34

L'ESTAQUE. 1883–1885. Oil on canvas, 23⅞ x 27¾". 264.54

FRUIT AND WINE. (c. 1885–88). Oil on canvas, 20⅜ x 25⅜". 11.34

MAN IN BLUE CAP (UNCLE DOMINIC). 1865–66. Oil on canvas, 32¼ x 6⅛". 17.34

THE ROAD. 1871–72. Oil on canvas, 23½ x 28¾". 14.34

PEARS AND KNIFE. (c. 1878). Oil on canvas, 8⅛ x 12½". 10.34

THE WATER CAN. (c. 1880–1882). Oil on canvas, 10⅜ x 13¾". 7.34

PORTRAIT OF MME. CÉZANNE. c. 1885–87. Oil on canvas, 28⅛ x 15⅜". 19.34

CHADWICK, Lynn.

THE JEWEL. Metal, glass, and plastic, 9⅜ x 10½ x 13⅝". 771.69

CHAGALL, Marc.

FLOWERS. 1925. Oil on canvas, 37¼ x 29⅝". 620.73

CHAMBERLAIN, John.

MAZ. 1960. Painted scrap metal, 44¼"h., at base 8⅛ x 9⅞". 1.61

NORMA JEAN RISING. 1967. Galvanized steel, 66 x 38 x 38". 627.73

CHARLOT, Jean.

BUILDER CARRYING STONE. 1930. Oil, 27½ x 27½". 178.35

THE DANCE (LA JARANA). (n.d.). Oil. 179.35

THE DRINKER. (n.d.). Oil. 180.35

DE CHIRICO, Giorgio.

DELIGHTERS OF THE POET. 1913. Oil on canvas, 27⅜ x 34". 525.41

EVANGELICAL STILL LIFE. 1916. Oil on canvas, (irreg.) 31½ x 28⅛". 583.67

CONVERSATION. 1926 (?). Oil on wood, 13¼ x 10¼". 1.35

HORSES AND TEMPLE. (n.d.). Oil on canvas. 68.61

CIKOVSKY, Nicolai.

GIRL IN GREEN. 1937. Oil on canvas, 36 x 30". 295.38

COHEN, George.

IMAGO. 1955. Construction of varnished and painted wood, metal, string, sponge and cloth, 34¼ x 12⅜ x 2⅜". 16.61

COSGROVE, Stanley.

MEXICAN LANDSCAPE. 1942. Oil on composition board, 10⅜ x 18". 581.42

CROSS, Henri-Edmond.

WOODLAND IN PROVENCE. 1906–07. Oil on paper mounted on canvas, 21¾ x 17¼". 382.35

DALI, Salvador.

IMPERIAL VIOLETS. 1938. Oil on canvas, 39¼ x 56⅛". 527.41

DAUMIER, Honoré.

BUST OF GUIZOT. 1832, this cast 1930. Bronze, 6½" h., at base 3¾ x 5" (irreg.). 621.39

THE LAUNDRESS 1861(?). Oil on wood, 19⅜ x 13⅛". 27.34

THE REFUGEES. (n.d.). Oil on canvas, 15¾ x 27". 613.43

DAVIE, Alan.

STEPPING STONES OF THE DRAGON. 1962. Oil and gold paint on canvas, 18 x 22". 500.65

DAVIES, Arthur B.

ENERGIA. Oil on canvas, 42½ x 20½". 1.67

DAVIS, Stuart.

CARREFOUR. Oil. 837.63

PLACE DES VOSGES. 1929. Oil on canvas, 21 x 28". 183.35

SUMMER LANDSCAPE. 1930. Oil on canvas, 29 x 42". 30.40

DEGAS, Hilaire-Germain-Edgar.

ARABESQUE OVER RIGHT LEG, LEFT ARM IN LINE. (n.d.). Bronze, 11¼ x 17⅛ x 4", including bronze base ¼ x 4⅜ x 3¾". Separate marble base, ⅞ x 4¾ x 6½". 503.70

RACE HORSES 1884. Oil on canvas. 18¼ x 21⅝". 38.34

DELAUNAY-TERK, Sonia.

MARKET IN MINHO (STUDY 7). 1916. Distemper and encaustic on canvas, 12¼ x 17½". 151.55

DELVAUX, Paul.

THE ENCOUNTER (LA RENCONTRE). 1938. Oil on canvas, 35⅝ x 47½". 326.63

DERAIN, André.

MADAME DERAIN. 1920. Oil on canvas, 14¾ x 9¼". 44.34

THE FARM. 1922–24. Oil on canvas, 19¾ x 24". 46.34

LANDSCAPE SOUTHERN FRANCE. 1927–28. Oil on canvas, 31½ x 38". 45.34

GUITAR PLAYER. 1928. Oil on canvas, 32½ x 38⅜". 417.47

NIGHT PIECE WITH MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS. After 1930. Oil on canvas, 9⅛ x 15⅜". 679.54

DESPIAU, Charles.

LITTLE PEASANT GIRL. 1904. Original plaster, 15¾" h., including plaster base 5¾ x 5¾ x 5¾". 619.39

A. MME OTHON FRIESZ.

B. LEDA AND THE SWAN. (1922). A. Original plaster, 20⅞" h. including plaster base 6 x 6¾ x 7½" h. B. Plaster relief, 6½ x 5". 616.39. A–B

MADAME HENRY WAROQUIER. 1927. Bronze, 15¾" h., on stone base 6 x 7⅞ x 6". 616.43

SEATED YOUTH: MONUMENT TO EMIL MAYRISCH. 1932. Bronze, 6' 5 ⅜₁₆" x 3' ⅜₁₆" x 4' 7⅛". 623.39

ANNE MORROW LINDBERGH. 1939. Bronze, 15½" h., on wood base, 4½ x 8¾ x 6¾". 657.39

MARIA LANI. (n.d.). Bronze, 14"h. 11.30

3.12 Michael Asher, *Painting and Sculpture from The Museum of Modern Art: Catalog of Deaccessions 1929 through 1998*, 1999, page 8. Courtesy of the artist.

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 Quatremère 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[1] 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 I posed to Michael. The following is an edited transcript of that discussion.[2]

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 curatorial 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 ways 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 itself, that is, the Museum of Modern Art in New York. [Perhaps the one exception would be Hans Haacke's* Cowboy with Cigarette *(1990), which comments on Philip Morris's sponsorship of the museum's Picasso and Braque exhibition of 1989–1990.] Your work takes up the museum's practice of "deaccession." This is a rather uncommon term. I've really never heard it before. Could you explain a little about the practice of deaccession 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 preeminent museum of classical Modernism— that 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 have been through, and what we have seen? But 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. It seemed to me necessary to look into the ways the museum transferred works of art into and out of the collection—whether the canon resulted from the piecing together of works acquired over the years; or rather, whether the canon was actually shaped through a process of deacquisition or deaccession as well? One always reads stories in periodicals and newspapers about new acquisitions. If just as much shaping goes on through deacquisition, then 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, it was confirmed 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, i.e., the particular data you used to make the work?*

Asher: *It wasn't accessible to me at all. And it isn'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 the 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 entailed 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 . . . (laughter) . . . 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—never the curator's. To me it was quite an amazing request.*

Pascher: *The gist of Varnedoe's letter is that he wants to discredit 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 about half a year to assemble the 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 . . . (laughter) . . .*

Asher: *(laughter) . . . Unofficial . . . yes. It's fascinating that Varnedoe would take the compilation list so lightly 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 on 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 [Varnedoe] 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 the 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 uncharacteristic. 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 Varnedoe'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 deaccession 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, 403 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 writing 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 those 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, is that it's about something other than money.

Pascher: What is?

Asher: Art . . . But this museum experience doesn't make me believe it's divorced 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 1969 I was in the "Spaces" exhibition. My gosh, it was quite amazing. The curator [Jennifer Licht] supported everything we did. And this was regardless of whether she agreed or didn't agree. It was a totally different experience. She very likely was way 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 Varnedoe 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 deaccession 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 rotation of its collection?

Asher: Yes, 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 indirect areas of my work stems from the debate around how the money from deaccessions is utilized. I believe most museums deaccession 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.[3] In fact, he gave examples of where it was being done. I wonder what donors thought of this idea?

Another indirect aspect of my work deals with the relationship between the working classes and acquisitions and deacquisitions 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 consciously, or 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 profits 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 to 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 ungive them, 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 conferred 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 disingenuous 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—thinks that the public forgets really easily. So they find it very easy to change things around and tell different histories.

Pascher: So then, there is some resistance to deaccession among a given constituency.

Asher: I think so, very much. For example, when the Lincoln Center, though it is not a museum, was getting rid of the Johnses 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 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 1998*, was "accepted as a piece that would continue on."[4] 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 Asher questioned 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.[3] 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

1. "The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect" appeared at the Museum of Modern Art in New York from March 14 until June 1, 1999.

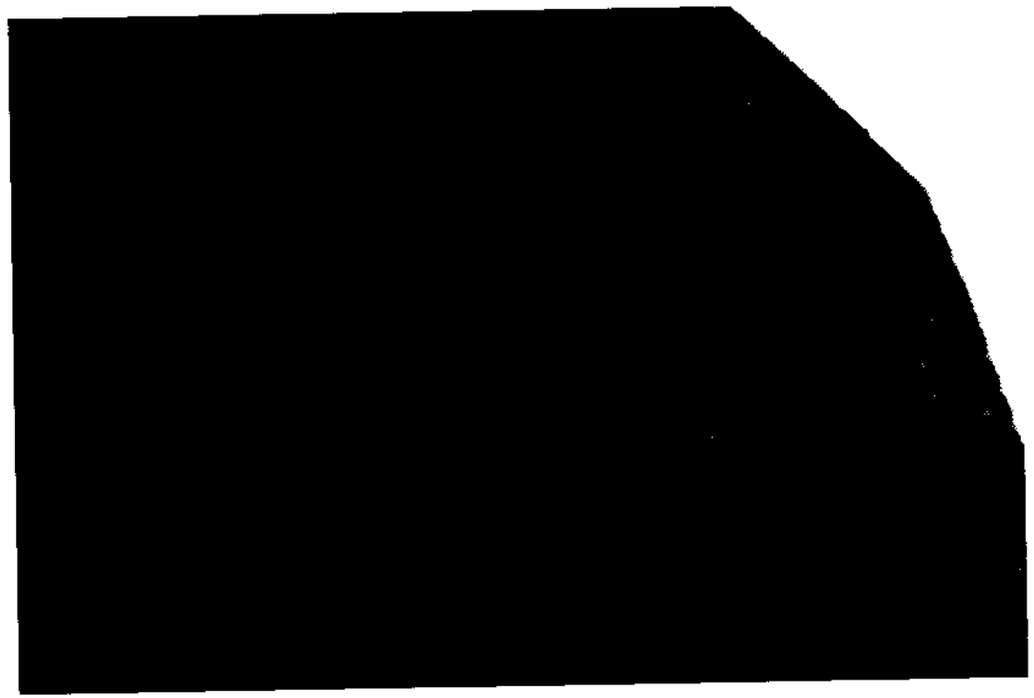
2. The interview was published in its entirety in *Merge Magazine* 5 (Summer 1999), as an article entitled "Cave Notes."

3. Glenn Lowry, "Taking the Lid off the Cookie Jar," *Art News*, March 1998.

4. Michael Asher, quoted in Lear Ollman, "The 'Museum' Show's Case of the Missing List," *Los Angeles Times*, October 10, 1999, 73.

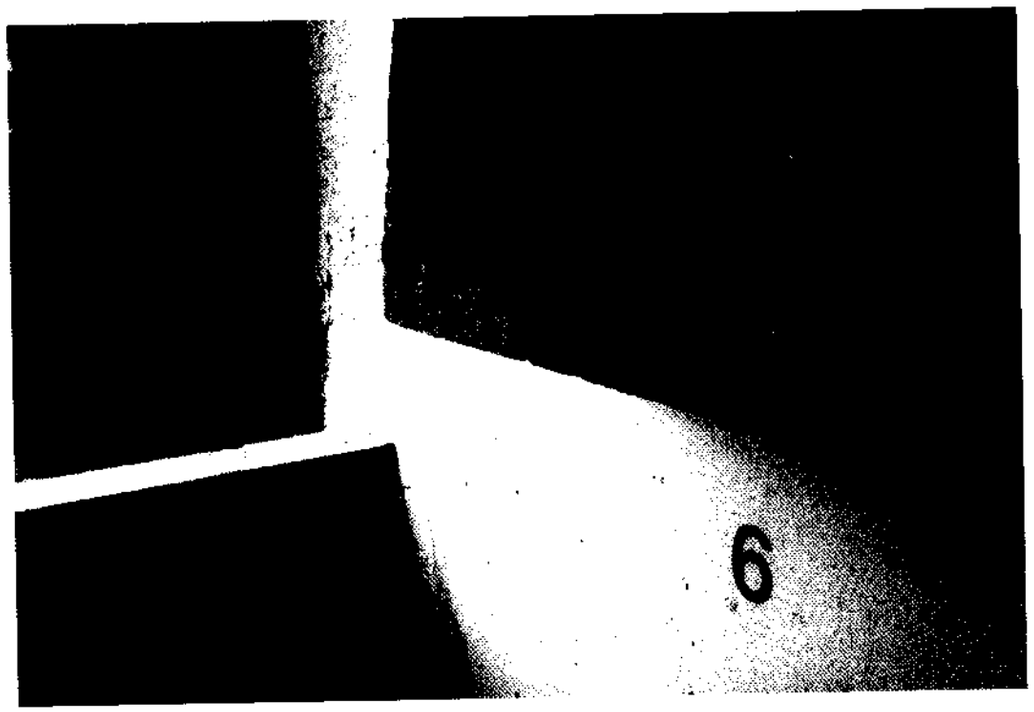
5. Ibid.

This interview was first published in *Merge Magazine* 5 (Summer 1999), and subsequently in Christian Kravagna, ed., *The Museum as Arena: Artists on Institutional Critique* (Cologne: Walther König, 2001), 106–112, from which the present version is taken. Alterations in brackets are Pascher's asides.

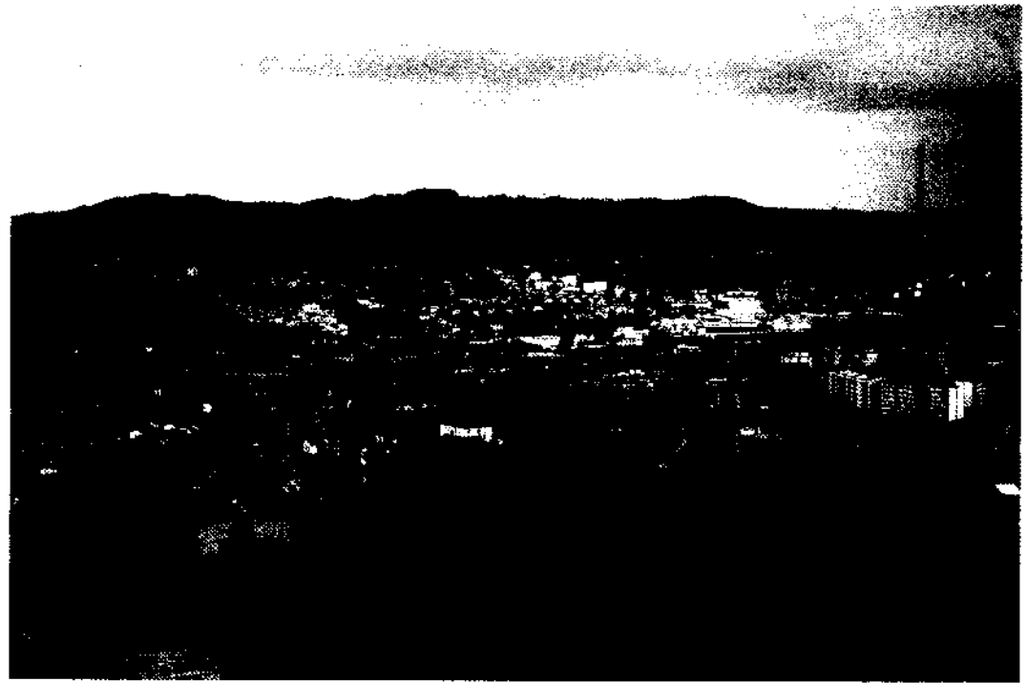


3.13 Renée Green, *Secret*, 1993. Scenes from a group show, 1993/2006. Unité d'habitation building. Courtesy of the artist and Free Agent Media. Invited to produce an installation in Le Corbusier's Unité d'habitation, a large modular apartment complex in Firminy, France, the artist inhabited the now derelict building for seven days and documented her stay with photographs and video.

3.14 Renée Green, *Secret*, 1993. Scenes from a group show, 1993. Immigration vest. Courtesy of the artist and Free Agent Media.



3.15 Renée Green, *Secret*, 1993. Scenes from a group show, 1993. Binoculars. Courtesy of the artist and Free Agent Media.



3.16 Renée Green, *Secret*, 1993. Scenes from a group show, 1993. Vista from apartment. Courtesy of the artist and Free Agent Media.

untitled (1999)

mark dion

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, I scarcely allow my luggage to be stowed 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 glassine envelope. The details of the quarry 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 (an 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 Formica, 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, convictions, and projections of the past. In Paris one can visit the Gallery of Comparative Anatomy and find it virtually unchanged since it opened in 1885. One can see the Teylers 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 of life to a general public? These places generate and distribute the official story. By critically analyzing the master narratives and techniques of display employed by the institutions, I can discern the ideology embedded in them. Being critical may also be just another way to love these museums. That contradiction is what I try to explore through my production of artwork. I don't lose sleep 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, it helps to use some of the institution's own tactics, particularly the microcosmic and the macrocosmic. 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 *Scala Naturae*. This ancient visual metaphor, 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 *Scala Naturae* 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 early 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.

This text was published in Kynaston McShine, *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 98.

3.17 Christian Philipp Müller, *Green Border*, 1993. Illegal border crossing between Austria and the Principality of Liechtenstein. Courtesy of the artist.

maria eichhorn public limited company (2002)

maria eichhorn

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 (Paragraph 1, German Law on Public Limited Companies). 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), is a fixed number which indicates the value of the tied assets.[1]

A public limited company is a production and trading undertaking. It issues shares to increase its capital. Its primary interest is profit.

As my contribution to Documenta 11, 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 therefore 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 found a public limited company, one or more individuals lay down the articles of association of the future company in a notarial deed. The articles set out the company 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 managing 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,[2] 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 rises in stock market prices in the 1980s and the further acceleration in the late 1990s.

Law. The law is venal.[3] 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 *Santa Clara County 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.[4] 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 Socialist/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 have to make the effort to examine the countermotions themselves. Shareholders without Internet access would be cut off entirely from information on countermotions.[5]

Self-determination. Public limited companies are also founded to counter the effects of privatization and to free themselves of the whims of financially powerful companies. In 1997 the Genoa dockworkers association CULMV (Compagnia Unica del Lavoratori Merci 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 *Il Manifesto* in Italy has been a public limited company since 1995. Rotpunktverlag, 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 value 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.[6] If money is not turned into capital, its value declines. Turning money into commodities that appreciate 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 Cauty of the band KLF (Kopyright Liberation Front).[7] In August 1994 Bill Drummond and Jimmy Cauty burned a million pounds. 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 Cauty present, provoked both acts of violence and great boredom, which resulted from the monotonous display, lasting over an hour, of the banknotes being set aflame.[8]

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?[5]

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 has entered 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?[6] 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?

Tradability versus nontradability, 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 traded. 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 circumvent the concepts of property, ownership, and wealth as manifested 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." 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

1. Wolfgang Hefermehl, introduction to *Aktiengesetz, GmbH-Gesetz*, 33rd ed. (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2001), xi.

2. Karl Marx, "The Process of Accumulation of Capital," part 7 of *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, 3 vols., trans. Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 1:780: "The world would still be without railways if it had had to wait until accumulation had got a few individual capitals far enough to be adequate for the construction of a railway. Centralization, however, accomplished this in the twinkling of an eye, by means of joint-stock companies." Originally published as *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, vol. 1 (1867).

3. Take the example of nuclear energy. The German state subsidizes the nuclear industry to the tune of 2 billion euros a year. On December 14, 2001, after many years of negotiations with the nuclear industry, the German Bundestag passed a law phasing out the nuclear industry. The opposition (CDU/CSU, FDP, PDS) announced that it would repeal the law when the government changed. The law is void. In 1997 the municipality of Schönau in the Black Forest purchased its power supply system in order to establish its own nuclear-free energy supply. In 1996 Ursula and Michael Sladek raised over 2 million deutsche marks as part of their campaign "Ich bin ein Störfall" (I am a malfunction) to make up the shortfall in buying the system back from the former energy provider. Ironically, the magazine *Capital* awarded them a special prize as ecological managers.

4. "The defendant Corporations are persons within the intent 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 the equal protection of the laws." Quotation from the Supreme Court ruling in the case of *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company*, 1886, available at www.tourolaw.edu/patch/santa/.

5. The Dachverband der Kritischen Aktionärinnen und Aktionäre (Association of Critical Shareholders in Germany) is calling for 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 promote environmentally friendly products and climate protection, and attach social obligations to property ownership. They campaign against the dikat of shareholder value, arms productions, nuclear energy, and companies which harm the environment. The Dachverband der Kritischen Aktionärinnen und Aktionäre organizes the joint campaigns of its member organizations. In addition, it is the central contact point for the approximately three thousand small shareholders who have transferred their voting rights to the association in order to exercise social and ecological responsibility.

6. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Labor of Dionysus: A Critique of the State-Form* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 7: "Just like money, law (which repeats in the capitalist system many of the figures assumed by

money) carries no values that are proper to it, but only those that social conflicts and the necessities of the reproduction of capitalist society, its division of labor, and exploitation produce every day."

7. In 1993 the K Foundation established by the KLF awarded a prize to "Great Britain's worst artist." Rachel Whiteread won 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.

8. This is reminiscent of the potlatch practices of archaic societies, in which property was given away or destroyed. Potlatch also functioned as a form of social regulating agent to prevent individuals from possessing excessive wealth. See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Function of Exchange in Archaic Societies,* trans. Ian Cunnison (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1954); and Georges Bataille, "The Gift of Rivalry: 'Potlatch,'" in *Consumption,* vol. 1 of *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy* (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 63–77.

9. In the interviews I conducted from 1997 to 1999 on the history and relevance of the *Artist's Reserved Rights Transfer and Sale Agreement* by Seth Siegelaub and Robert Projansky, the question of the different values that a work of art can have arose repeatedly. In this regard Daniel Buren remarked: "Long before my works were ever auctioned, I was against auctions. An auction is one of the ugliest things in the market history of a work. . . . The market price is increased or decreased by tricks and machinations; for example, in the 1980s when certain works that aren't worth anything today were getting high prices. . . . Particularly in the 1980s a lot of artists, especially in America, thought they weren't taking part in this boom, and they believed 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." (Quoted in Maria Eichhorn, *"The Artist's Reserved Rights Transfer and Sale Agreement" von Bob Projansky und Seth Siegelaub* [Salzburg: Salzburger Kunstverein, 1998].) Adrian Piper remarks: "I certainly do recognize the distinction between the meaning of the work and its art market value. In fact, I would make a further distinction, there's the art market value, there's the aesthetic value, and then there's the meaning. So, I think it's really a threefold distinction. And I am very much aware and I fully acknowledge the arbitrary nature of the art market value. It depends on so many variables. For example, what I was saying before about the fact that it took my joining a blue chip gallery to get people to notice the aesthetic value of my work so that they could then attach to it an art market value and buy it." (Unpublished interview with Adrian Piper, 1998.)

10. Institutions as part of the art trade: Richard Hamilton's installation *Seven Rooms* was created for an exhibition at the Anthony d'Offay Gallery in London. When it was presented at Documenta X, the exhibition space of the gallery was reconstructed exactly. Who sponsored whom in this case? Are public institutions dependent on financial support from the art trade, sponsors, or private collections? And is this dependence evident in the exhibitions?

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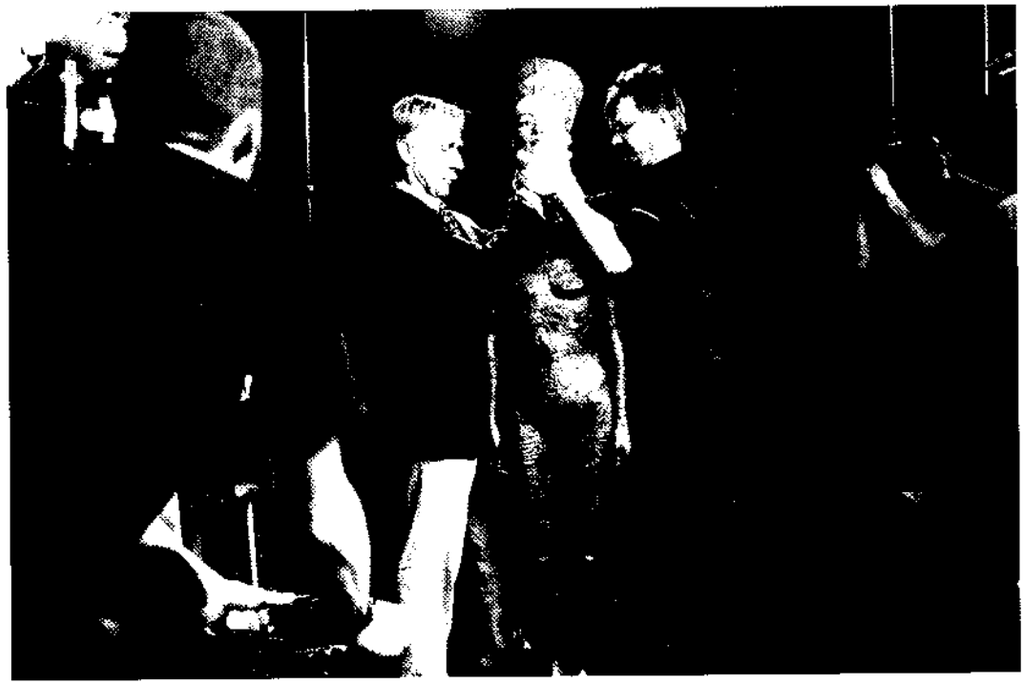
This text is a reprint of the proposal relating to *Maria Eichhorn Aktiengesellschaft, Documenta 11,* 2002, which the artist contributed to the Documenta 11 exhibition in Kassel, Germany, in 2002.



3.18 Little Warsaw, *The Body of Nefertiti*, 2003. Little Warsaw is a collaboration between Bálint 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 now-whole body to be documented, but did not allow the bust to leave the Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussamlung 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.

3.19 Little Warsaw, *The Body of Nefertiti*, 2003. 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 some rarefied 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 fixated 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: Well, I have never really understood where such idealized belief systems come from. Certainly, the majority of my work is derived from sources other than aesthetic models within art history and seeming 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. Theirs seems to be based on a keenly developed interest in a radical expansion of the problems of sculpture and painting, respectively—in 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 shell 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 custodial conditions of art history.

Buchloh: The bicycle bell work you did in The Hague in 1994, what kind of work is that? How do you see that now? It positions itself in what kind of discursive intersections?

Knight: Well, I would say that it is located or, more accurately, operates between the two registers of the micro-institution of art, where the opportunity begins, and the larger discursive site of geopolitics.

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

ecological questions particularly relevant in that nation/state condition. You wouldn't have done that piece in Germany, for example . . .

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 sociopolitic located outside the micropolitical boundaries of the art world.*

Graw: *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 sociopsychological 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?*

Graw: *A visual industry . . .*

Buchloh: *Monolithic . . .*

Knight: *Actually, I think it operates like a small town meeting.*

Buchloh: *Right.*

Graw: *It has both characteristics: It is an overlookable marketplace with archaic transactions and has corporate dimensions.*

Knight: *I agree. There is something very interesting about the fact that it remains so very archaic and at the same time totally subsumed by the metabusiness of the day with little real understanding, or care, by those at the epicenter, 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 completely reversing every aspect of site specificity. And nevertheless as it does so it gives a completely new model of the absolute necessity for specific interventions. It's not like going into some fake globalism or some mythical opening-up, but it really redefines the levels of intervention in the different types of site specific approaches, and these are geopolitical, ecological, and nation-state-specific.*

Knight: *I would refer to it as a form of discursive specificity, but certainly not the situational model of site specificity that has been proposed by Miwon Kwon and others that tends to legitimate a generation of '90s fashion production, the likes of Pardo, etc., which are essentially designer knickknacks disguised as "installation art."*

Graw: *So in what way is the way you legitimize your practice through a site different from that type of practice you just criticized, like Pardo's?*

Knight: *Because I don't think my project is constructed for or received in the same way. It's not reified under the conditions of the already fixated 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 Pardo who supposedly does exactly that in the most programmatic way? He's the guy who brought this out to the foreground and made a megaproject out of it.*

Knight: *Well, I welcome the illustration of the problem I think it represents, but don't cuddle up to projects so politically bankrupted. It is exactly the black hole of consumption that it wants to be and questions precisely nothing.*

Graw: *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 Cranbrook and spreads about the globe as it enters into the marketplace, vis-à-vis Design for Better Living, Design Research, Design Within Reach, and of course, the granddaddy of them all, IKEA. Product design, interior design, and installation design are all deeply implicated in capitalist ideology. It's the primary lexicon for substantiating neoliberalism. It's the off-the-shelf language of hegemony.*

Buchloh: *But it has a long complicated history with gradations; at the same time, for example, you are deeply interested, as far as I know, in Eames. What's your interest in Eames? I never really understood if it was a critical interest or an interest in the Eames effect. I think it was both probably, because the Eameses are kind of a design-history 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 splints and bentwood research was the day they took a political dive. Although they did appear to have a partial reprieve at the moment their house was completed, but in the end it all added up to a career of corporate cronyism—IBM utopianism—producing under the guise of multiculturalism, 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.

Graw: I'm interested in coming to terms with different types of site reflexivity or context 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.

Graw: But the choice of the 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 Worldebt 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 inescapability 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 compulsive dimension of all curatorial operations—to position themselves in international biennials 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 blinded by its own power structure. So it should not come as a surprise to see global culture being presented as a 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 Okwui Enwezor 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 these are not exhibitions designated for a real political discourse; after all, they're constructed from within the art institution and are by nature nothing 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 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 of reception for my Worldebt 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 four other platforms were made up of the Prada set with absolutely no local representation at all. All in all, it seemed to be an ideal opportunity to drag a larger discursive condition into an intersection with the institution of art.

Graw: 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 reductivist, so-called 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 indicting 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 interests 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 disqualifies 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 was just thinking back to what we said before, about the odd coexistence 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 Fine Arts. Your work anticipates the situation we are facing today, where there is a seamless continuity between the art gallery, the boutique, and the lobbies of corporations. If you go to Gagosian or Matthew Marks, they are decorated with these same types of bouquets.

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 importance and value 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 uptown gallerist 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 we were, on the street like two missionaries, going from restaurant to restaurant proselytizing in seersucker 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 logics—spheres that are now very deeply overlapping—and was this something you saw coming?

Knight: Well, these 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 viable site of production—victimizing myself, so to speak, in order to understand the consumer condition.

Graw: Didn't you also victimize 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 indictment 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 to the point of self-detriment.

Buchloh: It's also a strange concept of creativity. It's an amalgam, 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. It's the countercreativity model, it totally defines the act of intervention as being externally determined as a dialogic interaction, but not as a monologic appropriation.

Knight: In modernity, yes, but once the site 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 Buren 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, musing endlessly with propositions with the hopes that somebody finds out.

Graw: Everybody has something in the drawer.

Buchloh: Is that what you do?

Knight: Yes. But 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 as something happening again and again in the same place?

Knight: Studio production. The continuous generation of work out of the same monolithic site.

Graw: How about the commodity status of your work? On the one hand I feel that your work is consistently emphasizing a nonidealist 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 has 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 aloof suggests that the possibility for an interrogation exists. As Adorno would say, the moment of negation.

Graw: And how 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 logotypes 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 Worldebt 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: Oh 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 positivistic 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 so 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 a position that intricately engages with the condition of cultural production and with the concept of the response that you provide to those conditions, namely corporate cultural demands for pure utility. In a sense you make a contract every single time you make a work, anticipating that the work will be used anyway. The work has no freedom, the work has no autonomy, the work is inscribed from the very beginning in a transaction of exchange, deployment, representational functions. In those terms it is possible to see why you engage in a contract only rather than a model of creativity and independence and autonomy.

Knight: I think it represents an inversion of what takes place in the marketplace conundrum, wherein a contract is presumed onto the receiver through strategies of seduction. In turn, the consumer assumes they're in control as a commissioner of that pair of shoes or sculptural knick-knack, when in fact it is precisely the contrary. Understanding that is to understand the need for a position of resistance, which I think resides in the inversion of the order of need, that can allow an artist the opportunity to touch upon subjects of consumption and exchange, and the design strategies that sustain their presumed purpose within the culture industry, without reverting to the role of a cultural custodian.

This text was published in *Texte zur Kunst* 59 (September 2005): 118–137.

3.20 John Knight, *87°*, 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 87°, 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 returned with a major installation to the Guggenheim Museum (which famously censored both his and Hans Haacke's work in 1971); Buren and Olafur Eliasson 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 After." More symposia planned for the Getty and the College Art Association's annual conference, along with a special issue of *Texte zur Kunst*, may very well see the further reduction of institutional critique to its acronym: IC. Ick.

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-handedness 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 skepticism 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 "counterestablishment 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 analysis . . . invariably depends on the largesse of institutions like the Guggenheim." Kimmelman goes on to compare Buren unfavorably to Christo and Jeanne-Claude, who "operate, for the most part, outside traditional institutions, with fiscal independence, in a public sphere beyond the legislative control of art experts."[1]

Further doubts about the historic and present-day efficacy of institutional critique arise with laments over how bad things have become in an art world in which MoMA opens its new temporary-exhibition galleries with a corporate collection, and art hedge funds sell 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, a time when artists could still conceivably take up a critical position against or outside the institution. Today, the argument goes, there no longer is 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 reification? Now, when we need it most, institutional critique is dead, a victim of its 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 markets founder on a basic misconception 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 "founders" 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 engage(d) in institutional critique."[2]

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 Asher's analysis of the historical place and function of aesthetic constructs within institutions, or Haacke's and Broodthaers' operations revealing the material conditions of those institutions as ideological."[3] The essay continues 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 1985, 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 subsystem that is art enters the stage of self-criticism. Dadaism . . . no longer criticizes schools that preceded it, but criticizes art as an institution, and the course its development took in bourgeois society."[4]

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-'80s at the School of Visual Arts and the Whitney Independent Study Program (where Haacke and Martha Rosler also lectured)—including Gregg Bordowitz, Joshua Decter, 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 receiving may have just been forming at the time. It could even be that our very reception of ten- or fifteen-year-old works, reprinted texts, and tardy 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 enmeshed in the contradictions and complicities, ambitions and ambivalence 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" emerged as shorthand for "the critique of institutions," today that catchphrase has been even 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 art 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 museological order 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 once-radical—and uninstitutionalized—practices.

These representations can admittedly be found in the texts of critics 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 at every turn by the writings and work of Asher, Broodthaers, Buren, and Haacke. From Broodthaers's announcement of his first gallery exhibition in 1964—which he begins by confiding that "the idea of inventing something insincere finally crossed my mind" and then informing us that his dealer will "take thirty percent"[5]—the critique of the apparatus that distributes, 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.*"[6] 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 on" by investigating both the studio and the museum "as customs, the ossifying customs of art."[7]

Indeed, the critique most consistently in evidence in the post-studio work of Buren and Asher 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 predestines it to a life of circulation and exchange, market and museological incorporation. 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. Broodthaers, however, was the supreme master of performing critical obsolescence in his gestures of melancholic complicity. Just three years after founding the Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, 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 Galerie Michael Werner. Finally, the most explicit statement of the elemental role of artists in the institution of 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 coloration, are unwitting partners. . . . They participate jointly in the maintenance and/or development of the ideological make-up of their society. They work within that frame, set the frame and are being framed."[5]

From 1969 on, a conception of the "institution of art" begins to emerge that includes not just the museum, nor 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 1969 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 *Condensation Cube* (1963–1965) 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.[6]

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 *travail in situ* at Wide White Space in Antwerp, Buren realized many works that bridged interior and exterior, artistic and nonartistic 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."[7]

With his *Installation Münster (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. At the museum serving as a reference point for the show, visitors could find information about where 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.

Asher 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 competencies, 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 artistic discourses and practices. 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 all 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 distinguishes it most precisely from other legacies of the historical avant-garde. It may be unique among those legacies in its recognition of the failure of avant-garde movements and the consequences of that failure; that is, not 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 the readymade transformed that negation into a supreme affirmation of the omnipotence of the artistic gaze and its limitless incorporative power. It opened the way for the artistic conceptualization—and commodification—of *everything*. As Bürger could already write in 1974, "If an artist today signs a stove pipe and exhibits it, that artist certainly does not denounce the art market but adapts to it. Such adaptation does not eradicate the idea of individual creativity, it affirms it, and the reason is the failure of the avant-gard[e]."[1]

It is artists—as much as museums or the market—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 reintegrate 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, elitism 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. To give the most 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 galas, the exclusivity of which is broadly advertised in fashion magazines and society pages. Far from becoming less elitist, ever more popular museums have become vehicles for the mass-marketing of elite tastes and practices that, 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 field 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 traverses physical and conceptual boundaries, Haacke engaged the "institution" as a network of social and economic relationships, making visible the complicities among the apparently opposed spheres of art, the state, and corporations. It may be Haacke, above all, who evokes characterizations of the institutional critic as a heroic challenger, fearlessly speaking truth to power—and justifiably so, as his work has been subject to vandalism, censorship, and parliamentary 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 fictions 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 antiunion 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 content and justify their existence. And with these representations, we also reproduce the mythologies of volunteerist 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 Bürger called the avant-garde's aim to integrate "art into life praxis" 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.

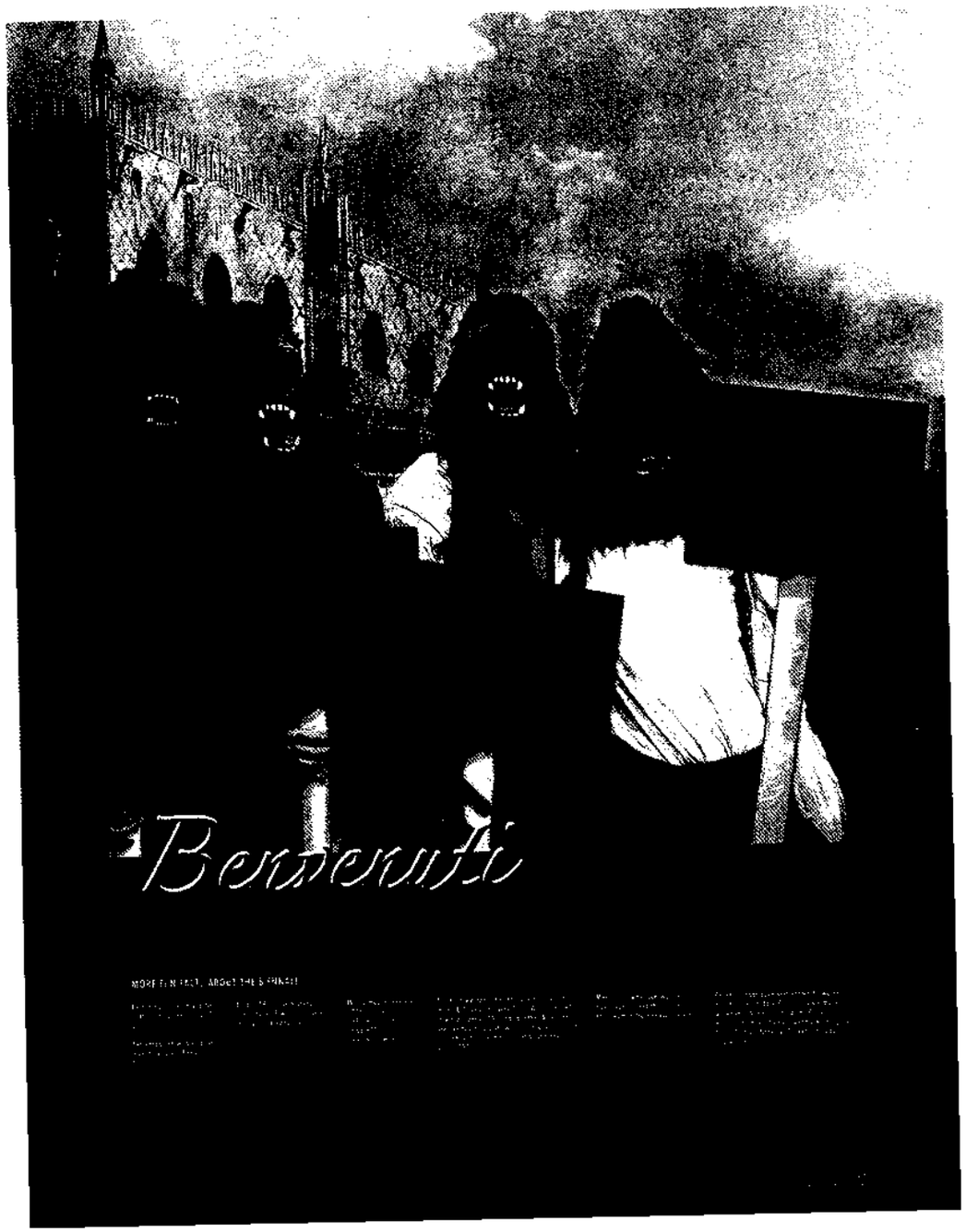
Every time we speak of the "institution" as other than "us," we disavow our role in the creation and perpetuation of its conditions. We avoid responsibility for, or action against, the everyday complicities, compromises, and censorship— above all, self-censorship—which are driven by our own interests 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 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.

Finally, it is this self-questioning—more than a thematic like "the institution," no matter how broadly conceived—that defines institutional critique as a practice. If, as Bürger 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.[12] 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.

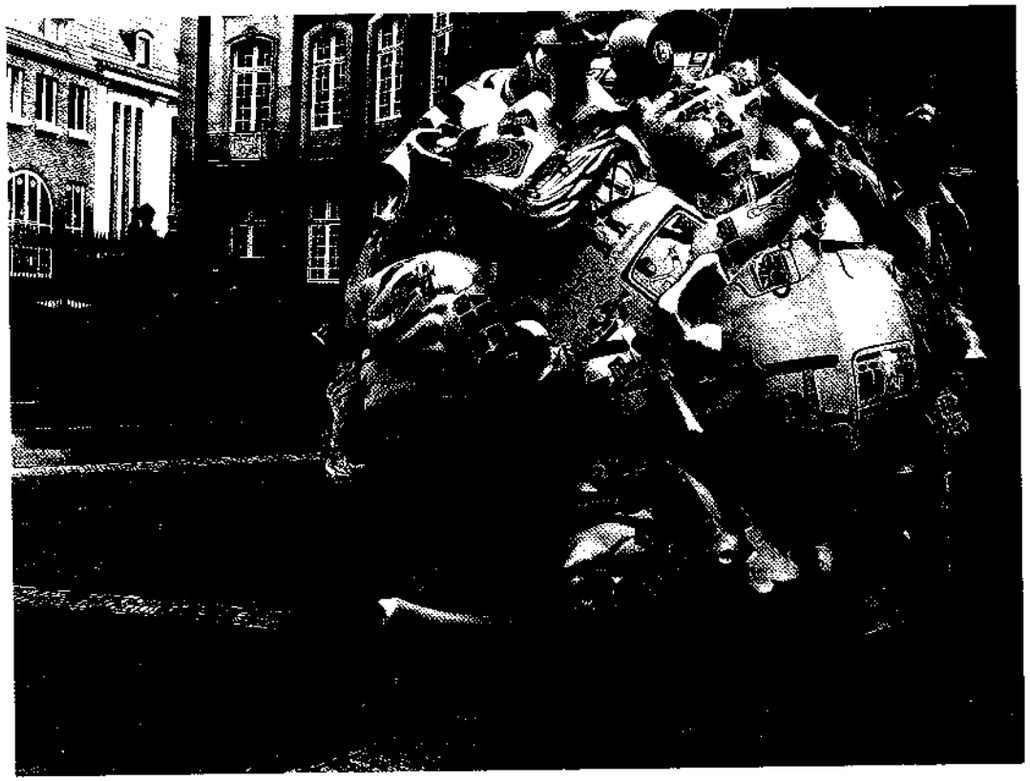
NOTES

1. Michael Kimmelman, "Tall French Visitor Takes Up Residence in the Guggenheim," *New York Times*, March 25, 2005.
2. Andrea Fraser, "In and Out of Place," *Art in America* (June 1985): 124.
3. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Allegorical Procedures: Appropriation and Montage in Contemporary Art," *Artforum* (September 1982): 48.
4. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 22.
5. Broodthaers, quoted in Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Open Letters, Industrial Poems," *October* 42 (Fall 1987): 71.
6. Daniel Buren, "The Function of the Museum," in A. A. Bronson and Peggy Gale, eds., *Museums by Artists* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983), 58.
7. Daniel Buren, "The Function of the Studio," in Bronson and Gale, *Museums by Artists*, 61.
8. Hans Haacke, "All the Art That's Fit to 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.
10. Daniel Buren, "Beware!" *Studio International* (March 1970), 101.
11. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 52–53.
12. Ibid., 54.

This text was published in *Artforum* 44, no. 1 (September 2005): 278–283, 332.



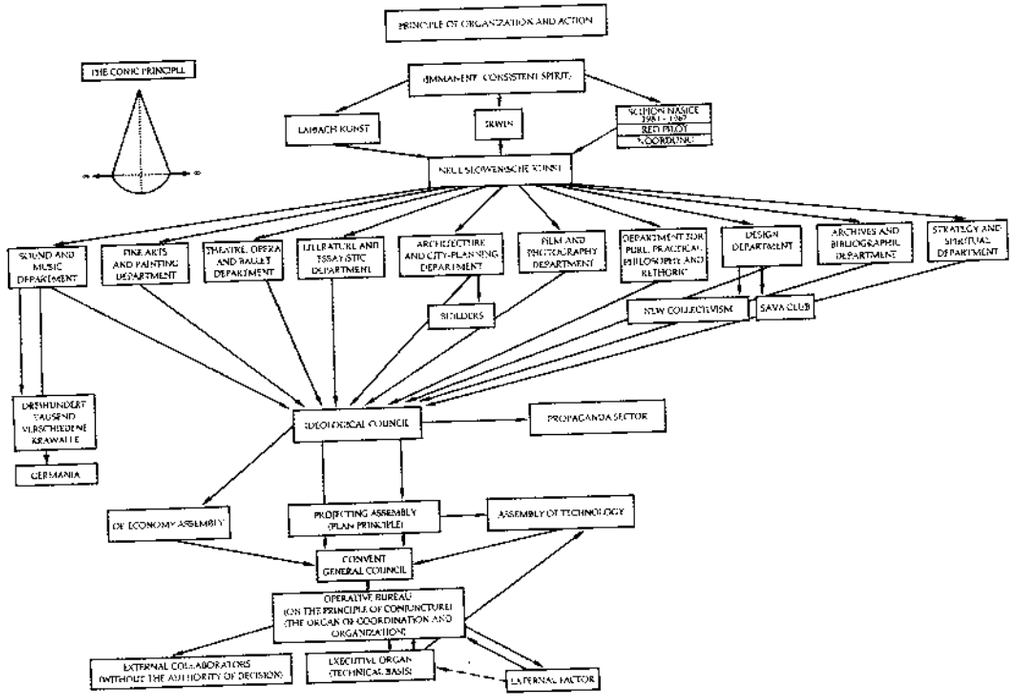
3.21 Guerrilla Girls, *Welcome to the Feminist Biennial*, 2005. © Guerrilla Girls. Courtesy www.guerrillagirls.com.



3.22 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.

3.23 Andreas Siekmann, *Trickle Down: Public Space in the Era of Its Privatization*, 2007.

PART IV exit strategies



4.1 NSK, *Principles of Organization and Action 2*, 1986. Courtesy of the artists.

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, presented through art. LAIBACH sublimates the tension between them and the existing disharmonies (social unrest, individual frustrations, ideological oppositions) and thus eliminates every direct ideological and systematic discursiveness. The very name and the emblem are visible materializations of the idea on a level of a cognitive symbol. The name LAIBACH is a suggestion of the actual possibility of establishing a politicized (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 gaps 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 annulled, every trace of individuality erased. The technological process is a method of programming function. It represents development; i.e., purposeful change. To isolate a particle of this process and form it statically 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 work 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—DACHAUER), which—predestined—conceals in itself an arbitrary number of sub-objects (depending on the needs).

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 objectivization).

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, brutism, 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 to it the mystical dimension of alienation, which reveals the magical component of the industrial process. Repression 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 entelechical, 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 .

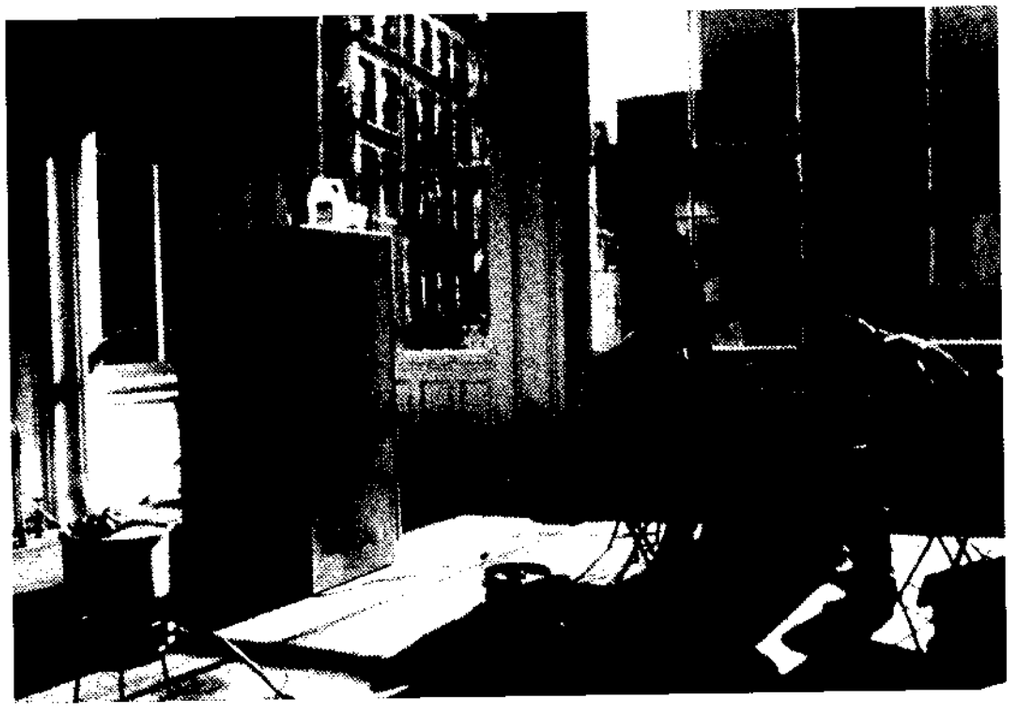
Besides LAIBACH, which concerns itself with the manner of industrial production in totalitarianism, there also exist two other groups in the concept of LAIBACH KUNST aesthetics: GERMANIA studies the emotional side, which is outlined in relation to the general ways of emotional, erotic, and family life, lauding the foundations of the state functioning of emotions on the old classicist form of new social ideologies.

DREIHUNDERT TAUSEND VERSCHIEDENE KRAWALLE is a retrospective futuristic negative utopia. (The era of peace has ended.)

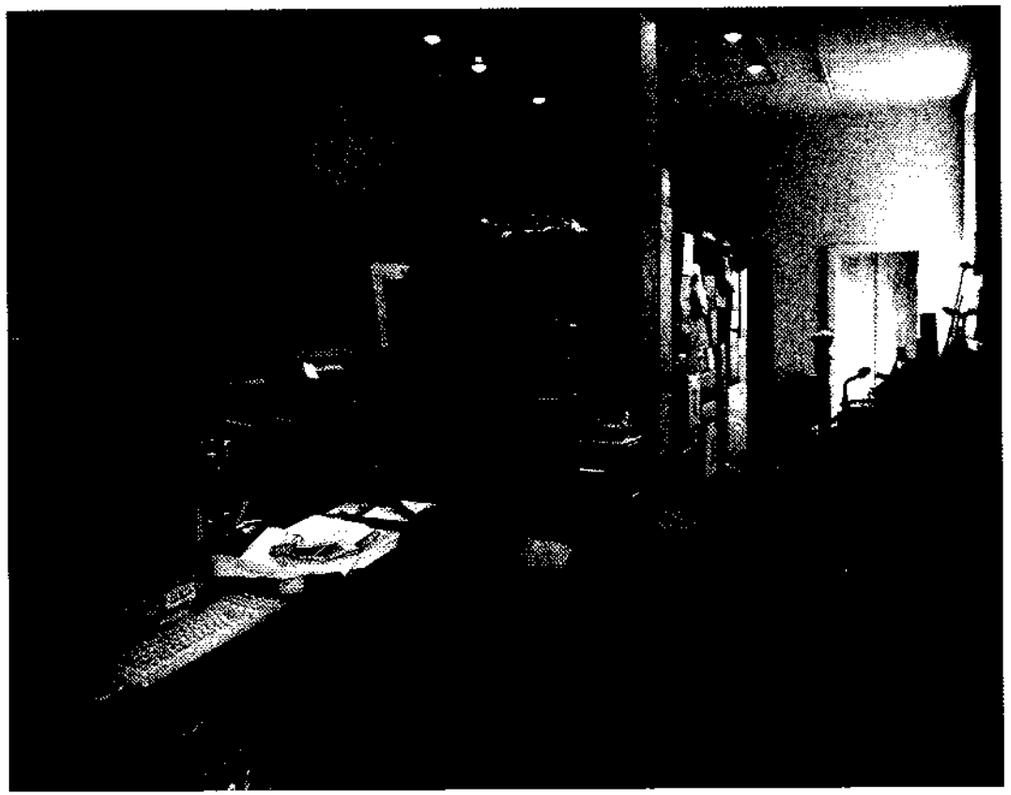
10 .

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 without limit; God has one face, the devil infinitely many. LAIBACH is *the return of action on behalf of the idea.*

This text was written in 1982. It was originally published in *Nova Revija* 2, nos. 13–14 (1983). Translated by members of Laibach, it was first published in English in Laura Hoptman and Tomáš Pospiszyl, eds., *Primary Documents: A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2002), 294–296.



4.2 Rirkrit Tiravaneja, *Untitled (Free)*, 1992. Courtesy of the artist and 303 Gallery, New York.



4.3

tactical media (1996)

critical art ensemble

Many traditional practitioners of anti-authoritarian resistance tend to dwell on the microphenomena 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 overemphasizing 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 a 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. Pancapitalism, 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 reduction of an event into invisibility. Resistance thus becomes imprisoned in a particular moment in time, 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.

CAE believes that no one understands 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 battlefields 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, resisters 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 nonrational, nonutilitarian, perverse, and unreasonable consciousness, as well as from absurd and delinquent social currents, should also be investigated with equal vigor.

BwO NOW. BwO NOW. BwO NOW.

Imperfect flesh is the foundation of screenal economy. The frenzy of the electronic sign oscillates 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 seduces all who see it into the bliss of the surface. It reinscribes the flesh as the sight of the abject, the disgusting. BwO now. The electronic body is the perfect body. The electronic body is a body without organs. It is both self and mirrored 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 physiologically, not psychologically, not sociologically. It is not conscious of separation.

The electronic body seduces 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 screenal space. But the electronic body oscillates between panic perfection and hysterical decay. The electronic body reinscribes the flesh as the site of the abject. At any moment the organic body could fracture and its surface could decay with sickness, ooze, and the squirting of antisocial fluids. The electronic body has consistently shown the splitting of skin, the eruption of pus, the projecting of vomit, the spilling of guts. Any sign of the organic in screenal space exists only to instill fear, contempt, and embarrassment.

BwO dreams of a body that never existed. BwO dreams of a body that never existed. BwO 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-phenomena 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 (telegraph, radio, cinema, television) into the visual apparatus. When the rapid growth and the insidious function of the spectacle were finally strategically identified and attacked 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 counterspectacle to subvert authoritarian representation rests on three strategies: The first intends to reveal the exploitive ideological imperatives that the spectacle masks, the second intends to reveal all that spectacle erases, and the third intends to collapse spectacle into its own meaningless rhetoric. Very quickly, tactics for subverting spectacularized representation surfaced in forms such as *détournement*, appropriation, radical juxtapositioning, conceptualism, and plagiarism. These methods 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 or jamming of state media distribution centers. It was soon realized (after '68) that the successes of such actions were temporary, because the power of the spectacle to resituate itself made it possible for it to reconsume subversive practice, and because of the strong corporate hold on distribution networks. A realization quickly emerged that resistant 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 garrison— a mere trace of the antiquated notion of power as presence. A new decentralized communication apparatus arose, made possible by the ascendancy of computer and satellite technology, that allows multinational power to retreat into absence, 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, I always thought technology was going to make my life easier. I'm told that the dawn of the information age is upon me, and that information technology will be designed for premium convenience. But whose convenience? Not mine. Convenience really means "efficiency," and that always means more work. I turned in my typewriter for a powerful computer, believing that I would have more free time to spend with family and friends. Then the office raised 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 "insufficient data entry" posted on the screen. What's really frightening is that I've actually begun 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 to 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 world 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

certainly isn't how the corporations described it. They just want to plug me in, and I can't unplug myself. I'm hooked up, inserted, unfulfilled, but ready to go. Just another office drone.

Perhaps the only release is self-sabotage—to short-circuit the fear that keeps me tied to my machine. I hack myself to reestablish the boundaries between my flesh and their technology.

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 bureaucrat to the tools of production is certainly nothing new; however, what has changed is the design of the machines to which the worker can be attached. The current generation of machines now simulate 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 scans 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 conjures feelings of loneliness and separation so profound that consciousness is looped back into now-purified cycles of production and consumption. Having lost the primary pleasures of sexuality, sociability, mind alteration, and other nonutilitarian possibilities, individuals have no choice but to engage in work (alienated production) and in forced leisure (asocial 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 naive 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 allow 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 inequitable 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 overstated, 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 onto infinity. Were it 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. Desire is 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?

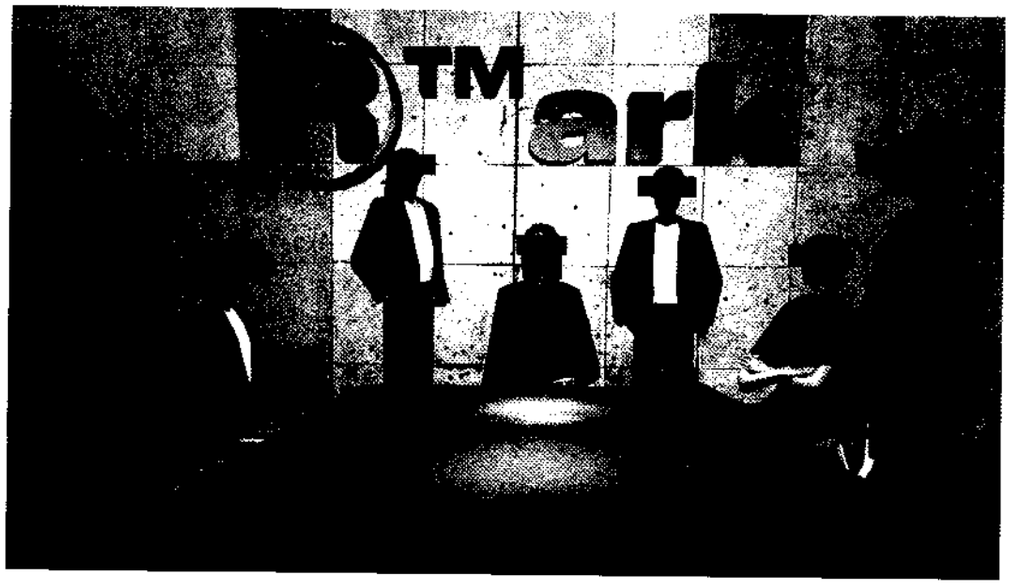
The appearance of the mature form of the data body is an indicator of two problems that plague resistant culture. The first is a micro-level problem, of concern to all people (whether they know it or not) in technologically saturated societies: Now that the data body

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. CAE suggests that nomadic power can be found in presence in the virtual environments of cyberspace, and second, that the object of value to be appropriated is vital information (such as research and development databases) or the conduits of information transfer themselves. Without total information access, or deprived of full-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*, exh. cat. (Graz: Austrian Triennial of Photography, 1996).



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®™ark, promotional image, 1998. Courtesy the artists.

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 Nato 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 overtly 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 Grains* (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 petri 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 of 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—theorizing, 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 amid that wreckage tried to formulate novel, pragmatic, and effective approaches to activism. Co-arising

with the emergence of the term "tactical media," CAE defined their precepts 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 '80s, 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 Civil Disobedience and Other Unpopular Ideas* (1996), 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, avatars, and bodies-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. *Flesh Machine* (1997–98)—a book as well as a project combining performance and audience participation in scientific procedures—investigated how the industry of human reproductive technology revitalized eugenics theories. The on-site lab work invited participants to "assess the potential value of their bodies as commodities, and hence their place in the new genetic market economy." With *Digital Resistance: Explorations in Tactical Media* (2000), 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 counterhegemonic science, speculating on the possibilities of bioresistance—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. (Walter 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 commandeered 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 underwritten by interests hostile to the needs of people. CAE's practice is not rhetorical; 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 *Flesh Machine*). At their exhibitions they often perform in the guise of a corporation or, in one instance, a cult (*Cult of the New Eve*, 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 on the walls, a working lab with microscopes, DNA testing, 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, or biological processes moving beneath the glass surface on the table before her. Art becomes science demystified, made real.

One CAE installation (*GenTerra*, 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 *E. 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 process," 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 into contact with material reality—largely ungovernable, 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 Kurtz 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 legitimize the freedom afforded by social and economic power: freedom from need, constraint, inhibition, rule, even law. 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) 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-reflectively, 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 Kurtz (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 hats, the other shoes. 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 passions burn hot around the question, How do we think and respond to a culture rationally 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 Lewontin inspire 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, mimesis, 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 affects 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 we 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 doubt familiar to many of us, and I cringe as I once again list them for publication—yet I must, 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 CAE, artistic autonomy must be addressed according to the situation confronted. I recently discussed these problems with Kurtz, who maintains that for CAE 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. *GenTerra* was once staged in a fruit market. Should CAE 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 constricting their production? Institutions can be useful, and the tactical approach to art relies on a shifting set of methods deployed according to context. With CAE'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 CAE 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. CAE 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 detonates her fireworks 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 burdens of her framework necessarily limit the ability to directly engage currents outside the gallery. Fraser revolts 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 unadorned. By conforming strictly to the demands of the situation, her performances foreground an uncontainable excess of emotion. Fraser's pathos—her irrepressible desire to be freely determining—burdens the viewers with a nagging impossible question: 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, corrosive, and unflinching critique. There's an enormous amount of optimism here. Fraser refuses to stop believing that the system can be different, better, truly committed to creativity. She remains one of the great experimental artists of her generation.

CAE, proceeding in altogether different ways, can also be counted among the signal 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 Félix 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. For 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 often lead us directly into the inarticulable, irreparable conflicts at the core of each psyche—difficult, if not impossible, to mobilize politically. That is exactly why CAE have little use for psychoanalysis.

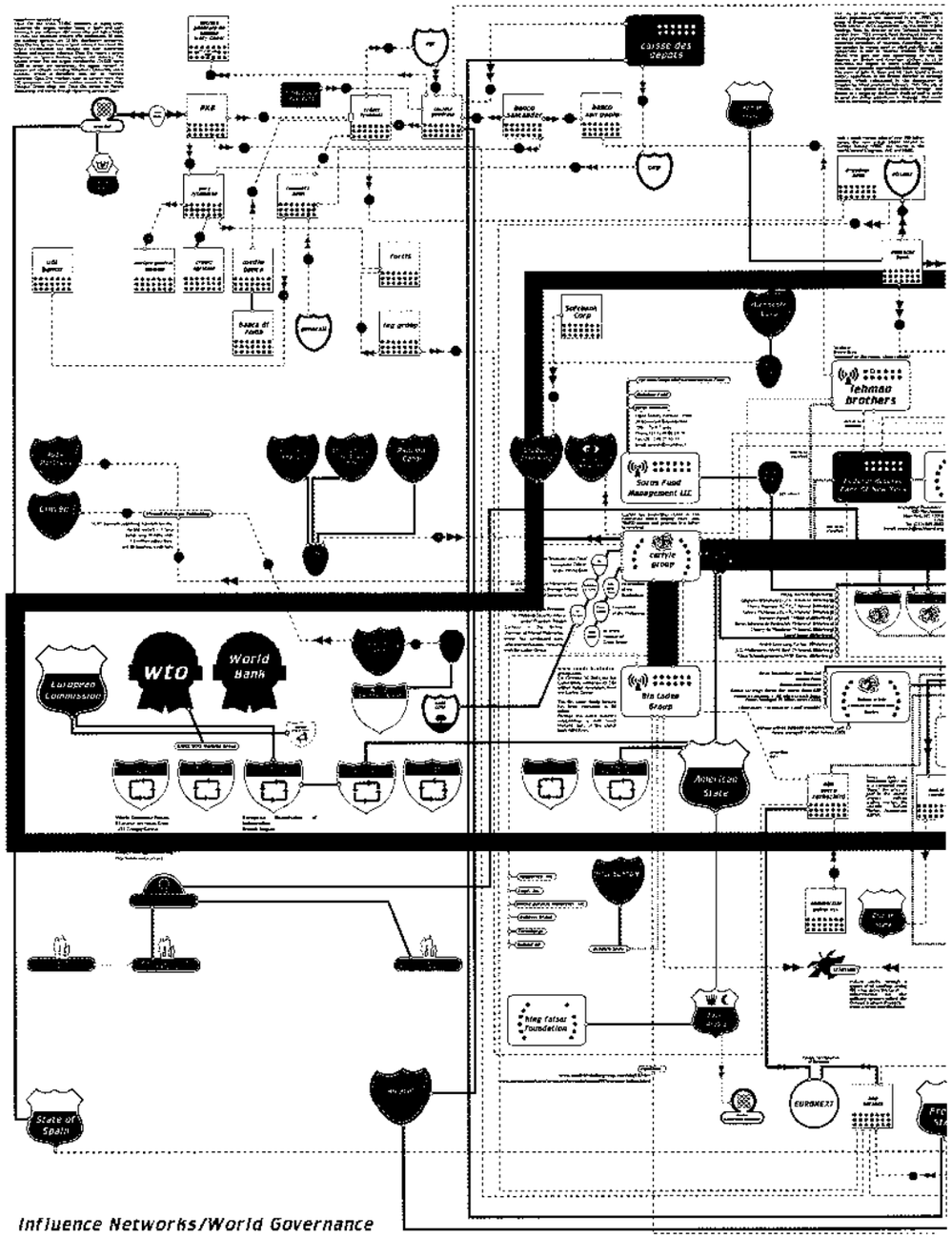
Fraser's methodology allows for exploration into areas where pragmatism fetters CAE. Although they are committed feminists, gender difference, sexuality, and desire are necessarily suspended problematics for CAE. Their front-burner concern is epistemology. The nonrational areas of the psyche are referred to and sometimes engaged, but not thoroughly analyzed in CAE. That's 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 any act of our own volition. What unfolds between birth and death may be a small set of minor navigations that appear hugely significant only to the living. Liberty exists, however, as a matter

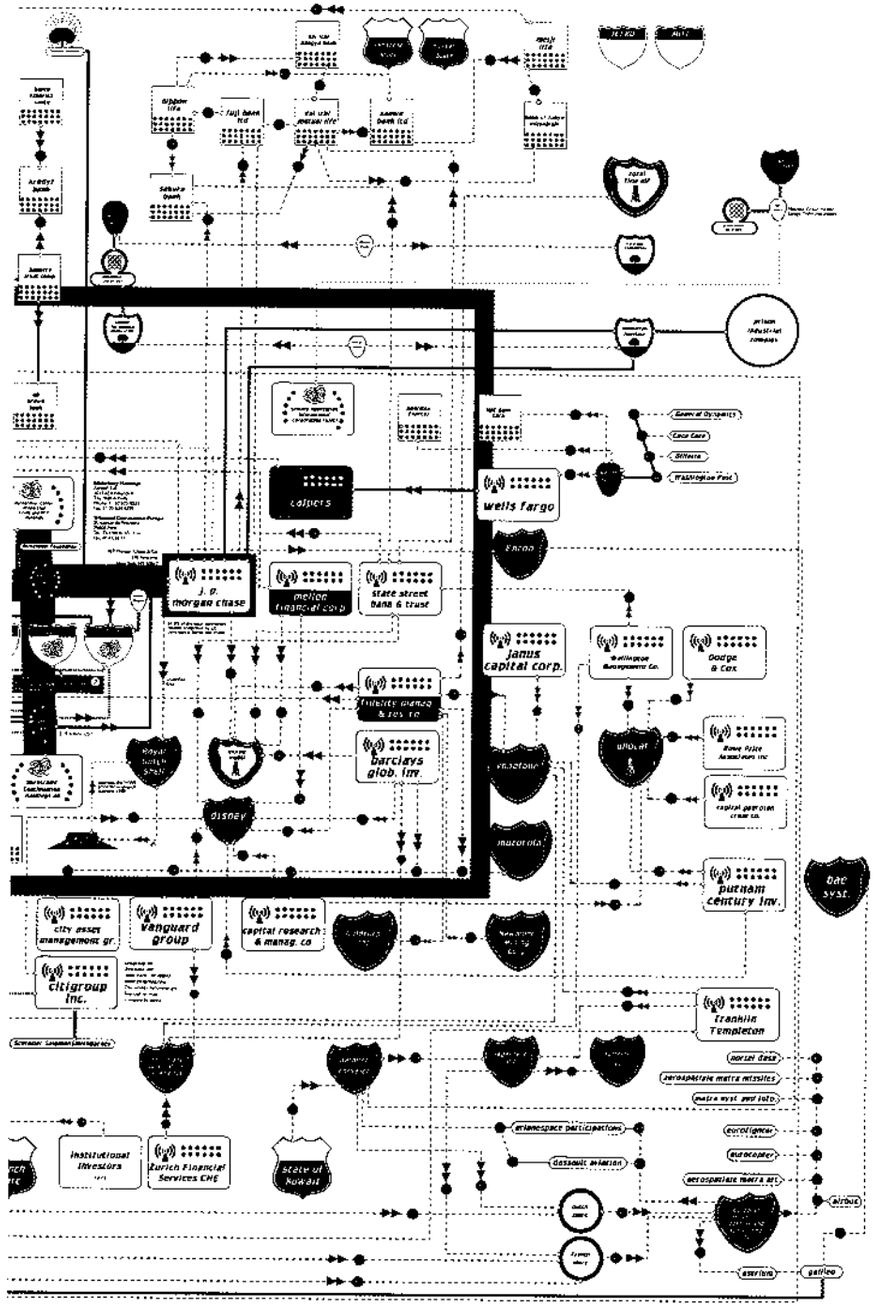
of the social. The choices open to us, whatever their import or abundance, are determined by rules and the latitude they provide. The public sphere and the choices allowed within it are all defined by politics.

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.



Influence Networks/World Governance



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Bureau d'Études, *Influence Networks*, 2002. Courtesy of the artists.

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 for 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."[1] 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 industrialization 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 artisanal realms of the feudal system of art (with

its institutional chateaux, its private and public barons, its obsequious cultural craftsmen, its exploitation of subjectivities, its embedded critics), it rapidly runs 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, Bourrelier toys, the NMPP and Relais H outlets, Hatier, Bordas, Belin, and Nathan publishers, Europe 1, RFM, 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 fiefdom, a collective symbol producer would have to assemble nothing less than publishing, distribution, and broadcasting machines, independent media, audiences, bookstores. Strike forces (unions) would also have to be created to oppose the blows of the adversaries, or to protect the exodus of the autonomous assemblies.

Such an assemblage of publication, broadcasting, and distribution machines, with the creation of unions for protection from and in opposition to the cultural fiefdoms, would be a full-fledged machine of resymbolization. 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 ways of feeling, of coordinating its forces and producing meaning. It would also stand apart by virtue of its ethics, its aesthetics, and even 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 artists' group became part of the distribution collective Co-errances.

Such a cooperative is an essential piece in an autonomous assembly: it allows for the articulation of publishers, journals, filmmakers, and producers, each one symbolizing in its own way, outside the cultural fiefdoms. It also articulates bookstores, art house cinemas, and other self-styled projection spaces and associations. To function coherently over time, the Co-errances 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 mid-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 to create a union of small and mid-sized publishers (actually numerous in France), very close to what might be called "the creativity of the multitudes." These publishers ought to meet just before the Salon du Livre, which is monopolized up to 75 percent by the manufacturer of arms and infotainment, Lagardère. Are the audiences hypnotized? Well, public mutuals (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 conscious 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 "in/out" 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 today. 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 ejaculation 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 industrialized information, as well as the sewage pipes that eject them into the infosphere. 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 collectives turn the publicity avatars 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 extra perceptual organs, thanks to their megamachines for the invention, collection, refinement, synthesis, transformation, and selective destruction of existing information. These megamachines help the governments or businesses in question to make decisions. They also allow them to manipulate collective representations by falsifying memory, implementing fake memories or false information, rumors, or pseudo-arguments (the Protagoras system, etc.). Alongside these psychological war-machines, there exist other symbolization machines creating the desire for submission, narcissistic prisons, senile adherence, coercion via the figures of desire. And so, megamachines 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 dreamt of a postindustrial Swedish welfare-state extended to the entire planet, and of a guaranteed income within the control society: "Lodging, communications and basic food supply are supposed to be guaranteed for everyone, whether they work or not."[2] 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 salaried labor, or ability to choose not to work.

Speculations 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,[3] 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 refined 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 (its "crystal ball" aspect whose effects in the hands of the technocrats are well known), would then bring into operation a process of critical resymbolization (by visualizing the different powers, the capacities of production, consumption, and their consequences) and also of positive resymbolization, 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://utangente.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 see 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

possible sovereignty of a production line, which would regroup, assemble, and coordinate scattered singularities, from the first stage to the last, from design all the way to use. It would therefore constitute the "republic" that exists in a latent state within the production line that brings together the extraction of cobalt in Zaire, the fabrication of plastics in Kuwait, the assembly of electronic components in Korea, the design of operating systems in California, software design in India, logistical support in Holland, information production in England, and consumption in France, autonomy and cooperation in the production of software, and slavery in the production of hardware.

Such a generator could also serve as the support medium for an unrepresentable multiplication of social and political ties or forms of cooperation gathering around the very framework of world power, wearing away the joints and the weak links, metamorphosing the regulatory procedures. Indeed, the world is immense, but finite. And by beginning from this finitude, the individual can become aware of and transform all the surrounding forces of exploitation and coercion, by associating on proximate terms with other individuals themselves linked together by a world class whose power can only last as long as it is hidden or presented as inexorable, natural, and necessary. By grasping the device on its largest scale, such a map generator could serve to nourish a consciousness of the multitudes, to reinforce their techniques of capture and styles of exodus in the face of a very real and effective class consciousness of the Upper Levels (bourgeoisie and aristocracy) in their daily accumulation of economic, social, and cultural capital.

A resymbolization at the intersection of a product's components would imply the loss of national struggles whose horizon is the protection of the state. The sovereignty of these struggles is a sovereignty of the production line, bringing scattered and coordinated singularities together in the same process. As in the assembly of autonomous publication, distribution, and broadcasting machines, what is at stake here is reappropriation of the lines and association of the publics. A production line is heterogeneous and multilinguistic from the outset. It has no border, even though it has relative limits. It constitutes a republic of individuals, in other words, a nonterritorial republic, which emerges in the face of the increasingly real perspective—confirmed by the gradual application of the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)—of a privatization of those functions that still remain the monopoly of the state (justice, education, territory, police, army). Here the map could serve to describe the still unrealized potential of these "republics" of globalized production.

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, Fahlström imagined obsessive monads (cock-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, slugging, 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, upraised fists, 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 resymbolized, its meaning must be extracted, 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 exodus, a machine of planetary political recomposition.

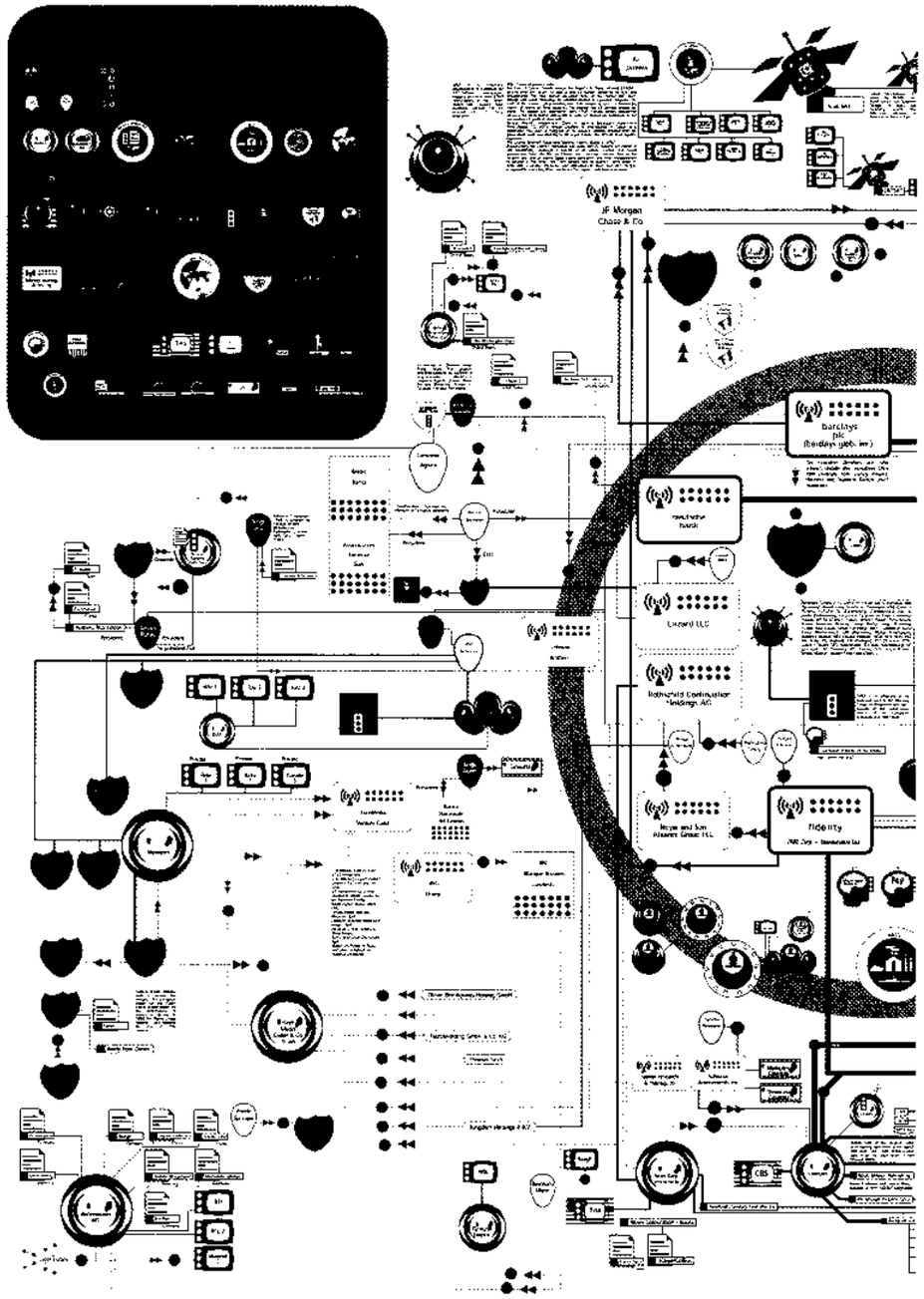
NOTES

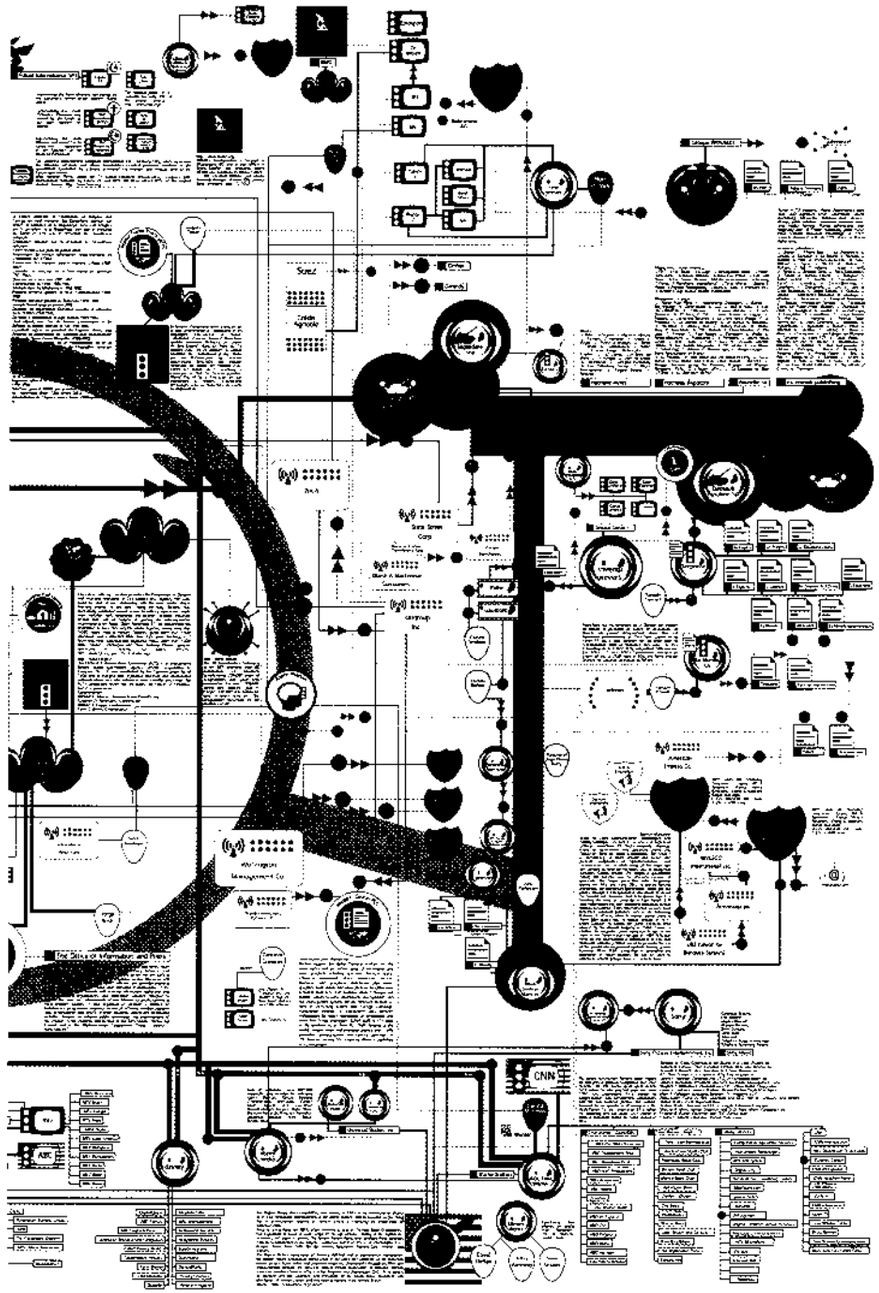
1. Öyvind Fahlström, "Take Care of the World," in *Öyvind Fahlström: Another Space for Painting*, exh. cat. (Barcelona: MacBa, 2000), 196.

2. Öyvind Fahlström, "2070, notes pour une conférence d'utopie," in *Öyvind Fahlström*, exh. cat. (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1980), 50–53.

3. For more information on this cooperative strategy game, deliberately conceived as the ecological contrary of military games, see Buckminster Fuller, *The World Game: Integrative Resource Planning Tool*, 1971, available at www.bfi.org/worlddesign/WG1_Title.pdf.

Translated by Brian Holmes, this text was published in *Third Text* 18, no. 6 (2004): 609–616.





4.6 Bureau d'Études, *Media Skills*, 2006. Courtesy of the artists.

from the object to the concrete intervention (2005)

wochenklausur

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 demand has been coming up again and again for a long time now: Art should no longer be venerated in specially designated spaces. Art should not form a parallel quasi-world. Art should not act as if it could exist of itself and for itself. Art should 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 virtuosi 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 -isms: Art can represent its commissioners and producers; it can be a definer and caretaker of identity; it can affect snobby allures and satiate the bourgeois hunger for knowledge and possession. Art can fatten up 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 enmeshed 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 religiously founded authority, art has been an especially fertile domain for querying irrational taboos and inherited 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 certitude nearing self-evidence. Every formal renewal of the world- -so 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 sociology seminars up to the present day. Looking back, the idea of "altering social relationships by altering form" appears a little naive. 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 world 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 Actionists 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 having been 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 auspicious 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. Artmann 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, nation, 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 placating 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. Ulrike Rosenbach's alternative television program was to emancipate the people from the media czars' monopolies; video technology was used by Richard Kriesche in the rehabilitation of disabled children (long before medicine came upon the idea); Barbara Steveni and John Latham of the Artist 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 agitprop 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 seer, shaman, healer, and revolutionary guru), these artists—and here avant-garde circles were in agreement—wanted to make contributions to improving coexistence: in psychology and sociology, with healing methods or in incarceration. 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. For most 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 sold, 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 mimesis, 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 changed its thinking and recognized the cause 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 collect. 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 fill their exhibition halls with visitors once again. Altered 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 extolling them for all they were worth. Art that had nothing more in mind than using its potential to improve odious conditions was not suitable for making a profit. It could not delight the aesthetically seducible eye or awaken any lofty sentiments.

In Poland these 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 callow anticommunism, but rather a refined strategy that these artists were using to assail 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 halting 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 manifesto of socialist surrealism. In this manifesto, the police officer was declared a work of art, as an individual, or better yet deployed en masse to charge against the activists: the wilder, the better the art.

In the West, the phase of self-satisfied, market-oriented art production did not last forever. With the nineties came a change of thinking and in fact a renewal of reflection on the social responsibility of art. Postmodernism's celebrated autonomy revealed itself to be an apparition to which countless palaces and new museums had been erected: They brought dealers dizzying 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 cutbacks, 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 demystification 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 lures the masses with spectacles and lots of horn-blowing. And conversely into an art that acts—independently of profit and populism—in possibilities, that seeks to examine and improve the conditions of coexistence. The latter sounds a bit altruistic and missionary. Too altruistic for the art that just wants to hang free 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 past 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 transforming 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. Folksongs don't rescue whales; "Stop AIDS" posters don't stop the spread of the disease; and Klaus Staeck's agitprop 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, reading Austrian literature aloud to asylum seekers, or having "Mutter Courage" appear on stage costumed 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 croissants before returning to her everyday life. There is "Rock Music with Lyrics on Housing Shortage" in which "tenant's need" rhymes 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-looking 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 basis 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 intensive 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.

engaging ambivalence: interventions in engineering culture (2005)

institute for applied autonomy

The most significant underwriter of engineering research in the United States is the Department of Defense, largely acting 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 REVIEW AS CO-PRODUCTION

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 transcendence (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" (2002) 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 entice academics with fanciful visions of future combat 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 while the rest are abandoned, unworthy of further attention. Principal investigators who keep their program managers satiated 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 "word 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 continuously labor to engage DARPA managers in the co-construction of technologically enabled martial fantasy, enjoying the bounty of continued funding where they succeed and adjusting their products where they fall short.

REINTERPRETATION AS INTERVENTION

Because their operations depend on the unfettered flow of DARPA funding, research and development labs generally rely on literal interpretation strategies when deciphering DARPA solicitations. Artists and amateurs, 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 "Contestational 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 juvenile 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—although, 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 (a "mobile communication system . . . optimized for restrictive terrain" 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 conceptual turn 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 problematic . . . an opportunity for continuous, useful, material development" (Holt 1997). 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 Dilbert 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 energizes a highly skilled workforce dedicated to solving "hard problems," the Dilbert 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 value-neutral tool that, by extension, insists 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-supported 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 slippage between "dual use" technologies, which have a varied but limited set of military and civilian applications, and "general 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 (Weizenbaum 1976), emphasizing civilian applications for a DARPA-funded research project downplays the particular application for which it has been designed and frees 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 IAA 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 right

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.

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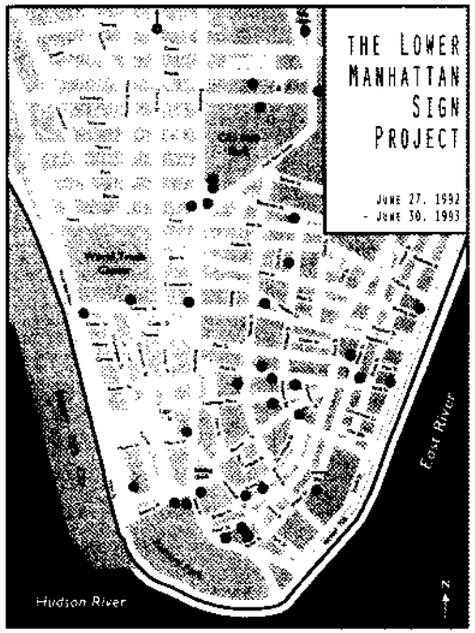
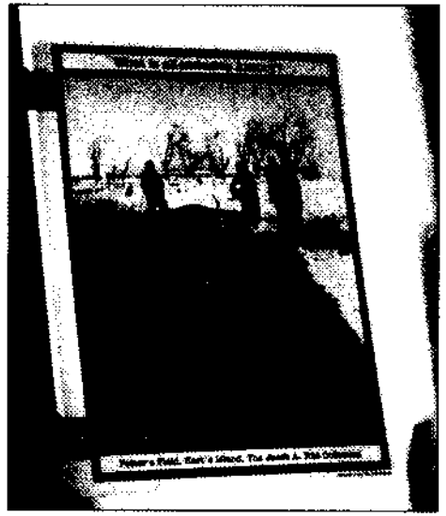


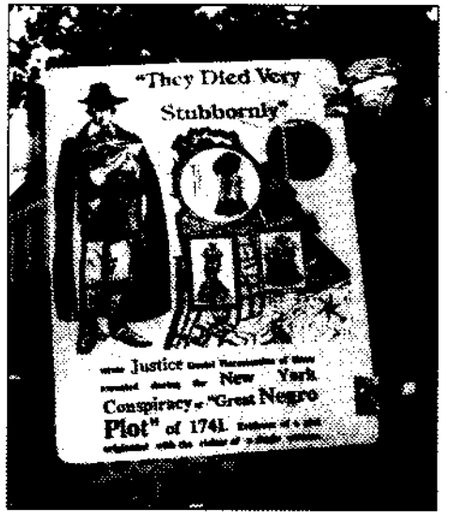
The Lower Manhattan Sign Project consists of 39 two-sided, silkscreened street signs, 18 by 24 inches, installed on lamp posts at 36 sites throughout lower Manhattan's financial district. The individual signs are linked by a two common elements that fill the lower portion of the back side of each sign: one or more of a series of questions addressed directly to the viewer concerning her or his relationship to the place, people and events recalled in the sign; and a number corresponding to the sign's location on a map of the overall project. The map suggests the route for a walking tour running from Battery Park at the southern tip of Manhattan, north to Leonard Street, just above City Hall. Visits to these sites can also easily be broken into three lunch-hour walks taking in the clusters of signs around Battery Park, Wall Street and City Hall.

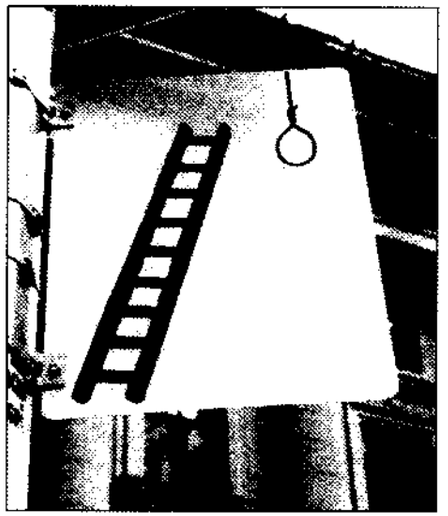
KEY

1. *Potter's Field/Ellis Island* - Jayne Pagnucco
2. *Indian Giver or When Will America Be Discovered?* - Todd Ayoung
3. *The Great Negro Plot of 1741* (3 signs) - Mark O'Brien & Willie Birch
4. *Leisler's Rebellion* - Stephen Duncombe
5. *Bullet Made from Statue of King George III* - Darin Wacs
6. *Homelessness: Forgotten Histories* - Tom Klem
7. *Whitehall Induction Center* - Beth-Sue Hertz
8. *Origin of Pearl Street* - Sabra Moore
9. *Nelson Mandela's Visit to New York City* - Curlee Holton
10. *Origin of the Word "Indian"* - Gustavo Silva
11. *Indian Settlement Sites* - Tohin
12. *India House* - Leela Ramotar
13. *The Other J. P. Morgan* - Greg Sholette
14. *Stock Market Crash* - Jim Costanzo
15. *False Democracy: Inequality of the U.S. Senate* - Ed Eisenberg
16. *Subway Fire* - Sam Binkley
17. *Who Owns Your Life?: Insurance and National Health Care* - Carin Kuoni
18. *The Meat and Slave Market* - Tess Timoney & Mark O'Brien
19. *Rose Schneiderman: Union Activist* - Nannette Yanuzzi Macias & Jeff Skoller
20. *The First Chinese Community in the United States* - EPOXY Art Group
21. *John Jacob Astor and Native Americans* - Alan Michelson
22. *The Story of the Waterfront* - Dan Wiley
23. *Madame Restell and Anthony Comstock* (2 signs) - Lisa Maya Knauer & Janet Koenig
24. *Office Workers Eat Their Lunch* - Naill Bogan & Irene Ledwith
25. *Maiden Lane: What's in a Name?* - Hilary Klinos & Betty Beaumont
26. *Gotham City* - Lise Brown & Curt Belshe
27. *Epidemics* - Brian Goldfarb
28. *Frances Wright: Racial and Sexual Equality* - Josely Carvalho & Deborah Mesa-Pelly
29. *Vito Marcentonio: The People's Congressman* - Gerald Mayer & Marina Gutierrez
30. *Civil Defense Drill Arrests in the 1950's* - Jody Wright
31. *Fight Tonight: Boxing and Exploitation* - George Spencer & Cynthia Anderson
32. *Forlorn Hope/Debtor's Jail* - Laurie Ourlicht & Jim Ciment
33. *The First Alms House* - Anita Morse & Andy Musilli
34. *Negros Burial Ground/The City Limits* - Dan Wiley & Lisa Maya Knauer
35. *Smith Act Trials* - Kaith Christensen
36. *United Tailoresses Society* - Stephanie Basch

4.7 RepoHistory, *The Lower Manhattan Sign Project*, 1992 -1993. Courtesy of the artists.







4.8

jude finisterra interviewed (2004)

the yes men

The twentieth anniversary of the Bhopal gas tragedy was a day of embarrassment 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 100,000 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 the firm 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 multibillion-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 apologize 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 there, 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? How did you end up being called for an interview with the BBC?*

Bichlbaum: *A couple of years ago we set up a website that looked 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, who received five hundred dollars apiece, 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 Bhopali is a shareholder. So about a week and a half ago 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 most 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?*

Bichlbaum: *That's right. Yes. Because I live in Paris, and Mike's here, as well—another Yes Man—and so we couldn't afford to go to London, what with the pound and the dollar. So they set up a studio here in Paris and went in on the morning of December 3. I was hooked in 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 Carbide. Good morning to you. A day of commemoration in Bhopal. Do you now accept responsibility for what happened?

Jude Finisterra: Steve, 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'm very, very happy to announce that for the first time Dow is accepting full responsibility for the Bhopal catastrophe. We have a twelve-billion dollar plan to finally, at long last, fully compensate the victims, including the 120,000 who may need medical care for their entire lives, and to fully and swiftly remediate the Bhopal plant site. Now, when we acquired Union Carbide 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 Carbide, this nightmare for the world and this headache for Dow, and use 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 not "plenty good for an Indian," as one of our spokespersons 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 Carbide abandoned the site twenty years ago, or sixteen years ago, they left tons of toxic waste which continues--the site 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 Carbide. This is, as you mentioned, late, but it is the only thing we can do. When we acquired Union Carbide, 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 no 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 nonfinancial 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 bail 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 Carbide shortly after the catastrophe. This information has never been released, Steve, and it's time for it to be released in case any of that information can be of use to medical professionals. And finally, we're going to perform—we are going 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 reiterate what Jude Finisterra, the spokesman 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 announcing 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 posing 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 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 Ashanin: 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 basis whatsoever for this report, and we also confirm that Jude Finisterra 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, wiping 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 intention, really. It was unfortunate that it had to be the BBC because the BBC had been covering Bhopal rather extensively and well. We would have much rather hoaxed Fox or ABC or NBC 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 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 News 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 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 remediate 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 Dowethics.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?

Bichlbaum: 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.

Bichlbaum: 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, but 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 maniacal 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 Bichlbaum, or whoever you are. I want to thank you for joining us. Jude Finisterra/Andy Bichlbaum of the Yes Men, 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.countercurrents.org.

4.9 Louise Lawler, *Big*, 2002. Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures.

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 or, 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 that 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 also 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 vein one could say that the proletariat as a political subject was produced through the criticism 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 subjectivation 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 criticism 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 had taken on a complex governmental function. This role has been brilliantly described by Benedict Anderson in his seminal work *Imagined Communities*, when he analyzes the role of the museum in the formation of colonial nation-states. In his view, the museum, in creating a national past, retroactively also created the origin and foundation of the nation and that was its main function. But this colonial situation, as in many other cases, points at the structure 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 disadvantaged 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 scene, propelled and inspired by social movements outside of the art field.[1]

NEOLIBERAL INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE

But during the next wave of institutional criticism 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 criticism, 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 ideal 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 legitimative 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 eher dar, als sie sie vertreten*. 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, somehow 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 so 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 unmooring 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 Janus-faced subject was formed. This subject was interested in more 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 fortunately 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 indigenist and ethnographic or else unspecific and snobbish. 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 nativist 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 tries to retreat into a position which claims that it is the duty 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 construction of national public spheres, and that under this perspective the cultural institution can only be defended by trying to retreat into the ruins of a demolished national welfare state and its cultural shells 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 critics of institution, who want to transform it into a sort of sacralized ethnopark. But there is no going back to the old Fordist 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 nativist, 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 freelancer work within cultural industries.[2] And in the worst cases, those spectacles of criticism are the decoration of large enterprises of economic colonialism such as in the colonization of Eastern Europe by the same institutions which are collecting conceptual art in these regions.

If, during 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

1. S. A. Jens Kastner, "Artistic Internationalism and Institutional Critique," in *Transversal Multilingual Webjournal: Do You Remember Institutional Critique?*, January 2006, http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0106/steyerl/en (accessed May 1, 2007).

2. As Anthony Davies has remarked, this raises the question of conflict between precarious workers and administrators within institutions as well the necessity to challenge those conditions of labor. "Take Me I'm Yours: Neo liberalising the Cultural Institution," *Mute Magazine* 2, no. 5 (May 2007).

This text was published without endnotes in the online journal of the European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies (EIPCP), *Transversal* (January 2006). It is taken from http://transform.eipcp.net.