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In memoriam Ioana Nemeş (1979 - 2011)

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Tactics for the Here and Now

by Anne Barlow

COLUMN

In the last few years, the 'here and now' has been increasingly referred to as 'precarious,' giving rise to a number of publications, conferences and exhibitions^[1] that examine the relationship between different forms and interpretations of precariousness in relation to current artistic practice. As Hal Foster noted in his article 'Precarious', 'Over the past decade, this condition became all but pervasive, and it is this heightened insecurity that much art has attempted to manifest, even to exacerbate. This social instability is redoubled by an artistic instability, as the work at issue here foregrounds its own schismatic condition, its own lack of shared meanings, methods or motivations. Paradoxically, then, precariousness seems almost constitutive of much art...^[2]. Foster further notes that within such work, the "confusion" of ruling elites and the "violence" of global capital... is often staged in performative installations,' and cites work by Thomas Hirschhorn and Isa Genzken that, in different ways, reflects this in both form and content.

Operating within the same context of the shifting nature of economics, politics and culture, are artistic practices whose agency lies in investigative or indirect approaches that possess their own kind of power. The fifth edition of the Bucharest

[4]

[5]

Biennale focuses on such practices through a number of installations, environments and performances, as well as through the integration of projects within existing presentation and distribution systems outside traditionally conceived art venues. While many of the artists engage with the subjects of territories and histories, risky and unstable positions or systems of authority, they do so in a way that is characterised by ambiguity, opacity, non-linearity and the quasi-fictional, or by tactics of subterfuge and infiltration. While some use processes that are investigative or slow in the making – expressing a kind of resistance to the speed and instability of everyday life – others turn to more 'informal' methodologies. As Simon Sheikh points out, 'The field of art has become-in short-a field of possibilities, of exchange and comparative analysis. It has become a field for alternatives, proposals and models, and can, crucially, act as a cross field, an intermediary between different fields, modes of perception, and thinking, as well as between very different positions and subjectivities...' [3]

The application of more laissez-faire approaches is dynamic and responsive and can be difficult to pin down. It is particularly resonant in Bucharest in terms of political history, infrastructure and support systems and conditions for artistic practice, which themselves are in the process of evolving. The informal has been identified by several writers as connected to societies that have experienced repression or that have undergone political transition. 'A key feature of communism was the organisation of society into formal and informal spheres. Formally, communist society was defined by a vast number of laws, rules and regulations and the econ-

omy was regulated by short-term and long-term plans. As laws were frequently idealistic – and consequently also often unrealistic – and plans (carrying the status of law) usually too taut to be implemented, informality became a useful tool to circumvent the former and secure fulfilment of the latter. It was also used by the general public as a strategy for coping with everyday life.' [4] During that time, informal environments offered artists the opportunity, albeit within limited circles, to show and discuss their work. [5]

The informal can spring from popular culture, quotidian events and the actions of various kinds of 'subcultures.' Informal structures have been recognized in different sectors of society, not only in culture but also in business and management, as having the capacity to act like a shadow, operating from the ground up. Such approaches are well suited to artists whose interests lie in ways of negotiating the realms of 'nonfiction, facts, directions, laws and ... how systems work,' observing their structure and behavior to investigate 'where their loopholes lie.' [6] The potential of the informal in relation to agency is also acknowledged in the educational framework advanced by Pavilion's Free Academy, where informal education is deemed more important and vital than that of the formal system, and where the type of citizen that participates in social debate becomes more of an agent of change who has the capacity to get involved. [7]

With some artists in the Biennale, tactics of subterfuge and infiltration are intrinsic to their practice, whether their work takes the form of documents of 'tactical behavior,' or situations that are playfully or

provocatively embedded within sites of daily activity. In relation to how one defines the public domain, it is important to bear in mind William Pope.L's comment that agency 'is relative to context. It is not natural and freely given Agency is a negotiation, always mediated.' [8] As Maria Lind points out, there are differences between work that is 'context-sensitive' as opposed to 'site-specific.' Lind considers that 'recipes must be reformulated for every occasion' since being context-sensitive is more about being sensitive to situations and a 'challenge to the status quo – being context-sensitive with a twist' [9] Within this framework, the Biennale contains several projects that generate spaces of encounter outside art venues themselves, altering the expected realities of a given context – whether this is a cinema schedule, social space, or publications on subjects other than art – allowing for moments of confusion or questioning, and ideally a curiosity as to the origins and intentions of these interventions. Such projects are not about the mere dispersal of knowledge, but, in their intentions and chosen contexts, seek to be closer to what Simon Sheikh refers to as 'networks of indiscipline, lines of flight, and utopian questionings' that create 'spaces of thinking.' [10]

Information itself, in terms of how it is distributed, researched, absorbed and represented has of course been profoundly affected by the internet. The circulation of information and images has never been greater, leading not just an 'expanded sociality of the web but an accelerated, highly visual, hybridized commons.' [11] Patterns of learning about a subject have been deeply affected by the Internet's ability to reveal formerly obscure or other-

wise concealed data, as well as its potential to generate associative meaning through multiple direct and tangential searches. As John Conomos notes, we are living 'in a world where the computer and its attendant techno-utopian myths of artifice, control and rationality create in us a sense of reality that is becoming more elaborate, more contingent, and more dependent on digital languages of representation – where the discourse between cognition and epistemology, images and knowledge is being radically alerted by electronic technologies.' [12]

User-generated sources such as Wikipedia, with its inherent potential for multiple and possibly inaccurate accounts, and the sheer act of researching links and connections from one thing to another online, provide rich material for artists interested in more associative structures, narratives and meanings. Often seductive and formal in their aesthetic presentation, their works are full of word games, tangential logic, and what may even seem flights of fancy, that render simplistic interpretation impossible – the consequences of a research and thinking process that in its very nature could be seen as a 'permission for knowledge that is tangential and contingent and whose sociability as it were, its search for companionship, is based not on linearity and centrality but on dispersal and on consistent efforts at re-singularisation.' [13]

A strong component of the Biennale involves a reworking of certain histories from the civic to the personal, in a way that is not always about nostalgia or narrative, but is rather a deliberately constructed perspective on the contemporary. Whether referring to the architecture and

symbols of past eras, or the genres of science fiction or documentary, content is altered through a process that is additive or reductive in intention and form, producing a configuration of components that require a shift in perception. Several histories or time frames may be evoked in one image, or a sense of place suggested yet concealed: in such cases, one has to 'reorient' the position from which one receives and processes information, setting aside assumptions and previously acquired knowledge. As Claire Staebler notes in the journal *Typologies of Unlearning: Resistance, Renewal and Fresh Attempts*, 'If unlearning becomes a means of connecting with the world – an individual or collective tendency, allowing everyone to rethink, to renegotiate and to question what they believe or think they know – then art, inevitably, can help us reformulate our perceptions of the world.'^[14] With several of the Biennale projects, relationships between visual art and literature also blur, not just in relation to how text is used as primary material, but in terms of how purely visual elements create 'the imaginative space and potential that is usually associated with literature ... without recourse to the trappings of language or narrative.'^[15] Operating 'in-between' fact and fiction, history and the 'now,' the works draw on, as well as project, either a multiplicity – almost overabundance – of references, or conversely, possess strength by virtue of creating a space where something seems 'missing' or incomplete, giving rise to 'a multiplicity of folds and gaps in the fabric of common experience that change the cartography of the perceptible, the thinkable and the feasible.'^[16]

- [1] Precarity in relation to contemporary art has been explored in exhibitions including *Human Condition: Empathy and Emancipation in Precarious Times*, Kunsthhaus Graz/Universal-museum Joanneum, 2010, and *The Workers*, MASS MoCA, 2011–12; articles including Nicolas Bourriaud, 'Precarious Constructions: Answer to Jacques Ranciere on Art and Politics,' in *A Precarious Existence: Vulnerability in the Public Domain* (Rotterdam: 2009); 'Thriving on Adversity: The Art of Precariousness,' Anna Dezeuze, in *Mute* 2, 3 (September 2006); and conferences including *Zones of Emergency: Artistic Interventions – Creative Responses to Conflict & Crisis*, MIT Program in Art, Culture and Technology (ACT), fall 2011.
- [2] Hal Foster, 'Precarious,' *Artforum* (December 2009).
- [3] Simon Sheikh, 'SPACES FOR THINKING: Perspectives on the Art Academy,' *Texte Zur Kunst* 62.
- [4] Åse Berit Grødeland and Aadne Aasland, *Informality and Informal Practices in East Central and South East Europe* Complex Europe (Melbourne, 2007).
- [5] As noted in the essay for *Agents & Provocateurs* (Institute of Contemporary Art, Dunaúvaros, 2009): 'In his fictive dialogue with Ceausescu from 1978, artist Ion Grigorescu takes the "father of the people" epithet literally, and directly addresses the political leader to offer constructive criticism. For several decades, this film of Grigorescu was only available to a narrow circle as the artist mostly worked as a restorer, secluded from the professional public.'
- [6] 'Mixing Business with Pleasure,' interview with artist Jill Magid, *Base Now* 15 (May, 2009).
- [7] Eugen Radescu, *Free Academy*, Pavilion, Bucharest.
- [8] William Pope.L, 'Agency and What You Can Do With It,' in *Creative Time: The Book: 33 Years of Public Art in New York City*, eds. Anne Pasternak and Ruth Peltason (New York, 2007).
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- [15] Kaelen Wilson-Goldie, 'Haris Epaminonda,' *Bidoun* 20, p. 126.
- [16] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London and New York, 2009), p. 72.

Fordism. Post-Fordism and attempts to reposition art in globalization

by Eugen Rădescu

AROUND

Postmodern society has not relinquished the major themes of ethics, as a moral, economic and cultural perspective. On the contrary, the new, complex and hyper-technological context raised new aspects of these topics for debate. The ethical realm of contemporary society expanded to new subjects that are discussed extensively and from various angles, either formally or informally: charity, bioethics, political correctness – political language codes – abortion, sexual harassment, euthanasia, fight against drugs, etc. There is an increasing talk about the revival of values and of the spirit of responsibility. The emergence of environmentalist, feminist and ethnic movements, the new social movements, as well as the new movements in contemporary art – which are of particular interest for this paper – stir a debate over the fundamental problems of man and society in the 20th century – a century that can undoubtedly be referred to as a century of extremes. Postmodern ethics itself, global and omnipresent in all types of discourse, share this feature of the epoch,

too. The individualism of these times is displayed without inhibition, often ostentatiously. At the same time, however, the existence of thousands of associations, alliances, foundations and organizations clearly shows that people are aware of the need to establish new (even though minimal) forms of cohabitation, of survival, as defeatists would say, of efficiently managing the heritage of past generations.

There are two opposite tendencies acting in the cultural and economic globalization. One stimulates immediate pleasure, consumption, entertainment, and explodes into excess: drugs, pornography, bulimia for objects and media programs. Lacking any limits and transcendence, the obese postmodern man embodies the individualistic cult of the present and the escalation to extremes in the absence of rules.

The other tendency is the rationalization of time and of the body, the "professional" approach to everything, the obsession for excellence and quality, for wholesomeness and hygiene. The hedonistic society does not capture energies in the form of pleasures, but they are utilized and standardized, diversified, presented in the rational norms of physical built and health (Gilles Lipovetsky, 1996).

Consumption is moderate, pleasures are short, enhanced, worth seeking for, attempts do not matter.

The postmodern hedonism is no longer transgressive or dilettantish, but managed, functionalized, reasonable.

Ford. Fordism

In 1925, there were 24,565,000 automobiles registered in the entire world. Of

them, 19,954,000 were in the United States and only 2,676,000 in Europe. In other words, ratio was of 1 automobile to 5.6 Americans, compared to 1 automobile to 49 people in Britain or to 54 people in France, a fact that made A. Siegfried say that "the automobile is the most visible sign of the American wealth." The success of the automobile in the United States had several major causes, including:

- the huge geographical area of the country;
- the richness in natural resources demanded by the automotive industry;
- the development of certain mechanical industries;
- a relatively large population;
- the skills of an American technical middle class, etc.

However, the most important element was probably the fact that the automobile seemed to fit very well with the American cultural values and with a certain type of social behavior.

The assembly line led to the advent of a new industrialism, referred to as "Fordism" by A. Gramsci. Basically, Fordism was a capitalist system of mass production and consumption implemented in developed countries, which facilitated a sustained economic growth rate from 1945 to 1970. In 1973-1990, the economic growth slowed down significantly in these countries.

Characterized by close connections between governments, trade unions, employer unions and the international capital, the system was controlled by the state.

In the '70s, Fordism turned into post-

Fordism, with the following characteristics:

- global competition,
- flexible production systems,
- flexible organizational structures,
- niche markets and niche production of dedicated goods,
- segmentation of consumers based in lifestyle, as well as on their standardized cultural model,
- declining trade unionism,
- selective individual consumption, depending on personal needs and selective choice,
- an extended managerial elite and flexible specialization (George Toma, 2005)

Globalization (as a term extrinsic to Fordism and post-Fordism) refers to an extensive process of worldwide integration and dissemination of a set of ideas more or less related to economic activities and to the production of goods, boosted by the liberalization of international trade and capital flows, the acceleration of technological advancement and the information society. A rather controversial concept, globalization is subject to two approaches: a positive one, focusing on the benefits of uniformity and of internationalization of societies, and a negative one, blaming globalization for the loss of individuality of a nation or community.

In the specialized literature, "globalization" is used with various meanings, economic, political, social or cultural, revealing a concept that captures the historical process of deepening and expansion of a system of interdependencies among nations, civilizations and political communities.

In the globalization period, the cultural dimension is often mistaken for the cul-

ture of media, audiovisual technologies and means of communications through which cultural representations are transmitted. Media culture means alienation through consumerism, democratization and even mediocritization of consumption. Culture can be global, too. Global culture is artificial and formless, as it is, in fact, a fabricated culture, outside history.

However, cultural globalization is a highly dialectical process, in which globalization and localization, homogenization and fragmentation, centralization and decentralization or conflict and creolization (mixing) do not exclude each other. They are inseparable sides of the same coin. The cultural change is not only a story of loss and destruction, but of development and creativity. Even though the interconnections among the old forms of diversity are lost, new forms of cultural diversity arise.

Cultural democratization

Democracy, in the modern acceptance, involves the participation of all citizens. Briefly, it consists in granting a certain level of decision-making power to people who are not ready to face the responsibilities involved and not even really interested in exercising power. Democratization in politics occurred in the early 20th century and was one of the main catalysts of the world wars. The democratic decision-making has always been fundamentally inefficient and even became its own enemy in the mentioned political context. Soon, cultural democratization arrived, too. Like in politics, a sphere that it encompasses (in the wider, ethnological meaning of culture), the expansion of the phenomenon is largely determined by the new forms of access to information. Obviously, there is also a reverse reac-

tion, i.e. and elitization of culture (in the narrower sense this time), but this only worsens the situation. It is no surprise that the democratization of culture originated in the country of democracy. Of the three political systems that fought for supremacy in the 20th century, the only one that preached the returning to nation (although in a devious way) was defeated in WW2 and strictly banished. Interdiction remains a taboo in contemporary politics, whose present relevance was demonstrated by the recent events in Austria. The representatives of the WW2 winning systems chose an internationalist approach to culture: the USA, for historical reasons, and the USSR, for ideological ones. It is sufficient to mention, as a proof, the names of these states: the United States and the Soviet Union. Moreover, the two states have never been major cultural groundbreakers. The situation at the beginning of the new century looks even gloomier. While on the social plane the collapse of communism was long-awaited and auspicious, in culture, the situation of the freed countries worsened (excepting the cultural elites, for which the freedom of expression is relevant). In popular democracies, this field was not democratic either and, as a consequence, culture, although strictly controlled, did not have the time to become vulgar, compensating, to some extent, for the evils of the initial communist internationalism through the national communism of the latest period. Thus, the beginning of the century has only one cultural winner – the American democratic internationalism, whose declared altruism is, in my opinion, not very sincere. The weapons used in the battle have improved and expanded their range of action. There is a tendency towards cultural homogenization, which means the

loss of identity, even if only cultural. I do not mean to promote a deterministic picture of the relationship between politics and culture, in which one would strictly follow the evolutions of the other, but one cannot fail to note that the military winners have imposed, in most cases, their cultural model, too. The model was imposed either intentionally or not and for selfish or altruistic purposes. Preestablished plans are inherently related to the historical period opened by the French Revolution. Two questions arise: is it worth fighting to keep the identity? and, if yes, how? The first question can only be answered from an ideological standpoint. Therefore, all I can do is state my belief: it should be tried. The alternative to homogenization is the national culture. The situation is sensitive, for several reasons, either European or specific to Romania. National culture is very hard to define (if anyone can see a point in attempting such a definition). The pursuit for purity cannot yield any result. The current state of amalgamation of various cultures can almost justify the positions that completely deny the existence of any reality to fill in the concept of national culture. I think, however, that a certain specificity has never ceased to exist. The theoretical attempt to detect and date influences is bound to fail by irrelevance, as it ignores the mythological dimension of this specificity. The most effective way to destroy a myth is to try to grasp it using the instruments of reason. A myth should be lived. A myth should be taken as it is. From a cultural point of view, it is a sure source of inspiration, validated by the passing of time. I cannot see a way out of the crisis through interbellum-like cultural associations or through government policies (although they can play a certain role), but through the creative action of individuals

who become aware of their cultural responsibility.

Art and politics. The beginning of a reasoning

In our current situation, when, on one hand, we are amidst of some accelerated attempts to direct the globalization movements (e.g. the “war against terror”) and, on the other hand, we see how difficult it is to combine the artistic experiment with political comment, it could be relevant to take a look back to the previous attempts to use art as a tool for approaching the topic of social inequality and for continuous controversy in the public debates. Focusing on what was traditionally described as one of the “golden ages” of wild art, particularly the ‘60s, we note that the difficulties related to the “crossbreeding” between artistic experiment and political commentary or between the art object and the political subjects, which we are currently facing, were equally present in that early period, too. I will briefly overview in the following paragraphs the Situationist International (SI), the Artist Placement Group and the Art Workers’ Coalition, which, back in the ‘60s, tried to get involved in the formulation of political topics and to break away from the institutional structures of art, moving towards a wider cultural or political practice. Jacques Ranciere (2011) highlights the relationship between art and politics, primarily viewed as two separate entities, without any clear connection between them, excepting that both are forms of disagreement. Politics is a process that simultaneously denies each foundation on which it is built. It is the dilution of the boundaries between what is political and what can be assigned to the sphere of the social and of private life. What is unique in

Ranciere’s approach is the attempt to introduce the equalitarian effects of art and politics in theory – a thing never done before. Ranciere introduces the politics in the sphere of radicalism, just like Chantal Mouffe (2000), criticizing the notion of consensus, which tends to shrink the public sphere, instead of giving it space to manifest itself. By resorting to consensus in politics, two aspects suffer an extreme reduction: one refers to the citizens, who become “population”, a subject with a sole identity, while politics is managed by professionalized persons - politicians or government experts. The disagreement concerning politics and art is based on the contradictory logic according to which the distribution for political participation and artistic practices is made. The disagreement in Ranciere’s view is not based on the difference between “friend” and “foe”, used by Carl Smith, then by Chantal Mouffe (1985), among others, but he sees political action as a breakaway from the social, hierarchic order, inventing new manners of being, of seeing, of expression, new subjectivities, new forms of collective enunciation.

In “Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics”, Ranciere focuses on art’s power to promote creative and transformative action. His conceptualization of art and politics emphasize the potential for destruction of the forms of domination, based on the tendency of seeing art as the promise of a new world for individuals and community. What Ranciere wants to point out is that the freedom of art, seen as the freedom of the aesthetic, is based on the same principles of equality as political demonstrations. He distinguishes three regimes of art: the ethical one, in which art does not have any autonomy and the artistic images are used

depending on their usefulness for society, the representational one, in which art means imitation, and the aesthetic one, the only one able to generate innovative action. The aesthetic regime is autonomous and creative; it overthrows restrictions, creating an artistic equalitarianism – hence, the possible resemblance to the overturning of political and social hierarchies. Each work of art must have a story with a moral, social and political significance, based on a system of meanings and focusing on action (Ranciere, 2010, p. 15).

On institutional criticism. Criticism by art

The very term of “institutional criticism” seems to point to a direct relationship between a method and an object, where the method is the criticism and the object is the situation. In the first wave of institutional criticism, in the late '60s and early '70 – much celebrated and categorized by the history of art since then – these terms were apparently defined in an even more specific and narrower way; the critical method was an artistic practice and the institution concerned was the institution of art, in particular, the art museum, but also the galleries and collections. The institutional criticism took many forms, from art works and interventions and critical writings to artistic political activism. Nevertheless, in the so-called second wave of the '80s, the institutional framework expanded, to some extent, to include the role of the artist (the subject performing the criticism) as being institutionalized, as well as the investigation of certain spaces (and practices) exterior to art. Today, both ways are themselves part of the institution of art, seen as art history and education, as well as general

contemporary art practice, dematerialized and post-conceptual.

Why do we speak of institutional criticism in art today? The answer is very simple: because we (still) believe that art has an intrinsic power to criticize. Of course, we do not refer here only to art criticism, but to something more, that is, to the ability of art to criticize life and the world beyond the boundaries of its own realm and, by doing this, even to change both of them. However, this also includes a certain degree of self-criticism or, more specifically, the practice of critical self-reflexiveness, which means that we expect (or, at least, used to expect) the art to be aware of the conditions making it possible, which usually mean the conditions of its creation (Buden, 2002). These two ideas – the awareness of the conditions of possibility and the awareness of the conditions of creation – point to two major domains of the modern criticism: the theoretical domain and the practical, political one. Kant was the one who launched the interrogation considering the conditions making our knowledge possible and who explicitly understood this interrogation as an act of criticism.

From this point forward, one can say that modern criticism either is critical (that is, self-reflexive), or is not modern.

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Politics as Art of the Impossible: The Case for a Dreampolitik in the United States

by Stephen Ducombe

A dominant movement in leftist politics has always embraced a sense of reality as opposed to dreams and imagination. The American sociologist Stephen Duncombe argues instead for a dreampolitik, which, unlike reactionary populist fantasies, can activate the imagination with impossible dreams. They make it possible to think 'out of the box' and to wonder what an alternative world and a different attitude to life might be like.

In his day, Otto von Bismarck was known for the practice of realpolitik: a hard-headed and hard-hearted style of politics that eschewed ideals in favour of the advantageous assessment of real conditions. Politics, in Bismarck's words, was 'the art of the possible'. But Germany's 'Iron Chancellor' ruled at the end of a long era of open autocracy, where the desires of the populace mattered little, if at all. What was realistic then is not realistic now. Today 'the crowd is in the saddle', as the American public relations pioneer Ivy Lee warned business leaders in the first decades of the twentieth century, and

politics must embrace the dreams of the people (a lesson not lost on a certain leader of a later German Reich) [1]. Furthermore, real conditions have changed. Today's world is linked by media systems and awash in advertising images; political policies are packaged by public relations experts and celebrity gossip is considered news. More and more of the economy is devoted to marketing and entertainment and the performance of scripted roles in the service sector. The imaginary is an integral part of reality. Realpolitik now necessitates dreampolitik.

So what sort of dreampolitik is being practiced in the USA in the twenty-first century? Let's begin with the presidential campaign of Barack Obama. No president in recent history has so successfully channelled popular American political dreams. Ronald Reagan was the last to do so, but his dream of limited government at home and muscular intervention abroad were, after three decades, shattered by the feeble state response to the domestic disaster of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and the foreign debacle of the war in Iraq. As Americans awoke from this conservative nightmare, Obama and his advisers conjured up a competing and compelling fantasy: Change and Hope. Change from what was and hope for what would be.

The brilliance of Obama's dream was its absolute emptiness. Nearly anyone, no matter what their political beliefs, could curl up inside it and fall asleep with contentment. This technique of dreampolitik is not a new one. Walter Lippmann, political journalist and adviser to nearly every American president from Teddy

Roosevelt to Lyndon Johnson, outlined this practice back in 1922 in his masterwork *Public Opinion*. He called it the 'manufacture of consent'. The procedure is simple: in order to organize the myriad and often conflicting desires and interests of voters in a popular democracy, savvy leaders learn to mobilize symbols with which people can identify. The broader and emptier the symbol the better, as it makes for a bigger tent within which to fit a greater number of people's individual dreams. The trick is, as Lippmann wrote, to 'siphon emotion out of distinct ideas' and then channel all that emotion into a unifying symbol [2]. That symbol – and all its new followers – can then be re-linked to a party, platform or politician. By owning the symbol, you own the people's fantasies, and if you own their fantasies then you own their consent.

Given the exhaustion of neoconservative ideals and the fiasco of George W. Bush's presidency, very few Americans didn't dream of change in 2008. And who isn't for hope? What I hope for and want the world to change to might be very different from a middle-American suburbanite defecting from the Republican Party, but we can both embrace the dream of hope and change. Mobilizing these abstractions, Barack Obama won in a landslide. But there's a fatal flaw to the manufacture of consent: an empty symbol can remain empty for only so long. What is widely interpreted as Obama's excessive political caution in enacting any real change might be better understood as a savvy understanding of this mechanics of the manufacture of consent once power is obtained. Obama delayed giving substance to the dream for as long as possible but sooner or later political

decisions had to be made and real policies enacted. And this is when his popularity plummeted. As his administration escalated the war in Afghanistan he betrayed my dream of peace, and when he passed the health care bill he lost my limited-government-loving middle-American doppelganger.

The disjuncture between the dreams conjured up by Obama and the disappointing political realities he's delivered has had disparate effect across the political spectrum. Liberals, for the most part, have given up their dreams. They support the president, not with the initial emotion that Obama had once masterfully siphoned, but instead with a dispirited sense of necessity. The popular right, on the other hand, has found something to dream about again. No place is this phantasmagoric renaissance on display more than with the Tea Party.

Dreams of the Past

People in the Tea Party dream of being American patriots of the past. And they love to dress the part, sporting tri-corner hats and wearing colonial garb, waving American flags and holding aloft tea bags. As their name and dominant symbol suggest, these people honestly and earnestly think of themselves as the ideological heirs to the Sons of Liberty that dumped British tea into the Boston harbour. ('Socialists are Today's Redcoats', reads a sign attached to a tri-corner hat at a Tea Party protest.) The Tea Party's politics, at their most coherent, adhere to this self stylization. Just as the American colonists rallied to fight an intrusive government, the Tea Party musters its troops to protest the expansion of government

health care and interference in the free market; just as the flashpoint for the American Revolution was unfair taxation, so too, do the Tea Partiers rail against government levies, flashing their favourite sign: Taxed Enough Already.

But there's a problem in equating the political grievances of eighteenth-century American revolutionaries with today's Tea Party activists, and it is a revealing problem. The patriots of the past were not protesting government or taxation per se, they were riled up over rule by foreign government and taxation without representation. Today, however, there is a US government made up of elected representatives. Given this, there are two ways to understand the Tea Party's faulty analogy: one, they really are the ignorant hicks that liberals believe them to be and need to be educated in basic US history, or two, Tea Partiers truly believe that the Federal Government is a foreign body and their elected officials don't really represent them. Given the Tea Party's obsession with proving that President Obama was not born in the USA, it's safe to bet on interpretation number two.

Part of the Tea Party's refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of the current US government is just sour grapes. After 30-odd years of conservative rule, the right lost the last election and lost it badly. It's not unrepresentative rule, as they might fantasize, it's that the other side's representatives won. That's how a democracy works. But there's something more at stake. It isn't just political representation that Tea Partiers feel alienated from, it is cultural representation.

You can spend weeks wandering the vast

mediascape and not see a sea of middle-aged, middle-American whiteness like a Tea Party rally. Over the past 50 years, partly out of political concern, partly out of some desire to accurately represent the changing face of America, but mostly in an attempt to reach as broad an audience as possible, the culture industry has largely rejected such bland homogeneity. The starring roles in most hit dramas still go to the straight white guy and girl, but the show would seem incomplete without a couple of co-stars of a different colour. And while whites still dominate positions of factual authority in the mass media, every local newscast has their 'other' anchor. It's been a long journey from the novelty of Nat King Cole in the mid 1950s to the routinized multihued casting of a show like today's Survivor, but what the American audience watches, and thus how they see their world and imagine its possibilities, has been irrevocably altered. 'Difference' is no longer different, and diversity, albeit in its most banal form, is what American's have come to expect. Beneath this ethereal media rainbow there used to be places where one might reliably find jowly white guys playing prominent roles, one of them being the nation's capital. Then came the Obama not-so-White House.

'Take our country back!' is a common cry at a Tea Party protest. Back. Back to a time when white people were firmly in power and those of other races knew their place. But also back to an imaginary America that was almost entirely white as well. Tea Party rallies – the costumes, the outrage, the provocative rhetoric – are so theatrical because they are theatre: a way for disaffected white people to represent themselves in a mediated world that

no longer recognizes them. The Tea Party folks have a nascent understanding that they are out of sync with the cultural dreams of America. This is a subtext to Sarah Palin's appeals to the 'Real America'. But the problem for the Tea Party is that a multicultural America is not a mere media fantasy, it's a demographic reality. And it has been for some time: Crispus Attucks, the first patriot killed in the Boston Massacre, was black. In a recent Captain America comic book a group of protesters is shown holding aloft signs that read 'Tea Bag The Libs Before They Tea Bag YOU!' Captain America and his – African-American – sidekick Falcon look down on the crowd in the street and dismiss them as a just a bunch of 'angry white people'.^[3] When you've been dissed by Captain America you know you're on the losing side of history.

Bypassed by multicultural America, Tea Partiers are attempting to resurrect a mythic (white) past through tri-corner hats and colonial garb. They may look ridiculous, but that doesn't mean they are not dangerous. The alienation that Tea Partiers feel from the dominant fantasies and demographic realities of the USA is exactly what makes them so volatile. They have no sense of identification with the majority and little recognition from the majority, and these are the conditions that breed incivility, violence and perhaps even terror. If the majority doesn't exist in the dream world of the Tea Party, then violence against them is not quite real. And, paradoxically, when the dream world of the Tea Party is not recognized by the majority, what better than violence to make them notice? But their dream has no future. No doubt there will be electoral shocks and violent outbursts from

the Tea Party over the next few years, but in the end it will disappear like Father Coughlin's National Union for Social Justice, the John Birch Society, the Ku Klux Klan and the myriad other manifestations of the populist radical right in the USA that promised a dream of the past. Dreaming the Future

So what is the alternative? Is there a practice of dreampolitik distinct from the reactionary, and ultimately doomed, popular fantasies of the far right and the manufactured consent of the political elite? I think so. You will not find it among the liberal-left, vacillating as they are between a support for Obama rationalized by the 'realities' of the present and reflexive criticism of his policies with no counter-inspirations offered. But on the creative fringes of the left another type of dreaming is taking place.

On 12 November 2008, New Yorkers awoke to a 'special edition' of the New York Times, handed out by a legion of volunteers at subway, bus and train stations across the city. 'IRAQ WAR ENDS' screamed the headline, followed by an article reporting that US troops would immediately withdraw from Iraq and that the UN would take responsibility for rebuilding the social and political institutions of both countries. This 'news' was surrounded by reports declaring passage of a Maximum Wage Law, the elimination of tuition at all public universities, a ban on lobbying, and a timeline detailing how progressives gained power in Washington, DC. Even the advertisements envisioned a utopic future: a picture-perfect full page ad for Exxon, with the tagline: 'Peace. An idea the world can profit from', pledged the multinational to a pacific and environmentally sound future.

The Times' slogan: 'All the News That's Fit to Print', was altered for one day to read: 'All the News We Hope to Print.'^[4]

Over 80,000 copies of the faux Times (the organizers, in fabulist form, claimed over a million) were handed out across the city and forwarded to national and international newsrooms, where news of the 'news' was then spread around the world. The project, the result of the clandestine labour of hundreds of contributors facilitated by artist/activists Andy Bichlbaum of the Yes Men and Steve Lambert, a political artist with a history of utopian interventions, was meant as an imaginary act of politics, or rather, a political act of imagination. The prefigured future, however, was not meant as a magical transformation: each event reported in the paper was described as the result of everyday citizens pushing for a more progressive agenda. Yet the experience was meant to be magical. The realism of the newspaper was singularly impressive: the paper, the type, the layout, even the tone and style of the articles and ads themselves were crafted to create a believable product of an imaginary future. The organizers hoped to make people stop and, for a moment, enter a dream world. 'The challenge isn't to make people think that the war is a bad idea, since most people already do,' Bichlbaum explained at the time. 'The challenge is to make people feel it can be over now.' He continues: 'We wanted people to read this and say to themselves, 'What if?'

Verfremdungseffekt, or What If?

What if? – to state the obvious – is a question. It is a question that disrupts the

fantasy; it asks the person reading the Times to realize that what they hold in their hands represents a dream. The striking verisimilitude of the newspaper was intended to convey a sense of felt possibility. 'None of this is currently true,' co-organizer Steve Lambert explained, 'but it's all possible.'^[5] But the sense of possibility that the paper hoped to evoke is complicated, for at the same time the reader was meant to feel the possibility of peace and justice, she was expected to know that this was just a dream.

Bertolt Brecht, the great German communist playwright, experimented with this tension between illusion and awareness in his quest for a radical theatre. Brecht was horrified about the ability of most theatre to suck the spectator into an illusion and have them vicariously dream someone else's dream. Traditional theatre made spectators into passive receptacles: a dumb, obedient mass, well suited for fascist mythologies or the 'democratic' manufacture of consent, but not the radical transformation of society. Brecht wanted his theatre to create active subjects who would think critically and act politically. His dramaturgical solution to this problem was *Verfremdungseffekt*, or alienation effect. Alienation, in Marxist as well as common parlance, has traditionally had a negative connotation: the proletariat was alienated from their labour just as the Tea Partier is alienated from the contemporary culture of their country; the struggle for both is to overcome alienation and regain power and control over the foreign object. Brecht, however, theorized that alienation might be used as a positive force: a means to shake people out of their comfortable integration. Through a battery of techniques like giv-

ing away the ending of a play at the beginning, disrupting dramatic scenes with song and dance, having stage hands appear on stage, and collapsing the fourth wall to have actors address the audience, Brecht worked to alienate his audience. Instead of drawing people into a seamless illusion, the playwright strove to push them away and remind them that they were only watching a play. If the audience wanted real action, if they wanted the world to change, they could not rely upon art to do it for them – they would have to do it themselves.

An end to wars and a just economy are not impossible, no matter how far we seem from these goals today, but the Times reporting this as factual news in 2008 is an impossibility. I saw firsthand the cognitive dissonance in people's faces when they were handed a copy of the newspaper: first surprise, then interest, then realization that what they held in their hands was not genuine – all in the matter of seconds. This rapid realization on the part of the audience that what they had been reading was a fake was not a political failure on the part of the project; it is the secret of its success. By holding out a dream and refusing entry simultaneously, the 'special edition' of the Times created the conditions for popular political dreaming.

Utopia is No-Place

This technique was pioneered nearly 500 years ago in Utopia, Thomas More's story of a far-off land that was, well, utopic. On this fantasy island living and labour is rationally planned for the good of all. There is a democratically elected government and priesthood, and freedom of

speech and religion. There is no money and no private property or privately held wealth, and perhaps most utopian of all, there are no lawyers. More's Utopia was everything his sixteenth-century European home was not: peaceful, prosperous and just. For, as More writes in his tale: 'When no one owns anything, all are rich.'^[6]

Utopia, however, is a curious book; two books really. Book I is essentially an argument – made through Raphael, the traveller and describer of Utopia – of why Book II – the actual description of the Isle of Utopia – is politically useless. Raphael explains that rulers don't listen to imaginings other than their own, and Europeans are resistant to new ideas. Indeed, Raphael insists that his own story will soon be forgotten (which, of course, is a clever rhetorical strategy to make sure it is not). The book is full of such seeming contradictions, riddles and paradoxes. The grandest one being the title itself. Utopia, composed of the Greek *ou* (no) and *topos* (place), is a place that is, literally, no-place. In addition, the story teller of this magic land is called Raphael Hythloday (or Hythlodæus), from the Greek *Huthlos*, meaning nonsense. So the reader is told a story of a place which is named out of existence, by a narrator who is named as unreliable. And so begins the debate: Is the entirety of More's Utopia a satire, an exercise demonstrating the absurdity of such political fantasies? Or is it an earnest effort to suggest and promote these dreams?

There's evidence for both sides. First the case for the satirical interpretation: in addition to the problematic names given the place and the narrator, More, in his

description of the island of Utopia, mixes 'possible' political proposals like publicly held property and the freedom of speech and religion with such absurdities as gold and jewel encrusted chamber pots. As such, one might argue that More effectively dismisses as ridiculous all political dreams. 'Freedom of speech? Well that is about as absurd as taking a shit in a gold chamber pot!' On the other hand, Raphael – our narrator – is named after the Archangel Raphael who gives sight to the blind and guides the lost. Arguing for More's political sincerity, one might propose that he uses the absurd to seriously suggest, yet at the same time politically distance himself from, political, economic and religious dreams that he favours but that would, in his time, be considered political and religious heresy. 'Freedom of religion?' More might plausibly plea: 'Can't you see I was kidding?'

But I think this orthodox debate about whether More was satirical or sincere obfuscates rather than clarifies, and actually misses the point entirely. The genius of More's Utopia is that it is both absurd and earnest, simultaneously. And it is through the combination of these seemingly opposite ways of presenting political ideals that a more fruitful way of thinking about dreampolitik can start to take shape. For it is the presentation of Utopia as no-place, and its narrator as nonsense, that opens up a space for the reader's imagination to wonder what an alternative someplace and a radically different sensibility might be like.

By positing his fantasy someplace as a no-place, More escapes the problems that typically haunt political dreamscapes. Most political imaginaries insist

upon their possibility: positing an imagined future or alternative as the future or the alternative. This assurance guarantees at least one of several results:

- A brutalization of the present to bring it into line with the imagined future. (Stalinization, Year Zero of the Khmer Rouge)

- A political disenchantment as the future never arrives and the alternative is never realized. (Post 1968 left, the current implosion of the US Republican Party.)

- A vain search for a new dream when the promised one isn't realized. (Endless consumption of products or lifestyles.)

- Living in a lie. ('Actually existing Socialism', 'The American Dream'.)

What More proposes is something entirely different: he imagines an alternative to his sixteenth-century Europe that is openly proclaimed to be a work of imagination. It can not be realized simply because it is unrealistic. It is, after all, no place. But the reader has been infected; another option has been shown. As such, they can't safely return to the surety of their own present as the naturalness of their world has been disrupted. Once an alternative has been imagined, to stay where one is or to try something else becomes a question that demands attention and a choice. Yet More resists the short-circuiting of this imaginative moment by refusing to provide a 'realistic' alternative. As such, this technique of dreampolitik resists the simple swapping of one truth for another, a left dream for a right dream, communism for capitalism. As no-place Utopia denies the easy, and politically problematic, option of such a simple choice. Instead, the question of alternatives is left open, and space is opened to imagine: Why not? How

come? What if?

Art of the Impossible

I was drawn into working on the faux Times (I wrote the copy for some of the advertisements) by one of the organizers, Steve Lambert. A few months earlier Lambert and his collaborator, Packard Jennings, had asked me to write the catalogue essay for a set of street posters that were commissioned and displayed by the city of San Francisco. These large-format posters, illustrated in the style of airplane emergency instructions and displayed on illuminated kiosks on one of San Francisco's main thoroughfares, offered passers-by images of the city's future. But not just any future: an absurd future. Skyscrapers are movable so citizens can rearrange their city. A commuter train is turned into a green market, lending library and martial arts studio. A football stadium is made into an organic farm (and linebackers into human ploughs). The entire city is transformed into a wildlife refuge. For inspiration Packard and Lambert asked experts in the fields of architecture, city planning and transportation for ideas on how to make a better city. These plans were then, in their own words, 'perhaps mildly exaggerated'. It is exactly this exaggeration that makes these artists' images so politically powerful.^[7]

Jennings and Lambert's plans are unrealizable. A city could become more 'green' with additional public parks and community gardens, but transforming San Francisco into a nature preserve where office workers take their lunch break next to a mountain gorilla family? This isn't going to happen. And that's the point.

Because it is a patent impossibility their fantasies fool no one. There is no duplicity, no selling the people a false bill of goods. Yet at the same time these impossible dreams open up spaces to imagine new possibilities. The problem with asking professionals to 'think outside the box' and imagine new solutions is that without intervention, they usually won't. Like most of us, their imaginations are constrained by the tyranny of the possible. By visualizing impossibilities, Jennings and Lambert create an opening to ask: 'What if?' without closing down this free space by seriously answering: 'This is what.'

Most political spectacles are constructed with the intent of passing off fantasy for reality. The function of the Nazi rallies in Nuremberg, so spectacularly captured in Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, were to substitute an image of power, unity and order for the reality of the depression, chaos and infighting that plagued interwar Germany; US president George W. Bush's landing on an aircraft carrier in a flight suit to declare 'mission accomplished' in Iraq was the attempt to trade the actuality of a disastrous and soon to be protracted war launched by a combat-shirking president for the fantasy of easy victory declared by a noble warrior-chief. These are fascist spectacles: the future is imagined by elites and then presented as already in existence. Ethical spectacle operates differently by presenting dreams that people are aware are just dreams. These are acts of imagination that provide visions of what could be without ever pretending they are anything other than what they are. Presenting itself as what it actually is, this form of fantasy is, ironically, truthful and

real. It is also unfinished. Because it is presented as only an act of human imagination, not a representation of concrete reality, ethical spectacle remains open to revision or rejection and, most important, popular intervention. Jennings and Lambert's posters are exemplars of ethical spectacle.

Standing in front of one of their posters on a street corner you smile at the absurd idea of practicing Tae Kwon Do on your train ride home. But you may also begin to question why public transportation is so uni-functional, and then ask yourself why shouldn't a public transport system cater to other public desires. This could set your mind to wondering why the government is so often in the business of controlling, instead of facilitating, our desires, and then you might start to envision what a truly desirable state might look like. And so on, ad infinitum. Jennings and Lambert's impossible solutions – like More's *Utopia* and the 'special edition' of the *New York Times* – are means to dream of new ones.

There's a dominant strain of the left that has always argued for a politics without dreams. In this vision, the masses (led by the left) will wake up and see the truth... and it shall make them free. In the famous words of Marx and Engels: 'Man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.' It's a nice fantasy, but that's all it is and ever has been. Even Marx and Engels implicitly recognized this by beginning their *Manifesto* with the chimera of communist inevitability: 'A spectre is haunting Europe . . .'[8] In the fantasy-fuelled world we inhabit today the dream of a politics without dreams is a

prescription for political impotence. The question is not whether dreams should, or should not, be a part of politics, but what sort of dreampolitik ought to be practiced. What is not needed is a left equivalent of the center's cynical manufacture of consent, or a replica of the reactionary phantasmagorias of the right. Nor is it desirable to wait for and follow the next progressive saviour who pronounces: 'I Have a Dream.' What is needed, if we are serious about the potential of populist (un)reason, are tools and techniques to help people dream on their own. Bismarck might have insisted that 'politics is the art of the possible', but a much more powerful case can be made today that politics is the art of the impossible.[9]

Notes:

- [1] Ivy L. Lee, address before the American Electric Railway Association, 10 October 1916, cited in Stuart Ewen, *PR!* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 75.
- [2] Walter Lippmann, "Public Opinion" (New York: Free Press, 1997), 158, 151.
- [3] *Captain America, #602* (New York: Marvel Universe, 2010). Pressured by conservatives, Marvel later apologized for their portrayal of the Tea Party.
- [4] For the complete 'special edition' of the *New York Times* see www.nytimes-se.com.
- [5] Andy Bichlbaum and Steve Lambert, personal interview, 20 November 2008; CNN interview, 14 November 2008.
- [6] Thomas More, "Utopia", edited and translated by V.S. Ogden (New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1949), 80.
- [7] All posters can be viewed and downloaded from visitsteve.com/work/wish-you-were-here-postcards-from-our-awesome-future-2/.
- [8] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "The Marx-Engels Reader", 2nd edition, edited by Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), 476, 473.
- [9] Fragments of this essay have appeared, in altered form, in *Playboy* magazine, *The Nation*, the exhibition catalogue for 'Wish You Were Here: Postcards from Our Awesome Future', and 'Dream: Re-Imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy'.

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From Contemplating To Constructing Situations

by Răzvan Ion

The morality of the citizen resides in his considering that the collective security is more important than any survival whatsoever. If the moral now is the one of pleasure, of the happiness of individuals, then survival lies under a question mark. Should nothing more be left of the citizen's morality, should we be devoid of the feeling that we ought to be able to fight in order to keep your chances for pleasure and happiness, then we are both shiny and effete (Raymon Aron). A society of spectators empty of feedback, invulnerable to indiscretion and abuse, a pensive society diminished its chances to build and progress. The riot, the screaming voice, with or without the immediate response from authority is necessary in the process of building up a democracy, a powerful community under the practice of solidarity. If the suitable soil for a pessimistic philosophy within history belongs to the thug, it follows that the glamorous society can be the condemned one. What would the world we are living in without an academic, literary perversion enabling

us to watch the fights occurring at the theoretical level between different disjoint, disruptive concepts, of an irregular, non-academic translation respecting vaguely etymological texts.

The debate concerning the disruptiveness of concepts that art employs to legitimize its position, be it self-directed, or submissive – in Jacques Rancière's interpretation – that defines the political art, on one side, as a policy of "autonomy" (the artists' struggle to be recognized as practitioners of an autonomous discipline, with the entitlement for a privileged position, detached within the society) and on the other side, a policy of "heteronomy" (the battle of art itself, yet, to fusion with the social reality, to consume the society as a compliant material that can be organized according to artistic conventions) is a protracted process. Or as he himself notes, "a critical art is (...) a precise negotiation (...) this negotiation must hold on to some of the tension pushing the aesthetic experience towards the reconfiguration of collective life and to some of the tension pulling out the force of aesthetic sensitivity from different realms of the experience, as well as the eternal undulation of the artist to be sometimes inside the social, sometimes outside it, according to the benefits/contexts, it introduces the idea of a discontinuity alongside the social which permits the creation of ruptures."

The plea for built-in social value of art is complicated, unless one presumes it from the start as being true. The implications of art are very unfathomable and, up to a certain extent, art can be safeguarded in terms of other values, such as, among others, its utility, its sovereignty,

its aesthetic and its message, however, when art itself conflicts with some of these values, some of the most shattering questions emerge.

What do we need today? A basic state? A state of equalities? A post-state? Where does the role and methodology of art intercede? Can it be a tool for struggle, progress, debate?

Should modern art be the answer, then the question is how can capitalism be made more beautiful? Yet, modern art is not just about beauty. It is also about function. Which is the function of art in the disastrous capitalism? Contemporary art feeds with the crumbs of the massive wealth redistribution and "on a large scale from the poor to the wealthy, made through an ongoing downward battle between the classes" (David Harvey). The production of traditional art can serve as model for the nouveau riche, model designed by the privatization, expropriation, and speculations. Certainly, within the art system there is exploitation, there are also exploited workers (artists). Political art through the institutions that it creates can make a new model of social order because it has already generated an exploited and practised model (Boris Groys). As Hannah Arendt noted, we need not create a new class, but rather to reject all classes. We should understand the artistic space as a political one instead of representing political situations from other areas. Art is not detached from politics, its politics resides in its production, its distribution, its perception. Should we consider this for a fact, perhaps we will surpass the flatness of the representation policy and launch a new kind of policy that is already there, right in

front of our eyes, ready to be embraced.

The co-dependency between art, politics and theory, with a special focus on the concept of “politic”, is emphasised and extended by Chantal Mouffe. During the two decades since the publishing of the paper “Hegemony and socialist strategy” (1985) of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Mouffe closely watched the concepts of politic, radical democracy, antagonism and agonist, through a series of papers: “Return of the politic” (1993), “Democratic paradox” (2000) and “About the politic” (2005). Rejecting the accepted models of democracy, perfected by men of wisdom such as Jurgen Habermas and John Rawls, Mouffe support an “agonistic” model for the claim of “radical democracy”, “we need a democratic model capable to encompass the political”. For him the “radical democracy” is a space that recognises the existence of irreducible conflicts and materialises the irrational passions that it inspires. However, Mouffe’s model for the radical democracy does it by only maintaining the social antagonisms until their end-resolution can be conceived in a future violence. The basic requirement of the democratic politics is not to extinguish the passions from within the public, in order to create a possible rational consensus, but rather to focus those passions towards democratic models.

“I do not see the relation between art and politics in terms of two domains constituted separately, art on one side and politics on the other, between which a relationship should be established. There is an aesthetic dimension in politics and there is a dimension of politics in art. For that reason, I consider that a distinction

between what political and non-political art represent, it is not useful.. The real issue is affecting the possible forms of critical art, the various manners in which artistic practices can contribute for the questioning of the dominant hegemony” (Chantal Mouffe).

Somewhere action must appear in direct relation to its antonym: non-action. Tracing Hegel back, it can be stated that knowledge and action cannot be dissociated and from this perspective reality has completely the characteristic that Kant had conferred to life and art only, that purposeless finality that merges action and knowledge. The method to analyse reality is not pure logic, the classic one, but the dialectic, aimed to reveal opposing sides, and history, which records the evolution of things in the contradictions pressured reality. The first manifestation step towards its potentialities is made by the Absolute Idea in the exact opposite direction, that of Nature, which only exist recurrently, in space. Becoming History of humanity, the Absolute Idea regains the dimension of temporality and, going on this path, reaches the concrete Absolute Knowledge: this way, what was in-self, virtually, in the Absolute Idea, becomes for-self, passing through the existence and reflected in knowledge. The direction of this movement is an accumulation of determinations, a growth, as Hegel says, of the concrete.

In the philosophical meaning, everything is true. But art also requires an assumed “aesthetic regime”(Jaques Rancière), meaning it must be kept in mind the perspective of the utility of the artistic endeavour for the society in which it is being created; this utilitarianism allowing

us to the real meanings of art and of the artist’ endeavour. The ambitions of contemporary art see to be connected to its power to provide the world with a symbol, of which it believe the worlds needs, or the world expects, but towards the state the artists show a rather anarchist attitude as compared to a partnership approach, and the action – seen as activism – became a disruptive battle against limitations of any sort.

Why do we discuss today, in the field of art, about the institutional critic, or about the critic against social, political or artistic institutions? The answer is very simple: because (we still) believe that art is inherently gifted with the power to criticize. Of course, we refer not only to the art critic, but beyond that, to its capacity to criticize the world and life past its own sphere and even, by doing so, to change them both. This includes a certain degree of self-critic or, more precisely, the practice of critic self-reflexivity, which means that we also expect – or at least we used to expect – that art would acknowledge itself its own capability conditions, meaning, generally, its production capacities. These two concepts – to acknowledge its possibility conditions and, respectively, its production capacities – indicate two major segments of modern critics: the theoretical and the practical-political one. Kant was the one to initiate the questioning regarding our knowledge possibility conditions and who understood explicitly this query as an act of critics. From then on it can be stated that modern reflexion is either critics – in this self-reflexive sense -, either it is not modern. (Boris Buden). But, the Freudian repression, Foucauldian, post-modern, Stalinist, Leninist etc is identical, and the only aspect able to set the differ-

ence is the slay of the ego and its ability to say “no” to the sovereign state(without transforming into a lamentable anarchist state).

We are already in the stage where we can admit that the revolutionary apparatus is a constituent part of hegemony. The resistance is not real coming from the social, as long as it is assimilated to the hegemonic structure and next transformed into a production engine of the holistic entity. Should we want to discuss a manner, a type of resistance, this takes place backwards, hegemony through the rhizome structure and totalling assimilation potential resists micro-societies socio-political attempts to deny its regeneration force and the characteristic quality particular to its indestructible construction: the timeless relation between the adaption possibility and the suspension of the humanistic intent of social change.

Looking back to past revolutions, including from the limited perspective of the pseudo-winning subject that history offers: the French revolution, the October revolution, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the ’89 waves of revolt, they all failed in the attempt to disperse “a” domination, or to replace “a” hegemonic structure with “another”. Through the replacement of the political system, the fight is not over, but merely the holistic entity adapted itself to a new type of social order through the transfer of influence from “direct power” to “soft power” or vice versa. The battle with the “political” continued even after the heroes have been mourned and after the anti-revolutionists sacrilege. In these conditions, we must admit the naivety of the speech admitting to more simultaneous hegemonic structures and

acknowledges through a revolution the victory of a hegemony over another hegemony.

When we will acknowledge that the revolution is not a form of resistance, but rather a catalyst in the social process, then innocent victims will no longer be necessary, and neither will be collateral damage. As the hegemony assimilates all our means of expression, we could identify in its structure the possibility to relocate the multi-culturalism of governmental politics into the civic speech, diverging the false globalisation focused on market economy and generation of the virtual policentralised capital, in a globalisation of the critic speech, beneficial to all micro-societies.

In this regard, the representation of situations surpasses the quality of documenting the recoil as a means of disguise a form of social truth, towards the analytical defragmentation of the situation, offering the possibility not only to contemplate a status-quo, but also for an intervention from the behalf of the civil society. And yet, is it enough to limit ourselves to the already classical aesthetics of representing through document? Is this manner of speech not already exhausted and redundant for the public space?

The transition of institutional critics from the academic environment to the autonomous structures is more than welcome for the conversion that already began in the critical artistic speech. We find there the necessary resources to overcome the moment of contemplating the situation, the possibility to construct situations and functional public structures bringing their own input on the critic

speech and which, at the same time, can function as an alternative institution to the classical forms of regulation. We have the resources to contemplate our future. We are in the it moment when the artistic act can legitimize best this kind of positioning in front of the holistic, hegemonic entity.

The theoretic speeches, publications and exhibitions – as a means of direct interaction, should gather positions of some thinkers and artists from different generations that refuse to participate in worn-out, dusty prescriptions of the market and authority, and they create, in response, new radical methods of commitment, of action. We should attempt to expand an indispensable, contemporary concept of political change – a concept that rises above the obsolete formulations about insurrection and resistance.

Contemplation is not an action. It is expectation as an action, societal regress, individual indifference. The transition from contemplation of a situation, from its representation, to constructing situations must be undertaken immediately, without further delay. Conversely, we will contemplate a condemned society. The right to resentment and protest is not being assigned by anyone to you, you just claim it. We should learn from the Spanish “Los Indignados”. We should learn the right to be indignant.

Too much blood and ink have been spilled for the revolutionary machinery and for the artistic one to remain separated.

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The Internalisation of the Discourse of Institutional Critique and the 'Unhappy Consciousness'

by Suzana Milevska

The vicious cycle of institutional critique stems from its dichotomous nature. It inevitably entails a certain position that exists outside or beyond any institution, in contrast to the institutional position that is being criticised. It implies a severe critique of powerful, supposedly autocratic, institutions and their systems of governance, in contrast to the preferred form of weak, supposedly democratic, institutions that, by all accounts, are expected to deal with art and cultural production in a more creative and liberal way. I want to argue that, because of this dichotomy, any discourse reliant on institutional critique, paradoxically, becomes dangerously internalised, in a similar way to the biopower and biopolitics that are its initial targets. [1]

I am interested in tackling the set of questions that derives from such an intrinsically dichotomous split within institutional critique, which results in an 'unhappy consciousness'. Hegel called this kind of divided mode of consciousness the 'unhappy consciousness', because the self is in conflict with itself when there is no unity between self and other. [2] On the

one hand, this 'unhappy consciousness' within institutional critique is the institutional consciousness that is conscious of itself, as being divided internally and as not being able to reconcile itself with its 'other' – the institutional system. On the other, the undivided consciousness would be a dual self-consciousness which brings unity to the self and the 'other'. In this text I want to argue that what stands behind the 'unhappy consciousness' of the institutional critique is the performative contradiction of contemporary society today that prevents such unity from taking place.

However, the question to be asked here is, what if such a completely independent position of institutional critique (beyond any institution) cannot exist? What if one can utter relevant statements only when there is a certain institutional framework (weak or strong), from which to speak? Does this indicate that the position of any institutional critique is that of a double dialectics, always already simultaneously self-legitimising and self-legitimated and, therefore, strong but questionable, in implying the oppositional shortcomings, exactly because of its reliance on self-legitimated strength?

The main paradox of institutional critique is that at first sight it seems as though it is a logical impossibility, on account of this internal performative contradiction – meaning that it is always already impossible, a posited contradiction within itself, in which the interlocutors are entrapped, since they deny the possibility of communication and understanding. [3] However, even if this were so, it would be relevant to discuss the potentialities for other possible directions in transitional institutional

critique in the context of the countries of South-East Europe.

Let me give you the good news now: what could demonstrate more clearly that institutional critique is still possible and very much alive than the fact that individuals and communities are still willing to step aside from society, pass judgment on it, and break free from the bonds of ideology? By questioning and pursuing truth, these 'rebels' seek to achieve a kind of institutional emancipation.

Seen from this perspective, if we try, despite all the contradictions, to re-establish the need for institutional critique in a post-socialist context, we see that the question of the standpoint that any such institutional critique might adopt becomes crucial and much more relevant, in fact, than the choice of any professional standpoint. Because of the crisis of legitimation and state authority in this transitional period, institutional critique has become possible in more general and political terms, and not only in terms of art or cultural institutions. Therefore, it has become increasingly significant to determine whether institutional critique should be understood as:

- a singular position of an artist, art critic or cultural producer
- a position of a self-organised community of art and culture producers
- a neo-liberal governmental position
- a conservative (nationalist) critique, or
- a non-governmental – democratic civil society organisation.

It is important to emphasise that, even though each of the above-mentioned positions entails a different starting point, some of the objectives of these different

positions overlap and intertwine with each other. Institutional critique can only have a relevant impact on society as a whole, if the agents of institutional critique are aware that their questions are formulated from a certain institutional platform.

However, a more complex approach would suggest that the different strands of institutional critique can be brought together under a common denominator. Self-consciousness embodies a certain intrinsic 'otherness' within itself, in that the self is conscious of what is other than itself. Self-consciousness on the part of institutional critique is contradictory, because it is conscious of both sameness and otherness. The contradictions of governmentality, self-governance and self-organisation, to name but a few examples. The fundamental challenge of each form of government is how to govern, but not too much, or, as Michel Foucault famously put it: 'The suspicion that one always risks governing too much is inhabited by the question: Why, in fact one must govern?...In other words, what makes it necessary for there to be a government, and what ends should it pursue with regard to society in order to justify its existence?'[4] The 'art of government', for Foucault, is actually something that does not entail any universalised distinction between different governing systems. 'Instead of making the distinction between state and civil society into a historical universal that allows us to examine all the concrete systems, we can try to see it as a form of schematization characteristic of a particular technology of government.' [5]

According to Gerald Raunig, 'not only

resistive individuals, but also progressive institutions and civil society NGOs operate on the same plane of governmentality.' [6] The main attribute of parrhesia ('frankness', 'freedom of speech') is not the possession of truth, which is made public in a certain situation, but the taking of a risk, the 'fact that a speaker says something dangerous - something other than what the majority believes.'[7] Raunig actually refers to Foucault's statement that distinguishes between the 'classical Greek conception of parrhesia' – constituted by those who dare 'to tell the truth to other people' - and a new truth game, which entails being 'courageous enough to disclose the truth about oneself.' [8]

The activity of speaking the truth is much more important than setting up truth in opposition to a lie, or to something 'false'. Criticism, and especially institutional critique, is not limited to denouncing abuses, or to withdrawing into a more or less radical form of self-questioning. In the field of the visual arts, this means that neither the belligerent strategies of institutional critique of the 1970s nor the notion of art as a service to the institution from the 1990s offer any guarantee of the potential for intervening effectively in the governmentality of the present. [9]

According to Raunig, a productive game emerges from the relationship between activists and the institution, so that social criticism and institutional critique permeate the interwoven strands of forms of political and personal parrhesia. It is only by linking the two techniques of parrhesia that one-sided instrumentalisation can be avoided, the institutional machine is saved from closing itself off, and the

dynamic exchange between movement and institution can be maintained.

In addition to Raunig's proposal for applying parrhesia as a double strategy (as an attempt to engage in a process of refutation and self-questioning), I would suggest that dialogical critique offers a more appropriate model of institutional critique, in terms of a positive agency of action. I suggest that a kind of deconstruction of the one-way critique inherited from the models of institutional critique from the 1970s and 1990s would engender a collaborative policy that could engage both state and independent institutions in the same critical projects, and favour the development of institutional awareness, though promoting a critical, yet constructive form of institutional activity.

Instead of assuming that an institution has internalised power through the instruments of governance only because it is an institution with a higher position in the hierarchy, perhaps it would be more constructive to remember that the institutions of power are all around us, and that biopolitics reaches much further than only within its own institution. Acknowledging this complex entanglement of power, its institutions, and its critique, could bring us closer to a sober, more refined, critical position that would be responsive to today's forms of institutional critique. Different institutions could then contribute, both by embracing a self-critical approach and by critiquing each others' practices.

Institutional Critique, as the Internalisation of Power and Politics

The internalisation of institutional critique

is a two way street:

On the one hand, institutions very quickly internalise the critique aimed at them, by appropriating the same vocabulary as their critics and superficially incorporating the new structures. Institutions criticised in this way are strengthened in the process, even if they continue to work under the same rules as before: an institution constructs itself only after being interpellated by the right kind of critical opposition!

On the other hand, critics themselves internalise institutional power, by practising the same forms of self-criticism time and time again, to the point where this starts to govern their own activities. By continuing to use the same methods, under the pretext of receiving protection from more powerful institutions, they thus become the gate-keepers and agents of a form of negation that itself amounts to the exercise of power, of a different kind.

In particular, the shift in institutional critique can best be discussed, by taking into consideration the shift in the role of contemporary art museums in South-East Europe and the challenge to their monopolistic position on the regional art scene, posed both by individuals and by the emergence of independently run, non-governmental, art spaces. These changes have mainly occurred, because of the new critical curatorial practices that started as far back as the early 1990s and have been carefully nurtured by small, but very active, art institutions.

It is important to stress the fact that, in the beginning, most of these new initiatives - especially, the appearance of the Soros

Contemporary Art Centers and their offshoots - were viewed as urgently needed means of balancing, contesting, and even confronting, the monopoly of the powerful state-governed and -supported art institutions. Their important political agenda was to stand up to communist ideology, in favour of an 'Open Society' purportedly by promoting the new art media.[10] However, there were instances where an ambiguous kind of unwritten agreement was reached between the centre and margin, and between the mainstream and alternative.. Therefore, the internalisation of institutional critique on the part of these new institutional models for almost a decade threatened to become an even more centralised monopoly of power, at least in cultural environments where the state institutions collaborated closely with their critical counterparts.

The most interesting example of this kind of merging of state power with oppositional institutional critique was the collaboration between the Soros Contemporary Art Center Skopje and the Skopje Museum of Contemporary Art that started with the very beginning of the activities of the SCCA-Skopje, in 1994. At that time the Museum of Contemporary Art was at its undisputed acme, as the lead institution for the presentation of international contemporary art in Skopje, and the only institution professionally capable of representing Macedonian contemporary art abroad.

The Museum of Contemporary Art was established in 1964, as the outcome of a political decision, embodied an Act of the Skopje City Assembly, to host the collection of art works that hundreds of interna-

tional artists had donated to the city immediately after the catastrophic earthquake of 1963. The new museum, which opened in 1970, was one of very few museums of contemporary art in the region and could thus be regarded as a cultural institution of exceptional importance. The plans for the building were themselves a gift to the city by the Polish architects J. Mokrzyński, E. Wierzbicki and W. Klyzewski and envisaged a total area of 5000 square metres, with over 3500 square metres of exhibition space, plus storage space, cinema, archives, library and all the other necessary concomitants. [11] However, the museum's administration always had a struggle to manage its assets and the building was completely run down by 1994, as a result of the poor decision the management had taken, to redirect the funds assigned to it for acquisitions and structural maintenance into programme activities. (Recent examples of this tendency have included the decisions to use maintenance funds to cover the expenses of an exhibition in Japan, in 2000, and to use rental income from a wedding reception at the museum in 1998 to pay for the cost of a museum café in 1998, instead of repairing the roof). The decision not to spend funds on structural repairs to the roof, in particular, has led to the catastrophic situation in which the entire collection has had to be removed from public display for the last fifteen years or so, and more and more of the museum's important potential long-term partners, such as international foundations and other museums, have abandoned any thought of collaboration, because of the risk of showing any valuable, or sizeable, exhibitions under such conditions. [12] The first serious attempt to reconstruct the building was started only

recently, with the support from the Italian Government, but a question mark hangs over the condition of the works that have been held in storage under appalling conditions for more than fifteen years [13]

This policy of self-promotion on the part of the museum's curatorial team, and of support for only a handful of favoured artists, has gradually resulted in the building, and the institution itself, becoming completely marginalised within society and by the general public. Attempts by independent artists and critics to protest, in the name of democracy, against this centralised abuse of power have been isolated and doomed from the outset. Indeed, any outsider attempting to criticise the institution has risked a form of ostracisation that is virtually tantamount to committing professional suicide. On the one hand, artists and critics who voice any kind of criticism are ruled out from participation in any creative initiatives. On the other hand, criticality turns into a vicious cycle, so that those expressing critical views have been prevented from taking any initiatives of their own through the combined opposition of institutional critique and institutional power.[14]

The best example of this perverse state of affairs is provided by my earlier comment, to the effect that the Soros Center for Contemporary Art Skopje had initially been promoted as a kind of alternative to the Museum of Contemporary Art. What actually happened was that, when the SCCA-Skopje joined forces with Contemporary Art in the early 90s, it brought even more power to the museum. Of course, there would have been nothing wrong with this, if it had not

directly affected the wider art scene in Macedonia. Mainly because of the monopoly of power in the display of contemporary art, hardly any criticism has been directed at the problematic artistic and cultural policies that are being pursued by the museum. It has even become impossible for artists who are not interested in the issues that dominate the MOCA/SCCA's agenda of large-scale group exhibitions and electronic arts to exhibit in the framework of these institutions.

Today many things have changed. The weakening of the SCCA-Skopje, due to the loss of support from its main benefactor, and the right-wing nationalistic cultural policy of the governing coalition that places greater emphasis on national heritage and archaeology, and less on contemporary art, have led to a general deterioration of the situation and a decline in these institutions' once untouchable monopoly. Paradoxically, this worsening situation in the museum has opened up the possibility of new kinds of institutional, or non-institutional, practices.

Some recent public-private collaborations are especially relevant here. Independent initiatives, such as the press to exit project space in Skopje and the Tocka Cultural Centre, in Skopje, function in a similar way to better known and longer established alternative spaces, such as Kuda, in Novi Sad, P74 in Ljubljana, WHW in Zagreb, and Remont in Belgrade. These all function in such a way as largely to overcome the performative contradiction in institutional critique and its unhappy consciousness, and succeed in producing art projects that deal with institutional critique in a more posi-

tive, and visionary, way.^[15] Instead of critiquing, complaining or nagging, the new generation of artists and activists, with the support of many different funding sources and foreign institutions, have become aware that their committed art activities are perhaps the most productive form of institutional critique, and that they may ultimately lead towards a kind of self-parrhesia.

Notes:

[1] Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, London: Harvard University Press, 23-27.

[2] Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979, 119-139.

[3] Habermas, Jürgen, 'Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification', in Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. C. Lenhardt and S.W. Nicholsen (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 89.

[4] Foucault, Michael, *Ethics, Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, Editor: Paul Rabinow, New York: The New Press, 1997, 74-75.

[5] Foucault 75.

[6] Raunig, Gerald, 'The Double Criticism of parrhesia: Answering the Question "What is a Progressive (Art) Institution?"', 18 September 2007 <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0504/raunig/en/>

[7] Raunig, 'The Double Criticism'.

[8] Michel Foucault, *Diskurs und Wahrheit*, Berlin 1996, p.14 (cf. discussion of parrhesia in English: <http://foucault.info/documents/parrhesia/>), 150, quoted from Raunig, 'The Double Criticism of parrhesia').

[9] Raunig, 'The Double Criticism'.

[10] George Soros, the main founder of the Open Society Foundations that started to emerge throughout Eastern Europe in the early 90s and of their offshoots, such as the Soros Centers for Contemporary Art, is a controversial figure, with an overtly problematic philanthropic image. Beside the intellectual aura owing to Soros' friendship and obsession with the philosopher, Karl Popper, there are many financial scandals that cast doubt on his philanthropic motives. Interestingly enough, his name appeared in one of Mark Lombardi's charts

of the flow of capital: Mark Lombardi, George W. Bush, Harken Energy, and Jackson Stephens, ca. 1979-90 (5th version).

[11] Today the stock of donated works consists of around 4600 art works by several hundred artists in various media, but acquisitions are rare and incidental. The works by internationally well-known artists are of special importance, but most of the works that are now in the museum depot either belong to early modernism (Jan Šursa, Václav Spála, Emil Filla, František Muzika, Jindřich Stýrský, Vojtech Preissig) or date from 1950s -1970s: Fernand Léger, André Masson, Pablo Picasso, Hans Hartung, Victor Vasarely, Alexander Calder, Pierre Soulages, Henryk Stażewski, Alberto Burri, Christo, Enrico Baj, Robert Jacobsen, Etienne Hajdu, Zoltan Kemeny, Robert Adams, Emilio Vedova, Antoni Clavé, Georg Baselitz ...

[12] There is a series from 2004 of ten digital photographs, 'Legend About the "legen"' (Mac. bucket) that the artist, Sašo Stanojković, made on the upper floor of the Museum of Contemporary Art. The photographs show the colourful plastic bucket 'installation' that was 'hosted' by the museum for almost fifteen years, instead of the collection (reproduced in *Contemporary*, London, No.70, 2005, 20.)

Taking into account the fact that that floods of dirty 'rivers' are frequent sights in the museum after each rainy day, some projects exhibited in the museum (such as Mozart's Boat by Antoni Maznevski, consisting of a 6.5 m wooden boat), sounded like a bad joke.

[13] The fact that the director newly appointed in 2008 comes from the field of theatre management does not inspire much confidence in the quality of future programming, however.

[14] From 10 September to 16 October 1990, a three-months' local debate was

conducted in Skopje between the author of this text and the museum's curator, Viktorija Vasev-Dimeska. The controversy was triggered by a review written on the occasion of the Second Youth Biennial, curated by Vasev-Dimeska at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje. See Suzana Milevska, 'The Perfectionism of the Obedient– or why the 2 Youth Biennial looks so classical', in *Republika*, 10 September 1990. The text of this review was published in the first independent and privately owned newspaper in Macedonia, *Republika*. It was envisaged as an attempt to problematise the ideology behind the strictly modernist institutional and cultural policy of the Museum of Contemporary Art, known for continuously neglecting and leaving aside many alternative postmodern artistic practices, such as the performances, public painting actions, installation, and concerts of the members of the Macedonian art group, Zero.

[15] The best example is the project 'Oskar Hansen's Museum of Modern Art', by Hristina Ivanoska and Yane Calovski, which looks at the proposal that this Polish architect submitted to the open competition for a Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje, instigated by the Polish Government in 1966. This proposal did not win the competition, as it was conceived as a radical, visionary experiment, proposing the use of transformative design. With 12 posters of imagined exhibitions, Ivanoska and Calovski simulated an imaginary programme for the museum that was never realised. See press to exit project space, 28 September 2007

www.presstoexit.org.mk/LectureAndPresentation/HTML_2007/OlafHansen.html

Eikonomia: Notes on economy and the Labor of Art

by Sotirios Bahtsetzis

TACTICS FOR THE HERE AND NOW

Much has been told about the dangerous impact of a superficial, lifestyle-based and money-oriented culture, which has been often identified as the major reason why people become passive, docile and easy to manipulate, no matter how disadvantageous their economic conditions might be. Following the illustrative critique of two eminent proponents of this criticism, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, the culture of our times is endangered by the uncontrollable spreading of cultural industry into higher artistic production, which manipulates the masses into passivity and cultivates false needs [1]. “Art” that produces standardized cultural goods reflects a peculiar type of aestheticization of the everyday-world: a dream-like immersion into mass-produced commodities of culture industry. This immersion is equivalent to the adoption of behavioral stereotypes and judgment of taste linked to a continuously advertised petit-bourgeois phantasmagoria, but also reflects the advanced commodification of social life.

Furthermore, this conviction has had an enormous impact on the current understanding of art as a derivate of a monopolized market, which functions on the same terms as the general financial market, a view that experts in 'art business' share. What is at stake in the contemporary art field, according to so many of its critics, is that the "art market" as formed in the 19th century has been replaced by 'art business' since the mid-1980s, reflecting not only that contemporary art has become a serious factor of wealth, but also making visible the devastating influence of neo-liberal financial doctrines formed by pirate capitalists, corporate lobbyists, and uncontrollable fiscal policies upon an art system that now runs on the basis of speculation and self-promotion. [2]

But is art's relation to money so transparent, so that it can be seen solely as a heroic struggle against its subjection to commodification and an opposing attempt to assert its aesthetic autonomy? The implied dialectic of autonomy of art, a central concept in Adorno's critique, refers to a complex condition that can only be understood through a more dialectical critique. As Peter Osborne observes, the integration of autonomous art into the culture industry is "a new systemic functionalization of autonomy itself—a new affirmative culture"—that promotes "art's uselessness" for its own sake.[3] Ultimately, the self-legislated "laws of form" in pure art—autonomous meaning production by the work—is an illusion. "Works of art are thus autonomous to the extent to which they produce the illusion of their autonomy. Art is self-conscious illusion." [4]

Let us concentrate on this point, as it allows for a further meditation on the connection between the art system, post-capitalist economic power and official, mainstream politics. Considering how politics work, we witness first that the systemic 'functionalization of autonomy' observed by Osborne, can be also seen as the grounding force of the post-democratic forms of hyper-capitalism. In other words, it appears that contemporary art's usefulness offers to contemporary politics a model of moral justification, as this art, in itself, becomes synonymous with the absolute autonomization and aesthetization of both commercial pragmatism and political functionality. Art does not expose its own uselessness for its own sake, but, most significantly, it reflects the uselessness of neo-liberal administration and, by extension, a post-capitalist market.

Post-capitalist economy and neo-liberal politics mime art's claim for autonomy as one of the grounding ethical values of Western civilization. In other words, the alibi of autonomy, which has been the main assertion and declaration of modernism during its constitution in the historical avant-garde, works today for the benefit of politics and market of commodities, which acts in disguise as (modern) art. For example, Andy Warhol's conflation of art and business attacks the culture industry by adopting its rules. On the other hand, this same culture industry attacks Warhol's subjective liberalism by adopting his artfulness. From this standpoint, art must reflectively incorporate neo-liberal politics and post-capitalist market into its procedures, not in order to remain contemporary (neo-modern, post-modern or 'alter-modern') but in order to

keep on offering the ontological proof for the contemporaneity, by necessity, of both market and politics. By contrast, of course, they guarantee the contemporaneity and validity of such an art within a given system. This is a win-win situation. Every art produced today that doesn't comply with this system of mutual recognition is automatically ostracized by disappearing from global media and, in this respect, from the public consciousness.

But what exactly does this systemic 'functionalization of autonomy' being at work in both art and politics in economical terms mean? What is the actual reason for such an interdependence of art labor, fiscal games and artful politics that seems to monopolize the art discourse today? Isn't the debate of autonomy versus heteronomy a rather masked way to talk about the fetishism of commodity—one of the major concepts of Marxian analysis—and by extension, to expose the onto-theological conditions of such a 'functionalization of autonomy' best described with the term 'capital'?

In Marx's concept of commodity fetishism, capitalist-exchange value is constituted at the level of social labor as a measure of abstract labor. It is not materiality of any object, which assumes its fetishistic nature, but the commodification of labor that results in the value of 'objective' commodities.[5] Although fetishism is immanent to the commodity form, it conceals not simply the exchange value of commodity, but, most significantly, the exchange-value of abstract labor that stands for the product of labor.[6] Based on that Marxian observation and linking it to the concept of the 'functionalization of autonomy' described above, we can

assume that the fetishistic character of commodities should be seen as a form of aesthetization of pragmatic human activity and autonomization, a disjoining of human action from any moral or social realm. In this regard, individuality and morality are evaluated in terms of their materialistic creditability. Modernity within the condition of alienation demands this level of sophisticated abstraction between labor and value. Isn't this the real reason why we keep buying our Nikes although we are fully cognizant of the unbearable exploitation of humans in their production? Nike as a "golden calf" is the emblem of commodity fetishism that sustains, in a sensuous way, our alienated understanding of our inter-subjective relation to others: a totally crude form of paganism, which also illustrates the theological nature of Marx's early socio-economical thinking.

Does art possess a particular status quo within this theoretical edifice? Drawing on Marx's seminal concepts of labor, alienation and objectified species-being (Gattungswesen) of being human as described in the Manuscripts of 1844, we can argue that an artwork represents a specific type of product of human labor.[7] It is not outside the human condition and social-being (das gesellschaftliche Wesen), which means that it partakes in humankind's universal sense of alienation, which is an inevitable intermediate stage within the so called socio-historical process. However, the product of human labor as a sovereign and self-contained force (unabhängige Macht), which is independent from its producer, potentially entails the means to overcome the alienated stage of current social-being.

Radicalizing this Marxian analysis, we can then offer a more refined description of autonomous artwork. Artworks are, in any case, a product like any other and thus a part of the capitalist exchange system. However, they are defined by a special type of resistance; not a resistance to being subjected to their capitalist commodification, but by another type of immunity. They tend to refuse commodity's own raw fetishization, which, when unconcealed—that can happen at any time—simply exposes its uselessness, drawing attention directly to the masked social constitution of capitalist exchange. It might be easy to see behind any simple commodity as fetish and expose the exchange-value structure that sustains it. It becomes, however, very difficult to look behind an artwork as it constantly negates its capitalist exchange value while preserving the concealment of abstract labor assigned to it.

We can draw on the consequences here and argue that art is somehow different from any other type of commodity. Above all, the debate between autonomy and heteronomy of art, or fiscalization of art and aestheticization of the everyday-world, does not take place between the value of 'pure' or autonomous art and its exchange-value as a commodity, but is a combat between two forms of fetishist character. In this regard, the artwork (either as pure, or commercial, or even anti-artwork) is a fetish commodity of a second grade: an intensified fetish. The 'functionalization of autonomy' might be seen as this additional fetish character of art, which constitutes a reversed notion of fetish as described by Marx. This is a category immanent only to the artwork. It conceals not only the exchange-value of

the product, but, most significantly, the generic fetish character of commodity or capital in general, and, therefore, the commodification of labor, which constitutes the value of 'objective' commodities.

The work of art comes to be an *acheiropoieton*—not handmade—and thus theologized. The term has been used in Byzantine theology to describe icons, which are alleged to have come into existence miraculously, not created by a human painter. According to Alain Besançon's reading of Hegel's *Aesthetics*, the notion of modern art is closed to such a concept of an icon.^[8] One might assume that, even after the Hegelian proclamation of "the end of art," the concept of art as an *acheiropoieton* prevails, transcending art's demise despite its continuous secularization and humanization. If art's function were to make the divine visible (as in ancient Greece), its function in the modern era is to make the visible divine. In other words, over and above the common phantasmagoria of commodity (Adorno's position), we have also the "asceticism" of the work of art. In this regard, an *acheiropoieton* appears to be outside human nature and its social order, possibly following another disposition or system—in other words, creating the illusion of autonomy from the (human) labor from which it arises and to which it belongs. An artwork has the tendency to reside outside the normal mechanisms of the market, to exist as something that cannot be sold, as something that resists exchange, thus creating the illusion of a non-alienated social-being, although it is placed at the very heart of neo-liberal speculation.

Let me give you a banal example from

the everyday world of art business in order to provide evidence for such a paradoxical thesis. We can honestly say that the reason for the hostility with which galleries face the mercantile practices of auction houses can be traced back to this double nature of the artwork. By simply offering an artwork to open sale, an auction house often degrades the artwork to a mere commodity of exchange-value. In this case, the artwork appears to be an interchangeable equity, like real-estate and stock-market bonds, stripped of any mystifications and negating its character as intensified fetish as an *acheiropoieton*. Usually we experience only the negative results of this double bind between the economy of commodity and the economy of the intensified fetish. The practice of an auction house can potentially pose a threat to the controlled pricing and validation policy of a gallery or transform an artist's career into a speculative bubble, with the subsequent sudden drop in price due to uncontrolled manipulations. Suddenly, the artwork loses its value; it becomes a nothing, a useless play—or, looking at it from another perspective—a non-alienated product of human labor! On the other hand, galleries, through their preferences for particular buyers (collectors and museums), often try to protect the symbolic and "universal" value of the artwork as something that can't be sold. Having enough cash doesn't make someone automatically eligible to buy art. And this false exclusivity is not simply a matter of the 'conspiracy of art,' or the privilege of insider-trading attached to art by its practitioners, as Jean Baudrillard remarks, but an inherent quality of the artwork. In other words, the "conspiracy of art" lies precisely within this paradox: the artwork's unreachable

nature, in fact, guarantees the commodity's disposability.^[9]

It can be argued that the artwork's double nature has enormous consequences for a capitalist market system. Actually, its character, as an intensified fetish safeguards any commodity's struggle to be presented as an *acheiropoieton*, which thus can be disguised and sold as a 'pure' artwork. The "new systemic functionalization of autonomy itself—a new 'affirmative culture'—is a coy description of this fact. Such a belief is gloriously performed in the contemporary culture industry, which produces commodities that must be sold, however frivolous, unnecessary or even impossible (like Japanese gadgets) they might be. They only manage to do so if they can be masked with the aura of freedom that stands in for the allegedly autonomous artwork. The culture of logos, luxury goods and cult objects benefits from this almost theological dimension of the work of art. This fact should be seen also as the true reason why contemporary art is so valuable to the financial market and political business today, and not necessarily the other way around.

Can we go even further and argue that contemporary art's innate tendency to replace the general fetishism of commodity with the 'particular economy of the artwork' is the model for any and every semblance of societal pragmatism today? In light of such a comment, and if we ignore the fact that the art system is actually subjected to the dominant social relations of capitalist exchange as argued above, every wealthy collector appears to be a radical trickster, idealizing himself as a romantic hero and spiritual Parsifal, as

some collectors indeed claim to be. Indeed, they might represent a kind of hero if we consider the fact that one can easily earn more investing in the stock market and currencies, rather than buying art. Investing in art is simply not lucrative enough. If we take this statement seriously, the choice between the two forms of investment is actually a combat between two forms of commodity fetishism: the labor versus the intensified fetish. Both types of investment are potentially unstable and they demand the readiness of the investor to take risks. But only the second can safeguard capital's ontological foundation.

We can expand the discussion and argue that a work of art in times of economic crisis, such as the current one, actually represents the ideological means for capital's own survival. Economic crisis is linked to fluctuation of what the 'fictitious capital' to which, mainly, credit and speculation capital belong.^[10] According to Norbert Trenkle's analysis of the current economic crisis, "the growth of fictitious capital not only provides an alternative choice for investors, but also constitutes, when viewed on the macroeconomic level, a deferral of the outbreak of crisis," which is inherent to capitalist system. (Such a crisis is a crisis of over-accumulation, or, to put it in the vocabulary of contemporary macro-economics, a crisis of "over-investment." In this case, a proportion of capital becomes excessive—measured according to its own abstract rationality as an end in itself—and is, therefore, threatened by devalorization.) As the outbreak of a series of capitalist crises from the 1970s until today have shown credit and speculation capital to be extremely unreliable, they threaten

always to translate a particular crisis of devalorization into a genuine global-market crisis. Credit and speculation capital grow too fast because of electronic transactions—automation offered by digital technology—and, as a result, create virtually instantaneous financial bubbles, always ready to burst.

Art as intensified fetish always masks its own existence as fictitious capital, eliminating in this way any moral consideration regarding its speculative nature. We can then assume that art's fictitious capital represents the best possibility for a continuous deferral of the outbreak of an unavoidable capitalist crisis, and, for that reason, view art on the macro-economic level as the best option of safeguarding the system deflecting a crisis of over-investment. Compared to credit and speculation capital of a digitally multiplied finance, art represents in this regard a slow type of fictitious capital. It requires its own investment time. This would mean that art is the perfect defense mechanism, an optimal deferral of the possible outbreak of systemic crisis inherent to a capitalist system. Art can combat the stagnation of the valorization of capital in the real economy. If so, collectors are indeed the heroes of macro-economic planning.

This is true. However, in search of a better understanding of the current status quo, it is important to choose an alternative perspective: In the current state of hyper-capitalism, human labor guarantees both the over-productivity and the accumulation, not of goods, but of commodities in the form of information. As Franco Berardi Bifo notes: for the post-operaist thought (Paolo Virno, Maurizio

Lazzarato, Christian Marazzi) "social labor is the endless recombination of myriad fragments producing, elaborating, distributing, and decoding signs and informational units of all kinds. Every semiotic segment produced by the information worker must meet and match innumerable other semiotic segments in order to form the combinatory frame of the info-commodity, semiocapital."^[11] If commodity fetishism conceals the exchange-value of abstract labor (according to Marx), then labor stands today for the attentive and affective time we produce and consume. Labor today is both a semiotic generator and a creator of organic time (of attention, memory and imagination) to be produced and consumed. Let me give you a simple example: Television advertisers purchase advertising time slots. The question is, however, from whom do they buy this time. Aren't the millions of spectators who offer their attention, cognitive engagement and time while watching commercials the actual creditors of media and creative industries? This is modernity's credo. However, one must add that information theory does not consider the importance of the message, or its meaning, as these are matters of the quality of data, rather than its quantity and readability. In this regard, the message quality distributed through the television is of no importance. Semiocapital pays no attention to the importance of distributed messages. Such a disjuncture between informational quantity and quality of the communication finds its equivalence in the economical system: Since the abandonment of the gold parity rule, the value of monetary currency is determined through its "informational" value, its exchangeability in stock markets.)

In addition to that, today's extreme acceleration of production and distribution of "semiocapital" has reached its capacity, so that "deep, intense elaboration becomes impossible, when the stimulus is too fast."^[12] What if the present-day crisis of capitalism, which obviously has reached the critical moment of "an overwhelming supply of attention-demanding goods," is a crisis of goods, which cannot be consumed? What if current crisis is not a financial crisis, but a crisis of governance and distribution of the produced semio-time? What is the alternative to this condition, which art can offer?

Art represents a very particular type of semiocapital. In contrast to the accelerated and digitally self-multiplied capital of the globalized finance system, the semio-time produced and consumed within the system of art is slow; and it is personal. You need some ninety minutes to watch a film, but only seconds to consume a TV commercial. With modifications, the same applies to the reading of a painting, or a book of poetry. Furthermore, art deals primarily with the importance of distributed messages, not with its informational quantity. In this regard, quality equals the intellectual labor and cognitive activity invested by the production of art workers and the reception of connoisseurs of art. It is the deceleration of intellectual labor and cognitive activity offered by art that makes the difference. Deceleration means to focus on the creation of deeper, slower and intensified time, to concentrate on the production and reception of meaning—ideally the maximum quantity of infinite and, for that reason, inconsumable meaning! (This might be another way to describe what Adorno has called art's "muteness," as

for Adorno art is critical insofar as it is mute, insofar as what it communicates is its muteness.)

What if present-day crisis of semiocapitalism is at the same time a crisis of current political order? In order to elucidate this last thesis, I would like to link the notion of the work of art with the notion of *oikonomia* as analyzed by Giorgio Agamben. The theological doctrine of *oikonomia*—originally meaning ‘stewardship,’ or wise and responsible management or administration of domestic life—was first developed by early Christian fathers in order to interpret the divine intervention of a personal God into the world. This concept was introduced in order to reconcile monotheism as an emerging state religion with the doctrine of the divine nature of the Son (within the Trinity) and thus explain and justify the intervention of God’s house, the Church, into the earthly world. The extremely sophisticated Byzantine discourse of *oikonomia* is directly linked to an elaborate conceptualization of the icon (mainly that of Jesus and, by extension, of all imagery) as being part both of the heavenly and the earthly realm.^[13] Understanding *oikonomia* (or *dispositio* in Latin) as a Foucauldian project, Agamben interprets it as a general theological genealogy of modern economy and governmentality. Modern political and economic doctrines, such as the invisible hand of liberalism over a self-regulated market and society, go back to these early-Christian theological concepts, which refer to God’s activity in the world. Such a genealogy of economy—meaning of a government of men and things—is pertinent to a critical re-orientation of thinking concerning key socioe-

conomic concepts such as the capitalist ethics of work (according to Max Weber) or fetishism of commodities, alienation and human labor (as per Marx). Not only various political concepts, but also the triumph of financial thinking over every other aspect of life in our times, testify to this close connection of modernity to the secularized version of the theological concept of economy and governance. The novelty of Agamben’s claim—echoing both Walter Benjamin’s ideas of capitalism as religion and Carl Schmitt’s famous thesis about the modern theory of state as a secularized theological concept—is that modern power is inherent in not only to political and financial administration, but also to ‘Glory,’ (*doxa*) meaning the ceremonial, liturgical acclamatory apparatus that has always accompanied it: “The society of the spectacle—if we can call contemporary democracies by this name—is, from this point of view, a society in which power in its “glorious” aspect becomes indiscernible from *oikonomia* and government. To have completely integrated Glory with *oikonomia* in the acclamative form of consensus is, more specifically, the specific task carried out by contemporary democracies and their government by consent, whose original paradigm is not written in Thucydides’ Greek, but in the dry Latin of medieval and baroque treaties on the divine government of the world.”^[14]

It is exactly the issue of what is perceived as the visual manifestation of power sustained by the semio-time offered by consumers-creditors of semiocapitalism, which allows mediation regarding art’s current state and future role. In view of capitalism’s tendency to commercialize everything as part of global financial

speculation, could art—understood as affective and sensuous time—offer an alternative? If economy alongside biopolitics is the secularized pendant to *oikonomia* and technological spectacle produced by modern industries of the imaginary is the equivalent to Glory, then the question that arises is: If the work of art as a *dispositif* of *acheiropoieton* can be turned back against the doctrines, what caused human labor to appear as a commodity at the very beginning, and current society to look like a network simply of fiscalized info-producers?

It is pertinent to us that art permanently assumes its position as *acheiropoieton*—a slow and mute icon—offering the impression that it is situated outside the world of labor (semio-time) as part of a particular economy. In this regard, the ‘economy of the art work’ might be the hidden equivalent of both the governmental machinery and the economic control power within our ‘alienated’ society. Because of this, art strives to infiltrate current society with the ascetic notion of the *acheiropoieton* and to hijack the secret center of power: capitalism’s political and financial mechanisms and the spectacular “glory” that sustain them. *Eikonomia*^[15], an economy of the work of art, can be the Trojan horse against the appealing and seductive deluge of accelerated information produced by ‘creative’ investment-managers, film-producers, software developers and corporate advertisers, which sustain commodity fetishism and direct consensual political decision-making. Such an alternative economy does not exist outside the given system of hyper-capitalism. It simply works outside the given informational parameters of this system. It produces an

inconsumable and intensified semiocapital slowing down affective and cognitive time—or, in the words of Lazzarato, it creates novel “time-crystallization-machines.”^[16] This is its hidden surplus value in view of a future society in which labor is not a commodity, but the production and consumption of content-time.

It is indeed difficult to imagine a world in which the ‘economy of the artwork’ will have a stronger influence on the global distribution of images, stock-market courses and the bio-politics of labor and will be able to establish a paradigmatic shift in society. But even if such a world remains utopian for the moment, art’s double nature, which intervenes both in cycles of financial speculation and in actual productive economy of affective time, still offers options for working within the structures of managerial, economic and political control. Beyond any romantic ideas of revolution, which might end the ‘evils of capitalism,’ the marketability of art should not be seen as its handicap, but as its safeguarding screen—a *trompe-l’œil* until a universal economy of the artwork can be established. This might not cancel out the condition of alienation that is inherent to the human condition and create a society free of conflicts—the romantic dream of all social revolutions—but it might be able to suspend its force to destroy our inherent social-being. The price to be paid is often very high: present-day impoverishment and precarization of intellectual labor, which makes artists (and, with them, inventors, philosophers, therapists and educators) appear simply as ornamental accessories of economy. Indeed, present-day “immaterial” and creative workers belong to the most exploited part of the

labor society. Not so, though, if we evaluate this labor not with economic, but with eikonomic criteria. Nevertheless, in a futuristic post-human scenario, in which semicapital is not only produced but also consumed by those who are able to deal with its endless acceleration—meaning by ‘intelligent’ machines—and in which humanity exists only as a beautiful, viral bubble within a gigantic technological, informational and fiscal Gestell (the beginning of which might be the so called “Internet of Things”), the intensified, non-fiscalized and creative time offered by art would be our only recourse. Focusing more on labor as praxis, as a bringing forth and taking into account human labor’s product as an acheiropoieton and its specific oikonomia, might offer us some solutions: worshiping less the golden calf of semicapital and creating invisible dispositives of intensified time! This project will require its own economists, theorists and workers. Even if, for now, leading a life that is as creatively intense as it is economically effective shouldn’t be seen as taboo—one should also urge: Watch to whom you offer credit! Sotirios Bahtsetzis is an adjunct professor in art history and an independent curator based in Athens and Berlin. His research interests include image theory, political theory and contemporary cultural analysis. Recent publications: *The Time That Remains* (e-flux Journal v. 28 & v. 30), *Image Wars* (Afterimage v. 38); Recent exhibitions: *Roaming Images* (3. Thessaloniki Biennale).

Notes:

[1] Horkheimer, M. and Adorno, T.W.: *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1976), p. 121.
[2] Interestingly, the moral justification of this neo-liberal cult in economy coincides with the phenomenon of the artist as a superstar, which actually commences with the so-called third phase of contemporary art—art since the mid 1980s—and should be seen as symptomatic of an equivalent transformation in society. As Olav Velthuis remarks in his insightful sociological analysis of the art market, the year 1980 marks the first time that the highest price was ever paid for a work of art by a living artist, \$1 million for the painting *Three Flags* by Jasper Johns. What is more significant, however, is not just the “winner-take-all” economic model that began to inform the art market, but also the so-called “superstar circuit” that emerged in the New York art world of the 1980s. According to Velthuis, Julian Schnabel is the representative case of an artist whose rapid rise of the price level of his work (and equally fast decline), have characterized the market’s mentality and its “aggressive superstar pricing strategy.” (In a period of less than seven years, Schnabel prices soared from \$3,000 to \$300,000, improving with this increase of prices the “symbolic” and financial position of the artist, his dealers and his collectors.) Warranted or not, this mixture of show business and stock-market mentality linked to prospective financial success has, since then, infiltrated the art world and resulted in a Darwinian network of success or burn-out. Olav Velthuis: *Talking Prices. Symbolic Meaning of*

Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 145.
[3] Peter Osborne, “Imaginary Radicalisms: Notes on the Libertarianism of Contemporary Art,” in: *Verksted No. 8* (2006), p. 15.
[4] Osborne, p. 18.
[5] Stewart Martin, “Critique of Relational Aesthetics,” in: in: *Verksted No. 8* (2006), p. 113.
[6] Martin, p. 106.
[7] Karl Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte, Kommentar von Michael Quante* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2009), p. 195.
[8] “The sensible rises toward the divine and enters art only at the state of ideality, of the abstract sensible. Art thus ‘lies nearer to the spirit and its thinking than purely external spiritless nature does.’ The matter it exerts itself on is ‘a spiritualized sensible appearance or a sensible appearance of the spiritual.’” Alain Besançon: *The Forbidden Image. An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 205.
[9] Obviously, the conflict between galleries and action houses as presented here is a theoretical example. The reality is often simpler: Because auction houses not only often present the appearance of a free market, but also a powerful system of interdependencies between a gallery, an auction house and a private or corporate collection, they control—and monopolize—prices and values.
[10] As Norbert Trenkle explains, “credit and speculation capital is fictitious because it only apparently serves as capital. For it yields high interest rates and speculative gains it for its owner in the relative absence of real valorisation takes

place, which always presupposes that abstract labor is spent on the production of commodities and services and that a proportion of it is siphoned off as surplus value.” Norbert Trenkle, “Tremors on the Global Market,” in: <http://www.krisis.org/2009/tremors-on-the-global-market#more-3383>
[11] Franco Berardi Bifo: “Cognitarian Subjectivation”, in: Aranda, Julieta, Kuan Wood, Brian, Vidolke, Anton (eds.), *Are You Working Too Much? Post-Fordism, Precarity, and the Labor of Art* (e-flux journal) (Berlin: Sternberg, 2011), p. 135.
[12] *Ibid.*, 138.
[13] see: Marie-José Mondzain: *Image, icône, économie. Les sources Byzantines de l’imaginaire contemporain* (Paris: Seuil, 1996)
[14] Giorgio Agamben: *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011) p. xii; *Doxa* in Greek means both Glory and the common belief or popular opinion.
[15] I freely use the term eikonomia in reference to theoretical debates during Byzantine iconoclasm. See Emanuel Alloa, “Bildökonomie. Von den theologischen Wurzeln eines streitbaren Begriffs” *Image*, Ausgabe 2, 6 (2005) p. 13-24
[16] Maurizio Lazzarato: *Video-philosophie. Zeitwahrnehmung im Postfordismus* (Berlin: B-Books, 2002).

Art in the Knowledge-based Polis

by Tom Holert

Lately, the concept of “knowledge production” has drawn new attention and prompted strong criticism within art discourse. One reason for the current conflictual status of this concept is the way it can be linked to the ideologies and practices of neoliberal educational policies. In an open letter entitled “To the Knowledge Producers,” a student from the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna has eloquently criticized the way education and knowledge are being “commodified, industrialized, economized and being made subject to free trade.”^[1]

In a similar fashion, critic Simon Sheikh has addressed the issue by stating that “the notion of knowledge production implies a certain placement of thinking, of ideas, within the present knowledge economy, i.e. the dematerialized production of current post-Fordist capitalism”; the repercussions of such a placement within art and art education can be described as an increase in “standardization,” “measurability,” and “the molding of artistic work into the formats of learning and research.”^[2] Objections of this kind become even more pertinent when one considers the suggestive rhetoric of the major European art educational network ELIA

(European League of Institutes of the Arts), which, in a strategy paper published in May 2008, linked “artistic research” to the EU policy of the generation of “‘New Knowledge’ in a Creative Europe.”^[3]

I am particularly interested in how issues concerning the actual situations and meanings of art, artistic practice, and art production relate to questions touching on the particular kind of knowledge that can be produced within the artistic realm (or the artistic field, as Pierre Bourdieu prefers it) by the practitioners or actors who operate in its various places and spaces. The multifarious combinations of artists, teachers, students, critics, curators, editors, educators, funders, policy-makers, technicians, historians, dealers, auctioneers, caterers, gallery assistants, and so on, embody specific skills and competences, highly unique ways and styles of knowing and operating in the flexibilized, networked sphere of production and consumption. This variety and diversity has to be taken into account in order for these epistemes to be recognized as such and to obtain at least a slim notion of what is at stake when one speaks of knowledge in relation to art—an idea that is, in the best of cases, more nuanced and differentiated than the usual accounts of this relation.

“Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it,” as Foucault famously wrote.^[4] Being based on knowledge, truth claims, and belief systems, power likewise deploys knowledge—it exerts power through knowledge, reproducing it and shaping it in accordance with its anonymous and distributed intentions. This is what articulates the conditions of its

scope and depth. Foucault understood power and knowledge to be interdependent, naming this mutual inherence “power-knowledge.” Power not only supports, but also applies or exploits knowledge. There is no power relation without the constitution of a field of knowledge, and no knowledge that does not presuppose power relations. These relations therefore cannot be analyzed from the standpoint of a knowing subject. Subjects and objects of knowledge, as well as the modes of acquiring and distributing knowledges, are effects of the fundamental, deeply imbricated power/knowledge complex and its historical transformations.

1. The Hornsey Revolution

On May 28, 1968, students occupied Hornsey College of Art in the inner-suburban area of North London. The occupation originated in a dispute over control of the Student Union funds. However, “a planned programme of films and speakers expanded into a critique of all aspects of art education, the social role of art and the politics of design. It led to six weeks of intense debate, the production of more than seventy documents, a short-lived Movement for Rethinking Art and Design Education (MORADE), a three-day conference at the Roundhouse in Camden Town, an exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, prolonged confrontation with the local authority, and extensive representations to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Student Relations.”^[5]

Art historian Lisa Tickner, who studied at Hornsey College of Art until 1967, has published a detailed account of these

events and discussions forty years after the fact. As early as 1969, however (only a few months after the occupation of Hornsey College of Art had been brought to an end by pressure from the above-mentioned local authority in July 1968), Penguin released a book on what had already gained fame as “The Hornsey Affair,” edited by students and staff of the college. This paperback is a most interesting collection of writings and visuals produced during the weeks of occupation and sit-ins, discussions, lectures, and screenings. The book documents the traces and signs of a rare kind of enthusiasm within an art-educational environment that was not considered at the time to be the most prestigious in England. Located just below Highgate, it was described by one of the participants as being “squeezed into crumbling old schools and tottering sheds miles apart, making due with a society’s cast-offs like a colony of refugees.”[6] One lecturer even called it “a collection of public lavatories spread over North London.”[7]

But this modernist nightmare of a school became the physical context of one of the most radical confrontations and revolutions of the existing system of art education to take place in the wake of the events of May ’68. Not only did dissenting students and staff gather to discuss new terms and models of a networked, self-empowering, and politically relevant education within the arts, the events and their media coverage also drew to Hornsey prominent members of the increasingly global alternative-utopian scene, such as Buckminster Fuller.

However, not only large-scale events were remembered. One student wrote of

the smaller meetings and self-organized seminars:

It was in the small seminars of not more than twenty people that ideas could be thrashed out. Each person felt personally involved in the dialogue and felt the responsibility to respond vociferously to anything that was said. These discussions often went on to the small hours of the morning. If only such a situation were possible under ‘normal’ conditions. Never had people en masse participated so fully before. Never before had such energy been created within the college. People’s faces were alight with excitement, as they talked more than they had ever talked before. At least we had found something which was real to all of us. We were not, after all, the complacent receivers of an inadequate educational system. We were actively concerned about our education and we wanted to participate.[8]

From today’s standpoint, the discovery of talking as a medium of agency, exchange, and self-empowerment within an art school or the art world no longer seems to be a big deal, though it is still far from being conventional practice. I believe that the simple-sounding discovery of talking as a medium within the context of a larger, historical event such as the “Hornsey Affair” constitutes one of those underrated moments of knowledge production in the arts—one that I would like to shift towards the center of a manner of attention that may be (but should not necessarily be) labeled as “research.” With a twist of this otherwise over-determined term, I am seeking to tentatively address a mode of understanding and rendering the institutional, social, epistemological, and political contexts and conditions of knowled-

ge being generated and disseminated within the arts and beyond.

The participants in the Hornsey revolution of forty years ago had very strong ideas about what it meant to be an artist or an art student, about what was actually at stake in being called a designer or a painter. They were convinced that knowledge and knowledge communication within art education contained enormous flaws that had to be swept away:

Only such sweeping reforms can solve the problems . . . In Hornsey language, this was described as the replacement of the old “linear” (specialized) structure by a new “network” (open, non-specialized) structure . . . It would give the kind of flexible training in generalized, basic creative design that is needed to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances—be a real training for work, in fact . . . the qualities needed for such a real training are no different from the ideal ones required to produce maximal individual development. In art and design, the choice between good workmen and geniuses is spurious. Any system worthy of being called “education,” any system worthy of the emerging new world, must be both at once. It must produce people whose work or ‘vocation’ is the creative, general transformation of the environment.[9] To achieve this “worthy” system, it was considered necessary to do away with the “disastrous consequence” of the “split between practice and theory, between intellect and the non-intellectual sources of creativity.”[10] Process held sway over output, and open-endedness and free organization of education permeated every aspect of the Hornsey debates.[11] It was also clear that one of the most

important trends of the mid-1960s was the increasing interaction and interpenetration of creative disciplines. “Art and Design,” the Hornsey documents argued, “have become more unified, and moved towards the idea of total architecture of sensory experience”; England underwent “a total revolution of sensibility.”[12]

The consequences of the intersecting developments within the rebelling body of students and staff at Hornsey (and elsewhere), as well as the general changes within society and culture, had to become manifest in the very conceptual framework not only of art education, but of art discourse as such. Hence, there was a widespread recognition that in future all higher education in art and design should incorporate a permanent debate within itself. “Research,” in this sense, came to appear an indispensable element in education:

We regard it as absolutely basic that research should be an organic part of art and design education. No system devoted to the fostering of creativity can function properly unless original work and thought are constantly going on within it, unless it remains on an opening frontier of development. As well as being on general problems of art and design (techniques, aesthetics, history, etc.) such research activity must also deal with the educational process itself . . . It must be the critical self-consciousness of the system, continuing permanently the work started here in the last weeks [June, July 1968]. Nothing condemns the old regime more radically than the minor, precarious part research played in it. It is intolerable that research should be seen as a luxury, or a rare privilege.[13]

Though this emphatic plea for “research” was written in a historical situation apparently much different than our own, it nonetheless helps us to apprehend our present situation. Many of the terms and categories have become increasingly prominent in the current debates on artistic research, albeit with widely differing intentions and agendas. It seems to be of the utmost importance to understand the genealogy of conflicts and commitments that have led to contemporary debates on art, knowledge, and science.

2. An Art Department as a Site of Research in a University System

Becoming institutionalized as an academic discipline at the interface of artistic and scientific practices at an increasing number of art universities throughout Europe, artistic research (sometimes synonymous with notions such as “practice-led research,” “practice-based research,” or “practice-as-research”) has various histories, some being rather short, others spanning centuries. The reasons for establishing programs and departments fostering the practice-research nexus are certainly manifold, and differ from one institutional setting to the next. When art schools are explicitly displaced into the university system to become sites of research, the demands and expectations of the scientific community and institutional sponsorship vis-à-vis the research outcomes of art schools change accordingly.

Entitled “Development and Research of the Arts,” a new program of the Austrian funding body FWF aims at generating the conceptual and material environment for interdisciplinary art-related research wit-

hin, between, and beyond art universities. Thus far, however, the conceptual parameters of the FWF appear to be the subject of debate and potential revision and extension. One should be particularly careful of any hasty grafting of a conventional image of a “scientific” model or mode of research (whatever it may be) onto the institutional context of an art academy. This is not only a matter of epistemological concern, but of education policies and of political debate as well.

One only has to look at the history of the implementation of practice-led research in Art and Design in Great Britain. In 1992 the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) began to formulate criteria for so-called practice-based/practice-led research, particularly in the field of performance, design, and media. By 1996 the RAE had reached a point where it defined research as

original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. It includes work of direct relevance to the needs of commerce and industry, as well as to the public and voluntary sectors; scholarship; the invention and generation of ideas, images, performances and artifacts including design, where these lead to new or substantially improved insights; and the use of existing knowledge in experimental development to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes, including design and construction.[14]

The visual or fine arts of that time had yet to be included in this structure of validation, though in the following years various PhD programs in the UK and elsewhere did try to shift them to an output-oriented

system of assessment close to those already established for design, media, and performance arts. “New or substantially improved insights” as well as “substantially improved materials, devices, products and processes” are the desired outcomes of research, and the Research Assessment Exercise could not be more explicit about the compulsory “direct relevance to the needs of commerce and industry.”

PARIP (Practice as Research in Performance) is a research group that supervises, assesses, and discusses the ongoing research in the new art and design environment initiated by the RAE and other organizations concerned with higher arts education in the UK. A 2002 report by Angela Piccini repeatedly focuses on the relation between research and (artistic) practice, and on the subjects and subjectivities, competencies, and knowledges produced and required by this development. After having interviewed various groups of researchers and students from the field of performance arts and studies, it became clear that both concepts assume specific meanings and functions demanded by the configuration of their new settings. One of the groups Piccini interviewed pondered the consequences of the institutional speech act that transforms an artistic practice into an artistic practice-as-research:

Making the decision that something is practice as research imposes on the practitioner-researcher a set of protocols that fall into: 1) the point that the practitioner-researcher must necessarily have a set of separable, demonstrable, research findings that are abstractable, not simply locked into the experience of performing

it; and 2) it has to be such an abstract, which is supplied with the piece of practice, which would set out the originality of the piece, set it in an appropriate context, and make it useful to the wider research community.[15]

It was further argued that “such protocols are not fixed,” that “they are institutionalized (therefore subject to critique and revision) and the practitioner-researcher communities must recognize that.” The report also expressed concern about “excluded practices, those that are not framed as research and are not addressing current academic trends and fashion,” and it asked, “what about practices that are dealing with cultures not represented within the academy?”[16]

When articulated in terms of such a regime of academic supervision, evaluation, and control (as it increasingly operates in the Euroscapes of art education), the reciprocal inflection of the terms “practice” and “research” appears rather obvious, though they are seldom explicated. The urge among institutions of art and design education to rush the process of laying down validating and legitimating criteria to purportedly render intelligible the quality of art and design’s “new knowledge” results in sometimes bizarre and ahistorical variations on the semantics of practice and research, knowledge and knowledge production.

For applications and project proposals to be steered through university research committees, they have to be upgraded and shaped in such a way that their claims to the originality of knowledge (and thus their academic legitimacy) become transparent, accountable, and

justified. However, to “establish a workable consensus about the value and limits of practice as research both within and beyond the community of those directly involved” seems to be an almost irresolvable task.^[17] At the least, it ought to be a task that continues to be open-ended and inevitably unresolved.

The problem is, once you enter the academic power-knowledge system of accountability checks and evaluative supervision, you have either explicitly or implicitly accepted the parameters of this system. Though acceptance does not necessarily imply submission or surrender to these parameters, a fundamental acknowledgment of the ideological principles inscribed in them remains a prerequisite for any form of access, even if one copes with them, contests them, negotiates them, and revises them. Admittedly, it is somewhat contradictory to claim a critical stance with regard to the transformation of art education through an artistic research paradigm while simultaneously operating at the heart of that same system. I do not have a solution for this. Nonetheless, I venture that addressing the power relations that inform and produce the kind of institutional legitimacy/consecration sought by such research endeavors could go beyond mere lip service and be effective in changing the situation.

3. Art in the Knowledge-Based Polis

I would like to propose, with the support and drive of a group of colleagues working inside and outside the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, a research project bearing the title “Art in the Knowledge-based Polis.” The conceptual launch pad for this

project is a far-reaching question about how art might be comprehended and described as a specific mode of generating and disseminating knowledge. How might it be possible to understand the very genealogy of significant changes that have taken place in the status, function, and articulation of the visual arts within contemporary globalizing societies?

With reference to the work of French sociologist Luc Boltanski, the term polis has been chosen deliberately to render the deep imbrications of both the material (urbanist-spatial, architectural, infrastructural, etc.) and immaterial (cognitive, psychic, social, aesthetic, cultural, legal, ethical, etc.) dimensions of urbanity.^[18] Moreover, the knowledge-based polis is a conflictual space of political contestation concerning the allocation, availability and exploitation of “knowledge” and “human capital.”

As a consequence, it is also a matter of investigating how the “knowledge spaces” within the visual arts and between the protagonists of the artistic field are organized and designed.^[19] What are the modes of exchange and encounter and what kind of communicative and thinking “styles” guide the flow of what kind of knowledge? How are artistic archives of the present and the recent past configured (technologically, cognition-wise, socially)? In what ways has artistic production (in terms of the deployment and feeding of distributed knowledge networks in the age of “relational aesthetics”) changed, and what are the critical effects of such changes on the principle of individualized authorship?^[20]

The implications of this proposal are

manifold, and they are certainly open to contestation. What, for instance, is the qualifier enabling it to neatly distinguish between artistic and non-artistic modes of knowledge production? Most likely, there isn’t one. From (neo-)avant-garde claims of bridging the gap between art and life (or those modernist claims which insist on the very maintenance of this gap) to issues of academic discipline in the age of the Bologna process and outcome-based education, it seems that the problem of the art/non-art dichotomy has been displaced. Today, this dichotomy seems largely to have devolved into a question of how to establish a discursive field capable of rendering an epistemological and ontological realm of artistic/studio practice as a scientifically valid research endeavor.

As art historian James Elkins puts it, concepts concerning the programmatic generation of “new knowledge” or “research” may indeed be “too diffuse and too distant from art practice to be much use.”^[21] Elkins may have a point here. His skepticism regarding the practice-based research paradigm in the fine arts derives from how institutions (i.e., university and funding bodies) measure research and PhD programs’ discursive value according to standards of scientific, disciplinary research. For Elkins, “words like research and knowledge should be confined to administrative documents, and kept out of serious literature.”^[22] In a manner most likely informed by science and technology studies and Bruno Latour, he argues instead that the focus should turn toward the “specificity of charcoal, digital video, the cluttered look of studio classrooms (so different from science labs, and yet so similar), the intri-

ciencies of Photoshop . . . the chaos of the foundry, the heat of under-ventilated computer labs.”^[23] I think this point is well taken.

However useless the deployment of terms such as “research” and “knowledge” may seem, such uselessness is bound to a reading and deployment of the terms in a way that remains detached from the particular modes of discourse formation in art discourse itself. The moment one enters the archives of writing, criticism, interviews, syllabi, and other discursive articulations produced and distributed within the artistic field, the use of terms such as “research” and discussion about the politics and production of “knowledge” are revealed as fundamental to twentieth-century art—particularly since the inception of Conceptual Art in the late 1960s. After all, the modernists, neo- and post-avant-gardists aimed repeatedly at forms and protocols relating to academic and intellectual work—of research and publication, the iconography of the laboratory, scientific research, or think tanks.

Administrative, information, or service aesthetics, introduced at various moments of modernist and post-modernist art, emulated, mimicked, caricatured and endorsed the aesthetics and rhetoric of scientific communities. They created representations and methodologies for intellectual labor on and off-display, and founded migrating and flexible archives that aimed to transform the knowledge spaces of galleries and museums according to what were often feminist agendas.

Within the art world today, the discursive formats of the extended library-cum-

seminar-cum-workshop-cum-symposium-cum-exhibition have become pre-eminent modes of address and forms of knowledge production. In a recent article in this journal on “the educational turn in curating,” theorist Irit Rogoff addresses the various “slippages that currently exist between notions of ‘knowledge production,’ ‘research,’ ‘education,’ ‘open-ended production,’ and ‘self-organized pedagogies,’” particularly as “each of these approaches seem to have converged into a set of parameters for some renewed facet of production.” Rogoff continues, “Although quite different in their genesis, methodology, and protocols, it appears that some perceived proximity to ‘knowledge economies’ has rendered all of these terms part and parcel of a certain liberalizing shift within the world of contemporary art practices.” However, Rogoff is afraid that “these initiatives are in danger of being cut off from their original impetus and threaten to harden into a recognizable ‘style.’” As the art world “became the site of extensive talking,” which entailed certain new modes of gathering and increased access to knowledge, Rogoff rightly wonders whether “we put any value on what was actually being said.”[24]

Thus, if James Elkins is questioning the possibility of shaping studio-based research and knowledge production into something that might receive “interest on the part of the wider university” and be acknowledged as a “position—and, finally, a discipline—that speaks to existing concerns,” [25] Rogoff seems to be far more interested in how alternative practices of communality and knowledge generation/distribution might provide an empowering capacity.

4. Artistic Knowledge and Knowledge-based Economies

Since the neo-avant-gardes of the 1960s (at the latest), knowledge generation within the visual arts has expanded through the constitutive dissolution (or suspension) of its subjects and media. Meanwhile, however, its specific aesthetic dimension has continued to be marked by elusiveness and unavailability—by doing things, “of which we don’t know what they are” (Adorno).[26] A guiding hypothesis of the “Art in the Knowledge-based Polis” conceit is that this peculiar relationship between the availability and unavailability of artistic knowledge production assigns a central task to contemporary cultural theory, as such. This not only concerns issues of aesthetics and epistemology, but also its relation to other (allegedly non-artistic) spaces of knowledge production.

To advance this line of reasoning, the various reconfigurations of knowledge, its social function, and its distribution (reflected within late modernist and post-modernist epistemological discourse) have to be considered. From the invocation of the post-industrial information society [27] to the critique of modernist “metanarratives”[28] and the theorization of new epistemological paradigms such as reflexivity, transdisciplinarity, and heterogeneity,[29] the structure, status and shape of knowledge has changed significantly. Amongst other consequences, this has given rise to a number of specific innovative policies concerning knowledge (and its production) on national and transnational levels.[30]

A point of tension that can become pro-

ductive here is the traditional claim that artists almost constitutively work on the hind side of rationalist, explicated knowledge—in the realms of non-knowledge (or emergent knowledge). As a response to the prohibition and marginalization of certain other knowledges by the powers that be, the apparent incompatibility of non-knowledge with values and maxims of knowledge-based economies (efficiency, innovation, and transferability) may provide strategies for escaping such dominant regimes.

Michel Foucault’s epistemology offers a hardly noticed reasoning on artistic knowledge that appears to contradict this emphasis on non-knowledge, while simultaneously providing a methodological answer to the conundrum. In his 1969 *L’Archéologie du savoir* (The Archaeology of Knowledge), Foucault argues that the technical, material, formal, and conceptual decisions in painting are traversed by a “positivity of knowledge” which could be “named, uttered, and conceptualized” in a “discursive practice.”[31] This very “positivity of knowledge” (of the individual artwork, a specific artistic practice, or a mode of publication, communication, and display) should not be confused with a rationalist transparency of knowledge. This “discursive practice” might even refuse any such discursivity. Nonetheless, the works and practices do show a “positivity of knowledge”—the signature of a specific (and probably secret) knowledge.

At the heart of “Art in the Knowledge-based Polis” would be a recognition, description, and analysis of such “positivity”—as much as an exploration of the epistemological conditions in which such

positivity appears. Just as the forms and discourses through which artists inform, equip, frame, and communicate their production have become manifold and dispersed, so has a new and continuously expanding field of research opened up as a result.

In many ways, the recent history of methodologies and modes of articulation in the visual arts is seen to be co-evolutionary with such developments as participate in the complex transition from an industrial to a postindustrial (or in terms of regulation theory: from a Fordist to a post-Fordist) regime. However, the relationship between art and society cannot be grasped in terms of a one-sided, sociological-type causality. Rather, the relationship must be seen as highly reciprocal and interdependent. Hence it is possible to claim that in those societies for which “knowledge” has been aligned with “property” and “labor” as a “steering mechanism,” the visual arts dwell in an isolated position.[32] The pertinent notion of “immaterial labor” that originated in the vocabulary of post-operaismo (where it is supposed to embrace the entire field of “knowledge, information, communications, relations or even affects”) has become one of the most important sources of social and economic value production.[33] Hence, it is crucial for the visual arts and their various (producing, communicating, educating, etc.) actors to fit themselves into this reality, or oppose the very logic and constraints of its “cognitive capitalism.”[34]

Amongst such approaches is an informal, ephemeral, and implicit “practical wisdom” that informs individual and collective habits, attitudes, and dialects. More-

over, the influence of feminist, queer, subaltern, or post-colonial epistemologies and “situated knowledges” is of great importance in relation to the visual arts.[35] Thus, for the purposes of inquiring into “Art in the Knowledge-based Polis,” the array of artistic articulations (both discursive and those deemed non-discursive) will be conceived as reaching far beyond common art/science and theory/practice dichotomies, while a careful analysis of the marks left on artistic epistemologies will be pursued throughout.

The relocation and re-contextualization of the knowledge issue create room-for-play absent in traditional research designs. The socio-spatial dimension of knowledge production within the visual arts should constitute another essential interest. Urban spaces are understood today as infrastructures of networked, digital architectures of knowledge as much as material, built environments. The contemporary knowledge-based city is structured and managed by information technology and databases, and the new technologies of power and modes of governance they engender (from surveillance strategies to intellectual property regulations to the legal control of network access) demand an adapted set of methodologies and critical approaches. Much of the work to be done might deploy updated versions of regime analysis and Foucauldian governmentality studies (which would by no means exclude other approaches). This urban “network society” displays features of a complex “politics of knowledge” that cannot be limited to stately and corporate management of biotechnological knowledge, because it is also actively involved in sponsoring the so-called

creative industries, universities, museums, etc.[36] By this token, it also becomes important to investigate and explore the social, political, and economic shares held by the visual arts in the knowledge-based polis.

What is needed is a multifocal, multidisciplinary perspective with a fresh look at the interactions and constitutive relations between knowledge and the visual arts. The specific, historically informed relations between artistic and scientific methodologies (their epistemologies, knowledge claims, and legitimating discourses) should play a major role. However, as deliberately distinguished from comparable research programs, research will be guided onto an expanded epistemic terrain on which “scientific” knowledge is no longer a privileged reference. Internal exchanges and communications between the social/cultural worlds of the visual arts and their transdisciplinary relationalities will be structured and shaped by those very forms of knowledge whose legitimacy and visibility are the subject of highly contested epistemological struggles.

An adequate research methodology has to be developed in order to allow the researchers positions on multiple social-material time-spaces of actual making and doing—positions that permit and actually encourage active involvement in the artistic processes in the stages of production before publication, exhibition, and critical reception. I would suggest that notions of “research” motivated by a sense of political urgency and upheaval are of great importance here. As can be seen in what took place at Hornsey in 1968, positions that are criticized (and desired) as an economic and systemic

privilege should be contested as well as (re)claimed. Otherwise, I am afraid that the implementation of practice-based research programs and PhDs in art universities will turn out to be just another bureaucratic maneuver to stabilize hegemonic power/knowledge constellations, disavowing the very potentialities and histories at the heart of notions of “practice” and “research.”

This essay is a revised and abridged version of a talk given at the conference “Art/Knowledge. zAesthetics” at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, November 11, 2008.

Notes

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- [11] See *ibid.* [Document 46], 122.
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- [13] *Ibid.* [Document 46], 128-129.
- [14] Angela Piccini, "An Historiographic Perspective on Practice as Research," *PARIP (Practice as Research in Performance)*, →.
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- [16] *Ibid.*
- [17] See Anna Pakes, "Original Embodied Knowledge: The Epistemology of the New in Dance Practice as Research," *Research in Dance Education* 4, no. 2 (December 2003): 144.
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Oh what a mess I've made: On Aesthetics and Political Praxis

by Olive McKeon

A few people may have been standing together - five, ten or twelve, not more; nothing has been announced, nothing is expected. Suddenly everywhere is black with people and more come streaming from all sides as though streets had only one direction. Most of them do not know what has happened and, if questioned, have no answer; but they hurry to be there where most other people are. (Elias Canetti, 16)

Thousands of us out here. In the middle of the street, in the middle of the city. Yelling, tumbling, running. Breaking off, galloping down the alley like a pack of wild ponies. Pausing, licking our fingers and testing the air. Then out onto the street again. The pack becomes a mass becomes a throng becomes a maelstrom. Grabbing a wrist and thrusting forward. The cops! the cops! Plans B and C. Spinning on heels, back tracking. Turning and then turning again and they are off

our tail. We are out wolfing.

A bloodied youth participating in the protest/occupation of the Tory Millbank Tower, London 2010. El Pias photo Political struggles coordinate the movements of bodies in spaces as in marches, protests, strikes, sit-ins, occupations, blockades, and lock downs. These forms of struggle often share compositional devices: bodies filling up or emptying out a space, bodies surrounding a terrain or clogging a channel, bodies displacing objects, breaking brittle surfaces, burning combustible elements. These sensuous moments of unrest traverse a broad cross section of political struggle. While one can describe these moments as a calculus of social and material forces, I wonder what one can learn from an inquiry into the aesthetic character of political struggles. An examination of struggles in their aesthetic dimension - their shards and ashes, their clamor and mess, their inescapable sensuality - can illuminate the gravity and exhilaration of political praxis.

This essay proposes a shift in formulating arts activism from a question of bringing art to social movements and towards thinking aesthetically about the barest of political practices. From this vantage point, political struggles already involve a rich set of aesthetic operations that precede the contribution made by artists. I use the concept of aesthetics to denote sensuousness and play, invoking specifically Kant's formulation of the beautiful as involving free play and a purposiveness without purpose. I propose an approach to political practices that may arouse an experience of the beautiful, as suggested through my reading of a text by the

French journal *Tiqqun*. While often sensuous, fulfilling, and rapturous, crowds and collective assemblages also potentially bear the dangers of alienation. Yet this aesthetic orientation toward political practices uniquely suggests a move away from the professionalization of arts activism that tames what otherwise might unfold as free play, communism, and the beautiful.

Thinking about the aesthetics of political struggles - specially in the moments when they become enacted with bodies in space - reframes an orientation towards art and politics. A few common frameworks for arts activism often situate art as a supplement to political movements. Community-based projects bring art in order to empower oppressed groups or build solidarity between people. Or artists aim to contribute and support social movements through projects such as silk-screening protest posters or preparing street theater for demonstrations. These practices, often immensely useful to community groups and social movements, fit into a framework of supplementing politics with art.

Moving in different direction, I propose an alternative question to ask: How can we think aesthetically about our political practices. This entails a shift from supplementing social movements to engaging with the preexisting complexity and richness of forms of struggle such as marches, blockades, occupations, sabotage, and so on. Approaching a political demonstration from this point of view would conceive of the street as always already a performance. This shift involves thinking formally and sensuously about spatial-temporal political practices and

about politics as a rich aesthetic field in itself. One can focus on the artisanal crafting of political struggle, the 'social movements' happening in the street in distinction to making dances alone in the studio.

This suggests a further aesthetic turn for politics and activism, a transference of the functions played by art to political practice. One could apply the notion of prefigurative politics to the aesthetic so that social movements might aesthetically prefigure the world to come. Everything one asks for from an aesthetic experience could be asked of how groups enact political struggles in space and time. The intensities of the aesthetic can be heightened, even made psychedelic, through forms of struggle. Situations of mass political insurrection involve a sensuous density, the exhilarating overturning of once undisturbed spaces and the devastating materiality of violence and repression. Other political practices, such as an under-attended, boring rally of trite and banal speeches, pall in comparison as aesthetic experiences. These practices might benefit from an increase in intensity and unpredictability. This call to seek aesthetic experiences amongst billy clubs and rubber bullets might appear dystopian or even an apology for police violence because of its potentiality for excitement. While certainly a danger, one must not overlook the importance of the aesthetic aspects of how struggles feel as we engage in them. Instead, this is a call to experience the conflict and antagonism that is a part of any historic political struggle from the civil rights era to Tahrir Square and beyond.

In thinking about the aesthetics of strug-

gle, what does this term 'aesthetics' do for us? From its long history, I use the term to point to sensuousness and play. Sensuousness refers to the perceptible properties of something, its sensual characteristics. Recalling Frederic Jameson's imperative to always historicize, I might rework this as always aestheticize, meaning to consider how one comes to perceive or experience whatever situation is at hand. How do you know a struggle is happening, how do you know to understand it as a political struggle, and what account do you privilege as a means of explain how it occurs? These questions pertain to the sensible and the forces that organize and categorize the sensorium.

As a second idea indicated by the term 'aesthetics,' play traverses many aesthetic theorists, particularly Kant who characterizes the aesthetic experience as one of play (Kant). Play broadly refers to non-instrumental activity, tasks without an end, and I am specifically focused in Kant's notion of 'free play.' Play appears in Kant's aesthetics as the free play of cognitive faculties. One feels an alignment of the faculties and a harmony between intuition and understanding. The aesthetic judgement senses that the object in view displays a purposiveness without purpose, an experience of understanding in general without a particular content. One remains disinterested, unmotivated, and unclouded by desire for the object.

To steal these concepts from Kant then, I propose political struggle as a form of free play, a moment in which one can experience the beautiful. Consider a moment of urban unrest. A person

engaged in a riot relates to the landscape in a manner paralleling a patron experiencing the beautiful before a work of art. The rioter does not interact with the newspaper box, trash can, or shop window for their functional properties nor for their pleasing qualities. She does not intend to put something in the trash can, obtain a newspaper from its box, or admire the objects displayed in the window. Rather, she interacts with the elements of the street scene with a purposiveness without purpose. She acts as though she has a purpose, taking a brick to the glass or tilting the newspaper box on its side, yet ultimately these actions serve no particular function. The riot becomes a scene of the free play of the cognitive faculties, an experience of the urban environment disinterested from its relation to either desire or goodness. The street becomes not a conduit of commerce but a play of forms. Certainly, Kant's notion of the beautiful shares some features with the riot but not others such as his sensus communis, the universalization of taste. This appropriation of the beautiful stems not from fidelity but an attempt to read with Kant against Kant.

While the connection between urban unrest and a Kantian free play appears out of joint as the beautiful involves a restfulness of the mind and an experience of harmony, play and non-instrumental actions can help make sense what happens in political struggle. If utopia or communism can be thought not as a concrete set of socio-institutional relations but as a process, political struggles do not pursue a specific end or aim. One must not ask if a particular struggle finishes in victory or defeat but how to

swing the unfolding circumstances in an emancipatory direction. The beautiful's purposiveness without purpose resonates both with the non-instrumentality of aesthetic form and political practice.

Play traverses not only aesthetic theory but also the left communist thought of the French journal *Tiqqun*, which embraces this continuous free play of political forces. In its Introduction to *Civil War*, Thesis 10 states, "Civil war is the free play of forms-of-life" (*Tiqqun*, 32, my emphasis) and Thesis 30 defines communism as "the real movement that elaborates, everywhere and at every moment, civil war" (*Tiqqun*, 63, my emphasis). This use of 'free play' gestures towards a reading of communism in light of Kant's aesthetics. *Tiqqun* presents a runaway communism that dispenses with any need for concepts of value production or exploitation in favor of a notion of communism as a ceaseless civil war without aim or end, a war fought with purposiveness without purpose. The choice of the word movement frames communism as a form of dance, an ongoing process of bodies leaning towards and away from each other. *Tiqqun* finds beauty precisely in this elaboration of civil war and communism, as it states, "the only beautiful moments of the last century were disparagingly called 'civil wars'" (*Tiqqun*, 191). Arising out of struggle, political struggle enacts a purposive disordering of the natural universe, a disorder experienced as the harmony and beauty of communism's unfolding. *Tiqqun* provides one approach to communism as an experience of the beautiful.

Let us turn towards social movements and their formal ways of collecting and

moving bodies in crowds, packs, swarms, gangs, huddles, clusters, herds, and bursting socialites. Various writers give us a sense of the viscosity and texture of crowds and their movements. One can think of Elias Canetti's poetic description of crowds and the complex typology he invents to understand them: Invisible Crowds, Baiting Crowds, Flight Crowds, Prohibition Crowds, Reversal Crowds, Feast Crowds, Double Crowds, Crowd Crystals, and so on. Or one can recall the way that Deleuze and Guattari picked up and ran with Canetti's work with their figure of the wolf pack: "The wolf, wolves, are intensities, speeds, temperatures, non-decomposable variable distances. A swarming, a wolfing" (Deleuze and Guattari, 35). These examples indicate the poetics of bodies and their collective movements. An aesthetic approach to struggle examines political practice at level of the crowd assemblages generated and the ensuing corporeality of action, or, in other words, how movements inspire themselves to actually, physically move.

Inside the form of a political struggle rests a dance party, an embodied play of social antagonisms. One can note the parallel between a struggle and a party, in its sense as revelry and festivity. At a dance party, everyone swarms towards the center of the dance floor, wanting to be surrounded and immersed in the amoebic form of the party. Both parties and struggles bring bodies together for a concentrated collective experience, leaving it their wake messy, a disorganized array of bygone objects.

While noting the poetics and play of crowds, I must raise two important admo-

nitions: the danger of alienation and the collapsing distance between play and work. While the packs that form on the streets and collectively discover what they can do together conjures the excitement of social movements, their beauty can produce alienation as much as emergent solidarity. A friend and comrade wrote to me describing her experience during the Millbank riot of November 10, 2010 when fifty thousand British students descended upon the head quarters of the Conservative Party that had voted to triple the cost of university tuition. In the midst of students breaking the floor to ceiling windows of the lobby, tossing whatever computer equipment they found into the street, and setting fires in the courtyard of the building, she describes her uneasiness:

Then the assault on Millbank in the student protests last november, I was there with A and we got into the building after it had been taken. We ran from the cops, went up on the roof, dropped a banner, etc. So this kind of scenario of being able to act with people I know and trust at demos or riots but feeling totally alienated and vulnerable if on my own or in an unknown group, not recognizing a group energy or not being able or desiring to tap into it. So my anxiety is not being able to connect my political desires for collectivity or rupture to the uneasiness with groups, crowds, and their behaviors. Being an only child, I guess I never got over the trauma of the first day at school. I was a sovereign individual thrown into a bunch of stupid kids.

The crowd or pack as a social form can swing in many directions, sometimes as frightening as exhilarating. What haunts

us about social relations in other contexts - the first day of school, the bar, the subway - will haunt us within social movements.

One must attend to the specificity of the bodies involved and how the stratification of bodies by race, gender, and class will continue to operate in the midst of action. Decision making and the norms about what to do in the context of political action will not escape the power dynamics at play within racialized and gendered social relations. White bodies acting together in a protest in a commercial center may understand each other as equipped with an anti-capitalist analysis while they may assume brown bodies in a poorer area doing the same actions as stripped of a sophisticated political critique. A group of men may fail to support actions done by women, indicative to them of female hysteria and frenzy rather than strategic political practice. Certain subject positions may understand their struggles as properly political and those done by others as non-political, mob hysteria, pointing towards a differentiation between who and what can occupy the space of the political. The dynamics of white supremacy and patriarchy will emerge in the midst of political movements as in other domains of social life.

In addition to the uneasiness of and power dynamics within group formations, approaching social movements as aesthetic phenomena raises a complex set of issues regarding cultural production, work, and revolt. If the bodies in the street resemble dancers, does taking part in political organizing consist of a form of cultural labor? Is the dancer/body-running-through-the-streets a cultural work-

er? From one vantage point, street actions reflect a revolt against work and a momentary refusal to be a quiet, docile body in transit, to heed the demands of capital. From the opposite angle, one could cast the street action as a form of unpaid creative labor that helps to generate a buzz about a city that brands and advertisers will source to promote their commodities. While many examples attest to the channeling of revolutionary movements by advertisers, one commodity appears particularly relevant, a video game titled *Brink* released in North America on May 10, 2011. In the game, two factions, resistance and security, battle in a fictional insurrectionary civil war. The characters utilize parkour-style movement, and the billboard advertisements for the game do not fail to circle the R in 'Revolution.' Framing political practice as a form of play stands in an uncertain relation to the status of work, often characterized as expanding into domains of leisure within a post-Fordist context. Political practice can play an antagonistic force to capital and value production, or it can contribute to the cultural reservoirs available for appropriation.

Another aspect of the relations between play, work, and political practice pertains to arts activists who make a profession out of their activist work. By collecting their projects into a portfolio or CV that may get them a teaching gig or other form of employment, they turn what would be the play of political antagonism into the imperatives of work. Perhaps this is the moment when social movements can no longer have their purposiveness without purpose, their beauty. To uphold their status as play may entail a move away from

professionalization, from an impressive portfolio of brilliant art work that knits communities together, critiques institutions, and opposes imperialism. The rowdiest in the street and during the darkest hours of the night will never receive compensation for their work, which I prefer to call communist play. Their activity will be anonymous and will not accrue symbolic capital. Few are ever paid to participate in political uprisings. Usually only mercenaries, those hired by a regime to suppress an uprising, receive wages. A distinction may need to separate the free play of political struggles from the logic and regulation of cultural labor.

If one identifies political practice not as work but as play, one faces the inevitable question of how exactly to fund and reproduce one's political efforts. While we still live in a capitalist mode of production, one is forced to sell labor-power to reproduce oneself or consent to a voluntarist marginalization. The problem of how to fund political practices on the left parallels the discussions around arts funding. As domains of play and non-instrumental activity, both political and artistic practices strive to articulate themselves as detached from or antagonistic to value production. Yet they require material resources to continue to exist. This constitutive contradiction of being exterior or in opposition to capital circulation yet dependent on it haunts those engaged in both political struggles and artistic practices. While furthering and elaborating political struggles involves a set of strategic decisions about how to sustain various efforts, I suggest not identifying too closely with professionalization. Capital will not pay labor for waging class war, and men will not pay women and trans-

identified people to resist patriarchy. Parsing out and understanding the distinction and contradiction between the work we do to reproduce our political practices and the play of struggle itself may help clarify the relation between play and work.

In this consideration of the aesthetics of struggle, political practices emerge as corporeal movements that one cannot abstract from the concrete moments of their elaboration, their performance in space and time. An aesthetic operation occurs during a moment of struggle prior to the arrival of any activist marching bands, the street theater troupes, or art as such. The doing of politics rests upon the participation and play of bodies in the elaboration of a struggle. Addressing politics on the level of its aesthetic operations forges a connection between play, means without ends, and the beauty sought after in both politics and aesthetics. We will not be paid for our most beautiful dances which will be on the ashes of capitalist social relations. We will not add a bullet point on our CV for abolishing capitalism and ourselves as workers, which will be perhaps the most aesthetically satisfying moment of our lives.

At stake here is not so much a creative proposition for a new sort of project, but a way of thinking differently about the practices that traverse social movements. This implies a call for artists, in addition to making art for social movements, to make the movement their aesthetic project. In the context of political movements that do not yet have the sublimity of a mass uprising, those involved can thump up the volume, strangeness, choreography, and poetics of what they do political-

ly. If participating in social movements feels boring or unfulfilling, add complexity and play to the dances that unfold on the streets. Use your legs for jumping, kicking, getting low. Use your arms for throwing, climbing, lifting. Your feet for running and stomping. Your hands for secret baseball catcher signs.

Pack lots of bodies into small spaces. Get tighter. Also, be more expansive, decentralize the activity, infinite splinter groups. Use levels - send some people up and others below. Dress the part, which is to say, dress as someone you have never met. Appropriate tactics from the animal kingdom - a wedge of swans, a pack of wolves, a wake of buzzards, a siege of cranes. Whether it is two or ten thousand of you, make it your finest and ceaseless dance.

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Spaces for Thinking. Perspectives on the Art Academy

by Simon Sheikh

Artists with a Ph.D.! - this should only tingle the spines of conservatives, right? Wrong: The shifts resulting from the so-called "Bologna process" with its creation of a European standardization of academic studies in the fields of institutional art history as well as art education in academies hit hardest where the general significance of methodologies is at stake. Under the buzzword of an "artistic research", currently many things resurface in a canonized format that former generations of artists had fought for as principles of self-empowerment: to do research on your own account, without having to justify your doings in the face of Academia and its limitations. Is it only rhetorical to ask what artists not operating within the ideal of "research" will be doing in the near future? What - apart from short-term displacements of funding - can result from the "scientific challenge" to the field of art?

The challenges for artistic education today are indeed many. Some would claim that art education is at a crossroad between tradition and innovation, others

that we are in a crisis of legitimation and methodology, perhaps parallel to a general institutional crisis of society, or even of global capitalism. A crisis not unlike the one that haunted my original field of study, or background, art history, in the 1980s. Here, there was a huge methodological crisis or even battle between traditional empirical and descriptive approaches towards influences from sociology, epistemology, post-structuralism and feminism. It was a question of whether the discipline was self-contained, its object of study and methods hereof a (pre)given or whether it was a discipline that had a theory of its object of study - as is the Althusserian definition of science. Indeed, the discipline itself became the object of art-historical research: the history of art history (in an epistemological sense), now a subgenre filling numerous volumes. And it is now no longer possible to study the art object, the history and sociology of art without a reflection of the mode of study itself, without an auto-critique and certain notions of interdisciplinarity. Such reflections and history lessons are of value to us today, in an evaluation of the education of artists, or what we, in broader and perhaps more accurate terms, could call cultural producers.[1] Especially since art academies may or may not be in a particular kind of crisis, but are at the same time hugely successful. Not only are artists, as I will return to shortly, branching out, as it were, into many other fields and disciplines, but also within the artworld itself are academies prevalent, if not hegemonic. If one looks at contemporary galleries, museums and international biennials, the artists represented here are almost exclusively all academy-trained, a huge difference to the ratio of just, say,

twenty or thirty years ago. In this specific sense, art schools and academies have never been more effective or even successful in the influence on the art world and art production in general. Whereas most modernist art movements clearly happened outside or even in opposition to academies and academia, we have witnessed a merger between the academy, critical theories and discourses, museal representations and the market, although often in contradictory and even antagonistic terms. We therefore have to ask ourselves not only what system we are educating people within, but also, crucially, which system are we educating people for?

In the current debates on the development of artistic education, and more specifically the implementation of the Bologna process [2] - meaning a European standardization of the Anglo-American academic structure of ba, ma and PhD degrees - we are witnessing a similar dichotomy to the one that plagued art history in the 1980s, between traditional, given modes and newer, interdisciplinary methods and approaches. As in the struggle between, or shift from, old to new art history, we see a conflict between the old master-student relation and a course-based system on the one hand, and between a (in)formal studio practice discourse and theoretical influxes and critiques on the other. In these forms of learning specific notions of art production - as well as the production of the artist-subject, are implicit:- as creation or construction, respectively. This dichotomy, or struggle, if you will, is happening on two fronts; in the educational system itself and in contemporary art production, with the former somewhat following or reflect-

ing the latter. In contemporary art practices we can see a certain "permissiveness", an interdisciplinary approach where almost anything can be considered an art object in the appropriate context, and where more than ever before there is work being produced with an expanded praxis, intervening in several fields other than the traditional art sphere, touching upon such areas as architecture and design, but also philosophy, sociology, politics, biology, science and so on. The field of art has become a field of possibilities, of exchange and comparative analysis. It has become a field for alternatives, proposals and models, and can, crucially, act as a cross field, an intermediary between different fields, modes of perception and thinking, as well as between very different positions and subjectivities.

Art thus has a very privileged, if tenable and slippery, but crucial position and potential in contemporary society. Such expanded practices emerged, as we know, in the 1960s and 1970s, but have become much more prevalent in the 1990s, and where they were originally in a dialogical/oppositional relationship with the tradition of art and its institutions, it is today more fully institutionalized, and only secondarily in opposition via its formats, which is why it was termed respectively "contextual" and "relational" by territorializing theorists Peter Weibel and Nicolas Bourriaud in the 1990s.^[3] Art is as often purely a place or even pretext for communication and action, as it is an end in itself, hence recent buzzwords such as platform, plateau and project. This is neither the time nor place to discuss the merits of such projects and language games, but rather to point to a profound

shift in the conception of art as objects and contexts, as well as of the artists as subject and producer. We therefore need new tools, not only in an art historical sense, but also in terms of the education of artists as a discipline and institutional space. Perhaps it is also in this context that we should view the emergence of a term such as "artistic research", one of the buzzwords in the current discussions around art education and the modular model: on the one hand research seems implied by certain artistic practices, and on the other it seems to academically validate artistic work processes as such. We are dealing with a transfer of terms, since we are not just talking about "research" as such, as in other fields, but with the prefix "artistic" added. That is, something additional and specific to the field of art. One must thus inevitably ask what kind of practices does not involve artistic research? What practices are privileged, and which are marginalized or even excluded? Does research function as a different notion of artistic practice(s) or merely a different wording, validation process and contextualization that can mold and place artistic work within traditional university structures of knowledge and learning?

Often, but not always, in such dematerialized, post-conceptual and, perhaps more accurately termed, re-contextualized art practices, there is of course a notion of research invoked. Research has even, to some extent, superceded studio practice. Artists are increasingly researching projects, not only to make site-specific works, but also time and content specific works. Here, form follows function, and the materialization of the work is decided upon different parameters than in histori-

cal studio practice. For example, the introduction of documentary strategies into artistic practice over the last decade or so, naturally requires very different skills and methodologies than a traditional studio practice, but also - alongside the so called project exhibition - implying potentially very different goals and scopes. To a certain extent, it is the issue at hand rather than the end product of an art object that is primary. Studio practice has by no means disappeared, though, especially not from the art market, instead several conceptions of art practice seem to co-exist, and the battle lines between different artistic and political positions can not be mapped out only in formal ways, as was the case in early modernism. However, it is obvious that re-contextualized art practices are not resting upon the same pillars of tradition as the historical art academy, if on any, and it is clear that such practices are increasingly present within the art academies, both in terms of teachers and students, but not necessarily visible in the structural framework of the art academies themselves. Why is this so? And will they find their place more easily in the modular system?

Perhaps, as we are continuously discussing new models of art production and institutions, we should also discuss new models of art educational facilities, both in terms of architecture, structure and curricula. It is clear that the interdisciplinary must necessarily stand in opposition to a traditional division of art practices into particular genres or indeed disciplines, such as "painting" or the no longer so new "new medias", to name but a few. In order to address the situation that contemporary young artists, or cultural pro-

ducers, face, we cannot rest on the pillars of tradition, neither within institutions, art production or methods of teaching. On the contrary, tradition seems quite counter-productive to our current endeavor: the assessment of new skills and tools for a re-contextualized art practice. So, if we view art production as knowledge production rather than formal production, we will have to develop and define a different set of properties and parameters for discussion, production and evaluation. And when we focus on art as a place "where things can happen" rather than a thing "that is in the world" we will see how an engagement between art production and critical theory becomes necessary and the education itself a multi-faceted interdisciplinary field that moves in many spaces as opposed to staying within one mode of production, or form. This is not to say that thinking doesn't take on a formal articulation or that research is always equal to art production, quite the contrary, since it is our particular property to understand content as form and vice versa. But the important shift that I want to emphasize is perhaps best described by Jean-François Chevrier, who has written of an "art conquering space", as it were, since the 1960s, that has facilitated a shift in emphasis from art objects to what he calls "public things".^[4] This indicates how notions of audience, the dialogical, modes of address and conception(s) of the public sphere(s) have become the important points in our orientation, and what this entails in form of ethics and politics.

This shift also entails, naturally, different notions of communicative possibilities and methods for the artwork, where neither its form, context nor spectator is

fixed or stable: such relations must be constantly (re)negotiated, and conceived in notions of publics or public spheres. This means, on the one hand, that the artwork itself (in an expanded sense), is unhinged from its traditional forms (as material) and contexts (galleries, museums etc.), and on the other hand, is made contingent on a(nother) set of parameters that can be described as spaces of experience, that is, notions of spectatorship and the establishment of communicative platforms and/or networks in or around the artwork that are contingent on, and changing according to different points of departure in terms of spectatorship. The gaze of the spectator is, of course, not only dependent on the work and its placement, but also on the placement of the spectator socially (in terms of age, class, ethnic background, gender, politics etc.). Or, more broadly speaking, experiences and intentionalities. In turn, work, context and spectator influence the definition of each other. None of which are given, and each of which are potentially conflictual, indeed agonistic: One may or may not feel addressed, may or may not accept the mode of address, even, by a given work or a given situation (both artwise and socio-politically). When thinking about art production and representation, it is therefore crucial to negotiate these terms both individually and in relation to each other. We must, then, think of art in terms of a triadic model, rather than in terms of dialectics (such as form and content, tradition and desire, meaning and non-meaning, and so on). To the extent that such a model was presaged by parts of historical conceptualism, we are as much within a post-conceptual as post-modern era.

A contemporary investigation of how art and artists are produced must thus reconfigure the terms of theory and practice in a different way, and explore both what can be termed the practice of theory and the theories of practice (historical and current): What exactly is involved in an act of representation? What is, for instance, the relationship between artistic practice and political representation, that is, two different notions of representation? What are the possible positions within the artistic field for political representations and perhaps even actions, and which modes are productive and which counter-productive? And, furthermore, what is the relationship between the claimed autonomy of the artwork, and claims for political autonomy? But also: what is the relationship between representation and derepresentation?.[5] What are the correlations between strategies and formal expressions? What are, for example, the trappings and potentials of collective works and groupings compared to the role of the singular artist? How do you define your work vis-à-vis the apparatus surrounding art production and presentation? What is the public role of the artist, historically, presently and potentially? These discussions must revolve around the various tools and methods of representation available to us: how we can conceive of various modes of address, and how new narratives, and in turn subjectivities, can be constructed? This is also an adequate moment to repeat the classical question: To and for whom do we speak? And what are the differences in our conceptions and invocations of various notions of institutions, audiences, constituencies and communities?

If we look at the academy itself we have been handed down certain historical models, the idea of "free art" and the master class, namely one professor talking to multiple students and deciding what art education is. In terms of mode of address this is, of course, a pre-democratic model, a non-dialogical mode of address, based on the sovereign reigning his subjects, listening attentively to his master's voice (an inherently hierarchical and masculinist subject positioning). However, if artists are now to be engaged with the world and not just themselves and their desirous relationship to a tradition - which was, famously, Norman Bryson's definition of academism in classical art - we must question the relevance of this model and perhaps look more closely at the university model of several lecturers and certain curricula as instigated by the Bologna process. If we view the academy as a "teaching machine", to paraphrase Gayatri Spivak, we must ask, then, what kind of subjects (i.e. the students) and what kind of knowledge (i.e. the teaching) is produced. Presently, this has a heightened urgency, since we are importing the Anglo-American university system onto the traditional European academy model. It would be illusory to think that the implementation of a modular system will in itself solve the problems and grievances we have with the historical master class. One will merely substitute a system of discipline with a system of control: whereas the traditional educational system is part of the disciplinary society, the new methods of examination, modules and internalization, can be seen as part of a society of control. Power is no longer exercised through discipline, as it is very concretely in the traditional academy with its disciplinarily themed depart-

ments and sovereign professors, but rather through a simultaneous diffusion of this power, making it less visible and personally identifiable, but double enforceable through various mechanisms of control and (self)surveillance, where you individually have to choose your course work, but according to a modular system installed in advance, and with various instances of evaluation and examination. This "educational system" of control is continued after graduation, of course, through how your work processes and advance in the artworld, or generalized field of cultural production, is structured.[6]

In this sense, the notion of the cultural producer, a contemporary artist figure, can be seen as complicit with these later developments within administration, politics and capital. The artists are a sort of social avant-garde, on the forefront of the risk society and the notion of immaterial laborers. As producers of knowledge universities are often mere teaching machines, reproducers rather than producers of knowledge and thinking, which is why we should not uncritically adopt their structures. Rather, one should learn from those structures as spaces of experience, as discursive spaces, and simultaneously to the implementation of its productive features, maintain the notion of unproductive time and space, which was potentially hidden in the academy model: where the traditional professorial reign meant that the professor in charge decided on methods and curricula (if any), he or she could naturally also allow for the students to do whatever they wanted, even doing nothing. Such is the total power of the sovereign: to be a good king or a bad king ... Reversely, the stu-

dents could also take charge themselves and directly overthrow their professors in place revolutions (as inspired by the student riots of 1968), as actually witnessed in art schools throughout the 1990s, where students created so called "free classes", professor-less departments run by the students themselves. One should maintain such notions of a free space, of the laboratory, something that is not implied in strict course work and evaluation schemes. In this sense one has to move beyond knowledge production into what we can term spaces for thinking. Thinking is, after all, not equivalent to knowledge. Whereas knowledge is circulated and maintained through a number of normative practices - disciplines as it were - thinking is here meant to imply networks of indiscipline, lines of flight and utopian questionings. Naturally, knowledge has great emancipatory potentials, as we know from Marxism through psycho-analysis, but knowledge, in the sense being what you know, what you have learned, is also a limitation: something that holds you back, that inscribes you within tradition, within certain parameters of the possible. And thus with certain eliminations of what it is possible to think, possible to imagine - artistically, politically, sexually and socially. Secondly, the notion of knowledge production implies a certain placement of thinking, of ideas, within the present knowledge economy, i. e. the dematerialized production of current post-Fordist capitalism. And here we can see the interest of capital become visible in the current push for standardization of (art) education and its measurability, and for the molding of artistic work into the formats of learning and research. There is a direct corollary between the dematerial-

ization of the art object, and thus its potential (if only partial) exodus from the commodity form and thus disappearance from the market system, and the institutional re-inscription and validation of such practices as artistic research and thus knowledge economical commodity. Obviously, even dematerialized artistic practices can be bought and sold as commodities on the art market, if the marketing of the artist figure - as hipster, as creator, as innovator - is done forcefully and strongly by the right agents, i. e. specific high end galleries. (The artists as pure sign value, we could even say, rejoicing with almost forgotten postmodern guru Jean Baudrillard ...)

In institutional terms, we have seen this witnessed in the merge between art, economy, fashion and academies in the uk, exemplified by the Thatcherite transformation of the art educational system into a cultural industrial complex, reaching its apex with the hegemonic position of Goldsmiths College and the Young British Artists generation of artists in England in the 1990s.[7] A similar tendency can be seen in other places and institutions (such as Yale and now Columbia University in the United States), and shows how the Anglo-American system of education, capital and culture, along with general political implementations of deregulation and state control, are exported from the us through the uk and into Europe. Internationalization and harmonization of education also mean a normalization, and a possibility of transforming the educational sector into a competitive market. It is, in these cases - and one could easily mention European schools as well - quite obvious which system artists are educated for as well as

within: one and the same. However, as indicated, it is also possible to think of education as a process of thinking, of unlearning certain modes of knowledge and production and subjectivity, of questioning these very structures rather than embracing them. It should be possible to think of educational spaces that are produced through subjectivities rather than merely producers of them. Or put in other words, not just producing artworld artists, but rather positions within as well as without the art world and its repetitious economies of galleries, collectors, markets, careerings, reifications, trends and circuits.

Notes:

[1] I am using the term cultural producers for two reasons, first to escape the limitation of art as object-based and market-driven, and secondly in order to refer to the larger framework of an entertainment or cultural industry, in which art production is now thoroughly based. So, on the one hand an unhinging from historical categories and limitations, and on the other a newer circumscription and delimitation.

[2] The Bologna process refers to a eu declaration on education from 1999, which has been signed by 29 European countries so far. The goal is to create a European University standard of education, allowing for movement between countries and faculties, using the same ects point system and the standardization of the Anglo-American system of Bachelor and Masters degrees, following by a possible PhD in a so called three plus two plus three modular system. Within art education, there is currently a pan-European discussion on whether to follow this model, already in place in Great Britain, or whether to keep the traditional Franco-Germanic model of the art academy, without modules, but with each student attending the class of one professor, whose department is defined according to a specific artistic discipline (traditionally painting and sculpture department, and today most often with new media, video, public space etc. departments added for good measure).

[3] See Peter Weibel (ed.), *Kontext Kunst*, Köln 1994, and Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics / Esthétique relationnelle*, Dijon 1998.

[4] The movement from object to public things, events, installations, utterings, situations etc. has been eloquently described by Jean-François Chevrier in his book *The Year 1967. From Art Objects to Public Things, Or Variations on the Conquest of Space*, Barcelona 1997.

[5] By representation we mean a double movement of absence and presence, politically that someone is present somewhere, representing others that are absent, and artistically transferal and transformation in the sense of the emergence of an idea or sensation within an object, placed somewhere (else). By derepresentation, we are referring to the opposite movement, a presence or emergence that is removed or even erased. Something that can no longer be represented. It is thus not a matter of a discourse or subject position that cannot emerge in a given hegemony (as the ways in which the subaltern cannot speak), but rather of an active and effective removal of certain ideas and speech acts from the visible, from the possible, from the system of representation and signification as such.

[6] Moving beyond the artworld and even the larger cultural industrial sphere, we will find that one of the political catchwords of post-Fordist, and even post welfare societies of core Europe is indeed "education for life", meaning education as an ongoing process, constant deskilling and reskilling of labor, as well as a mode of production and productivity itself.

[7] Interestingly, a generation of artists that were all academy trained and socialized, indeed connected to the market, media and gallery system through the academy, emerged publicly as anti-academic in the sense of being anti-theoretical. The effects of the ba and ma system does not, then, indicate an increase in theoretical academic discourse, but is equally capable of maintaining and even cultivating the reactionary anti-theoretical artist subject of the traditional art academy. The main common feature, obviously, is connections: how artists enter the marketplace, i. e. the dealers-collectors network and economy of desire.

Practice Here and Now. The Shift in Contemporary Art and Theory

by Ștefan Voicu

I.

Within the humanities and social sciences, recent discussions have focused on practice as a way to overcome the traditional attention granted, on one hand, to structures and systems and, on the other hand, to actions. Theodor Schatzki (2001) tries to account for this turn, even though there is no unified meaning attributed to the term of practice across disciplines. From a philosophical point of view Wittgenstein, Dreyfus and Taylor speak of practices as modes of making and doing that disclose subjects and objects, nonpropositional knowledge, and conditions of intelligibility. Sociologically, Bourdieu, Giddens, and the ethnomethodologists use the notion of practice to question the structural determinations, the agency's ability to define social phenomena, and as an attempt to go beyond the action-structure opposition. Cultural theorists, like

Foucault and Lyotard, bring the concept into discussion in order to describe the language as being performative instead of structured. The same is applied in relation to a scientific language/discourse by the science and technology studies scholars.

What I am concerned with in this essay is how this shift of focus has had an impact on artistic practices. Peter Osborne (1999), using Bourdieu's notion of field of production, has seen in the Conceptual art of the 1960's-1970's how philosophy and art are intimately related, on various levels and degrees of intensity. In his opinion, this relation emerges out of an art criticism crises which is managed legitimizing art within the field of artistic production, by means of acquired dispositions from the philosophical field of production. He says that:

Only a certain kind of philosophy could have played this role: namely, an analytical philosophy which combined the classical cultural authority of philosophy, in the updated guise of a philosophical scientism (logico-linguistic analysis) with a purely second-order or meta-critical conception of its epistemological status. [Osborne 1999: 50]

In the British context, Osborne mentions, Marxism played a role for defining the activist conceptual art. Peter Goldie and Elisabeth Schellekens (2007) have argued that conceptual art made use of both Anglo-saxon analytical and continental philosophy among which authors like Wittgenstein, Carnap, Austin, Kuhn, Barthes, Althusser, Benjamin, Foucault,

Lacan, Saussure, etc. were frequently invoked. Recently, in a similar manner, some (Schneider, Wright, et. al. 2006; 2010) have tried to make the same connection between contemporary art and anthropology, especially its practical aspect, the ethnographic method (cf La Triennale 2012: www.latriennale.org).

Probably Thierry de Duve's (1996) historical account of "The Richard Mutt Case", that turned Marcel Duchamp's urinal into a famous work of art, is illustrative when one tries to point out the practice character of the conceptual/contemporary artwork. But because Duchamp's practices might be considered as a "bridge" towards this change, rather than a fulfilled "revolution", I would like to look at the curatorial statement for the forthcoming Bucharest Biennial for Contemporary Art (Anne Barlow's Tactics for Here and Now: www.bucharestbiennale.org/concept.html). How does this contemporary practice differs, if it does, from the 1960's-1970's conceptualism and what are the philosophical ideas from which the curator draws her statement? Moreover, I would prefer to substitute Bourdieu's problematic notion of field of production (cf Schatzki 2002; Turner 1994; 2002) with Latour's (2005) network, what he calls a concatenation of mediators, i.e., a practical association of human and non-human, material and non-material, entities that translate, derive, distort, delegate and are delegated in a program of action.

II.

Schatzki (2001) argues that the practice approach can be defined in terms of

analyses that account for practices as fields, i.e., domains of subject-object/human-non-human activity, or descriptions of these fields, in order to understand the changes of their subject-object's practices. He notes that:

Most practice theorist would agree that activity is embodied and that nexuses of practices are mediated by artifacts, hybrids, and natural objects, disagreements reign about the nature of embodiment, the pertinence of thematizing it when analyzing practices, the sorts of entities that mediate activity, and whether these entities are relevant to practices as more than mere intermediaries among humans. [Schatzki 2001: 2]

For them order is a characteristic(s) of the field of practices and these practices are responsible for the production of these characteristics, while the psychological basis for action is constituted by abilities "such as know-how, skills, tacit understanding, and dispositions" (Schatzki 2001: 7).

He, most probably, takes the notion of field from Bourdieu's social theory. The latter uses the idea of field in order to describe a social space that is based on a dynamic structure of difference. The field nominates both a domain of force, "whose necessity is imposed on agents who engage in it", and a domain of struggle "within which agents confront each other, with differentiated means and ends according to their position in the structure of the field of forces, thus contributing to conserving or transforming its structure" (Bourdieu 1998).

When one looks at the relation between the field of art and the field of philosophy, the link seems to be established according to positions and dispositions of individual or class habituses. Henceforth, conceptual art is a position within the field of art, embodied in a habitus, the catalyst for practices of change or conservation, that has acquired certain dispositions from within the field of philosophy.

Although the historical determinants of this field alignment play an important role in its explanation, Osborne seems to give a very narrow account of them, neglecting what happened in a broader context. One might link it though with what some have called post-modernism (Harvey 1990; Jameson 1991; Lyotard 1984), that is, the failure of knowledge's grand narratives to legitimately represent what counts as "real" by means of epistemological fallacies or political economic contingencies. Schneider, Wright et. al. are more detailed in this regards. They follow the historical origins of the link between art and anthropology from post-modernism onwards. It is not the case here to trace this history. Because this would mean to take for granted the descriptions of the relation established between philosophy or anthropology and art as fields, either in Bourdieu's rigorous manner or sometimes in a fashion more nuanced by post-modernist theories. What interests me is the possibility of replacing the idea of a field with what, for me, seems to be a more adequate term. But first, I will outline some problems that make the operationalization of the field difficult.

As Stephen Turner has noticed (1994), Bourdieu avoids an explicit account of the means by which dispositions are acquired and embodied in habitus, and how they subsequently influence the position in the field, by arguing that this is a psychological object of investigation that sociologists don't have to deal with, and that, nevertheless, this will not significantly change the outcomes of the actions performed. Thus, one can see in Osborne's text that the notion of field doesn't help him to provide a convincing argument for what he names inclusive/weak and exclusive/strong conceptual art. Schatzki (2002: 153) agrees with Turner about this, saying that "Bourdieu collapses the organization of practices into the structure of habitus". Furthermore, Schatzki abandons the notion of field, that according to him doesn't allow practices to occur in intertwined bounded realms, for the concept of social site. This may be the reason why Osborne speaks about the alignment and not the overlapping or entanglement of the fields. But in the case of Schneider, Wright et. al., they theorize and analyze the relations between art and anthropology more in their dynamic of entanglement than in its purified realms.

Latour (1993) also calls into question Bourdieu's "Enlightenment" background that shoves the "Great Divide" into his theoretical framework. Therefore, for him, Bourdieu is engaged in a project of dividing and categorizing entities by "purifying" them and stabilizing, to a certain extent, their uncontrollable agency.

He rejects or rather avoids talking about the hybridization of these entities, emerged out of translation, delegation, black-boxing, and composition processes. For Latour there is no site or field, but a network that is sewed through the above mentioned practices which are performed in an action program that composes a hybrid entity.

III.

To make sense out of the concepts deployed by Latour, I will make appeal to the curatorial statement provided by Anne Barlow for the 2012 Bucharest Biennial for Contemporary Art. Taking in consideration his definition of a program of action, by which he means, the series of goals, steps and intentions described by one agent, I argue that, in this case, as strange as it may sound, the agent is not just Anne Barlow, but also the statement that pertains to the reader, and the web page where he can find it. The reader is not interacting with the curator, but with something she wrote on her virtual sheet, next agent, at her personal or office computer, another agent. Anne Barlow needed the computer, a home or an office, the fourth agent, the text editing software, the fifth agent, and the language skills, another agent, which she got from the attended schools, agents again, etc. to compose the statement. She also might have needed agents like art theory books, artists, artworks, exhibitions etc.

The text translates all the actions that Anne Barlow performed in association with some of the entities mentioned,

even with the act of writing, and it is a new form of expression delegated, by those associations of actions and entities, to continue pursuing the initial goals and intentions. Sometimes, very often, the translating entities distort the meaning of those intentions and goals. It is nevertheless impossible for the reader to know if that happened with the text, because he/she wasn't present during the unfolding of those practices. The associations between the various entities are black-boxed - "a process that makes the joint production of actors and artifacts entirely opaque" (Latour 1999: 183)- as soon as practices cease, therefore the reader cannot make any posits in regard to that. With these notions, Latour somehow overcomes the criticism Turner brought to Bourdieu's social theory because, to a certain extent, he manages to give an account of how the "embodiment" of information takes place.

Then, the statement was sent to the directors of the Biennial which read it, accepted it, perhaps translated it into the official language of the country in which the event will be held (it is here where distortions and detours of meaning may be highly present, because it is in the translation where the text suffers a considerable change of expression and meaning), with the help of a translator or a volunteer, and sent forward to the administrator of the website who uploaded both of the versions on the official web page. A series of agents that are black-boxed, again, work in order for someone to read this statement. The text will also be bracketed when one visits the exhibition. This is what Latour

calls a composition, i.e., an association of human and non-human agents that symmetrically exchange intentions and goals and that is shaped like an intricate network. The hybrid agent is the result of a composition action that requires translation, delegation and black-boxing. He acts by associating itself with entities that can be positioned in fields like technology, art, philosophy, administration etc. but putting them in such categories would mean to perceive them as black-boxed intermediaries, or purified hybrids, instead of mediators endowed with agency. This sends us back to Schatzki's definition of practice theory that stated: "activity is embodied and that nexuses of practices are mediated by artifacts, hybrids, and natural objects". Here Latour goes beyond Bourdieu's "Enlightenment" and his field's inability to interweave.

IV.

Now that the problems raised by Bourdieu's habitus and field have been sorted out by replacing it with Latour's actor-network-theory, one can have a fresh new look at the relation between the black-boxed practice theory and the composition of BB5's curatorial statement. The title "Tactics for Here and Now" immediately shows that the text is trying to position artistic know-how within the categories of time and space. Thus, it is placing practices related with art in a, what Schatzki calls, site ontology that in its material form takes the shape and content of Bucharest. The statement speaks about "the context of the shifting nature of politics, economics and culture" and "the conditions of flux"

to designate this space and time, the here and now. Furthermore, it notes that in here "artists often have to negotiate risky positions, contested territories or situation in which cultural activities interact or provide a counter point".

The power of the artist, as mentioned in the text, derives from "investigative, indirect, or informal strategies". His ways reflect "a practice that is evolving, dynamic and responsive, something that is essential for situations that change quickly or are not yet fully understood". Henceforth, in the statement one can see that the order characteristics of the artistic site are a product of strategies, negotiations, and tactics (domains of force) performed in an indirect, informal manner (domain of struggle), with the mediated aid of the Internet among others. The artist avoids "overt statements" that could recall the modernist grand narratives. Instead, he is engaged in the construction of a different type of instrument for knowing the contemporary, "the art of living in the city as the work of art" (Lefebvre 1996: 173). In the 1960's the social theorist Henri Lefebvre (1996), argued more or less the same. He stated that "leaving aside representation, ornamentation and decoration, art can become praxis and poiesis on a social scale" (Lefebvre 1996: 173, emphasis added). His theoretical position is developed in a more recent book authored by Nicolas Whybrow (2011).

There is no doubt that the curatorial statement finds its way in the loose definition of the practice theory turn provided by Schatzki. But it is more inclined

towards a Bourdieuan-like perspective, rather than a Latourian one. For this reason its conceptualization is opened for the same criticisms brought to Bourdieu earlier. Nevertheless, this black-box is not closed yet until the grand opening. It is now and then, here and there, that various agents will direct their actions in associations with this text in order to translate, distort, derive and relegate it.

V.

I have tried to make a short account of the possible link between the practice theory turn and contemporary artistic practices by means of Latour's ideas that for me stand as an alternative for Bourdieu's central notions. This article made use of Schatzki's loose description of the practice turn in order to see how this black-box is an entity associated with the curatorial text developed by Anne Barlow for BB5. According to my interpretation, the text easily fits into the practice framework but is encrusted with the same difficulties encountered in the ideas of habitus and field. This could be redressed with the help of work done by actor-network-theorists (Hennion 1993; Latour 2011; Yaneva 2003) or with a more fashioned perspective provided by Nicolas Bourriaud (1998). For example, "Art and the City", the latest work of Whybrow, tries to bring both Lefebvre's production of space and Bourriaud's (1998) relational aesthetic into an analysis of the links between body, art, and city.

One may argue that the case is closed. The text is how it is, its meaning fixed,

and there is no possibility of avoiding the “catastrophe”. But I consider that the Biennale is still in its process of composition; practices and entities of all sorts are yet to be associated with the text and the other agents present in the program of action. In the end, I must stress that my aim was not to reject or condemn but rather to explore one of the alternatives within practice theory and artistic practices, at large, that could stir one's curiosity regarding the topic of this paper.

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Avant-garde Arts under the Spell of Politics

by Marius Stan

Switzerland has become, with the passing of time, a cliché of neutrality, although the destinies of many socially and politically engaged spirits started, unfolded or recovered there. It is the case of the artists gathered around the Cabaret Voltaire in Zürich, a quasi-cultural space founded in 1916 by Dadaist Hugo Ball [1] and, among others, by the Romanians Tristan Tzara and Marcel Iancu. During WW1, Switzerland maintained its neutrality, as I have already mentioned, which allowed many refugees to set up ideological, cultural, artistic and sometimes even political projects here. And as any place has (besides other perfectly measurable coordinates) a certain spirit, Cabaret Voltaire had, from its very beginning, a fine internationalist touch. In this space of European cultural effervescence, you could hear, in all languages, the expressions of the cultural trend of the day (Tristan Tzara, for instance, used to recite his poems in Romanian). Another thing to be noted from the very beginning is that about half of the Dadaists at the Cabaret Voltaire were Romanian [2]. How did that happen?

We should mention that the flattering nickname of “Little Paris” that the Romanian capital had at that time was closely related to the cultural and intellec-

tual ebullience of the Bucharest of that period and, moreover, to the almost established tradition of the petite bourgeoisie of that time to study in the major academic centers of Europe (particularly in Paris, Vienna or Berlin) and to return and attempt to implement this whole imported conglomeration of visions and ideas. However, in spite of this cosmopolitan pattern [3], many commentators believe that the Romanian avant-garde stood out in the great internationalist family due to a sound Eastern European derivative component. In fact, for Hugo Ball himself, the Romanians at Cabaret Voltaire largely remained Orientals. Last, but not least, the Romanians in Zurich had a Semitic family background and, in the political context of that period, their exodus to the West had a deeply pragmatic meaning. In its connection with politics, the avant-garde was many times a response to politics, a kind of effect of a marked causality. With regard to the period discussed here, we can say easier now (although remaining in the realm of speculation) that that the avant-garde in arts can be ideally reproduced only in a political climate that permits the freedom of choice and, consequently, of controversy. Nevertheless, a totalitarian (or totalitarian-like) society cannot allow sufficient space for manifestation to the avant-garde arts. Moreover, the avant-garde often seems to accept a fashion instead of creating or promoting a new one. Starting from this fact, the hypothesis according to which the aesthetic radicalism (in arts) and the social radicalism (in politics) are related is completely false from a historical perspective [4]. For instance, the political phase of surrealism was, actually, very short. Louis Aragon abandons surrealism for communism, while others solve this option dilemma by surrendering communism and remaining faithful to the surrealist art [5]. Obviously, the positioning of avant-garde artists

towards politics (although initially it was a matter of fending off politics) could only generate an infinite series of tensions, surrenders and returns. And that was because, in order to stay at the center of attention and at the core of the ideological convulsions of that time, a transition needed to be made from the subjectivity of individual freedom (expressed artistically) to the more radical subjectivity of denying social reality (expressed politically) [6]. Euphemistically speaking, putting the equal sign between the arts revolution and the social one today is a mere rhetorical act. And probably the only political and ideological recurrence of the avant-garde art is actually very little political (or even not political at all): its anarchism! After all, the avant-gardism is plagued by an exacerbated individualism, most frequently biographical and psychological – see the poem of Vladimir Mayakovsky, “To a Cut-Throat”, in which he combines the belief that he will survive his own death with a cult for the anonymous multitude (the masses of the future)[7].

*

However, when the avant-gardists leave the cocoon of art to become politically engaged, they do not do it to promote the artistic movement that used to give them an identity until not long before. They simply adhere to a political ideology completely disrupted from the original artistic manifesto. And as in most cases the ideology happens to be the communist one, the relations between the government and these persons turned into political actors suffer a fundamental mutation, too: in the 1930s, many Romanian avant-gardists come to the attention of the Siguranta (the Romanian secret police)!

Thus, the Romanian secret police (acting through Eugen Cristescu, the chief of police at that time) sent a telegram in 1934 to all regional police inspectors

requesting them to take action to ban and prevent the distribution in the country of the "Commune" magazine edited by the Association des Écrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires (AEAR [8] – Paris), and of the pamphlets entitled "Des Amendes" (Paris), "La lutte de l'URSS pour la paix mondiale" (Paris 1934, authors: I. Stalin, V. Molotov, M. Litvinov) and "Le travail des cellules d'Usines" (Les publications révolutionnaires, Paris)[9]. In fact, the international congresses of "antifascist-communist" writers were no longer attended by "avant-gardists" or other representatives of various cultural and artistic movements, but simply by "communists" or communist sympathizers (the label difference is relevant for this transfer of identity that we referred to above as being paradigmatic of the transition – understood as a breakaway – from the sphere of arts to that of politics). Such a congress took place in 1935, in Paris, and the Romanian secret police knew all details (some major personalities of the international culture were among the participants: Aldous Huxley, George Bernard Shaw, Leo Tolstoy, John Dos Passos, Sinclair Lewis, Kostas Varnalis, etc.). "Public events" of this kind often occasioned settlements of accounts even within the same artistic family – although it was clear that what had previously united them under the umbrella of the artistic manifesto was now dividing them, under the influence of a powerful argument: the political ideology! At that congress, Louis Aragon (the leader of the AEAR, but also a promoter of Surrealism) is confronted by his former comrade, André Breton, as the latter chose to publicly support Victor Serge (Victor Lvovich Kibalchich), a Russian writer and former Comintern journalist associated to the Trotskyist left-wing opposition.

The Romanian Siguranța also had detailed information concerning the rela-

tionship that Louis Aragon had with Victor Brauner (Romanian surrealist painter of Jewish origin) and, through him, with many other Romanian communist writers considered by the authorities in Bucharest as a branch of the French AEAR [10]. Now, we realize that the political oppression against the cultural promoters has nothing to do with the substance of their artistic manifesto, but rather with their specific social option. The government does not see their works, paintings and artistic creations as a threat, but their actual anti-establishment actions. Nevertheless, the interest in the tumultuous relationship between the avant-garde artists and the politics is not generated by some significant result that their actions would ever had. As a matter of fact, the avant-gardists never changed the course of any major political events. What is interesting, indeed, is their polemical writing (the manifesto itself) and the attempt to associate their moral and intellectual pursuits with the purposes and methods of the internationalist communism. There were also several serious reasons that prevented the avant-gardists (and especially the surrealists) from projecting their metaphysical ambitions into social terms. Firstly, they believed that poetry (in particular) was no longer a skill of the few, a means of expression, but an activity of the mind accessible to everyone: a poetic communism! Thus, the poetry was taken down from the Empyrean of abstraction to the vernacular area of pure desire. However, in the early '20s, although it had already become a red thread in the avant-garde writings, the word "revolution" did not have those political connotations yet: "The immediate meaning and purpose of the Surrealist revolution is not as much to change the manifest and physical order of things, but to create a state of agitation in people's minds" [11].

But it was that very "state of agitation" that actually worried the authorities of the time, including the Romanian ones, not the number or organization potential of those who conveyed such messages: although officially established as a political group in 1921, the Romanian communists were banned on July 28th, 1924. This immediately triggered an unprecedented radicalization in the position of the pro-Soviet communists, culminating with the peasants' armed rebellion at Tatarbuniar (in Southern Bessarabia, a province of the Romanian Kingdom at that time), whose fundamental and declared purpose was to put an end to the Romanian occupation in Bessarabia. To stifle the Bolshevik-like uprising, the Brătianu government deployed artillery troops from the 3rd Romanian Army Corps in the area, as well as a navy unit. Therefore, it had become almost impossible for the Romanian authorities of the time to see the subtle differences between the communists of various orientations, the artists sympathizing with the communist internationalism and other categories of agitators. In this troubled political context, the oppression started by the Siguranța against any persons that allegedly had or may have had any connections with the communist movement actually became a matter of national security. The poetic dream of territorial mutations was actually the purely political background against which these avant-gardists fallen under the ideological fascination of communism were moving. Maybe Breton, Aragon, Iancu, Tzara, Gellu Naum (and others) were not interested in these matters of immediate actuality, but their even remote association to the cabalistic maneuvers and schemes of the Bolsheviks could not go unnoticed by the authorities of the time. In fact, the Siguranța was operating like any present-day secret service and the control of information and of transnational networks

was a major component of the national security.

The ideas of these avant-gardists and their artistic credo were gradually directed towards the communist political ideology. As they were (of course) willing to change the world by conceptually transforming the reality, they did not always realize that the ideas had detectable consequences. And when they realized it, they either returned to the non-political version of their beliefs or completely abandoned the initial artistic manifesto to become true political militants.

The case of one of the most important representatives of the Romanian and Western Surrealism – Gellu Naum – is also paradigmatic. In 1934, Naum (who studied philosophy from 1933 to 1937) was member in "Amicii U.R.S.S." ("The Friends of U.S.S.R."), a so-called cultural association populated by left-wing (antifascist) intellectuals who wanted to strengthen the relations with the Soviet Union (although, as we mentioned earlier, the Romanian Kingdom was not on the best diplomatic terms with its eastern neighbor). Financed by the Comintern, this association was also banned on November 25th, 1934, by the Tătărescu government. However, the group that frequented the "Amicii" included remarkable intellectuals of the Romanian interbellum period: Iorgu Iordan, N. D. Cocea, Alexandru Sahia, Petre Pandrea, Tudor Bugnariu, Marcel Iancu, Zaharia Stancu, Demostene Botez and many others. Also in 1934, Gellu Naum planned to distribute to students and workers, as editor, "Tanara Generatie" [12] (a newspaper considered subversive by the Siguranța). On December 29th, 1934, he did it right at the Grivita Railways Workshop, handing a copy of the paper to each worker who was coming or leaving from work [13]. To understand the anxiety of the authorities,

we should remember that one year before, on February 16th, 1933, Romania had experienced the largest workers' protests in its history to that date: due to the poor working conditions and low wages (also as a consequence of the world economic crisis), the railway workers at Grivita had violently clashed with the riot police. The incident resulted in many injuries and several deaths. We should also mention that the trade union at the Grivita Workshops had been penetrated and was manipulated by the communists who, immediately after 1945, did not hesitate to turn the incidents at Grivita into one of the central points of their propaganda messages. In January 1935, the Siguranta analyzed the content of "Tanara Generatie" newspaper and the conclusions of the authorities are recorded in the same archived documents: "it contains the usual communist theories about the class war, but the language is moderate, a fact explained by the communists' change of tactical approach, as well as by their intention to maintain the possibility of publishing a legal newspaper to be distributed to the working masses" [14] (the language was so moderate that not even the word "socialist" was used [15]). After only two issues, the newspaper it banned by order of the Ministry of the Interior, in February 1935, and consequently becomes clandestine [16].

Gellu Naum is arrested on December 27th, 1935, under the accusation of having been caught writing "communist passwords" on the walls of buildings in Dr. Sergiu street, Dr. Felix street and Al. I. Cuza boulevard. A note to the Royal Chief Superintendent specified that Naum was not at his first arrest and that the police was aware that he was a member of the clandestine organization of the communist students in Romania [17]. Later, in 1938, Gellu Naum goes to Paris,

to complete his philosophy studies at the Sorbonne (encouraged by Victor Brauner) and meets the group of André Breton and other veteran surrealists...

It is important to mention, however, that this pro-Stalinist fascination of the surrealists never was a univocal act. They had their share of mistakes and doubts, they went separate ways [18] and became allies equally easy, depending on the sequence of events of the time (remember that it is the period that witnessed the fall of the German democracy, the Spanish civil war and the Moscow show trials by which Stalin eliminated his political opponents and which will be masterly depicted later by Arthur Koestler in *Darkness at Noon...*). In fact, the conclusion is rather simple: "Seized by the political turmoil, the surrealism of the '30s lives less on aesthetic experiences and on challenges and defiance compared to the '20s. It looks dated, consumed, exhausted, and harassed by its own visions and schisms. In fact, the war puts an end to this experience and turns it into a chapter in the art history handbook." [19] Apparently, the surrealists had to dream politically – otherwise, they wouldn't have existed. Unfortunately for their cause, they failed to take political action. Moreover, they seemed to persist in cultivating a pessimism deriving from their awareness of the irreconcilable cleavage between human aspirations and their actualization. This did not prevent them, however, from frantically experimenting with pushing the buttons of social transformation, but that pessimism estranged them from the optimistic and much narrower minds of the simple communist militants [20].

Notes:

[1] In his diary, "Flight out of Time", Hugo Ball describes the opening night: "The place was full to bursting; many could not get in. About six in the evening, when we were still busy hammering and putting up Futurist posters, there appeared an oriental-looking deputation of four little men with portfolios and pictures under their arms, bowing politely many times. They introduced themselves: Marcel Janco the painter, Tristan Tzara, George Janco and a fourth, whose name I did not catch. Arp was also there, and we came to an understanding without many words. Soon, Janco's opulent Archangels hung alongside the other objects of beauty and, that same evening, Tzara gave a reading of poems, conservative in style, which he rather endearingly fished out of the various pockets of his coat". Source: Adrian NOTZ, in "Introduction" to the Catalogue of the exhibition Dada East? The Romanians of Cabaret Voltaire/ Fargfabriken/ Stockholm/ Sweden, Bucharest: RH Printing House, 2007, p. 5.

[2] Tom SANDQVIST, *Dada East. The Romanians of the Cabaret Voltaire*, Cambridge, Mass and London: The MIT Press, 2006.

[3] "Poets, artists, doctors, lawyers, politicians, they all studied in Paris, Vienna, Berlin or Munich. In Romania, Cubism is more Cubistic and Futurism is more Futuristic than anywhere else. Small French-like policemen harass the peasants on their way to the farmers' market, the cabarets and variety theaters are only cheap copies of those in Montmartre; one can see revues based on French originals, sad and boring, copies of some equivocal comedies imported directly from Théâtre Antoine or the Comédie Française. In brief: a fantastic city in an incredible country. Thirty years later, everything will be different...". Source: Tom SANDQVIST, "Cuvint înainte", in *Arhiva Durerii*, Stockholm: Sweden/Bucharest: Fundația Academia Civică, 2000, p. 5.

[4] Renato POGGIOLI, "The Avant-Garde and Politics", in *Yale French Studies*, No. 39, Literature and Revolution, 1967, p. 181.

[5] *Ibidem*, p. 182.

[6] Stelian TANASE, *Avangarda romaneasca in arhivele Sigurantei*, Iasi: Polirom, 2008, pp. 13-14.

[7] Renato POGGIOLI, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

[8] The purposes of the association, as stated in a copy of the Rules of AEAR sent to Professor Petre Constantinescu in Romania and intercepted by the Siguranta, included: „a). Organizing writers (of fiction and science criticism) and artists, workers and professionals, for actual participation in the class war in close cooperation with the revolutionary work-

ers' organizations in France and the colonies, by systematically working with the worker and farmer contributors to the revolutionary press and with the Marxist circles, with the workers' groups in the fields of theater, cinematography, photography and radio, etc. b). Fighting against all nuances of the bourgeois ideology, fascism, down to social fascism; inducing the nonconformist writers and artists to take a stand and to become partners to the proletariat by adopting the political form of the UIER; c). Creating and developing a proletarian art and literature by adopting the dialectical materialism as a basis; d). Organizing rallies, contests, conferences, exhibitions, publications, etc., as well as any other forms of activity consistent with these purpose based on the national and international proportion; e). Promoting the formation of a national federation of the revolutionary proletarian culture and, until such formation, accepting and coordinating the efforts of the already existing cultural groups". (Central National History Archives (hereinafter referred to as ANIC), Fund 50, File No. 1216 – Inteligenția Occidentală, „Statutul Asociației Scriitorilor și Artiștilor Revoluționari de la Paris”, November 11th, 1934).

[9] ANIC, Fund 50, File No. 1216 – Inteligenția Occidentală, Telegrama cifrată Nr. 25516/27.03.1934.

[10] ANIC, Fund 95, Personal File of Louis Aragon, No. 27653, f. 3.

[11] Maurice NADEAU, *Documents Surréalistes*, Paris, 1947, p. 44.

[12] ANIC, Fund 95, Personal File of Gellu Naum, No. 13507, f. 7.

[13] *Ibidem*, f. 8.

[14] *Ibidem*, f. 14.

[15] *Ibidem*, f. 17.

[16] *Ibidem*, f. 19.

[17] ANIC, Fond 95, Dosar personal Gellu Naum, Nr. 13507/6470, f. 7.

[18] For instance, André Breton launched in 1930 the second essential proclamation of the movement ("Second manifeste du surréalisme"), a document that actually eliminates from the great family the surrealists who hesitated to embrace "collective action" with all its good and bad things: Raymond Queneau, André Masson, Robert Desnos and others. Later, these "dissidents" from the initial movement joined "lock, stock and barrel" the editor of the surrealist art magazine "Documents", Georges Bataille.

[19] Stelian TANASE, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

[20] Robert S. SHORT, "The Politics of Surrealism: 1920-36", in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Left-Wing Intellectuals between the Wars (1966), pp. 3-25.

EXTENT

PARTICIPANTS AND VENUES OF BUCHAREST BIENNALE 5

PAVILION
Center for Contemporary Art and Culture
Șos. Nicolae Titulescu nr. 1 (Piața Victoriei)



Located in Victoria Square, PAVILION - center for contemporary art and culture is situated on the ground floor of a communist building. The aforementioned space became a banking center in 1993 and it has stayed like this for the last 15 years. The actual building of the block started in the years of the communist regime and it was concluded five years after the fall of communism. The hruschiovii (apartments named after the former communist leader from the '60s) from the center of Bucharest have witnessed the changes of a Stalinist society into a capitalist society, with strong social and political marks.

is a work-in-progress independent space, a space for production and research in the fields of the audiovisual, discursive and performative. It is a space of critical thinking, and promotes an artistic perspective implying the social and political involvement of art and of cultural institutions.

PAVILION - center for contemporary art and culture will function as an exhibition venue, as well as the info point of BB5.

Triptychs

This project began with snapshots of spaces that I have found myself visiting and revisiting over the last few years. At one point, I realized that what might have attracted me to these spaces was that they reminded me of others; that they triggered a series of memories and associations. In an attempt to articulate the content of these memories and associations, I decided to start constructing settings that corresponded to them, settings which I would then photograph. The resulting images ended up constituting the second element in each of these triptychs.

[102]

In trying to be as precise as possible, I realized that the certainty with which I was able to construct and produce these images did not translate to my final photographs, that I no longer recognized my constructions, nor was I certain of their sources. This brought about the idea to approach these photographs in a removed manner—as if they were found or produced by someone else—and use them as a point of departure for another artwork, one which eventually became what is presented here as the third and final element in each of these triptychs.



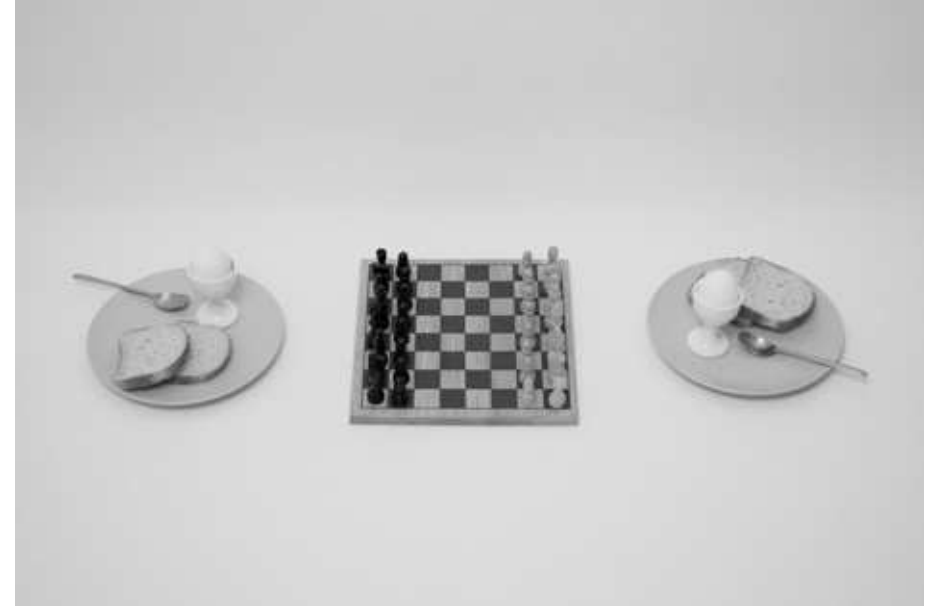
Iman Issa, *Triptych#6*, photographs, framed text, installation view, 2009.
Courtesy of the artist and Rodeo.

[103]



Iman Issa, *Triptych#4*, photographs, text, notebooks, c-print (installation detail), 2009.
Courtesy of the artist and Rodeo.

[104]



Iman Issa, *Triptych#5*, photographs, light, circuit, metronome, c-print (installation detail), 2009.
Courtesy of the artist and Rodeo.

[105]

Stones to Throw

Stones to throw is an installation which has been extended to public space. I depart from nose art, the decorative paintings on the fuselage of military aircrafts, which can be seen as a form of aircraft graffiti. I painted on 10 stones that feature the same paintings seen in airplanes and the stones were on 10 plinths. During the show at Kunsthalle Lissabon 9 of the stones was sent to Diyarbakir, my hometown, one by one and left in the street. What remained at the end of the show was; 10 plinths, only one stone and photos of the other stones located in the streets of Diyarbakir and the FedEx bills. At Kunsthalle Lissabon, it was a process; visitors witnessed stones disappearing from the exhibition one by one. I decided not to send the last stone, so it actually becomes the physical documentation of the other stones that disappeared in the streets of Diyarbakir.

[106]

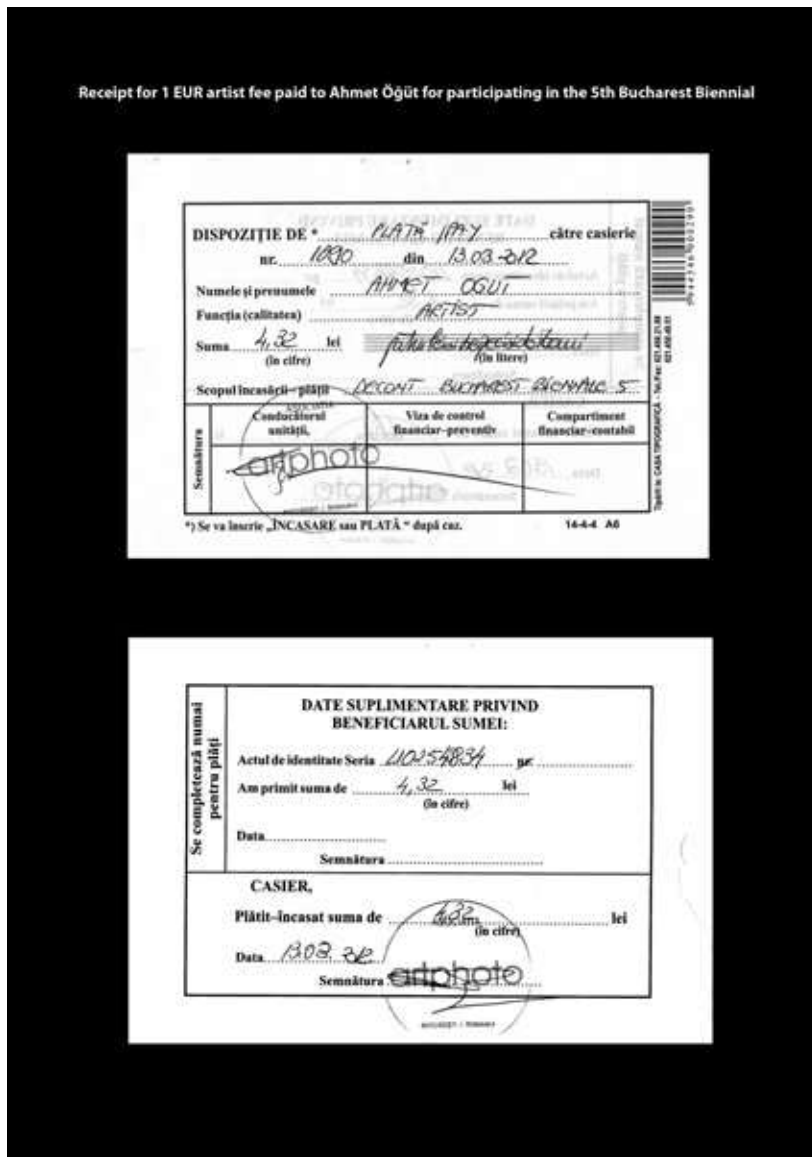


Ahmet Ögüt, *Stones to throw*, installation view from the streets of Diyarbakir. 2010. Painted stones, plinths, photographs, FedEx bills. Courtesy of the artist. Photographs by Askin Ercan, Bruno Lopes, Ahmet Ögüt

[107]



Ahmet Ögüt, *Stones to throw*, installation, mail and public art project. 2010. Painted stones, plinths, photographs, FedEx bills. Courtesy of the artist. Photographs by Askin Ercan, Bruno Lopes, Ahmet Ögüt.



Receipt for 1 EUR artist fee paid to Ahmet Ögüt for participating in the 5th Bucharest Biennial.

The Pledge

The Pledge are seven *Assembly Instructions* that use as a starting point interviews conducted by the artist with Marc-Olivier Wahler (curator and director of the Palais de Tokyo, Paris), Leah Kelly (neurobiologist and researcher at The Rockefeller Center, New York), Michel Gondry (film maker and director of music- videos and commercials), Danny Rubin (screenwriter and author of *Groundhog Day*), Donatien Grau (teacher at Paris-Sorbonne University and member of the “Proust” Team at the ITEM_CNRS institute, Simon Fujiwara (artist and performer) and Alfredo Arias (theatre director, playwright and actor). These interviews were published in a special issue of the Palais de Tokyo’s magazine Palais together with a series of collages created by Singh to illustrate the ideas within. Each interview is the departure point for a rumination on the notion of a beginning, a promise, how the brain understands the world, how we understand a story, our dreams, external reality.

The Pledge (Simon Fujiwara) plays Simon and Alexandre’s conversation throughout forty framed images. Each one developing upon ideas related to architecture, childhood, sky-scrapers, phalluses, The Tower of Babel, paleolithic tools, listener and storyteller, performance, creative writing, audi-

ence, Simon Fujiwara’s autobiography, erotic fantasy, Assyrian statuary, lettuce, rabbits, clouds and the Sistine Chapel. As in Simon Fujiwara’s performances, the artwork plays with the gap between reality and imagination, emphasizing the conflict between material and form and exploring the complicity between actor and spectator.

The seven works operate as proxy-portraits for the interviewees, visual essays exploring the subjects’ ideas and as a window into the phantasmagoric universe Singh has created to amplify their thoughts. A common theme throughout the works is the notion of how the mind assembles a coherent view of the world from fragments: from parts of sensory perception, from childhood memories, from personal and historical facts. The very collages used to engage with these concepts are themselves reminiscent of the same ideas. Individually each framed work uses the simplest mechanisms of cutting and pasting, changing scale and orientation to make a coherent whole from two completely different images. As a group, a coherent thread is constructed through the repetition and elaboration on multiple ideas, visual icons and motifs.



Alexandre Singh, *Assembly Instructions (The Pledge - Simon Fujiwara)*, framed inkjet ultrachrome archival prints and dotted pencil lines, 2011. Courtesy of the artist and Monitor Rome.



Alexandre Singh, *Assembly Instructions (The Pledge - Simon Fujiwara)*, forty framed inkjet ultrachrome archival prints and dotted pencil lines, 2011. Installation view from Monitor Rome. Courtesy of the artist and Monitor Rome.



Alexandre Singh, *Assembly Instructions (The Pledge - Simon Fujiwara)*, forty framed inkjet ultrachrome archival prints and dotted pencil lines, 2011. Installation view from Monitor Rome. Courtesy of the artist and Monitor Rome.

untitled (The Lost Bishop)

For his contribution to the Biennale of Bucharest, Van de Velde will make a new, site-specific installation that consists of a series of black-and-white wall drawings in charcoal and a narrative text. Together, they tell a story based on the biography of Bobby Fischer (1943-2008), who is considered to be one of the greatest, but also most controversial chess players of all time.

The drawings Van de Velde presents are based on existing photographs drawn from Fischer's biography and other sources, which the artist then re-enacted within the confines of his studio, working with props, extras and himself as the protagonist. In doing so, Van de Velde imagines himself to be the main character of some one else's story, which he appropriates and transforms.

The narrative is based upon Fischer's legendary victory in the 1972 World Championship in Reykjavik, where he defeated his

Russian rival Boris Spasski in what has come to be known as "the game of the century". In Van de Velde's retelling of the heroic story, Fischer becomes a chess-playing artist, a heroic but obsessive and world-strange hero that controls a game he is completely absorbed by. The game of chess thus becomes a metaphor for a studio-based art practice that revolves around the ego of the artist and gives structure to the unsurpassable chaos of the 'outside' world, which consists of an abundance of images.

The large-scale drawings ask the viewer to 'suspend their disbelief' and literally step into the fictive story. At the same time, they reflect on the illusionistic function of drawing, storytelling, fantasy and romantic ideas of geniality and heroism. Although these are myths, Van de Velde suggests, they could still be considered to have a productive, self-realising value in the real of the outside world. (Koen Sels)



Rinus van de Velde, *untitled (The Lost Bishop)*, charcoal on wall 200 x 140 cm, 2012.
Photo: Ben Van den Berghe. Courtesy of the artist and Ben Van den Berghe.



Rinus van de Velde, *untitled (The Lost Bishop)*, charcoal on wall 200 x 247 cm, 2012.
Photo: Ben Van den Berghe. Courtesy of the artist and Ben Van den Berghe.
[116]



Rinus van de Velde, *untitled (The Lost Bishop)*, charcoal on wall 240 x 340 cm, 2012.
Photo: Ben Van den Berghe. Courtesy of the artist and Ben Van den Berghe.
[117]

CASA PRESEI LIBERE
HOUSE OF THE FREE PRESS
CNI Coresi
Piața Presei Libere nr. 1



Casa Presei Libere (original name, before 1989, it was Casa Scânteii), a building in northern Bucharest, is a copy of the Lomonosov Moscow State University. Casa Presei Libere held the record for the tallest structure in the city between 1956 and 2007. The building was originally conceived as Scânteia House Complex. The construction of the building took 5 years (1952 - 1957), (between 1949 and 1954, the project leader was prof. Panait Mazilu) and was intended to be the headquarters of the official media and especially of the "Scânteia" newspaper that reemerged as the official voice of the Communist Party of Romania. The antenna on this building sustained for a while, since 1956, the Romanian Television transmitter. After 1989, "Casa Scânteii" became known as "Casa Presei Libere" The House of the Free Press. The former Printing House "Casa Scanteii" was also transformed after 1989 into the Autonomous Administration of Printing "Coresi". In February 1999, the Autonomous Administration of Printing "Coresi" became The National Company of Printing Coresi.

Untitled Garden

As viewers enter the exhibition, they are confronted by Akhavan's installation 'Untitled Garden' – a long row of 9 feet tall emerald green cedar trees that align the entrance of the gallery. The hedges, a form of fence that resembles a row of soldiers, barricade the view into the gallery, and render the audience as potential trespassers. The cedar hedge commonly used as a natural form of fencing has a long history in the contentious battle in the privatization of common lands. Hedges have been used as a way of controlling animal and human movement, rendering grazing and gleaning as trespassing and theft, and demarcating the property of middle to upper class homes.

[120]



Abbas Akhavan, *Untitled Garden*, cedar hedges, planters, soil, size variable, 2009.
Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Jesse Birch.

[121]

Failed States

Jill Magid is a New York-based artist and writer known for work that infiltrates structures of authority and power by means of engaging their human side. Rather than treating these structures as subjects to challenge, Magid creates opportunities to manipulate them, by drawing them closer, exploiting their loopholes, engaging them in dialogue, infiltrating their systems, repeating their logic.

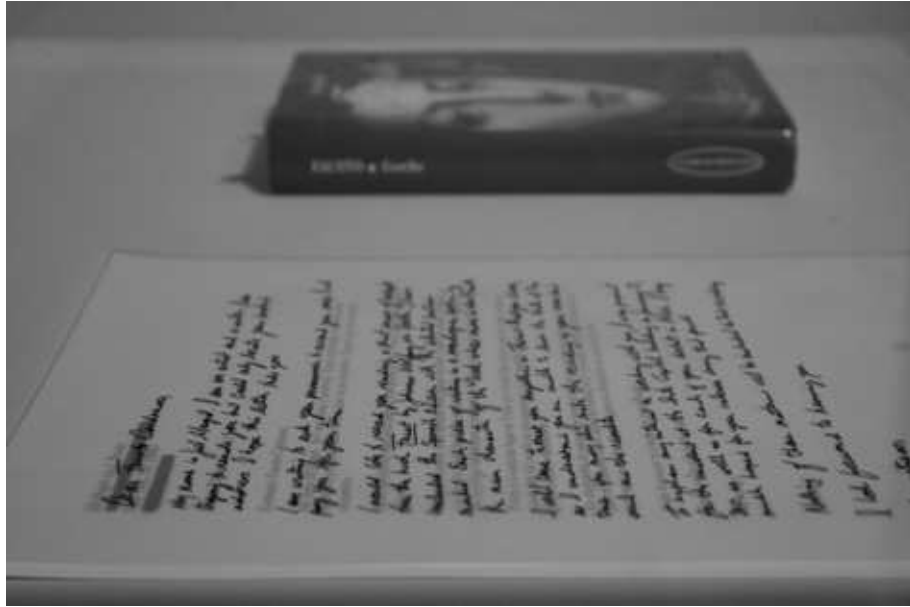
For the Bucharest Biennial, Magid will present *Failed States*, a work of literary non-fiction, as a text and within an installation of related works. She will form collaborations with local magazines in Bucharest to print excerpts of the book within their publications. The book will be

published by Publication Studio, which is “a laboratory for publication in its fullest sense — not just the production of books, but the production of a public. This public, which is more than a market, is created through any and all means — physical production, digital circulation, and social gathering. Together these construct a space of conversation, a public space, which beckons a public into being.”

Failed States approaches the war on terror through the theme of embeddedness, and explores media representations of terrorism. The work examines how far the definition of terrorism or war can be stretched.



Jill Magid, *Failed States*, offsite installation, 1993 Mercedes station wagon, armored to B4 Level, parked at the Texas State Capitol, 2012. Photo by CT. Courtesy of the artist.



Jill Magid, *Failed States*, installation detail photo at AMOA-Arthouse, spanish edition of Goethe's Faust and letter to Fausto. 2011. Photo by Erica Nix. Courtesy of the artist and AMOA-Arthouse.



Jill Magid, *Failed States*, installation photo at AMOA-Arthouse. Wall text, *The Capitol Shooter : Breaking News*, digital video, 9'16", 2011. Photo by Erica Nix. Courtesy of the artist and AMOA-Arthouse.

Out of Projection

David Maljković's new installation expands on his continuing exploration of memories as futurist propositions, while making reference to disparate film genres such as science fiction and documentary.

Out of Projection was filmed at the carefully guarded test track of the Peugeot headquarters in Sochaux, France. The primary screen shows the protagonists, elderly couples who build ideas for future projects. They are actual retired company workers who act as a medium between past and future, moving slowly around the test track alongside the car prototypes. The second, smaller projection is of close-up interviews with individual workers in silent recollection, eerily blurring the past and the future. The use of Peugeot prototypes as props follows the artist's use of futuristic automobile prototypes in Croatian Modernist architectural settings, such as in his past video works *These Days* and *Lost Memories from These Days*.

[126]



David Maljković, *Out of Projection*, 2 channel HD video installation, 18' 41".
Courtesy of Sprüth Magers Berlin London
[127]



David Maljković, *Out of Projection*, 2 channel HD video installation, 18' 41".
Courtesy of Sprüth Magers Berlin London



David Maljković, *Out of Projection*, 2 channel HD video installation, 18' 41".
Courtesy of Sprüth Magers Berlin London

The Office for Anti-Propaganda

The *Office for Anti-Propaganda* was founded in 2007. The *Office* produces an archive of videos, texts and picture material on the subject of political propaganda with the focus on Belarus.

The *Office* participates and organizes political actions, publishes newspapers which are distributed in Belarus and the world. *The Office for Anti-Propaganda* is the result of long-standing work in gathering and archiving the original propaganda material and the works of artists. It is shown in the form of an installation with an archive, which every viewer can use.



Marina Naprushkina, *Office for Anti-Propaganda* installation view.
Courtesy of the the artist and CAC, Vilnius, Lithuania, 2010.



Marina Naprushkina, *Oleg Alkaew*, video, 22', 2012.
Courtesy of the artist.

[132]



Marina Naprushkina, draft of the poster for the campaign *Removal on Ice Hockey Championship 2014*, print, size variable. Courtesy of the artist.

[133]

Search for Landscapes

The *Search for Landscapes* project develops around a group of found vintage slides, which depict one family's travel around the world in the 1960s. Slides were a popular mode of recording travel from the 1960s-1980s. This coincided with a period of American freedom of mobility and travel to the world's exotic locations and well-known pilgrimage sites. The slide technology itself was a product of the American consumer economy, and it came at a time of projection of American power. The American tourist with camera is itself an iconic image, one whose era may have passed. She is both a consumer of places and a producer of images. Her archive represents a mediation of cultural experiences. As a tourist, she has both framed a multitude of places, as well as been framed by them. What were left in the end are images, which are fading, along with those framed experiences. The reenactment of a slide show in the installation is suggestive of this loss. Inherently sentimental, for its vintage look, and color quality, when viewed today, those images remind us of the inevitable technological shift. The 'unpacking' of this archive has been recast through the apparatus of the photographic representation and display.

[134]



Vesna Pavlović, *Search for Landscapes*, photographic installation, artist's studio, size variable, 2011.
Photo by Vesna Pavlovic. Courtesy of the artist and G Fine Art Gallery, Washington DC.

[135]



Vesna Pavlović, *Search for Landscapes*, photographic installation, size variable, 2011.
Photo by Dieter Kik. Courtesy of the artist and the Contemporary Art Center of Quimper, France
[136]



Vesna Pavlović, *Search for Landscapes*, photographic installation, artist's studio, size variable, 2011.
Courtesy of the artist and G Fine Art Gallery, Washington DC.
[137]

***THE INSTITUTE FOR POLITICAL
RESEARCH
University of Bucharest
Str. Spiru Haret nr. 8***



The Institute of Political Research was created in 1999, 10 years after the revolution, through the transformation of the Centre for Political Research, founded in 1995 as the research core of the Faculty of Political Science of The University of Bucharest. After 10 years from the institutionalization of research activity, the Institute remains one of few platforms of debate and analysis of the Romanian political environment from an academic perspective, through social and economic mediation.

By intervening within the Institute of Political Research, BUCHAREST BIENNALE 5 suggests and inserts new means of investigation, discussion and criticism of the socio-political context.

The Real People's House

During Ceausescu's "reign" in Romania, we had power supply back-outs that lasted between a few hours during daytime and usually the whole night when started in the evening. This event happened very often, sometimes daily. In this time, people used oil-lamps and candles for being able to complete activities around the house, read or just see each other. But almost every time these things would not happen, the reality would shift, a change of ambiance implied a change in living, being, in the pre-thought program. This would be a break, a pause in which one could think things over, but also a time of closeness - we are all in this situation and we feel it in the same way. We are abettors to one another. We are open, we put our arms, guards and shields down. We realize that not everything we urged to do is that urgent or even needed.

[140]

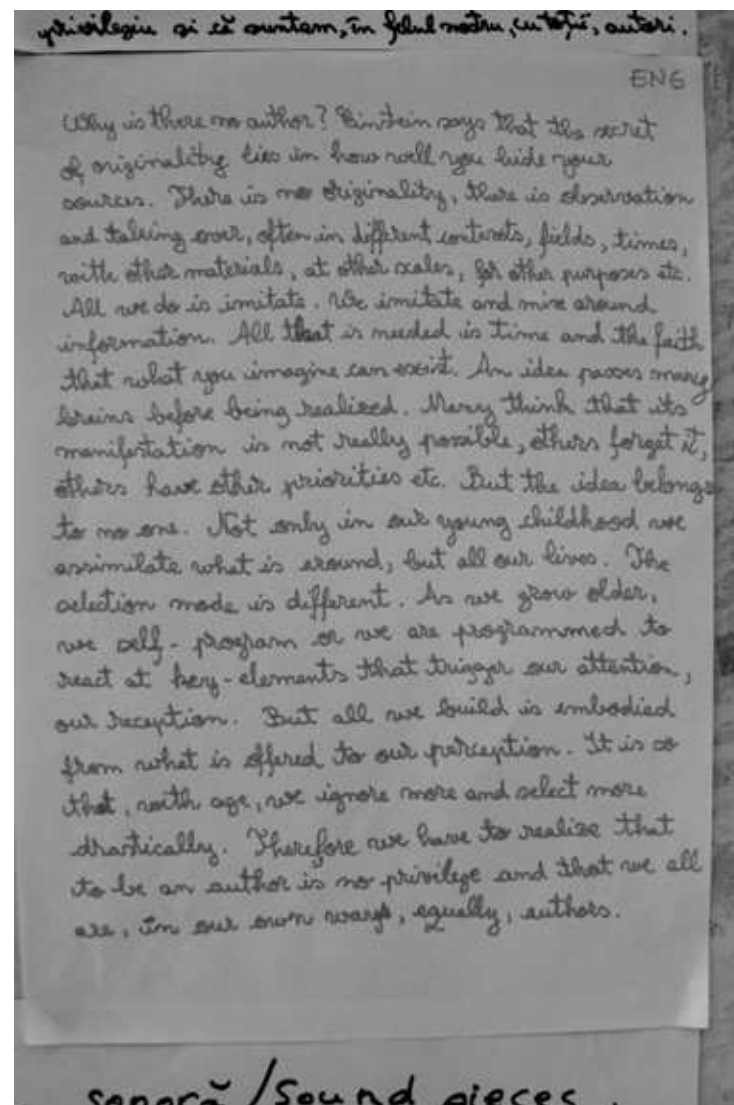
Paradoxically, closer to darkness we see more clear. I am creating a room that contains lit oil-lamps as we used to use, church-usage candles in a glass, refilled to supply for the whole biennale period, accompanied by an audio describing the situation and the state of being. The room invites for this pause in the flow of things and actions for each of the visitors and suggests a break of the like in the flow of things and actions on the larger scale, in the way things happen in the world, in our societies. Stop, question, realize. Also, if then this lack of electric light was a troubling situation seen as directed against the people, nowadays we are aware of the finiteness of resources and propose a self-constructed system of black-outs. In this black-out we allow ourselves to feel without object, to be without reason, to let go.



Marina Albu, *The Evercoming Potentiality of Infinity*, textile band and wool thread, 2012.
Courtesy of the artist.



Marina Albu, *Believe*, textile band, flower sponges, wooden box, 2012.
Courtesy of the artist.



Marina Albu, *Creativity and authorship*, felt tip pen on paper, 2012.
Courtesy of the artist.

Take the Book, Take the Money, Run!

This is a book about stealing your way out of the financial crisis.

Get your basic necessities, keep your social standing, round up your annual income... Keep your head up in the material world even if you can't pay for it. Learn how to spot the ideal occasions for getting things without money, and practice how to do it without getting caught.

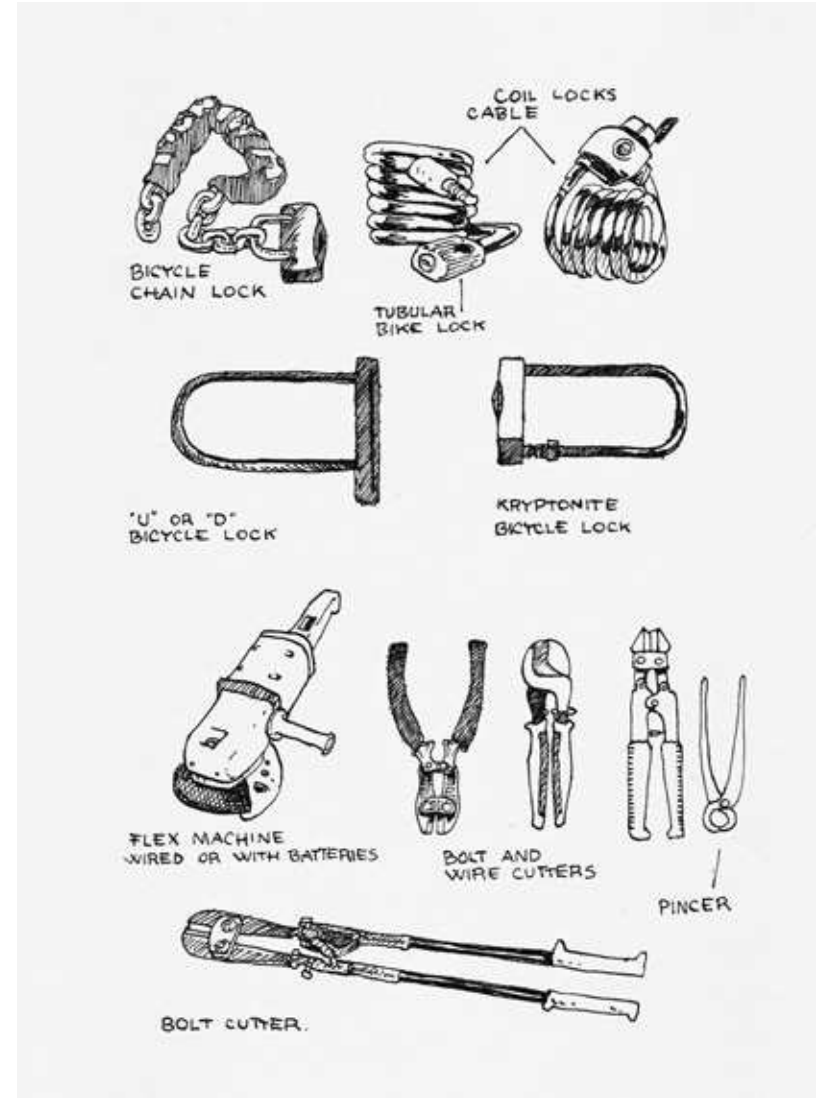
Steal without stress!

The art of stealing is a long term apprenticeship. As needs and desires are fulfilled, new ones will manifest and call for new techniques and more elaborate actions. Here you will find a step by step account of the progression to higher, more expensive, and more noble needs and desires.

This Crisis Special will get you acquainted with the essential vocabulary of unlawful appropriation techniques, such as pick pocketing wallets and jewelry (chapter 1), and snatching street bicycles (chapter 2). Shoplifting is also introduced,

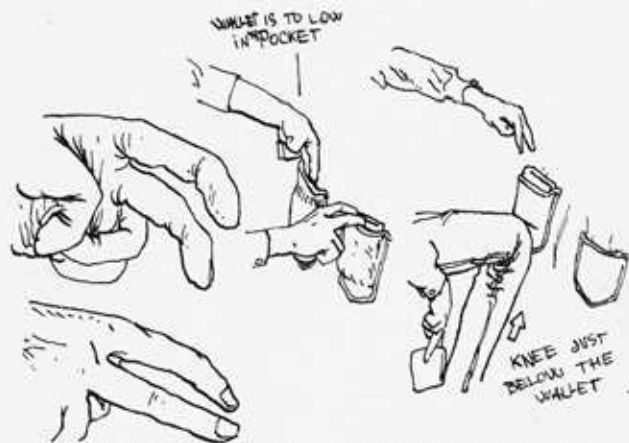
from small takes of basic products (chapter 3) to large quantities of more sophisticated commodities (chapter 4). Getting a free meal and free drinks, as if they fell from the sky will interest those wishing to satisfy the need for luxurious leisure (chapter 5), as will obtaining free clothes and furniture from charity and other such organizations (chapter 6). The theft of motor vehicles (chapter 7) and of home furnishing (chapter 8) represent more delicate and riskier takes, while immaterial theft, although almost untraceable, requires technological intervention (chapter 9). Learn also how to spot the most profitable opportunities for engaging in stealing activity.

This book should be particularly useful for the chronically unemployed, the hungry for cash, and the demanding consumer. Bonus: discover some inspirational experiences through case studies of those who have succeeded in the business of disengaging from the market. (C.H.)



Ciprian Homorodean, *Take the Book, Take the Money, Run!*, 100 pages, hand made book, ink on paper, 32,4 x 24,4 cm, 2010. Courtesy of the artist.

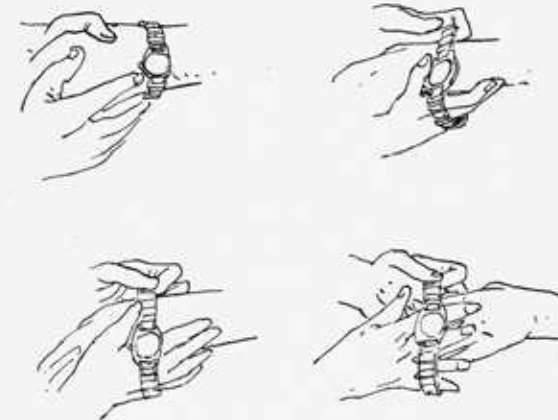
Another spontaneous move compels the pickpocket to sneeze up behind the mark, put his hand over the victim's eyes and say "Gues Uho?" At the same time, the contents of his pockets are also removed. Drunks also, make deliciously simple targets, but rarely do they carry a great deal of cash. Prostitutes are notorious for putting a few drops of chloral hydrate into the mark's drink so that when he passes out, in the bar or a hotel, he can be relieved of his valuables, with ease.



STANDING BEHIND THE MARK, THE PICKPOCKET MAKES A "V" WITH HIS FINGERS. DURING THE COLLISION, THE DIVERSION CHOSEN, THE PICKPOCKET SNAGS THE WALLET AND JERKS IT OUT. THIS IS NOT DONE GINGERLY OR TIMIDLY, BUT QUICKLY AND FORCEFULLY.



Boasting a metal banded watch.



PICKPOCKETS WHO SPECIALIZE IN BOOSTING WATCHES WILL OFTEN CARRY SOME SORT OF ROSIN IN THEIR POCKETS. AS THIS REDUCES SLIPPAGE AND MAKES THE UNBUCKLING PROCEDURE GO MORE SMOOTHLY

Remarkable

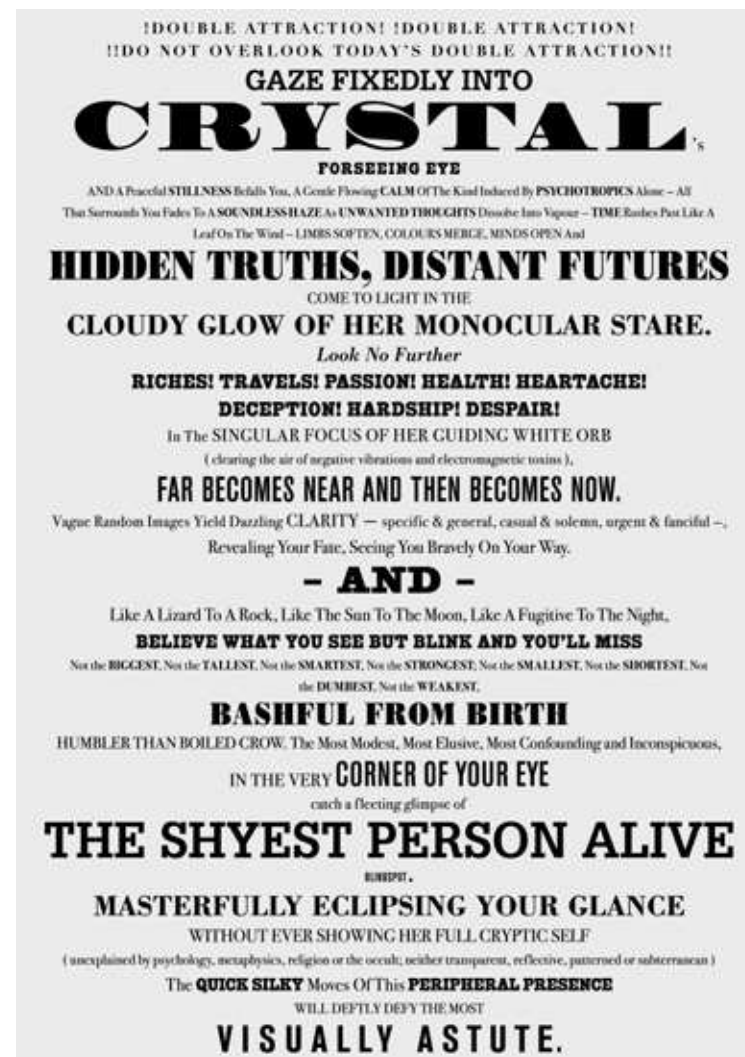
'Remarkable is a print-based work that announces the achievements of a range of extraordinary beings imagined in response to the context of the fair. In the tradition of printed broadsides and fair-ground ephemera Remarkable employs hyperbolic language and un-illustrated texts to conjure these unique individuals.'

Janice Kerbel, July 2007

Remarkable is a continuation of Janice Kerbel's fascination with deception in all its forms, the outcomes of which range from plausible but impractical plans for a bank heist to a cheat's pack of playing cards and a town designed specifically for ghosts.

The artist's understanding of the visual codes that surround these activities allow her work to exist in its own reality, between thought and action, where suggestion and expectation flourish. Kerbel's print project took 19th-century fairground posters as its inspiration, heralding the arrival of a series of remarkable characters. Behind Kerbel's diverse works lies a fascination with the possibility of realising an impossible event or encounter.

[148]



Janice Kerbel, *Remarkable: Double Attraction, Crystal and Blindspot*, silkscreen print on campaign poster paper, 107 x 158 cm, 2007. Courtesy of the artist.

[149]

ON THIS DAY ONLY, Welcome with *Disbelief*—
LIKE THE TRUEST OF SCALES
 AND FAIREST OF BEAUTIES,
THIS POLYGRAPHIC WONDER
 PERFORMS THE MOST DELICATE BALANCING ACT,
SWOONING
 IN THE FACE OF ANY UNTRUTH!
 WHITE LIES, BLACK LIES, COMPLEX AND ELABORATE LIES — LIES TOLD TO PROTECT, LIES TOLD TO ENCHANT,
 LIES TOLD IN PURSUIT — EVASIONS, EXAGGERATIONS, EQUIVOCATIONS — FALSE MODESTIES, INSINCERITIES, SELF-AGGRANDISMENTS
 — HARMLESS LIES AND HEARTFUL LIES — LIES TOLD BY OMISSION, LIES TOLD TO ONESELF —

**INDEED, ALL FORMS OF
 FALSEHOOD!**

Compensating With EQUAL & OPPOSITE Measure For EACH & EVERY Deception
 HER HEARTBEAT SLOWS, HER BREATH SHALLOWS;
 HER VISION DIMS, HER PALLOR ASHENS
 AND HER DIVINE, SOOTHSAYING BODY
 crumples to the ground.

A HEROINE
 OF THE SINCEREST BENEVOLENCE AND MOST INFALLIBLE COMPASSION
 WITNESS THIS INCREDULOUS SPECTACLE OF STAGGERING
!! EQUILIBRIUM !!

FAINTGIRL

Janice Kerbel, *Remarkable: Faintgirl*, silkscreen print on campaign poster paper, 107 x 158 cm, 2007. Courtesy of the artist .

W E L C O M E
!! TO - NIGHT ONLY !!
 A GREAT SPECTRAL AND METEORIC WONDER & NEVER BEFORE SEEN

IGGY FATUSE

WILL MAKE A RADIANT APPEARANCE!
THIS EXPLOSIVE BEAUTY,
 — “**THE HUMAN FIREFLY**” —

Bound By Neither LAWS OF GRAVITY nor PRINCIPLES OF THERMOPHOTONICS
RIGHT BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES
 WILL TRANSFORM
RANDOM ENERGY into **VISIBLE LIGHT**
 TO RENDER HERSELF AT ONCE
WEIGHTLESS AND **LUMINOUS.**

NO ORDINARY ACT OF SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION!
NO SIMPLE FEAT OF LEVITATIONAL METAMORPHOSIS!
NO MERE TEMPERATURE-GRADIENT INVERSION MIRAGE!

In a Brilliant Aura of Sublime Courage — WITH NO EXTERNAL SOURCE OF IGNITION — This Daring Maverick
 WILL ELEVATE TO AN EMINENCE
 UPWARDS OF
FORTY-FOUR FEET
BY THE HEIGHT OF THIS POSTER!!
before disappearing into a glowing streak in the sky.

Janice Kerbel, *Remarkable: Iggy Fatuse, The Human Firefly*, silkscreen print on campaign poster paper, 107x158 cm, 2007. Courtesy of the artist .

Roof Piece Tehran

The project "Roof Piece Tehran" is taking Trisha Brown's 1971 setup for the work "Roof Piece" out of its original New York context to the city of Tehran / Iran. For Brown's piece, 12 Dancers telegraphed sequences of large gestural moves from one to another on NYC's rooftops. Tehran's rooftops recently got known as a 'performance space' in a different context: they gathered attention in relation to the protests after the Iranian presidential election 2009, where protesters were standing on their rooftops at night shouting paroles like "Death to the Dictator" and "Allahu Akhbar" throughout the city, which were echoing from one roof to another. The reenactment of Brown's performance in Tehran is making use of that autonomous performance space in a

country, where dance itself and artistic performance non-conforming to the regulations of the Islamic regime, is forbidden. The choreography in Tehran was carried out by local performers creating a new 'Roof Piece version' within the restrictive circumstances of the city. No audience could attend the performance, instead there was video documenting. The video material was then transformed into a video installation on twelve screens, which was first shown within the framework of the Emdash Award at Frieze Art Fair 2011. The step from Tehran to London automatically produced another cultural transfer within the work, - from a hidden guerilla act to the reception of a mass audience at the art fair.



Anahita Razmi, *Roof Piece Tehran*, video installation, 12 video loops, 18' 11", 2011. The Emdash Award 2011. Commissioned and produced by Frieze Foundation for Frieze Projects 2011. In cooperation with Hasti Goudarzi. Courtesy of the artist.



Anahita Razmi, *Roof Piece Tehran*, video installation, 12 video loops, 18' 11", 2011. The Emdash Award 2011. Commissioned and produced by Frieze Foundation for Frieze Projects 2011. In cooperation with Hasti Goudarzi. Courtesy of the artist.

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Anahita Razmi, *Roof Piece Tehran*, video installation, 12 videoloops, 18' 11", 2011. The Emdash Award 2011. Commissioned and produced by Frieze Foundation for Frieze Projects 2011. In cooperation with Hasti Goudarzi. Courtesy of the artist.

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ALERT STUDIO

Str. Mircea Vulcănescu nr. 2-4

Alert studio is an independent artist-run space that acts as a platform for the research and promotion of contemporary artistic production. Taking on the function of a laboratory space, Alert Studio proposes a meeting point between artists, ideas, directions and dialogues from different areas of conceptual and cultural spaces.

BUCHAREST BIENNALE chose this artist-run space as a venue for its strategic position vis-a-vis the Bucharest University of Art, also being a microcosm of a contemporary art scene.

Haris Epaminonda

Polaroid

Haris Epaminonda's work for BB5 consists of a new set of Polaroids of printed matter from her 'Polaroid' series created between 2008 and 2009 together with a short video as part of 'Chronicles' (2010-ongoing), a series of short Super 8 films (transferred to video) that the artist began to film over the past few years, mainly during her travels.

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Haris Epaminonda, *Polaroid* series, polaroids on printed matter, 2008-2009. Courtesy of the artist.

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Haris Epaminonda, *Polaroid series*, polaroids on printed matter, 2008-2009. Courtesy of the artist.
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Haris Epaminonda, *Polaroid series*, polaroids on printed matter, 2008-2009. Courtesy of the artist.
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MAKE A POINT
Str. Morarilor nr. 1



The headquarters of the cultural center Make a Point is inside of old textile factory, "Postăvăria Română" (1925-2008), where, under low light, the weavers would correct any problems found in the finished material. Make a Point is a permanent exhibition space, ideal for a wide variety of cultural events, having a screening room with two screens and a library open to the public.

Com´on You Reds Curva Viola

I take an interest in control, power and limitation, through the expressions of performance, video and sculpture. My point of departure is mass-culture, where, employing various strategies, I explore notions of authenticity, power and artistic expression. In all my works I have an attempt to establish communicative immediacy that is both visually and conceptually innovative. The works often borrow their expressions from popular culture, subculture and various power structures.

For BB5 I am doing two collective performances with emphasis on the given architecture, subculture and the public realm of Bucharest. The two performances can be seen as a mash-up between the terrace culture surrounding football, the public realm and the history of Bucharest.

I see it as a way of questioning what the public space has to offer in terms of readings and reactions. A staged collective action with a key signature in a subcultural movement is put in a different context. The performance visually triggers questions on political issues, hostility, power and aesthetics. The many different readings that appear can be seen as addressing a slumbering public subconscious.

The first performance, titled *Com´on You Reds*, consists in around 100 volunteers burning red flares on the terraces of Intercontinental Hotel, an important landmark of Bucharest situated in the

University Square which stands as a symbol of freedom and a place of protest. The title comes from a chant that originates from the British football culture. The hotel, which for a very long time dominated the center of Bucharest with its height, was perceived as a standard of luxury and cosmopolitan western life style before '89, when it functioned as a hotel for foreigners only. It still preserves its symbolic status in the collective memory. The performance will challenge the way people perceive the connection between the social and architecture, by transforming the building into a temporary sculpture that relates to the complex history of the University Square and the participatory role that subcultures may appropriate within the frame of social movement.

The other performance, titled *Curva Viola*, consists of a large amount of pink and violet smoke that will temporarily mark Make a Point, a cultural community center situated in Pantelimon, one of Bucharest's so called disadvantaged area, in a communist textile factory. In this performance a memory of the early fanzine movement surrounding the Swedish terrace culture is reenacted through the attempt of recreating a b&w xeroxed image of Curva Viola, the ultras of Fiorentina football club, into the colors my mind reads. Again, by transforming architecture into temporary sculptural monuments, I wish to raise awareness over these areas and their social relevance for the urban landscape. (K.E.)



Klas Eriksson, *Who are ya?!*, collective performance, 2011. Courtesy of Göteborg Biennale 2011. Photo: Dorota Dolores Marzena Lukianska.



Klas Ericsson, *Volvo – Döner Kebab (im rolling - rotating kebab)*, sculpture, 2011. Courtesy of Kalmar Konstmuseum. Photo: Per Larsson
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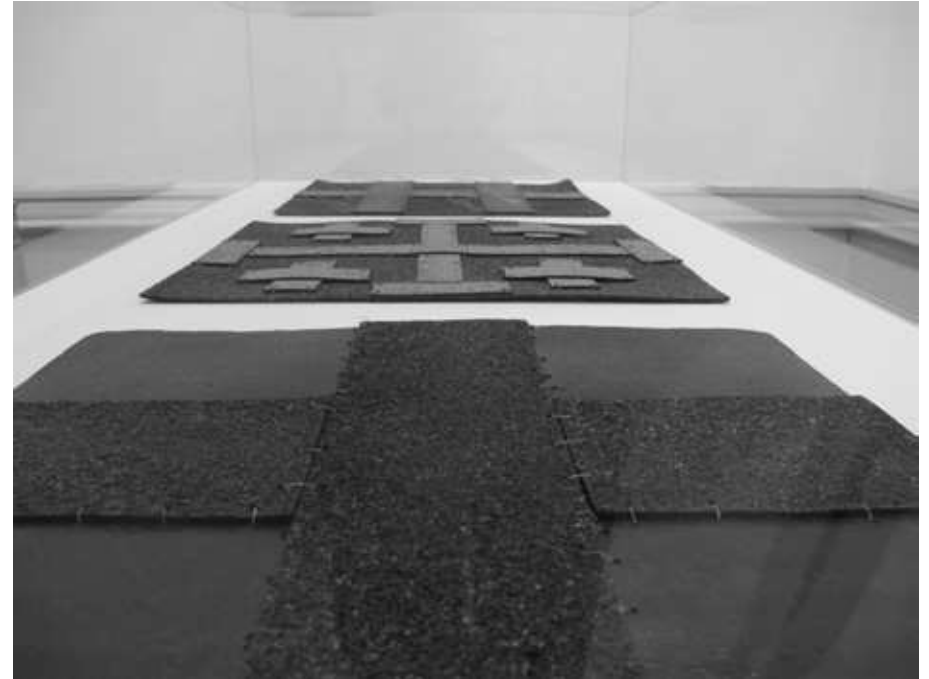
Klas Ericsson, *The public gets what the public wants*, performative sculpture, 2011. Courtesy of the artist and IASPIS Open house. Photo: Jean-Baptiste Béranger
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Cabaret Crusades

Shawky's characteristic drawings, installation and sculptural works, using asphalt and galvanized wire since 1998, coincide with his early experiments with performance and video. His work often deals with the dichotomies and contradictions of social norms, primarily relating to culture and religion. Possessing an acute sense of the absurd, he raises questions about what is generally perceived as "normal" and "acceptable". Within this context, Wael has explored a variety of specific themes that are often rooted in regional issues yet have profound international relevance - themes such as modernisation, cultural hybridisation, and marginalisation.

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The installation of 9 flags and 13 drawings from the *Cabaret Crusades* project, tells the story of the First Crusade of 1096–1099 from the perspectives of Arab historians. These look like abstract paintings and refer to Crusader heraldry, and are made of geometric pieces of dark, sparkling tarmac, sandpaper and galvanized wire that hover between painting and sculpture. Also on view are a suite of fantastical drawings in ink, pencil and metallic pigments that illustrate fairytale-like interactions between imaginary beasts, landscapes, architecture, and the natural elements. Shawky opens up the texture of history and confronts this far-away time in vivid focus and tactile intensity.



Wael Shawky, *Cabaret Crusades* flags, asphalt, tarmac, liquid tar, enamel, galvanized wire, 40 x 50 cm, 2010.
Courtesy the artist.

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Wael Shawky, *Cabaret Crusades* flags, asphalt, tarmac, liquid tar, enamel, galvanized wire, 40 x 50 cm, 2010.
Courtesy the artist.
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Wael Shawky, *Cabaret Crusades* drawing, ink, graphite, pigments, oil on paper, 21 x 32 cm, 2010.
Courtesy the artist.
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Colaborators on Gas

Two Artists' Statement:

We wonder at the same time why do artists collaborate? Who owns the work in that case, and would both parties be equally satisfied?

Not to be stuck with these questions before we even start working together, we'd like to inform you just for practical reasons that our work will be performative, and simply related to daily life practicalities instead of being philosophical or ethical or historical or whatsoever. The result however will not be a documentation of these daily performances, rather a parallel feeling to them. How can a feeling be parallel? Perhaps, what we need is a hug, and that's it...

Bassam Ramlawi and Mounira Al Solh

Bassam Ramlawi:

It was in the Netherlands that Al Solh and I met for the first time, inside Westerpark in Amsterdam, I was sketching a bunch of funny homeless people, and she was reading a book. We had seen each other somewhere in Beirut and recognized each other automatically.

Since then we became close friends, and Al Solh made a booklet about me, co-written by Jacques Aswad and titled "In a Time Fleece". She also made a documentary titled "Seven Reversed Scenes about Bassam Ramlawi". I am of course grateful to her efforts, but I think

I am more interested to collaborate with her, rather than just being passively driven and passively manipulated in her productions, although I have to admit that it is flattering to have someone wanting to document your life and understand your work.

But this was so far not a real collaboration, and I don't really know why she got so enthusiastic about such productions. I recently asked her if I could in return make a booklet about her work, and a documentary. Hoping she might agree one day!

Mounira Al Solh to Bassam Ramlawi:

Just because I have some fascination for you, you can use me... so please do!

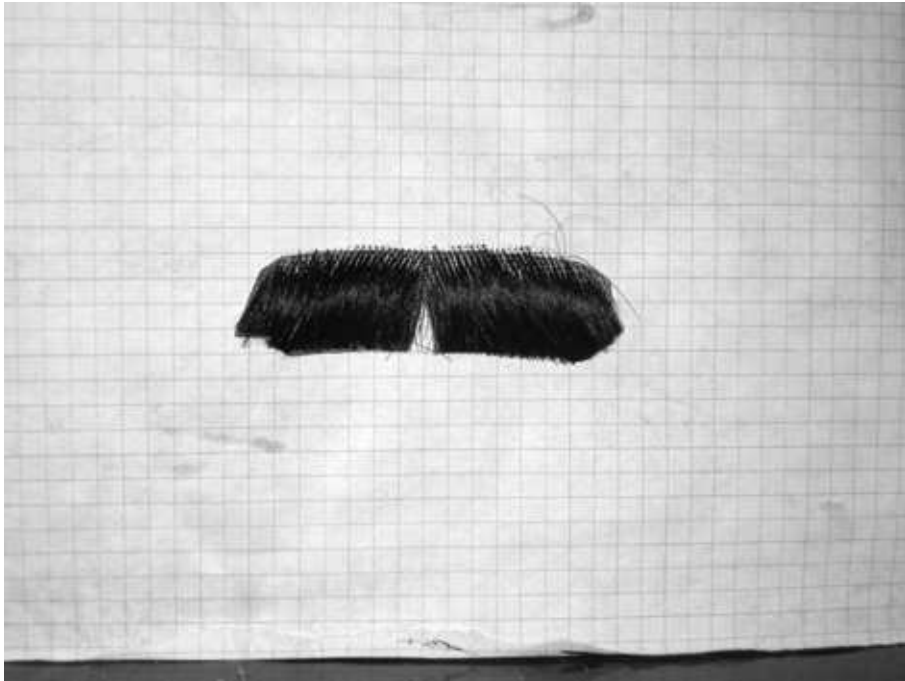
Two Artists' Work description:

For the Bucharest Biennial, Ramlawi proposed to deliver for Mounira to her studio and for free a bottle of apple or carrot juice that he had squeezed at his father's shop. In return, she drunk the content, and filmed with her handy-camera these bottles and kept them at her studio. Ramlawi has made drawings of things that struck him on his way each time he delivered the juice to her studio riding his scooter.



Mounira al Solh and Bassam Ramlawi, *Colaborators on Gas*, research photo, various dimensions, 2012

Courtesy of the artist



Mounira al Solh and Bassam Ramlawi, *Bassam's Moustache*, *Collaborators on Gas*, research photo, 2012
Courtesy of the artist
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Mounira al Solh and Bassam Ramlawi, *Bassam's Delivery Mobillette*, *Collaborators on Gas*, research photo, 2012
Courtesy of the artist
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NANA RESTAURANT
Str. Ion Câmpineanu nr. 22



Nana Natural Food is a colorful place among the restaurants of Bucharest. Located downtown, close to “Kilometer Zero”, the restaurant is minimalistically decorated and serves natural food. A family place, where food is prepared and served by the owner herself, Nana, who is a very special person, always present and willing to talk to each customer to make sure that everything is perfect. This quiet location has been chosen for the subversive intervention of Ruth Ewan, which shatters the peace of the place, turning it into a stage for political, vaguely utopian or historical debates.

A Jukebox of People Trying to Change the World

A Jukebox of People Trying to Change the World is a CD jukebox, sitting between digital and analogue technologies which contains a growing collection of songs addressing a spectrum of social issues, some directly political in motive, some vaguely utopian and some chronicling specific historic events. The songs could all be described as progressive in subject matter. The archive currently contains over 2,000 tracks, with no more than two by the same artist, which are ordered into over seventy categories such as feminism, land ownership, poverty, civil rights and ecology.

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Ruth Ewan, *A Jukebox of People Trying to Change the World*, Rowe CD jukebox containing 100 CDs / 1500 tracks, ongoing project started in 2003. Installation shot from *Younger Than Jesus*, New Museum, New York, 2009. Photograph by Ruth Ewan. Courtesy of the artist.

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Ruth Ewan, *A Jukebox of People Trying to Change the World*, Rowe CD jukebox, 100 CDs / 1500 tracks, ongoing project started in 2003. Installation shot from Brank & Heckle, Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee, 2011. Photograph by Ruth Clark. Courtesy of the artists.
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Ruth Ewan, *A Jukebox of People Trying to Change the World*, Rowe CD jukebox containing 100 CDs / 1500 tracks, ongoing project started in 2003. Installation shot from Brank & Heckle, Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee, 2011. Photograph by Ruth Clark.
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CINEMA UNION
Str. Ion Câmpineanu nr. 21



Union Cinema is unique among the movie theaters in Bucharest. It shows old or art movies every day. A small, very cozy cinema, reminding of an old French movie theater. Union Cinema is owned by the National Film Archive, established in 1957 as a body subordinated to the Ministry of Education and Culture. According to the Order of the Minister at that time, the Archive had the mission to collect, classify and preserve movies and any other filmed materials. It also provided the obligation for one copy of every film to be submitted to the archive. Battery 13-14 at Fort Jilava, a building erected in the early 20th century for military purposes, was assigned for storing the films. In this cinema with a long history, Aurélien Froment intervenes at the beginning of usual movie shows, maybe as a memento of the days when the artist worked as a projectionist in a Paris movie theater.

Pulmo Marina

The film features a *Phacellophora Camtschatica* (egg-yolk jelly), as it drifts in its tank home at the Monterey Bay Aquarium. A voice-over informs the viewer of its baroque but literally brainless anatomy, its voracious cannibalism and its classical forebears. It compiles an extended description of the creature according to various modes of knowledge, perception and understanding, from ancient mythologies to natural sciences and exhibition design. Shifting from a seemingly banal wildlife TV programme about a sea creature towards a description of the physical and architectural conditions of its display in

the aquarium, the film looks at how the image pre-exist its own recording, approaching the window of the aquarium as a display device that participates in the construction of the notion of the viewer. The work was commissioned by LUX, a British film organisation, to be inserted between ads and feature films within a network of commercial cinemas in the UK and Ireland. It would take around 6 days and 11 hours to watch a two hour film if each shot of the programme where the work is inserted was narrated in the same format as *Pulmo Marina*.



Aurélien Froment, *Pulmo Marina* video still, HD Cam and sound transferred to 35 mm, dolby SR, 5' 10".
Courtesy of the artist, Motive Gallery, Amsterdam and Marcelle Alix, Paris.

VICE
radical lifestyle magazine

TABU
women magazine

ZEPPELIN
architecture magazine

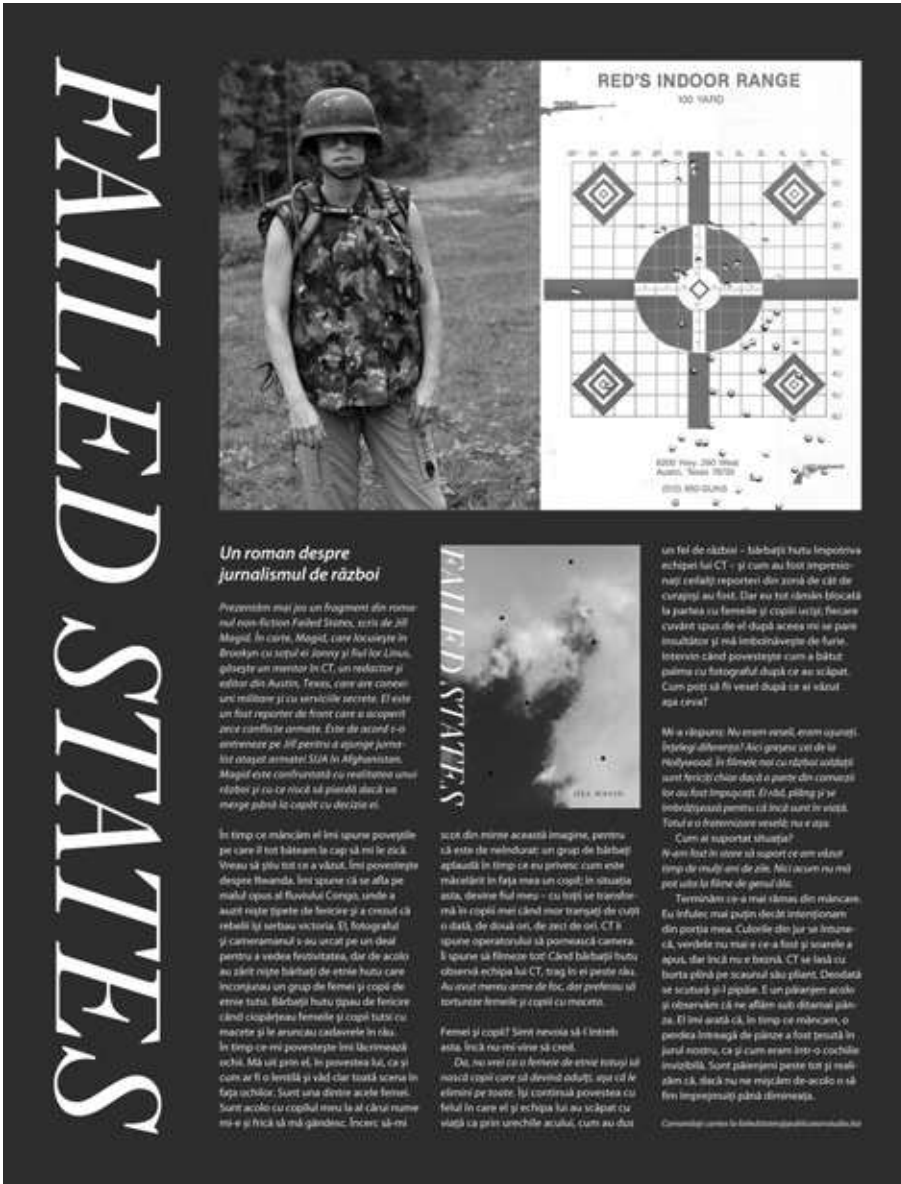
During a trip to Austin, Texas I witnessed an event on the steps of the State Capitol Building. Twenty-four year old Fausto Cardenas fired several rounds into the air before being arrested. The event became the background against which I, under the guidance of CT – editor at the Texas Observer and former embedded war correspondent for AP – started my training to become an embedded journalist with the U.S. military in Afghanistan.

My non-fiction novel *Failed States* approaches the themes of transparency, secrecy and publicity through my personal desire to engage the war on terror and its media representation through becoming an eyewitness.

For my contribution to BB5, I wanted to launch *Failed States*, and to do so within The House of The Free Press. The building provides the perfect context: its history as initially intended (but never realized) to be the headquarters of Romania’s official media; its current, decrepit state; and its enormous scale—reminiscent of the Texas Capitol Building. I also wanted the narrative of *Failed States* to extend beyond the book, the building and the biennial, into the wider public of Bucharest. But I wondered how my story (American in its themes of gun control, the US military, press, and court systems) would translate, literally and conceptually.

To explore this question, I collaborated with three Romanian magazines: Tabu, Vice, and Zeppelin, to publish excerpts of *Failed States*. Each magazine gave me a brief, based on the themes of their individual publications, a word count, and image request. For Tabu, a women’s fashion magazine, the editors chose an excerpt in which I am questioning being an artist (and potentially an embedded journalist with the US Military) while having a child. Vice asked for “an excerpt with the most violent/aggressive scene/part of the book” or one that had a “fashion angle” to run alongside articles on YSL’s Stefano Pilati and Pierre Cardin. Zeppelin, an architecture magazine, asked for an entry on public space. I gave them one featuring the Capitol Building.

The word publish means ‘to bring to the public’s attention’. The Biennial now lists Tabu, Vice, and Zeppelin as extended venues of BB5. *Failed States*, the book, is being published by Publication Studios whose mission is to be “a laboratory for publication in its fullest sense — not just the production of books, but the production of a public. This public, which is more than a market, is created through any and all means — physical production, digital circulation, and social gathering. Together these construct a space of conversation, a public space, which beckons a public into being.”



Jill Magid, *Failed States*, excerpt from the book, insert in the Romanian radical lifestyle magazine Vice, 2012. Courtesy of the artist



Jill Magid, *Failed States*, excerpt from the book, insert in the Romanian architecture magazine Zeppelin, 2012. Courtesy of the artist.



Jill Magid, *Failed States*, excerpt from the book, insert in the Romanian women magazine Tabu, 2012. Courtesy of the artist.

Curator

Anne Barlow

Anne Barlow (born in Glasgow, Scotland) is Executive Director of Art in General, New York, a non-profit organization that supports artists through the commissioning of new work and an international residency exchange program. From 1999-2006, Barlow was Curator of Education and Media Programs at the New Museum, New York, where she oversaw its educational and public programs, conceived of and developed Museum as Hub (a global network initiative that connected the museum with art partners in Cairo, Eindhoven, Mexico City and Seoul), organized inter-disciplinary roundtables with leaders in the fields of the visual arts, architecture, and design, developed the museum's Digital Culture Programs, and curated numerous exhibitions and performances.

Barlow received her M.A. in the History of Art from the University of Glasgow, Scotland. Prior to moving to New York, Barlow was Curator of Contemporary Art and Design at Glasgow Museums, where she managed its contemporary art collection, exhibitions, residencies and commissions programs. Independently, she collaborated on the exhibition *Copy It, Steal It, Share It* at Borusan Art Gallery, Istanbul, and guest-curated film and media projects for the International Film Festival Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and Threshold Artspace, Scotland. Barlow has published for organizations including: Liverpool University Press/Tate Gallery Liverpool; the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, United Kingdom; the Edith Russ House for Media Art, Oldenburg; the New Museum; and Art in General. She recently co-organized Art in General's international residency/exchange symposium *What Now?*, and has participated in lectures and discussions at organizations including: the Royal College of Art, London; Centre for

Contemporary Art, Warsaw; MUMOK, Vienna; The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, New York; New York University; ARCOmadrid, for Latitudes' Professional Encounters; Tate Modern, London; and the Sharjah Art Foundation.

Writers / Scriitori

Sotirios Bahtsetzis

Sotirios Bahtsetzis is an adjunct professor in art history and an independent curator based in Athens and Berlin. His research interests include image theory, political theory and contemporary cultural analysis. Recent publications: *The Time That Remains* (e-flux Journal v. 28 & v. 30), *Image Wars* (Afterimage v. 38); Recent exhibitions: *Roaming Images* (3. Thessaloniki Biennale).

Stephen Duncombe

Stephen Duncombe is an Associate Professor at the Gallatin School and the Department of Media, Culture and Communications of New York University where he teaches the history and politics of media. He is the author of *Dream: Re-Imagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy* and *Notes From Underground: Zines and the Politics of Underground Culture*, and co-author of *The Bobbed Haired Bandit: Crime and Celebrity in 1920s New York*; the editor of the *Cultural Resistance Reader* and co-editor of *White Riot: Punk Rock and the Politics of Race*. He is the creator of the *Open Utopia*, an open-access, open-source, web-based edition of *Thomas More's Utopia*, and writes on the intersection of culture and politics for a range of scholarly and popular publications, from the cerebral, *The Nation*, to the prurient, *Playboy*. Duncombe is a life-long political activist, co-founding a community based advocacy group in the Lower East

Side of Manhattan and working as an organizer for the NYC chapter of the international direct action group, *Reclaim the Streets*. In 2009 he was a Research Associate at the Eyebeam Center for Art and Technology in New York City where he helped organize *The College of Tactical Culture*. With funding from the Open Societies Foundations he co-created the *School for Creative Activism* in 2011, and is presently co-director of the Center for Artistic Activism. Duncombe is currently working on a book on the art of propaganda during the New Deal.

Tom Holert

Tom Holert is an art historian and cultural critic. A former editor of *Texte zur Kunst* and co-publisher of *Spex* magazine, Holert currently lives in Berlin and teaches and conducts research in the Institute of Art Theory and Cultural Studies at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. He contributes to journals and newspapers such as *Artforum*, *Texte zur Kunst*, *Camera Austria*, *Jungle World*, and *Der Standard*. Among his recent publications are a book on migration and tourism (*Fliehkraft: Gesellschaft in Bewegung—von Migranten und Touristen*, with Mark Terkessidis), a monograph on Marc Camille Chaimowicz' 1972 installation "*Celebration? Realife*" (2007) and a collection of chapters on visual culture and politics (*Regieren im Bildraum*, 2008).

Răzvan Ion

Răzvan Ion is a theoretician, curator, cultural manager and political activist. He is the co-founder and co-director (with Eugen Rădescu) of *Pavilion - journal for politics and culture*, *Bucharest Biennale* and *Pavilion - center for contemporary art & culture*. He taught and lectured at venues including *University of California, Berkeley*; *University of Oxford*; *University of London*; *Headlands Center for the Arts, San Francisco, California*; *Political Science Faculty, Cluj*; *Art*

Academy, Timisoara; *La Casa Encendida, Madrid*; and the *Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon*. Ion writes for different magazines and newspapers, and recently curated "*Exploring the Return of Repression*" at *rum46, Aarhus, Denmark* and "*From Contemplating to Constructing Situations*" at *PAVILION, Bucharest, Romania*. He is now working on the two book projects "*Exploring the Return of Repression*" and "*Rhizomic Structures Of Art Institutions. Neo-Politics Of Culture*", to be published in 2012/2013. His new curatorial and research project is "*Smash the Church! Smash the State!*" dealing with anarchist and collective activism and social-political movements in art and will be exhibited late 2013. He is professor at *University of Bucharest, Romania*. Ion lives and works in Bucharest.

Olive McKeon

Olive McKeon is a doctoral candidate at UCLA in Culture and Performance. Her research focuses on the relation between dance and Marxism, moving between the political economy of dance and the choreography of labor struggles. She makes dances as a part of the Welcoming Committee. She is involved in university organizing and feminist groups. She lives in Los Angeles, California.

Suzana Milevska

Dr. Suzana Milevska is a theorist of visual art and culture based in Skopje, Macedonia. Currently she teaches art history and theory of visual art at the Faculty of Fine Arts – University Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje. From 2008 – 2010 she taught fine arts and digital arts at the New-York University in Skopje and she taught art history and analysis of styles at the *Accademia Italiana Skopje* and she was its Dean. From 2006 to 2008, she was the Director of the Center for Visual and Cultural Research at the *Social Sciences and Humanities Research Institute*

“Euro-Balkan” in Skopje and she taught Visual Culture at its research degree M.A. in Gender Studies. She holds a Ph.D. in Visual Cultures from Goldsmiths College in London (2006) where she thought from 2003 to 2005. In 2004, she was a Fulbright Senior Research Scholar in Library of Congress. Her research and curatorial interests include post colonial critique in arts, visual culture, feminism and gender theory. Since 1992 she curates exhibitions, conferences, long-life learning and other participatory projects. She was a member of the Advisory Board at the Contemporary Art Museum in Kumamoto, Japan (2004/2005). Her most recent research and curatorial project The Renaming Machine consists of series exhibitions and conferences discussing the politics of renaming and overwriting memory in art and visual culture (2008-2010). Recently she published her book *Gender Difference in the Balkans* (Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag, 2010) and edited *The Research Machine* (Ljubljana: P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Institute, 2010).

Eugen Rădescu

Eugen Rădescu is politologist (specialized in moral relativism and political ethics), cultural manager, curator and theoretician. He writes for various magazines and newspapers. He curated, among others, Bucharest Biennale 1 with the theme "Identity Factories", "How Innocent Is That?" and "presently i have nothing to show and i'm showing it!" at Pavilion Bucharest. He published a book "How Innocent Is That?" at Revolver Books - Berlin, Germany. He is co-editor of *Pavilion - journal for politics and culture* and co-director of Bucharest Biennale (with Răzvan Ion) and the chairman of the organizational board of Pavilion and Bucharest Biennale. He is associate professor at University of Bucharest and Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj. Curently is a PhD candidate at Babes-Bolyai University with a thesis on political science. Lives and works in Bucharest.

Simon Sheikh

Simon Sheikh is a curator and critic. He is an Assistant Professor of Art Theory and a Coordinator of the Critical Studies Program, Malmö Art Academy in Sweden. He was director of Overgaden – Institute for Contemporary Art in Copenhagen, 1999-2002 and Curator at NIFCA, Helsinki, 2003-2004. Editor of the magazine *Øjeblikket* 1996-2000, and a member of the project group GLOBE 1993-2000. Curatorial work includes exhibitions such as *Exclusion*, Consul, Århus, 1993, *I Confess*, Nikolaj – Copenhagen Contemporary Art Center, 1995, *Escape Attempts in Christiania*, Copenhagen, 1996 (with GLOBE), *Do-it-Yourself – Mappings and Instructions*, Bricks+Kicks, Vienna, 1997, *Models of Resistance*, Overgaden, Copenhagen 2000 (with GLOBE), *Naust Øygarden*, Bergen, Norway 2000, *In My Room*, Nordic Video, Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Circa Berlin, Nikolaj – Copenhagen Contemporary Art Center, 2005 and *Capital (It Fails Us Now)* at UKS, Oslo, 2005 and *Kunstihoone*, Tallinn, 2006. Recent publications include the anthologies *We are all Normal* (with Katya Sander), Black Dog Publishing, London 2001, *Knut Åsdam* (monograph), Fine Arts Unternehmen, Zug, 2004, *In the Place of the Public Sphere?*, b_books, Berlin, 2005 and *Capital (It Fails Us Now)*, b_books, Berlin, 2006. His writings can also be found in such periodicals as *Afterall*, *AnArchitectur*, *Springerin* and *Texte zur Kunst*. Lives in Berlin and Copenhagen.

Marius Stan

Marius Stan holds a PhD in political sciences from the Faculty of Political Sciences – Bucharest University (with a thesis on the administration of the past in Serbia and the functioning of the ICTY), and currently works as a researcher within the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile wherefrom he has published several articles and other

writings on the history of communism in Romania. He has published many studies about the penitentiary system, re-education by means of torture, and the communist repression in Romania; he also coordinates the international journal *History of Communism in Europe*. He co-authored two volumes of the *The Dictionary of the Officers and Civil Employees belonging to the General Directorate of the Penitentiaries. Central Apparatus: 1948-1989, Iași: Polirom, 2009/ 2011*.

Starting with 2006 he is a member and spokesman of the civic movement "Militia Spirituala" ("Spiritual Militia").

Among his fields of interest should be mentioned few educational and memorial projects (istoriacomunismului.ro; memoryofnation.eu/), the socio-political transformations in post-communist Europe and transitional studies – general (Romania/Serbia – in particular).

Ștefan Voicu

Ștefan Voicu studies Social and Cultural Anthropology at KULeuven in Belgium. He is interested in the production of contemporary visual African art, visual representation of postcolonialism and post-socialism, and the analysis of epistemic objects. He curated "The Discreet Charm of Political Activism" in 2011, the first edition of *Pavilion Screenings. Lives and works in Leuven, Belgium*.

Abbas Akhavan

Abbas Akhavan was born in Tehran, and currently lives and works in Toronto. His practice ranges from site-specific ephemeral installations to drawing, video and performance. For the past five years, the domestic sphere has been an ongoing area of research in Akhavan's work. Earlier works explore the relationship between the house and the nation state and how the trauma of systemic violence enacted upon civilians can be inherited and re-enacted within the family lineage – the home as a forked space between hospitality and hostility. More recent work has shifted focus onto spaces just outside the home – the garden, the backyard, and other domesticated landscapes.

Akhavan's work has been exhibited in spaces including Vancouver Art Gallery, Darling Foundry (Canada), KW Institute for Contemporary Art (Germany), Kunsten Museum of Modern Art (Denmark), Belvedere Museum (Austria), Performa 11 (USA), and the Delfina Foundation (UAE, UK).

Marina Albu

I realized just now why I always delay sending/writing my bio. I know it for sure at this moment. I DO NOT BELIEVE IN BIOS. Bios do not matter to me. At all. Which city one comes from, where one works, if one has well-known artist-or-something-else-ancestors, how old or young one is or if the university where one studied has renowned teachers or ex-students (there is one grand figure of art history who's student work was rescued by the university i was in and placed in the middle of the spiraling teachers stairs, but i did not study neither with him nor with his teachers - all long gone). It does not matter how many exhibitions one had and where they had it, it does not matter what prizes they won or at what prices they sell. At most, all these are future conversation

starters, guesses on influences or familiarity highlights. I do activate for several years in the art zone and I try to touch nerves and transmit all I can through this, mostly thoughts, sensations, emotions, the private, the public, the hidden and the shown, observations or desires. I am all around us, the human kind, our behavior, habits and that what we perceive. This is what I have for input. And this makes me just as much as you. The selection is what makes us different, and the reasons why we do this. And my reason is our growing out of our fears, sufferings and certainties.

15.02.2012, Bucharest

Haris Epaminonda

Haris Epaminonda, born in 1980 in Nicosia, Cyprus, lives and works in Berlin. She studied in London and graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2003. Epaminonda has had solo exhibitions at MoMA, New York (2011), the Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (2011), Tate Modern, London (2010), Museo di Palazzo Poggi & Biblioteca Universitaria, Bologna (2010), Site Gallery, Sheffield (2010), Malmö Konsthall, Malmö (2009) and Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin (2008). Recent group shows include Transmediale Berlin (2012), Contemporary Art Museum St Louis (2010), New Museum Triennial, New York (2009), Sharjah Biennale (2009), Athens Biennale (2009), Berlin Biennale (2008) as well as representing Cyprus at the Biennale di Venezia (2007). Since 2008 Epaminonda is developing together with German artist Daniel Gustav Cramer 'The Infinite Library', an ongoing book project.

Klas Eriksson

Eriksson is interested in control, power and limitations.

He expresses himself through performance, video and sculpture.

Klas Eriksson's point of departure is mass-culture, where, employing various strategies, he explores our notions of authenticity, power and artistic expression.

Recent appearances include the Gotheburg

International Biennale for contemporary art, Shirayev Biennale, Kalmar Konstmuseum and NCCA Moscow.

Upcoming shows include the BB5, PALS – Performance art links, Nordin Gallery, Kalmar Konstmuseum. In November he will be a resident at Platform in Finland.

Klas Eriksson lives and works in Sweden and Berlin.

Ruth Ewan

Her work mixes cultural anthropology and musicology with a historically-minded engagement with public protest and leftist politics. She had recent solo exhibitions and projects which include: Billboard for Edinburgh, Ingleby Gallery, Edinburgh, 2012; Brank & Heckle, Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee, 2011; These Airwaves Neutralise the Tools of Oppression, Frieze Projects, London 2009, Nuestro es el Mundo a Pesar de Todo, Kiosko Galeria, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia; A Jukebox of People Trying to Change the World, Ancient and Modern, London. Also, recently, the artist had been selected for group exhibitions and projects: Weighted Words, Zabudowicz Collection, London, 2012; Transcendental Empiricism, Rob Tufnell at Page Street, London, 2011; A Million Miles from Home, Folkestone Triennial, Folkestone; Living, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk; The Big Society, Galerie Vallois, Paris; Savage Messiah, Rob Tufnell at Sutton Lane, London; The Bell Show, Lüttgenmeijer, Berlin. Ruth Ewan is the recipient of EAST International Award in 2006 and artist residency in Cove Park, Creative Development Residency, Cove, 2010, Yorkshire Artspace Residency, Sheffield, 2010, Triangle Arts Trust Arts Council Residency, Santa Cruz, Bolivia, 2009, Cocheme Fellowship, Byam Shaw School of Art, 2008. Ruth Ewan (b. 1980, Aberdeen) is an artist based in London.

Aurélien Froment

Between 1995 and 2000 he studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Rennes, Manchester Metropolitan University, and the Ecole des

Beaux-Arts in Nantes. He trained simultaneously as a film projectionist, also qualifying in 2000. His work has since developed through exhibitions, films, publications and performances. Since 2001, he has been removing Friedrich Froebels objects from their original educational context to present them in exhibition spaces. In 2005, he completed a video portraying Paolo Soleri's architectural project of Arcosanti in Arizona, and in 2007, filmed Théâtre de Poche with magician Stéphane Corréas. Since 2010, the jellyfish from his short film Pulmo Marina has popped up on the screens of more than 30 cinemas across the UK. In 2011, Froment released 9 Intervals, a short film series intended to be presented before films by others.

Froment has had solo exhibitions at: Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, Aubervilliers; Project Arts Centre, Dublin; FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims; Module du Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Gasworks, London; and the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco. His work has also been included in group exhibitions at: Tate Britain, London; Nam June Paik Centre, Gyeonggi-do; Basel Kunsthalle; Mudam, Luxembourg; Centre Pompidou, Paris; the 8th Gwangju Biennale; Sculpture Center, New York; the 11th Biennale de Lyon; and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Aurélien Froment (born in 1976 in Angers, France) currently lives in Dublin, Ireland.

Ciprian Homorodean

Although I have formal training as a sculptor, I use different medias to give form to observations that concern me as an artist. I consider art to be just another language, whose vocabulary is based on personal history and expressive needs. I approach a variety of subjects, with one theme linking all the facets of my work: the human experience. Our quest for identity, the stereotypes that often define how we are perceived or that we voluntarily incarnate, our role as individuals who are also a part of the collective social tissue, these are some of the issues at the centre of my reflection.

tion. Through my projects, I wish to look at the models and anti-models of our society, to examine the two sides of every story in order to arrive at an impartial conclusion. Using subversion, humour, and a dose of self-critique, I try to breach the rules of the art world to deliver ironic comments on socially controversial subjects.

Iman Issa

Iman Issa (born 1979, Cairo) is an artist living and working in Cairo and New York. Her most recent solo and group exhibitions include *The Ungovernables*, New Museum, New York, *Abstract Possible*, Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm, *Material*, Rodeo, Istanbul; *Seeing is believing*, KW Institute of Contemporary Art, Berlin; *Short Stories*, SculptureCenter, New York; and *Propaganda by Monuments*, Contemporary Image Collective, Cairo. Her video work has been screened at several venues including Tate Modern, London; *Spacex*, Exeter; *Open Eye Gallery*, Liverpool; and *Bidoun Artists Cinema*. Her book *Thirty-three Stories about Reasonable Characters in Familiar Places* was published in September 2011 by the SculptureCenter in New York.

Janice Kerbel

Janice Kerbel (b.1969, Canada) lives and works in London. Recent solo exhibitions include *Kill The Workers!*, Walter Philips Gallery, Banff (2012); *Badischer Kunstverein*, Karlsruhe (2011); *Chisenhale*, London (2011); *Art Now*, Tate Britain (2010); *greengrassi*, London (2009); *Kitchener Waterloo Art Gallery*, Canada (2009); *Remarkable*, Frieze Art Fair Projects (2007). Selected group exhibitions include *Bucharest Biennale* (2012); *Dexter Sinister*, Walter Philips Gallery, Banff (2011); *Best Laid Plans*, the Drawing Room, London (2010); *Poor. Old. Tired. Horse.*, ICA, London (2009); *Gartenstadt*, Kunstverein Hildesheim (2009); *Magic*, Hayward Gallery Touring (2009); *1st at Moderna*, Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2006). Her book, *15 Lombard St* (2000), is published by Book Works, London.

Janice Kerbel works with a range of material

including, print, sound and light, to explore the indefinite space between reality and fiction, abstraction and representation. Drawing on language, Janice's work often takes the form of plans, proposals, scripts or announcements for imagined scenarios that cannot or will not occur. Janice has exhibited at Tate Britain, Chisenhale Gallery, London, greengrassi, and Moderna Museet in Stockholm.

Jill Magid

Jill Magid, a New York based artist and writer, seeks platforms for acting inside and outside of institutions, responding to their imposition, negotiation, and, at times, capitulation of power. For Magid, this power isn't a remote condition to contest, but rather something to manipulate, by drawing it closer, exploiting its loopholes, engaging it in dialogue, seducing its agents, revealing its sources, infiltrating its structure, repeating its logic. As an artist and writer, Magid is fascinated by hidden information, being public as a condition for existence, and intimacy in relation to power. With solo exhibitions at institutions around the world including Tate Modern, London; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Berkeley Museum of Art, California; Tate Liverpool; the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam; Yvon Lambert, Paris and New York; Gagosian Gallery, New York; The Centre D'Arte Santa Monica, Barcelona, and at the Security and Intelligence Agency of the Netherlands, Magid has been recognized with awards such as the Basis Stipendium from Fonds Voor Beeldende Kunsten in the Netherlands and the Netherland-American Foundation Fellowship Fulbright Grant. She is also the author of four books including *Becoming Tarden*, a novel which opens with the phrase "the secret itself is much more beautiful than its revelation." In accordance with Magid's proclivity for intrigue, this book is as mysterious as the project it is associated with which included the book being edited, censored, contents confiscated and a one-time-only exhibition of the novel at Tate Modern from September 10th to January 3rd 2010.

David Maljković

Born 1973 in Rijeka, Croatia, David Maljković studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb and the Cite Internationale des Arts in Paris. Maljković has participated in numerous residencies including the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten, Amsterdam, KW Institute for Contemporary Art, studio program, Berlin, Kunstzeitraum, artist residency, Munich, International Residence at Recollets, Paris and IASPIS, Stockholm.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Secession*, Vienna, *Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia*, Madrid, *Kunstverein Hamburg* and *P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center*, New York. Significant recent group exhibitions include 'Latifa, Echakhch & David Maljković – Morgenlied' at Kunsthalle Basel, 'One Sixth of the Earth: Ecologies of the Image' at Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, 'Scene, Hold, Ballast: David Maljković and Lucy Skaer' at the Sculpture Center, New York and the 29th Bienal de São Paulo in 2010. In 2009 David Maljković was awarded the ARCO Prize for Young Artists in Madrid, followed by the International Contemporary Art Prize Diputació de Castelló in 2010.

Marina Naprushkina

Marina Naprushkina, born 1981 in Minsk, Belarus, studied at School of Art Glebow, Minsk and Staedelschule, Frankfurt. Recent exhibitions include 2011 General Plan, The Centro Cultural Montehermoso (SP), 2011 Scenario on Europe?, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig (D), 2011 A Complicated Relation, Kalmar Konstmuseum (SE), 2010 New Frankfurt Internationals, MMK Frankfurt / Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt a.M. (D), 2010 Is there any Hope for an Optimistic Art?, MMOMA, Moscow (RU), contributions to the 7th Berlin Biennale, 11th Istanbul Biennial (TR), Fokus Lodz Biennale (PL), 2nd Moscow International Biennale for Young Art (RU). Naprushkina works in different media (painting, video and installation) to develop critical examinations of power and the structure of the State, often using material acquired from contemporary Belarus.

A rich source is the propagandistic material delivered by governmental institutions. The obtained images and symbols become either slightly changed or inserted in a different context in order to reverse the original message. The artist's painstaking dissection of the visual and linguistic structure and research-based works demonstrate how state authority affects society, and transforms democracy into an illusion for those living under the persistent hegemony of the ruling network.

Naprushkina works consistently with issues surrounding art and politics—and the relationship between the two. Since 2007 Naprushkina runs the Office for Anti-propaganda.

Ahmet Ögüt

Born in Diyarbakir, Turkey in 1981, Ögüt currently resides in Amsterdam. Ögüt has been a guest artist at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten in Amsterdam in 2007-2008. Winner of the Volkskrant Art Prize 2010, Ögüt's recent solo exhibitions include *Modern Essays 1: Across the Slope*, SALT, Istanbul; *Once upon a time a clock-watcher during overtime hours*, Fondazione Giuliani, Rome; *Stones to Throw*, Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon; *Exploded City / MATRIX 231*, The MATRIX Program at the UC Berkeley Art Museum, *Ricochet # 4*, Museum Villa Stuck, Munich; *Speculative Social Fantasies*, Artspace Visual Arts Centre in Sydney; *Europas Zukunft 2010*, Museum of Contemporary Art (GfZK) Leipzig; *Mutual Issues*, *Inventive Acts*, Kunsthalle Basel. Selected group exhibitions include 12th Istanbul Biennial; 4th Moscow Biennial; 2011 Asian Art Biennial, Taichung; *Trickster Makes This World*, Nam June Paik Art Center; *Performa 09*, New York; 5th Berlin Biennial for Contemporary Art; *Stalking with Stories*, Apexart, New York and 9th International Istanbul Biennial. In 2009 he co-represented Turkey at the 53rd Venice Biennale together with Banu Cennetoğlu. Some of his upcoming group exhibitions are *Moving for Wards Counting Back Wards*, Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo (MUAC); *TRACK*, Ghent and *Skyscraper*, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (MCA)

Vesna Pavlović

Vesna Pavlović (Serbia/US) obtained her MFA degree in visual arts from Columbia University in 2007. She is an Assistant Professor of Art at Vanderbilt University where she teaches photography and digital media. She has exhibited widely, including solo shows at the Frist Center for the Visual Arts in Nashville, Museum of History of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, and the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento. She has been featured with a solo presentation at the Untitled, 12th Istanbul Biennial, 2011, and in group exhibitions at the Le Quartier Center for Contemporary Art in Quimper, France (From Closed World to the Infinite Universe), Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade (Conversations), Serbia, Tennis Palace Art Museum in Helsinki, Finland (Situated Self, Confused, Compassionate, Conflictual), Photographers' Gallery in London (Mediterranean, Between Reality and Utopia), Kettle's Yard in Cambridge, UK (Rear View Mirror), and FRAC Center for Contemporary Art in Dunkerque, France (De-Collecting). Vesna Pavlović is the recipient of the Robert Penn Warren Fellowship at Vanderbilt University, and Copenhagen Artist-in-Residence grant in 2011. Selected publications include: Office Taste, co-authored with Casey Smith, Belgrade, Skart, 2005 and An Idyll on the Beach, Belgrade, Samizdat, 2001.

Anahita Razami

Anahita Razmi (* 1981, Hamburg / Germany) is a video and performance artist. Her works often are dealing with issues concerning identity and gender, employing objects with a national and cultural significance or citing the work of high-profile artists. Working within the tradition of appropriation and re-enactment, Razmi detaches cultural symbols from their established meanings by employing them in unexpected situations and contexts. Within this, her work often builds up a relation to contemporary Iran. Recent solo and group shows include "Videonale 13", Kunstmuseum, Bonn, Germany (2011), "Division by Zero", Carbon12, Dubai (2011), "Iran Via Video Current", Thomas Erben Gallery, New York

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(2011), "Make - Believe - Remake", Kunstverein Friedrichshafen, Germany (2011), "The State: Social? Antisocial?", Traffic, Dubai (2011), "Leinen Los!", Kunstverein Hannover (2010), „Ikeallahu Akbar“, Interventionsraum, Stuttgart (2010), "Robberies", Kunstverein Das Weisse Haus, Wien (2010). In 2010 Razmi received a work stipend from the Edith Russ Site for Media Art, Germany for her work "The Paykan Project", in 2011 she was awarded "The Emdash Award" (Frieze Foundation, London) for her project "Roof Piece Tehran".

Wael Shawky

Wael Shawky is born in 1971 in Alexandria, Egypt, studied visual arts in Egypt and the US. Recent solos have taken place at Nottingham Contemporary (2011) and Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto (2010). Shawky has participated in Istanbul Biennale (2011) and (2005), The Santa Fe Biennial (2008) and the Biennial di Venezia (2003). Recent awards include the Schering Foundation Art Award (2011) and Abraaj Capital prize (2011). Shawky founded MASS Alexandria, educational space (2010)

Alexandre Singh

Alexandre Singh is a visual artist and writer based in New York. Singh who was born in Bordeaux, France to Indian and French parents was brought up in Manchester, UK before studying Fine Art at the University of Oxford, UK. Singh's work derives at once from traditions in literature, performance, photo-conceptualism and object-based installation art. Often starting with elaborate, publicly presented lectures that blend historical fact with narrative fiction, Singh's practice resists categorization. Taking in such diverse genres as writing, collage, installation and performance, Alexandre Singh's works are characterized by obsessive details and linkages. Drawing upon a dizzying constellation of themes and characters; culled as much from classical history and philosophy, as popular and consumer culture; Singh's universe is one of absurdist junctures and juxtapositions in which Adidas founder Adi Dassler

is re-imagined as Faust; Piero Manzoni creates a camera that eats the Universe; and Molière's send-ups of 17th century snobbery are translated to modern-day New York. If figures such as Molière, Lucian of Samosata, and even Woody Allen, appear as characters in Singh's world, it only seems natural, his works perpetuating a like spirit of wit, imagination and fantasy.

Alexandre Singh's work has been exhibited in venues throughout Europe and the United States including The Serpentine Gallery, London; New Museum, New York; PS-1 MoMA, New York ; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Palais de Tokyo, Paris and Sprüth Magers, Berlin. Singh's work is held by a number of private and public collections including MoMA, New York and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

Mounira Al Solh

Born in Beirut in 1978 Al Solh studied painting at the Lebanese University in Beirut (LB), and Fine Arts at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam (NL). In 2007/08, she was a resident artist at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. Her work is playfully conceptual, and includes videos, installations, magazines, drawings and performances, while it "queries the possibilities and impossibilities of roles accessible to contemporary artists, and their impact in a globalized consumer culture. The experience is – to say the least – schizophrenic. And thus comes in the voice-overs, role-play, invented personas (such as Bassam Ramlawi) and dressing-up, as characteristic of her practice. More often than not, Al-Solh does not provide an answer but keeps pushing questions." (By Nat Muller)

Thus, "gray humor" is recurrent in her work and while starting from the autobiographical she proposes specific socio-political and aesthetic questions, where the futile becomes the essence. She often reflects on specific artworks including them into her fictions and invented stories that are finally neither so fictional nor really invented.

Rinus Van de Velde

Rinus Van de Velde (°1983) lives and works in Antwerp. His practice mainly consists of drawings that hearken back to a personal archive of photographs derived from vulgarizing scientific magazines such as National Geographic, from biographies of artists and scientists... Lately, he often re-enacts found footage or even stages non-existent scenes in photographs, which he then uses as source material.

Van de Veldes overtly narrative drawings are confronted with texts in installations that tell a new and personal story. This fiction takes place in a mirror universe that is peopled by courageous alter egos and who serve as ideal representatives of the actual artist. At the same time, this drawn world is delineated by its own subjectivity: it can be nothing but a fantasy, a fiction, and so beyond its borders lies the great nothingness of the "real" world.

As such, Van de Velde moves through the borderland between system and unsystematic reality, between self and ideal, between the ordinal subdivisions of the I and the Other. His artistic practice is characterized not only by a personal desire for self-actualization, control and structure, but also "shows" us something; namely, that fiction and reality need and even imply each other.

PARALLEL EVENTS OF BUCHAREST BIENNALE 5

Simultaneous Parallel Events

POLIMATECA

May 9 - 31, 2012

Festival of Political Arts and Sciences, 1st edition 8, Spiru Haret st. & 24, Sf.Stefan st., Bucharest

For the detailed program:
www.fspub.unibuc.ro/polimateca

Politics ain't easy. It may not be rocket science but, in the right hands, it can achieve the status of art. Would you let it just to politicians? Our current politicians? Neither do we. And that's why we invented POLIMATECA. A chic party of food for thought on indecently hot topics, served with hors d'oeuvre and finely crafted collections for connoisseurs and debutants: Haute Culture (high class conferences with top thinkers from fields as diverse as architecture, history, medicine, economics or engineering), Prêt-à-penser (informal and slightly unconventional debates and roundtables), Handmade (events with and about civil society) and In the making (career workshops). For the young ones we have a School of political media and communication but if you are an artist, we invite you to exhibit in the 'Salon' of social and political cartoons, illustration and photography. Irrespective of age, as this is the Year of Solidarity across Generations. To mark it, we will open the festival with a basketball mini-championship between journalists, politicians from across the entire political spectrum and, of course, the hosts - the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Bucharest (FSPUB).

Have we mentioned that, during and after POLIMATECA, we also host a part of the Bucharest International Biennial of Contemporary Art? Interested? All events will take place on our premises (8, Spiru Haret st. and 24, Sf.Stefan st.) but more locations may be added.

POLIMATECA is a non partisan series of events that aims to raise awareness on the fact that political sciences do not necessarily produce politicians but train the mind in the spirit of freedom, argument discipline, curiosity, empathy and creativity, essential for crafting independent personalities capable to generate and lead successful personal and community projects. Currently at its first edition, POLIMATECA replaces a pilot project known as the Political Science Week that we initiated in 2011 to mark 20 years since our establishment as the first Romanian higher education institution created in opposition to the communist political education. Coordinator: lect. dr. Luciana Alexandra Ghica, +40 723 630 040).

CONTROL DAY OUT

June 1, 2012

Live concert, open air.

Arenele Romane, Cutitul de Argint 26 st., Bucharest

Powered by Control Club

With: Wild Beasts, Woodkid, The Shoes, O.Children

For details: www.control-club.ro

PRISPA

To Observe And To Be Observed

July 1 - July 31, 2012

Șoseaua Chitilei 284-286 (Colosseum Retail Park, in front of Leroy Merlin), Bucharest,

Opening day: July 1, 2012, 10:00

PRISPA is a student project that offers another perspective on sustainable living, while also aiming at the revival of the traditional Romanian village. The goal is to build a solar house that produces all the energy it needs for normal functioning and to use it not only as an architecture object, but also as a social instrument. Hence, the house has to meet the needs of an average couple (price, ease of living, adaptability, contemporary comfort), but it also has to keep a touch of the national identity, while creating the kind of space Romanians can psychologically understand and relate to. It is all about building an environmentally friendly home that uses technology without being threatening and also helps bring down some walls people are hiding behind when it comes to being part of a community. Overpopulated cities are overrated and the rural countryside does not provide what the modern society understands as comfort. PRISPA is an alternative, if not a first attempt at a solution. This new approach on living must be at least experienced so, in July, the team has a fully functional 1:1 scale prototype on display and open for visiting. We invite you to observe and to be observed! For more details: www.prispa.org

MARCEL IANCU (JANCO), UN VISIONNAIRE DE L'ART MODERNE

May 25 - June 22, 2012

SWAN Office & Technology Park, sos. Bucuresti Nord 15 - 23 (Pipera), Bucharest

Opening day: May 25, 2012, 18:00

A highly ethical art does not belong to one brain only, but to the whole world. If art is done only for one's own pleasure, one neither does justice to other people, nor to oneself." (Marcel Janco, preface to the catalogue of "Das Neue Leben" Exhibition (The New Life) Zurich, 1919). Marcel Janco's genius lies not only in his highly innovative work: reliefs, paintings, woodcuts, sculptures, and architecture, but in the courage reflected in his creations. The artist's work establishes him as a pioneer of modernism and his artistic experiments seem daring even today. 117 years have passed since Marcel Janco (Iancu) was born on May 24th, 1895 and 73 years since his last exhibition in Romania, in 1939, at the Ghica Hall together with Mihaela Pătrașcu. (The Ghica Building was the last Romanian construction by Marcel and Iuliu Iancu). For more details: www.colors-art.ro

MELTING by Judit Balko

May 25, 2012, 18.00

Free Press Square, Bucharest (Piata Presei Libere), Bucharest

Judit Balko is opening the second phase of Project 1990 with Melting.

"Project 1990" was initiated in January 2010 by Ioana Ciocan and highlights her desire to revitalize an area of Bucharest with a tumultuous history that has largely been ignored since the advent of democracy. Artists invited by Ciocan to exhibit through this initiative have succeeded over two years to create a new identity for the former location of Caragea's Lenin. All of the artworks exhibited have made critical artistic statements about Romanian sociopolitical life.

The relationship between totalitarianism and political pressure fostered works which tended to produce art that served and expressly supported the greater glory of the Communist/Ceausescu régime.

"Melting" brings up the recent past and how it is perceived by contemporaries. Too often, for those who lived in the communist era the communist brutality and the ugliness of the collective past is blurred by fond memories of a personal past. For those who were born after the collapse of the communist regime, the past is nothing else but a sad, closed chapter without connection to the country's past or future." (Judith Balko)

aMAZEinSOUND

June 3, 2012, 19.00 - 20.30

Opera Studio of the National University of Music

Stirbei Voda 33 st., Bucharest

aMAZEinSound is a one hour and a half concert/multimedia performance that includes some of the biggest names from the art music of the last century (Mauricio Kagel, Toru Takemitsu, Witold Lutoslawski, Luciano Berio and George Crumb), as well as some of the most prestigious Romanian contemporary composers (Dan Dediu, Liviu Dăncănu) and two of the most promising young voices in Romanian new music (Diana Rotaru, Mihai Murariu). SonoMania will guide you through the labyrinth of art music creating storied for each of these sound worlds with the help of Mihai Cucu (video projections) and Tiberiu Dinescu (photo collage).

For more details and program:

www.fb.com/SonoManiaEnsemble

ABOUT LIFE, HOUSES, PEOPLE AND OTHERS...

May 10 – June 10, 2012

Victoria Art Center

Calea Victoriei 12 C st., Bucharest

Opening day: May 10, 2012, 19:00

From a biological and social standpoint, man is a permanent consumer of goods, services

and information. In order to live one has to satisfy different needs that entail consuming related goods. Nature provides some necessary elements but human beings need to seize, alter and adapt them for consumption. Such changes lay the basis for what we call "production" and ensue from the human necessity to satisfy one's needs.

On the official website of the Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Protection a draft Government decision has been published to stipulate the guaranteed minimum gross wage. We have decided to make an experiment based on establishing the consumption range ensured by such an amount of compensation. Our project will comprise photography and video documentation of the life experience which is repeated over and over again for an unprivileged category of Romanian citizens.

For more details: www.artvictoria.ro

START POINT PRIZE

June 15 - July 15, 2012

Victoria Art Center

Calea Victoriei 12 C st., Bucharest

Opening day: June 15, 2012, 19:00

The StartPoint Prize exhibition hosted by Victoria Art Center presents a selection of the best projects executed by the BFA and MFA graduates of three art education institutions in Romania in 2012. During the exhibition period, the SP curatorial board will designate a winner for each school involved in this national round. The StartPoint Prize is in the tenth year of its existence and organizes a competition between the best art academies and universities in Europe. Thus the whole StartPoint project creates a unique and continuous documentation of the emerging art generation but also a wide network of new contacts and a platform for further opportunities to meet and cooperate.

For more details: www.artvictoria.ro

Whatever your background or experience level with regard to contemporary art, heritage or art history, BB5 educational programs allow you to engage, participate in the dialogue and broaden your outlook. Join us, together with your friends, family or students, for one of our conversational tours and more.

If you are planning a visit to BB5 with your school, university, community organization, company, museum association or any other group over 10 persons, then this is the place to be. Be sure to let us know in advance to organize for you a free guided tour. Based on your interests, age and background, we will create a personalized program to fit your group.

If you are visiting BB5 by yourself, or with a small group, please note that we have volunteers prepared to guide you in every venue. Just ask them for details.

Feel free to contact us for more information or with any requests.

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