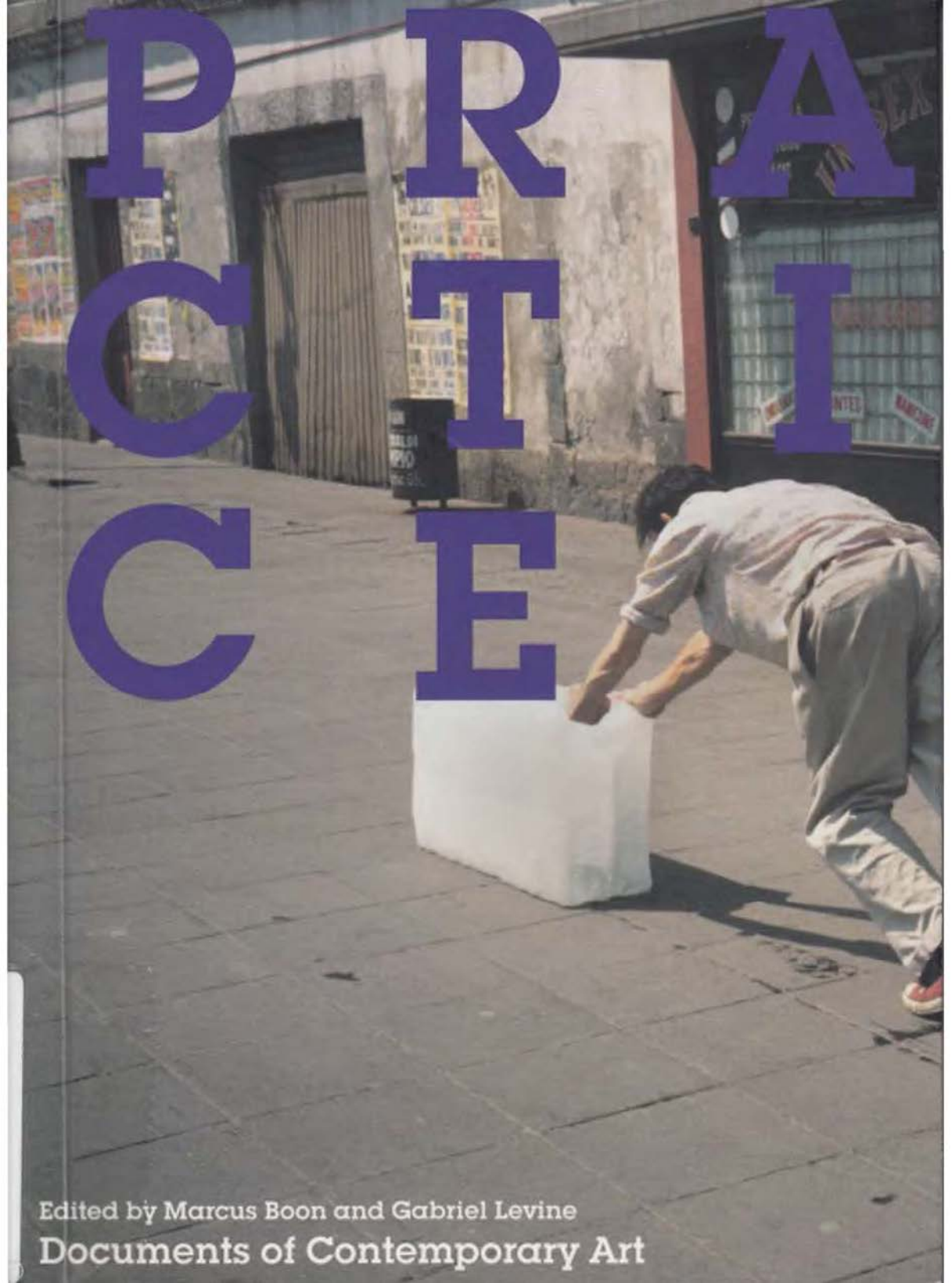


# PARTICIPATION



Edited by Marcus Boon and Gabriel Levine  
Documents of Contemporary Art



**Marina Abramovic//Kathy Acker//Theodor Adorno//  
Giorgio Agamben//Louis Althusser//Francis Alÿs//  
Ayreen Anastas//Rasheed Araeen//Arakawa//Hannah  
Arendt//Alain Badiou//Georges Bataille//Florene  
Belmore//Walter Benjamin//Lauren Berlant//Joseph  
Beuys//Jennifer Biddle//Gregg Bordowitz//Pierre  
Bourdieu//AA Bronson//Julia Bryan-Wilson//Judith  
Butler//Guido Cappello//Judy Chicago//Lygia Clark//  
Commission of Artistic Action of the Argentine CGT//  
Dalai Lama//Edit deAk//Michel de Certeau//Manthia  
Diawara//David T. Doris//Jennifer Doyle//Lee  
Edelman//Okwui Enwezor//Frantz Fanon//Michel  
Foucault//Mohandas Gandhi//Theaster Gates//  
Madeline Gins//Boris Groys//Stefano Harney//Saidiya  
Hartman//Max Horkheimer//Tehching Hsieh//Maulana  
Karenga//Mary Kelly//Julia Kristeva//Henri Lefebvre//  
Saba Mahmood//Herbert Marcuse//Karl Marx//Marcel  
Mauss//Gustav Metzger//Henri Michaux//Viktor  
Misiano//Linda M. Montano//Robert Morris//Fred  
Moten//Pauline Oliveros//Yoko Ono//Andrea Phillips//  
Adrian Piper//Paul B. Preciado//Raivo Puusemp//Lane  
Relyea//Gerhard Richter//Tim Rollins//Suely Rolnik//  
Ed Sanders//Miriam Schapiro//Carolee Schneemann//  
Aliza Shvarts//Léopold Sédar Senghor//Shiraga Kazuo//  
Greg Sholette//Situationist International//Peter  
Sloterdijk//Jonas Staal//Stelarc//Isabelle Stengers//  
Blake Stimson//Pablo Suárez//Fiona Tan//Min Tanaka//  
Michael Taussig//Nadezhda Tolokonnikova//Sergei  
Tret'akov//Cecilia Vicuña//Simone Weil//Ludwig  
Wittgenstein//Winnie Won Yin Wong**

**Practice**

**Whitechapel Gallery  
London  
The MIT Press  
Cambridge, Massachusetts**

**Edited by Marcus Boon and Gabriel Levine**



**P R A  
C T I  
C E**

**Documents of Contemporary Art**

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Whitechapel Gallery



## Documents of Contemporary Art

In recent decades artists have progressively expanded the boundaries of art as they have sought to engage with an increasingly pluralistic environment. Teaching, curating and understanding of art and visual culture are likewise no longer grounded in traditional aesthetics but centred on significant ideas, topics and themes ranging from the everyday to the uncanny, the psychoanalytical to the political.

The Documents of Contemporary Art series emerges from this context. Each volume focuses on a specific subject or body of writing that has been of key influence in contemporary art internationally. Edited and introduced by a scholar, artist, critic or curator, each of these source books provides access to a plurality of voices and perspectives defining a significant theme or tendency.

For over a century the Whitechapel Gallery has offered a public platform for art and ideas. In the same spirit, each guest editor represents a distinct yet diverse approach – rather than one institutional position or school of thought – and has conceived each volume to address not only a professional audience but all interested readers.

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SENSITIVITY TO THE ZEITGEIST  
DON'T COME WITH A COLLEGE  
DIPLOMA OR LIVE IN AN  
ADMINISTRATOR'S BRIEFCASE.  
YOU NEED TO KNOW WHICH WAY  
TO POINT THE MAP

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## Marcus Boon and Gabriel Levine

### Introduction//The Promise of Practice

In the early twenty-first century, few words crop up in so many contexts – from art to science to theory to politics to everyday life – as 'practice'. Scientists, lawyers, athletes, musicians, artists and yogis all practice, while rarely pausing to reflect on what this practising means. In politics, practice (a.k.a. 'praxis') is in crisis, caught between forms of mass struggle, neoliberal market-driven individualism, and social movements anchored in the collective practice of daily life. Yet in all of these contexts, the layers and histories of 'practice' are rarely addressed. What do people talk about when they talk about practice? Is everything a practice – and what are we (diverse humans and non-humans around the planet) practising for?

Peter Sloterdijk defines practice as 'any operation that provides or improves the actor's qualification for the next performance of the same operation'.<sup>1</sup> With its roots in the Greek *prattein* ('to act' or 'to do'), practice has soaked up further connotations: from political transformation (revolutionary praxis), to professional activity (the practice of law or medicine), to discipline, rehearsal or training (zen practice, band or basketball practice). Talk of practice in contemporary art tends to blend all of these meanings, with 'practice' signifying the shift away from the artwork or medium, and toward open-ended actions, series, processes and projects. From 'contemporary practice' to 'social practice' to 'practice-based research', making art no longer seems to describe adequately the vocation of artists. Catalogue texts describe an artist's 'practice' rather than artworks; art students learn to speak of 'my practice' as they work to build their portfolios and their brands. Art today has become enmeshed with practice. But what is practice? Practice has often been opposed to theory, but the use of the term 'practice' in the world of art is often highly abstract and intellectualized. If art has become practice, what does this have to do with thinking, with making, with action, with transformation, with discipline, with repetition, with training, with habit and with performance?

To art critics such as Roberta Smith and Peter Schjeldahl, the term 'practice' condenses everything wrong with the contemporary art world.<sup>2</sup> It suggests that artists have become a safely credentialed and self-regulating body of practitioners, like doctors, lawyers, dentists or therapists. (Indeed, with MFA and 'practice-based' PhD programmes offering professional connections and bona fides, this is not far from the case.) Critics also see the term as a dangerous abstraction: talking about 'an artist's practice' leaves behind the messiness of materials and

the autonomy of artworks, and opens into a blur of generalized 'doing', where art as process or intentional state becomes more important than the result. Works of art, at least in the modern European imagination, were thought to jut out of the state of things and to make singular demands on both the producer and the viewer. Some philosophers even thought that art could oppose the social order with a utopian promise or a critical stance. Now, instead of the artwork as singular entity or art as an oppositional force, we are left with a haze of activity: 'a nebula named "practice"'.<sup>3</sup> Yet, much as some critics would like it, the haze of practice can't simply be waved away.

In our view, the 'practical turn' crystallizes profound changes in how art has been defined, made and received, as well as transformations in the economic and political spheres.<sup>4</sup> It is tied to the radical social and political movements of the twentieth century, and equally to the economic order of precarity and immaterial labour established after their repression and dispersal. It tracks the mutation of art that has accompanied this political-economic trajectory – a shift from the work of art to art-as-practice, variously defined as the 'dematerialization of the art object', the shift 'from medium to social practice', and the emergence of the 'post-medium condition'.<sup>5</sup> It informs many of the key tropes of contemporary art, from relational aesthetics to participation, to site specificity, to institutional critique, to interdisciplinarity as such. Moreover, art-as-practice is marked by the reception and transformation of non-Western religious and philosophical traditions such as Buddhism in the West – a strange history of desire and misunderstanding that is rarely given the consideration it deserves. Together, these influences make practice a contradictory creature. As the writings in this book demonstrate, art-as-practice can take the form of activities as diverse as meditation, social revolution, forensic analysis, professional service-provision, chess and ritual healing. In so doing, it can lead beyond the boundaries of art, into experimental forms of therapy, politics or religion. This, we suggest, is the ambiguous promise of practice. It offers a way out of the (end) game of art, and a proposal for other frameworks in which thinking, making and doing can be valued.

The word practice (*praxis* in Greek or German; *pratique* in French, etc.) can be traced back to the philosophy of Aristotle. For Aristotle, *praxis* meant an action that is valuable in itself, in contrast to those actions whose goal is making or creation (*poiesis*). The Greek *praxis* had an ethical dimension, concerned with self-shaping or a decision as to how to live, as well as a political dimension, concerned with the form in which one lived with other people. Praxis underwent a series of reconfigurations as it was taken up by the Romans, by Christian and Islamic scholars, and in modernity by Kant, Marx and others, who reframed the problem of ethical action through new ways of thinking the relation of individual

to collective, and of action as the articulation of human freedom through the transformation of material conditions.<sup>6</sup> We can view the history of art over the last hundred years as a kind of seething, restless struggle with this reconfigured imperative to practice. The ethical mandate that art has taken on via its confrontation with existing material conditions has resulted in a splintering of art into more and more diverse objects, events and engagements – with the paradoxical result that basically anything that could be considered a practice might be considered art. Consequently, we find ourselves at an impasse in which art – as practice – oscillates between a reduction to ethics on the one hand, and an infinite proliferation of seemingly random repetitive actions on the other. In this sense, many forms of contemporary art continue to instantiate aspects of Aristotle's thought, knowingly or not. But can we not also see the historical frameworks which frame our sense of practice as a potential trap, in which we are doomed to repeat ourselves so long as we remain unaware of them? If so, how might we think practice ... otherwise?

In political terms, art-as-practice emerges out of the movements which demanded that social life be transformed through what Karl Marx called 'revolutionary praxis'. Marx invested the Greek and German word for practice with a new meaning of collective transformative worldly action, a meaning that would be amplified by his successors.<sup>7</sup> While the Russian Revolution of 1917 showed that such a praxis was indeed possible, the actual praxis of a post-revolutionary society was contradictory and even catastrophic. It was disenchantment with the trajectory of Soviet society that led to Henri Lefebvre's refocusing of Marxist theory and practice on the problem of the transformation of everyday life, a problem that remained intractable in both post-revolutionary and consumer-capitalist settings. At the same time, Mao Zedong's 1937 essay 'On Practice', especially as taken up by the various 'Maoist' movements of the 1960s and 1970s, again emphasized the measure of practice's success according to its ability to transform reality in the form of existing material conditions.<sup>8</sup> After World War II, global anti-imperialist struggles, from Africa to Asia to the Middle East, along with internal anti-colonial struggles by Black and Indigenous people, movements of students and workers from the New Left to Autonomia, feminist groups and LGBTQ activists, all redefined the project of human emancipation and its praxis.

Swept up in these radical movements, postwar artists and theorists took up the mantle of previous avant-gardes, declaring that art in the revolution should serve neither as cheerleading propaganda nor as the autonomous preserve of freedom, but as the living expression of the collective transformation of the world. Some of the writings from the 1950s through the 1970s gathered here articulate a vision of art-as-praxis. This could involve a revival of Indigenous pre-



colonial art practices, as Léopold Senghor suggests, or re forging these practices entirely in the crucible of anti-colonial struggle, as Frantz Fanon observed during the Algerian revolution. It could mean enacting new forms of aesthetic collectivity: from ludic efforts to levitate the US Pentagon to experiments in communal living and working, like the feminist Womanhouse collective and countless others. Praxis, for artists drawn into the radical current of the times, meant the reformulation of life and art into a new fusion of critical thought, creative production and political action. Crucially, the collective praxis of artists was not worked out in isolation, but was part of a general social struggle against the capitalist class, imperialism, war, racism and the subjugation of women and minority groups. This was the case even for art movements without explicitly revolutionary goals, such as Gutai in Japan, which sought a liberating fusion of art and life against the horrors of war and the threat of nuclear annihilation.

This revolutionary political and aesthetic drive came under increasing pressure in the late 1970s, with the emerging contradictions of decolonization movements, the debacle of the Cultural Revolution in China, the failure of the Maoist model of vanguardist praxis, and the implosion and violent repression of radical political groups. The year 1977, Franco 'Bifo' Berardi argues, was a turning point: he calls it 'the death of the future', the end of a global progressive vision of revolutionary change.<sup>9</sup> The punk cry 'no future' sounded the collapse of the faith in what Marx called 'practical-critical activity' to transform the world. And as the fortunes of collective practice waned, a vision of individual practice was on the rise, best represented by the 'praxeology' of the Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises, for whom individual human actions, which constitute an existential horizon, are aggregated by the invisible hand of the free market.<sup>10</sup> The years of Reagan and Thatcher marked a new era of neoliberal hegemony, which in many ways continues to the present day.

With the eclipse of theories of revolutionary praxis in these years came a multiplication of theories of practice. In France alone, social theorists chalked up the failure of revolution to ingrained bodily habits (Pierre Bourdieu's *The Logic of Practice*, 1980), proposed a vision of localized tactical resistance (Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 1980), or offered a model of individualized asceticism and experimentation (Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*, volumes 2 and 3, 1984).<sup>11</sup> Artists' projects and texts from around 1980, documented in this book, track the turn to practice beyond the frame of art. Raivo Puusemp's *Dissolution of Rosendale, NY* folds art and politics into the generalized field of practice: as a clandestine art project, Puusemp ran for and was elected Mayor of the village of Rosendale and then presided over that municipal entity's formal dissolution. Lygia Clark's 'Structuring the Self' charts her exit from art into the border practice of art therapy, in which she used

sculptural objects to produce catharsis in individual clients. Most iconically, Tehching Hsieh's *One Year Performances* take living itself as both an artwork and an art practice, generating rules for an ascetic game and then following those protocols to their ultimate limits. All three of these artists found an exit into the border space of practice, even if proposals and documentation from their projects would later be welcomed back into the fold of art. All three, not incidentally, would go on to give up art entirely, while continuing to 'practise' in singular ways.

The work of these and many other artists suggests that the notion of practice in the sphere of art has been thoroughly transformed over the past century. This change can be clearly seen in the transformation of the artist's studio, which has long existed as what Michel de Certeau calls 'a practised place'.<sup>12</sup> As the editors of *The Studio Reader* note, the studio in the modern European imagination has stood as a romanticized and masculinized zone of skilled repetition and production, in which the structured iteration of craft practices met the brooding of a solitary 'genius'.<sup>13</sup> Practice, in this tradition, meant both social withdrawal and a process of apprenticeship in a medium and a set of techniques.<sup>14</sup> Beginning with Marcel Duchamp – whom Robert Morris calls 'the prototype of the artist without a practice and therefore without a craft' – another version of practice came to the fore, in which the production of artworks through skilled repetition gave way to a continuous process carried out through self-generated rules and protocols (what Groys calls a 'project'). Practice also left the studio: in the 'social sculpture' of Joseph Beuys or the 'maintenance art' of Mierle Laderman Ukeles, along with many other artists of the 1960s and 1970s, practice no longer took place in seclusion, but was diffused throughout the social body. For some artists, the studio was dispensed with in favour of a mobile or site-specific approach, while for others, including Hsieh after his exit from art-making, it became a space not for the creation of works but for reflection without production.<sup>15</sup> Conceptualism, deskilling and delegated labour further divorced practice from its base in studio craft. This new regime of practice influenced artists who continued to engage in skilled studio production, from printmaking and sculpture to video and digital media. Even painting became a 'practice'. Of course, this was not news to artists who practised outside the studio, like the train-bombing graffiti artists described by Rammellzee, who were engaged in an unceasing practical-tactical war in the subways, rail yards and underpasses of the post-industrial city. Or the outsider artists, craftspeople, the folk and vernacular experimenters, and many others, who continue to pursue their practices beyond or at the margins of the art market.

Art's shift from work to practice also mirrors the economic transformations that began in the 1970s in Europe and North America and soon spread across the globe. Industries began to move offshore and out of major cities in search of



cheaper labour while simultaneously becoming increasingly automated; advanced economic sectors focused more on the provision of services – notably finance, cultural industries and technological innovation. If 'art practice' sounds like a professional service, as some critics lament, this reflects the wider transition to a service economy, in which the grime and toil of production increasingly happens elsewhere, in special economic zones or in poor and poisoned communities. The practical turn reflects the increasing precarity of labour, in which artists living from gig to gig share the precarious state, if not the brutal conditions, of pieceworkers in global supply chains, as discussed here by Winnie Won Yin Wong. Faced with the precariousness of work in the 'knowledge-based polis', artists become solo entrepreneurs, with professional practice and branding as one way to get a foothold.<sup>16</sup> If you go to the right school and meet the right people, you might find your way out of the vortex of art's 'dark matter', as Greg Sholette calls it, the churning well of amateur and professional art production that never makes it into the pages of *Artforum*.<sup>17</sup> Practice, in the service economy, takes on a neoliberal, bootstrapping connotation: no artist is going to make it without a hustle. Yet the recognition that art practice provides a service can also radicalize artists and lead them to take collective action. In projects like Ukeles' work with the New York Department of Sanitation, Andrea Fraser and Helmut Draxler's *Services*, collectives like Temporary Services out of Chicago, and organizations like the Art Workers' Coalition and the Gulf Labor Artist Coalition, artists have embraced art-as-practice not as neoliberal entrepreneurialism, but as an invitation to work collectively as 'art workers' in solidarity with other workers.<sup>18</sup> If this version of practice lacks the ambitions of revolutionary praxis, it does open up alliances between artists and other precarious practitioners in the knowledge economy.

Entangled with both revolutionary praxis and neoliberal practices of self-care is a spiritual, religious or psychological framing of practice, which looms over our topic. At stake in this framing is the transformation of subjectivity. It remains a mostly unwritten chapter in the genealogy of contemporary art – and in the genealogy of the concept of practice, whose European history would have to be compared with the histories of the Sanskrit *sadhana*, or the Chinese *wu-wei* that so fascinated Roland Barthes, along with a multiplicity of philosophical traditions around the world. Such traditions, as Brazilian anthropologist Viveiros de Castro has pointed out, have potentially different ontological frameworks and different ways of thinking about practice compared to those emerging, consciously or not, from Aristotle. And different ways of situating subject and object – even if, as anthropologist Michael Taussig has shown, the 'alterity' of the figure of the shaman has historically often been itself the product of a colonial or imperial presentation of the native Other. Still, in an anthropology that took

aesthetic practice seriously, 'art', with its emphasis on the visual, the object, distance and disinterested judgement, would be but one set of histories, locations or sites of study. And indeed, since at least Nietzsche, who saw art as springing from the Dionysian folk forms of performance, carnival, *ekstasis* and ritual, such a model of aesthetic practice has been a part of European modernity – whether existing as part of the official history of art, or more ambiguously, as counter-culture or subaltern practice.

In giving a full account of the practices of the avant-gardes, we would take note of the various practices of self-care, therapy, sociality and collectivity that have emerged from over a century of engagement with various traditional Asian forms, and from the various modernizations and radicalizations of Asian traditions emerging out of anticolonial struggle, as evidenced by such diverse figures as Gandhi, Thich Nhat Hanh and the Dalai Lama. We would also have to think about what Cedric Robinson calls the Black radical tradition, and the various forms of transformative practice that mark the history of the Black Atlantic, from the birth of the Blues, through the work of the Negritude group, to the Five Elements of contemporary hip hop.<sup>19</sup> We would have to consider the ways in which settler colonialism operates not only through genocide and dispossession but through the suppression, deformation and reification of Indigenous practices, and the ways in which Indigenous peoples continue to reinvent and transform these practices. We would have to think about the history of psychoanalysis and its impact on the aesthetic and political programmes of both the Surrealists and the Frankfurt School, as well as the shift in the 1950s to somatic and gestalt-based therapies, with their absorption of meditation techniques, at places like Esalen in California, which opened up a much broader problematic of the nature of psychophysiological basis of aesthetic practice. The impact of psychoactive drugs, which Aldous Huxley announced in his 1954 book *The Doors of Perception* as superseding art by transforming our phenomenological apprehension of everyday life itself into intense aesthetic-religious experience, should also not be overlooked. In all of these cases, practice comes to the fore as a way of asserting some kind of transformation of the subject, however defined, in ways that attempt to go beyond neoliberal notions of self-care, even as they are often recouped as such.

We can go further, though. If practice is a key term today, it is because it offers a way of tracking and recognizing the multitude of forms of life on earth, always there but long suppressed by white heteropatriarchal colonialism, in which Eurocentric accounts of the history of art have been and continue to be complicit. 'Practice' in the art world may be considered suspect precisely because it is the space or vector by which some such forms of life are today able provisionally to legitimate themselves. Jennifer Biddle and Florene Belmore's texts in this volume

are exemplary in this regard. Art provides a location in which a repressed or ignored form of life can manifest – but it is by no means clear that this form of life ‘belongs’ to the history of art, or that associating this form of life with art does not in some ways repeat a colonizing strategy aimed at domesticating and ultimately negating Indigenous practices. Nevertheless, the transformation of what art means enacted by including or creating space for Indigenous practices, along with many other marginalized or forgotten practices, could be salutary. Art has become, might be, has to be a space for ‘the revaluation of all values’, in Nietzsche’s words. And to practise is nothing if not to value.

Moving through the expanse of ‘the planet of the practising’, in Sloterdijk’s phrase, the four sections of this book pursue distinct but related pathways, each establishing its own constellation of artists and thinkers. We begin, in ‘Thinking, Making and Doing’, by exploring Aristotle’s foundational demarcation of *theoria* (thinking), *praxis* (acting) and *poiesis* (making), and tracking art’s shift between and beyond these divisions. This section opens by juxtaposing three texts from the mid 1950s that refigure those categories, whether in politics (Arendt’s definition of the *vita activa*) or art (Gutai’s blurring of the distinctions between making and acting, as well as art and life) or their relationship (Senghor’s text on the decolonization of aesthetics). The remainder of this section tracks the expansion of ‘practice’ as it subsumes distinctions between forms and spheres of activity, in art, criticism and philosophy from the 1960s onward. Themes include the shift from medium to practice (Beuys), the expansion of art practice beyond Eurocentric aesthetic categories (Ono, Belmore), and the exit from art-making in favour of relational practice (Clark and Rolnik, Puusemp). A selection of philosophical texts from Horkheimer and Adorno, Althusser and Agamben surmise an expanded definition of ‘practice’ alongside questions of subjectivity, agency, production and virtuosity. Critical writings highlight the ambiguities of the shift from work or medium to practice, linking it to the neoliberal network society (Relyea), or exploring its global artistic and political-economic consequences (Wong).

Section two, ‘Collective Action’, branches off from Marx’s reformulation of Aristotelian *praxis*, redefined as a collective ‘critical-practical’ transformation of the world. It begins with several examples from the historical avant-gardes of the demand that art must participate in the revolution of social relations and everyday life – Tret’iakov’s analysis of what art can be in post-revolutionary Soviet society, and Benjamin’s famous meditation on the politics of Surrealism. It then turns to a series of political-artistic experiments in ‘radical practice’ in the global 1960s, including the attempted levitation of the Pentagon, the *Tucumán Arde* project, the Black Arts movement, and collective experiments in feminist art practice. It explores the ambiguities of the lineage stretching from the historical

avant-gardes to contemporary 'social practice'. Meanwhile, writings on the IRWIN collective and by Blake Stimson and Greg Sholette consider counter-institutions in the post-cold war era, which offer new figures of community and activist strategies in an age of 'enterprise culture'. The section closes with Moten and Harney's anguished reflection on the death in 2014 of eighteen-year old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and in the face of continuing genocide and pervasive racism, the affirmation of blackness as what they elsewhere call an 'ongoing experiment with the informal' at the most basic level of collective life.<sup>20</sup>

Section three, 'Forms of Repetition', explores several interrelated genealogies of practice conceived in terms of the organization and framing of a repetitive action, whether considered as habit, method, rule, rehearsal, training, technique, game or project. This way of thinking about repetitive action was generalized in early twentieth-century anthropology and sociology as the basis of societal organization and individual behaviour – here in the form of Marcel Mauss's 'techniques of the body'. It is also at the core of Wittgenstein's late work on language games, which he discusses in terms of practice. Duchamp's fascination with chess stands for us as a figure of the possibility, always on the horizon in the last one hundred years, of exiting art into other forms of repetition. Nevertheless, 'art' remains one of the names by which we index repetitive action. And the art of art, like the art of archery, requires a commitment to practice (Tan and Chobo). In this section we explore the ways in which practice in the sense of repetitive action inhabits a flexible territory where a non-art practice becomes art (Biddle on Indigenous Australian contemporary art), and where a practice emerging out of art is reframed as therapy (Linda Montano), meditation (Oliveros), or a new kind of science (Rammellzee's cosmopolitical graffiti). As contrasting writings by Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau and Saidiya Hartman show, there are real intellectual and political stakes in putting forward a 'theory of practice' that navigates between structure and agency. Butler, Guattari and Stengers all try in various ways to reconcile versions of assemblage theory as the liberatory practice of experimenting with repetition in order to create new social, aesthetic and political forms, with the awareness of historical-material structures that condition such experiments. Indeed, this defines Butler's key notion of 'performativity' and the radical way it has been taken up by Preciado in his self-experimentation with testosterone, as well as Arakawa and Gins' utopian experiment in non-mortality through architectural strategies of iterative change.

The final section, 'Discipline(s)', argues the centrality, for both art and politics, of practices that create forms of life that exist somewhere between order and disorder – or sovereignty and non-sovereignty, as these terms appear in the recent dialogues between Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman. Peter Sloterdijk



recently coined the term 'anthropotechnics' to describe this mode of practice, using the word to encompass religious, athletic, aesthetico-political and ludic practices. But against Sloterdijk's focus on the generation of Nietzschean overmen (Michaux's embattled mescaline drawings; Stelarc's prostheses), our selections also affirm exposure to abjection, death (Acker, Shvarts) and limit states (Abramovic, Taussig, Athey) as the object of practice. With the French surrealist Georges Bataille, or Gerhard Richter's reflections on his painting practice, what is important is modes of exposure to an ontological emptiness or nothingness. This work is given a political meaning in Gandhi's affirmation of non-violence as a discipline, Simone Weil's discussion of 'decreation', or Jonas Staal's work on 'the art of the stateless state'. It can also be understood as being at the core of spiritual practices in a broader sense, as we learn from Louwrien Wijers' 1982 interview with the Dalai Lama, Saba Mahmood's work on women and Islam, and AA Bronson's queer shamanism. Foucault's late work on 'the care of the self' also provides a parallel to the life-works of Tehching Hsieh, Francis Alÿs's walking pieces, and Kader Attia's celebrated Repair project, suspended as they are between notions of sovereignty and non-sovereignty.

Recognizing aesthetics to be a part of all human activities, we do not seek to set out what modes of practice can be validated through a theory or genealogy of art, but rather to try to understand what it might mean to speak of art in an emerging age of practice qua practice. In this age, as Rolnik suggests in her brilliant reading of Lygia Clark's untimely therapeutic works, we are continually on a frontier in which the auto-consistency of practices must be established anew, and always in relation to the specific local, global and cosmic elements by which they are constituted. Within this expanded field, art could constitute a plane of immanence (in Deleuze and Guattari's phrase): a site for practical experimentation. There would be no obligation to remain on that site – in fact one might say that there was an obligation to move. Against the possessive individualism of 'my practice', art in the age of practice would take up the challenge of 'praxis', on both individual and collective levels. This could mean moving beyond art into 'ecoaesthetics', as Rasheed Araeen calls it, where the resources of art are put to work in the regeneration of the earth. It could mean setting up in the border-space where art meets other practices as part of 'an ecology of practices' (Stengers), rejecting the economic and political imperatives that would judge one practice by the standards of another. Practice would be pragmatic and pluralist, in the broadest sense of those words, and directly involved in the creation and sustaining of diverse forms of life.

1 Peter Sloterdijk, *You Must Change Your Life: On Anthropotechnics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013)

2 For a classic study of expertise and 'deliberate practice', see K. Anders Ericsson et al., 'The Role

- of Deliberate Practice in the Acquisition of Expert Performance', *Psychological Review*, vol. 100, no. 3 (1993) 363–406.
- 2 Peter Schjeldahl, 'Get With It: The Whitney Biennial', *The New Yorker* (17 March 2014) 76; Roberta Smith, 'What We Talk about When We Talk about Art', *New York Times* (23 December 2007) 237.
  - 3 Dieter Roelstraete, '(Jena Revisited) Ten Tentative Tenets', *e-flux Journal*, no. 16 (May 2010). ([www.e-flux.com](http://www.e-flux.com))
  - 4 A similar 'turn' has taken place in social theory: see Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr Cetina and Eike von Savigny, eds, *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).
  - 5 See Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (1973) (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997); Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) 158–64; Rosalind E. Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999).
  - 6 See Nikolaus Lohkowitz, *Theory and Practice: History of a Concept from Aristotle to Marx* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967); Étienne Balibar, Barbara Cassin and Sandra Laugier, 'Praxis', in Barbara Cassin, Steven Rendall and Emily S. Apter, eds, *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014) 820–32.
  - 7 Gerard Bensussan and Solange Mercier-Josa, 'Praxis', in *Dictionnaire critique du Marxisme*, ed. Georges Labica and Gerard Bensussan (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982) 908–12.
  - 8 Mao Zedong, *On Practice and Contradiction*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (London and New York: Verso, 2007).
  - 9 Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, *After the Future*, ed. Gary Genosko and Nicholas Thoburn (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2011).
  - 10 Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949).
  - 11 See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984); Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality Volume 2*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985); Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality Volume 3*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).
  - 12 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, op. cit., 114, quoted in Michelle Grabner's introduction to *The Studio Reader: On the Space of Artists*, ed. Grabner and Mary Jane Jacob (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010) 5.
  - 13 See also Caroline A. Jones, *The Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
  - 14 On skilled apprenticeship in social practices, from architectural drawing to Jamaican sound systems, see Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Julian Henriques, *Sonic Bodies: Reggae Sound Systems, Performance Techniques and Ways of Knowing* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011).
  - 15 Barry Schwabsky, 'The Symbolic Studio', in *The Studio Reader*, op. cit., 88–96.

16. John Holert, 'Art in the Knowledge-based Polis', *e-flux Journal*, no. 3 (February 2009). ([www.e-flux.com](http://www.e-flux.com))
17. Greg Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 2011).
18. Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009). See also Lucy R. Lippard, 'The Art Workers' Coalition: Not a History', *Studio International* (November 1970), extract reprinted in Friederike Nijler, ed., *Work, Documents of Contemporary Art* (London: Whitechapel Gallery/Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2017); and Andrea Fraser, 'How to Provide an Artistic Service: An Introduction' (1994), in *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser*, ed. Alexander Alberro (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2005).
19. Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).
20. 'In the undercommons of the social reproductive realm the means, which is to say the planners, are still part of the plan. And the plan is to invent the means in a common experiment launched from any kitchen, any back porch, any basement, any hall, any park bench, any improvised party, every night. This ongoing experiment with the informal, carried out by and on the means of social reproduction, as the to come of the forms of life, is what we mean by planning; planning in the undercommons is not an activity, not fishing or dancing or teaching or loving, but the mindless experiment with the futural presence of the forms of life that make such activities possible.' Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe/New York/Port Watson: Minor Compositions, 2013) 74–5.



I think it is possible to see a  
chair as it is. But when you  
burn the chair, you suddenly  
realize that the chair in  
your head did not burn or  
disappear

## **THINKING, MAKING AND DOING**

**Shiraga Kazuo**

**The Baby and Milk, or Proof of Life//1956**

Why does art exist? Certain kinds of art make the world more beautiful and dazzle people. Lately in the adult world, however, art is seen as the proof of life.

A baby cries when she needs milk. This signals that the baby is alive, because she will die without milk.

So if you want to do something, that means you are alive. If you do it, then that proves that you are alive ...

Speaking of doing what you want to do, there is one method you can always count on that uses only what you have in front of you. Think hard.

You can do many things when you are given a piece of paper or a box. What do you do if you don't have crayons or paint? You can make a hole in the paper, tear it, or stick a torn-off piece into a hole you make. You may find it more beautiful than you expected. It may even seem to be proof that you have been alive.

Let's look at our faces and compare them. They're all different. In the same way, what you want to do or what you think up is different for everybody. If you do what you come up with yourself, it will naturally express your feelings at the time ... This method is different [from the usual way of making art]. Everyone does it enthusiastically, once she gets started. And when I see you work this way, I can certainly tell that you are alive. So I encourage you to turn what you want to do and what you think up into your work of art.

Shiraga Kazuo, extract from 'Tobikiri omoshiroi koto', *Kirin* (July 1956) 1; trans. Ming Tiampo. 'The Baby and Milk, or Proof of Life', in Ming Tiampo and Alexandra Munroe, eds, *Gutai: Splendid Playground* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2013) 277.

## Léopold Sédar Senghor

### The General Nature of African Art//1956

Because they are functional and collective, African literature and art are *committed*. They commit the *person*, not just the individual, through and in the community, in the sense that they are techniques of *essentialization*. They commit him in a future which then becomes present for him, an integral part of himself. This is why an African work of art is not, as has often been asserted, the copy of an archetype that has been repeated thousands of times. Of course, there are a number of *subjects*, each expressing one of the vital forces. But what is striking is the variety of execution according to personal temperament and circumstances. Again, the poet-artisan is in a concrete situation and he commits not only himself but his race, his geography, his history as well. He uses the materials that are at hand and the everyday things which make up the texture of his life, rejecting the anecdotal, for this does not commit because it is without *significance*. The painter or sculptor will at times use instruments and materials imported from Europe. He will not balk at representing the machine, the pride of the Western world. He will even give an ancestral spirit European clothes. In the new society, shaped by the spirit of the 'colonial pact', the storyteller will give money its proper and pre-eminent place as the incarnation of Evil. Because he is committed, the artisan-poet is not concerned to make a work for eternity. The work of art is perishable. The style and the spirit are preserved, but the old work is quickly replaced and realized anew as soon as it becomes antiquated or is destroyed. Thus in Africa, art for art's sake does not exist. All art is social. The minstrel who sings the noble into battle gives him strength and shares his victory. When he intones the deeds of a legendary hero, he is writing the history of his people with his tongue, restoring to them the divine profundity of the myth. And so down to the fables which, beyond the laughter and the tears, serve for our instruction. Through the dialectic which they express, they become essential factors in the social equilibrium: under the forms of the Lion, the Elephant, the Hyena, the Crocodile, the Hare and the Old Woman, we read plainly with our ears of our social structures and our passions, the good as well as the bad. Sometimes it is refusal in the face of the Great Ones, Right against brute force, sometimes acquiescence in the order of the universe, whether of the ancestors or of God. And, as Wolof stories end: 'And so the story went and jumped into the sea. The one who smells it first will go to paradise.' [...]

Léopold Sédar Senghor, extract from 'L'Esprit de la civilisation ou les lois de la culture négro-

africaine' (1956); trans. John Reed and Clive Week, 'The General Nature of African Art', in Reed and Week, eds. *Léopold Sédar Senghor: Prose and Poetry* (London, Nairobi, Ibadan, Accra: Oxford University Press, 1965) 81–2.

## **Hannah Arendt**

### **Action//1958**

[...] For in every action what is primarily intended by the doer, whether he acts from natural necessity or out of free will, is the disclosure of his own image. Hence it comes about that every doer, in so far as he does, takes delight in doing; since everything that desires its own being, and since in action the being of the doer is somehow intensified, delight necessarily follows ... Thus, nothing acts unless [by acting] it makes patent its latent self.

– Dante

[...] With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance. This insertion is not forced upon us by necessity, like labour, and it is not prompted by utility, like work. It may be stimulated by the presence of others whose company we may wish to join, but it is never conditioned by them; its impulse springs from the beginning which came into the world when we were born and to which we respond by beginning something on our own initiative. To act, in its most general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin (as the Greek word *archein*, 'to begin', 'to lead' and eventually 'to rule', indicates), to set something into motion (which is the original meaning of the Latin *agere*). Because they are *initium*, newcomers and beginners by virtue of birth, men take initiative, are prompted into action. [...]

It is in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before. This character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginnings and in all origins. Thus the origin of life from inorganic matter is an infinite improbability of inorganic processes, as is the coming into being of the earth viewed from the standpoint of processes in the universe, or the evolution of human out of animal life. The new always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability, which for all practical, everyday purposes amounts to certainty; the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle. The fact that man is

capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable. And this again is possible only because each man is unique, so that with each birth something uniquely new comes into the world. With respect to this somebody who is unique it can be truly said that nobody was there before. If action as beginning corresponds to the fact of birth, if it is the actualization of the human condition of natality, then speech corresponds to the fact of distinctness and is the actualization of the human condition of plurality, that is, of living as a distinct and unique being among equals. [...]

Without the disclosure of the agent in the act, action loses its specific character and becomes one form of achievement among others. It is then indeed no less a means to an end than making is a means to produce an object. This happens whenever human togetherness is lost, that is when people are only for or against other people, as for instance in modern warfare, where men go into action and use means of violence in order to achieve certain objectives for their own side and against the enemy. In these instances, which of course have always existed, speech becomes indeed 'mere talk', simply one more means toward the end, whether it serves to deceive the enemy or to dazzle everybody with propaganda; here words reveal nothing, disclosure comes only from the deed itself, and this achievement, like all other achievements, cannot disclose the 'who', the unique and distinct identity of the agent.

In these instances action has lost the quality through which it transcends mere productive activity, which, from the humble making of use objects to the inspired creation of artworks, has no more meaning than is revealed in the finished product and does not intend to show more than is plainly visible at the end of the production process. Action without a name, a 'who' attached to it, is meaningless, whereas an artwork retains its relevance whether or not we know the master's name. [...]

Hannah Arendt, extracts from chapter V: 'Action', *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); second edition (1998) 175, 176–7, 177–8, 180–81 [footnotes not included].

## **Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer**

### **The Concept of Practice: Dialogue//1956**

*Theodor Adorno* The central issue is how to relate theory and practice in general. You said that the right theory wants that which is right. We can go further than that. Firstly, we must say that thinking is a form of practice; when I think, I am doing something. Even the most rarefied form of mental activity contains an element of the practical.

*Max Horkheimer* I do not entirely agree with that.

*Adorno* Thinking is a form of behaviour that in a curious way has taken on the appearance of something in which human activity is not involved.

*Horkheimer* I am reminded of something related to this. You cannot say that adding up is an activity in the same sense as listening to a piece of music. Just as there is a difference between pushing a chair somewhere and sitting on it. The element of rest, of contemplation belongs on the side of theory.

*Adorno* On the other hand, theory's claim to be pure being, purified of action, has something of a delusion about it.

*Horkheimer* Theory is theory in the authentic sense only where it serves practice. Theory that wishes to be sufficient unto itself is bad theory. On the other hand, it is also bad theory if it exists only in order to produce something or other.

*Adorno* I always come back to the feeling I have when people ask me how I would act as the director of a radio station or as minister of education. I always have to admit to myself that I would be in the greatest possible state of perplexity. The feeling that we know a huge amount, but that for category reasons it is not possible for us to put our knowledge to genuine practical use, is one that has to enter our deliberations.

*Horkheimer* That does not go far enough. As long as you are working in a society alongside others you cannot fall back on the concept of practice that was still available to Marx. Our situation is that we have to get to grips with the problem of reformism. What is the meaning of practice if there is no longer a party? In that case doesn't practice mean either reformism or quietism?



*Adorno* Our concept of practice is different from [the sociologist] Lazarsfeld's. People have always tried to foist onto us a concept that is appropriate for a state of emergency.

*Horkheimer* Since the Communist Party already exists within society, this means renouncing what we mean by practice. By practice we really mean that we're serious about the idea that the world needs fundamental change. This has to show itself in both thought and action. The practical aspect lies in the notion of difference; the world has to become different. It is not as if we should do something other than thinking, but rather that we should think differently and act differently. Perhaps this practice really just expects us to kill ourselves? We probably have to start from the position of saying to ourselves that even if the party no longer exists, the fact that we are here still has a certain value.

*Adorno* Moreover, we are by no means as unhappy as other people.

*Horkheimer* And temperamentally we are a long way from wishing to commit suicide.

*Adorno* Precisely because of its exceptional status, theory is a kind of stand-in for happiness. The happiness that would be brought about by practice finds no correlative in today's world apart from the behaviour of the man who sits in a chair and thinks.

*Horkheimer* That is an Aristotelian view.

*Adorno* It is not true in so far as happiness is only thought and not real, but it is true in the sense that this exceptional status outside the realm of daily routine is a kind of substitute for happiness. And in that sense the difference between thinking and eating roast goose is not so very great. The one thing can stand in for the other.

*Horkheimer* But eating roast goose is not the same thing as doing theory. Freedom is being allowed to do as you wish. The fact that thinking gives us pleasure is not what justifies the privileging of theory over practice. Where there is no link to practice, thinking is no different from anything else one happens to enjoy. The difference between thinking we approve of and disapprove of is that the thinking we approve of must have a connection to a world set to rights and must look at the world from this perspective. It must relate to the question of how the world is to be made different. If we wish to write about



theory and practice we must give a more incisive account of this aspect. Sometimes by practice we mean the fact that everything we think and do should be classified under the heading of change. At other times, we mean by practice whatever relates to the difference between thinking and doing. We must make every effort to ensure that all our thoughts and actions fit in with the first mentioned concept of practice. You, on the other hand, resist the idea that thought might be denied various possibilities by always asking how we are to make a start.

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, extract from 'Towards a New Manifesto?' (1956), *New Left Review* (September/October 2010) 51–4; reprinted in *Towards a New Manifesto* (London and New York: Verso, 2011).

## **David T. Doris**

### **Making a Salad//1998**

Alison Knowles created situations of delicate, even mysterious, elegance in much of her early work. Her simplest and perhaps best-known work, *Proposition*, was first performed on 21 October 1962 at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London:

Make a salad.

Here is an act that is performed many times a day, in many different ways, by countless hungry individuals around the globe. Knowles does not offer a recipe for a salad, does not elucidate the form that such a salad should take, but rather instructs the performer to act, simply to make a salad. Transplanted into the context of the concert hall, such an act becomes a specifically artistic or musical presentation – an unwritten contract between the performer and the audience that the work will be received within the horizon of art- or music-production. There is a mode of heightened perception that attends the making of a salad within the four walls of a concert hall; one that is ostensibly there, after all, to listen to music or experience a theatrical presentation. Yet, with such a work as *Proposition*, a peculiar reversal takes place that draws the work outside the contract of theatrical presentation: one becomes explicitly aware of a quotidian object/action as having become something extraordinary (that is, 'art') by virtue of its context. One is immediately reminded of Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* of

1917, a common urinal signed by the artist [as 'R. Mutt'] and relocated into the space of the gallery, the museum, and ultimately art-historical discourse. But Knowles' salad production makes an additional leap: such an action need not be supported by the structures of artistic presentation in order to be extraordinary. While one might return from viewing *Fountain* with a renewed awareness of and respect for the form of common urinals, and with a sense of the power of institutions to frame and shape our perceptions of the world, one does not henceforth experience the *act of urination itself* as an act of producing art. In Knowles' work, by contrast, there is nothing but the performance of an action. Clearly, such a work need not be performed in an art institute for it to become meaningful. Nor does it have to be perceived as meaningful in order for it to be performed at all. 'Art' becomes 'life' and 'life' becomes 'art' and finally the distinction between the two becomes confused, superfluous. Knowles comments:

I think that many of the pieces are just simple refreshment pieces done for whatever day's work you have to do, supporting occurrences in life. It gives members of the audience the ball: they can make their own salad differently, even if they are doing it for their family ... Whatever it is you have to touch and work with, you can make a kind of performance of it, but it has to be stripped of the hangings and accoutrements of theatre. What happens is that a kind of revelation, no, an emptiness, opens up.'

This quality of emptiness, says Knowles, is brought about through action performed 'exactly, precisely and modestly'. She notes: 'That's why Zen is mentioned in terms of Fluxus event performing. The action is directed and precise with nothing added.'<sup>2</sup>

By adhering to a strict procedure, by bracketing 'artistic' intention and simply making a salad, the performer allows that action to come to presence *as such*, unfolding in a space *between* states of being art or non-art. The making of Knowles' salad – or your salad, or mine – is a narration of the condition of liminality itself, the disruption of the frames of reference in which the act of making a salad occurs: making a salad is not art, yet it is not simply making a salad. And of course, it is both. [...]

1 [footnote 59 in source] Estera Milman, 'Road Shows, Street Events and Fluxus People: A Conversation with Alison Knowles', *Visible Language*, vol. 26, no. 1–2 (1992) 103.

2 [60] *Ibid.*, 104.

David T. Doris, extract from 'Zen Vaudeville: A Medi(t)ation in the Margins of Fluxus', in *The Fluxus Reader*, ed. Ken Friedman (London: Academy Editions, 1998) 107–8.

**Yoko Ono**  
**To the Wesleyan People//1966**

To the Wesleyan People (who attended the meeting.)  
– a footnote to my lecture of January 13th, 1966.

When a violinist plays, which is incidental: the arm movement or the bow sound?

Try arm movement only.

If my music seems to require physical silence, that is because it requires concentration to yourself – and this requires inner silence which may lead to outer silence as well.

I think of my music more as a practice (gyo) than a music.

The only sound that exists to me is the sound of the mind. My works are only to induce music of the mind in people.

It is not possible to control a mind-time with a stopwatch or a metronome. In the mind-world, things spread out and go beyond time.

There is a wind that never dies.

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My paintings, which are all instruction paintings (and meant for others to do), came after collage & assemblage (1915) and happening (1905) came into the art world. Considering the nature of my painting, any of the above three words or a new word can be used instead of the word, painting. But I like the old word painting because it immediately connects with 'wall painting' painting, and it is nice and funny.

Among my instruction paintings, my interest is mainly in 'painting to construct in your head'. In your head, for instance, it is possible for a straight line to exist – not as a segment of a curve but as a straight line. Also, a line can be straight, curved and something else at the same time. A dot can exist as a 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 dimensional object all at the same time or at various times in different

combinations as you wish to perceive. The movement of the molecule can be continuum and discontinuum at the same time. It can be with colour and/or without. There is no visual object that does not exist in comparison to or simultaneously with other objects, but these characteristics can be eliminated if you wish. A sunset can go on for days. You can eat up all the clouds in the sky. You can assemble a painting with a person in the North Pole over a phone, like playing chess. This painting method derives from as far back as the time of the Second World War when we had no food to eat, and my brother and I exchanged menus in the air.

There maybe a dream that two dream together, but there is no chair that two see together.

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I think it is possible to see a chair as it is. But when you burn the chair, you suddenly realize that the chair in your head did not burn or disappear.

The world of construction seems to be the most tangible, and therefore final. This made me nervous. I started to wonder if it were really so.

Isn't a construction a beginning of a thing like a seed? Isn't it a segment of a larger totality, like an elephant's tail? Isn't it something just about to emerge – not quite structured – never quite structured ... like an unfinished church with a sky ceiling? Therefore, the following works:

A venus made of plastic, except that her head has to be imagined.

A paper ball and a marble book, except that the final version is the fusion of these two objects which come into existence only in your head.

A marble sphere (actually existing) which, in your head, gradually becomes a sharp cone by the time it is extended to the far end of the room.

A garden covered with thick marble instead of snow – but like snow, which is to be appreciated only when you uncover the marble coating.

One thousand needles: imagine threading them with a straight thread.

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I would like to see the sky machine on every corner of the street instead of the coke machine. We need more skies than coke.

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Dance was once the way people communicated with God and godliness in people. Since when did dance become a pasted-face exhibitionism of dancers on the spotlighted stage? Can you not communicate if it is totally dark?

If people make it a habit to draw a somersault on every other street as they commute to their office, take off their pants before they fight, shake hands with strangers whenever they feel like, give flowers or part of their clothing on streets, subways, elevator, toilet, etc., and if politicians go through a tea house door (lowered, so people must bend very low to get through) before they discuss anything and spend a day watching the fountain water dance at the nearest park, the world business may slow down a little but we may have peace. To me this is dance.

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All my works in the other fields have an 'Event bent' so to speak. People ask me why I call some works Event and others not. They also ask me why I do not call my Events Happenings.

Event, to me, is not an assimilation of all the other arts as Happening seems to be, but an extrication from the various sensory perceptions. It is not 'a get togetherness' as most happenings are, but a dealing with oneself. Also, it has no script as happenings do, though it has something that starts it moving – the closest word for it may be a 'wish' or 'hope'.

At a small dinner party last week, we suddenly discovered that our poet friend whom we admire very much was colour blind. Barbara Moore said, 'That explains about his work. Usually people's eyes are blocked by colour and they can't see the thing.'

After unblocking one's mind, by dispensing with visual, auditory and kinetic perceptions, what will come out of us? Would there be anything? I wonder. And my Events are mostly spent in wonderment.

In Kyoto, at the Nanzenji Temples the High Monk was kind to let me use one of

the temples and the gardens for my Event. It is a temple with great history, and it was an unheard of honour for the Monk to give permission for such a use, especially, to a woman. The Event took place from evening till dawn. About fifty people came with the knowledge that it will last till dawn. The instruction was to watch the sky and to 'touch'. Some of them were just fast asleep until dawn. Some sat in the garden, some on the wide corridor, which is like a verandah. It was a beautiful full moon night, and the moon was so bright, that the mountains and the trees, which usually looked black under the moonlight, began to show their green. People talked about moonburn, moonbath, and about touching the sky. Two people, I noticed, were whispering all about their life story to each other. Once in a while, a restless person would come to me and ask if I was alright. I thought that was very amusing, because it was a very warm and peaceful July night, and there was no reason why I should not be alright. Probably he was starting to feel something happening to him, something that he did not yet know how to come with, the only way out for him was to come to me and ask if I was alright. I was a little nervous about people making cigarette holes on the national treasure floors and tatami, from being high on the moonlight, since most of the people were young modern Japanese, and some French and Americans. But nothing like that happened. When the morning breeze started to come in, people quietly woke up their friends and we took a bath, three at a time in a bath especially prepared for us at that hour of the day. The temple bath is made of high stone, and it is very warm. After the bath, we had miso soup and onigiri (rice sandwich). Without my saying anything about it, people silently swept the room and mopped the corridor before leaving. I did not know most of them, as they were mostly Kyoto people, and they left without giving their names. I wonder who they were.

At another time, also in Kyoto, before the Nanzenji Event, I had a concert at Yamaichi Hall. It was called 'The Strip-tease Show' (it was stripping of the mind). When I met the High Monk the next day, he seemed a bit dissatisfied.

'I went to see your concert'. he said.

'Thank you, did you like it?'

'Well, why did you have those three chairs on the stage and call it strip-tease by three?'

'If it is a chair or stone or woman, it is the same thing, my Monk.'

'Where is the music?'

'The music is in the mind, my Monk.'

'But that is the same with what we are doing, aren't you an avant-garde composer?'



'That is a label which was put by others for convenience.'

'For instance, does Toshiro Mayuzumi create music of your kind?'

'I can only speak for myself.'

'Do you have many followers?'

'No, but I know of two men who know what I am doing. I am very thankful for that.'

Though he is a High Monk he is extremely young, he may be younger than myself. I wonder what the Monk is doing now.

Another Event that was memorable for me was 'Fly', at Naiqua Gallery in Tokyo. People were asked to come prepared to fly in their own way. I did not attend.

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People talk about happening. They say that art is headed towards that direction, that happening is assimilating the arts. I don't believe in collectivism of art nor in having only one direction in anything. I think it is nice to return to having many different arts, including happening, just as having many flowers. In fact, we could have more arts 'smell', 'weight', 'taste', 'cry', 'anger' (competition of anger, that sort of thing), etc. People might say that we never experience things separately, they are always in fusion, and that is why 'the happening', which is a fusion of all sensory perceptions. Yes, I agree, but if that is so, it is all the more reason and challenge to create a sensory experience isolated from other sensory experiences, which is something rare in daily life. Art is not merely a duplication of life. To assimilate art in life is different from art duplicating life.

But returning to having various divisions of art does not mean, for instance, that one must use only sounds as means to create music. One may give instructions to watch the fire for 10 days in order to create music in the mind, or drink water once a month to create a vision in one's mind.

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The mind is omnipresent, events in life never happen alone and the history is forever increasing its volume. The natural state of life and mind is complexity. At this point, what art can offer (if it can at all – to me it seems) is an absence of complexity, a vacuum through which you are led to a state of complete relaxation of mind. After that you may return to the complexity of life again, it may not be the same, or it may be, or you may never return, but that is your problem.

Mental richness should be worried just as physical richness. Didn't Christ say that it was like a camel trying to pass through a needle hole, for John Cage to go to heaven? I think it is nice to abandon what you have as much as possible, as many mental possessions as the physical ones, as they clutter your mind. It is nice to maintain poverty of environment, sound, thinking and belief. It is nice to keep oneself small, like a grain of rice, instead of expanding. Make yourself dispensable, like paper. See little, hear little and think little.

The body is the Bodhi Tree  
The mind is like a bright mirror standing  
Take care to wipe it all the time  
And allow no dust to cling. – Shen-hsiu

There never was a Bodhi Tree  
Nor bright mirror standing  
Fundamentally, not one thing exists  
So where is the dust to cling? – Hui-neng

Yoko Ono, 'To the Wesleyan People', typescript (New York, 23 January 1966). First published in Yoko Ono, *Grapefruit* © Yoko Ono. Reproduced with permission. All rights reserved.

## **Adrian Piper** **To Art (reg. intrans. v.)//1975**

I want to consider a certain class of answers to the question, 'What do you do?' The class of answers I have in mind interests me because it reveals different conceptions of what it means to be committed to art, and thus different conceptions of what art activity consists in. Secondly, it may also suggest different solutions to the problem of what it might be like to succeed in making one's commitment even nominally intelligible to some interlocutor *outside* the art context.

Within the art context, another class of answers, which I will not discuss in detail here, would be appropriate. Samples might include: 'Video', or 'Holography', or 'Performances', or some similar shorthand tag. Note that these answers could not be an appropriate response to the query when issued from a vantage point outside the art context, since they do not by themselves convey the particular

use of media that seems to distinguish the art context *per se* from, say, television, advertising or vaudeville.

The attempt here will be to distinguish more carefully some of the differences between members of the former class. These differences are largely obscured by their colloquial character, and by the purpose they serve in common, which is to deflect the question and change the subject. I will proceed by first calling attention to some of their grammatical and semantical implications, both through analysis and through comparison with grammatically similar responses with different subject matter. This discussion will serve as the basis for a brief sketch of the logical interrelationships that seem to hold between these answers. Finally I will propose and argue for the addition of a new member to this class of answers on the grounds that it has certain merits which some of the others lack.

## I

### i. 'I am an artist.'

Superficially, this is analogous to 'I am an architect', 'I am a cook', or 'I am a biologist.' But this answer, perhaps more than any other of the class under scrutiny, reveals the problem of identifying one's commitment. While it appears to distinguish being an artist from being an architect, cook or biologist, it does not in fact, because it is not incompatible with any of the latter. It may be construed as revealing a certain conception, i.e. an aesthetic conception, of how one sees oneself, together with whatever one's vocation actually is. Here the impatient rejoinder, 'Yes, but what do you *do*?' or 'Yes, but what kind of artist?' (A bullshit artist? A culinary artist?) is not out of place. The scope of this answer is so broad that it is not sufficient to specify one's vocation at all: it indicates only what we may call the aesthetic attitude towards oneself and one's work. In order to determine to what in particular the aesthetic attitude is directed, we need more information than this answer alone will yield.

### ii. 'I make art.'

In certain respects, this answer resembles 'I make hammocks', or 'I breed collies', but is significantly different in others. It is similar in that it identifies the purposive, intentional, teleological character of the activity which forms the focus of the commitment. It tells us that, regardless of how this activity may look, it is intended by the agent to fall under the aegis of 'art', rather than, say, 'cooking' or 'biology'. To this extent it provides a partial solution to the difficulty encountered in i., for making art is, presumably, not the same thing as making five-course dinners or scale models of buildings.

Clearly, this distinction is highly tentative and open to qualification. But it is

at least *prima facie* workable, for the former response is of a different type than the latter. The analogy for 'I make art' in another field might be something like 'I design buildings', or 'I make meals', while the analogy in art for 'I make five-course dinners' or 'I make scale models of buildings' would be something like 'I do videotapes' or 'I do lithographs.' The first analogy offers an intentional identification of one's vocation; it situates our activity within the context in which we wish it to be understood. The second analogy tells us more directly what that activity consists in, and presupposes the first. If one is unclear about the purpose of my, say, constructing small Plexiglas cubes, I can clarify that purpose by saying, 'I am making art' or 'I am designing furniture.' But if one wants to know more specifically what my activity consists in, 'I make videotapes', like 'I make five-course dinners' specifies this.

However, 'I make art' is different from 'I make hammocks' or 'I breed collies' in the important respect that to truly aver that I make hammocks, I have to have successfully made, i.e. completed, at least one hammock; to claim that I breed collies I must have actually bred at least one litter. There are fairly standard criteria which I must meet here, and I may well have tried and failed at either or both of these endeavours. But I can truly say that I make art given only that I indulge in intentional, art product-directed activity. There is nothing, it seems, that counts as a *failure* on my part to make art, if that's what I intend by my action, and if that's what I have, in my own estimation, accomplished. I may, of course, make bad, trite or unpleasant art. But I can't mistakenly think I am making art but in fact be making something else.

This is not to deny that, *in* making art, I may be doing something else, like satisfying my ego, giving vent to my anxieties, changing the world, or passing the time of day. But my activities under these descriptions constitute some part of an explanation of my activity *as* making art; they do not undermine my contention *that* I am making art. It seems that nothing, properly speaking, can undermine that contention, for any attempt of the form 'That's not art!' only reveals an undecidable discrepancy between the artist's and the audience's conception of art.

So ii. exposes some of the teleological kinks in the character of a commitment to art, for failing as an artist means not: failing to make art, but: failing to elicit positive critical response, failing to gain support or approval, and the like.

### iii. 'I do (am doing) art.'

This actually covers two distinct responses, which deserve separate treatment.

#### a. 'I am doing art.'

Whereas ii. signifies a purposive, goal-directed activity, iii.a. does not. If I am doing art as opposed to making art, I am engaging in a continuous process in

which the goal is, so to speak, achieved at each step. There is nothing over and above the activity itself that identifies itself as art. In making art I may be interrupted or sidetracked; thus my purpose, i.e. the bringing about of the state or object that I take to be the art, may be deflected. In this *material* sense, I may fail to make art, not because I was actually making something else, but because my intended goal was not achieved. But in iii.a. there is no goal, separable from the doing, to achieve. So this answer suggests a different brand of incorrigibility: I cannot fail to be doing art if I intend to do art, unless I fail to act at all; for my doing art occurs at all points in the process. Compare 'I am doing art' with 'I am ice skating.' Failure in the latter activity, thus disconfirmation of the claim, might be demonstrated by my falling flat on my face every time I try to take a step on the ice. But what kind of condition would disconfirm the former claim? What kind of activity would I have to be doing for it to be *false* that I was doing art?

The continuous character of doing art has the apparent effect of mitigating the purposive character of doing art as a vocation, in the sense that doing art can be seen as a purposeless activity the way taking a walk is purposeless. This is not to say that it is random, or unintentional. But we don't necessarily do art or take a walk for the sake of any purpose or goal beyond the execution of the process itself. But if we needn't be able to say *why* we are doing art, i.e. what we are doing it *for*, the sense in which doing art is intentional, or deliberate, requires further scrutiny. For if there is no point or purpose to the activity, it may well fail of rational explanation altogether. Then we would have to have recourse to a causal explanation in just the same sense in which the intention to take a walk may be subject to causal explanation in terms of nerve action potentials and muscular contractions. This doesn't deny, of course, that we intend to do art or take a walk. It just suggests that the intention is impelled by causes rather than reasons.

b. 'I do art.'

In opposition to iii.a., this states explicitly that in general, I do art. Even if I am not doing it this minute, this is broadly what my vocational commitment amounts to. iii.b. signifies an intentional attitude towards my activity: if iii.b. is true, iii.a. must be true at some point. b. implies a. in that it could not be true that I do art without its being true that sometimes I am doing art. iii.b. also answers the original question, 'What do you do?' with a slightly different conception of the vocation in question than does ii. To do art is to be actively involved in the process of art production at all points, and the response b. expresses this as a self-conscious conception of what one's commitment entails. To conceive of oneself as doing art rather than making art is to conceive of one's vocation as including this participation as an important and necessary feature, rather than simply as the production of some *further* thing which is itself important and necessary. In



conceiving of myself as an agent, what I do is logically prior to what I make; for in saying what I do, I am saying what my actions *are*; in saying what I make, I am saying only what they *effect*, or bring about (compare: 'I stamped and cursed' with: 'I made a fuss.')

iv. 'I am into art.'

This is, of course, shorthand for: 'I am involved in art.' It suggests a state or condition of participation of the agent, rather than any product he/she might generate. In this sense, it resembles 'I am in love', 'I am into dog-catching', for it leaves unspecified the nature of that involvement, which might as well be passive or contemplative as active. In some ways it vies with i. in the breadth and ambiguity of its scope. It reveals a participation in or commitment to art in some broad sense of the words, but not in what that participation or commitment consists. i. expresses an attitude of self-regard; a way of fixing one's personal identity which is lacking here: I may be into art without having a vocational commitment to it. I may, that is, be into art without being an artist in *any* sense of 'artist'. [...]

#### IV

Now we are closer to specifying the condition that seemed to be missing in our recent attempt to define 'doing art' in II. What we lacked was a way of directly conveying the participatory attitude, the importance of the active involvement of the artist as agent in the art process. What we lacked, quite simply, was the active verb construction. In proposing the regular intransitive verb *to art* for the purpose of filling this requirement, I am thereby altering slightly the ranking order of the four responses we considered, in the following way.

Let us suppose that 'arting' bears the same grammatical relationship to 'doing art' that 'working' bears to 'doing work':

- |                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| a. I do work       | a'. I do art       |
| b. I am doing work | b'. I am doing art |
| c. I am working    | c'. I am arting    |

If work (under some suitable interpretation) is my vocation in the active sense just discussed (i.e. such that 'I do work' [a.] is an appropriate response to the question, 'What do you do?'), then b. must be true of me at some point. And if b. is true, c. must similarly be true. a. implies b., and b., implies c. This relation is transitive: if I do work, then I am, at some time, working.

Above it was suggested that the 'doing' construction implied continuous production of that which was done: If I am doing philosophy, then philosophy is



being done, or produced, at each point during which I am doing philosophy. But I can surely philosophize without doing philosophy ('That's life', he philosophized). Similarly, I can work, and work hard, without, as it were, getting any work done. Working (c.) does not strictly imply doing work (b.), for doing work implies that I can, theoretically, get the work done, successfully complete or terminate the process, while working does not. 'Doing work' can be thought of in terms of [Gilbert] Ryle's concept of an 'achievement verb', while 'working' need not. So c. does not imply b. If it does not imply b. then it cannot imply a., for we saw that the truth of a. depended upon the occasional truth of b. And since c. does not imply that b. is ever true (although of course it seems likely that it might be), it cannot imply that a. is true.

Now to apply the same line of reasoning to a' – c'. If it is true that I do art (a'), then it must be at some point true that I am doing art (b'). If I am doing art, I must be arting (c'). Hence if I do art, then at least occasionally, I am arting. (C) a' → b'. and b' → c'. and a' → c'.

But just because I am arting, this doesn't mean I am doing art, for it doesn't mean that I am continuously producing art, nor that at some point I will presumably get the art done. I may well *never* get the art done. Here we find independent confirmation for the analogy. For the objection raised in III. was essentially that even if we art, we don't always or necessarily *do* art in the sense of continually producing Art. The notion of arting thus provides a way of thinking of our vocation as an ongoing, participatory activity, without thereby committing us to the implication that we thereby get art *done* (i.e. get Art done). [...]

Adrian Piper, extracts from 'To Art (Reg. Intrans. V.)', *The Fox*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1975) 60–62, 64.

## **Louis Althusser**

### **What is Practice?//1975**

[...] The word 'practice' points, then, to an *active relationship to the real*. Thus we say that a tool is *très pratique* when it is especially well suited to a particular type of work on a particular kind of material, and produces the desired results. Thus we say that someone has a *bonne pratique* of English, meaning that his contact with that language is direct enough to allow him to 'put it into practice', in other words, to use it effectively. In the same sense, we say that someone has

no *pratique* of farm machines when he knows them only from books, from theory, but has never actually used them hands-on and does not know how to run them.

The idea of practice thus implies the notion of active contact with the real, while the idea of activity inherent in it implies the notion of a *human agent* (or subject). Since a human subject or agent is, unlike an animal, a being capable of 'forming a plan of action in his mind', at least in theory, we shall agree to use the word 'practice' to designate only the kind of *active contact with the real that is peculiarly human*. Thus we shall not speak of 'bees' practice', despite the marvels that bees can accomplish, but of the practice of the carpenter, mechanic, architect, engineer, physician, jurist, politician and so on.

We can see straight away, however, that since this idea of *practice* is associated with human beings, and since human beings are animals endowed with 'consciousness' – in other words, the capacity to distinguish and detach a representation of external things from the things themselves, work on this representation and form a plan of action in their minds – we can see straight away that the idea of *practice* answers to the idea of *theory* as if it were its inverted echo.

It must not be supposed that theory is specific to 'theorists'. Their theory (that of scientists and philosophers) is simply the most abstract, refined and elaborate form of a capacity that all human beings possess. The word 'theory' comes from a Greek word meaning 'to see', 'to contemplate'. It implies that one *does not handle what one sees* and, consequently, leaves things as they were. Thus the hand [*main*], which 'handles' [*manie*] or 'manipulates' [*manipule*], which works, is contrasted to the eye, which sees at a distance, without touching or transforming its object. Implied by the word 'theory', accordingly, is the notion of a distance taken from immediate reality and maintained; the word expresses, by its nature, what is commonly called *consciousness*, that is, the capacity to gather and store perceptions of the real, and also, thanks to this step back from reality and the 'play' it allows, the capacity to make connections between these perceptions and even to anticipate them. *In this sense, everyone is a theorist*. The farmer who sets out on his tractor in the morning has planned out his day in his mind, and sees far beyond that one day. He could hardly run his farm if he didn't. We have employed the term 'consciousness' to designate people's capacity to receive and store perceptions of the real, and anticipate them as well. We have done so for the sake of convenience, imposed by long usage. For 'consciousness' is another of idealist philosophy's favourite terms. We express the same idea when we say that human beings possess *language*, for it is language which puts this distance, in advance, between immediate reality and the representation of it: in advance, in as much as language contains this distance simply by virtue of

its abstractness. In this sense, we can say that *all human beings are theorists*, less because they see *than because they speak*. And we know why: because language is made up of abstractions (sounds that we abstract in order to treat them as words designating concrete realities that we abstract).

That is why the opposition between theory and practice has to be treated with great caution.

In the concrete reality of people's relations to the world, we never find ourselves dealing with, on the one hand, practice alone (blind, purely animal labour) and, on the other, theory alone (pure contemplation in the absence of all activity). In the most elementary practice (the ditch-digger's), there are *ideas* about how to go about things, the plan to follow and the tools to use, and all these 'ideas' exist only in language – even if the people using this language are unaware that it is already theory. And, in the loftiest theory, that of the most abstract of mathematicians, there is always practice: not just the work the mathematician does on his problems, but the *inscription* of those problems in mathematical *symbols* in chalk on the blackboard – even if the mathematician is unaware that such symbolization is a practice.

The philosophical question of the primacy of practice over theory (which defines the materialist position) or theory over practice (which defines the idealist position) is posed in the context of this complex interdependency. In affirming the primacy of theory, idealism affirms that, in the last instance, contemplation or the activity of reason determines all practice. In affirming the primacy of practice, materialism affirms that, in the last instance, practice determines all knowledge.

The very generality of these positions, however, affords us a glimpse of something important: the general and, therefore, 'abstract' character of human practices. We said that practice designates people's active contact with the real. Of course, there exist practices that are apparently utterly singular (such as the practices of madness, said to be 'abnormal'). One can even defend the idea that there exists no practice that is not individual in some respect, since every practice calls for an individual human agent. We are all familiar, for example, with the high praise bestowed on the medieval artisan, who singlehandedly produced an object in a single exemplar intended for a single client. Yet even this artisan reproduced a *general social practice*: he applied certain socially recognized procedures inherited from a collective past to a socially defined demand. He was, certainly, alone before his 'work', but, alongside him, silently, thousands of other artisans were making the same gestures using the same tools in order to furnish the same market with the same products. And if he added a 'personal touch' to his work, he did so within the social limits laid down by both the utility of the object produced and the fashion reigning in his society.

This is a crucial point, for the practices we shall be discussing can be individual only to the extent that they are first of all *social*. What holds for the artisan producing in apparent solitude holds a fortiori for workers subject to the collective organization of work, producing in order to satisfy existing society's 'creditworthy' social needs and, at the same time, so that the capitalist class can accumulate wealth.

*Thus every practice is social.* As such, it brings into play a set of elements so complex (in the case of production, these elements are the raw material, the agents of production and the instruments of production, under the domination of the social relations of production) that it is impossible to conceive of it as a simple *act* or even a simple *activity*. (For both act and activity lead us to imagine that they have a cause or an author – namely a subject or an agent – and that it would be enough to trace things back to this cause or origin in order to understand everything that goes on in a practice.) We are thus naturally led to conceive of social practices not as acts or simple activities, but as *processes*: that is, as a set of material, ideological, theoretical, and human (the agents) elements sufficiently well adapted to each other for their reciprocal action to produce a result that modifies the initial givens.

We shall therefore use the word 'practice' to designate a social process that puts agents into active contact with the real and produces results of social utility. It is no doubt possible to speak of 'social practice' as a whole, when this expression is justified – that is, whenever we want to think the interdependency of the different practices. But we must beware of this expression, which, when it is not justified, has the disadvantage of making distinct practices 'melt' into the all-devouring night of 'social practice' – the disadvantage of not marking each practice's *specificity*, and thus of subordinating, say, scientific or philosophical practice to political practice as its 'handmaiden' (consider the example of Lysenko under Stalin). To grasp what practice is, we have first to recognize *the existence of distinct, relatively autonomous social practices*. Technical practice is not scientific practice, philosophical practice is not assimilable to scientific practice, and so on.

This methodological precaution once taken, however, we can provide some idea of what a legitimate use of the notion of 'social practice' as a whole would be. When we invoke this notion, it can only be with a view to assigning a meaning to the primacy of practice over theory in a social formation in general.

In every social formation, we observe a certain number of practices at work: the practice of production, the practice of technical and, later, scientific knowledge, political practice, ideological practice, aesthetic practice and so on. The question that then arises is less to identify and classify all the existing practices than to establish *the determinant practice in the totality of practices*.

This question is not purely speculative, as might be supposed: it has practical

effects, in so far as the way we visualize the determination of the practices, which can originate in either an ideology or a science, is itself part of the practices. Of course, such practical effects are relative, for ideology's impact on a society's evolution is itself relative, depending as it does on the balance of power between the classes. And it is because this question is not purely speculative that it is one of the major philosophical questions. [...]

Louis Althusser, extract from *Initiation à la philosophie pour les non-philosophes* (1975; first published in France 2014); trans. G.M. Goshgarian, *Philosophy for Non-Philosophers* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017) 79–82.

## **Henri Lefebvre**

### **The Worldwide Experience//1978**

[...] The various moments of the worldwide experience do not lie outside one another. They form a whole: the acquired assets of theory and practice can in the twentieth century open and illuminate a path yet to be followed.

The outcome is that these times are not without challenges. These are challenging times! But what is being challenged? The products and creations of history. The challenge of the worldwide consists mostly in this, that the transformation of the world that produces the worldwide is accompanied by the most terrifying danger and terror. The planet enters its unitary existence and life at total risk. Which is not to say that destiny declares itself thus and that the final catastrophe will be fatal.

Revolution presents itself as worldness on the move: a transformation with multiple aspects, dominated by peasant, national, state [*étatiques*], and political questions. Turning the world upside down also includes the overturning of this domination. Which leaves room for the combined action of the worldwide working class and of theory reaching the concrete universal.

The theory explores the possible/impossible and declares that 'one must' (a theoretical imperative, not an ethical one) want the impossible in order to realize the possible. Nothing closer to and nothing further from the possible. Utopia therefore assumes an urgent character. *Urgent utopia* defines a style of thinking turned toward the possible in all areas. This tends to redefine 'socialism' and 'communism' not by the state [*l'étatique*] and the political, but by a critique of the state and the political, on one hand, and on the other, the production,



appropriation and management [*gestion*] of space. Neither the individual nor the group exists without an appropriated space (produced as such).

Conceptual thought explores ways, ventures on paths. It can precede practice, but cannot separate itself from it. Practice alone, freed from political obsession and released from state pressure [*la pression étatique*], can effectively realize what promises to be the simultaneous use of concept and imagination (utopia). Theory opens the road, clears a new way; practice takes it, it *produces* the route and the space. [...]

Henri Lefebvre, extract from *De l'État. Vol. 4: Les contradictions de l'état moderne: La dialectique et/de l'état* (Paris: Union Generale d'Editions, 1978); trans. Elizabeth Lebas, Gerald Moore, Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden, in *Henri Lefebvre, State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, ed. Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009) 287–8.

## **Raivo Puusemp Rosendale//1980**

Art has no parameters ... Artists do, they continually redefine them.

It is in this context of parameter definition that 'Rosendale' was undertaken. It is my belief that those constantly redefining form perceive reality differently. They conceive visually, and therefore can retain and examine abstract concepts in a formal structure. Aesthetics is particularly well suited for such visual conceptualization.

Aesthetic structure and form can be applied equally well to social and political systems as physical ones. Most political structures lack formal concept and move from crisis to crisis. The lack of conceptual structure limits them to being responsive rather than initiative.

In 'Rosendale. A Public Work', the attempt was made to superimpose a formal concept upon an essentially directionless political microsystem and to affect that system permanently by doing so; politically, it was successful. A community of 1,500, founded in 1669, having gone through a rich and varied past, being faced with a less than glorious present, was disincorporated forever.

Rosendale, labouring under archaic tax loads, was suffering from power struggles between irreconcilable groups, as was the rest of the country during that time. The political structure was primarily preoccupied with maintaining its control. Any possibility of compromise with the changing population, a more



liberal segment, was responded to defensively. It was within this conflict and reality that 'Rosendale, A Public Work' was born.

In March 1975 we won the hotly contested campaign. I as mayor, Mark Phalen, like myself basically apolitical, as trustee. Political unknowns, we won by a vote against our opposition. Through the next few years until 31 December 1977 the concept of dissolving Rosendale evolved.

Dissolution as the only rational course became evident to me in February of 1975, two months prior to the election, but disincorporation was too radical an issue to be undertaken successfully by political newcomers. Over the course of the next two years, credibility had to be established and disincorporation strategy developed and implemented. Deliberate changes in political structures don't just happen, they are planned and occur because they seem inevitable.

To make changes seem inevitable requires a clear structure and a systematic process.

Disincorporation, at first, was perceived as radical and politically controversial, but by the time of the required referendum it had become accepted as an inevitability and was endorsed by over 70 per cent of the voters. It is that process from being nominated to the final dissolution that constitutes 'Rosendale, A Public Work'.

Artistically, 'Rosendale' followed a sequence in my art beginning with the 'discovery' and 'phenomena' works of the late sixties. The art consisted of examples of physical and perceptual discoveries I had made during that period. The discoveries were attractively packaged, compatible with existent artforms and well received.

During this period, however, many changes were taking place in my thinking which precipitated the redefinition to political art and made 'Rosendale' possible.

One very important change was my participation at the organizational level of a group called 'Museum', an underground art group in New York City. It was my first opportunity to participate in the development of a formal group structure. I became fascinated by the social and political process.

During that period a different perspective on art became clear to me as well. It became apparent that art was a continuum of predictable steps each built upon the last. It seemed that by being familiar with the then accepted formal parameters of art, and by doing work within those parameters, there was a great likelihood of art community acceptance of that work. Creative leaps were reduced to inevitable innovations and predictable steps. I became fascinated with the process of conception to completion rather than the product.

From that point I found it difficult to continue making art within the standard context. However, my fascination with 'process', 'group dynamics' and the newly discovered predictable innovation principle continued.

My first attempts at combining these elements occurred in 1970, when I attempted the first 'idea plants' or 'influence pieces', as I refer to them.

The principle was this, if it was correct: that the next step in art was predictable, then it didn't matter who took it. Anyone actualizing that step would enjoy some degree of acceptance based on the accuracy of apparent inevitability of that step. The steps might be suggested to someone else, and they might produce the work, unaware of my influence. When their piece was accepted by either being published or shown, my piece would be completed. The principle worked; the process was predictable. I became somewhat apprehensive of the manipulative aspects of this direction and discontinued any further pursuit. [...]

I felt that the political process, like any other, had predictable results given controlled input. In the case of Rosendale the process was a two-year sequence of semi-controlled events to achieve a desired product – dissolution.

Raivo Puusemp, 'Rosendale', preface from *Beyond Art: The Dissolution of Rosendale, N.Y. – A Public Work by Raivo Puusemp* (Los Angeles: Highland Art Agents, 1980) n.p.

## **Joseph Beuys**

### **In Conversation with Kate Horsfield//1980**

*Kate Horsfield* How do you approach deciding to do a piece of art, or in certain cases an action; what comes up to you before you start to do it; what do you know about it, and how do you proceed?

*Joseph Beuys* I know a lot before I start an action. I know a lot about the necessity of the general idea of sculpture, but I don't know anything about the process in which the action will run. When the action runs, my preparation works, because I am prepared to do a thing without knowing where it goes. You see, it would be a very uninteresting thing – it would have nothing to do with art – if it were not a new experiment for which I have no clear concept. If I had a clear concept of solving the problem, I would then speak about the concept and it wouldn't be necessary to make an action. Every action, every artwork for me, every physical scene, drawing on the blackboard, performance, brings a new element in the whole, an unknown area, an unknown world.

So I never have a clear concept for a performance. I only make a decision about tools, for instance, but I don't determine the run of the action, or the

character of the action at all. I never make actions to make actions, as a kind of innovation in the art world, as a new style. But I must say that the nature of the actions, as a possibility to arrive at an understanding of art, for the most part was translated into an official modern art style, and again became restricted to the enclosure of an ivory tower, reduced to a traditional view of art as a history of formal innovations, without being seen as a possibility to innovate the whole social body. You see, that is the dilemma in the art world – but I try to overcome that situation as much as I can; nevertheless, the problem always reappears, and I am always confronted with the temptation of the system to destroy such an impulse.

*Horsfield* I'd like to ask you, in terms of people participating in your work, the audience, for example, whether you want to refer to the audience at the actions, or the audience in Europe, or at the Guggenheim. A lot has been made out of the fact that people have to rely so much on verbal or written interpretations of your work in order to understand the symbols and the quality of the meaning behind it. This seems to me, in a way, to be a contradiction with the intention of reaching out across society.

*Beuys* If it were true, then it would be a contradiction, but you see, it isn't true. That is transported by a lot of unclear sources and unclear positions by people who are involved in this whole difficulty. Journalists, critics and art historians, they are all building up this misunderstanding, that one must have interpretations for the phenomena of the production. It isn't true, simply it isn't true. People could work without interpretation, and they still can work without interpretation, but perhaps it is also interesting... Let's stop on this point, so as not to blur it out.

I never preserved a tool or a part of my laboratory, one could say, to avoid this term 'artist'. Because this is already an allusion to a kind of traditional understanding in a restricted way, which wouldn't work on its own form, or the relationship between form, material and so on. Sometimes there appears such a thing, and such a tool, which doesn't work without interpretation, but I would never give it as an example of my understanding of sculpture, or as a stimulating phenomenon to see something about the problems involved. So it is not necessary to have such an interpretation.

One of the most important statements of the enlarged understanding of art is that it is not only materials – formed, or in chaos if necessary – that have to do with sculpture. Thought is a sculptural process, and the expression of thinking forms in language is also art. This totality of humankind's creativity – beginning with feelings and thoughts and their expression in a special material, the language material, for which you need your body and physical tools, your tongue,

larynx, lungs, the air, sound waves, the ear of the other person – all has to do with the idea of sculpture in the future.

There is, on one side, the physical consequence of the thought: the forms being realized in buildings, in architecture, in agricultural forms, in so-called sculptures, because they have a special form; they imply a special imagination rather than being only a repetition of the given. It is possible for people to see those tools, the result of a process; they can see, one could say, the 'hardware' character of a process. But from this point we should look at the source, where the sculptural process starts, and it is the thought, the thinking power and its consequence, information, which means for me bringing form in a material condition. [...]

Joseph Beuys and Kate Horsfield, extract from Lyn Blumenthal and Kate Horsfield, *Joseph Beuys: An Interview* (video) (Chicago: Video Data Bank, 1980); edited transcript, in *Energy Plan for the Western Man: Joseph Beuys in America – Writings by and Interviews with the Artist*, compiled by Karin Kuoni (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1990) 71–3.

## **Lygia Clark**

### **The Structuring of the Self//1980**

The 'structuring of the self'<sup>1</sup> was my first attempt to systemize a therapeutic method with 'relational objects'.

The person lies down, lightly dressed on a large, plastic mattress filled with Styrofoam, covered by a loose sheet. With his<sup>2</sup> own weight, the person creates furrows in the mattress into which his body settles. I massage the head at length, and I compress it with my hands. I take hold of the entire body with my hands; I squeeze the joints softly and firmly, which gives to many the sensation of 'glueing' or of 'welding' together pieces of the body. For others, the touch has the power of 'closing' the 'holes' of the body, or of 'displacing them' to other areas. I work the entire body with the 'lightweight cushions', rubbing the soles of the feet and the palms of the hands for a long while. I place a small stone wrapped in a small, smooth-textured bag (like the ones that are used for selling vegetables) in one of the subject's hands.

For the people who go through the process, the small stone in their hand is crucial. It is experienced as a concrete object that is neither the subject nor the mediator who applies it. It is positioned outside of the relationship, and it acquires the status of a 'reality test'. In all of my experience, there has only been

one exception to this rule: a *borderline*<sup>3</sup> who, in her fantasmatic constructions, experienced the little stone as excrement. I move 'plastic bags containing water' over the body, then 'plastic bags filled with air', followed by hot air that I blow through a tube over the entire surface of the body. I place the 'lightweight cushions' around the head, pressing the mattress around the body so as to mould it. I then place the 'heavy cushions' around the waist, between the legs, filling up all the empty spaces of the body. I place my hands on the place where I've detected a 'hole' (*manque*), pressing them down, and possibly replacing them eventually by 'light-heavy cushions'. I cover the body with a woollen blanket, and sit on the floor behind the subject's head, positioning myself close to him. I allow silence to settle; otherwise the subject may express all his fears and sensations verbally, possibly even experiencing his 'primitive agonies' (cf. D.W. Winnicott). I place my hand, as if it were a shell, on the person's face, stomach, or another part of the body, according to the fissures he expresses. In some cases, the removal of my hands from the body is experienced as fragmentation, as the loss of a body part. One witness described the experience this way: 'When you remove your hands from my body, I feel that a part of my body leaves, and what remains lacks the structure to maintain itself on its own.' At the end of the session, I gently remove the blanket and the cushions; I touch the subject's head and turn it from side to side. With some, I also pass the 'large mattress' over their bodies. I ask the person to stretch for a long while. From a seated position, I touch the entire surface of his back. Finally, I give the person one of several 'plastic bags filled with air' to handle or, eventually, to burst. I massage the person's head during this moment of exploration, creating favourable conditions so that he might *act out*.<sup>4</sup> When the subject bursts the plastic bag, he experiences 'ambivalence' toward the object. During this destruction, the 'relational object' is a receptacle to receive the subject's attacks, not even as a part-object (cf. Melanie Klein), but still in a process of undifferentiation: the two bodies are like communicating vessels, a continent in which the child doesn't differentiate between himself and the object. Afterwards, I urge the subject to fill another plastic bag to replace the destroyed one. This process of 'reparation' assures a stable identification with the beneficent object ('good object'), reinforcing the ego and distancing it from guilt. The process occurs at the same time as the appearance of the global object, through the restoration of integrity to the love object that had previously been the target of aggressive attacks by the subject. This moment therefore has a structuring role. The 'structuring of the self' occurs in the pre-verbal space. During this phase of the work, there is an utter respect for silence. Language intervenes later, if the person wishes verbally to express images or sensations that he has experienced, or, further, if in the following session he has noticed modifications in his behaviour in the real. The 'structuring of the self'



consists of a solid mothering: establishing between the mediator and the subject, in a real and symbolic manner, a relationship that is analogous to the one that would exist between a 'good mother' and her child. The action is reparatory – bringing to the subject real satisfactions that were withheld from him by his mother. It is a question of understanding the fundamental needs of the subject, and of responding to them through contact with the body, rather than through classical analytic interpretation. This evidently implies an affective engagement on the part of the mediator. When the patient has had a 'super-mother', he reacts against mothering with various symptoms: asphyxiation, coughing, a sensation of being crushed and of a weight that suffocates him. I apply the 'structuring of the self' in different structures and for different sets of psychological problems: with people who use drugs, who have 'holes' in their body, who have sexual or identity disorders, and with people who have extreme difficulty expressing themselves verbally. For the moment, I observe progress in all of them – even, or, above all, with *borderlines*. The body that is experienced as partial or fragmented starts to become global, the 'holes' of the body close up, the relationship with drugs changes, and there is an unblocking of sexuality, both polymorphic and genital. I currently apply this method in a consistent way in all of my therapies.

- 1 *Self* is in English in the original.
- 2 The male pronoun has been retained in the text but should be read as non gender-specific.
- 3 *Borderline* is in English in the original.
- 4 *Act out* is in English in the original.

Lygia Clark, 'Structuring the Self' (1980), in *Lygia Clark* (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1997) 320–22. Translated by Micaela Kramer, 2017.

## **Suely Rolnik**

### **Lygia Clark and the Art/Clinic Hybrid//1996**

How many beings am I that I always search for the reality of contradictions in the other being that inhabits me? How much joy and pain has my body, opening up like a gigantic cauliflower, offered to the other being that is secretly inside my self? Inside my stomach there lives a bird, inside my chest, a lion. The latter roams from side to side, incessantly. The bird screeches, flails, and is sacrificed. The egg continues to envelop it like a shroud, but it is already the beginning of the other bird that is born immediately after death.



There is not even an interval. It is the feast of life and death interlaced.<sup>1</sup>

Birds and lions inhabit us, says Lygia – they are our animal-body. A vibratory-body sensitive to the effects of the agitated movement of the environmental fluxes that traverse us. Egg-body, in which unknown intensive states germinate, provoked by the new compositions that are made and unmade by the fluxes as they roam here and there. From time to time, the germination of the body increases to the point where the body can no longer express itself in its current figure. It is restlessness: the animal screeches, flails, and ends up being sacrificed; its form has become a shroud. If we let ourselves be captured, it is the beginning of the other body that is born immediately after death.

Yet by what exactly should we let ourselves be captured? By the tension between the current figure of the animal-body that insists out of force of habit and the intensive states that are irreversibly produced in it, demanding the creation of a new figure. To allow ourselves to be captured by the feast of life and death interlaced – the tragic. The extent to which one can inhabit this tension can be a criterion for distinguishing modes of subjectivation.<sup>2</sup> An ethical criterion, as it is based on the expansion of life, which occurs in the production of differences and their affirmation in new forms of existence.

Art is the privileged field for confronting the tragic. One can recognize an artistic mode of subjectivation from its special intimacy with the entanglement of life and death. The artist can remain attuned to the intensive differences that vibrate within her animal-body and, allowing herself to be taken by the agony of its flailing gestures, gives herself over to the feast of the sacrifice. Then, like a gigantic cauliflower, her egg-body opens, and from there another I, until then in larval form, will be born together with her work.

Artist and work are produced simultaneously in an inexhaustible heterogenesis. It is through the act of creation that the artist confronts the malaise of the death of her current self, caused by the pressure of the larval selves that become agitated within her body. The artist achieves this confrontation within the materiality of her work, where the marks of her singular encounter with the tragic feast inscribe themselves. The marks of this experience carry the possibility of their transmission: they increase the chances within the receiver's subjectivity of accomplishing this encounter, of getting closer to one's vibratory-body, and of exposing oneself to the demands of the creation of this body.

Art is thus an ecological reserve for the invisible species that populate our animal-body in its generous germinative life; a wellspring of courage for confronting the tragic. The degree of permeability between this reserve of heterogenesis and the rest of the planet – and the extent to which the planet can breathe the airs of the reserve – depends on the historical context.

In the contemporary world, we face a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, art is a well-demarcated domain, which gives the rest of the planet the impression of a certain withering of the vibratory-body. A kind of subjectivity establishes itself that tends to be ignorant of intensive states, orienting itself solely according to the dimension of form. A contributing factor is that today the market has become the main – if not the only – mechanism of social recognition. Subjectivities tend to orient themselves increasingly on the basis of this recognition and, therefore, according to forms that are supposedly rising in value, and less and less on the basis of the efficacy of forms as vehicles for emerging differences. Media monopolies play a significant role in establishing this less experimental, more market-driven mode of subjectivation. Images of glamorized forms of existence, which seem to hover unshaken over the turbulences of the living, navigate within their electronic arteries. The seductiveness of these figures mobilizes a frenetic search for identification, forever failing and beginning again, for we are dealing with imaginary montages.

On the other hand, however, our animal-body has been flailing more than ever: new communication and information technologies mean that each individual is permanently inhabited by the fluxes of the entire planet, thereby multiplying hybridizations, and arousing differences that vibrate within the body and make it screech. This means that the disparity between the infinitude of the production of differences and the finitude of forms is increasingly exacerbated: there is now hardly any interval between the egg and the shroud, as Lygia already warned us in the 1960s. Today, forms are more ephemeral than ever.

In other words, many fluxes, many hybridizations, an intensified production of difference; yet, paradoxically, there is not much listening to this murmur, little fluidity, a debilitated power of experimentation. In this world of marketed subjectivities, there is little permeability between art – the one and only place where the screech is heard as an appeal to creation – and the rest of the planet. Outside of art and of the artist, each animal's screech, each death of a figure of the human tends to be experienced as a total annihilation. This sensation can lead to pathological reactions, and at this point we have already entered another domain: that of the clinic.

Between the ecological reserve of the animal-body in art and its exile in the clinic, when it becomes pathological for having inadvertently stepped outside the reserve, the disruptive power of the disparity between animal and human becomes sterile. Without a path to existentialization, differences end up aborted. Ethics and aesthetics split: the process of an experimental creation of existence shuts down; life dwindles.

As I see it, it is in this context that one finds the question that propels Lygia Clark's work: to incite, in the receiver, the courage to expose herself to the

animal's screech; the artist being thus a 'proposer' of the conditions for this confrontation. What Lygia wants is for the feast of the interlacing of life and death to exceed the boundaries of art, and to spill out onto existence. And she searches for solutions so that the object itself might have the power to promote this un-confinement.

Although it has been present throughout her oeuvre, this proposal can be more easily discerned starting with the phase that is inaugurated by *Caminhando* (Walking), in 1964, when Lygia invests further in the experimental axis of art to the detriment of the narcissistic/market-driven axis. During this phase, she writes things such as: 'Even if this new proposal is no longer considered a work of art, one must keep taking it forward (new modality of art?)'<sup>3</sup> Her question becomes more powerfully radical and explicit. The meaning of the object starts to depend entirely on experimentation, which prevents the object from being merely exposed and consumed by the receiver, without the receiver being affected by it. The object loses its autonomy, 'it is merely a potentiality',<sup>4</sup> actualized (or not) by the receiver. Lygia wants to arrive at the minimal point of the object's materiality, where it is nothing but the embodiment of the transmutation that has taken place in her subjectivity; a point at which, for this very reason, the object attains its maximum power of contagion.

Her last piece, *Objetos Relacionais* (Relational Objects), was the closest Lygia was ever able to get to this point. Small plastic or cloth bags filled with air, water, sand or polystyrene; rubber tubes, cardboard pipes, cloths, socks, shells, honey and other such unexpected objects are spread throughout the poetic space she created in one of the rooms in her apartment, to which she gave the name of consulting room.<sup>5</sup> These objects are the elements of an initiation ritual that she develops throughout the regular 'sessions' with each receiver.

Yet into what exactly are we initiated in this experimental consulting room of hers? Into the experience of the undoing of our contours, our corporeal image, to venture through the effervescent processuality of our vibratory-body with no image. A voyage to the beyond of representation so intense that, as a matter of prudence, Lygia would leave a small stone in the receiver/patient's hand during the entire session so that, like Hansel and Gretel, the receiver/patient would be able to find her way back. Back to the familiar, to the known, to the domestic; back to form, to the image, to the human – the 'reality test', which is how Lygia would refer to this aspect of her ritual.

Thus the initiation that takes place in Lygia's experimental consulting room has nothing to do with the expression or recovery of one's self, nor with the discovery of some supposed unity or interiority in whose recesses one would find hidden fantasies, primordial or not, which one would attempt to bring to consciousness. On the contrary: the *Objetos Relacionais* take us to the egg-body. These strange

objects that Lygia created have the power to make us differ from ourselves.

The radicalization of Lygia's proposal already announced itself with *Trepante* (Creeper), the last specimen of her prestigious family of *Bichos* (Animals). This radicalization gained visibility with the kick that Mário Pedrosa gave the work when he saw it for the first time, and with his joy at being able to kick a work of art. The memorable gesture of the critic and friend materializes the starting shot of a leap that Lygia would take in her work, leading her toward a region increasingly at the borders of art, especially within the artistic universe of the time period.<sup>6</sup> A mystery begins to loom over her work, which will last throughout the last twenty-four years of her life, and even beyond. Is it art itself that Lygia kicked? Did she empty herself as an artist? Did she lose her mind?

Twelve years later, when she created the *Objetos Relacionais*, her last piece, it was Lygia herself who, misunderstood and marginalized by art at this point, provided a response: she had become a psychotherapist. The few critics who still dared to reflect on her work at the time tended to accept this explanation without contesting it (an acceptance generally unaccompanied by a recognition of the therapeutic value of her work). In this way, the official interpretation of Lygia Clark's post-kick oeuvre was established.

At the time, I, too, agreed with this response; so much so that, at Lygia's request, I developed a psychoanalytic reading of her sessions with the *Objetos Relacionais*, which I treated as clinical practice in the Psychology dissertation that I defended at a Paris university.<sup>7</sup> However, I no longer so easily accept the interpretation that Lygia had become a therapist. And this is not because of some craving for orthodoxy. On the contrary, it seems to me that the challenge that Lygia proposes to us is precisely that of living together in the border space in which she increasingly positioned herself. It is Lygia herself who, commenting on her project with the *Objetos Relacionais* in an interview, says: 'It is border-work, because it isn't psychoanalysis, it isn't art. So I find myself on the border, completely alone'.<sup>8</sup> Today I would understand Lygia's request differently: more than bringing her to the world of the clinic, as I did in the 1970s, it would be necessary to meet her at the border.

Even though it seems perfectly reasonable to me to use Lygia's proposals in clinical work – which she herself wanted, by the way – I don't believe that there is an artist Lygia and a separate, therapist Lygia. And further: I believe that this division diminishes the disruptive force of her work. The kick – Lygia's gesture, and the gesture that Mário Pedrosa enacts – wasn't aiming at art; rather, it was aiming at its confinement as an autonomous discipline, which implies a reification of the creative process. Lygia wanted to displace the object from its condition as end to a condition as means. Lygia's leap after *Bichos* doesn't remove her from art and place her within the clinic; rather, her leap takes her to a border



where the question that traverses the whole of her work is distilled, reverberating through art as well as through the clinic.

Lygia's question, materialized in her work, has the power to wrench away the fence that isolates art as the ecological reserve of a confrontation with the tragic. In this way, she ends up producing hybridizations of art with other practices – especially with the clinic, which is no accident. We saw that the clinic is born precisely within a socio-cultural context that silences the animal's screech, caging it within art; the result is that in the rest of social life this screech tends to be experienced as a trauma. It is interesting to note that Lygia called the 'state of art' that which hears the screech of the animal-body within ourselves, while Deleuze calls 'state of the clinic' that which silences this screech within ourselves. The art/clinic hybrid produced in Lygia's work makes explicit the transversality that exists between these two practices. Problematising this transversality can mobilize the power of critique both in art and in the clinic.

In the first place, this hybrid makes visible the clinical dimension of art: a revitalization of the state of art potentially implies a surpassing of the state of the clinic. And, in return, an aesthetic dimension of the clinic becomes visible: a surpassing of the state of the clinic potentially gives rise to a revitalization of the state of art.

Secondly, we can find in these two practices the presence of the same ethical dimension: the exercise of dislodging the founding principle of the predominant forms of reality in our world. Undoing any attachment to the shroud-forms as a reference, so as to be able to constitute oneself in the feast of the interlacing of life and death; or, in Lygia's words, 'so that everything in reality may become a process'.<sup>9</sup> Her art/clinic hybrid allows us to see that the fundamental ethical question that traverses these two fields is that of creating the conditions so that one might be able to expose oneself to the malaise brought about by the tragic.

And, lastly, the same political dimension becomes explicit in both artistic practice and clinical practice. From the perspective of their hybridization, both practices reveal themselves to be forces of resistance against the sterilization of the disruptive power of the disparity between the infinite germination of the egg-body and the finitude of the forms that embody each one of its creations. As we have seen, the rigid separation between these practices implies a pathologization of the state of art: it diminishes our chances of constituting territories that are the expression of differences engendered in our animal-body, and with it, our chances to invest in the experimental dimension of life, the construction of life itself as a work of art. [...]

1 Lygia Clark, letter to Mário Pedrosa, 1967; in Sonia Lins, *Artes* (1996).

2 Cf. Paulo Cesar Lopes, *Pragmática do Desejo. Aproximações a uma teoria da clínica em Félix Guattari*

e Gilles Deleuze. MA Dissertation, Graduate Degree in Clinical Psychology from PUC/SPP. São Paulo, 1996.

- 3 'A magia do objeto sem função'. Unpublished, 1965.
- 4 '1964: Caminhando', in *Lygia Clark* (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, 1980) 26.
- 5 In Portuguese, a 'consultório' can be a doctor's or a therapist's office. In order to maintain the ambiguity about which practitioner might be using the office space, it has been translated as 'consulting room'.
- 6 Mário Pedrosa, one of the most important figures in the history of art criticism in Brazil, was a privileged interpreter of Lygia Clark's work.
- 7 *La mémoire du corps*. Paris, U.E.R. de Sciences Humaines Cliniques, Sorbonne, Université de Paris VII, 1978.
- 8 'A radical Lygia Clark', interview with Wilson Coutinho, *Jornal do Brasil* (15 December 1980).
- 9 Letter to Oiticica (26 October 1968), in *Lygia Clark e Hélio Oiticica* (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, 1987).

Suely Rolnik, extract from 'Lygia Clark e o híbrido arte/clínica' (Lygia Clark and the Art/Clinic Hybrid), *Percurso: Revista de Psicanálise*, vol. 8, no. 16 (1996) 43–8. Translated by Micaela Kramer, 2017.

## Giorgio Agamben Poiesis and Praxis//1994

It may be time to attempt a more original understanding of the statement made in the previous chapter: 'man has on earth a poetic, that is, a productive, status.' The problem of the destiny of art in our time has led us to posit as inseparable from it the problem of the meaning of productive activity, of man's 'doing' in its totality. This productive activity is understood, in our time, as praxis. According to current opinion, all of man's doing – that of the artist and the craftsman as well as that of the workman and the politician – is praxis, that is, manifestation of a will that produces a concrete effect. When we say that man has a productive status on earth, we mean, then, that the status of his dwelling on earth is a *practical* one.

We are so accustomed to this unified understanding of all of man's 'doing' as praxis that we do not recognize that it could be, and in other eras has been, conceived differently. The Greeks, to whom we owe all the categories through which we judge ourselves and the reality around us, made a clear distinction between *poiesis* (*poiein*, 'to produce' in the sense of bringing into being) and *praxis* (*prattein*, 'to do' in the sense of acting). As we shall see, central to praxis was the



idea of the will that finds its immediate expression in an act, while, by contrast, central to poesis was the experience of production into presence, the fact that something passed from nonbeing to being, from concealment into the full light of the work. The essential character of poesis was not its aspect as a practical and voluntary process but its being a mode of truth understood as unveiling, *á-lêtheia*. And it was precisely because of this essential proximity to truth that Aristotle, who repeatedly theorizes this distinction within man's 'doing', tended to assign a higher position to poesis than to praxis. According to Aristotle, the roots of praxis lay in the very condition of man as an *animal*, a living being: these roots were constituted by the very principle of motion (will, understood as the basic unit of craving, desire and volition) that characterizes life.

The Greeks were prevented from considering work thematically, as one of the fundamental modes of human activity besides poesis and praxis, by the fact that the physical work necessary for life's needs was performed by slaves. However, this does not mean that they were unaware of its existence or had not understood its nature. To work meant to submit to necessity, and submission to necessity, which made man the equal of the animal, with its perpetual and forced search for means of sustenance, was thought incompatible with the condition of the free man. As Hannah Arendt rightly points out, to affirm that work was an object of contempt in antiquity because it was reserved to slaves is a prejudice: the ancients reasoned about it in the opposite direction, deeming necessary the existence of slaves because of the slavish nature of the activities that provided for life's sustenance. In other words, they had understood one of the essential characteristics of work, namely, its immediate relation to the biological process of life. For while poesis constructs the space where man finds his certitude and where he ensures the freedom and duration of his action, the presupposition of work is, on the contrary, bare biological existence, the cyclical processes of the human body, whose metabolism and whose energy depend on the basic products of labour.

In the Western cultural tradition, the distinction between these three kinds of human doing – poesis, praxis and work – has been progressively obscured. What the Greeks conceived as poesis is understood by the Romans as one mode of *agere*, that is, as an acting that puts-to-work, an *operari*. *Ergon* and *énérgeia*, which for the Greeks had nothing directly to do with action but rather designated the essential character of a status in presence, become in Latin *actus* and *actualitas*: they are transposed (translated) into the plane of *agere*, of the voluntary production of an effect. Christian theological thought, which conceived the supreme Being as an *actus purus*, ties to Western metaphysics the interpretation of being as actuality and act. When this process is completed in the modern era, every chance to distinguish between poesis and praxis, production and action, is

lost. Man's 'doing' is determined as an activity producing a real effect (the *opus* of *operari*, the *factum* of *facere*, the *actus* of *agere*), whose worth is appreciated with respect to the will that is expressed in it, that is, with respect to its freedom and creativity. The central experience of poiesis, production into presence, is replaced by the question of the 'how', that is, of the process through which the object has been produced. In terms of the work of art, this means that the emphasis shifts away from what the Greeks considered the essence of the work – the fact that in it something passed from nonbeing into being, thus opening the space of truth (*á-lêtheia*) and building a world for man's dwelling on earth – and to the *operari* of the artist, that is, to the creative genius and the particular characteristics of the artistic process in which it finds expression.

In a movement parallel to this process of convergence between poiesis and praxis, work, which used to occupy the lowest rank in the hierarchy of active life, climbs to the rank of central value and common denominator of every human activity. This ascent begins at the moment when Locke discovers in work the origin of property, continues when Adam Smith elevates it to the source of all wealth, and reaches its peak with Marx, who makes of it the expression of man's very humanity. At this point, all human 'doing' is interpreted as praxis, as concrete productive activity (in opposition to theory, understood as a synonym of thought and abstract meditation), and praxis is conceived in turn as starting from work, that is, from the production of material life that corresponds to life's biological cycle. This productive doing now everywhere determines the status of man on earth – man understood as the living being (*animal*) that works (*laborans*), and, in work, produces himself and ensures his dominion over the earth. Everywhere, even where Marx's thought is condemned and refused, man today is the living being who produces and works. And artistic production, which has now become creative activity, also enters into the dimension of praxis, albeit a very peculiar praxis, aesthetic creation or superstructure.

In the course of this process, which implies a total reversal of the traditional hierarchy of man's activities, one thing remains unchanged, namely, the taking root of praxis in biological existence, which Aristotle had expressed by interpreting its principle as will, drive and vital impulse. The ascent of work from the lowest to the highest rank and the subsequent eclipse of the sphere of poiesis depended precisely on the fact that the endless process put into being by work was, among all human activities, the most directly tied to the biological cycle of the organism.

All the attempts made in the modern era to found man's 'doing' differently have remained anchored to this interpretation of praxis as will and vital impulse – that is, to an interpretation of life, of man as a living being. In our time, the philosophy of man's 'doing' continues to be a philosophy of life. Even when Marx

inverts the traditional hierarchy of theory and praxis, the Aristotelian determination of praxis as will remains unchanged, because for Marx work is, in its essence, 'capacity for work' (*Arbeitskraft*), and its foundation is inherent in the very natural character of man as 'active natural being', that is, as endowed with vital instincts and appetites.

In the same way, all attempts to transcend aesthetics and to give a new status to artistic production have started from the blurring of the distinction between poesis and praxis, that is, from the interpretation of art as a mode of praxis and of praxis as the expression of a will and a creative force. Novalis's definition of poetry as a 'wilful, active and productive use of our organs', Nietzsche's identification of art with the will to power in the idea of the universe 'as a work of art that gives birth to itself', Artaud's aspiration to a theatrical liberation of the will, and the situationist project of an overcoming of art based on a practical actualization of the creative impulses that are expressed in art in an alienated fashion, are all tributary to a determination of the essence of human activity as will and vital impulse, and are therefore founded in the forgetting of the original productive status of the work of art as foundation of the space of truth. The point of arrival of Western aesthetics is a metaphysics of the will, that is, of life understood as energy and creative impulse.

This metaphysics of the will has penetrated our conception of art to such an extent that even the most radical critiques of aesthetics have not questioned its founding principle, that is, the idea that art is the expression of the artist's creative will. Such critiques remain inside aesthetics, since they are only the extreme development of one of the two polarities on which it founds its interpretation of the work of art: the polarity of genius understood as will and creative force. And yet what the Greeks meant with the distinction between poesis and praxis was precisely that the essence of poesis has nothing to do with the expression of a will (with respect to which art is in no way necessary): this essence is found instead in the production of truth and in the subsequent opening of a world for man's existence and action. [...]

Giorgio Agamben, extract from *L'uomo senza contenuto* (1994); trans. Georgia Albert. *The Man without Content* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999) 68–72 [footnotes not included].

**Florene Belmore**  
**Wana-na-wang-ong// 1993**

Wanna now wong gong  
It's funny. I can't remember how we decided to spell it.  
Forgetting things is so easy.  
So easy.

wananawangong.  
is a place. It's the land:  
sandy, curving, and beautiful.

I walked along Town Beach until sand filled my shoes  
I walked barefoot and sat on the mountain top  
I scanned the horizon and quickly hid my thoughts  
Only in the shadows of sunset did I tell her.  
Sometimes my eyes like to see none of what's around

we sit at the kitchen table  
between garden and setting sun

she pours tea  
into thick clay cups

I turn the green tomatoes  
sitting on the sill

'Get rid of it! Get rid of the weaving, the macramé and whatever else.  
Throw it all out! We're not weavers! We're Anishinabe! Root People!'

She talks quickly. Her words rush together so I have to repeat them in my mind to separate them, give them room for each other. I wish she would speak slower, but she doesn't like the sound of our voices out here. I know this because inside, at night, she lets her words roll out like smooth stones. She says we should go and come again tomorrow. I agree and we walk back together.

The sun sinks behind the trees. The western sky catches fire leaving us in smouldering light. The evening air is tight like the skin on a drum. She moves

ahead of me and roots fall from under her arm like hair from a clasp. The thick strands flow over the ground like spring water.

I follow her across the raw field of tangled stumps and felled trees, side-stepping basins of mud. A stick breaks, the snap ricochets off the distant black wall of evergreens. The mud squelches and grabs hold of my foot. I hurry to catch up. Once we reach the road, we coil the roots up and put them in the back of the van. The noise of opening and shutting the door brings out our voices and we talk about tomorrow and how much we did today.

I hold and pull the spruce roots as she ties.  
The roots are soft and pliable but hard on the hands.  
She finishes the frame while I pick and press the autumn leaves.

In places the bark has broken away and flesh is exposed.  
The roots are intricately wound and tied.  
I marvel at the strength and delicacy of the roots and our hands, especially hers.

we could be gatherers ...  
we could be cows grazing in a field ...  
we could be the potato pickers ... painted in dark hues ...  
we could just be plain kooks ... gone kooky ...  
we could get shot ... mistaken for moose by the hunters eager to kill ...  
The moss folds back like a lush green page. I pick out bits of peat moss that are right in their colour and texture then replace the cover.

The ground is covered with thick moss and rotting leaves. I look for club moss. It has stems that stand out in short tufts. I find the end of the vine-like moss and pull, trying to get it up in one long piece. I gather the moss and put it into piles. After I have about four or five piles I start taking the piles to the house. Carrying the moss to the house is like carrying a big wreath. It feels like a decoration for some celebration. I like collecting the club moss. Somehow I'm a child again, playing. Once I've gathered all the piles I find a place in the yard to sit and begin the task of removing all the stems from the vine. The result of the piles I estimate will cover about three quarters of one panel. It's close to four o'clock and I go back out to gather one more pile. These I'll leave for tomorrow to trim.

Rain's turned to wet snow. Impossible to find shelter in the scrawny spruce stand so I turn my back to it and keep on picking. The lichen comes off easier when it's wet. The other day the lichen was dry and dusty, picking it off the branches was

like pulling apart dry bread. It crumbled real easy. In the freezing rain the lichen is like the bread is fresh again. I coax my hands to keep moving, to keep plucking. I concentrate on filling my box. I swear and sing fragments of songs. Turns out I know lots of titles. The titles run out and I tire of swearing. I let the hush of the wet snow take over, fill space and carry time on.

Every now and then I'd call out their names and their voices would come back as a surprise. We moved about the forest like players on a board game.

We'd shout back and forth asking each other if our box was full yet.

Our voices coming in closer  
or moving further away.

The tea in the thermos is sweet and warm.

The first sip starts to melt the ice sliver that has pierced me  
and lies next to my bones.

We wave good-bye and turn to the house.

Suula's sitting on the step waiting to be let in.  
She scoops up the cat and strokes her thickening fur.  
Suula's meow says she is hungry.

She feeds the cat and calls from the kitchen  
asking me to light the fire.  
She and Suula join me.  
We watch the fire.  
Drink cedar tea.

I wonder aloud if they were reluctant or eager.  
She says maybe they were curious.  
We talk about them,  
they're in the room with us.  
our brothers, and nephews,  
our friends and lovers,  
our sister and our mother.  
We thank them.

Florence Belmore, 'Wana-na-wang-ong' (1993), in Rebecca Belmore, Lee-Ann Martin, Florence Belmore, *Wana-na-wang-ong* (Vancouver: Contemporary Art Gallery, 1994) 35-8.



## **Cecilia Vicuña** **cloud-net//1998**

The true performance is that of our species on Earth: the way we cause suffering to others, the way we warm the atmosphere or cause other species to disappear.

I cover myself with clouds to feel like the Earth feels.

Cecilia Vicuña, 'cloud-net' (1998), in *Spit Temple: The Selected Performances of Cecilia Vicuña*, ed. Rosa Alcalá (Brooklyn: Ugly Duckling Press, 2012) 98.

## **Boris Groys** **The Loneliness of the Project//2002**

[...] In the past two decades the art project – in lieu of the work of art – has without question moved to centre stage in the art world's attention. Each art project may presuppose the formulation of a specific aim and of a strategy designed to achieve this aim, but this target is mostly formulated in such a way that we are denied the criteria which would allow us to ascertain whether the project's aim has or has not been achieved, whether excessive time is required to reach its goal or even if the target as such is intrinsically unattainable. Our attention is thereby shifted away from the production of a work (including a work of art) onto life in the art project; life that is not primarily a productive process, that is not tailored to developing a product, that is not 'result oriented'. In these terms, art is no longer understood as the production of works of art, but as documentation of life-in-the-project, regardless of the outcome the life in question has or is supposed to have had. This clearly has an effect on the way art is now defined. Nowadays art is no longer manifested as another, new object for contemplation that has been produced by the artist, but as another, heterogeneous time-frame of the art project, which is documented as such.

A work of art is traditionally understood to be something that wholly embodies art, lending it immediacy and palpable, visible presence. When we go to an art exhibition, we generally assume that whatever is there on display – paintings, sculptures, drawings, photographs, videos, readymades or installations

– must be art. The works can of course in one way or another make reference to things that they are not, maybe to real-world objects or to certain political issues, but they do not allude to art itself, because they themselves are art. However, this traditional assumption defining visits to exhibitions and museums has proved progressively more misleading. Besides works of art, in present-day art spaces, we are now to an ever-increasing degree also confronted with the documentation of art in various guises. Similarly, here too we see pictures, drawings, photographs, videos, texts and installations; in other words, the same forms and media in which art is commonly presented. But when it comes to art documentation, art is no longer presented through these media but simply documented. For art documentation is *per definitionem* not art. Precisely by merely referring to art, art documentation makes it quite clear that art itself is no longer at hand and instantly visible but, instead, absent and hidden.

Art documentation thus signals the attempt to use artistic media within art spaces to make direct reference to life itself, in other words, to a form of pure activity or pure praxis, as it were; indeed, a reference to life in the art project, yet without wishing directly to represent it. Here, art is transformed into a way of life, whereby the work of art is turned into non-art, to mere documentation of this, of life. Or, put in different terms, art is now becoming biopolitical, because it has begun to produce and document life itself as pure activity, by artistic means. Not only that, but art documentation could only have evolved at all under the conditions of our biopolitical age, in which life itself has become the object of technical and artistic creativity. So once more we are faced with the question as to the relationship between life and art, but in an utterly novel constellation, one which is characterized by the paradox of art in the guise of the art project now also wanting to become life, instead of, for instance, simply reproducing life or furnishing it with art products. But the conventional question that comes to mind is to what extent documentation, including art documentation, can actually represent life itself?

All documentation is under general suspicion of inexorably adulterating life. For each act of documentation and archiving presupposed a certain choice of things and circumstances. Yet such a selection is determined by criteria and values which are always questionable, and necessarily remain so. Furthermore, the process of documenting something always opens up a disparity between the document itself and the documented events, a divergence that can neither be bridged nor erased. But even if we managed to develop a procedure capable of reproducing life in its entirety and with total authenticity, we would again ultimately end up not with life itself, but with life's death mask, for it is the very uniqueness of life that constitutes its vitality. It is for this reason that our culture today is marked by a deep malaise towards documentation and the archive, and

even by vociferous protest against the archive in the name of life. The archivists and bureaucrats in charge of documentation are widely regarded as the enemies of true life, favouring the compilation and administration of dead documents over the direct experience of life. In particular, the bureaucrat is viewed as an agent of death who wields the chilling power of documentation to render life grey, monotonous, uneventful and bloodless – in brief, deathlike. Similarly, once the artist too starts to become involved with documentation, he runs the risk of being associated with the bureaucrat, under suspicion as a new agent of death.

As we know, however, the bureaucratic documentation stored in archives does not consist solely of recorded memories, but also includes projects and plans directed not at the past but at the future. These archives of projects contain drafts for life that has not yet taken place, but as it is perhaps meant to in the future. And what this means in our own biopolitical era is not merely making changes to the fundamental conditions of life, but actively engaging in the production of life itself. Biopolitics is frequently mistaken for the scientific and technological strategies of genetic manipulation, which, theoretically at least, aim to reshape individual living beings. Instead, the real achievement of biopolitical technology has far more to do with shaping longevity itself, with organizing life as an event, as pure activity that occurs in time. From procreation and the provision of life-long medical care to the regulation of the balance between work and leisure and medically supervised, if not medically induced death, the life of each individual today is permanently subject to artificial control and improvement. And precisely because life is now no longer perceived as a primeval, elementary event of being, as fate or *fortuna*, as time that unravels of its own accord, but is seen instead as time that can be artificially produced and formed, life can be documented and archived before it has even taken place. Indeed, bureaucratic and technological documentation serves as the primary medium of modern biopolitics. The schedules, regulations, investigative reports, statistical surveys and project outlines that this kind of documentation consists of are constantly generating new life. Even the genetic archive that is contained in every living being can ultimately be understood as a component of this documentation: one that both documents the genetic structure of previous, obsolete organisms, yet also enables the same genetic structure to be interpreted as a blueprint for creating future living organisms. This means that, given the current state of biopolitics, the archive no longer allows us to differentiate between memory and project, between past and future. This, incidentally, also offers the rational basis for what in the Christian tradition is termed the Resurrection and for what in political and cultural domains is known as a revival. For the archive of elapsed forms of life can at any moment turn out to be a script for the future. By being stored in the archive as documentation, life can be

repeatedly relived and constantly reproduced within historical time, should anyone resolve to undertake such reproduction. The archive is the site where past and future become reversible.

The art project can be documented because life in the art project was originally artificial, and this life can be reproduced in time in just the same way as works of art can be reproduced in space. By this token, an unfinished, unrealized or even initially rejected project is far better suited for demonstrating the inner nature of modern life as life-in-the-project than all those projects that have been approved of and successfully concluded. Such 'failed' projects namely shift attention more clearly away from the project's result and onto the processual character of fulfilling the project, ultimately focusing on the project author's subjectivity. The art project that addresses the impossibility of being concluded offers a constantly changing definition of the figure of the author. In this case, the author is no longer the producer of an art object, but the person who is documenting – and thereby authorizing – the heterogeneous time of a life in the project, including his own life as well. But the author is not being occasioned to do this by some public body or institution that possesses the power to authorize in the sense of granting permission. Rather, this is more like an authorization provided at one's own risk, one that not only admits the possibility of failure, but indeed explicitly celebrates it. In any case, though, this kind of authorization of life-in-the-project opens up another, heterogeneous parallel time frame – the time of desirable and socially legitimate loneliness.

Boris Groys, extract from 'The Loneliness of the Project' (Antwerp: Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, 2002); reprinted in *New York Magazine of Contemporary Art and Theory*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2002). ([www.ny-magazine.org](http://www.ny-magazine.org))

**Andrea Phillips**

**From Work to Practice//2010**

[...] The by now widely understood evolution from material to immaterial concepts of labour (literally, the production of services that 'result in no material and durable good')<sup>1</sup> ushers in terms such as practice-based. 'Practice' is radically different from 'work' in its temporal and spatial, operational and aesthetic organization. To be practice-based is to be more flexible; more embedded in the immanence of operations; more responsive to material and

conceptual change; more reflexive. In art and education, this has widely been recognized as a useful reshaping of what constitutes work and/or research; in terms of labour, more generally, a division occurs between those who regard immaterial or affective labour as a new form of social collectivization and those who strongly oppose it on the grounds of exploitation. Many post-Marxist thinkers determine that this shift produces major problems with regard to the development of new forms of poverty; the deskilling of traditions; social exclusions; the eradication of traditional structures of democracy in the workplace (unionism, bargaining power, etc.), which results in lowering wages; deregulation of state structures such as welfare, housing and medical provision; and the increase in privatization linked to developing forms of capital. Of great influence, however, and particularly within art and higher education, is the view that such critiques delimit workers as reactive rather than active authors of new forms of production. [...]

The argument between immaterial and material labour, between practice as a form of deregulation and practice as a form of rehearsal, might be characterized as this: if when we work, we expect remuneration and discrete satisfaction for our part in the production of an object, an event or outcome; when we *practice*, we do not have such discrete expectations – rather, we understand that we participate in a flow of process that is both immanent and interdisciplinary, through which we develop an event-based and ongoing, improvisory state of productivity. We also repeat ourselves, in the sense that we work at this productivity every day, every week, to get better at it (we can always work harder to get better but there is never a final state of achievement). If we are artists, we produce objects that do not summarize this process but rather embody states in the level of flow. This practice, then, asserts a different way of being in the world, one that modifies the concept of work, and thus has a different relation to the politics of production. Pedagogy slips between these definitions. It is at once involved in the production and promotion of skills-based training (however ambiguous) and in the production and promotion of immaterial conceptions of practice-based knowledge; this situation is perhaps most exacerbated by arts education itself.<sup>2</sup> [...]

1 [footnote 3 in source] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. *Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Press, 2000) 290.

2 [13] Recent debates in the art department at Goldsmiths [University of London] demonstrate this paradox: in 2007, the department chose to rebrand its well-known Masters in Fine Art as 'MFA Art Practice' in the acknowledgement of the shift away from the discrete nomenclatures that artists themselves took up ('sculptor', 'painter', printmaker, etc.) and in recognition that the historically important MA in Textiles had been subsumed into a general MFA, resulting in a



need to reflect the diversity of practices students might take up (and the diversity of practical options open for training via departmental technical workshops). At the time of writing, a reversion to the old programme title, MFA Fine Art, is tabled, signalling, amid other market-led arguments, a discomfort amongst many staff in having their (often very material) practice labelled as 'practice' as such.

Andrea Phillips, extracts from 'Education Aesthetics', in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, ed. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions/Amsterdam: De Appel, 2010) 86, 88–9.

## **Lane Relyea**

### **Welcome to Yourspace//2013**

[...] DIY serves as the honorific term for the kind of subject required by the constant just-in-time turmoil of our networked world. It has come to stand for a potent mix of entrepreneurial agency and networked sociality, proclaiming itself heir to both punk autonomy, the notion of living by your wits and as an outsider, and to a subcultural basis for authentic artistic production, the assumption that truly creative individuals exist in spontaneously formed social undergrounds. Most artists tend to be DIY today – I know this from experience. When I first started teaching college art courses in the early 1980s, it would often be in painting departments, and I, like everyone else, would assign articles from the 1960s addressing topics like the difference between modernist medium specificity and conceptualism's art in general. I would ask the painting students how they would identify themselves if someone asked them – in a bar, in court – 'What do you do?' Would they call themselves painters or artists? Most back then answered, 'I'm a painter.' I've continued to ask this question, at schools where I work full time and also at schools where I'm invited to conduct one-day seminars, group critiques, or individual studio visits. Today the painting students, all of them, across the board, don't say they're painters. But they also don't call themselves artists. 'I do stuff' is the most frequent response. Or, 'I make stuff.' All verb, no predicate. All open-ended adaptability and responsiveness, no set vocation. [...]

Of course, doing it yourself and being in a network are not identical – on a desert island you can be self-reliant and yet lack social connections – but today the two do closely overlap. That's because the subject of DIY is not an autonomous individual; rather it is a 'free agent' or networker who, by being so



thoroughly defined in her or his predisposition to 'doing' and making connections, is always situated and contextualized, externalized and performative. And yet this agent remains 'free', despite being context-dependent, because the new context is not thought to be the all-determining social structure or the rigid bureaucratic institution or the brainwashing ideological apparatus. It's the temporary project. [...]

The end of Fordism hasn't left us with a less turbulent, shattering and dispersive version of capitalism, only one offering much fewer remedies to such things. And today DIY serves as one of its campaign slogans. It's the new punk, after capitalism itself has gone punk – has gone liquid, disorganized and flexible. No longer about condemning the system, DIY is exemplary of how to bargain and negotiate with it endlessly, how to battle for a modicum of romantic glamour and self-worth within it, a sense of worth measured by the system's values and achieved through its laws and norms. Louis Althusser's insight into the necessity for labour power to reproduce itself is no less true today, only now labourers are constructed in conformity with dominant conditions by being flexible rather than rigidly disciplined, and by acting out in their daily material practices the society's reigning belief in flexibility, flux and the short-term as undeniably enduring and timeless values. And while Althusser also certainly focused on institutions in his analysis, they weren't fundamental for him; as if anticipating the shift today toward a more mobile and atomized unit of measure, he distilled the existence of ideology into two things: what he called 'the practical telecommunications of hailings', and the 'destination' of such communication, 'concrete individuals as subjects'. 'This destination for ideology', he writes in 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', 'is only made possible by the subject: meaning, *by the category of the subject and its functioning ... all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects.*'<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, it would be hard to concoct a better motto or hail for our neo-entrepreneurial age than 'do it yourself', an ingrown, chest-thumping form of self-hailing in which the steely sense of role and identity enforced by former institutional and disciplinary apparatuses of the Fordist 'society of discipline' are superseded by the improvised adaptations and temporary projects of free agents in the 'society of control'. The syntax of 'do it yourself' favours not the spatial matching and mirroring of subject and stable framing predicate but the temporal drumbeat of a verb-centred practice – do, do, do – a practice that is both open-ended (do what?) and oddly autistic (*what* isn't important, *you* are), whose second-person subject is posited as the responsive and responsible addressee of an unattributed, generalized grammatical imperative (the address of language per se as the basis of access to social existence), although now the imperative implores not just ongoing, intransitive action but the taking of ownership over

that action, commanding that the commanded feel themselves in command. The empty index here – an update of the cop's 'Hey, you' in the Althusserian account – is substantiated from one moment of doing to the next, in context after context, by means of a practice with seemingly no other goal than that subject's own perpetual reproduction as self-assertive. You publish your own blog, run your own gallery, knit your own sweaters. You motivate yourself, apply yourself, manage yourself – now congratulate yourself! Beyond this claustrophobic autism and treadmill repetition-compulsion, the *you* in DIY is troubled by a founding or ontological contradiction: overly eager to recognize itself in the open pronoun, the subject so designated is both authoritative and obedient, its triumph attained only upon submission. And this tension between simultaneous action and reaction continues to mount as the hailing grows louder and more frequent, the phrase becoming a general cultural value, a socially recognized virtue, a political ideal, a normative subject type. And of course a marketing fad: "Our", "my" and "your" are consumer empowerment words', notes Manning Field, senior vice president for brand management at Chase Card Services, when explaining the retail trend ignited by the popularity of websites such as MySpace and YouTube.<sup>2</sup>

In the wake of collapsing disciplinary arenas – school, family, factory, shopping mall, but also art studio and museum, all frames or 'apparatuses' with prescribed, discrete and repeatable practices, the enactment of which leads to their being identified with, as if spontaneously, by subjects – doing it yourself is today's generalized, all-purpose call to action, a far more flexible ritual that etches subjects into, carves them out of, neoliberal ideology. [...]

- 1 [footnote 72 in source] Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)' (1970), in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971) 170, 173–4.
- 2 [73] Quoted in Stuart Elliott, 'Advertising Nowadays, It's All Yours, Mine or Ours', *New York Times* (2 May 2006) C1. 'A turning point may have come in 1996', Elliott writes, 'when Yahoo introduced a personalization service called My Yahoo. It has grown to about 55 million unique users each month.'

Lane Relyea, extracts from *Your Everyday Art World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2013) 5, 6, 49–51.

**Winnie Won Yin Wong**  
**Van Gogh on Demand//2013**

{...} For some time since Duchamp and his readymades, if not long before, we have suspected that the work of art defined as the unique and singular expression of the individual self is an untenable idea. Neither, it seems, is it possible to imagine the making of art without copying, referentiality, or influence in some degree. But our contemporary moment of globalization, characterized by Chinese workers gaining an awareness of their upwardly mobile and negotiable value in the global labour market, has accelerated that feeling that our *selves* are hardly unique. Everywhere we find our own doppelgängers, doubles and copies, for everywhere we find replacements for our labour. Since Western culture has long equated the individual self with the individual's labour, the mere abundance of labour can seem to threaten the very foundations of its culture. Dafen ['painting village' in Guangdong province] raises the stakes still higher, for it offers a dramatic replacement for one of the most cherished figures in the modern and Western conception of the self – the artist, Vincent van Gogh, no less. Signalling the futility of painterly self-expression in the face of globalization, Dafen's very existence shows that there is nothing a painter can do that a farmer cannot learn to substitute for. There is a proposition enacted in Mao's Cultural Revolution, when peasants became art teachers and vice versa, one half of which was echoed in Joseph Beuys' mantra, 'Everyone an Artist.' Inherent in the democratic ideals of this proposition is the notion that 'art' is as much the province of an anonymous village painter as a signature cosmopolitan artist; that matters of skill, genius and talent are in no way limited to those born with social advantages or in its cultural centres. This is an ideal that the theorists of the post-'68 generation might well claim as an ethical presupposition, and it is a question that artists of the twentieth century have consistently kept at the forefront of contemporary art. The artistic claim that everyone is an artist would further seem to render the Academy moot, though the American art school ended up teaching that very same principle. In the post-Mao China that includes the conceptual art made about Dafen discussed in [*VanGogh on Demand*], the universalism that undergirds Beuys' 'social sculpture' has taken on a particular stratification, separating those artists who would *install*, *exhibit* and *bring out for all* to see the village painter himself, from those who would rather keep the demonstration of such foolish egalitarianism in check. Well-positioned artists like Ai Weiwei, who employs a stable of in-house craftsmen while sending off 1,001 Chinese to Documenta, encompass this stratification in a single artistic persona.

Like an otherworldly echo, the products of Dafen village demonstrate how deeply the contradiction between the ideal of universal creativity and its global stratification has wound itself into the thick and global fabric of consumer culture. For it is not so much that Dafen painters can produce 'perfect copies' of the Mona Lisa, or that Dafen painters desire to be Leonardo himself, but rather that thousands of Chinese painters can produce millions of paintings that are bought and sold in galleries and shops around the world as work by a European or American art student, a painter in Paris, Rome or Amsterdam or a long-forgotten artist. As a ghost-painter knows, the difference between the retail price and what he is paid for that painting is determined by the romantic fictions spun by middlemen, fictions that usually entail removing his or her identity (and location) from the story. And yet conceptual artists like Christian Jankowski and Liu Ding have shown that, by transparently showcasing these painter-workers within the frame of postmodern appropriation, the same painterly labour (prompted by a new demand) can be sold with profit margins much higher, through recondite galleries, and to discerning art collectors who know that 'outsourcing to China' is a fascinating component of contemporary art discourse. Whatever it is that Dafen's anonymous painter-workers do, the results are sufficient to be consumed within multiple paradigms of art, from the Romantic to the postmodern, with or without their names. The readymade and conceptual non-objects preserved in the collections of art museums had already proved that painting as self-expression had long been dead, or at least was no longer a necessary condition for 'art'. Dafen village serves to show how far that proposition has extended its reach.

And what precisely is that practice of painterly self-expression that has become futile in the face of globalization? Here again we need no longer rehearse art history and theory to describe it, for its basic form is now globally apparent. It is apparent even to the subdistrict-level propaganda officials of Dafen village, who wish to provide an avenue for its lowly painters to become recognized as 'true artists', to elevate them from the global morass of anonymity. This is an individual with the simple knowledge of *how* to paint (not at all difficult, it turns out), and who knows quite a wide range of historical references (indeed, far more than the typical deskilled artist). These aspiring artists are provided with a subsidized home and a studio, where he – but preferably *she*, for the propagandist – might alone, and out of nothing but herself, produce a series of original 'experiments' 'expressions' and 'innovations' on the surfaces of her canvases, that is her 'own work', and that expresses her innermost self. Exhibitions in an art museum, professional validation in artists' associations, consignment with dealers and auction houses – such things even the lowest-level Chinese government can *and* does provide, but it turns out that they are only ancillary components of the apparatus in this schema of art. And since history has shown

that it is hardly predictable what sorts of pictures may succeed, there is hardly a need to set out the criteria with which to judge or legitimate them. Indeed, as a Dafen dealer would say, 'No matter how bad a painting, there will eventually be someone to buy it.' In this parodic rehearsal of bohemia and the romance of the studio, the expressions of the artistic self are safely domesticated on the canvas, and made potentially saleable in a global market of any and all possibilities, ready for some buyer to confer upon it the Chinese (or American) dream.

For the Dafen painter – the anonymous but aspiring artist on the extreme periphery of a social sphere called the art world – such a schema of art is incommensurate with the stratification that globalization enacts. For in a moment of plentiful artistic labour, those in the metropole (curators, critics, gallerists, collectors, buyers) have little interest in the individualized self-expressions of unknown provincials confined to their local context. Indeed, the Dafen painter cannot speak for his painterly self-expressions in any way that is not laughable to those who position themselves as far beyond its confines as possible – even the term 'original artist' sounds like a joke just a kilometre or two outside Dafen, where truer artists claim to gather. Theoretically, this is a tragic consequence (tragic because creativity is always staged as universal) of the Dafen painter's provincality, his peripherality, and his peasant status. In practical terms, it is his lack of English or even proper Mandarin Chinese, his lack of an art academy experience, of cosmopolitan attitudes and social networks, of self-defining clothing and behaviours. More insurmountable are the Chinese legal and administrative restrictions on the rural-born that bar him from legitimate urban citizenship, the same restrictions that long ago handicapped his entry into the academy and a host of other institutions. Indeed, the painter working in the self-expressive mode knows he needs the most schooling of all: in tearful crits or rebelling against his teachers, in a Master of Fine Arts, and in a contract with a savvy dealer. For only through the well-pitched calibration of persona and artwork could the painterly self-expressions of an anonymous individual be even minimally interesting, en route to producing that individuality as itself as saleable commodity. Painting, in other words, is insufficient as a condition for 'art', because an artistic self must be produced alongside it to justify the entirely replaceable nature of its work. After the copy, painting must prove itself to be 'conceptual', that is, the product of an authorial persona.

Although globalization has been largely understood to give rise to multiple centres of cultural significance, the perspective from its lowest rungs suggests that it has also made many peripheries, with inescapable provincialisms and abjections. This is why news from the deeply local (in the form of craft) can be so seductive. This is why provincials who faithfully desire the meritorious centre are so consistently valorized (in propaganda or reality television), and so



consistently held at bay. And this is why so many readymade agents – whether conceptual artists or state designers – are sent and brought to perform the site-specific work of translating between peripheries and centres for biennials, triennials and expos. Under the conditions of global replaceability, conceptualism – or artistic practices that extend explicitly into other systems, modes and contexts of production, including that of 'art' itself – becomes the most 'natural' mode of irreplaceable work. For the global contemporary artist's special charge is to suture together the incidental variations of provincial anonymity, the 'self'-obsessions of the monotonous centre, and the invisible authorship of the state.

Generating new forms of immaterial labour in every conceivable way, the contemporary artist thus functions as a middleman in the stratified world of global artistic labour. His transnational mobility – his existence as a located but *free* migrant – is articulated in a biography that usually begins with his birth in a semi-peripheral location, and his current metropolitan studio location(s), even as his projects span still further geographical reaches. This mobility, so distinct from the subaltern's unfree labour – captured by the censorious state or the factory regime – is crucial to the imagination of a 'global contemporary'. This is an art world that requires the myth of *unalienated* labour as steadfastly as the price of art ascends. But, as case after case in this study shows, the value-laden apparatus on which the myth of originality depends reveals itself to be beholden to a set of false inequalities, one that trades in provincial exoticisms of true art and authentic selves. Universal values function, in the implicit claims of cosmopolitans, only as a moving goalpost that reinforces the insurmountable difference between appropriation and alienation, between the real and the fake. As one conceptual artist after another orders readymades in Dafen, pronouncing the same myths of Chinese copying over and over, they themselves prove to be cogs in a machine, a machine that keeps on reproducing the West's inventiveness. [...]

In the flexible machinery of aura, any concept can be remade into the intentional utterances of genius. Hence, it is entirely logical and laudable (indeed, if not an ethical obligation) to encourage all painters to work away at the production of their selves through that mode of self-expression founded in the modern paradigm of authorship. But their actual appearance in the world of contemporary art will occur in a global supply chain of readymade dreams, as names in search of personae, and ghosts awaiting orders from that big boss, creativity.

Winnie Won Yin Wong, extracts from epilogue, *Van Gogh on Demand: China and the Readymade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) 234–8.



We need to defend  
our ways in our  
persistent practice  
of them. It's not  
about taking to the  
streets, it's about  
how, and about  
what, we should  
take to the streets

## COLLECTIVE ACTION

## Karl Marx

### Theses on Feuerbach//1845

II. The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth – i.e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely *scholastic* question.

III. The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself. This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society.

The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionary practice*. [...]

VIII. All social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice.

IX. The highest point reached by contemplative materialism, that is, materialism which does not comprehend sensuousness as practical activity, is contemplation of single individuals and of civil society.

X. The standpoint of the old materialism is civil society; the standpoint of the new is human society, or social humanity.

XI. The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.

Karl Marx, extracts from 'Theses on Feuerbach' (1845), first published as an appendix to Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (1886); trans. W. Lough, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works, Volume 1* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969) 13–15. Marx/Engels Internet Archive. (marxists.org)

[...] Objectively, the revolution is a historical process that changes class hierarchies and involves a dramatic acceleration in the rate of change within socio-economic forms. Subjectively, it means the awareness of new tasks and of the devices for their realization by an individual organized by the interests of the collective.

Isn't art one productive process among other modes of production? What kind of relationship does art have to life? What is art's role in the latter?

Do works of art have an absolute value, or are they subordinate to the principle of relativity that is at the core of Marxist dialectics? What occasions the production of aesthetic products (works of art), and what conditions the consumption of these products by the collective?

From the perspective of communism, in which direction should this production and consumption develop? Are the tasks of the revolution in the realm of art resolved by *representation* and *reflection*, or is art faced with *organizational* and *constructive* tasks that have not been fulfilled by the forms that have existed up to our time? What kind of changes to the principles of 'form and content' does the revolution dictate?

To what extent is the art of our revolution simultaneously a revolutionary art, i.e. an art that revises its own methods and devices every time it fulfils a new task?

*These are some of the questions that demand the utmost attention of those who believe that all kinds of human activity (including art) should be subordinated to the fundamental task of organization.*

Although we are hardly asking these questions for the first time, it must be said that the constructors of the new life somehow overlooked them. These questions did not become central points in the battles between the old and the new aesthetic ideologies. They were only partially considered. Rarely were they ever worked through thoroughly. Most often people simply brushed them aside, and preferred instead to proceed blindly, orienting themselves not so much by the 'future to be created' as by the same old 'culture of yesterday'. The result was something on the order of a scholastic dispute among pedants: since the bible (the old culture) was the same for revolutionaries and reactionaries alike, the dispute concerned only which direction the handle of this bible should be pointing on the apparatus of criticism.

And so the question concerns how to fortify our positions and define and

activate the fight against those who are resurrecting the old aesthetics of taste.

How were the questions about art and its relationship to life resolved during the tense period of the revolution by those who were the actual conductors of the revolutionary energy?

There are slogans: *Art for all! Art into the masses! Art into the streets!*

These slogans seem rather vague once you take into account that there are two aspects of art: the fixing of private experiences and sensations in a material (creation), and the effect of the created forms upon human psyches (perception). [...]

Art for all! This slogan should have meant the highest degree of skill and adaptiveness in all one's practical activities – whether one is speaking, sanding wood or sharpening, convincing an audience, commanding an army, walking on the street, or sewing a dress. Joy in transforming raw material into some socially useful form, combined with skill and the intensive pursuit of the most expedient form: this is what this 'art for all' should have become. Every person should be an artist, the absolute master of whatever he is doing at the present moment.

But instead of this, instead of an understanding of the socialist labour process as one that is both joyous and necessary, people are given the same old art that develops parallel to life. 'Art for all' turns out to be the *mere democratization* of old art. The objects of artistic creation are made as accessible as possible to everyone: concert halls, theatres and picture galleries are filled with the labouring masses. Instead of recognizing verse as a preliminary attempt to organize living human language, and as an attempt that demands active participation; instead of approaching theatre as the first initiative toward a rhythmically coordinated construction of life, etc., people are once again 'absorbed in contemplation', and are 'experiencing life second-hand'.

This democratization of art conversely took the artworks that had once transported the previous masters of life into the 'world of art', and transformed them into the plush divans for life's new masters, the proletarians. The bourgeois environment and hated conditions of labour only further entrenched the habitual desire to spend leisure time in a state of artistic contemplation, enthralled by the charms of verse, melody and dance.

Are there really responsible, leading minds in the sphere of 'revolutionary' art who say, for example, that theatre is a 'means to fill up the leisure time of a proletariat weary from the work day'? We must remember that it was the curse of forced labour that actually generated this need in its day. It was this curse that primed people to assimilate the haze of a 'bourgeois culture' that instilled passivity and contemplation: art was the best way to escape from their drawn-out daily routine into other worlds. Take America, where they have the 'Young Men's Christian Association', a colossal organization supported by the funds of

capitalists, founded to fill up the leisure time of the labouring classes with partially religious, partially aesthetic-contemplative pursuits, and to thereby imbue them with the inert psychology of petty-bourgeois contentment. Is this what we're striving for?

The democratization of art as currently practised does perhaps have one positive quality: it provides an educational service by familiarizing the masses with the aesthetic expressions of preceding generations. *The true 'art for all' should never consist of turning all people into spectators, rather the opposite: it consists in mastering what was previously the particular property of the specialists of art – mastering all of the qualities and abilities necessary to build and organize raw material. That comes first. Second is the involvement of the masses in the processes of 'creation', which until now only individuals have used to conduct their 'liturgies'.*

Our practical life in its movement, in its ascents and declines, discoveries and catastrophes, joys and misfortunes; our life that, by collectivizing production and consumption, is forcing separate individuals to come together within the granite block of the collective; our life in its totality – this is the only important and essential subject around which word, sound, colour, material and human activity should be organized.

*In connection with the revolution and the perspectives that it enables, we must introduce and investigate the question of art as aesthetic production and consumption – the question of the interrelations between art and life. At every moment, all manifestations of practical life must be coloured by art. Everyone must become an artist-constructor of this life. Perhaps lyrical verses – the fireworks of poetic illumination and reincarnation – will disappear from our world. But they will survive as exemplary models for the reconstruction of language. Art's centre of gravity will be situated in life itself, in the lines and forms of its objects, in everyday language, in the sounds of plants, factories, ports, streets, tractors and workers' assemblies. To each according to his needs: such is the precept of revolution. The attention of constructors of our life must be focused not upon perfect works of art, but upon the perfect individual, full of organizational skill and the will to overcome the obstacles that lie along the path to the total mastery of life.*

A science with this goal is currently emerging, and it is saturating all of the production processes of the social revolution with the highest degree of perfection, productivity and joy.

Sergei Tret'iakov, extracts from 'Iskusstvov revoliutsii revoliutsiia v iskusstve (esteticheskoe potreblenie i proizvodstvo)', *Gorn*, no. 8 (1923); trans. Devin Fore, 'Art in the Revolution and the Revolution in Art (Aesthetic Consumption and Production)', *October*, no. 118 (Fall 2006) 14–15, 17–18.



**Walter Benjamin**

**Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European  
Intelligentsia/1929**

[...] To win the energies of intoxication for the revolution – this is the project on which Surrealism focuses in all its books and enterprises. This it may call its most particular task. For them it is not enough that, as we know, an intoxicating component lives in every revolutionary act. This component is identical with the anarchic. But to place the accent exclusively on it would be to subordinate the methodical and disciplinary preparation for revolution entirely to a praxis oscillating between fitness exercises and celebration in advance. Added to this is an inadequate, undialectical conception of the nature of intoxication. The aesthetic of the painter, the poet, *en état de surprise*, of art as the reaction of one surprised, is enmeshed in a number of pernicious romantic prejudices. Any serious exploration of occult, surrealist, phantasmagoric gifts and phenomena presupposes a dialectical intertwinement to which a romantic turn of mind is impervious. For histrionic or fanatical stress on the mysterious side of the mysterious takes us no further; we penetrate the mystery only to the degree that we recognize it in the everyday world, by virtue of a dialectical optic that perceives the everyday as impenetrable, the impenetrable as everyday. The most passionate investigation of telepathic phenomena, for example, will not teach us half as much about reading (which is an eminently telepathic process) as the profane illumination of reading will teach us about telepathic phenomena. And the most passionate investigation of the hashish trance will not teach us half as much about thinking (which is eminently narcotic) as the profane illumination of thinking will teach us about the hashish trance. The reader, the thinker, the loiterer, the *flâneur*, are types of illuminati just as much as the opium eater, the dreamer, the ecstatic. And more profane. Not to mention that most terrible drug – ourselves – which we take in solitude.

'To win the energies of intoxication for the revolution' – in other words, poetic politics? 'We've tried that beverage. Anything, rather than that!' Well, it will interest you all the more to see how much an excursion into poetry clarifies things. For what is the programme of the bourgeois parties? A bad poem on springtime, filled to bursting with metaphors. The socialist sees that 'finer future of our children and grandchildren' in a society in which all act 'as if they were angels' and everyone has as much 'as if he were rich' and everyone lives 'as if he were free'. Of angels, wealth, freedom, not a trace – these are mere images. And the stock imagery of these poets of the social-democratic associations? Their *gradus ad parnassum*? Optimism. A very different air is breathed in the Pierre

Naville essay that makes the 'organization of pessimism' the call of the hour. In the name of his literary friends, Naville delivers an ultimatum in the face of which this unprincipled, dilettantish optimism must unfailingly show its true colours: Where are the conditions for revolution? In the changing of attitudes or of external circumstances? This is the cardinal question that determines the relation of politics to morality and cannot be glossed over. Surrealism has come ever closer to the Communist answer. And that means pessimism all along the line. Absolutely. Mistrust in the fate of literature, mistrust in the fate of freedom, mistrust in the fate of European humanity, but three times mistrust in all reconciliation: between classes, between nations, between individuals. And unlimited trust only in IG Farben [chemicals company] and the peaceful perfecting of the airforce. But what now? What next?

Here, due weight must be given to the insight which in the *Traité du style* (Treatise on Style), Louis Aragon's last book, required a distinction between metaphor and image, a happy insight into questions of style that needs extending. Extension: nowhere do these two – metaphor and image – collide so drastically and irreconcilably as in politics. For to organize pessimism means nothing other than to expel moral metaphor from politics and to discover in the space of political action the one hundred per cent image space. This image space, however, can no longer be measured out by contemplation. If it is the double task of the revolutionary intelligentsia to overthrow the intellectual predominance of the bourgeoisie and to make contact with the proletarian masses, the intelligentsia has failed almost entirely in the second part of this task because it can no longer be performed contemplatively. Yet this has hindered scarcely anybody from approaching it again and again as if it could, and calling for proletarian poets, thinkers and artists. To counter this, Trotsky had to point out – as early as *Literature and Revolution* – that such artists would emerge only from a victorious revolution. In reality, it is far less a matter of making the artist of bourgeois origins into a master of 'proletarian art' than of deploying him, even at the expense of his artistic activity, at important points in this image space. Indeed, mightn't the interruption of his 'artistic career' perhaps be an essential part of his new function?

The jokes he tells will be better for it. And he will tell them better. For in the joke, too, in invective, in misunderstanding, in all cases where an action puts forth its own image and exists, absorbing and consuming it, where nearness looks with its own eyes, the long-sought image space is opened, the world of universal and integral actuality, where the 'best room' is missing – the space, in a word, in which political materialism and physical creatureliness share the inner man, the psyche, the individual, or whatever else we wish to throw to them, with dialectical justice, so that no limb remains untorn. Nevertheless –

indeed precisely after such dialectical annihilation – this will still be an image space and, more concretely, a body space. For in the end this must be admitted: metaphysical materialism, of the brand of Vogt and Bukharin – as is attested by the experience of the Surrealists, and earlier by that of Hegel, Georg Büchner, Nietzsche and Rimbaud – cannot lead without rupture to anthropological materialism. There is a residue. The collective is a body, too. And the *physis* that is being organized for it in technology can, through all its political and factual reality, be produced only in that image space to which profane illumination initiates us. Only when in technology body and image space so interpenetrate that all revolutionary tension becomes bodily collective innervation, and all the bodily innervations of the collective become revolutionary discharge, has reality transcended itself to the extent demanded by the *Communist Manifesto*. For the moment, only the Surrealists have understood its present commands. They exchange, to a man, the play of human features for the face of an alarm clock that in each minute rings for sixty seconds.

Walter Benjamin, extract from 'Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia' (1929); trans. Edmund Jephcott, in Walter Benjamin, *Reflections* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978); repr. in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 2, Part 1, 1927–1930*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999) 215–18.

## **Frantz Fanon** **On National Culture//1959**

[...] In artisanship, the congealed, petrified forms loosen up. Wood carving, for example, which turned out set faces and poses by the thousands, starts to diversify. The expressionless or tormented mask comes to life, and the arms are raised upwards in a gesture of action. Compositions with two, three or five figures emerge. An avalanche of amateurs and dissidents encourages the traditional schools to innovate. This new stimulus in this particular cultural sector very often goes unnoticed. Yet its contribution to the national struggle is vital. By bringing faces and bodies to life, by taking the group set on a single socle as creative subject, the artist inspires concerted action.

The awakening national consciousness has had a somewhat similar effect in the sphere of ceramics and pottery. Formalism is abandoned. Jugs, jars and trays

are reshaped, at first only slightly and then quite radically. Colours, once restricted in number, governed by laws of traditional harmony, flood back, reflecting the effects of the revolutionary upsurge. Certain ochres, certain blues that were apparently banned for eternity in a given cultural context, emerge unscathed. Likewise, the taboo of representing the human face, typical of certain clearly defined regions according to sociologists, is suddenly lifted. The metropolitan anthropologists and experts are quick to note these changes and denounce them all, referring rather to a codified artistic style and culture developing in tune with the colonial situation. The colonialist experts do not recognize these new forms and rush to the rescue of indigenous traditions. It is the colonialists who become the defenders of indigenous style. [...]

We would also uncover the same transformations, the same progress and the same eagerness if we enquired into the fields of dance, song, rituals and traditional ceremonies. Well before the political or armed struggle, a careful observer could sense and feel in these arts the pulse of a fresh stimulus and the coming combat. Unusual forms of expression, original themes no longer invested with the power of invocation but the power to rally and mobilize with the approaching conflict in mind. Everything conspires to stimulate the colonized's sensibility, and to rule out and reject attitudes of inertia or defeat. By imparting new meaning and dynamism to artisanship, dance, music, literature and the oral epic, the colonized subject restructures his own perception. The world no longer seems doomed. Conditions are ripe for the inevitable confrontation.

We have witnessed the emergence of a new energy in the cultural sphere. We have seen that this energy, these new forms, are linked to the maturing of the national consciousness, and now become increasingly objectivized and institutionalized. Hence the need for nationhood at all costs. [...]

Frantz Fanon, extract from paper presented at the Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists (Rome, 1959), in *Les damnés de la terre* (Paris: François Maspero, 1961); trans. Richard Philcox, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004) 175–7.

# **The Situationist International Questionnaire//1964**

## **1 What does the word 'situationist' mean?**

It denotes an activity aimed at *creating* situations, as opposed to passively recognizing them in academic or other separate terms. At all levels of social practice or individual history. We replace existential passivity with the construction of moments of life, and doubt with playful affirmation. Up till now philosophers and artists have only interpreted situations; the point now is to transform them. Since human beings are moulded by the situations they go through, it is essential to create human situations. Since individuals are defined by their situation, they need the power to create situations worthy of their desires. This is the perspective in which poetry (communication fulfilled in concrete situations), the appropriation of nature, and complete social liberation must all merge and be realized. Our era is going to replace the fixed frontier of the extreme situations that phenomenology has limited itself to describing with the practical creation of situations; it is going continually to shift this frontier with the development of our realization. We want a phenomeno-praxis. We have no doubt that this will be the first banality of the movement toward the liberation that is now possible. What situations are to be transformed? At different levels it could be the whole planet, or an era (a civilization in Burckhardt's sense, for example), or a moment of individual life. On with the show! It is only in this way that the values of past culture and the hopes of realizing reason in history can find their true fulfilment. Everything else is in decay. The term situationist in the SI's sense is the total opposite of the current usage in Portugal, where 'situationists' means supporters of the existing situation (i.e. supporters of Salazar's dictatorship).

## **2 Is the Situationist International a political movement?**

The words 'political movement' today connote the specialized activity of group and party bosses who derive the oppressive force of their future power from the organized passivity of their militants. The SI wants nothing to do with any form of hierarchical power whatsoever. The SI is neither a political movement nor a sociology of political mystification. The SI aims to represent the highest degree of international revolutionary consciousness. This is why it strives to illuminate and coordinate the gestures of refusal and the signs of creativity that are defining the new contours of the proletariat, the irreducible desire for freedom. Centred on the spontaneity of the masses, such activity is undeniably 'political' in the sense that those rebellious masses are themselves political. Whenever new



radical currents appear – as recently in Japan (the extremist wing of the Zengakuren), in the Congo, and in the Spanish underground – the SI gives them *critical* support and thereby aids them practically. But in contrast to all the ‘transitional programmes’ of specialized politics, the SI insists on a permanent revolution of everyday life.

### **3 Is the SI an artistic movement?**

A large part of the situationist critique of consumer society consists in showing to what extent contemporary artists, by abandoning the richness of supersession implicitly present (though not fully realized) in the 1910 to 1925 period, have condemned themselves to doing art as one does business. Since that time artistic movements have only been imaginary repercussions from an explosion that never took place, an explosion that threatened and still threatens the structures of this society. The SI's awareness of this abandonment and of its contradictory implications (emptiness and a desire to return to the initial violence) makes the SI the only movement able, by incorporating the survival of art into the art of life, to speak to the project of the authentic artist. We are artists only in so far as we are no longer artists; we come to fulfil art. [...]

The Situationist International, extract from ‘Questionnaire’, *Internationale Situationniste*, no. 9 (August 1964); trans. Ken Knabb, in *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006). ([www.bopsecrets.org](http://www.bopsecrets.org))

## **Ed Sanders**

### **A Magic Rite to Exorcize the Spirits of Murder, Violence & Creephood from the Pentagon//1967**

- 1 purification rites for participants. cleansing of eye-heart-minds with Hittite spell
- 2 prayer for the soldiers & their violent karma in vietnam
- 3 consecration of the four directions
- 4 creation of magic circle for the protection of the rites. Pouring of corn-meal trail about the pentagon
- 5 invocation of Powers & Spirits of exorcism
- 6 placing of love-articles & clothing onto the pentagon: beads, feathers, rock & roll records, books & the sacred Grope Relic.



## 7 ceremony of exorcism:

EARTH	–	physical contact with the pentagon
AIR	–	conjuring of Malevolent Creep Powers
WATER	–	cleansing by liquid
FIRE	–	Destruction by fire

## 8 The rising of the pentagon

## 9 THE EXORGASM! Banishment of the evil spirit. singing & shrieking!

## 10 peace mantra.

This is the purification spell:

a-ri-ia-ad-da-li-is Dim-an-za sar-ri ka-si-i

hu-u-e-hu-u-i-ia tap-pa-as-sa-it sar-ri

ti-ia-mi hu-i-hu-i-ia

Ed Sanders, text from 'A Magic Rite to Exorcize the Spirits of Murder, Violence & Creephood from the Pentagon', handwritten manuscript with diagram and symbols (1967).

## **Pablo Suárez and Commission of Artistic Action of the Argentine CGT Argentine Subversive Art//1970**

During 1968 a group of avant-garde artists, moved by their own direct working experience, started openly to discuss the decrepitude and uselessness of prevailing Argentine culture and of their own art, which until then they – and their society – had perceived as a revolutionizing force.

The oligarchic-imperialist dictatorship in our country has increased its oppressive measures. Censorship has become obvious and crude, enforced by 'cultural' institutions (museums, prize committees, etc.) as well as by the police.

We have shattered our own illusions that we were able to create, inside the bourgeois cultural apparatus, work that truly opposed the prevailing social structure. Our development now demands a complete restatement of the purpose and conduct of the artist and the intellectual, a search for new institutional frameworks, for new audiences, for new media and messages.

## **Chronology**

### **1968**

*January–February.* A group of avant-garde artists held a series of discussions about the possibility of creating a movement which would carry out the role which every avant-garde should play: solvent of the ethics and aesthetics of our society, an irritant which can't be absorbed by the chic or the institutional.

Very small units began to form, and some works were produced which attempted to realize these principles.

*May.* 'Experiences '68', at the Di Tella Institute, the top official event of the avant-garde, was the occasion for the first public collective statement of our position.

The works at this show illustrated the weariness and banality of continuing to create within the official framework which has been assigned to the avant-garde. The Rosario artists' unit decided to destroy these works and to throw the remains out into the street, at the same time releasing a declaration signed by all the sympathetic artists, protesting against a police ban on one of the works.

As a result the artists were held six days under conditional arrest. The group from Rosario paid a \$300 fine to Di Tella and strongly attacked a lecture by its director, Jorge Romero Brest.

*July.* In reaction to these events, the French embassy put a clause in the rules of the Braque prize which would permit them to make alterations on the works submitted.

Meetings were then held, several artists refused to participate in the competition, and there was a demonstration against censorship and cultural colonialism, accompanied by a statement of support for French workers and students. Nine artists were arrested at the Fine Arts Museum and sentenced to thirty days' imprisonment. The lawyers of the CGT (General Confederation of Workers) took up their defence.

*August.* The first large organizational meeting of vanguard artists took place, with the aim of preparing a programme of political and cultural action.

Resolutions were passed in support of national and social liberation movements and those who refused to participate in bourgeois institutions (galleries, festivals, etc.) established to co-opt the avant-garde. It was proposed that artists form a 'culture of subversion', that is, a means of artistic action which can aid and parallel the working and peasant class in its revolutionary endeavour.

At the second meeting, approval was given to the artists' first collective enterprise – a propaganda and action campaign to publicize and protest against the repressed and impoverished situation of the people in Tucumán – and to become a commission of the CGT.

*October.* The Tucumán action began with a trip by ten artists to Tucumán,

where they contacted workers in the mills and fields, labour and student leaders, teachers, priests, etc. There were interviews and meetings, and the problems of the Tucumánians were discussed in the mills and the neighbouring towns. Documentation was gathered: written, taped, photographed and filmed.

*November.* A campaign of posters and paintings about the problems of Tucumán was begun in Rosário and Buenos Aires. There was an exhibition called 'Tucumán Burns' at the CGT headquarters in Rosario – our aim was to transform the exhibition into a political act. The walls were covered with huge photographic murals, handwritten signs, and strips of cloth with slogans; tape recordings were played; films and slides were shown; mimeographed reports were passed out; spectators were urged to participate in the discussions. A few days later the same exhibition was shown in Buenos Aires, with introductory speeches by our colleagues Ongaro, Secretary General of the CGT, and Torres, of the Oil Strike Committee. The next day a police ultimatum announced that the CGT building would be taken over unless the exhibition was closed.

This experience forced us to plan new methods of action; to do both work which was clearly within the legal framework and work of a clandestine nature which would be difficult to suppress, done within the structures of the revolutionary workers' groups and parties.

The regime's violence is crude and clear when it is directed against the working class but more subtle when artists and intellectuals are the target. For besides the repression implicit in the censorship of books and films, the closing of exhibitions and theatres, there is the other, permanent, repression. It is found in the form art assumes these days: an elegant consumer item for a particular class. Artists may delude themselves by creating superficially violent works, but these are received with indifference or even with delight; they are bought and sold, their virulence is just one more product in the marketplace of prestige. The system can take over and absorb even the most audacious and innovative works of art because these works are within a framework which exposes the people overwhelmingly to those messages which solidify their oppressed condition (mainly through radio, TV, newspapers and magazines). It can do this because artists have isolated themselves from the struggle and from the real problems of the revolution in our country, and their works still do not say what needs to be said and are not addressed to those most in need of our message.

What then can we artists do to stop being servants of the bourgeoisie? We can join the most enlightened and belligerent organizations, centred in the working class, using our creative militancy and our militant creativeness for the struggle. We must contribute to the creation of a real underground network of information and communication which will oppose the system's network. In the

process we will develop effective means: clandestine movies, posters, pamphlets and flyers, records and tapes, songs and slogans, terrorist acts, demonstrations, theatre, propaganda. The important thing will be the attainment of the proposed political objective. Each particular problem, each particular moment, requires its own specific level of profundity, its own method.

Someone might object that what we propose is not art. But what is art? Are the elitist forms of pure experimentation art? Are those creations which pretend to be corrosive, but which really satisfy the bourgeois who consume them, art? Are the words in their books art? and the scenarios of films and stage? and the paintings in the art galleries? All quiet, in order. All useless. We want to restore words, dramatic actions, images, to their revolutionary function, in which they will be useful, they will become weapons.

Art is all that mobilizes and agitates. Art is all that categorically denies our way of life and says: let's do something to change it. This exhibit, the actions against establishment art institutions which preceded it, and the works of other artists who are following new directions, are already a beginning.

Pablo Suárez and Commission of Artist's Action of the Argentine CGT, extract from 'Argentine Subversive Art: The Vanguard of the Avant-Garde', *The Drama Review: TDR*, vol. 14, no. 2, *Latin American Theatre* (Winter 1970) 98-103.

## **Maulana Karenga On Black Art//1970**

Black Art must be for the people, by the people and from the people. That is to say, it must be functional, collective and committing.

Soul is extra-scientific, that is to say, outside of science; therefore we will allow no scientific disproof of it.

All that we do and create is based on tradition and reason, that is to say, foundation and movement. We began to build on a tradition, but it is out of movement that we complete our creation.

Art for art's sake is an invalid concept, all art reflects the value system from which it comes.

We say inspiration is the real basis of education. In a word, images inspire us, academic assertions bore us.

Our art is both form and feeling but more feeling than form.

Our creative motif must be revolution; all art that does not discuss or contribute to revolutionary change is invalid. That is [...] why the 'blues' are invalid, they teach resignation, in a word, acceptance of reality – and we have come to change reality.

There is no better subject for Black artists than Black people, and the Black artist who doesn't choose and develop his subject will find himself unproductive.

All art is collective and reflects the values of the people. Therefore what makes us able to identify an artist's work is not individuality but personality, which is an expression of the different personal experiences of the artist within the Black framework.

Suppose Ray Charles had to sing Beethoven or Bach's Carols, or Miles Davis had to play in the Philharmonic; it wouldn't go off at all. That's why we have to have a pattern of development that is suited to our own needs.

The truth is that which needs to be told, and true creation is that which needs to be created and what we need to create is Black images which speak to and inspire Black people.

We need a new language to break the linguistic straitjacket of our masters, who taught us his language so he could understand us, although we could hardly understand ourselves.

In terms of history, all we need at this point is heroic images; white people have enough dates for everybody.

All education and creation is invalid unless it can benefit the maximum amount of Blacks.

Art is an expression of soul and creativity, sensitivity, and impulse is the basis. Sensitivity, creativity and impulse are abstract to those who don't have them. There is no art in the world you should have to go to school to appreciate.

Borrowing does not mean you become what others are. What is important here is the choice of what one borrows and how he shapes it in his own images. Whites are no less white by borrowing from Blacks and vice versa.

There is no such thing as art for art's sake. If that's so, why don't you lock yourself up somewhere and paint or write and keep it only to yourself.

The white boy's classical music is static. He values the form rather than the soul force behind the creation. That is why he still plays tunes written two or three hundred years ago.

All art should be the product of a creative need and desire in terms of Black people. In Africa you won't find artists of great name because art is done by all for all. There is no premium on art in Africa just as there is no premium on dancing in the ghetto. All Blacks can dance.

In African art, the object was not as important as the soul force behind the creation of the object.

All art must be revolutionary and in being revolutionary it must be collective, committing and functional.

Whites can imitate or copy soul, but they can't create out of that context. All nationalists believe in creativity as opposed to destruction and a nationalist must create for the Black nation.

Black art initiates, supports and promotes change. It refuses to accept values laid down by dead white men. It sets its own values and re-enforces them with hard and/or soft words and sounds.

All art consciously or unconsciously represents and promotes the values of its culture.

Language and imagery must come from the people and be returned to the people in a beautiful language which everybody can easily understand.

Soul is a combination of sensitivity, creativity and impulse. It is feeling and form, body and soul, rhythm and movement, in a word, the essence of Blackness.

Muddy Waters and those in the same school are very deep, and so when bourgeois Negroes say that Muddy Waters is too deep for them, they are saying, in a word, that Muddy Waters is more down to earth.

Maulana Karenga, 'On Black Art', *Black Theatre: A Periodical of the Black Arts Movement*, no. 4 (Harlem: New Lafayette Theatre, 1970) 10 [for space reasons, the paragraphs are here indented].

## **Herbert Marcuse**

### **Art as Form of Reality//1969**

[...] Living Art, anti-art in all its variety – is its aim self-defeating? All these frantic efforts to produce the absence of Form, to substitute the real for the aesthetic object, to ridicule oneself and the bourgeois customer – are they not so many activities of frustration, already part of the culture industry and the museum culture? I believe the aim of the 'new act' is self-defeating because it retains, and must retain no matter how minimally, the Form of Art as different from non-art, and it is the Art-Form itself which frustrates the intention to reduce or even annul this difference, to make Art 'real', 'living'.

Art cannot become reality, cannot realize itself without cancelling itself as Art in *all* its forms, even in its most destructive, most minimal, most 'living' forms. The gap which separates Art from reality, the essential otherness of Art, its 'illusory' character can be reduced only to the degree to which *reality itself* tends



towards Art as reality's own Form, that is to say, in the course of a revolution, with the emergence of a free society. In this process, the artist would participate – as *artist* rather than as *political activist*, for the tradition of Art cannot be simply left behind or discarded; that which it has achieved, shown and revealed in authentic forms contains a truth *beyond* immediate realization or solution, perhaps beyond any realization and solution.

The anti-art of today is condemned to remain Art, no matter how 'anti' it strives to be. Incapable of bridging the gap between Art and reality, of escaping from the fetters of the Art-Form, the rebellion against 'form' only succeeds in a loss of artistic quality; illusory destruction, illusory overcoming of alienation. The authentic *oeuvres*, the true avant-garde of our time, far from obscuring this distance, far from *playing down* alienation, *enlarge* it and harden their incompatibility with the given reality to an extent that defies any (behavioural) application. They fulfil in this way the cognitive function of Art (which is its inherent radical, 'political' function), that is, to name the Unnameable, to confront man with the dreams he betrays and the crimes he forgets. The greater the terrible conflict between that which is and that which can be, the more will the work of art be estranged from the immediacy of real life, thought and behaviour – even political thought and behaviour. I believe that the authentic avant-garde of today are not those who try desperately to produce the absence of Form and the union with real life, but rather those who do not recoil from the exigencies of Form, who find the new word, image and sound which are capable of 'comprehending' reality as only Art can comprehend – and negate it. This authentic new Form has emerged in the work (already 'classic') of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern; of Kafka and Joyce; of Picasso; it continues today in such achievements as Stockhausen's *Spirale* and Samuel Beckett's novels. They invalidate the notion of the 'end of art'.

### **Beyond the Established Division of Labour**

In contrast, the 'living art', and especially the 'living theatre' of today does away with the Form of estrangement: in eliminating the distance between the actors, the audience and the 'outside', it establishes a familiarity and identification with the actors and their message which quickly draws the negation, the rebellion into the daily universe – as an enjoyable and understandable element of this universe. The participation of the audience is spurious and the result of previous arrangements; the change in consciousness and behaviour is itself part of the play – illusion is strengthened rather than destroyed.

There is a phrase of Marx: 'these petrified [social] conditions must be forced to dance by singing to them their own melody.' Dance will bring the dead world to life and make it a human world. But today, 'their own melody' seems no longer

communicable except in forms of extreme estrangement and dissociation from all immediacy – in the most conscious and deliberate forms of Art.

I believe that 'living art', the 'realization' of Art can only be the event of a qualitatively different society in which a new type of men and women, no longer the subject or object of exploitation, can develop in their life and work the vision of the suppressed *aesthetic* possibilities of men and things – aesthetic not as to the specific property of certain objects (the *objet d'art*) but as forms and modes of existence corresponding to the reason and sensibility of free individuals, what Marx called 'the sensuous appropriation of the world'. The realization of Art, the 'new art' is conceivable only as the process of constructing the universe of a free society – in other words: Art as Form of reality.

*Art as Form of Reality*: it is impossible to ward off the horrible associations provoked by this notion, such as gigantic programmes of beautification, artistic corporation offices, aesthetic factories, industrial parks. These associations belong to the practice of repression. Art as Form of reality means, not the beautification of the given, but the construction of an entirely different and opposed reality. The aesthetic vision is part of the revolution; it is a vision of Marx: 'the animal constructs (*formiert*) only according to need; man forms also in accordance with the laws of beauty.'

It is impossible to concretize Art as Form of reality: it would then be creativity, a creation in the material as well as intellectual sense, a juncture of technique and the arts in the total reconstruction of the environment, a juncture of town and country, industry and nature after all have been freed from the horrors of commercial exploitation and beautification, so that Art can no longer serve as a stimulus of business. Evidently, the very possibility of creating such an environment depends on the total transformation of the existing society: a new mode and new goals of production, a new type of human being as producer, the end of role-playing, of the established social division of labour, of work and pleasure.

Would such realization of Art imply the 'invalidation' of the traditional arts? In other words, would it imply the 'atrophy' of the capability to understand and enjoy them, atrophy of the intellectual faculty and the sensuous organs to experience the arts of the past? I suggest a negative answer. Art is transcendent in a sense which distinguishes and divorces it from any 'daily' reality we can possibly envisage. No matter how free, society will be inflicted with necessity – the necessity of labour, of the fight against death and disease, of scarcity. Thus the arts will retain forms of expression germane to them – and only to them: of a beauty and truth antagonistic to those of reality. There is, even in the most 'impossible' verses of the traditional drama, even in the most impossible operas and duets, some element of rebellion which is still 'valid'. There is in them some faithfulness to one's passions, some 'freedom of expression' in defiance of

common sense, language and behaviour which indicts and contradicts the established ways of life. It is by virtue of this 'otherness' that the Beautiful in the traditional arts would retain its truth. And this otherness could not and would not be cancelled by the social development. On the contrary: what would be cancelled is the *opposite*, namely, the false, conformist and comfortable reception (and creation!) of Art, its spurious integration with the Establishment, its harmonization and sublimation of repressive conditions. [...]

Herbert Marcuse, extract from 'Art as Form of Reality' (1969), *New Left Review*, vol. 1, no. 74 (July 1972) 56–8.

## **Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro Womanhouse//1972**

Womanhouse began early in the fall of 1971, Paula Harper, art historian in the Feminist Art Program at the California Institute of the Arts, inspired us by suggesting the idea. The Program was just beginning again after an experimental year at Fresno State College. We became very excited about the possibility of starting the year with a large-scale collaborative project, rather than with the extended consciousness-raising sessions that had been held when the Program was in Fresno. There the women students had spent a lot of time talking about their problems as women before they began to do any work. We wondered if those same problems could be dealt with while working on a project.

Female art students often approach artmaking with a personality structure conditioned by an unwillingness to push themselves beyond their limits; a lack of familiarity with tools and artmaking processes; an inability to see themselves as working people; and a general lack of assertiveness and ambition. The aim of the Feminist Art Program is to help women restructure their personalities to be more consistent with their desires to be artists and to help them build their artmaking out of their experiences as women. Womanhouse seemed to offer the perfect context for this educational process.

The women broke up into teams to look for a house that would be suitable to the dreams and fantasies they envisioned for what would be an exclusively female environment. Three women saw an old house on Mariposa Street in a run-down section of Hollywood. As they explored the deserted mansion, they knew that they had found Womanhouse. They knocked at the doors of several

neighbouring houses until they found someone at home. He informed them that the house was owned by an elderly woman who would certainly not be interested in their project. With their customary ingenuity, the women went downtown to the Hall of Records to search out the name and address of the owner, a woman named Amanda Psalter. They wrote her a letter describing the Feminist Art Program, CalArts, and the project we wished to work on. The idea so intrigued the Psalter family that they donated the house to us for the project.

On 8 November 1971, 23 women arrived at 533 Mariposa Street armed with mops, brooms, paint, buckets, rollers, sanding equipment and wallpaper. For two months we scraped walls, replaced windows, built partitions, sanded floors, made furniture, installed lights, and renovated the 75-year old dilapidated structure. One of the goals of the Program is to teach women to use power equipment, tools and building techniques. The House provided a natural context for the women to learn these things. When we found that we had to replace 25 broken windows, five women went to Redondo Beach, where the father of one of them owned a hardware store. All of the banisters in the stairway had been pulled out by vandals. The women laid in 330 dowels, then painted and varnished each one. At first the neighbours were shocked to see women in work clothes and boots sawing two-by-fours on the porch and carrying sheets of plywood up the steps. They thought that they were being invaded by hippies and they complained to the school about all of the 'longhairs'. The school explained that the women usually wore their hair long. The neighbours replied: 'If they're women, why aren't they wearing brassieres?'

Slowly the neighbourhood got used to us and the women got used to working long hours. There was no hot water, no heat and no plumbing. But the real difficulties in the Womanhouse project lay in the struggles of the individual women to push beyond their own limits, as artists and as women. In order to accomplish a project as demanding as Womanhouse, the women had to work in a manner that they were totally unaccustomed to. They had to do hard physical labour, use tools they knew nothing about, complete their projects by the opening date, work in a scale larger than most of them had ever tackled. At first they were very excited, but the excitement soon gave way to waves of resentment about having such intense demands placed upon them. They began to see us as monsters, terrible people asking impossible things of them. Many of them complained incessantly, sure that they would fail, that the House would be a failure, that we would never finish. Endurance became a dirty word.

We know that society fails women by not demanding excellence from them. We hung in there. We assured them that they could do it, that the House would be a success, that they were angry because they were being forced to work harder than they ever had before ... that it was worth it. In the end, they came to agree with us, and they developed real pride in achieving what was, individually and

collectively, an incredible feat. Each of the women, working singly or together, had made rooms or environments: bedrooms, closets, bathrooms, hallways, gardens. The age-old female activity of homemaking was taken to fantasy proportions. Womanhouse became the repository of the daydreams women have as they wash, bake, cook, sew, clean and iron their lives away. [...]

Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, extract from catalogue essay, *Womanhouse* (Los Angeles: California Institute of the Arts, 1972); digital reprint edition (Belen, New Mexico: Through the Flower).

## **Tim Rollins**

### **A Proposal for Learning to Get Things off Our Chests: Behaviour, Discipline and Our Project/ /1980**

#### **Discipline**

Group Material really needs to tighten up, to be more efficient in our work methods and organization, to be more conscientious to priorities if we are not to deteriorate into a messy, arbitrary, indistinctive co-op gallery that dresses indecisiveness in the garb of humility, 'down to earth'ness and a commitment to the casual. When discipline isn't consistently embraced by every member in a group, then self-discipline and self-initiative is unfair and impossible – it virtually feeds the laziness or the sloppiness of other members' responsibilities. Already in Group Material we can see that certain individuals tend to carry the organization, only to be reprimanded for conspiring to build hegemony. All this leads to personal resentments that are hard to undo.

Group members should be highly conscious of their responsibilities. I'm amazed how members approach the reality of this enterprise. The Group should at least provide a world of compensation for the social functions we perform for money: we design for corporations, teach for the state, construct the lofts for people responsible for gentrification, make insipid, useless products for the profit of some asshole somewhere. And yet we wouldn't think of being late for work at the office, work that is almost completely against our self-interest, but when a work session on the Group Material space is scheduled, people saunter in over an hour late or don't show up at all. And we wonder why advanced capitalism has survived with such durability all this time – they know how to organize themselves effectively! THIS IS THE WRONG TIME AND PLACE TO PLAY IN A LOW-KEY. Everyone is treating the group as if it were some leisure-time activity when



particular people (namely Mary Beth and Patrick, without whom I'm sure we would have 1. no space because no one else got off their asses to look 2. no references because most of us have pathetic credit histories 3. no basic utilities) are losing money, losing time at work and, certainly, losing faith in the ability of this group to last five years. FACT: Not one serious suggestion for a 3rd (or 4th or 5th) show has been offered – only the most vague, evasive and practically flippant of 'ideas for proposals for shows'. Sometimes I wonder if there hasn't been a strain of mononucleosis artificially introduced into the group by the biological warfare department of the CIA. The endless wind-blowing, the 'working out' of polemics that common sense should tell us can only be resolved in praxis – all this I suspect gets us quite depressed. Many of the little practical problems I find with the group would be petty complaints if they did not appear to be irrefutable evidence of the Group's collective incompetence. Trivial? ... if we can't even call Con Ed, how the fuck are we going to be able to call press and contacts to get people to come to the space, to establish a supportive audience, to promote our work for the benefit of not only ourselves but, and I mean this, for the advancement of art history in America. Our inconclusiveness is becoming maddening; one gets crazed trying to keep 1001 issues and questions 'in mind' never knowing when group 'opinion' will shift at the whim of one who has changed his/her mind, or who didn't attend the last meeting and didn't bother to call someone to find out what went on.

### **Our Project**

The problem of discipline, like the problem of behaviour, is linked to the question that, it seems, everyone in the Group is trying to evade: WHAT IS GROUP MATERIAL GOING TO DO? Only the collective can discuss this, but I want to ask: Are we to be a co-op debating society or a spearhead for a politically and socially informed cultural movement? Of course these are the extremes of possibility, but anyone who sees aiming for the high mark as 'impractical' or 'overambitious' has been victimized by the old pedagogy of the bourgeoisie that tells every member of the working class: 'You can do nothing but work for us!' Artists or would-be artists like us tend to suffer from an irrational inferiority complex when it comes to putting our asses on the line of *actual cultural production*. Are we Group MATERIAL or not? Really ... how insecure ... how dare we feel inadequate or hesitant to do work in this age of Judy Chicago and Times Square Shows??? This is to say nothing of the out-and-out reactionaries that constitute the façade of the American avant-garde! Our work concerns, at an essential level, the politics of aesthetics in a world where politics are increasingly being made aesthetic. We will certainly do more harm than good – by example – if we don't get our shit together in the way of theory and practice. (Can't you hear it now?



'So you are naïve and want to make a socially committed art? Look at Group Material, look how far they got ...') Discipline is the foundation of any effective activism (in this world, at least) and the Group needs to work harder on an individual and collective basis. We must DO things, MAKE things – it is through this practice that we will earn a real ability and education instead of merely consuming information we can puff out at someone else's gallery openings.

Julie [Ault] said a good thing a couple of weeks ago, unfortunately not at a G.M. meeting. She was in her room, preparing her artworks. I don't remember what led to her excellent comment: 'I'm just going to do these things and I'm not going to worry about looking like an asshole anymore.' At last, purism is defeated! Julie is no hero (or isn't she?!), but this is an example of commitment (to cultural production – to art) and courage. It will probably get her a nice bunch of money in the long run as well. (Just kidding, of course.)

Tim Rollins, extract from 'A Proposal for Learning to Get Things off our Chests: Behaviour, Discipline and Our Project' (unsolicited statement to Group Material, 22 July 1980); reproduced in Julie Ault, *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material* (London: Four Corners Books, 2010) 13–15.

## **Gregg Bordowitz** **Picture a Coalition//1987**

[...] The agenda of this project compels the video activist to organize the screening and distribution of material. People must be able to see themselves making history. People living with AIDS must be able to see themselves not as victims, but as self-empowered activists. In view of this agenda, distribution plans have to be fundamentally pragmatic: Generate as much material as possible. Show this material in as many forms and as many places as possible. Utilize every possible resource. Work by any means necessary.

The Testing the Limits collective has addressed issues of distribution by organizing its production as a self-generating process. The twenty-eight minute documentary is the 'public image' for the work of the collective. As such, it is made to appeal to a wide audience. It has been screened in Los Angeles at the American Film Institute and in New York at both the New Museum of Contemporary Art and Global Village. Appropriate for broadcast, it is a means to recognition and funding. More importantly, it provides an impetus to the community-based advocacy work in which the collective is engaged. Our

material can be disseminated through local distribution, presented anywhere a screening is possible. The collective has a policy of sharing material with anyone in the movement. Aside from the local VCR circuit, material is fed to public access programmes such as *Living with AIDS*, and *Out in the Eighties*, a gay cable TV show. It is possible to set up screenings anywhere. Some groups have organized screenings in parking lots, running tapes off the cigarette lighter of a station wagon, propping the TV on the tailgate.<sup>1</sup>

Imagine a screening. In a local community centre a consumer VCR deck and a TV set sit on a table. Representatives from the various communities affected by AIDS sit in front of the TV. They watch a video composed of interviews with each of them. They see themselves pictured in relation to one another as they sit next to one another.

Consider this screening. It presents both means and ends for the video AIDS activist. The AIDS movement, like other radical movements, creates itself as it attempts to represent itself. Video puts into play the means of recognizing one's place within the movement in relation to that of others in the movement. Video has the potential to render the concerted efforts – as yet unimagined – between groups. The most significant challenge to the movement is coalition building, because the AIDS epidemic has engendered a community of people who cannot afford not to recognize themselves as a community and to act as one.

The AIDS epidemic has caused us to change our behaviour. It has shaped our social relations as it has changed our views of ourselves. This became apparent to me recently, after coming out to my family. I realized that I had come out as a member of two disenfranchised groups. I am a member of the gay community and a member of the AIDS community. Furthermore, I am a gay member of the AIDS community, a community that some would establish by force, for no other end but containment, toward no other end but repression, with no other end but our deaths – a community that must, instead, establish itself in the face of this containment and repression. We must proudly identify ourselves as a coalition.

Picture a coalition of people refusing to be victims.

Picture a coalition of people distributing condoms and clean works.

Picture a coalition of people having safe sex and shooting up with clean works.

Picture a coalition of people staging a die-in in front of City Hall or the White House until massive funds for AIDS are released.

Picture a coalition of people getting arrested for blocking traffic during rush hour as they stand in the middle of Times Square kissing one another.

Picture a coalition of people occupying abandoned buildings, demanding that they be made into hospices for people living with AIDS.

Picture a coalition of people chanting 'Money for AIDS, not for war' as they surround and quarantine the Pentagon.

The government and the medical establishment denounce as 'immoral' the people who get sick and the people they hope will get sick. They worry about themselves, their children and the 'innocent victims'. They predict the kinds of people who get AIDS, the numbers of people infected, the numbers of deaths that will occur. But they are doing next to nothing to cure the sick and prevent the spread of AIDS.

People are asking, 'If they won't do anything now, when will they?' 'If they won't do anything for those who are sick now, for whom will they?'

Getting no answers, people are mobilizing.

Getting no answers, a movement is emerging.

Picture a coalition of people who will end this epidemic.

- 1 [footnote 10 in source] See Dee Dee Halleck, 'A Few Arguments for the Appropriation of Television', *High Performance*, no. 37 (1987) 40.

Gregg Bordowitz, extract from 'Picture a Coalition', *October*, no. 43 (1987) 193–6.

## **Okwui Enwezor**

### **The Production of Social Space as Artwork//2007**

[...] On the vast outskirts of the urban rim, forgotten communities in the villages that are the historical link between the past and the present, the local and global, live on the edge of official amnesia, on the dark side of a politics of invisibility.<sup>1</sup> Though massive in population and visible through the meagre, deracinated social amenities that can barely cope with their demands, the poor in Africa have become the disappeared of globalization. In broad daylight Africans are short-circuited between development and underdevelopment, between the *third world* and the *first world*. The poor are invisible because official discourse long ago stopped seeing them. Instead they have become a blind spot in the neoliberal catechism of the move toward market economy. They have become ghosts in the political machine<sup>2</sup> of late modernity. Deracinated by structural adjustment policies, the rural and urban contexts in Africa have become manifestations that produce their own structure of fecundation, a fertile soil for new possibilities of being. Urban and rural inhabitants have increasingly begun working with new kinds of experimentation contra the logic of development modernity. They are involved in inventing new subjective identities and protocols of community.

All these issues coalesce in the activities of Huit Facettes. Its principal project since its formation is the Hamdallaye project, a long, extended collaboration with the inhabitants of the village of Hamdallaye, some five hundred kilometres from Dakar in the Haute Cassamance region near the Gambian border. Huit Facettes perceives its work exactly as the inverse of the logic of development strategies through the utility of art. In so doing, its central mission has been to 'disentangle modernism's historical contradiction between art's claim to aesthetic autonomy and its ambitions for social relevance'.<sup>3</sup> The sustained ongoing project at Hamdallaye attempts, through collaboration between the members of the group and the villagers, to concentrate on the circulation of not only the symbolic goods of artistic skills but also on the strategic transfer of vital skills from the artists to the village community. However, this transfer of skills is directed to ensure that the villagers retain creative control of their artistic labour. To empower the isolated villagers and thereby increase their economic capacity through artistic skills not only profits the villagers, it also helps them bridge the social distance between them as artists and the villagers who perceive artists from the point of view of being a privileged urban elite identified with elements of the state. According to Kan Si, one of the founding members:

Huit Facettes in rural Senegal is much more the story of a procedure or process which, as it unfolds, has given us (contemporary Senegalese artists living in the city) a point of anchorage or reconciliation with the part of society that feeds us and from which we were cut off. One particular elite rejoins its roots in the same socio-cultural (Senegalese) context.<sup>4</sup>

Each year since 1996, the project with the villagers in Hamdallaye begins with a series of public discussions that then move into the phase of workshops. The workshops are designed to transform basic skills into professional skills – for example, in underglass painting, ceramics, batik dyeing process, carving, weaving, embroidery. Depending on the level of work needed to accomplish the training at hand, the workshops are normally conducted over a period of one to two weeks. The concentration on specific kinds of skills is arrived at based on their utility and creativity, but also on dialogue with members of the community. Women are especially targeted as a group who can profit from the link with the artists. For Huit Facettes the planning of each workshop is connected to the utility of certain creative systems (they have to be accessible, inexpensive, skilful, sustainable over a long period, and draw from the exchange of knowledge between the two groups). What the artists offer, in addition, are access to material, advertisement of the results, and access to the urban market. Above all, the autonomy of the Hamdallaye residents in deciding what is most useful for

them in the collaboration is important for the critical discourse of Huit Facettes. The group tries to avoid the hierarchical structure of NGO development work. This is partly to stimulate the agency and subjective capacity of each participant in the workshop, to help them establish an individual expression. But above all it is to avoid at all cost the possibility of dependency. By paying critical attention to the idea of subjectivity Huit Facettes works in the interstices of development and empowerment, whereby 'in the end the participants are able to set up self-sustaining practices as non-dependent citizens'.<sup>5</sup>

This approach is attempted as a subtle contradiction of the development discourse, which recently has been the dominant vehicle for addressing many African crises. The top-down, donor-client model of NGOs and development agencies from wealthy Western countries has been perceived as undermining Africa's ability at non-dependency. Oftentimes, development organizations, through donor institutions, operate on the assumption of economic and socio-political templates that can be domesticated within an African context, transforming the templates as it were into substrates of an authentically African ideal. As such there is the preponderance of support for an aesthetic of recycling, the make-do, makeshift and bricolage rather than invention, sophistication and technologically sound transfer of knowledge. In short, development has given rise to the spectacle and excess of *Tokunbo* culture, whereby discarded and semifunctional technological objects and detritus of the West are recalibrated for the African market. From used cars to electronics, from biotechnology to hazardous waste Africa has become the dumping and test ground for both extinct Western technology and its waste. All of these issues come up in the analysis of the political-social-cultural economy of Senegal by Huit Facettes. [...]

- 1 [footnote 34 in source] Abdou Maliq Simone, 'The Visible and Invisible: Remaking African Cities', in *Under Siege: Four African Cities: Freetown, Johannesburg, Kinshasa, Lagos*, ed. Okwui Enwezor et al. (Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz, 2002).
- 2 [35] Ibid.
- 3 [36] Nadja Rottner, 'Huit Facettes', in *Documenta 11 – Platform 5* (Kassel, 2002) 114.
- 4 [37] Kan Si, 'Dimensions Variable: Reply from Kan Si', in *The Metronome, or Backwards Translation*, no. 4–6, ed. Clémentine Deliss (Frankfurt: Bielle, 1999) 126.
- 5 [38] Exhibition statement, 'Documenta 11 – Platform 5' (Kassel, 2002).

Okwui Enwezor, extract from 'The Production of Social Space as Artwork: Protocols of Community in the Work of Le Groupe Amos and Huit Facettes', in Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette, eds, *Collectivism after Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination after 1945* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007) 244–6.



**The confidential project as a project of the transitional epoch**

It's clear that the structure of the confidential project is nothing but an attempt to create a structure for a collective artistic practice in the situation of the absence of an art system. Thus the confidential project and the Moscow-Ljubljana community itself (let's call it the confidential community) is exactly the type of transitional society characteristic of Eastern Europe. In an institutional, ideological and moral vacuum, friendship becomes the last shelter for culture. The direct result of the institutional and symbolic collapse in Eastern Europe is the crisis of any objective justification for artistic practice. Communism not only provided an objective foundation for official art, it also gave birth to the alternative. Avoiding official institutions and taking root in the sphere of the everyday, this alternative culture was also controlled by strict ideological principles. Acting as an opposition to the official institutional culture, alternative culture required the ideals and principles of 'comrades-in-arms' and 'the common affair'. Moreover, one of the most developed alternative strategies became the interiorization of the symbolic and institutional order of the official culture.

There is no more evident example of this strategy than the phenomenon of the NSK [Neue Slowenische Kunst] state. Irwin's progress from the NSK state via the NSK Embassy (which represented alternative experience in a new context and a new form) to Transnacionala is essentially the evolution of the creative consolidation from the ideological to the post-ideological epoch. Friendship is the most non-institutional and personalized type of social communication. Even love obtains a social codification in the institution of matrimony.

The confidential community is a direct reaction to the mad dynamics of social transformation. The cultural crisis in Eastern Europe is not just the absence of institutions, but also that the downward motion of social change has exceeded the possibility of cultural reflection. The dynamics of thought are not as fast as social dynamics. That's why the media became the main actor in the transitional period, and reportage became the most fitting genre for writing and analysis. Consciousness cannot generalize: it can only register at a better time. The efficacy of the confidential community is that, in such a situation, it is the only social institution in which time is not determined by external circumstances: it is determined by the participants themselves. Friendly communication is not established through formalized procedures, but through the rhythm discovered by the participants when they listen to each other. The members of the



confidential community have a common goal: to create a special temporal regime to oppose the social regime, the regime of thought. In the situation where not only the normative ethics of the authority collapse, but the 'comrade-in-arms' and 'common affair' ethics of opposition collapse as well, it is friendship, 'the ethical form of Eros' which remains the most invulnerable. It is also invulnerable to the cult of immorality, now associated with the liberating ethos of the transitional period. Finally, the ethic of friendship does not accept any relativization of moral feelings, which (especially in the communist period) was the most efficient opposition to official morality. Links between friends can't avoid morality, that's what takes them beyond simple acquaintance and relations between colleagues. While accepting any forms of human expression (including transgression and excess), friendship denies only one – irony. The confidential project is a characteristic symptom of the new situation, in which ironic strategies are left in the past. It is based in a deep earnestness, almost an obsession (transgression and excess). In this sense the confidential community is the only possible form in which to preserve ethics in the period of the transition from the ideological ethics of the communist age to the conventional ethics of post-industrial society.

The confidential community's denial of irony is an acknowledgment that deconstruction has exhausted itself as a strategy, and that what's needed is a strategy of reconstruction. The constructive character of the confidential community is the utopian element that exists in any real friendship. The confidential project is the project of an ideal community or an ideal art system. In other words, the confidential community is a sphere of absolute democracy. In this sense, the idea of the institutionalization of friendship is mobilizing the major advantage of any transition epoch, when the old order has collapsed and the new one has not yet been built. The confidential community ascribes value to a pure potentiality. The potentiality of the confidential community is guaranteed by the freedom from any preliminary judgements, and by an openness to the Other, which is characteristic of any friendly feeling. There is nothing preliminary in friendship except the friendship itself. That's why the confidential community can avoid ideological dogmatism, and can remain open to the chaos of the transitional epoch instead of turning into a closed sect. That's why it's the form most suitable for the thinking class in transitional countries, which is faced with re-evaluating the communist past, appropriating the Western experience and registering the symptoms of the present.

The confidential community is useful for the thinking class in that it presumes no ultimate and indisputable judgement. It is impossible not to see that problems facing East European intellectuals still exceed their capabilities. To pass any judgement is to become orthodox in approach, but there is no way to avoid trying

to resolve these problems. Finally, the suitability of the confidential project to the transitional epoch is evident in its purely aesthetic parameters. The work in the confidential project is in pure questioning, blatantly ignoring the institutional forms of artistic production characteristic of the transitional societies. To move from the production of artefacts to the discussion of artistic production's preconditions, is essentially to invest value in the potentiality contained in the social and artistic situation of the transitional countries. In other words, the strategy of institutionalizing friendship is the manner in which the art of the transitional period injects self-knowledge into aesthetics. [...]

Viktor Misiano, extract from 'The Institutionalization of Friendship' (1998), *Transnacionala* (Ljubljana, 1999). ([www.irwin.si](http://www.irwin.si))

## Ayreen Anastas

### 16Beavergroup//2004

#### 16Beavergroup

**1** Strength or continuity derived from an initial effort. **2** A directing influence or guidance, *spec.* (esp. in the Society of Friends) a spiritual indication of the proper course of action in any case **3a** Strong predilection, liking or fondness for, or devotion to something. **b** An instance of affection (now rare). Formerly also, an act of kindness. **4** The fitting moment; the momentary conjunction of circumstances, esp. as affording an opportunity. **5** 'many, much', 'having, involving, containing, etc., many' (many variously connoting 'two or more', 'three or more', 'several', or 'a large number' in different contexts) **6a** *n.* (The state of having) time at one's disposal. **b** Opportunity afforded by freedom from occupations. **c** Time remaining, sufficient time. **7a** The course taken by something in relation to the point towards which it is moving; the line towards anything in its relation to a given line; a point to or from which a person moves, turns, etc. **b** *fig.* The course of development of thought, effort or action; a distinct tendency or trend; consistent progress. **8** Differing from itself in different circumstances, at different times, or in different parts; changeful; varied. **9** A deep resonant sound. **10** An index of the average level of share prices on the New York Stock Exchange at any time, based on the daily price of a selection of representative stocks. **11** He or him himself, I or me myself, it itself, she or her herself, we or us ourselves, you yourself, you yourselves, they or them themselves. **12** An engine or motor vehicle

with sixteen cylinders. **13a** Move, set in motion. **b** Utter, cause (a voice or sound) to be heard. Also, make (a gesture). **c** Move (a thing) from the normal place or position; shift, displace. **14** A collection of saints' lives or similar stories. **15a** Steady or uniform in action, procedure or occurrence; esp. recurring or repeated at fixed times, recurring at short uniform intervals. **b** Pursuing definite course or observing a uniform principle of action or conduct. Now esp. observing fixed times for or never failing in the performance of certain actions or duties. **16** A state of supreme happiness.

Ayreen Anastas, '16Beavergroup' definition, from 'The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary', *Rethinking Marxism*, vol. 16, no. 3 (July 2004).

## **Blake Stimson and Greg Sholette Collectivism Now//2007**

Evidence that recent and profound mutation in the neoliberal agenda has occurred in the months since 9/11 is everywhere abundant. Likewise, collectivism is undergoing a radical transformation of its own. As we write this, Steven Kurtz, a founding member of the Critical Art Ensemble (CAE), is facing dubious criminal charges, connected to the group's public critique of the biotechnology industry, that were levelled by a federal grand jury impanelled to reveal the artist's involvement in bioterrorism.<sup>1</sup> Underlying the state's investigation, however, is the CAE's anarchist-inspired writings about tactical media and the creation of radical, collective cells for carrying out 'molecular interventions and semiotic shocks that contribute to the negation of the rising intensity of authoritarian culture'.<sup>2</sup>

All at once it seems that an era has transpired since the risk-taking, experimental approach embodied by contemporary art was being held up as the sexy doppelgänger of the new economy. Ounce for ounce art's cultural capital also paid dividends of another type. According to John Murphy, a former vice president of Philip Morris Inc., art harbours an essential ingredient that 'has its counterpart in the business world. That element is innovation – without which it would be impossible for progress to be made in any segment in society.'<sup>3</sup>

But what appears to have set Kurtz and the CAE apart – at least for the moment – from other, similar artistic endeavours is most apparent by a question FBI officers posed to one of Kurtz's academic colleagues: why, they asked, is the CAE 'listed as a collective rather than by its individual members'?<sup>4</sup> No longer

mere symptom but now fully suspect, the innovative groupthink common to both unbridled corporate entrepreneurialism and a certain electronic vanguard sensibility will henceforth be required to take a loyalty test or face the consequences. There is only room for one collective enterprise now and that is state-sanctioned marketplace fetishism as imagined community. And with it comes the ethereal image of commingled youthful blood, always purposely kept offscreen yet always fully present. It is as ghostly a form of collectivism as that of Vicksburg, Normandy, Iwo Jima and countless other mnemonic points of reference cynically mobilized by a new cult of communal sacrifice and blindly administered over by a swarm of embedded media, grey-haired talking heads and evangelical party leaders.

In other words, what was only very recently a primarily *cultural* battlefield waged over modes of representation, manifestations of identity and even choices of lifestyle has abruptly shifted into increasingly direct confrontation that, as Brian Holmes argues, is constituted by 'decentralized collective action that propagates itself via every means: word-of-mouth and rumour, communication between political groups, meetings of social movements, and broadcasts over specialized and mass media – above all the Internet'.<sup>5</sup> Cultural politics may have ended, but in a world all but totally subjugated by the commodity form and the spectacle it generates, the only remaining theatre of action is direct engagement with the forces of production. This repoliticization of the economy brings with it the ghosts of collectivism past. In this respect we cannot help but recall the words of El Lissitzky, 'The private property aspect of creativity must be destroyed; all are creators and there is no reason of any sort for this division into artists and non-artists'.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, in so far as collectivism after modernism remains rooted in difference rather than its attempted neutralization, it is constituted within what Antonio Negri has described as a multitude consisting of creative workers, community and environmental activists, radical labour and NGO administrators, but also urban garden builders, houseworkers and mothers. From puppet makers busted by the Philadelphia police to radical hip-hop artists on Chicago's South Side, from rural peasants facing down agribusiness giants like Monsanto or the PRI in Chiapas to techno-geeks who dream of turning the very tools of global capital into the means of its destruction, the new collectivism at once resembles the tentative unity of the United Front in the 1930s while simultaneously counterposing the universal consumer to the romance of world man. Therefore, when the Carnival Against Capital occupies urban centres, when the group Yomango seizes merchandise simply 'because you can't buy happiness', or when the Critical Art Ensemble creates home testing kits for identifying transgenic foods purchased at the local grocery store, they move within and are literally

constituted by the same, nearly global force of capital they aim to disrupt.

This then is our fetish now: that the dream of collectivism realize itself as neither the strategic vision of some future ideal, of a revised modernism, nor as the mobile, culture-jamming, more-mediated-than-thou counter-hegemony of collectivism after modernism, but instead as Marx's self-realization of human nature constituted by taking charge of social being, here and now. This means neither picturing social form nor doing battle in the realm of representation, but instead engaging with social life as production, engaging with social life itself as the medium of expression. This new collectivism carries with it the spectral power of collectivisms past, just as it is realized fully within the hegemonic power of global capitalism. Its creativity stands in relationship to the modernist image and the postmodernist counter-image much in the same way that the multitude of Sunday painters and other amateurs does to the handful of art stars: as a type of dark matter encircling the reified surfaces of the spectacle of everyday life. Vastly more extensive and difficult to pinpoint, this new collectivist fetish inhabits the everywhere and nowhere of social life. In so doing it gives its own interpretation to the old avant-garde banner – 'art into life!' – that it proudly carries forward from its predecessors: that the ancient dream of the glorious, all-encompassing body of the collective – of Christ or God or Allah or King or Leviathan or Nation or State or Public – the dream of redemption, of experiencing the imagined community as an end to alienation and as a promise of eternal life, realize itself not as an image or as flight from images but instead as a form of social building that brings itself into being wherever and whenever it can. [...]

- 1 [footnote 13 in source] In May 2004, the Joint Terrorism Task Force illegally detained artist and SUNY Buffalo professor Steve Kurtz of Critical Art Ensemble (CAE). They seized documents, computers and equipment used in three of CAE's projects. For details see [updated archive page, accessed July 2017:] <http://critical-art.net/siteapps/WordPress-49402/htdocs/defense/>
- 2 [14] Critical Art Ensemble, <http://www.critical-art.net/>.
- 3 [15] Chin-tao Wu, *Privatizing Culture: Corporate Art Intervention since the 1980s* (London and New York: Verso, 2002) 125.
- 4 [16] Lynne Duke, 'The FBI's Art Attack: Offbeat Materials at Professor's Home Set Off Bioterror Alarm', *Washington Post* (2 June 2004).
- 5 [18] Brian Holmes, in correspondence with the authors, 10 August 2002.
- 6 [19] El Lissitzky, 'Suprematism in World Reconstruction' (1920), in *El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1967) 333.

Blake Stimson and Greg Sholette, extract from 'Introduction: Periodizing Collectivism', in Stimson and Sholette, eds, *Collectivism after Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination after 1945* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007) 11–13.



**Alain Badiou**

**We Need a Popular Discipline: In Conversation with  
Filippo Del Lucchese and Jason Smith//2007**

*Filippo Del Lucchese and Jason Smith* You argue for a 'politics without party' and a new model of 'organization'. How do you distinguish them, and why? And what is the relation between politics and the state today?

*Alain Badiou* The question of organization is still one of fundamental importance, even for those who maintain that politics shouldn't be organized at all, as is the case for the great anarchist tradition. The name *organization* designates the collective dimension of political action. We know that organization can take the form of a movement, party, union, or what have you. It's a great tradition. Today, however, we're in a situation in which the long-dominant model of the class party, of the Leninist avant-garde party (in an aesthetic sense as well), is saturated. It's exhausted. My evaluation of the Leninist party is that it was a model whose function was to make a victorious insurrection possible. Lenin was obsessed by the bloody failures of the worker insurrections of the nineteenth century – especially the Paris Commune. This was the first experience of the dictatorship of the proletariat, to use Lenin's language, and it was a bloody failure. It failed because the movement was undisciplined, divided and powerless. Lenin therefore advised that there be a high degree of centralization of worker power in a party that would be able to lead and organize the class. And he proved, on the question of organization at least, that it was a good idea. The revolution of 1917 was the first victorious insurrection in the history of humanity. This is why it has such an enormous historical importance – a step had been taken. After the many worker revolts of the previous century, all of which had been crushed with an extraordinary and bloody brutality, the Leninist model finally made possible a victorious revolution.

This model, however, didn't offer much more. With regard to the question of the state and power, of the duration of the power of the state, the model of the party-state ended up showing serious limitations, whether it be what the Trotskyists called the tendency to bureaucratization, what the anarchists identified with state terrorism, or the Maoists with revisionism. None of that is important here. It's clear that the party-state was a failure. From the point of view of taking power, the party was victorious. But not from the perspective of exercising power. So we are in a phase that is or should be beyond the question of the party as a model of organization. That model solved the problems of the nineteenth century, but we have to solve those of the twenty-first.

The form of organization today should be, in my opinion, less directly

articulated with or by the question of the state and power. The model of the centralized party made possible a new form of power that was nothing less than the power of the party itself. We are now at what I call a distance from the state. This is first of all because the question of power is no longer immediate; nowhere does a 'taking power' in the insurrectional sense seem possible today. We should search for a new form. My friends and I in *L'Organisation politique* call this a politics without party. This is a completely descriptive, negative characterization of the situation. It simply means that we do not want to enter into a form of organization that is entirely articulated with the state. Both the insurrectional form of the party and today's electoral form are articulations by state power. In both cases, the party is subordinated to the question of power and the state. I think we have to break with this subordination and ultimately engage political organization (whatever form it may take) in political processes that are independent of – 'subtracted' from – the power of the state. Unlike the insurrectional form of the party, this politics of subtraction is no longer immediately destructive, antagonistic or militarized.

I think the Leninist party was at bottom a military model. And for good reason. This is not a criticism. Lenin was obsessed with one question: how does one win the war? The question of discipline is therefore fundamental, just as it is for an army. You cannot win the war if people do whatever they like, if there is no unity and so on. The problem for emancipatory politics today, however, is to invent a non-military model of discipline. We need a popular discipline. I would even say, as I have many times, that 'those who have nothing have only their discipline'. The poor, those with no financial or military means, those with no power – all they have is their discipline, their capacity to act together. This discipline is already a form of organization. The question is whether all discipline can be reduced to a military model, the model that dominated the first part of the twentieth century. How can we find, invent, exercise or experiment with – today, after all, is an age of experimentation – a non-military discipline? [...]

Alain Badiou, Filippo Del Lucchese and Jason Smith, extract from interview. "We Need a Popular Discipline": Contemporary Politics and the Crisis of the Negative' (Los Angeles, 7 February 2007), *Critical Inquiry*, no. 34 (Summer 2008) 648–50.

Art today is trapped in the facile idea of the individual 'freedom of expression' that merely produces the banality of media scandals and sensationalism, widening the gap further between art and life in which art now operates purely as a commodity. The tremendous success of the artist today has in fact inflated the artist's narcissist ego (hereafter *narego*) further and turned him or her into a celebrity which can entertain the public spectacularly but without any transformational function.

All this has in fact been due to the failure of the historical avant-garde. This failure was not inherent in the ideas of the avant-garde themselves, but the way the criticality of the avant-garde was appropriated by the very forces it wanted to confront and change. The potential of the avant-garde to intervene in life and transform it is still there. But it must first liberate itself from the artist's *narego*, and also from where this ego leads art to: the bourgeois art institution. Art must now go beyond the making of mere objects that are displayable in the museum or/and sold as precious commodities at the market place. Only then can it enter the world of everyday life and its collective energy that is struggling not only to improve life itself but to save it from its impending destruction on earth.

Historically, the struggle of the avant-garde was of course to integrate art with life, to find ways by which individual creative processes could enter life's own dynamic processes and become part of it. But it was only during the Land art movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s that what emerged – though paradoxically, as both a concept and form – from abandoning the making of objects in favour of art as concepts, should now pay the way forward. Thanks to Duchamp ... but art now went beyond his object making and became engaged with the land or the earth itself – indeed, a dynamic reversal of the readymade.

The land had always been an object of the artist's gaze, but this time the gaze did not produce landscape painting. On the contrary, the conception of land as art itself became the artwork. This was achieved by intervening in the land and transforming it as something that continued to remain part of the land, either as a stationary object or what would transform itself continually. But, again, what should have become part of the living process of the productive land ended up in the museums as photographic artworks to be looked at as objects of the gaze.

Some ten years later, Joseph Beuys tried to resolve this difficult paradox by suggesting that his work of planting trees (Kassel, 1982) could in fact become part of people's everyday work. It offered a social model for the transformative

power of art, but his proposal of planting trees also failed to go beyond the idea of art legitimized and contained by the bourgeois art institution. And although Beuys' work opened a new space for art to move forward, it failed to resolve the problem of art trapped within both the artist's narego and the institution that will not allow art to become part of the collectivity of life.

However, although such radical ideas of the avant-garde failed, as they were legitimized and contained within the individualism of artists, the ideas themselves are still there to be taken out of their institutional closures. The ideas were of course appropriated and their true significance aborted, turning them into institutionally manageable objects, frozen in their temporalities. But ideas as knowledge can never be frozen or trapped, either as the absolute property of an individual or the institution. They can always be salvaged from history, given new context and made to move forward within the dynamic of a new time and space. They can indeed be made to perform a radically transformative function in dealing with the problem of humanity today.

But in order to perform this function, the very concept of art will have to liberate itself from the narcissist ego of the artist, its institutional legitimization as art which facilitates and promotes art only as saleable commodities and then turns them into reified objects placed in its museum showcases. Art must then go beyond what prevails as art and integrate itself with the collective struggle of life today to recover its true social function; and, indeed, to become a radical force of the 21st century.

A piece of land can now be conceived not merely as a conceptual artwork but this concept can be taken beyond its becoming a canonized object and integrated into an ongoing, self-sustaining dynamic process with a movement generated within itself, by its own agency that thus legitimizes itself. This agency is not of an individual, who might have initiated the idea of land as art, but the *collective work* of those who work on the land. It is this collective work of the masses, not of nature as perceived by the American land artists Robert Smithson and Robert Morris, which continually transforms the land, producing an agency which is not only creatively productive but posits a progressive idea, philosophically, towards the solution of the problem the world is facing today and will continue to face.

The phenomenon of climate change can be studied by scientists in their ivory towers, but the reality of its disturbing consequences is faced by all the life on earth. The solution to this problem lies not in the theories of the academics but the productive creativity of the people themselves, which can be enhanced through the intervention of an *artistic imagination*. What the world now needs are rivers and lakes of clean water, collective farms and planting of trees all over the world – which was in fact initiated in Kenya by the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004, Wangari Maathai, a few years [in 1977] before Beuys' proposal, as a result

of which millions of trees have been planted all over the world. The aim of *Ecoaesthetics* is to bring both Maathai's and Beuys' visions together, in a unison that fills the gap between art and life – which the avant-garde had failed to do. Although it is extremely important to protect existing rain forests, they will not alone reduce the greenhouse effects in the atmosphere. Only the planting of more trees can achieve this, for which enormous water would be required. This can be achieved by conceptualizing the process of desalination of sea water as an ongoing continuous artwork, with its own dynamics and agency. The establishment of desalination plants around the world – which can be millions – may not make much difference to the sea level, but it can provide an enormous quantity of water not only for the cultivation of land but also to fulfil all other needs of life on earth.

Desalination of sea water as art is based on its potential to transform things. It comprises a complex cycle of continuous transformations of the sun's energy, which when brought into contact with water becomes steam that runs desalination plants to produce fresh water, which then fertilizes the earth and produces trees and plants.

This phenomenon actually happens in nature. But when it is replicated through the combination of art, science and technology, its controlled results enhance the very phenomenon of nature that is replicated. The role of artistic imagination here is to think, initiate and create not what is self-consuming by the ego from which the idea emerges, but what can transcend and transgress nature and become part of the collective energy of the earth and transform it in such a way that this transformation not only enhances the natural potential of the earth itself but also the collective creativity of the life of all its inhabitants – humans, animals, plants, insects, and so on.

The idea of desalination is not just a conceptual artwork, but can be realized materially; it is also meant to be an example of the broader conceptual framework from which many more ideas and projects can emerge in the future.

Art must, ultimately, liberate itself from the romanticism of anarchic confrontation, from the prison of facile irony (Baudrillard), from the regimes of representation (Rancière/Deleuze), in order to become a continuous movement in life's natural processes. as part of its collective cultural endeavours to become more humane and truly egalitarian.

Rasheed Araeen, 'Ecoaesthetics: Art Beyond Art' (London, 8 November 2008).



**Nadezhda Tolokonnikova**

**When the World Spirit touches you, don't think you can walk away unscathed//2013**

Dear Slavo j,

One time, in the autumn of 2012, while I was sitting in pre-trial detention with the other Pussy Riot activists, I came to your house for a visit. In a dream, of course.

I get what you're saying about horses and the World Spirit, about [John Jay] Chapman's 'buffoonery and irreverence', and more to the point about how and why all of these are so forcefully bound up with one another. Pussy Riot has wound up on the side of those who feel the call to critique, to creation and co-creation, to experimentation and the role of the unceasing provocateur. To put it in terms of the opposition Nietzsche set up, we're the children of Dionysus, floating by in a barrel, accepting nobody's authority. We're on the side of those who don't offer final answers or transcendent truths. Our mission, rather, is the asking of questions.

There are architects of Apollonian equilibrium in this world, and there are (punk) singers of flux and transformation. One is not better than the other: 'Mamy raznye nuzhny, mamy raznye vazhny.' Only our cooperation can ensure the continuity of Heraclitus' vision: 'This world has always been and will always be a pulsing fire, flaring up accordingly, and dying down accordingly, with the cycling of the eternal world breath.'

We count ourselves among those rebels who court storms, who hold that the only truth lies in perpetual seeking.

Nikolai Berdyaev wrote in *Self-Knowledge*: 'Truth as an object which intrudes itself and wields authority over me – an object in the name of which it is demanded that I should renounce freedom – is a figment: truth is no extraneous thing; it is the way and the life. Truth is spiritual conquest; it is known in and through freedom.' 'Christianity itself is to me the embodiment of the revolt against the world and its laws and fashions.' 'From time to time a terrible thought crossed my mind: what if obsequious orthodoxy is right and I am wrong? In that case I am lost. But I have always been quick to "cast this thought from me".' All statements that might have come from Pussy Riot just as easily as from Russia's great political philosopher. In 1898, Berdyaev was arrested on charges of agitating for the Social Democrats, indicted for 'designs on the overthrow of the government and the church', and exiled from Kiev for three years to the Vologda Gubernia. When the World Spirit touches you, don't think you can walk away unscathed.

Intuition – and this is where your blind leading the blind comes in – is of stunning importance. The main thing is to realize that you yourself are as blind

as can be. Once you get that, you can, for maybe the first time, doubt the natural place in the world to which your skin and your bones have rooted you, the inherited condition that constantly threatens to spill over into feelings of terror.

It's tempting to think that fundamentalism is the only terrifying aspect of our situation, but the problem is bigger than that; fundamentalists are the tip of the iceberg. There's a powerful anti-fascist dictum that 'the fascists do the killing, the authorities the burying.' I remember something the curator Andrei Erofeev, whom I know to be anything but indifferent to anti-fascism, used to say while he was on trial at the instigation of the ultra-conservative People's Council, and facing considerable jail time, for his role in organizing the 'Forbidden Art – 2006' exhibition: 'If the People's Council had acted without the sanction of state apparatuses, this trial wouldn't be happening. So the situation, fraught as it is with the crescendoing possibility of violence, is reproduced by those same "experts" who, from where they stand in the halls of power, are supposed to be able to make impartial decisions. "Only an expert can deal with the problem."'

That's something Laurie Anderson sings: 'Only an expert can deal with the problem.' If only Laurie and I could've had the chance to take those experts down a peg! And solve our problems without them. Because expert status is no portal to the Kingdom of Absolute Truth.

Reasonable minds at last are seeing how truth can come from the mouths of innocents. It's not in vain that the Rus'<sup>2</sup> so esteems its holy fools, its mad ones. In the beating, political heart of civil Russia's capital city, at the site of Pussy Riot's January 2012 performance, at the base of Red Square, stands St Basil's Cathedral, named after Russia's beloved Basil Fool for Christ.

Cultural competence and sensitivity to the Zeitgeist don't come with a college diploma or live in an administrator's briefcase. You need to know which way to point the map. 'Humour, buffoonery and irreverence' might turn out to be modes of seeking truth. Truth is multifaceted, its seekers many and varied. 'Different but equal', as another good antifascist slogan had it.

I think Plato was pretty much wrong when he defined human beings as 'featherless bipeds'. No, a person does a lot more doubting than a plucked cock does. And these are the people I love – the Dionysians, the unmediated ones, those drawn to what's different and new, seeking movement and inspiration over dogmas and immutable statutes. The innocents, in other words, the speakers of truth.

Two years for Pussy Riot – the price we owe fate for the gift of perfect pitch that enables us to sound out an A, even while our old traditions teach us to listen for G-flat.

How can we resolve the opposition between experts and innocents? I don't know. But this I can tell you: the party of the innocents, as in Herod's time, will

exemplify resistance. We'll find our own basket and Pharaoh's daughter to help us. Those who keep a childlike faith in the triumph of truths over lies, and in mutual aid, who live their lives entirely within the gift economy, will always receive a miracle at the exact moment they need it.

Nadya

- 1 A line from the popular Soviet children's writer Sergei Mikhalkov: 'Moms of all kinds are needed, and moms of all kinds are important.'
- 2 'Rus' is an antiquated name for the earliest Slavic polities in the area of contemporary Russia; roughly akin to calling England 'Britannia'.

Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, 'When the World Spirit touches you, don't think you can walk away unscathed', Letter to Slavoj Zizek (23 February 2013), in Tolokonnikova and Zizek, *Comrade Zizek: Greetings: The Prison Letters of Nadya and Slavoj* (London and New York: Verso, 2014).

## **Theaster Gates** **Embedded: In Conversation with Jacqueline** **Stewart//2014**

*Jacqueline Stewart* Your Dorchester Projects consist of buildings on a residential block on Chicago's South Side that you have rehabilitated and animated with arts and cultural programming. They now house collections of books, records and glass slides. They host resident artists, screenings, meals, performances and dialogues among diverse constituencies, including folks living on the block. Why did you use the word 'house' to describe these transformed buildings? What does that word mean to you?

*Theaster Gates* Library House, Listening House, Archive House, or Black Cinema House – I think that it was a way of flat-footedly acknowledging the building type. And that building type over commercial building types, where this cultural activity is supposed to happen, is a way of converting the house building type into something that has the right to be symbolic. So if you went to the library, then you'd be going to the library, and that's what people do. But this is not the library: this is the Library House. It acknowledges usurping the repository and usurping this building type each to do something else with it. If it was just a house that you live in, you don't have to call it anything: it's just your apartment. But I think that

acknowledging the thing and acknowledging it taking place inside the house makes it a new kind of community entity. And instead of just saying, 'Come to this address', and by saying, 'Come to the Library House', people can imagine it differently. It's announcing itself as an amenity, as an asset in a place.

*Stewart* What people?

*Gates* I have a real strange sense of what 'everybody' means. In my neighbourhood, I want good people to come and people who will imagine the space as an asset. And if everybody in my neighbourhood were good people or everybody in my neighbourhood who is a bad person would want to be good when they're in my space, they're invited. I found early on that if you invite people in and you don't know them and they haven't earned the right to be in your crib, they may not have the same values you have. So we've tried to figure out ways so that when people enter the door they know there's an expectation of how they are to be in the house. Most of the time they can see that expectation played out in the culture that's happening in the place. But everybody in the hood is welcome. At one point, when I was trying to create an artistic practice and trying to find the resources necessary to do this work, it felt like I had to connect with other, outside folks who could help me to do that. I have a complicated, diverse set of friendships, and I wanted my friends, whomever they were, to feel like they could come into my crib.

*Stewart* Could you talk a little about how privacy fits into this? Because you're talking about inviting people into your crib, and historically black people, people in working class and poor communities like Greater Grand Crossing, have struggled for privacy.

*Gates* Privacy is really interesting, maybe in part because of my personality and, in part, because I'm the ninth of nine children, so I never really understood a certain kind of privacy that an only child might experience.

I never had my own bedroom growing up until I got my own apartment. Even then I was rarely alone. My guy would need a spot; my sister would need a spot. That's just the way things work. So I have a complicated sense of privacy. Privacy is something that is a kind of unarticulated retreat. When I get on a plane, I feel private. When I go to a country and I don't know anybody and can't speak the language, I have moments of privacy. But privacy isn't something that's contained in a space for me. Every time I think I'm making a private space, I make it public. And so public has an interesting meaning to me because I feel like my sense of public is stronger than my sense of private.

*Stewart* Sense – like an understanding of it, an experience of it?

*Gates* There is such a public need that I sacrifice my sense of privacy (sometimes) to create an opportunity for publicness. I wake up sometimes and a staff member is keying my keypad; they're coming into my house. Sometimes it could be very problematic, but the advantage is that they also share in the responsibility of maintaining that space. So to have privacy, you gain things and you give up things, and to have a public life, you gain and give up.

*Stewart* You have lived in these buildings as you develop them. Your status as an increasingly successful black artist and property owner living in this neighbourhood raises questions not only about privacy but also privilege and critical engagement. The people who live around you are also living in an immersive art practice in a way, right, by virtue of being your neighbours?

*Gates* So let's separate those words a bit. In a dynamic city, in a dynamic place, people are always living their lives in other people's lives. I don't believe that immersive and art are necessarily always together. Take the Archive House – if the Newberry Library were to move to Stony Island, people could choose to have an engagement with the Newberry or not.<sup>1</sup> They could use the Newberry's deep Romanesque arches as a shelter for waiting for a bus, and that might be the engagement with it; the immersion part is simply to stay out of the rain. That's as far as it goes.

On the block, people are definitely both voyeurs and participants. And because there's an invitation that goes out to make gingerbread houses or to come watch a movie or to learn how to shoot a film, they're involved in something. I set up a structure so that immersion can happen, but that immersion has nothing to do with an ongoing relationship with my artistic practice. I built that building. That was an act of transformation – the artist's and the art moment. But then that building is taken care of by another set of people, and in some ways it feels like a familial relationship. There are nine buildings and people are living among and in my buildings, but I'm also living among their buildings. I'm living within their joys and frustrations. I'm living inside of violence. My body moves through a very complicated terrain just like everyone else. And part of immersion or embeddedness assumes that there are things that you are embedded in that are not you. The embeddedness is sediment that may have been loose, that then, because of heat or pressure or water or cold air, is forced to move and join in a relationship, because of their proximity to one another. Then there is this alchemical process that happens and you find yourself stuck together.

When I think of the word *immerse*, I think of water and going under it:



immersion, immerse.<sup>1</sup> I don't know how that works. When I think of embeddedness, I think of things that may or may not have had consequence. The wind blew this over; the sand was there; some things fell off the cliff and landed in the sand; and then there was a volcano; then the lava flowed over all those things; and before you know it, by consequence of where I was and the accident of this volcanic explosion, I was embedded. And I don't really have a choice about the thing that's next to me.

*Stewart* So choice is the distinction you're making between immersion and embeddedness? Not a surrender of the self to engulfing surroundings, or an attempt to immerse your neighbours in your practice, but rather an embedded relation, in which you actively maintain your own distinctiveness as it becomes layered with the distinct lives of your neighbours, often in unpredictable ways.

*Gates* Yeah. One way to guarantee that everything around you is feldspar is to just buy everything around you. One way to assure I'm in control is to buy up all the buildings. But I actually think it's a healthier neighbourhood to understand that others are here too. It's important that there's some kind of diversity and variety, and that's the stuff that creates dynamism. The last thing I want to do is see twenty Theasters on the block. There are lots of people who are attracted to this mode of embedding or this mode of operating in a city space. We've been looking for ways to figure this out, and it's hard. This looks like a model that works, so people want to move to the block and want to understand it. My hope is that people who already live on the block want to continue to live on the block, and also other normal people who live on the South Side or wherever else. (I'm saying normal, like, normal black folk, a little bit ghetto, just normal folk.) People who come by and say: 'I like your building. Do you have any apartments for rent?' My hope is that they would be as invited and as interested and invested – that the architecture is never exclusionary, and people wouldn't automatically look at it and think, 'Oh, I could never live there.'

If there were twenty Theasters, that would be black gentrification. It would be a middle-class takeover. And maybe there are going to be twenty Theasters or twenty middle-class folk on the block. And maybe that's a good thing because at least then you're talking about a kind of economic diversity, which I think all neighbourhoods need. But in addition to a certain kind of expansive vision from the outside, can't we just cultivate the stuff that is already there?

1 The Newberry Library is a private research library housed in a large Romanesque-revival style building in the Gold Coast neighbourhood on Chicago's North Side. Stony Island Avenue is a major artery a few blocks east of the Dorchester Projects.

## **Fred Moten and Stefano Harney**

### **Michael Brown//2015**

[...] On 9 August, like every day, like any other day, black life, in its irreducible sociality, having consented not to be single, got caught walking – with jurisgenerative fecundity – down the middle of the street. Michael Brown<sup>1</sup> and his boys: black life breaking and making law, against and underneath the state, surrounding it. They had foregone the melancholic appeal, to which we now reduce them, for citizenship and subjectivity and humanness. That they had done so is the source of Darren Wilson's genocidal instrumentalization in the state's defence. They were in a state of war and they knew it. Moreover, they were warriors in insurgent, if imperfect, beauty. What's left for us to consider is the difference between the way of Michael Brown's dance, his fall and rise – the way they refuse to take place when he takes to the streets, the way Ferguson takes to the streets – and the way we seek to take, but don't seem to take to, the streets: in protest, as mere petitioners, fruitlessly seeking energy in the pitiful, minimal, temporary shutdown of this or that freeway, as if mere occupation were something other than retrenchment (in reverse) of the demand for recognition that actually constitutes business as usual. Rather than dissipate our preoccupation with how we live and breathe, we need to defend our ways in our persistent practice of them. It's not about taking the streets; it's about how, and about what, we should take to the streets. What would it be and what would it mean for us jurisgeneratively to take to the streets, to live in the streets, to gather together another city right here, right now?

Meanwhile, against the dead citizenship that was imposed upon him, the body the state tried to make him be, and in lieu of the images we refuse and can't have, here is an image of our imagination.

[Photograph:] *Michael Brown Sr. yells as the coffin of his son, Michael Brown, is lowered into the ground at St Peter's Cemetery in St Louis, 25 August 2014. Photo courtesy of Richard Perry/The New York Times/Redux.*

This is Michael Brown, his descent, his ascension, his ceremony, his flesh, his

animation in and of the maternal ecology – Michael Brown's innovation, as contact, in improvisation. Contact improvisation is how we survive genocide.

we didn't get here by ourselves. black takes  
like black took. we were already beside our  
selves, evidently. eventually, we were upside  
ourselves in this wombed scar, this womblike  
scarring open scream tuned open, sister, can  
you move my form? took, had, give. because he  
wasn't by himself he's gone in us. How we got  
over that we didn't get here is wanting more  
than that in the way we carry ourselves, how  
we carry over our selves into we're gone in the  
remainder. here, not here, bought, unbought,  
we brought ourselves with us so we could give  
ourselves away, which is more than they can  
take away, even when its more than we can take.

- 1 [Michael Brown was the 18-year-old unarmed African American man fatally shot by the white police officer Darren Wilson, 28, in Ferguson, Missouri, on 9 August 2014.]

Fred Moten and Stefano Harvey, extract from 'Michael Brown', *boundary 2*, vol. 42, no. 4 (November 2015) 85–7.

WE PLAY CHESS WITH  
THE SUBWAY LIGHTS  
AND THE TRAINS. IT'S  
BIG. YOU DON'T KNOW  
IF YOU'RE WALKING IN  
CIRCLES, YOU DON'T  
KNOW IF IT'S DAYLIGHT  
OR NIGHT, YOU DON'T  
KNOW NOTHING. YOU  
DON'T KNOW WHERE  
THE ENTRANCE IS,  
YOU DON'T KNOW  
WHERE THE FLOOR IS  
GONNA DROP. YOU'RE  
JUST IN THERE

## FORMS OF REPETITION



## Marcel Mauss

### Techniques of the Body//1934

Some techniques involve only the presence of the human body, but the actions they bring about are nonetheless traditional ones, tried and tested. The sum of bodily habits (*habitus du corps*) is a technique that is taught, and whose evolution has not yet come to an end. The technique of swimming improves day by day.

Body techniques should be studied with the aid of photography and if possible with slow-motion cinema. The study of body techniques should be divided, according to age, into techniques dealing with:

*childbirth* (position during delivery, handling of the child at birth, cutting of the umbilical cord, attention given to the mother, etc.);

*breast-feeding* (posture of the breast-feeder, how the child is held).

Weaning is an important moment, which often signals the definitive physical separation of mother and child.

The study of *techniques among children* will include the study of the cradle, then of the whole of a child's life; education of sight and hearing, elimination of certain postures, imposition (or not) of ambidexterity, the study of the use of the left hand: finally, the deformations the child will undergo (deformation of the skull, scarifications, extraction of teeth, circumcision or excision, etc.).

Among adults, the following techniques should be studied in succession:

*rest while awake*: standing, on one leg, lying down, on a bench in front of a table ...

*rest while asleep*: standing: lying down on a bench: use of the pillow: of the head rest (apparently localized between 15 degrees and 30 degrees of latitude): use of the hammock.

The study of *bodily movements* should include *movements of the whole body*: do people crawl, do they walk on all fours? The gait will vary according to whether clothes are sewn or draped.

Breath and *breathing* differ while running, dancing or performing magic; the rhythm of breathing should be noted, together with the associated stretching of arms and legs.

*Running* will cover movements of the feet and arms, and the endurance of the runners. Study *dance*; and *jumping*: long jump, high jump, pole vault, etc. How does one take off? How does one climb [a tree]: with a belt, with spikes, or gripping with arms and legs? ...

*Swimming* is entirely determined by tradition. How do people start off, how

do they dive? Do they swim using a board, or a beam? Swimming races on a turtle's back are held all over the Pacific.

How do people carry out *movements requiring force*? How do they push, pull, lift and throw?

Note the use of *fingers and toes*; conjuring tricks and legerdemain (using the armpit, the cheek ...).

*Gymnastics and acrobatics* can be the object of detailed study.

In relation to the care of the body, note whether washing is done with or without soap (what is soap made of?). What are the procedures for excreting: how do people spit, urinate and defaecate? The study of perfumes and cosmetics, with the collection of catalogued samples, should not be left out.

The division of life according to the *timetable* followed by the natives will yield interesting results: some societies stay up late at night while others do not. Full moon nights are almost always festive nights.

Finally, *reproductive behaviour* should be studied, including the complications caused by deliberate mutilations, and noting the presence or absence of sodomy, lesbianism and bestiality. [...]

Marcel Mauss, extract from 'Les techniques du corps' (1934), *Journal de Psychologie*, XXXII, no. 3-4 (March/April 1936); trans. Dominique Lussier, in Marcel Mauss, *Manual of Ethnography* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books/Durkheim Press, 2007) 25-6.

## Guido Cappello Duchamp's Chess Games//1969

### Game A: Played at the French Championship in Strasbourg, 4 September 1924

White: Michel; Black: Duchamp

1 P-K<sub>4</sub> P-QB<sub>4</sub>

The problem of space is the first that occurs on the board. The centre (squares Q<sub>4</sub>, K<sub>4</sub>, Q<sub>5</sub>, K<sub>5</sub>) is similar to a height overlooking a battlefield: the pieces that hold it restrict the operations of the opponent and hence win space. This explains the significance of the move 1 ... P-QB<sub>4</sub>, which forestalls White's possibility of completing the control of the centre with the move P-Q<sub>4</sub>.

The move 1 ... P-QB<sub>4</sub>, in reply to 1 P-K<sub>4</sub>, is known as the Sicilian Defence, a sixteenth-century term that derives from historical contests between the strongest players of the time at royal courts and feudal castles. Because the

Sicilian Paolo Boi was one of these players – among whom were also the Spaniard Ruy Lopez and the Calabrian Leonardo da Cutri – we may presume that it was Paolo Boi (1529–98) who preferred this reply to 1 P-K<sub>4</sub>. The Sicilian Defence is greatly favoured by chess players in tournaments and championships. Today it is still chosen in at least 40 per cent of the cases in reply to 1 P-K<sub>4</sub>.

2 N-KB<sub>3</sub> N-QB<sub>3</sub>

3 N-QB<sub>3</sub> P-Q<sub>3</sub>

4 P-Q<sub>4</sub>

While the move P-Q<sub>3</sub> leads to a closed game, the advance P-Q<sub>4</sub> leads to a fighting game: the line is opened for the KB, and, as the next move of Black will show, the QB file and the Q file open up (the first for Black's operations; the second for White's).

4 ... P x P

5 N x P P-KN<sub>3</sub>

prepares the development of the KB at KN<sub>2</sub>, from where the centre occupied by White is threatened. There is another side to the coin: the command of the centre increases the efficiency of the occupying forces, but the pieces are more exposed to attack. A second operational stage begins for whoever has occupied the centre – the sustainment of the central pieces (reinforcement of the occupation).

This position – the Simagin Variation, as it has been called by modern theoreticians – leads to the following continuation according to the latest developments: 6 B-QB<sub>4</sub>, B-KN<sub>2</sub>; 7 B-K<sub>3</sub>, N-KB<sub>3</sub>; 8 P-KB<sub>3</sub>.

6 B-QN<sub>5</sub> B-Q<sub>2</sub>

7 O-O B-KN<sub>2</sub>

8 B-K<sub>3</sub> N-KB<sub>3</sub>

9 P-KB<sub>3</sub>

forestalls N-KN<sub>5</sub> and the forced exchange of a black N against a white B. (Even though the Knight and the Bishop are considered to be of equal strength, the pair of Bishops, especially in an open game, is preferable.) [...]

Why, when the KB is at QN<sub>5</sub>, N x N not feasible (as in the case when the B is at QB<sub>4</sub>)? Because, after PQN<sub>2</sub> x N, White loses time to withdraw the threatened B; in the same way, time would be lost in solving the problem of NQ<sub>4</sub> by simply withdrawing the N from the attack of QNB<sub>3</sub>.

Time is another important element of the game. It is the faster player who secures positional superiority (the so-called initiative); speed is related to the development of the pieces in the most efficient squares, to the creation of problems for the opponent, and to conditioning the opponent's moves. (Time is gained when more than one aim is achieved with a single move.) [...]

Guido Cappello, extract from 'Duchamp's Chess Games', trans. Arturo Schwarz, in Schwarz, ed., *The*

## **Robert Morris**

### **Professional Rules//1997**

[...] Marcel Duchamp demonstrated that the custom of manipulating affect was unneeded in making art. In him we have the prototype of the artist without a practice and therefore without a craft. To the horror of the profession, he grinningly described himself as an 'unfroked' artist. He remarked that he liked breathing better than working. In this he seems, Buddha-like, to have been able to step off the wheel of desire. For the market, he was willing to remake his works in multiple series of miniature reproductions. And here he demonstrates how the lure –and we again want to invoke custom here – of art-making validated as some mysterious, but necessarily constant, incremental and, if legitimized, serially developed enterprise, is anything but mysterious, necessary or legitimate. [...]

Robert Morris, extract from 'Professional Rules', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 23, no. 2 (Winter 1997) 306.

## **Ludwig Wittgenstein**

### **Philosophical Investigations//1953**

199. Is what we call 'obeying a rule' something that it would be possible for only *one* man to do, and to do only *once* in his life? – This is of course a note on the grammar of the expression 'to obey a rule'.

It is not possible that there should have been only one occasion on which someone obeyed a rule. It is not possible that there should have been only one occasion on which a report was made, an order given or understood; and so on.

To obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are *customs* (uses, institutions).

To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be master of a technique.

200. It is, of course, imaginable that two people belonging to a tribe unacquainted with games should sit at a chess-board and go through the moves of a game of chess; and even with all the appropriate mental accompaniments. And if we were to see it we should say they were playing chess. But now imagine a game of chess translated according to certain rules into a series of actions which we do not ordinarily associate with a *game* – say into yells and stamping of feet. And now suppose those two people to yell and stamp instead of playing the form of chess that we are used to; and this in such a way that their procedure is translatable by suitable rules into a game of chess. Should we still be inclined to say they were playing a game? What right would one have to say so?

201. This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule. The answer was: if everything can be made out to accord with the rule, then it can also be made out to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here.

It can be seen that there is a misunderstanding here from the mere fact that in the course of our argument we give one interpretation after another, as if each one contented us at least for a moment, until we thought of yet another standing behind it. What this shows is that there is a way of grasping a rule which is *not* an *interpretation*, but which is exhibited in what we call 'obeying the rule' and 'going against it' in actual cases.

Hence there is an inclination to say: every action according to the rule is an interpretation. But we ought to restrict the term 'interpretation' to the substitution of one expression of the rule for another.

202. And hence also 'obeying a rule' is a practice. And to *think* one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule 'privately': otherwise thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same thing as obeying it.

203. Language is a labyrinth of paths. You approach from *one* side and know your way about; you approach the same place from another side and no longer know your way about.

204. As things are I can, for example, invent a game that is never played by anyone. But would the following be possible too: mankind has never played any games; once, however, someone invented a game – which no one ever played?

205. 'But it is just the queer thing about *intention*, about the mental process, that the existence of a custom, of a technique, is not necessary to it. That, for example,



it is imaginable that two people should play chess in a world in which otherwise no games existed; and even that they should begin a game of chess – and then be interrupted.'

But isn't chess defined by its rules? And how are these rules present in the mind of the person who is intending to play chess?

206. Following a rule is analogous to obeying an order. We are trained to do so; we react to an order in a particular way. But what if one person reacts in one way and another in another to the order and the training? Which one is right?

Suppose you came as an explorer into an unknown country with a language quite strange to you. In what circumstances would you say that the people there gave orders, understood them, obeyed them, rebelled against them, and so on?

The common behaviour of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, extract from *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. Gillian Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1953) 80–83.

## **Julia Bryan-Wilson Practising *Trio A*//2012**

### **Walk On**

This is a text about embodiment and presence, about spectres and time. It is about tempo, about slowness, about pacing, about duration, about counting, about the routines we give ourselves to make it through hard times. It is about 'going through the motions'. It is, more specifically, about the endurance – one could say haunting – of a single set of motions, routines and gestures: Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A*. Choreographed over a six-month span in 1965, and first performed in 1966, the dance has been understood as inaugurating a new field of practice that embraced laconic movements and ordinary bodies and helped usher in postmodern, task-based dance. In addition, *Trio A* has refigured what it means to talk about the medium – or mediums – of contemporary art.

Though many are familiar with this now-canonical work, here is some basic descriptive ground: in *Trio A* the performers – often a mix of dancers and non-dancers – generally wear normal street clothes, usually dance without musical accompaniment and perform the same movements together, but not in unison.

The sequence of unpredictable actions, ones that disregard dance conventions of phrasing and climax, runs about four and a half to five minutes long, but since there is no musical beat or rigid metronome to keep people in sync, inevitably each performer ends up dancing for different lengths of time. [...]

### Turn Head

It has been argued that *Trio A* presents a special case in terms of its challenge to the spectator. As is often noted in the literature, viewers have a notoriously difficult time mentally 'tracking' this dance, as it repeats few phrases and unravels assumptions about internal through-lines. I have taught documentation of Rainer's work for years, in contemporary art classes that focus on everything from Minimalism to performance to political art. Having studied many photographs, screened the film numerous times for my students, and read incisive written accounts of it, I thought I had a pretty good sense of what it entailed. I was wrong. I now approach the question of the medium of *Trio A* differently, because in the fall of 2008, over the space of about six months, I took a class from Rainer at the University of California, Irvine, and learned *Trio A*.

To be clear: I am not a trained dancer. I have never taken a dance class in my life, and have always been pretty clumsy – as a child I clomped around, constantly walking into tables and bruising my shins. I had not, in fact, initially intended to take the class. I showed up the first day to the dance studio thinking I would silently observe and take notes. [...]

I was wholly unprepared for what came next: Rainer, with virtually no preliminary explanation, introduction or discussion, started teaching the opening movements and assumed we were all there to learn. Though I was not sure I was prepared to flail around alongside students, it seemed like madness not to join in.

Any dreams I might have had about preserving my professional dignity vanished as we all began to follow the initial motions: you walk onstage, stop, turn your head to the left and bend your knees. It took me an embarrassingly long time to do that right. I could not always reconcile what I knew to be the required gesture (such as a modified version of an arabesque that the trained dancers could leap into with little prompting) with the limitations of my body as I wobbled, tripped and fell. My knees didn't bend the way they were supposed to; my sense of my centre of gravity and balance was totally off; and as Rainer once said to me, her brow furrowed with concern, 'Do you even know how to run?' For it turns out that most of our received ideas about this dance are slightly misleading; it is not full of 'everyday' actions (for instance, it includes a free handstand in the middle of the room, and balance *en demi pointe* while wearing tennis shoes). Rather, it is exhausting, it is strenuous, it is very physically challenging, and Rainer has incredibly precise ideas about the ways the body

needs to configure itself, where exactly the gaze should land, how even the fingers should be positioned. One does not sloppily move through a series of somewhat improvised or random motions; every tiny movement is prefigured, and it takes a great deal of concentration and work. Far from a free-form, unstructured terrain of unconstrained movement, Rainer's instructions were a reminder that dance, though it can be deeply pleasurable, is equally a discipline, concerned with techniques of training and regimes to shape the body. [...]

The question of how performance endures through time, and the paradox of capturing ephemeral events, have been central to work on live art – including arguments by Phillip Auslander, André Lepecki, Peggy Phelan, Rebecca Schneider and others, and I will not recapitulate those important debates here. Instead I propose that we think about *Trio A* as a complex discursive site that invites, demands and necessitates *practice* – as obvious as that might seem, given that it is a dance that is rehearsed and repeated. However, the term *practice* could use more attention beyond the meanings delimited by Pierre Bourdieu (who uses the word to theorize social ordering as it 'unfolds in time') and Michel de Certeau (who thinks through the procedures and modes of everyday behaviour). Recently the word, commonly used in contemporary art criticism to signify post-studio artistic work that is difficult to pin to one medium, has come under some scrutiny. An article by Roberta Smith in the *New York Times* in December 2007 called its use 'lamentable' and 'pretentious', a sanitization of art-making that aligns it with the work of those white-collar professionals who need licences to practise, such as 'lawyers, doctors and dentists'.<sup>1</sup>

Smith overlooks something critical: *practice* as a way to describe artistic labour that is wide-ranging and difficult to categorize has its uses, as it signals that art-making (which might not adhere to any one medium) might continually be in process. Against Smith's claim that the term professionalizes art, Andrea Phillips in her article 'Education Aesthetics' argues that 'practice' strains the definition of artistic labour by distancing it from an expectation of production or remuneration, placing it rather in the flow of process, learning or procedure.<sup>2</sup> (Rainer's insistence that *Trio A* be transmitted through teaching prefigures the wider 'educational turn' in contemporary art.) Historically, Herbert Marcuse used the phrase *political practice* in his 1969 'An Essay on Liberation' to refer to attempts to forge new forms of experience that move both the political and the aesthetic realm away from the automatic and the engineered. He writes: 'Such a practice involves a break with the familiar, the routine ways of seeing, hearing, feeling, understanding things so that the organism may become receptive to the potential forms of a non-aggressive, non-exploitative world.'<sup>3</sup> The literally repeated practice of *Trio A* might, counter-intuitively, connect to Marcuse's notion of a political practice that offers a way out of routine.

## Swing Arms

During my experience with *Trio A*, 'practice' took on new levels of meaning. I set myself the task of learning something I had read about and studied for years from a radically transformed perspective – suddenly I was thrust from the role of witnessing scholar (ostensibly removed by a historical distance) to a body on the scene. It felt, in part, like trying an alternative research methodology, what Donna Haraway has called 'situated knowledge' at its most literal, as I sited myself within and among Rainer's rigorous paces. 'We need to learn in our bodies', wrote Haraway in her call for a critical feminist epistemology.<sup>4</sup> What, too, about *unlearning*? Many of the actions in *Trio A* are slight tweaks on ballet movements such as the *rand de jambe* and the arabesque, but made more ordinary, their dynamic range toned and tamped down, the flourishes and emphases taken out. Former professional dancer Caryn Heilman told me during one rehearsal that the hardest thing for her was to stop putting accents on the movements, to stop stylizing her gestures – in other words, to stop dancing too much. But at least she knew the basic moves that Rainer was perverting: as a non-dancer, I found learning *Trio A* akin to learning a language so foreign that you not only don't understand the words or the alphabet, but you can't even distinguish between consonants and vowels.

Learning *Trio A* expanded and enriched my relationship to time. It slowed things down (all that exertion only took five minutes?); it sped things up (we only have a few more minutes to go?). It was the last thing I thought about before going to bed, and the first thing I thought about when waking up. Its chain of motions, which progress uninterruptedly with very little emphasis, functioned like a mental string of worry beads that I would go over to calm myself. Through Rainer's infinite patience, and over many, many hours of rehearsal, I slowly managed to put the pieces together into a 'good enough' version. (Rainer acknowledged that her small UC Irvine troupe in 2008 'worked their asses off'.)<sup>5</sup> Still, though eventually I could do it just right in my own mind, my body did not always comply. The disconnection between my perfectly executed mental motions and my actual flubbings were a reminder of the disjunction between visualization (how the mind sees the self) and material embodiment (how the body performs its own incoherence). [...]

What, for Rainer, is the medium of the body about? She has many metaphors for the dance, most of them mechanical: an airplane coming in to land, a motorized machine for flapping the ears. When teaching, Rainer said that one of the things that makes it so very hard to learn is that 'there is more energy where you wouldn't expect it and less energy where you would expect it'. But it is a faulty machine, she admits, unruly and bizarre, with potential for failure and humiliation and foolishness and fragility and vulnerability. Thus at one point she

instructs that you 'scramble up however you can'. Body parts scatter and disperse: they become unfamiliar and disembodied, as if they had minds of their own. You 'unspool your arm from your body', or your foot 'skitters along like a mechanized bug', or you lean back as if your leg had suddenly become leaden and were too heavy to lift.

Why might the public in 1968 have needed this lesson? Then, as now, the contested terrain of the body has everything to do with questions of embodiment, of fleshy presence and all its ramifications: gender, race, ability, age and sexuality (the very terms thrown most into question during the social movements of the mid to late 1960s, when Rainer choreographed *Trio A*). The body is the very grounds on which social and public identity is fought. [...]

- 1 [footnote 26 in source] Roberta Smith, 'What We Talk about when We Talk about Art', *The New York Times* (23 December 2007) 2. 37. Further, Smith does not discuss how 'practice' could be viewed as an element of praxis.
- 2 [27] Andrea Phillips, 'Education Aesthetics', in *Curating and the Educational Turn*, ed. Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson (London: Open Editions, 2010) 83–96.
- 3 [28] Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969) 17.
- 4 [29] Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3 (Autumn 1988) 581.
- 5 [30] Rainer, 'Trio A: Genealogy, Documentation, Notation', *Dance Research Journal*, vol. 41, no. 2 (2009) 17.

Julia Bryan-Wilson, extracts from 'Practising *Trio A*', *October*, no. 140 (Spring 2012) 55, 58, 58–9, 65–7, 68.

## **Pauline Oliveros**

### **Sonic Meditations//1974**

#### **Introduction I**

Sonic meditations are intended for group work over a long period of time with regular meetings. No special skills are necessary. Any persons who are willing to commit themselves can participate. The [Venus/female symbol] Ensemble to whom these meditations are dedicated has found that non-verbal meetings intensify the results of these meditations and help provide an atmosphere which is conducive to such activity. With continuous work some of the following



becomes possible with Sonic Meditations: Heightened states of awareness or expanded consciousness, changes in physiology and psychology from known and unknown tensions to relaxations which gradually become permanent. These changes may represent a tuning of mind and body. The group may develop positive energy which can influence others who are less experienced. Members of the Group may achieve greater awareness and sensitivity to each other. Music is a welcome by-product of this activity.

## **Introduction II**

Pauline Oliveros has abandoned composition/performance practice as it is usually established today for Sonic Explorations which include everyone who wants to participate. She attempts to erase the subject/object or performer/audience relationship by returning to ancient forms which preclude spectators. She is interested in communication among all forms of life, through Sonic Energy. She is especially interested in the healing power of Sonic Energy and its transmission within groups.

All societies admit the power of music or sound. Attempts to control what is heard in the community are universal. For instance, music in the church has always been limited to particular forms and styles in accordance with the decrees of the Church Fathers. Music in the courts has been controlled through the tastes of patrons. Today Muzak is used to increase or stimulate consumption in merchandizing establishments.

Sonic Meditations are an attempt to return the control of sound to the individual alone, and within groups especially for humanitarian purposes; specifically healing.

Each Sonic Meditation is a special procedure for the following:

- 1 Actually making sounds
- 2 Actively imagining sounds
- 3 Listening to present sounds
- 4 Remembering sounds

Because of the special procedures involved, most all of the meditations are available to anyone who wishes to participate regardless, or in spite, of musical training. All that is required is a *willing commitment to the given conditions*.

Sound making during the meditations is primarily vocal, sometimes hand clapping or other body sounds, sometimes using sound producing objects and instruments.

Sound imagining is encouraged through the use of various questions designed to trigger auditory fantasy. Individuals are then asked to share what was heard inwardly, with members of the group using any means to describe the experience. Conditions given for listening to present sounds are intended

to expand awareness of the auditory environment, both within and without of the individual.

Auditory memory is also encouraged by trigger questions with subsequent sharing of these memories in the group. Some of the meditations involve body movement as well. The term meditation is used simply to mean dwelling with or upon an idea, an object, or lack of object without distraction, or divided attention.

Healing can occur in relation to the above activities when 1) individuals feel the common bond with others through a shared experience. 2) when one's inner experience is made manifest and accepted by others. 3) when one is aware of and in tune with one's surroundings. 4) when one's memories, or values, are integrated with the present and understood by others.

In process a kind of music occurs naturally. Its beauty is not through intention, but is intrinsically the effectiveness of its healing power. This may be felt by the group, and the music relates to the people who make it through participation and sharing, as a stream or river whose waters offer refreshment and cleansing to those who find it.

## **I**

### **Teach Yourself to Fly**

Any number of persons sit in a circle facing the centre. Illuminate the space with dim blue light. Begin by simply observing your own breathing. Always be an observer. Gradually allow your breathing to become audible. Then gradually introduce your voice. Allow your vocal cords to vibrate in any mode which occurs naturally. Allow the intensity to increase very slowly. Continue as long as possible naturally, and until all others are quiet, always observing your own breath cycle.

Variation: Translate voice to an instrument.

## **II**

Search for a natural or artificial canyon, forest or deserted municipal quad. Perform *Teach Yourself to Fly* in this space. [...]

Pauline Oliveros, 'Introduction I', 'Introduction II', and Sonic Meditation I and II, from *Sonic Meditations* (Baltimore: Smith Publications, 1974) unpaginated. © Smith Publications and Sonic Art Editions.

**Mary Kelly**

## **In Conversation with Terry Smith//1995**

*Terry Smith* There are very few artists still practising now whose work, however transformed, remains shaped – in its basic parameters, perhaps – by that moment in the early 1970s when it seemed possible to achieve what we then called ‘praxis’: to fuse theory and practice, to evolve a theoretical practice as art, to do art-theoretical work. I recall that David Antin once picked out the most enterprising work of the 1960s as *performative* – I think he had in mind happenings, performance work, maybe even his and Ian Wilson’s speech pieces – or *processual* – which meant actions or environments displaying natural systems, such as Hans Haacke’s early work – or *procedural* – all those nominations of a series of actions, or sequence of thoughts, logical strings, ranging from scripts for performances to Richard Long’s walks, or Douglas Huebler’s social measurement mappings. Another term, *propositional* practices, needs to be added to pick up the essential character of language-based conceptualism. This was emphasized by Joseph Kosuth in the second issue of *Art-Language*, when he tried to distinguish the work which he and the English originators of Art & Language were doing from artists in what they called the Seth Siegelaub stable (Andre, Weiner, Barry, Huebler, et al.).

These four terms are useful pointers to the forms of practice then, but I believe that content was – as always – crucial. Right from the mid 1960s, the driving template, if you like, was to work on the concept of art, to test the possibilities for art practices which would be metadiscursive, and to use languages of various kinds to that end. So Art & Language-type work, for example, was initially an *analytic* practice, developing propositions about the possibilities for art practice, first through interrogating imagined or actualized theoretical objects, then through examining imagined theories and theories of imagining, or, better, of theorizing. In the early 1970s, however, things shifted. Analytical work continued, but it became also *synthetic* in the sense that the practice was expanded to become an inquiry into subjects and experiences which were much broader than art and its languages, and, of course, into theories for thinking, for speaking, these subjects and experiences. This is an obvious impact of the social movements of the 1960s.

Examples of this shift would be Hans Haacke, obviously. Less obvious, but important, is the trajectory of Art & Language work itself, especially in New York and then Australia from 1975–76. But it happens all over the world, in Central Europe, in Latin America, for example, sometimes earlier, sometimes later. The

conceptual-political connection occurs as a split, or a displacement, or as a nexus, depending on the local context. I see your *Post-Partum Document* very much in this context.

*Mary Kelly* When I started work on *Post-Partum Document* in 1973 I was curious about the parallels with Art & Language work in England. They were very influential, as was the work of Kosuth in New York. I did want to shift the emphasis from the notion of the analytical proposition to a more synthetic process. This is a much more complex argument than simply saying that I was going to reintroduce life into art. Your own terms for understanding conceptual art – where you set up the idea of a practice concerned with interrogating the conditions of existence for its own interrogation – make a lot of sense to me. In my case, obviously, the founding condition is an investigation of the subject. This was coincident with the kinds of questions being asked outside of art, by Marxism and feminism. The very first piece that I did, called *Introduction to the Post-Partum Document*, used found objects. Previous conceptual work had remained rather distant from that kind of materiality.

That was one of the first big departures from the established conceptual aesthetic. Another was the decision to not use photography. I wanted to emphasize what was, effectively, emotionally loaded about this relation that I was documenting. But then, when I superimposed the Lacanian schema over the baby vests, I don't think that, at the very first moment, I knew exactly how controversial – or even consequential – this juxtaposition would be. It began as a very insistent and almost intuitive attempt to bring the desire – you could say – for theory (itself very, very embryonic as far as its use in the women's movement was concerned at that time) together with the cathexis of the everyday experience of mothering. *Post-Partum Document* was the first work that I know of to introduce Lacanian references so explicitly, but there isn't a significant division here between the emotional affect of theory and the emotional affect of objects, between the ability of material objects to be fabricated or organized theoretically and for a theory to have its materiality. There's a certain breaking down of these discrete domains by bringing them together. [...]

*Smith* I see *Post-Partum Document* as primarily conceptual work, definitely in its form: it's organized to track various activities, that is, procedurally. Its organizational logic is presumed to be larger than the subject or the person doing the tracing. It's processual in that its subject – motherhood – is itself normally figured as a natural process. Yet the procedures you follow, or set out, seem to cut against any sense of natural flow, seem placed against the instinctual. There is a kind of manic restraint, a withholding, an initial distancing which

nevertheless hopes to surprise some otherwise inaccessible information or attitudes along the way. This mood is typical of procedural work from the late sixties onwards.

Some people probably did read the *Document* as about natural forces, and were shocked by its cognitive armature. To me, it's a work of theory, in the sense that it shows theory at work in your daily life, actively constructing the sort of relations involved in having children, being a mother. Mothering is a theoretically informed practice in an absolutely saturated way. Dr Spock, or Penelope Leach, anyone?

Another conceptual art aspect of the *Document* is that it enables – in fact, obliges – the spectator to experience theory, to relate to what's happening via theory as the only way of grasping what's going on.

Kelly Right, the *Document* follows, in your terms, typical procedural forms, tracing events such as feeding every hour, every day, or taping the linguistic exchanges between mother and child. This might look developmental, but what I always call the pseudo-scientific discourse is countered by the reference to the Lacanian diagram. In the '*Experimentum Mentis*' section footnotes I introduced a different theorization of that moment which was much more connected to the debate around psychoanalysis and feminism. The Art & Language indexes, although they might have touched on questions that moved outside of aesthetics, still seemed to me to remain within the discourse of the fine art institutions. The installation of the *Document* was intended to be polemical with the Art & Language Index. My idea was that you would go to the footnotes for information, but rather than a system of internal referencing, it would raise issues which related to the social movements of the time.

Smith That's important, but a response might be that if you look closely at the Index, or many other conceptual works right from the mid 1960s, you will find that systemization always has one or two random terms in it, or that its structural regularity is aimed at provoking, even generating, some kind of dyssystemic irrationality. The craziness of things in the world. The randomness of structures. The irreality of the real. These were what drew us – more and more, especially in the early to mid 1970s. So it's not an obsession with order, but a thirst towards a catachrestic disordering of pictures ...

Kelly For some people, the *Document* was a catachrestic disordering of motherhood.

Smith Yes, mothering appears in an environment of manic intensity!



*Kelly* And once you take the discourse to that extreme it almost turns itself inside out, it's hardly recognizable as coming out of that procedural method. [...]

*Smith* One point of view, perhaps masculinist, would presume that [*Post Partum Document's*] subject – motherhood – is a domain of social experiencing, bodily feeling, emotional diversification, etc. which is both specific to each individual and also widespread. Not universal, but quite fundamental, basic if anything is, miasmatic. So you were faced with the possibility of this project roaming in every direction. Against this chaotic yet bounded prospect you set your methods of regulation, which posit flows, and escaping from regulation. Nothing like a flow escapes from the look of the *Document*, or from its mode of presentation. But flows do erupt in the way many people responded to it, especially to its message about motherhood – which does seem at the heart of what most people take to be natural – being constructed. Many, including me, reacted by reading the work itself as closed: how could motherhood be subject to this cool, withdrawn, unemotional analysis? Maybe our response was one of shocked displacement from the realization that motherhood – even motherhood! – was not a natural but social, psychic, linguistic construction.

*Kelly* It is what I was saying earlier about the affective force of the idea, that it should be taken on – as you would say – as part of the interrogation of the conditions of interrogation as such. It's not divided up into some neat masculinity/femininity, theory/practice binary, but is a rather chaotic, anarchic, impositional structure of drives and desires that I continue to be interested in. All of my work has, I think, a certain tension between ordering and losing control. [...]

Mary Kelly and Terry Smith, extracts from 'A Conversation about Conceptual Art, Subjectivity and the Post-Partum Document' (Chicago, 10 March 1995), in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, eds, *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1999) 450–52, 455–6, 457.

**I** [...] Artists tend to deny the relationship of their work to therapy and subsequently to psychology, insisting that they make highly inspired, intensely complex works which link them to the history of art and aesthetic traditions. This need for professional validation is somewhat arcane because underneath the surface of each artist is a shaman, an instinctual curer and therapist who lives a life outside of and beyond social medicine. Artists have found that the best way to direct their energies, learn hidden information about themselves, and face hidden fears is to pursue the relationships of space, form, colour, texture, size, mass and direction in an obsessive way. Instead of brooding about what is wrong in their lives, artists are trained to use problems as material for their work, since work diverts anxiety, fear and worry into artistic expression. Even though the art practice on some levels serves this therapeutic purpose, most artists disregard the connection between themselves and the practice of psychology. [...]

**III** What I am doing now might not be a peak of matured painting, but they are good, follow an idea, and they are the work of a young, active, developing painter. Only painting can now see me through and I must see it through. It is totally interdependent with my ambitions and frustrations. It is what I have found through which I express myself, my growth, and channel my development. Within its scope I can develop strength and conviction. (Eva Hesse.)<sup>1</sup>

The attitude toward the artistic process began to change in the late 1960s. Conceptual art, body art and feminist art introduced the 'New Way' which de-emphasized traditional classical values and technical virtuosity. Focus was now on feelings, interior need and the total process of the artist, not just his/her technical virtuosity. In fact, artists working in these new areas were less concerned with art and more involved in personal initiations, psychological transformations, and group therapy. They hardly touched brushes, paints or sculptural material. Instead ideas, bodies and psyches were formed, moulded and aesthetically examined.

**IV** It seems ironic that Terry Fox has been categorized as a 'body artist' when in fact the focus of his art is escape from the confines of the body. Fox has explored in his work an astonishing number and variety of means of evading or rising above the limitations of body or corporeality: energy transformations and transferences, sleep

and dreaming, levitation, reincarnation, music, fasting, religious chants, mantras, melting, dissolving (wax, liquid, smoke, dust), hypnosis, automatic writing and accident, hallucination. (Brenda Richardson on Terry Fox.)<sup>2</sup>

It is relevant to look at some of the reasons for this emphasis on the person and process rather than the object. Actually artists were doing what they always do, mirroring the social fabric which was slowly unweaving. As a result, there were a lot of loose ends in the late 1960s: a senseless war in Vietnam, breakdown of authoritarian structures, sexual revolution, drugs, reevaluation of the nuclear family, the women's movement, spiritual movement, and many other hidden factors for change. Conceptual art and body art grew out of and psychically foretold these social issues.

**V** Powerlessness and lack of self-affirmation led to aggression as repeatedly asserted by psychologists and psychiatrists. Psychological powerlessness is the result of past events but institutional and cultural powerlessness are here and now. (Edward T. Hall.)<sup>3</sup>

My own response to the chaos of the late 1960s was chickens! I substituted them for sculptures that I could have made, and presented them in an art context. And in 1971 I literally became the 'Chicken Woman', appearing in public places as a living statue dressed in my Chicken Woman habit. In retrospect, it seems that most of the work had a therapeutic reason but was always couched in the language of sculpture. My insistence on belonging to the art community committed me to my work but I was forced to find an individual sculptural language suitable to my needs. That was the beauty of the 1960s and its source of energy. There was permission to do what you wanted to do, find a personal form based on a historical structure but do things your way. And I did! So instead of going for therapy three times a week I would blindfold myself for three days when I lost touch with who I was. Instead of learning about my early relationships with my parents from an analyst, I interviewed them repeatedly and tried unveiling the information artistically. Instead of spending thousands of dollars on therapy, I spent that much on videos, photography, making a book, and insisted on doing things for myself, in my way. Solutions and findings seemed quixotic, sometimes hermetic and often humorous, but I called all of it ART! [...]

**VIII** The endurance of more art by women into the establishment is certainly good for the establishment. But it is, perhaps, less of a good thing for feminist art. One of the questions we have to answer is whether women want the same things that men have wanted, whether greatness in its present form is in fact desirable. (Lucy Lippard.)<sup>4</sup>

Chris Burden chose to be great in the traditional way, by doing great big newsworthy things, challenging himself and audiences with suicidal-type actions which often morally implicated everyone present, that is, if I don't personally stop this now, he dies, but then again, art is sacred and mustn't be 'tampered with'. For years he was the public martyr whose themes were physical endurance, pain, death, risk and starvation. It all started in 1971 when he was locked into a school locker for five days having prepared himself by fasting and checking the project with medical authorities. He endured. A hose leading from the locker above provided water and the locker below held a jar and hose for urination.

**IX** It was more like mental experience for me. To see how I would deal with the mental aspect. Like knowing that at 7.30 you're going to stand in a room and a guy is going to shoot you. I'd set it up by telling a bunch of people that, and that would make it happen. It was like setting up fate or something, in a real controlled way. The violence part wasn't really that important, it was just a crux to make all of the mental stuff happen. (Chris Burden.)<sup>5</sup>

Out of forty-eight of his performances, twenty-eight are concerned with death. The Art/Life Counsellor in me asks 'why does he choose such drastic measures?' Karl Menninger sees self-mutilation as a victory, albeit a costly victory, of life over death, a victory of aversion of total annihilation over the other alternative, suicide. Self-mutilation is a victory of the life instinct over the death instinct.

**X** Artaud compares his theatre to a plague: a disorder of the most horrendous type which brings with it both social and psychological disturbances. (Bettina Knapp.)<sup>6</sup>

Is Burden cured? I prefer to think that he has successfully worked on himself. Body art, early feminist art and some conceptual art qualifies as therapy because artists are probing places that formerly belonged to psychological realms. The new artists have been personally stretched, tested, encouraged and made aware via their work. No outside professional help is needed because other artists and friends act as co-therapists and the performance art magazine *High Performance* doubles as a psychological journal. [...]

**XII** As *The Tibetan Book of The Dead* teaches, the dying should face death not only calmly and clear mindedly and heroically but with an intellect rightly trained and rightly directed, mentally transcending, if need be, bodily infirmities as they would do if they had practised efficiently the art of dying. (W.E. Wentz.)<sup>7</sup>

Performance is practice for the endgame.

UPDATE: After being tied to Tehching Hsieh in his *Art/Life: One Year Performance* for a year, I began professional therapy and now believe that art is not enough.

- 1 [footnote 3 in source] Eva Hesse, in Lucy R. Lippard, *Eva Hesse* (New York: New York University Press, 1976) 14–15.
- 2 [4] Brenda Richardson, in *Terry Fox* (Berkeley: University Art Museum, 1971) 8.
- 3 [5] Edward T. Hall, *Beyond Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1977) 6.
- 4 [8] Lucy R. Lippard, *From the Center* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1976) 10.
- 5 [9] Chris Burden, in Jim Moisan, 'Interview with Chris Burden', *High Performance*, no. 5 (1979) 9.
- 6 [10] Bettina Knapp, *Antonin Artaud: Man of Vision* (New York: Avon, 1969) 118.
- 7 [12] W.E. Wentz, ed., introduction, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (New York: Galaxy Press, 1960) 12.

Linda Montano, extracts from 'Art as Therapy' (1977/2002), in *Letters from Linda M. Montano* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005) 111–12, 112–14, 115–16, 116.

## **Pierre Bourdieu**

### **Belief and the Body//1980**

Practical sense is a quasi-bodily involvement in the world which presupposes no representation either of the body or of the world, still less of their relationship. It is an immanence in the world through which the world imposes its imminence, things to be done or said, which directly govern speech and action. It orients 'choices' which, though not deliberate, are no less systematic, and which, without being ordered and organized in relation to an end, are none the less charged with a kind of retrospective finality. A particularly clear example of practical sense as a proleptic adjustment to the demands of a field is what is called, in the language of sport, a 'feel for the game'. This phrase (like 'investment sense', the art of anticipating events, etc.) gives a fairly accurate idea of the almost miraculous encounter between the *habitus* and a field, between incorporated history and an objectified history, which makes possible the near-perfect anticipation of the future inscribed in all the concrete configurations on the pitch or board. Produced by experience of the game, and therefore of the objective structures within which it is played out, the 'feel for the game' is what gives the game a subjective sense – a meaning and a *raison d'être*, but also a direction, an orientation, an impending outcome, for those who take part and therefore acknowledge what is at stake (this is *illusio* in the sense of investment in the game and the outcome, interest in



the game, commitment to the presuppositions – *doxa* – of the game). And it also gives the game an objective sense, because the sense of the probable outcome that is given by practical mastery of the specific regularities that constitute the economy of a field is the basis of 'sensible' practices, linked intelligibly to the conditions of their enactment, and also among themselves, and therefore immediately filled with sense and rationality for every individual who has the feel for the game (hence the effect of consensual validation which is the basis of collective belief in the game and its fetishes). Because native membership in a field implies a feel for the game in the sense of a capacity for practical anticipation of the 'upcoming' future contained in the present, everything that takes place in it seems *sensible*: full of sense and objectively directed in a judicious direction. Indeed, one only has to suspend the commitment to the game that is implied in the feel for the game in order to reduce the world, and the actions performed in it, to absurdity, and to bring up questions about the meaning of the world and existence which people never ask when they are caught up in the game – the questions of an aesthete trapped in the instant, or an idle spectator. This is exactly the effect produced by the novel when, aiming to be a mirror, pure contemplation, it breaks down action into a series of snapshots, destroying the design, the intention, which, like the thread of discourse, would unify the representation, and reduces the acts and the actors to absurdity, like the dancers observed silently gesticulating behind a glass door in one of Virginia Woolf's novels.<sup>1</sup>

In a game, the field (the pitch or board on which it is played, the rules, the outcome at stake, etc.) is clearly seen for what it is, an arbitrary social construct, an artefact whose arbitrariness and artificiality are underlined by everything that defines its autonomy – explicit and specific rules, strictly delimited and extraordinary time and space. Entry into the game takes the form of a quasi-contract, which is sometimes made explicit (the Olympic oath, appeals to 'fair play', and, above all, the presence of a referee or umpire) or recalled to those who get so 'carried away by the game' that they forget it is 'only a game'. By contrast, in the social fields, which are the products of a long, slow process of autonomization, and are therefore, so to speak, games 'in themselves' and not 'for themselves', one does not embark on the game by a conscious act, one is born into the game, with the game; and the relation of investment, *illusio*, investment, is made more total and unconditional by the fact that it is unaware of what it is. As Claude Lévi-Strauss put it, 'connaître, c'est naître avec', to know is to be born with, and the long dialectical process, often described as 'vocation', through which the various fields provide themselves with agents equipped with the *habitus* needed to make them work, is to the learning of a game very much as the acquisition of the mother tongue is to the learning of a foreign language. In the latter case, an already constituted disposition confronts a language that is perceived as such, that is, as an arbitrary game, explicitly

constituted as such in the form of grammar, rules and exercises, expressly taught by institutions expressly designed for that purpose. In the case of primary learning, the child learns at the same time to speak the language (which is only ever presented in action, in his own or other people's speech) and to think in (rather than with) the language. The earlier a player enters the game and the less he is aware of the associated learning (the limiting case being, of course, that of someone born into, born with the game), the greater is his ignorance of all that is tacitly granted through his investment in the field and his interest in its very existence and perpetuation and in everything that is played for in it, and his unawareness of the unthought presuppositions that the game produces and endlessly reproduces, thereby reproducing the conditions of its own perpetuation. [...]

Practical belief is not a 'state of mind', still less a kind of arbitrary adherence to a set of instituted dogmas and doctrines ('beliefs'), but rather a state of the body. *Doxa* is the relationship of immediate adherence that is established in practice between a *habitus* and the field to which it is attuned, the pre-verbal taking-for-granted of the world that flows from practical sense. Enacted belief, instilled by the childhood learning that treats the body as a living memory pad, an automaton that 'leads the mind unconsciously along with it', and as a repository for the most precious values, is the form par excellence of the 'blind or symbolic thought' (*cogitatio caeca vel symbolica*) which Leibniz refers to,<sup>2</sup> thinking initially of algebra, and which is the product of quasi-bodily dispositions, operational schemes, analogous to the rhythm of a line of verse whose words have been forgotten, or the thread of a discourse that is being improvised, transposable procedures, tricks, rules of thumb which generate through transference countless practical metaphors that are probably as 'devoid of perception and feeling' as the algebraist's 'dull thoughts'.<sup>3</sup> Practical sense, social necessity turned into nature, converted into motor schemes and body automatisms, is what causes practices, in and through what makes them obscure to the eyes of their producers, to be *sensible*, that is, informed by a common sense. It is because agents never know completely what they are doing that what they do has more sense than they know. [...]

Bodily *hexis* is political mythology realized, *em-bodied*, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking. [...]

1 Cf. Maxime Chastaing, *L'existence d'autrui, et la philosophie de Virginia Woolf* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951) 157-9.

2 G.W. Leibniz, *Mediationes de cognitione, veritate et ideis*, in *Opuscula Philosophica Selecta* (Paris: Boivin, 1939) 3.

3 G.W. Leibniz, *Nouveaux essais*, in *Oeuvres philosophiques*, ed. P. Janet (Paris: Ladrange, 1866) 163.

## **Michel de Certeau**

### **The Tactics of Practice//1980**

[...] I call a 'strategy' the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an 'environment'. A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as *proper* (*propre*) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, 'clientèles', 'targets', or 'objects' of research). Political, economic and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model.

I call a 'tactic', on the other hand, a calculus which cannot count on a 'proper' (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions and secure independence with respect to circumstances. The 'proper' is a victory of space over time. On the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time – it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized 'on the wing'. Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into 'opportunities'. The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them. This is achieved in the propitious moments when they are able to combine heterogeneous elements (thus, in the supermarket, the housewife confronts heterogeneous and mobile data – what she has in the refrigerator, the tastes, appetites and moods of her guests, the best buys and their possible combinations with what she already has on hand at home, etc.); the intellectual synthesis of these given elements takes the form, however, not of a discourse, but of the decision itself, the act and manner in which the opportunity is 'seized'.

Many everyday practices (talking, reading, moving about, shopping, cooking, etc.) are tactical in character. And so are, more generally, many 'ways of operating': victories of the 'weak' over the 'strong' (whether the strength be that of powerful people or the violence of things or of an imposed order, etc.), clever tricks,

knowing how to get away with things, 'hunter's cunning', manoeuvres, polymorphic simulations, joyful discoveries, poetic as well as warlike. The Greeks called these 'ways of operating' *métis*. But they go much further back, to the immemorial intelligence displayed in the tricks and imitations of plants and fishes. From the depths of the ocean to the streets of modern megalopolises, there is a continuity and permanence in these tactics. [...]

Michel de Certeau, extract from *L'invention du quotidien*, vol. 1: *Arts de faire* (1980); trans. Steven Rendall, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984) xix–xx.

## **Edit de Ak**

### **Train as Book: On Rammellzee//1983**

*Culture is the most fertilized substance. It does nothing but ferment its own substance for millenia. It is the best flammable stuff along with the soul, the spirit, the winged breath of air, the O<sub>2</sub> particle that gives oxygen to the fire of culture. Where time is rhythm it is almost impossible not to be spun by words and turns of phrases, and even more by the person who reveals them in one's presence for the first time – not to mention engraving them in one's mind by repetition. 'Language itself is a gamble. A roll of dice. The way you formulate your sentence, the words you pick and make that sentence, is the roll of the dice. That's why I'm a rapper, I pick the best words for the sentence. If your gamble rolls right, you'll win. Where the dictionary rolls, the word's right. When the title was made, Ornamental Style, well that word was one roll or one knowledge straight off armament. The next roll that came up was armament. And that's what graffiti is.'*

'The trains out there are a big book, and as the pages are being written, as formations are being placed on the train, the page cars are switched around. And the book is scattered and rescattered into a gamble. The letters armoured themselves while we were scattering them on the transit. And society was still playing that big major game by breaking up car numbers in sequence. When you put two cars together it makes an ionic sentence. A one-word statement of a sentence, full of five of these one-word joints. And these sentences started to make sense.'

*Like a pinball machine on which places are demarcated, fixed, each in communication with further stations, the ball shooting in any direction from place to place according to the force with which it spins, Rammellzee's verbal vocal oeuvre*

*produces a space/place where he may deposit his voluminous moments of rhythmic knowledge. He is a theoretical machine, hard to break down. 'The rhyme cannot be reported because I just put words in formation as letters in the word formations, how you gonna tell me to repeat it. All my rhymes, every rhyme I ever say is never repeated. That is what makes me the Zee and that is a title. I do not repeat anything and I never write it down.'*

*In the sense of conventional, socialized codification, Rammellzee is about language at its wit's end. His diction tends involuntarily to lapse into verse, cadenced according to the traditions of conversation cum preaching and the syncopation of funk. His dialogue clamps on the spinal vertebrae of the letter, putting the central nervous system of language into overdrive as his baritone pumps and chuckles like a piston. The phrasing moves through the beat like a scythe, tearing into percussives through to the issue: articulation. He ordains the laws which govern the letter which governs society. He speaks with such ease and eloquence that it all seems the truth of mesmerizing poetry for those who hear him. This relentless regurgitation of rhetoric makes the speech work, and it is the working of the speech, the speaking of the speech, which is at least half of how the speech registers.*

*Rammellzee's discourse is on the universe and its cosmic symbolic defence systems – structures which were dipped into social apocalypses and bent in their generic aspects (letters). In a tone of intimacy yet in a practical manner he ejects his treatises the only effective way, with familiarity. He frequents his territory with messianic consistency, making constant appearances, like the fool or the magician, bouncing on the edge of the void or on the brink of self-manifestation. The computopian sorcerer's space where he reverberates is an echoed space of singularity and universalities. He wasn't born with Logos; he has acquired it little by little, by questing everybody he meets. 'All the collaborators with Webster and everybody else that deals with the dictionaries and all the other world books and the Britannica, I understand why they started snatching words and taking them out and putting them back in when they wanted to, reformulating letters and taking letters out of words. They put a dictionary together, they gave a word formation meaning and structure, but they don't understand the letter. The dictionary has no outline construction and no evolution for the A through the Z in the military sense or commercial. Only certain letters could go together, and they went together, but then diseased culture compiled letters that shouldn't have been put together and when they compiled them, the letter just got into a gap, a universal gap, and then tricked all formations, so that it kept its knowledge in the dark to itself until the right time in evolution.' Rammellzee is drenched in but not knowing of the historical delineation and organizational stuff of his topic; that is why he takes the whole of our heritage as one unit, undifferentiated, like dark ink before letter formation.*



*The unborn darkness is potent with existential, historical and biographical metaphors. It is idiomatic of activities in the dark that they are pure and true. It is a tradition that darkness is cover from conscious control and social patrol. The archspook of teenage heresy and the timewarp of the dark re-zoned Rammellzee in a historical flashback of identity to the era of Gothic calligraphers. 'How can I do it if I don't know what I'm doing. The lines came to me in the dark. I drew because of anxiety, desperation, third rails and cops. I made quick decisions. I just said fuck it do this do that do that, and if it came out right when I saw it the next day it came out right. I was amazed. When I studied it and I knew what it was, then I put the elaborations into it. Graffiti was created in the dark when you can't feel, when you can't touch. You're not going to concentrate or manipulate nothing. You're worried about twenty big gaping holes in the floor, dogs chasing after you all mad and muddled up. The most Gothic-looking things around are down there in those tunnels.'*

*Destined to repeat the eminent gestures with which the monks adorned the letter, he assumed the continuing lineage. Under the cover of darkness, Jean Genet consecrates simulated vocational genes:*

*... You belong to a kind of heroic family, each member of which repeats the same signs, or else ... you are the reflection in time of a past act, like the reflection in space seen by a mirror: in the subway, supporting myself at times with both hands on the thin vertical column between the doors, have I not been the reflection of Joan of Arc at the coronation in Reims holding the staff of her standard?*

*Rammellzee is projected by the same ray of illumination as the Gothic scribes, but has to focus himself on a different screen, a different set of dimensions in order to make the genealogies visible and the symbols functional. 'The monks started what we do, we extend off their science. The bishops in 1582 stopped their knowledge because they couldn't read the monks' tax papers. They were getting too fancy so the bishops stopped the monks because their power was becoming too strong with the letter. Those damn monks contradicted what the kings and bishops wanted. They wrote it the way they wanted to write it. In their style. The calendar monks sent a letter to the one place that God cannot go: Hell. The light that we had was from a knowledge that was dim down there, so the knowledge was very faint, but yet it was real, and with its energy passing through our bodies, we received it – that's how we get scared and how our hair stands on end, that's all. The subway is a place where it can be so black you'd swear you were watching television. We play chess with the subway lights and the trains. It's big. You don't know if you're walking in circles, you don't know if it's daylight or night, you don't know nothing. You don't know where the entrance is, you don't know*

where the floor is gonna drop. You're just in there. So what is the territory you want to command? The book, page, paragraph, word formation phrase.' *Writing into blackness (the subway) or pursuing the black on the white (the page), between the polarity of dark and light, knowledge and delineation, Rammellzee gambles with the hunger of the void to gratify the letter. [...]*

Edit DeAk, extract from 'Train as Book', based on interview with Rammellzee, *Artforum* (May 1983) 88–9 [in the original DeAk's text is in roman with Rammellzee quotations in bold, here reset as italic; roman].

## **Min Tanaka**

### **Body Assemblage: In Conversation with Félix Guattari//1985**

*Félix Guattari* By the way, I would like to present the layered structure as follows: a theatrical space that is also a world consisting of intensities of the body. As the latter sometimes collides with the former, how do we control these layers and what sanctions float within them?

*Min Tanaka* It may take a long time to explain this point because what is determining these layers is not me but an agency outside myself ...

*Guattari* That is exactly right. I am calling it an assemblage, which is collective. The collective assemblage does not imply the involvement of many people as it is an inhuman process. This inhuman process is a cosmic entity or a biological-hormonal history of abstract machines, and at the same time, can also be a history of rhythm imposed by a pure type of repetition that cannot be controlled by the logic of humanism.

*Translator* ... Min's work consists precisely in detaching from this manipulative idea of assemblage.

*Guattari* Beyond an individual assemblage ...

*Tanaka* It seems like a big mistake to treat something as if it were about my own event, given that an event happens outside me. For many years, I have believed that there would be no 'my' time until the end of my life. However, I would never

intend to live for the sake of others. I'm living for myself but I am nothing, for I wish to be thoroughly more myself than anyone else. For example, nature had originally been dancing. Through observing its dance, our senses themselves dance; then they are raised to the level of intelligence. A long continuation of the human/inhuman process, I think, arranges our dancing. My point is to return to the outside and surface of the body. [...]

Min Tanaka and Félix Guattari, extract from 'Body Assemblage: Félix Guattari and Min Tanaka in Dialogue' (June 1985); trans. Toshiya Ueno and Toulouse-Antonin Roy, in *Félix Guattari, Machinic Eros*, ed. Gary Genosko and Jay Hetrick (Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing, 2015) 46–8, 50–51.

## Judith Butler

### From Parody to Politics//1990

[...] As a process, signification harbours within itself what the epistemological discourse refers to as 'agency'. The rules that govern intelligible identity, i.e. that enable and restrict the intelligible assertion of an 'I', rules that are partially structured along matrices of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality, operate through *repetition*. Indeed, when the subject is said to be constituted, that means simply that the subject is a consequence of certain rule-governed discourses that govern the intelligible invocation of identity. The subject is not *determined* by the rules through which it is generated because signification is *not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition* that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. In a sense, all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; 'agency', then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition. If the rules governing signification not only restrict, but enable the assertion of alternative domains of cultural intelligibility, i.e. new possibilities for gender that contest the rigid codes of hierarchical binarisms, then it is only *within* the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible. The injunction *to be* a given gender produces necessary failures, a variety of incoherent configurations that in their multiplicity exceed and defy the injunction by which they are generated. Further, the very injunction *to be* a given gender takes place through discursive routes: to be a good mother, to be a heterosexually desirable object, to be a fit worker, in sum, to signify a multiplicity of guarantees in response to a variety of different demands all at once. The

coexistence or convergence of such discursive injunctions produces the possibility of a complex reconfiguration and redeployment; it is not a transcendental subject who enables action in the midst of such a convergence. There is no self that is prior to the convergence or who maintains 'integrity' prior to its entrance into this conflicted cultural field. There is only a taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very 'taking up' is enabled by the tool lying there. [...]

Judith Butler, extract from *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990; reprinted 1999) 184–5.

**Saidiya Hartman**

### **Redressing the Pained Body: Towards a Theory of Practice//1997**

The subterranean history of death and discontinuity informs everyday practice in myriad ways. Perhaps the most significant ways are the memory of difference and the role of repetition in performance. Repetition or iterability is what enables us 'to regenerate ourselves through the continuing process of redefinition'.<sup>1</sup> Yet the failure of full recovery or recompense, the inability fully to occupy an imagined prior condition or to bridge the divide of the split subject, is what drives redress and deems it inadequate. It is also this failure that necessitates repetition. If repetition 'continually "cuts" back to the start' or is homage to an 'original generative instance or act', as James Snead argues, then what is returned to is the inevitable loss or breach that stands at the origin and engenders the black 'New World' subject and 'neo-African' forms like [the dance] *juba*. As well, the 'cut' returns to denied and unmet needs.

The event of rupture is articulated in a variety of ways. The discontinuity in *juba*'s descent makes impossible the recuperation of origins: was it an African circle dance, a jig or a square dance? Isolated gestures insinuate the divergent lines of descent but refuse definitive classification. Mnemic traces of past practices cannot be followed to one site of origin. The impossibility of origins might also be conceptualized in relation to the sexual economy of slavery: the uncertainty of descent, the negation of paternity, the interdiction regarding the master-father's name, and the ambiguous legacy of inheritance and dispossession. This approach to descent 'fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself'.<sup>2</sup>

The very designation 'juba' refers to a range of practices: the percussive use of the body, slapping out rhythms on chest, thighs and knees while tapping or dancing a short step, shuffle or jig; a circle dance of competition where the dancer pats or those in the circle keep time or create complex rhythms for the central dancer or couple; and a solo performance comprising mainly patting chest, knees and thighs. It was commonly described as 'a kind of reel with a calling leader' and as a jig, a designation that applied to the 'Irish jig' and to an 'impolite bacchanalian dance of grotesque manner' identified as 'African'. The very term *juba* invokes this uncertainty and the submarine roots of the black Atlantic. The etymology of this revision or misrecognition has been traced to Bantu words like *juba*, *diuba* or *guiba*. Yet in the space of this revision and repetition emerges the subterranean history of rupture. Repetition is an outcome, a consequence or an accumulation of practice, and it also structures practice. Repetition enables the recognition of the self and points to that which can never be fully recollected and to the impossibility of restoring that which has been breached. The constancy of repetition is catalyzed by the inadequacy of redress and the regularity of domination and terror. These factors induce 'rememory'; in other words, the compulsion or propensity for repetition is induced by the ungovernable processes of the social. Breach triggers memory, and the enormity of the breach perhaps suggests that it can be neither reconciled nor repaired.

The forms of redress enacted in performance are a necessarily incomplete working through of the event of breach because of the constancy of assault and the inability to transform social relations through such practices or generate an event that would result in the reversal of forces. In other words, while the breach could never be fully compensated for, at the very least, the efforts to set things right would entail a revolution of the social order – the abolition of slavery, racism, domination and exploitation, the realization of justice and equality, and the fulfilment of needs. Thus the inadequacy of the redressive action undertaken in everyday practices does not signal the failure of these practices but highlights the way in which pleasure or the counter-investment in the body at stake here serves as a limited figure of social transformation. [...]

- 1 [footnote 108 in source] Drucilla Cornell, *Transformations: Recollective Imagination and Sexual Difference* (London and New York, Routledge, 1993) 42.
- 2 [111] Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1984) 147.

Saidiya Hartman, extract from *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 75–6.



## **Madeline Gins and Arakawa**

### **Architectural Body//2002**

[...] That mortality has been the prevailing condition throughout the ages does not mean it will always have to be. Any resistance mounted thus far against mortality, that ineluctable asphyxiator, has been conducted in too piecemeal a fashion. How can human beings rid themselves of the defeatist attitude that leads them to accept unquestioningly their own inevitable obliteration? Be unrelenting when faced with the relentless. The effort to counter mortality must be constant, persistent and total. The wish and will to do this must be in the air we breathe, having been built into the places within which we live and breathe. Architecture must be made to fit the body as a second, third, fourth, and, when necessary, ninth (and counting) skin. We believe that people closely and complexly allied with their architectural surrounds can succeed in outliving their (seemingly inevitable) death sentences! There continues to be something fundamentally wrong with the way our species approaches the puzzle of itself. Generation after generation, our species, not trying all that it could on its own behalf, has made nice with its glaring vulnerability. At best, we move in a morass of inconclusive investigations and fragmentary pursuits; at worst, it is assumed that our species will always remain a mystery to itself. It has of course by now been ascertained that the more a person learns about herself as a functioning organism, and the more she takes cognizance of what she learns in this regard, incorporating it into her routine, the less likely will she be to harm herself. We therefore ought to take pains not to limit ourselves in any way in this respect. It must never be forgotten that we don't know what we are in the first place. Although the human condition is a crisis condition if ever there was one, few individuals and societies act with the dispatch a state of emergency requires. The fact that the human condition is a crisis condition gets routinely covered up, with culture invariably functioning to obscure how dire the condition is and to float it as bearable. The crisis – that we live in a state of crisis: that all goes down the drain, all – has been put on permanent hold, and the species, oblivious to its own desperateness, goes off on tangents. [...]

[H]ave the architectural surroundings themselves, by virtue of how they are formed, pose questions directly to the body. The unit for consideration, that which is to be measured and assessed, should be the body taken together with its surroundings. How to put all that one is as a body to best use becomes the chief ethical concern. Lives should be lived as case studies, and surely not isolated ones. No one should consider herself a finished product or a non-puzzle;

everyone should live as a self-marmot (self-guinea pig). Self-marmots will act as coordinators that keep discoveries from all fields of research actively in the arena. A self-marmot's urge to assemble knowledge, to effect a living synthesis, will be sparked by a recognition of the state of emergency in which she is doomed to live. Research should no longer be done off to one side, in a school, a library, a laboratory. Where one lives needs to become a laboratory for researching, for mapping directly, the living body itself, oneself as world-forming inhabitant.

What then is preventing us from inventing ourselves further? The answer comes quickly: the species has not yet learned how to have its members pull together to work communally at the same time they continue to form themselves as separate individuals. The species is in need of a common purpose, fuelled by a sharp sense of a shared plight, and a concerted communal effort to address this purpose. And this is so, despite the fact that every individual has been formed communally, and that therefore all actions have communal echoes and repercussions (this is easily proven). For members of our species to arrive at having a great many more than the paltry sum of possibilities that is usually their due, there needs to be a communal devising, selecting and combining of techniques that will strengthen organisms-persons and help them to regenerate themselves; results need to be pooled and compared.

To be insisted on: sentience assembles its swerving suite of cognizing stances depending on how the body disports itself – the whole of this text will prove this statement. Therefore, architecture ought to be designed for actions it invites. Theoretical constructs as to the nature of person can be assessed in a thoroughgoing manner through – and, in the end, only through – architectural construction.

Economic priority should be given to the resolving of existential puzzles: What is this species in the first place? What lives and what dies? It is admittedly costly for our species to ask questions of itself through architecture, particularly if one determines it to be necessary to devote an entire room to the posing of a single question, or, for that matter, if it should turn out that two rooms are needed for that purpose, or even if the testing of a single hypothesis might necessitate that an entire house (or a city) be constructed. But if this is how and from where the answers can come at last, why worry over the expense?

Madeline Gins and Arakawa. extracts from *Architectural Body* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002) xiv–xvi, xviii–xix, xx–xxii.

*Preparing your mind is important. In the end, there will be a great difference depending on whether you begin practice on a whim or after you have made a firm resolution. By all means you should keep the following points in mind. [...]*

—Saito Chobo, 'Kokoro No Yoi' (Preparing Your Mind), 1968

### Coming of Age

On 11 January this year I boarded the flight from Amsterdam to Osaka Kansai airport, together with a modest film crew: my camerawoman, Claire Pijman and soundman Hugo Dijkstal. Our goal: to film the Toshiya at the Sanjūsangen-dō temple, which was taking place on the coming Sunday. Prior to this I had frequently been e-mailing and faxing with my contacts, in frantic attempts to obtain permission to film an event I had never seen, knew little about, and which was only scarcely documented. Thanks to the efforts of Shinji Kohmoto and the Triennial staff, permission had finally been granted only a week before. Toshiya is a religious ceremony in a sacred temple; permission to film the entire event had never before been given. [...]

#### *Take Care with Each and Every Shot*

*There is an old teaching that says 'One hundred hands, one hand; one hand, one hundred hands.' (One hand means a pair of two arrows.) It means that two hundred shots done carelessly are inferior to two shots done with care and two shots done with care are superior to two hundred shots done carelessly.*

*Among those who practice, there are those who want cavalierly to shoot a lot of arrows and those who are lazy and want to shoot as little as possible. Neither of these is good; the best way is carefully and diligently to shoot as many arrows as possible. I was told by my teacher that 'he who shoots one hundred arrows a day will go neither forward nor backward'. If you want to become skilful, you should shoot more than one hundred arrows every day, day after day.*

*If you do this carelessly it is harmful and profitless; you must bear down and shoot each shot with firm resolve. You must not make the mistake of thinking that shooting carefully means to experiment at random. Shooting is a practical skill. 'Knowledge follows action' is how kyujujutsu should be. You must practice over and over again just as you have been taught. In this process, you will grasp a certain secret, trick or knack [kotsu]. Then your teacher will correct you and explain this secret. This is how kyujujutsu must be learned. The world today has become a hectic place, so I suppose it is*

*unavoidable for people to seek the explanation for something first and then try to master it later; but the biggest nuisances are those people whose knowledge precedes action, who thoughtlessly listen to or read snatches of things that their teachers haven't taught them. [...]*

### **'One shot, one life'**

**14 January, Sunday morning**

My crew and I were up at half past five to load the camera and check and transport the equipment. Now it's seven, the temperature is minus four degrees Celsius and it looks like it might start snowing. I'm glad I've brought thermal underwear with me. Shinji and Triennial staff Eric and Naomi are also present to help and translate. A last-minute meeting with the chairman of the archery association has secured us a green light; we can place cameras at all the positions I would like. The men's competition is up first, giving us time to set up and test. The women's competition lasts two hours and is our only chance to get the scenes I am looking for.

Mesmerized, I gaze at the endless rows of women who appear briefly and then, after the second shot and short bow, retreat silently from the podium. I lose track of numbers. Their multitude, over eight hundred, overwhelms me. This must be some Japanese idea of heaven, I muse, and gaze absent-mindedly at the shapes of girls' ears. In some strange way I'm reminded of large flocks of birds. The women perform silently and elegantly as in a choreography, each kimono more stunning than the last. The gap separating me from this culture becomes even larger. [...]

### *Do Not Lose Interest*

*No matter what happens, losing interest in training is forbidden. There are many forms that this takes: some lose interest quickly, some after having trained for a while, and some after they have progressed to quite a high level; but all of these are unacceptable. With an attitude that you may perhaps achieve some small measure of skill after practising for ten years, you should practise unstintingly with a patient frame of mind.*

### *Practice without Let-up*

*You must practice every day, even if it is only for 30 minutes or an hour. It is no good to practice all day Sunday and then not shoot during the week. If you simply can't get to the dojo, you should practise even if you just do subiki (drawing the bow without shooting an arrow). Another good way is to set up a makiwara at home and practise every day.*

*Makiwara practice is liable to be monotonous, so there are those who dislike it, but*

*it is a useful thing. If you shoot at the target when you are a beginner you can ruin your form without realizing it, but the makiwara does not have that drawback. People are prone to want to shoot while fooling around with their friends, but in a situation like this not only will you of course make no progress, but those who will not develop bad habits are few. For those who find the makiwara boring, I hope that you will bear with it and practise until it becomes interesting.*

#### *Make the Target Your Only Goal*

*Among those who practise kyudo, there are those who say that in yumi it is not necessary to hit the target, or that all that is necessary is that your form is good; there are even those who say that form doesn't matter, that spirit is the most important thing. Of course, those who have a twisted spirit are a pain in the neck no matter what they do; and practising yumi with bad form is not good. However, to have good form (shooting technique) and to not hit the target is against nature. Do not be misled by nonsense. If your shooting form is good, accuracy will surely follow. I want you not to forget that missing the target means that something is wrong.*

After a while I can follow the rhythm of the proceedings. At a nod of the head, in rows of twelve, the women (although in appearance some would seem girls) step forward. Without a pause the preparatory movements are made: a bow in the direction of the target, the careful placement of the feet, the arrow's end slotted in the string. In smooth, synchronized motion the bow is raised, and with both arms above the head the string is drawn. Their concentration draws me in; faces like masks. Without tension the moment passes. The women bow curtly and step down, their place already taken by the next row waiting behind them.

#### **Forgetting distance (editing notes)**

February

Finally over jet lag, and the flu ...

The shooting of the shooting. I am delighted with the filmed material, to me it's magic and beautiful. Perhaps even too beautiful. The decision to shoot close-up was the right one; the target so far away that it seems irrelevant. But for now I need to forget being there – the cold, the crowds, the apprehension and excitement. I am struck by the little imperfections revealed by the camera – shaking, frowns, the pressing of the cheek against an arrow's shaft, hair tossed by the release of the bow. My readings on the philosophy of kyudo make me dizzy: artless art, directionless direction. (The viewer is the target.)

#### **March**

Some distance gained. Still, I have the feeling that I'm avoiding questions and



issues. Making art cannot be an excuse not to think things through. At the same time it is not about content only, the images must be let to speak. The closeness and intimacy of the scenes is for me their most crucial element. So it is a paradox – closeness and distance at the same time.

## **April**

Experimenting with the presentation – I have two sides. They don't have to go side by side, possibly back to back. Forgetting is so important for the work process. Acquiring again the distance of the stranger, but in a different way now.

## **May**

In-between travelling. *Saint Sebastian*, as I've decided to call this video installation, seems to be falling into place, and is starting to feel right. I've been showing the edit to a few friends. Now it's on to the practical things. Only I'm not entirely at ease in the necessary altercation between all the modes of working: dreaming, experimenting, organizing, producing. I also need to rent a space and the equipment for a trial installation. The last stages, sound, postproduction, require the stamina of a long-distance runner. [...]

The art of archery and the art of art. The target is so far away that it seems irrelevant.

My tools are the camera and the editing table. Viewing things from both sides.

There are two works – the one in my head or in my desires, and the one it will become.

*A true shot in kyudo is not just one that hits the centre of the target, but one where the arrow can be said to exist in the target before its release.*

Fiona Tan, extracts from 'Saint Sebastian (Works in Progress)' [incorporating extracts from Saito Chobo, 'Kokoro No Yoi' (Preparing Your Mind, 1968), here italicized, in the original printed in parallel to the left of the artist's text], *Gagarin*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2001) 5–11.

**Peter Sloterdijk**  
**Exercises and Misexercises: The Critique**  
**of Repetition//2009**

**Damned to Distinguish between Repetitions**

The ethical distinction took effect from the moment in which repetition lost its innocence. The appearance of ascetics and asceticisms in the twilight of the advanced civilizations revealed a difference that had not been open to explicit development in earlier stages of civilization: in choosing to withdraw, the early practising ethicists broke with the conventional forms and attitudes of life. They abandoned the established repetition sequences and replaced them with different sequences, different attitudes – not arbitrarily different, but rather redemptively different ones. Where the original distinction between high and beneficial life forms, on the one hand, and hopelessly ordinary ones, on the other, makes its cut, it does so in the mode of a neuro-ethical programming that turns the entire old system against itself. Here there are initially no intermediate forms. Body and soul reach the other shore together – or not at all. 'The whole man must move at once.'

The radical separation of ascetics, saints, sages, practising philosophers, and later also artists and virtuosos from the mode of existence of those who continue in the average, approximate and unqualified, shows that the human being is a creature damned to distinguish between repetitions. What later philosophers called freedom first manifests itself in the act with which dissidents rebel against the domination by inner and outer mechanisms. By distancing themselves from the entire realm of deep-seated passions, acquired habits and adopted or sedimented opinions, they make space for a comprehensive transformation. No part of the human can stay as it was: the feelings are reformed, the habitus remodelled, the world of thoughts restructured from the bottom up, and the spoken word overhauled. The whole of life rises up as a new construction on the foundation of favourable repetition. [...]

This de-automatization, this liberation from infection by the blindly reproducing unexamined, must be accompanied by the methodical erection of a new spiritual structure. Nothing could be more alien to the pioneers of the ethical distinction than modern spontaneism, which cultivates shock, confusion and the interruption of the habitual as aesthetic values per se, without asking what should replace the interrupted. The original ethical life is reformatory. It always seeks to exchange harmful for favourable repetition. It wants to replace corrupt life forms with upright ones. It strives to avoid the impure and immerse itself in the pure. That these binary oppositions entail costly simplifications is, for now, beside the

point. All that matters is that in this framework, individualized freedom emerges in its oldest and most intense form. It results from an awkward discovery: there is a choice that changes all the factors influencing human behaviour. The first ethicists faced the decision between a life in the usually unnoticed iron chains of involuntarily acquired habits and an existence on the ethereal chain of freely accepted discipline. The most erroneous possible conclusion one could draw from this is that the appearance of genuine practising awareness concerned purely the active. Let the sadhus torture themselves in their lonely forests with complicated breathing exercises; let the Stylites feel closer to heaven on their absurd pillars, and let the philosophers sell their second coats and sleep on the ground – the average mortals will cling nonetheless to the opinion that these extravagant distortions of the ordinary are meaningless for them, the business of a sacred-perverse private meeting between the incomprehensible God and his artiste followers. Whoever is unable to participate can continue in their old habitus, which, though not perfect, seems good enough for everyday life.

### **The Creature that Cannot Practise**

In reality, the secession of the practising places the entire ecosystem of human behaviour on an altered foundation. Like all acts of rendering things explicit, the appearance of the early practice systems brought about a radical modification of the respective area – that is, of the whole field of psychophysically conditioned actions. Explicit exercises, whether the *asanas* of the Indian yogis, the Stoics' experiments with letting go of the non-own, or the *exercitationes spirituales* of Christian climbers on the heavenly ladder, cast a shadow on everything that lies opposite them on the implicit side: this is no less than the world of old Adam, the gigantic universe of unilluminated conventionalities. The shadow zone encompasses the area dominated by repetitions of an undeclared practice character. We can leave open the question of whether the psychoanalytical insult to humans claimed by Freud – triggered by the purportedly unwelcome discovery that the ego is not the master of its own house – ever really existed. There is certainly no doubt about the reality of the behaviouristic insult to humans, which could equally be called the ascetological one. It follows from the observation that 99.9 per cent of our existence comprises repetitions, mostly of a strictly mechanical nature. The only way to deal with this insult is to imagine that one is still more original than plenty of others. If one subjects oneself to more probing self-examination, one finds oneself in the psychosomatic engine room of one's own existence, where there is nothing to be gained from the usual flattery of spontaneity; and freedom theorists would do better to stay upstairs.

In this investigation, one advances into a non-psychoanalytical unconscious encompassing everything belonging to normally athematic rhythms, rules and

rituals – regardless of whether it stems from collective patterns or idiosyncratic specializations. In this area, everything is higher mechanics, including intimate illusions of non mechanics and unconditioned being-for-oneself. The sum of these mechanics produces the surprise space of personality, in which surprising events are actually very rare. Humans live in habits, not territories. Radical changes of location first of all attack the human rooting in habits, and only then the places in which those habits are rooted. [...]

Peter Sloterdijk, extracts from *Du mußt dein Leben ändern* (2009); trans. Wieland Hoban, *You Must Change Your Life: On Anthropotechnics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013) 404–5, 405–7.

## **Paul B. Preciado** **Becoming T//2008**

### **Becoming Molecular**

When I take a dose of testosterone in gel form or inject it, what I'm actually giving myself is a chain of political signifiers that have been materialized in order to acquire the form of a molecule that can be absorbed by my body. I'm taking not only the hormone, the molecule, but also the concept of hormone, a series of signs, texts and discourses, the process through which the hormone came to be synthesized, the technical sequences that produce it in the laboratory. I inject a crystalline, oil-soluble steroid carbon chain of molecules, and with it a bit of the history of modernity. I administer myself a series of economic transactions, a collection of pharmaceutical decisions, clinical tests, focus groups and business management techniques; I connect to a baroque network of exchange and to economic and political flow-chains for the patenting of the living. I am linked by T to electricity, to genetic research projects, to mega-urbanization, to the destruction of forests of the biosphere, to the pharmaceutical exploitation of living species, to Dolly the cloned sheep, to the advance of the Ebola virus, to HIV mutation, to anti-personnel mines and the broadband transmission of information. In this way I become one of the somatic connectives through which power, desire, release, submission, capital, rubbish and rebellion circulate.

As a body – and this is the only important thing about being a subject-body, a techno-living system – I'm the platform that makes possible the materialization of political imagination. I am my own guinea pig for an experiment on the effects of intentionally increasing the level of testosterone in the body of a cis-female.

Instantly, the testosterone turns me into something radically different from a cis-female. Even when the changes generated by this molecule are socially imperceptible. The lab rat is becoming human. The human being is becoming a rodent. And as for me: neither *testo-girl* nor *techno-boy*. I am a port of insertion for  $C_{19}H_{28}O_2$ . I'm both the terminal of one of the apparatuses of neoliberal governmentality and the vanishing point through which escapes the system's power to control. I'm the molecule and the state, and I'm the laboratory rat and the scientific subject that conducts the research; I'm the residue of a biochemical process. I am the future common artificial ancestor for the elaboration of new species in the perpetually random processes of mutation and genetic drift. I am T.

### **The Devil in Gel Form**

After the fifth dose of Testogel, I began to make out variations in the range of excitation, muscular tension, the tendency for outward expressions of my body. All drugs are poisons. The only difference between a poison and a medicine lies in the dose. But what is the right dose of testosterone? The one that yields my body, or another? What would hormonal justice be? And if there is a hormonal justice, should I apply that justice to myself?

Testosterone is the devil in a colourless gel. The cutaneous administration of fifty milligrams of testosterone in gel form twice a week for three months isn't easy to detect with the naked eye in the body of a cis-female, in my body. It is changing the hormonal composition of my body substantially. *Modus molecularis*. It is a matter of a potential transformation of my own endocrinal ontology. The changes are not purely artificial. Testosterone existing externally is inserted into a molecular field of possibilities that already exist inside my body. Rather than rejection of it, there is assimilation, incorporation. *Mit-sein*. Being-with-testosterone.

Testosterone does not radically alter the perception of reality or the sense of identity. This particular dose of testosterone isn't strong enough to produce in the body of a cis-female identifiable exterior changes labelled as 'virilism' by mainstream medicine (beard and moustache, noticeable increase in muscle mass, changing of the voice ...). It does not change the way others decipher my gender. I've always had an androgynous body, and the microdoses of testosterone that I'm giving myself don't alter that situation. However, they produce subtle but decisive changes in my affect, in my inner perception, in my sexual excitation, in the odour of my body, and in resistance to fatigue.

Testosterone isn't masculinity. Nothing allows us to conclude that the effects produced by testosterone are masculine. The only thing that we can say is that, until now, they have as a whole been the exclusive property of cis-males. Masculinity is only one of the possible political (and non-biological) byproducts



of the administration of testosterone. It is neither the only one nor, over the long term, the one that will dominate socially.

The consumption of testosterone, like that of oestrogen and progesterone in the case of the Pill, do not depend on any ideal cultural constructions of gender that would come to influence the way we act and think. We are confronted directly by the production of the *materiality* of gender. Everything is a matter of doses, of melting and crystallization points, of the rotary power of the molecule, of regularity, of milligrams, of form and mode of administration, of habit, of praxis. What is happening to me could be described in terms of a 'molecular revolution'. In detailing this concept in order to refer to the revolt of May 1968, Félix Guattari certainly was not thinking of cis-females who self-administer testosterone. On the other hand, he was attentive to structural modifications generated by micropolitical changes such as the consumption of drugs, changes in perception, in sexual conduct, in the invention of new languages.<sup>1</sup> It is a question of becomings, of multiplicities. In such a context, *molecular revolution* could be pointing to a kind of political homeopathy of gender. It's not a matter of going from woman to man, from man to woman, but of contaminating the molecular bases of the production of sexual difference, with the understanding that these two states of being, male and female, exist only as 'political fictions', as somatic effects of the technical process of normalization. It's a matter of intervening intentionally in this process of production in order to end up with viable forms of incorporated gender, to produce a new sexual and affective platform that is neither male nor female in the pharmacopornographic sense of the term, which would make possible the transformation of the species. T is only a threshold, a molecular door, a becoming between multiplicities.

For a body accustomed to regulating its hormonal metabolism in terms of the production of oestrogen, the intentional increasing of the level of testosterone in the blood constitutes an endocrinal reprogramming. The slightest hormonal change affects all the functions of the body: the desire to eat and to fuck, circulation and the absorption of minerals, the biological rhythms regulating sleep, the capacity for physical exertion, muscular tone, metabolism, the sense of smell and taste – in fact, the entire biochemical physiology of the organism. None of these modifications can be qualified as masculine. But of all the mental and physical effects caused by self-intoxication based on testosterone in gel form, the feeling of transgressing limits of gender that have been socially imposed on me was without a doubt the most intense. The new metabolism of testosterone in my body wouldn't be effective in terms of masculinization without the previous existence of a political agenda that interprets these changes as an integral part of a desire – controlled by the pharmacopornographic order – for sex change. Without this desire, without the project of being in

transit from one fiction of sex to another, taking testosterone would never be anything but a molecular becoming.

1 [footnote 3 in source] Félix Guattari, *La Révolution moléculaire* (Paris: Recherches, 1988). [...]

Paul B. Preciado, extract from *Testo Yonqui* (Madrid: Espana Calpe, 2008); trans. Bruce Benderson, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2013) 139–43.

## **Isabelle Stengers**

### **An Ecology of Practices//2005**

When we deal with practices, recognition would lead to the question: Why should we take practices seriously as we know very well that they are in the process of being destroyed by Capitalism? This is their 'sameness', indeed, the only difference being between the already destroyed one and the still-surviving ones. The ecology of practice is a non-neutral tool, as it entails the decision never to accept Capitalist destruction as freeing the ground for anything but Capitalism itself. The point is not to defend physics or any other surviving practice. So many have already been destroyed, and those that are now surviving are not the crucial ones, whatever their claims of embodying rationality, of equating their loss with the loss of the very soul of humanity. But the way they defend themselves, thereby accepting and even justifying destruction of others, is not a reason to celebrate as well deserved what will eventually happen to them also. This would be a moral attitude, the sheer expression of resentment. The point is to resist any concept, any prospect, which would make those destructions the condition for something more important.

It is clearly hard to think without reference to a kind of progress that would justify its past as a path leading to our present and future. The ecology of practices has this ambition, and this is one of the reasons why I choose an open reference to the wisdom of naturalists who have learned to think in the presence of ongoing facts of destruction – with nothing beyond to justify it – who are able both to feel that the disappearance of any species is an irreparable loss, which makes our world poorer, and to accept the loss of so many species. Never will these naturalists agree to promote a given loss to the status of something that was needed – unfortunately – as a condition for the further progress of Life on this earth.

However, we also diverge from naturalist wisdom as our present is something that we cannot try to understand independently from a diagnostic bearing on its possibility of transformation. Whenever our present is concerned, whatever understanding we have, comes to be included in this present anyway, and this in turn cannot be separated from the understanding it generates. An ecology of practices does not have any ambition to describe practices 'as they are'; it resists the master word of a progress that would justify their destruction. It aims at the construction of new 'practical identities' for practices, that is, new possibilities for them to be present, or in other words to connect. It thus does not approach practices as they are – physics as we know it, for instance – but as they may become. [...]

Using the word empowerment is a risk because the word is now everywhere, even in World Bank deliberations about creating a better world. So I will double the risk by explicitly referring to the source from which I learned to think with it. It was when I learned about the story which has led activists to name themselves neo-pagan witches, daring to take the old word 'magic' up again in order to name the efficacy of the rituals they produce.

As the witch Starhawk wrote, calling forth the efficacy of ritual magic is in itself an act of magic. Indeed it goes against all the plausible, comfortable reasons that propose magic as a simple matter of belief, part of a past which should remain in the past. 'We no longer ...' – as soon as we begin like that, the master word of progress is speaking in our place, precisely the one the contemporary witches contest as the name they gave to themselves is there also to recall to memory witch-hunting and the 'burning times'.

Magic, as neo-pagan activist witches define it, is a technique, a craft or an art which many would be tempted to reduce to a matter of mere psychology, relaxation, psycho-sociology and so on. But the name 'magic' makes fully explicit something which both feminists and non-violent activists have discovered – the need to create techniques which entail what I would call 'de-psychologization'. Rituals are modes of gathering, the achievement of which is that it is no longer I, as a subject, as meant to belong to nobody but myself, who thinks and feels. But it is not because I have been overwhelmed by something those who gather would have in common. And it is not because of the powerful influence of that in the name of which we do gather, or in which we believe. What the ritual achieves could perhaps be compared to what physicists describe as putting 'out of equilibrium', out of the position which allows us to speak in terms of psychology, or habits, or stakes. Not that they forget about personal stakes, but because the gathering makes present – and this is what is named magic – something, which transforms their relation to the stakes they have put up. [...]

It is important to contrast empowerment, as the transformative power produced by what the witches call rituals, with unity in the name of a cause, that is, mobilization. The Goddess the witches' rituals make present is indeed a cause, but a cause without a representative, an authorized spokesperson. It is a cause which is nowhere else than in the effect She produces when present, that is, when fostered. And this effect is not that of 'becoming aware' of something which others already knew, of understanding some truth beyond illusions – her effect is enacting the relation between belonging and becoming, producing belonging as experimentation while it is always in danger of being some kind of a psychological habit.

If there is to be an ecology of practices, practices must not be defended as if they are weak. The problem for each practice is how to foster its own force, make present what causes practitioners to think and feel and act. But it is a problem which may also produce an experimental togetherness among practices, a dynamics of pragmatic learning of what works and how. This is the kind of active, fostering 'milieu' that practices need in order to be able to answer challenges and experiment changes. that is, to unfold their own force. This is a social technology any diplomatic practice demands and depends upon.

I started with the problem of ecology of practices as a tool for thinking, the need of which I felt while working with physicists. Physicists feel weak and they protect themselves with the weapons of power, equating their practice with claims of rational universality. But the tool, as it is not an instrument to be used at will, co-produces the thinker, as shown by the very fact that it led me from physics to the art of the witches. Doing what I did, my own practice was that of a philosopher, a daughter to philosophy, thinking with the tools of this tradition, which excluded magic from the beginning, and which, rather unwittingly, gave its weapons to physicists and to so many others presenting themselves in the name of universality. Maybe this is why I had to go back to this very beginning, since as a daughter, not a son, I could not belong without thinking in presence of women, not weak or unfairly excluded women but women whose power philosophers may have been afraid of.

Isabelle Stengers, extracts from 'Introductory Notes on an Ecology of Practices', *Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 11, no. 1 (March 2005) 185–6, 194–6.

## Jennifer Biddle

### Tjanpi Desert Weavers//2016

Described by Hetti Perkins as 'an art centre without walls', Tjanpi Desert Weavers is the only pan-regional organization across the NPY [Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara] homelands of the Western Desert. While the administrative centre for Tjanpi Desert Weavers has always been centrally located in Alice Springs, Tjanpi art worker staff travel regularly to, from and between remote communities, in continuous and varied forms of engagement on the lands and with artists and community members (distributing supplies, needles, collecting finished work, conducting workshops and project-based bush camps), with a permanent production centre in the remote Ngaanyatjarra community of Warakurna only since 2008. Tjanpi art workers, themselves, traverse the roads and communities of the NPY lands, an 'art centre without walls' that is as practice-base supported and as mobile as the artforms are themselves.

Non-technologically dependent, Tjanpi weavings travel, move, as women's lives command, across communities, distance, responsibilities, the desert homelands; providing for what Marcia Langton [Tjanpi Desert Weavers, 2012] calls Tjanpi artists being their own bosses. Arguably Tjanpi work reactivates a certain 'nuclear script' [Silvan Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 1963] of country, place and practice: a conjointly female-specific way of being with one another, and of being in country. A primacy of affective orientations, attenuations, organization and modes of response are tied to the bodies of others as much as to country itself. Imbrications of habit, affect and encounter take shape through co-oriented bodies in 'concernful absorption' by which country becomes a place of feeling as much as practice – what Edward Casey might call a thick place (as opposed to a thin or unpractised place) ['Between Geography and Philosophy', 2001] – a critical revivification of country for increasingly community-based contemporary existence.

Crucially, Tjanpi was revealed to be made – makeable – not only in and on country but directly from country. Early experiments with Tjanpi utilized locally sourced plant fibres, *minarri* and *wangurnu* specifically, which are often found today as the inside stuffing of figurative forms, with raffia or other fibres (wool, cotton) as wrapping. Grasses, rushes and human hair, collected, cut, dried, spindle spun, spat on, caressed, fondled, held – the viscera of country, person, and above all an enduring, intimate relation between hand, technique and object – become woven directly into the object form. Traditional Tjanpi grasses may mix up with, vie with, be abandoned for raffia, if not available – 'No matter', said the Tjanpi artist Eunice Yunurupa Porter, when I asked her what was the



best material to work with [- conversation with the artist, 2012]. [...]

The high Tjukurrpa/Tjukurpa works associated with commissioned works utilize harvested Tjanpi grasses directly. Memory is acted out through social practice, reversing the Western assumption that art is the teleological result of memory and reflection, rather than being itself an instigator in the process. This memory is not archival. Tjanpi does not serve to accumulate historical memory as in an official repository; it is not driven by the compulsive necessity to collect and store, in order to compensate for ever-receding memory and to ward off death, as Derrida characterizes Western cultural 'archive fever'. Nor is this necessarily a 'melancholic identification' historicism of the kind I have elsewhere depicted in relation to Western Desert women's acylic painting, in which the imperative to repeat is indicative of grief, of loss (melancholy, not mourning), of an ultimately irreparable wound. Tjanpi inaugurates a far more practical and practice-oriented object relationality. In its more predominant, prosaic forms (a tea cup, this bowl, some baskets), in its radically secular if not irreverent interpretation of the everyday banal, a practice-based relationship to country is insisted upon. Experimental art – acylic painting, Tjanpi – provides ritualized forms of caring for country: concrete processes in which country is held in the mind as much as in the hand. Country can remain fertile, productive, only if it is looked after, tended to, cared for, fed properly. An incarnate form itself, country will starve without care, is starving now; and that means work, ritual, labour, what Warlpiri might call, in English, the business of looking after: a labour of lifelong attachment.

Country is dependent upon humans for making and keeping its viscera (species, flora, fauna, social relations and relationships) animated, enlivened, activated and attached to lived sentiments and sensibilities. The labour of Tjanpi (hunting, camping and art making) is materially productive in these terms. This then is a memory of what might be called 'remembering the future', where a female-specific responsibility for looking after country, people and knowledge is acknowledged, supported and nourished through art making. As I have discussed in previous research, this responsibility is increasing, simply for demographic reasons alone, as men die younger and women live longer. I don't want to romanticize this existential insecurity, as Diane Austin-Broos has identified it: the daily trauma of extremely high rates of avoidable deaths of young men, which finds a smaller number of women now looking after a larger number of both immediate and extended family members. That figurative Tjanpi works present human family figures, especially children, in this context may well be for good reason (note the abundance of *mamu* and other haunted child figures in *New Sculptures* by Tjanpi Desert Weavers, Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, 2011).

In the encounter with Tjanpi art, the proximity of this politics, a vital material politics, is inescapable. Tjanpi objects collapse the actual space between art

object and viewing spectator in an encounter of participatory command both immediate and temporal. The three criteria Shelly Errington argues are necessary for primitive art to become fine art (portability, durability and framability) are here elided. Tjanpi artworks have no frame, no distance from which they can safely be hung; they are not inert and cauterized spectacle, for ocular purposes alone. Even without directly touching, these works make and bring the world of intimate incarnate association close, proximate, even (for some) too close. Arguably, the ambivalent status of Tjanpi within the high art category, the ever-reductive question 'Is it art or is it craft?' is about this ambiguity.

Tjanpi is not about something else. It is the thing itself. Unlike acrylic desert paintings, where the historical requirement has been to rely upon a Dreaming story or a supplementary account to tell what it really is, and, in turn, the marked move to make the canvas itself an autonomous encounter, as witnessed in recent acrylic painting practices and digital photography, Tjanpi's unique capacity is unmediated: a potent hit direct to global audiences and markets. Explaining her reason for judging the *Tjanpi Toyota* the 2005 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award winner, Destiny Deacon says it was 'art you could smell', identifying in an instant the visceral hit that Tjanpi delivers. Smell, like touch itself, confounds the distinction between subjective human experience and the object that engenders it, human and non-human, inside and outside, me and it. Arguably, in this sense, Tjanpi works border on a Kristeva sense of abjection: compelling and fascinating because they will not settle within the bordered, bounded concept of Aboriginal art. Poised radically to pry open the new (the less well-appreciated aspect of Kristeva's abjection), Tjanpi is not remote Aboriginal art in this sense: over there, elsewhere, othered but embodied, alive, present, here and now.

Jennifer Biddle, extracts from *Remote Avant-Garde: Aboriginal Art under Occupation* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2016) 133–4, 136–8 [footnotes not included]. ([www.tjanpi.com.au](http://www.tjanpi.com.au))

## Eyal Weizman

### Political Plastic//2016

[...] At Forensic Architecture, we do some work with victims of rendition, trying to recreate the networks of prisons they have been held in. Reconstructing parts of the global geography of flow between detention sites could be undertaken by asking former prisoners if they could identify from memory labels on bottles of

mineral water – which the detention centres sometimes erroneously left on the bottles. This made it possible for researchers to show former prisoners many labels until they recognized those manufactured in countries they were held in without their knowledge. Prisoners did not know where they were being held, but when shown images, they could recollect the different labels on bottles of mineral water they encountered at each site. [...]

Forensic Architecture is the civil practice that emerges within [a] shattered physical and legal geography. When abuses happen within an area of sovereign control, in the 'mainland', it is the police that deal with it. We have no part in (and do not work with) states or police forces. Rather, we work within the fragmented flotsam of shattered sovereignties, of grey areas and overlapping jurisdictions where there is no law. Forensic Architecture does forensics where there is no law, where there is no regulation, where there are no institutions of justice. What we try to do is to trace the way in which state violence follows that splintered geography of the post-Cold War order. It flows within the veins of this shattered geography. [...]

Forensic architecture is an investigative practice. We are like investigative journalists, but our means of research are space and the visual domain, media and aesthetic practices. But the task that we've defined for ourselves is a kind of post-academic task. It is not only about giving birth to concepts or descriptions of things. Our aim is to find the real-world political levers and try to transform investigation into action. It is not enough to reflect and criticize. Some of the arenas in which we operate are undoubtedly institutional – courts, the human rights council, various truth commissions, or international tribunals – but we try to use them tactically. The juridical move is only as good as the political process that it is part of, and the question is on behalf of whom, and how, you can undertake it. So in that sense it's post-academic, because it seeks not only to generate knowledge but to activate strategic sites worldwide. It's not a melancholic practice – in the sense of coming to terms with the tragedies of the past – it's a proactive and tactical practice. [...]

For me as an architect, politics is a process – a slow process of materialization and dematerialization, of forces slowing into form, and not a realm of deliberation alone, although it can include deliberation. My political imagination is one in which architecture and politics come together to make something that I call the political plastic (after Joseph Beuys), which is a kind of viscous medium in which forces and structures, global flows, forms and trajectories create a world that undergoes a constant process of formation.

Eyal Weizman, extracts from conversation with Lucy Lopez (2016), in *Former West: Art and the Contemporary after 1989* (Utrecht: BAK/Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2016) 308–9, 312–13.

I pursue no objectives, no system, no tendency. I have no programme, no style, no direction. I have no time for specialized concerns, working themes, or variations that lead to mastery. I steer clear of definitions. I don't know what I want. I am inconsistent, non-committal, passive. I like the indefinite, the boundless. I like continual uncertainty

## **DISCIPLINE(S)**



## Mohandas Gandhi

### The Secret of *Satyagraha* in South Africa// 1916

[...] There are two ways of countering injustice. One way is to smash the head of the man who perpetrates injustice and to get your own head smashed in the process. All strong people in the world adopt this course. Everywhere wars are fought and millions of people are killed. The consequence is not the progress of a nation but its decline. Soldiers returning from the front have become so bereft of reason that they indulge in various antisocial activities. One does not have to go far for examples. [...]

But through the other method of combating injustice, we alone suffer the consequences of our mistakes, and the other side is wholly spared. This other method is *satyagraha*. One who resorts to it does not have to break another's head; he may merely have his own head broken. He has to be prepared to die himself suffering all the pain. In opposing the atrocious laws of the Government of South Africa, it was this method that we adopted. We made it clear to the said Government that we would never bow to its outrageous laws. No clapping is possible without two hands to do it, and no quarrel without two persons to make it. Similarly, no State is possible without two entities [the rulers and the ruled]. You are our sovereign, our Government, only so long as we consider ourselves your subjects. When we are not subjects, you are not the sovereign either. So long as it is your endeavour to control us with justice and love, we will let you to do so. But if you wish to strike at us from behind, we cannot permit it. Whatever you do in other matters, you will have to ask our opinion about the laws that concern us. If you make laws to keep us suppressed in a wrongful manner and without taking us into confidence, these laws will merely adorn the statute-books. We will never obey them. Award us for it what punishment you like, we will put up with it. Send us to prison and we will live there as in a paradise. Ask us to mount the scaffold and we will do so laughing. Shower what sufferings you like upon us, we will calmly endure all and not hurt a hair of your body. We will gladly die and will not so much as touch you. But so long as there is yet life in these our bones, we will never comply with your arbitrary laws.

It all began on a Sunday evening in Johannesburg when I sat on a hillock with another gentleman called Hemchandra. The memory of that day is so vivid that it might have been yesterday. At my side lay a Government Gazette. It contained the several clauses of the law concerning Indians. As I read it, I shook with rage. What did the Government take us for? Then and there I produced a translation of that portion of the *Gazette* which contained the said laws and wrote under it:

'I will never let these laws govern me.' This was at once sent for publication to *Indian Opinion* at Phoenix. I did not dream at the time that even a single Indian would be capable of the unprecedented heroism the Indians revealed or that the *satyagraha* movement would gain the momentum it did. [...]

Mohandas Gandhi, extracts from 'The Secret of *Satyagraha* in South Africa', speech (27 July 1916), in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Volume 15* (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India) 239, 240. ([www.gandhiashramsevagaram.org](http://www.gandhiashramsevagaram.org))

## **Georges Bataille**

### **Programme (Relative to *Acéphale*)/1936**

- 1 Form a community creative of values, values creative of cohesion.
- 2 Lift the curse, the feeling of guilt which strikes men, sending them to wars they do not want, forcing them to a labour whose fruits escape them.
- 3 Assume the function of destruction and decomposition, but as accomplishment and not as negation of being.
- 4 Realize the personal accomplishment of being and of its tension through concentration, through a positive asceticism and through positive individual discipline.
- 5 Realize the universal accomplishment of personal being in the irony of the animal world and through the revelation of an acephalic universe, one of play, not of state or duty.
- 6 Take upon oneself perversion and crime, not as exclusive values, but as integrated within the human totality.
- 7 Fight for the decomposition and exclusion of all communities, national, socialist, communist or churchly – other than universal community.
- 8 Affirm the reality of values, the resulting inequality of men, and acknowledge the organic character of society.
- 9 Take part in the destruction of the existing world, with eyes open to the world to come.
- 10 Consider the world to come in the sense of reality contained as of now, and not in the sense of a permanent happiness which is not only inaccessible but hateful.
- 11 Affirm the value of violence and the will to aggression in so far as they are the foundation of all power.

## **Simone Weil** **Decreation//1947**

[...] It is necessary to uproot oneself. To cut down the tree and make of it a cross, and then to carry it every day.

It is necessary not to be 'myself', still less to be 'ourselves'.

The city gives us the feeling of being at home.

We must take the feeling of being at home into exile.

We must be rooted in the absence of a place.

To uproot oneself socially and vegetatively.

To exile oneself from every earthly country.

To do all that to others, from the outside, is a substitute (*ersatz*) for decreation.

It results in unreality.

But by uprooting oneself one seeks greater reality.

Simone Weil, extract from *La Pesanteur et la grâce* (Paris: Librairie PLON, 1947); trans. Emma Crawford and Mario von der Ruhr, *Gravity and Grace* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002) 39.

## **Henri Michaux** **Miserable Miracle//1955**

This book is an exploration. By means of words, signs, drawings. Mescaline, the subject explored.

From the thirty-two autograph pages reproduced out of the hundred and fifty written while the inner perturbation was at its height, those who can read handwriting will learn more than from any description.

As for the drawings, begun immediately after the third experiment, they

were done with a vibratory motion that continues in you for days and days and, though automatic and blind, reproduces exactly the visions to which you have been subjected, passes through them again.

It being impossible to reproduce the entire manuscript, which directly and simultaneously translated the subject, the rhythms, the forms, the chaos, as well as the inner defences and their devastation, we found ourselves in difficulties, confronted by a typographical wall. Everything had to be rewritten. The original text, more tangible than legible, drawn rather than written, would not, in any case, suffice.

Flung onto and across the paper, hastily and in jerks, the interrupted sentences, with syllables flying off, frayed, petering out, kept diving, falling, dying. Their tattered remnants would revive, bolt and burst again.

The letters ended in smoke or disappeared in zigzags. The next ones, similarly interrupted, continued their uneasy recitation, birds in the midst of the drama, their wings cut in flight by invisible scissors.

Sometimes words would be fused together on the spot. For example, 'Martyrissibly' would recur to me time and time again, speaking volumes. I couldn't get rid of it. Another repeated untiringly, 'Krakatoa! Krakatoa!' or sometimes a quite ordinary word like 'crystal' would return twenty times in succession, giving me a great harangue all by itself, out of another world, and I could never have augmented it in the least or supplemented it with some other word. Alone, like a castaway on an island, it was everything to me, and the restless ocean out of which it had just come and of which it irresistibly reminded me, for I, too, was shipwrecked and alone and holding out against disaster.

In the huge light-churn, with lights splashing over me, drunk, I was swept headlong without ever turning back.

How to describe it? It would require a picturesque style which I do not possess, made up of surprises, of nonsense, of sudden flashes, of bounds and rebounds, an unstable style, tobogganing and prankish.

In this book, the margins, filled with what are epitomes rather than titles, suggest very inadequately the *overlappings* which are an ever-present phenomenon of Mescaline. Without them it would be like talking about something else. I have not used any other 'artifices'. It would have required too many. The insurmountable difficulties come from the incredible rapidity of the apparition, transformation and disappearance of the visions; from the multiplicity, the pullulation of each vision; from the fanlike and umbellate developments through autonomous, independent, simultaneous progressions (on seven screens as it were); from their unemotional character; from their inept, and even more, from their mechanical appearance: gusts of images, gusts of 'yes's' or of 'no's', gusts of stereotyped movements.

I was not neutral either, for which I do not apologize. Mescaline and I were more often at odds with each other than together. I was shaken, broken, but I refused to be taken in by it.

Tawdry, its spectacle. Moreover it was enough to uncover one's eyes not to see any more of the stupid phantasmagoria. Inharmonious Mescaline, an alkaloid derived from the Peyotl which contains six, was really like a robot. It knew only how to do certain things.

Yet I had come prepared to admire. I was confident. But that day my cells were brayed, buffeted, sabotaged, sent into convulsions. I felt them being caressed, being subjected to constant wrenchings. Mescaline wanted my full consent. To enjoy a drug one must enjoy being a subject. To me it was too much like being on 'fatigue duty'.

It was with my terrible buffetings that it put on its show. I was the fireworks that despises the pyrotechnist, even when it can be proved that it is itself the pyrotechnist. I was being shoved about, I was being crumpled. In a daze. I stared at this Brownian movement – disturbance of perception.

I was distraught and tired of being distraught, with my eye at this microscope. What was there supernatural about all this? You scarcely got away from the human state at all. You felt more as if you were caught and held prisoner in some workshop of the brain.

Should I speak of pleasure? It was unpleasant.

Once the agony of the first hour is over (effect of the encounter with the poison), an agony so great that you wonder if you are not going to faint (as some people do, though rarely), you can let yourself be carried along by a certain current which may seem like happiness. Is that what I thought? I am not sure of the contrary. Yet, in my journal, during all those incredible hours, I find these words written more than fifty times, clumsily, and with difficulty: *Intolerable, Unbearable*.

Such is the price of this paradise (!).

Henri Michaux, Foreword (March 1955), from *Misérable Miracle* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1956); trans. Louise Varèse (1963) and Anna Moschovakis (2002), *Miserable Miracle* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2002) 5–8.



## **Gustav Metzger**

### **Manifesto – Auto-Destructive Art//1960**

Man in Regent Street is auto-destructive.

Rockets, nuclear weapons, are auto-destructive.

Auto-destructive art.

The drop drop dropping of HH bombs.

Not interested in ruins (the picturesque),

Auto-destructive art re-enacts the obsession with destruction, the pummelling to which individuals and masses are subjected.

Auto-destructive art demonstrates man's power to accelerate disintegrative processes of nature and to order them.

Auto-destructive art mirrors the compulsive perfectionism of arms manufacture – polishing to destruction point.

Auto-destructive art is the transformation of technology into public art. The immense productive capacity, the chaos of capitalism and of Soviet communism, the coexistence of surplus and starvation; the increasing stock-piling of nuclear weapons – more than enough to destroy technological societies; the disintegrative effect of machinery and of life in vast built-up areas on the person ...

Auto-destructive art is art which contains within itself an agent which automatically leads to its destruction within a period of time not to exceed twenty years. Other forms of auto-destructive art involve manual manipulation. There are forms of auto-destructive art where the artist has a tight control over the nature and timing of the disintegrative process, and there are other forms where the artist's control is slight.

Materials and techniques used in creating auto-destructive art include: Acid, Adhesives, Ballistics, Canvas, Clay, Combustion, Compression, Concrete, Corrosion, Cybernetics, Drop, Elasticity, Electricity, Electrolysis, Electronics, Explosives, Feedback, Glass, Heat, Human Energy, Ice, Jet, Light, Load, Mass-production, Metal, Motion Picture, Natural Forces, Nuclear Energy, Paint, Paper, Photography, Plaster, Plastics, Pressure, Radiation, Sand, Solar Energy, Sound, Steam, Stress, Terracotta, Vibration, Water, Welding, Wire, Wood.

Gustav Metzger, 'Manifesto – Auto-Destructive Art' (London, 10 March 1960), included in *Auto-Destructive Art. Demonstration by G. Metzger*, handbill (London, 3 July 1961); reproduced in Andrew Wilson, 'Gustav Metzger's Auto-Destructive/Auto-Creative Art: An Art of the Manifesto, 1959–1969', *Third Text*, vol. 22, no. 2 (March 2008) 185.

**The Body Stripped Bare**

On 20 July 1964 Yoko Ono first performed *Cut Piece*, a work in which the audience cuts the clothing from her body piece by piece. As part of an evening of works billed as a 'Contemporary American Avant-Garde Music Concert', Ono shared the stage of Kyoto's Yamaichi Concert Hall with Tony Cox and Al Wonderlick. She called her concerts 'strip-tease shows', saying that this referred to the 'stripping of the mind'. Works performed that night included *Fly Piece*, in which Ono asked the audience to leap from ladders placed on the stage, and *Word of Mouth Piece*, in which Ono whispered a word into the ear of an audience member, who then turned to her neighbour and repeated the word, thus inaugurating a chain of whispers that eventually snaked through the entire concert hall. These conceptual pieces set the stage for *Cut Piece*, as they demanded a high degree of audience participation and played on viewers' fantasies, interactions and imaginations. As in every iteration of *Cut Piece*, Ono knelt on a stage and placed a large pair of scissors in front of her. She asked audience members to come up, one by one, cut off her clothes, and take the scraps with them. After these verbal instructions, she remained silent for the duration of the piece. Her posture, with her legs folded underneath so that her body rested on her shins, replicated the polite Japanese sitting position *seiza*, assumed in formal or respectable environments. Significant pauses elapsed between each hesitant cut, and the piece ended when the audience stopped cutting—long stretches punctuated by the quiet sounds of scissors slicing through cloth. Ono's own silence was thrown into relief by the anxious titters of audience laughter. As her body was eventually bared, viewers descended the stage steps clutching the remnants of her dress and underclothes.

This essay asserts that *Cut Piece*, seen in dialogue with Ono's other works and situated within the context of the international Fluxus art movement, actively generates feminist political readings. I specify the ways in which *Cut Piece* cites the visual culture of atomic war in order to confront the influence of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on postwar Japanese art. By integrating Ono's art into a broadly understood feminism, one that directs itself toward the circulation of the female body within global politics, this essay considers *Cut Piece's* uses of a body not only gendered, but formed by nation, race and history. Art historians have rightly looked at *Cut Piece* as a prototype for feminist performance art. However, this feminism is often of a limited scope, and it turns Ono's piece into a literalization of 'undressing' as violence to the female body; as Thomas Crow

writes, this work 'acutely pinpoints (at the very point when modern feminist activism was emerging) the political question of women's physical vulnerability as mediated by regimes of vision'.<sup>1</sup> In this reading, Ono's body represents all female bodies, and she as female art object represents all females as objects. In the catalogue for the exhibition 'Bad Girls', wherein Ono is celebrated as one of the 'foremothers' of bad-girlism, Marcia Tanner lists the 'serious issues' that Ono is confronting in *Cut Piece*: 'voyeurism, sexual aggression, gender subordination, violation of a woman's personal space, violence against women'.<sup>2</sup> In such instances, Ono's body is taken as a body stripped, scrutinized and violated by the audience's gaze, and the work is described as 'really quite gruesome – more like a rape than an art performance'. These statements, motored by theories of feminine submission and masculine domination, implicate the audience in a series of escalating transactions, from voyeurism to physical harm, and present the audience as menacing, terroristic and compassionless. There is little possibility in these interpretations that the invitation Ono proffers might be positive – no space for *Cut Piece* to be a gift, a gesture of reparation, or a ritual of remembrance.

For *Cut Piece* does not simply accuse the audience for taking up the scissors, and it does not unmask the audience as merely sadistic. Indeed, the viewer's participation is vital to the piece's reciprocal ballet. By accentuating the violence of the situation, these readings elide the more complex dynamic of simultaneous destruction and memorialization. Although such readings have been productive for feminist understandings of Ono and her early work, they do not elucidate *Cut Piece*'s uncomfortable intersection between sex, nationality and physicality. Rather than tidily offering the body up to be assigned a single meaning, *Cut Piece* stages its unease with the interaction between the performing body and the interpreting audience. The nudity in *Cut Piece* is not so much the index of its maker's status as a woman as it is the vehicle for the work's key metaphor. Nudity, with its implications of vulnerability and danger, was deployed by Ono in its relation to wartime afterimages. By using strategies of commemoration and the souvenir, Ono's art worked to counteract atomic amnesia. In *Cut Piece*, the body announces itself not only as a recipient of risks and threats, but also as a source of gifts. This dualism of aggression and generosity has complex implications for the audiences of this work, whether these audiences are viewers with scissors in hand or art historians some forty years later.

How can we rethink *Cut Piece* in a way that does not circle back to the scandal of exposed female flesh, with the stripped female body reading only as a 'universal' signifier of female victimization? Looking at Ono's art within a national context does not mean reducing art-historical interpretation to issues of identity. Never transparently 'Eastern' or 'Western', Ono's own shifting notions of identification complicate the reception of *Cut Piece* by forging a space where race

cannot be understood nakedly, but rather as a dialogic production of performance and reception. The piece's stripping does not disclose a stable body under these costumes, but instead refuses stability in its restless repetitions and its mutable reliance on the viewer. [...]

- 1 [footnote 3 in source] Thomas Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties. American and European Art in the Era of Dissent* (New York: Abrams, 1996) 133. [...]
- 2 [4] 'Mother Laughed: The Bad Girls' Avant-Garde', in Marcia Tucker, ed., *Bad Girls* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1994) 65.

Julia Bryan-Wilson, extract from 'Remembering Yoko Ono's *Cur Piece*', *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 26, no. 1 (2003) 101–4.

## **Gerhard Richter**

### **Notes//1964–66**

[...] I like everything that has no style: dictionaries, photographs, nature, myself and my paintings. (Because style is violence, and I am not violent.)

Theory has nothing to do with a work of art. Pictures which are interpretable, and which contain a meaning, are bad pictures. A picture presents itself as the Unmanageable, the Illogical, the Meaningless. It demonstrates the endless multiplicity of aspects; it takes away our certainty, because it deprives a thing of its meaning and its name. It shows us the thing in all the manifold significance and infinite variety that preclude the emergence of any single meaning and view. [...]

I pursue no objectives, no system, no tendency; I have no programme, no style, no direction. I have no time for specialized concerns, working themes, or variations that lead to mastery.

I steer clear of definitions. I don't know what I want. I am inconsistent, non-committal, passive; I like the indefinite, the boundless; I like continual uncertainty. Other qualities may be conducive to achievement, publicity, success; but they are all outworn – as outworn as ideologies, opinions, concepts and names for things.

Now that there are no priests or philosophers left, artists are the most important people in the world. That is the only thing that interests me. [...]

Gerhard Richter, extracts from 'Notes, 1964–65' and 'Notes, 1966', in Gerhard Richter, *The Daily*

## Julia Kristeva Practice//1974

[...] Since the end of the nineteenth century, 'poetry' has deliberately maintained the balance between sociality and madness, and we view this as the sign of a new era. After the upheavals of the French Revolution, the nineteenth century discovered history: the Hegelian dialectic showed that history constitutes a history of reason or, more profoundly, a history of the subject, and Marxism proved that history is a succession of struggles and ruptures within relations of production. This 'discovery' opened up the modern episteme – a historical one – which philosophers today are still exploring. Establishing the bourgeois Republic in the second half of the century showed not that history was closed but rather that its logic was henceforth *thinkable* – which is not to say controllable. For a certain 'residue' continues to elude the control of the historical *ratio*: the subject. History is not the history of a subject always present to himself; it is a history of modes of production. This is the Marxist correction of the dialectic. But what then becomes of the subject? This is the question that remains unanswered.

The subject never is. The *subject* is only the *signifying process* and he appears only as a *signifying practice*, that is, only when he is absent *within the position* out of which social, historical and signifying activity unfolds. There is no science of the subject. Any thought mastering the subject is mystical: all that exists is the field of a practice where, through his expenditure, the subject can be anticipated in an always anterior future: 'Nothing will have taken place but the place.'<sup>1</sup> This is the '*second overturning*' of the Hegelian dialectic, which came about toward the end of the century and was as fundamentally radical as the Marxist overturning of the dialectic – if not more so. If history is made up of modes of production, the subject is a *contradiction* that brings about practice because practice is always both signifying and semiotic, a crest where meaning emerges only to disappear. It is incumbent upon 'art' to demonstrate that the subject is the absent element of and in his practice, just as it was incumbent upon political economy to prove that history is a matter of class struggle. '... in order to close the gap created by our lack of interest in what lies outside the realm of aesthetics. – Everything can be summed up in Aesthetics and Political Economy.'<sup>2</sup>



The subject's absence in practice is demonstrated first and foremost through the practice of language, which was what *objectively* prepared the way for Freud's discovery. This discovery sought the truth of the subject in the transference relation, which can be viewed as a subset of practice relations. Only today can we see that this truth must be applied to all social practice, including political practice, but also, and increasingly, everyday, scientific and technical practice. It is as if, after the emphasis Freud placed on the subject's impossible coincidence with himself in sexuality, a return toward the practice of the text were necessary to recall not only that 'poets' had already discovered this impossibility but also that, as the precondition of their practice, the contradiction inherent in the signifying process is the precondition of all practice. Consequently, poetry ceased to be 'art' and claimed other functions: showing the heterogeneity that works on all practice and furnishing every disappearance of meaning with a signifying device and practical scope.

- 1 [footnote 19 in source] *Stéphane Mallarmé*, trans. Grange Wooley (Madison: Drew University, 1942; reprinted New York: AMS Press, 1981) 185; translation modified.
- 2 [20] *Stéphane Mallarmé, 'La Musique et les lettres', Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945) 656.

Julia Krísteva, extract from *La Révolution du langage poétique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1974); trans. Margaret Waller, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984) 214–16.

## **Marina Abramovic**

### **Rhythm 2//1974**

I use my body for an experiment .

I take the medication used in hospitals for the treatment of acute catatonia and schizophrenia. which puts my body in unpredictable states.

#### **Performance**

Facing the public, I take the first medication.

This medication is given to patients who suffer from catatonia to force them to change the positions of their bodies.

Shortly after taking the medication, my muscles begin to contract violently, until I completely lose control.

Consciously I am very aware of what is going on but I can't control my body.

*Duration: 50 minutes*

## **Break**

I turn the radio to a random station.

While preparing for the second part the public listen to Slavic folksongs on the radio.

*Duration: 10 minutes*

## **Part II**

### **Performance**

Taking the second pill

Facing the public, I take the second medication.

This medication is given to schizophrenic patients with violent behaviour disorders to calm them down.

Shortly after taking the medication, I first feel cold and then completely lose consciousness forgetting who and where I am.

The performance finishes when the medication loses its effect.

*Duration: 6 hours*

Marina Abramovic, 'Rhythm 2' (Galerija Suvremene Umjetnosti, Zagreb, 1974), in *Marina Abramovic: Artist Body: Performances, 1969–1998* (Bern: Kunstmuseum/Milan: Edizioni Charta, 1998) 70.

## **Marina Abramovic**

### **In Conversation with Thomas McEvilley//1998**

*Marina Abramovic* [...] When I was twelve or thirteen I wanted to paint my dreams, and I wanted to use only blue and green. My father arranged for an *informel* painter to come and give me a lesson. My first painting lesson was like this. The guy came to the small room that was my studio. He cut a piece of canvas irregularly, put it on the floor, opened a can of glue and threw the liquid glue on the canvas, then a little bit of sand, some yellow pigment, some red pigment, some black, then he poured about half a litre of gasoline on it, lit a match, and everything exploded. Then he said, 'This is a sunset', and left. Well, I was thirteen, and that made a pretty big impression on me. I waited a week till it all dried, then very carefully put it on the wall and left with my family for vacation. When I came back the August sun had dried it, the sand fell off and the colour with it,

there was nothing left. It was just a pile of dirt. [I]t didn't exist anymore. Later on I understood why it was so important, because to me the process has always been more important than the result, the performance more important than the object. I saw the process of making it and immediately the process of its unmaking; there was no duration or stability to it. It was pure process.

So I painted my dreams, or daydreams, for a while, using only blue and green. Then I started painting car accidents. I was maybe sixteen years old. Actually they were truck accidents. I would go to the police and ask where a big truck accident had happened, then I would go there and paint it. After truck accidents I started painting the sky, the clouds, three or four phases of clouds; I would paint the clouds forming, the clouds existing, the clouds breaking up. At one point I watched a skywriting plane drawing something in the air. It was like my three-staged cloud studies. I saw the making of the drawing, the existence of the drawing, the disappearance of the drawing. So I went to the military base and asked if I could have fifteen planes to help me make drawings. They called my father, who was a general in the army, and said please come get your daughter.

Then I got very interested in sound. I wanted to install on a bridge the sound of the bridge falling down. I recorded the sound of a building coming down under demolition and installed it, so you're on the bridge and every three minutes you hear the sound of the bridge falling down.

This all led me into performance. I had so much energy going on in myself that I never could go back to two dimensions. All my work had to do with the body, so in order to be real it had to be in three dimensions. The most crucial piece was *Thomas Lips*, which I did in Innsbruck, where I cut a star in my stomach with a razor blade, along with other things. In Yugoslavia itself I did the fire-star piece. I took 150 litres of petrol, built a huge star on the floor and poured the petrol in, cut my hair, cut my nails, my toenails, then got inside the star and had someone light it. I was supposed to stay there till it burned down, but as I was lying there the fire took up all the oxygen and I passed out. Nobody knew what was happening till a doctor in the audience noticed it and pulled me out.

This was when I realized that the subject of my work should be the *limits* of the body. I would use performance to push my mental and physical limits beyond consciousness. As one step in this project I did the piece with pills, in Zagreb. I was in front of an audience, seated on a chair beside a little table. First I took medicine for catatonia, something they give to people who hold one position for a long time, to prod them into movement. Because I already had so much energy, I had an epileptic attack. I couldn't control my movements though I was conscious. Then, for the second part, I took a strong tranquillizer. I sat there with this idiotic smile on my face, but really didn't know who I was. This time I quieted down and sat still. So there was this opposition, first not controlling my body, then controlling it.

*McEvilley* When you left Yugoslavia what kind of change was there in your energy, or in the energy of your performance works?

*Abramović* I think when I was in Yugoslavia I was more fatal. I was always thinking that art was a kind of question between life and death, and some of my performances really included the possibility of dying, you know, during the piece; it could happen. I remember one of the performances which I never really got permission to do, though I proposed it to a few institutions in Yugoslavia. The idea was this: I would come on the stage dressed like my mother wanted me to look; I would have my hair cut in a certain way, wear a certain kind of skirt or dress, gloves, the whole idea of being decent. I would stand looking at the public, then put one bullet in a pistol like Russian roulette, put it to my temple and shoot, and if I didn't get shot then I would dress again in my own way and leave. That would be a kind of radical change of identity and would, I hoped, change my life. All my work in Yugoslavia was very much about rebellion, not against just the family structure but the social structure and the structure of the art system there, and I was always accused of being a traitor in regard to art. My whole energy came from trying to overcome these kinds of limits. [...]

Marina Abramovic and Thomas McEvilley, extract from 'Stages of Energy: Performance Art Ground Zero', interview (Los Angeles, 6 February 1998), in *Marina Abramovic: Artist Body: Performances, 1969–1998* (Bern: Kunstmuseum/Milan: Edizioni Charta, 1998) 14–15.

## **Tehching Hsieh**

### **In Conversation with Adrian Heathfield//2009**

*Adrian Heathfield* When you did the *One Year Performance* out on the street did people try to find you?

*Hsieh* Only some artists. But before they could get to me, I had avoided them. During the work I tended not to have audience getting into my life. The work was isolated. If I became too social with an audience it would break the work.

*Heathfield* In the first *One Year Performance* the audience could come to see you, but only on specific days?

*Hsieh* That's right. Every three weeks it opened to the public: nineteen times a year. During the nineteen public days, what the audience saw was no different from the other 346 private days. No talking, no reading, no writing, neither listening to the radio nor watching TV. Whether people saw me or not, I was in the same situation: not communicating with others at all. The viewers didn't need to come every day because every single day was almost the same. This emphasized my isolation effectively. For those nineteen days alone, I brought my isolation to the public while still preserving the quality of it.

*Heathfield* On those days when you had an audience did you feel that the meaning of the work was changed by the presence of the people watching you?

*Hsieh* Yes, I did, although I didn't look at them directly. I didn't want to communicate with them through the eyes. It was my first *One Year Performance*, there were just a few people coming to my studio for the whole year. But I want to say that the most important thing is that I do art for myself. For me the audience is secondary. However, without them my performances couldn't exist.

*Heathfield* By not looking at people you maintained a kind of privacy even though you were in public on those days.

*Hsieh* Eye contact would have caused interaction with an audience. It was to be avoided. If you look at the pictures of this piece when I was inside the cage, look at my eyes, and you can see that I was inside myself. In order to make the space inside the cage bigger, I treated the corner with my bed as 'home' and the other three corners were 'outside'. I would take a walk 'outside' and then come 'home'.

*Heathfield* How do you think of the thinking that you did in this piece?

*Hsieh* Thinking was the focus of this piece and also my way of survival. While doing this piece, thinking was my major job. It doesn't matter what I was thinking about, but I had to continue thinking, otherwise I would lose control not only of myself but the ability to handle the whole situation. It was difficult to pass time. I scratched 365 marks on the wall, one for each day. I had to calculate time; although I may have broken the rule of no writing, it helped me to know how many days I had passed, how many I had to go. In such a condition, I had no work to do, so I had more work to do. I tried to bring art and life together in time, and to be in this as a process. I was so concentrated on thinking about art. Everything I thought about art was about this: how to survive? I thought mostly about my past, sometimes about the outside world, or when Cheng would deliver my meal. Whatever I was



thinking, what is important to me is that people can see that during this special period of time, one year, the artist's thinking process becomes a piece of art.

*Heathfield* You wanted to enter a heightened experience of being contained?

*Hsieh* I didn't do this piece to meet with a 'heightened experience'. I did it in order to execute my idea. What I needed was the use of my confined body to carry out this work, while at the same time, my mind, detached from the confinement, was free to think and to advance. I am as free in the cage as outside. My work here is not focusing on political imprisonment or on the self-cultivation of Zen retreats, but on freedom of thinking and on letting time go by.

*Heathfield* In these situations what enables you to continue?

*Hsieh* The motivation of this piece had something to do with the content of my thinking: I thought of people who influenced me and about my understanding and experiences of rebellion, betrayal, crime, punishment, suffering and freedom. This kind of thinking gave me energy to go forward one day, and I would do it all over again the next day, and day after day, go on doing it for one year. My will is strong. Like in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. The old man catches a big fish, but he goes way out to sea and his boat is too small, so sharks take bites out of the fish. In this piece I knew that I had caught a big fish but I had a lot of process to do. To bring back this big fish, I had to make more pieces of work and it would take over my whole life, and I knew it wouldn't be easily finished. I believed, and still believe, art can be of value, a good thing to do. So I just wanted to say what art could be. Art is one way to live, an energy or power that gives you a way to be.

*Heathfield* All of these pieces work on a rule system; the performance attempts to stay within the regulations. But because this is human life the rules get broken or are insufficient. Are there many times in the different pieces where the rule is broken?

*Hsieh* Yes, I allowed myself an exit. I don't think that if I punched the time clock more it would make the work perfect. But of course, the rules could not be broken too often; otherwise the work would collapse. A little bit of damage is good for the system.

*Heathfield* So you are interested in the failure of the rules, but only the little failures?

*Hsieh* In the process of doing a piece I would give more effort, then I might get

an outcome of 90 per cent or above; if I broke the rules on purpose, then the outcome would be much less. There are many things unexpected and out of control in a year.

*Heathfield* Can we discuss this very striking moment in the film of the 'Outdoor Piece', when you have been arrested and the police try to bring you inside the station, which breaks the rule of the piece

*Hsieh* I was in jail for fifteen hours.

*Heathfield* How did the camera person know to be there?

*Hsieh* It was an accident: it was in Tribeca, my friend was passing by, I carried a camera and I asked her to shoot what was happening. Any other way I would not have this document; this clip from the film wasn't set up, it's all based on what you can shoot if you happen to be there.

*Heathfield* In that moment you really tried to stay within the rules and not go inside.

*Hsieh* At that time I knew the piece would be damaged by this kind of break in the rules. The lawyer offered to me by the court said: 'If you are found guilty you could get one year of jail or three years probation. Do you want to use me?' I said I wanted to find my own lawyer. I had a nunchaku that was deemed an illegal weapon: so it was a serious situation. At that time the *Wall Street Journal* had written about my work. The judge paid attention to that. In the end the charges were reduced and I was found guilty of disorderly conduct. The judge said: 'I don't see any reason to bring him indoors [...] These days anything is art. Staying outside may be art. I'm getting old and nothing surprises me.' But in the film, you see that I really didn't want to go inside, as I knew this could collapse my piece. I was an illegal immigrant. I knew that I might not only have to go inside: I might be deported.

*Heathfield* What interests me about this piece as a whole, but this moment in particular, is that you have put yourself in a situation where the social conditions that prevail in this circumstance operate very powerfully upon you. You live for a while in the world of homeless people: a precarious life, with violence and penalties. You give yourself over to powers that you cannot control, and by doing this you make a profound commentary on these powers. I would say that you allow these powers to show their nature; this is very different from an artist setting out to say things about political powers.

*Hsieh* I think this has to do with my attitude to life. Maybe I'm pessimistic. I don't think art can change the world. But at least art can help us to unveil life. I do have political awareness, but I'm not a political artist. It is my reality that compels me to confront political issues. I know that my work would fit in a political frame in such a way that people can have their own interpretation of it. But I'm inclined to observe the universal circumstances of human beings instead of pointing to issues. My understanding is the more I give a critical commentary on political powers, the less powerful my art will become. Political powers are close to the truth of reality; on the contrary, the power of art is leaning toward the exploration of essences. [...]

Tehching Hsieh and Adrian Heathfield, extract from interview, in *The Lifeworks of Tehching Hsieh* (London: Live Art Development Agency/Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2009) 327–30.

## **The Dalai Lama On Collaboration with Joseph Beuys: In Conversation with Louwrien Wijers// 1982**

*Louwrien Wijers* Could Your Holiness remark on how shamanism, which has been well preserved in Tibet, could work, or is working, in the present?<sup>1</sup>

*Jeffrey Hopkins (interpreter)* The problem is that this is an unfamiliar word in Tibetan; there is no direct translation.

*Wijers* People's minds go to Tibet when one says 'shamanism', or Mongolia ...

*Hopkins* ... or some indigenous societies in South America – ancient peoples, ancient cultures. But exactly what is shamanism? If you could say that, then perhaps we could think about it.

*Wijers* All I can refer to is the ritualistic aspect ... about feeding the audience, having a therapeutic effect on them.

*Hopkins* Isn't all religion like that?

*Wijers* The question comes from current art; we're talking about performances.

Hopkins So it is like a ritual performance.

Wijers That's right, done by visual artists.

Hopkins And it has an effect like medicine on the audience.

Wijers Yes, to initiate a healing process.

Dalai Lama (*in Tibetan, translated by Hopkins:*) The pleasure and pain that the mental-consciousness experiences is mainly influenced by the experience of the eye-consciousness, the ear-consciousness, and so forth. Thus the colours and shapes of figures doing certain things, and the sounds of music, and so forth, can have a profound effect on the experience of pleasure and pain by the mental-consciousness. And in terms of *dharma*, for instance, even if the meaning is the same, there will be various tunes, or melodies, through which it is chanted, and there will be then a different impact. (*continues in English:*) Similarly, this thing which we can see through pictures, or certain drawings, from that again there is some impact on the sixth mind, or the main, or mental-consciousness. The religious rituals have a connection in this way. On that basis a certain religious, ritual aspect happened. Because of that reason. Now again, I think, once your sixth-, or mental-consciousness, the main mind, once it develops further, then, I think, the mental consciousness's dependency on other sense consciousnesses is less and less. So, you see, the other day I mentioned (*a reference to the Maha Mudra teachings given in Dharamsala a month earlier*): Once you reach a certain stage, then the physical action, such as prostration, or the verbal recitation, all these things are deliberately stopped, because at a certain stage you have to develop fully the mental-consciousness. (*in Tibetan, translated:*) Once the practice that is done in terms of the mental-consciousness is fully developed, once its potency has fully come out, then one deliberately, purposely, stops these other activities that involve the sense consciousnesses. (*in English:*) Then, at that time, there is no need for the artist. (*laughs*)

So now, the main point is: in order to develop a certain inner progress, the artist's thing is very much influential and helpful. I mean, helpful as well as harmful. It depends on the meaning that the artist is conveying. Now, you see, certain art is made to have an impact on hatred, or anger, such things, and that is harmful. In any way, the artists with their art, and with this ritual thing, have powerful means to give a message. I am not sure I have understood your question entirely, but as far as I can understand it, this is my response. (*laughs*) [...]

1 [from introduction to the dialogue:] For the realization of Joseph Beuys' vision to prepare a

permanent conference on the questions of humanity with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, it seemed necessary to convey more details to the Dalai Lama beforehand. [...] A third audience with the Fourteenth Dalai Lama was requested upon my return to Dharamsala in the spring of 1982. [...] Three questions referred to the means that Joseph Beuys, and current art in general, have worked with in the recent past. The last three questions were meant to bring up points on which eventually a co-operation between [the Dalai Lama and Beuys/The Free University might become practicable].

The Dalai Lama and Louwrien Wijers, with translations by Jeffrey Hopkins, extracts from interview, 'Exploring Modern Art: HH the Dalai Lama Reflects on Points from the Work of Joseph Beuys' (1982), in Wijers, *Writing as Sculpture, 1978–1987* (Oxford: John Wiley, 1996) 152–3. Revised for this publication.

## **Michael Taussig** **Shamanism//1987**

[...] Santiago poured out the *yagé* and wiped it clean with the curing fan but did not sing. We all drank and fell into a dreamy doze. About three-quarters of an hour later a tiny hum began. It grew louder to counterpose the wind from the forest and the river's rush. Utterly absorbed and lost in itself, the song went on for a long time. The singer was old and tired. His voice was rough and low. He seemed lost in himself, singing for the sake of singing, the rite singing to itself in complete disregard of our presence or judgements. The room was quiet. People seemed to be asleep. Someone stumbled out and we heard the gut-wrenching retching and vomiting sounds that curl back into your own stomach like the snakes people talk about that come out in your vomit and go back in at the same time – a collective empathizing of nausea, now gathering like a storm. It feels like ants biting one's skin and one's head, now spinning in wave after trembling wave. [...]

Fundamental to the power of this almost night-long carnival was montage – immanent and active from the moment the curtain rose, so to speak, an hour after sunset when the old man breathed 'whoosh fire' into the *yagé*, cracked his tongue like a gunshot and began to sing, curing the *yagé* that would cure us all, the old man included. The power of this *yagé* night came only in part from what could be called 'mysticism', and that mystery concerned the quite unconscious way in which whites like Eliseo and his two companions from Boyacá attributed magical power to the 'Indian'. Given this attribution of magical power to tamed savagery, the power of the ritual itself then proceeds to do its work and play through splintering and decomposing structures and cracking open meanings. In



this most crucial sense, savagery has not been tamed – and therein lies the magic of colonial healing through the figure of the 'Indian'. The 'mystical insights' given by visions and tumbling fragments of memory pictures oscillating in a polyphonic discursive room full of leaping shadows and sensory pandemonium are not insights granted by depths mysterious and other. Rather, they are made, not granted, in the ability of montage to provoke sudden and infinite connections between the dissimilars in an endless or almost endless process of connection-making and connection-breaking.

*Montage*: alterations, cracks, displacements and swerves all evening long – the sudden interruptions, always interruptions to what at first appears the order of ritual and then later on takes on little more than an excuse of order, and then dissolves in a battering of wave after wave of interruptedness into illusory order, mocked order, colonial order in the looking glass. Interruptions for shitting, for vomiting, for a cloth to wipe one's face, for going to the kitchen to gather coals for burning copal incense, for getting roots of magical *chondur* from where nobody can remember where they were last put, for whispering a fear, for telling and retelling a joke (especially for that), for stopping the song in mid-flight to yell at the dogs to stop barking ... and in the cracks and swerves, a universe opens out. [...] ]

Michael Taussig, extract from *Shamanism: Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 440–41.

## **Michel Foucault**

### **The Ethics of the Concern for the Self: In Conversation with Concordia// 1984**

*Concordia* (Helmut Becker, Raul Fornet-Betancourt, Alfredo Gomez-Müller) Isn't there a 'break' between your former problematic [in works such as *The Order of Things*, 1966] and that of subjectivity/truth, particularly starting with the concept of the 'care of the self'?

*Michel Foucault* Up to that point I had conceived the problem of the relationship between the subject and games of truth in terms either of coercive practices – such as those of psychiatry and the prison system – or of theoretical or scientific games – such as the analysis of wealth, of language, and of living beings. In my

lectures at the Collège de France [from 1971 onwards], I tried to grasp it in terms of what may be called a practice of the self; although this phenomenon has not been studied very much, I believe it has been fairly important in our societies ever since the Graeco-Roman period. In the Greek and Roman civilizations, such practices of the self were much more important and especially more autonomous than they were later, after they were taken over to a certain extent by religious, pedagogical, medical or psychiatric institutions.

*Concordia* Thus there has been a sort of shift: these games of truth no longer involve a coercive practice, but a practice of self-formation of the subject.

*Foucault* That's right. It is what one could call an ascetic practice, taking asceticism in a very general sense – in other words, not in the sense of a morality of renunciation but as an exercise of the self on the self by which one attempts to develop and transform oneself, and to attain to a certain mode of being. Here I am taking asceticism in a more general sense than was attributed to it by Max Weber, for example, but along the same lines.

*Concordia* A work of the self on the self that may be understood as a certain liberation, as a process of liberation?

*Foucault* I would be careful on that score. I have always been somewhat suspicious of the notion of liberation, because if it is not treated with precautions and within certain limits, one runs the risk of falling back on the idea that there exists a human nature or base that, as a consequence of certain historical, economic and social processes, has been concealed, alienated or imprisoned in and by mechanisms of repression. According to this hypothesis, all that is required is to break these repressive deadlocks and man will be reconciled with himself, rediscover his nature or regain contact with his origin, and reestablish a full and positive relationship with himself. I think this idea should not be accepted without scrutiny. I am not trying to say that liberation as such, or this or that form of liberation, does not exist: when a colonized people attempts to liberate itself from the colonizers, this is indeed a practice of liberation in the strict sense. But we know very well, and moreover in this specific case, that the practice of liberation is not in itself sufficient to define the practices of freedom that will still be needed if this people, this society and these individuals are to be able to define admissible and acceptable forms of existence or political society. This is why I emphasize practices of freedom over processes of liberation; again, the latter indeed have their place, but they do not seem to me to be capable by themselves of defining all the practical forms of freedom. This is precisely the

problem I encountered with regard to sexuality: does it make any sense to say, 'Let's liberate our sexuality'? Isn't the problem rather that of defining the practices of freedom by which one could define what is sexual pleasure and erotic, amorous and passionate relationships with others? This ethical problem of the definition of practices of freedom, it seems to me, is much more important than the rather repetitive affirmation that sexuality or desire must be liberated.

*Concordia* But doesn't the exercise of practices of freedom require a certain degree of liberation?

*Foucault* Yes, absolutely. And this is where we must introduce the concept of domination. The analyses I am trying to make bear essentially on relations of power. By this I mean something different from states of domination. Power relations are extremely widespread in human relationships. Now, this means not that political power is everywhere, but that there is in human relationships a whole range of power relations that may come into play among individuals, within families, in pedagogical relationships, political life, and so on. The analysis of power relations is an extremely complex area; one sometimes encounters what may be called situations or states of domination in which the power relations, instead of being mobile, allowing the various participants to adopt strategies modifying them, remain blocked, frozen. When an individual or social group succeeds in blocking a field of power relations, immobilizing them and preventing any reversibility of movement by economic, political or military means, one is faced with what may be called a state of domination. In such a state, it is certain that practices of freedom do not exist or exist only unilaterally or are extremely constrained and limited. Thus I agree with you that liberation is sometimes the political or historical condition for a practice of freedom. Taking sexuality as an example, it is clear that a number of liberations were required vis-à-vis male power, that liberation was necessary from an oppressive morality concerning heterosexuality as well as homosexuality. But this liberation does not give rise to the happy human being imbued with a sexuality to which the subject could achieve a complete and satisfying relationship. Liberation paves the way for new power relationships, which must be controlled by practices of freedom.

*Concordia* Can't liberation itself be a mode or form of practice of the freedom?

*Foucault* Yes, in some cases. You have situations where liberation and the struggle for liberation are indispensable for the practice of freedom. With respect to sexuality, for example – and I am not indulging in polemics, because I don't

like polemics, I think they are usually futile – there is a Reichian model derived from a certain reading of Freud. Now, in Reich's view the problem was entirely one of liberation. To put it somewhat schematically, according to him there is desire, drive, prohibition, repression, internalization, and it is by getting rid of these prohibitions, in other words, by liberating oneself, that the problem gets resolved. I think – and I know I am vastly oversimplifying much more interesting and refined positions of many authors – this completely misses the ethical problem of the practice of freedom: How can one practise freedom? With regard to sexuality, it is obvious that it is by liberating our desire that we will learn to conduct ourselves ethically in pleasure relationships with others.

*Concordia* You say that freedom must be practised ethically ...

*Foucault* Yes, for what is ethics, if not the practice of freedom, the conscious [réfléchi] practice of freedom? [...]

Michel Foucault, extract from interview with Helmut Becker, Raul Fornet-Betancourt and Alfredo Gomez-Müller (20 January 1984), *Concordia: Revista internacional de filosofía*, no. 6 (July–December 1984); trans. Phillis Aranov and Dan McGrawth, in *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961–1984*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext[e], 1996); reprinted in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault. Volume 1. Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997) 281–4.

## **Stelarc**

### **Prosthetics, Robotics and Remote Existence: Post-evolutionary Strategies//1991**

#### **Obsolete Body**

It is time to question whether a bipedal, breathing body with binocular vision and a 1400 cc brain is an adequate biological form. It cannot cope with the quantity, complexity and quality of information it has accumulated; it is intimidated by the precision, speed and power of technology, and it is biologically ill-equipped to cope with its new extraterrestrial environment. The body is neither a very efficient nor a very durable structure. It *malfunctions* often and *fatigues* quickly; its performance is determined by its age. It is *susceptible* to disease and is doomed to a certain and early death. Its survival parameters are very slim – it can survive only weeks without food, days without water and

minutes without oxygen. The body's LACK OF MODULAR DESIGN and its overreactive immunological system make it difficult to replace malfunctioning organs. It might be the height of technological folly to consider the body obsolete in form and function, yet it might be the highest of human realizations. For it is only when the body becomes aware of its present predicament that it can map its post-evolutionary strategies. It is no longer a matter of perpetuating the human species by REPRODUCTION, but of *enhancing* the individual by REDESIGNING. What is significant is no longer male-female *intercourse* but human-machine *interface*. THE BODY IS OBSOLETE. We are at the end of philosophy and human physiology. Human thought recedes into the human past.

### **Redesigning the Body/Redefining What is Human**

It is no longer meaningful to see the body as a *site* for the psyche or the social but rather [it can be seen] as a *structure* to be monitored and modified. The body not as a subject but as an object – NOT AS AN OBJECT OF DESIRE BUT AS AN OBJECT FOR DESIGNING. The *psycho-social* period was characterized by the body circling itself, orbiting itself, illuminating and inspecting itself by physical prodding and metaphysical contemplation. But having contemplated *its image of obsolescence*, the body is traumatized to split from the realm of subjectivity and consider the necessity of reexamining and possibly *redesigning* its very structure. ALTERING THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE BODY RESULTS IN ADJUSTING AND EXTENDING ITS AWARENESS OF THE WORLD. As an object, the body can be amplified and accelerated, attaining planetary escape velocity. It becomes a post-evolutionary projectile, *departing* and *diversifying* in form and function. [...]

### **No Birth/No Death – The Hum of the Hybrid**

Technology transforms the nature of human existence, *equalizing* the physical potential of bodies and *standardizing* human sexuality. With fertilization now occurring outside the womb and the possibility of nurturing the foetus in an artificial support system THERE WILL TECHNICALLY BE NO BIRTH. And if the body can be redesigned in a modular fashion to facilitate the replacement of malfunctioning parts, then TECHNICALLY THERE WOULD BE NO REASON FOR DEATH – given the accessibility of replacements. Death does not authenticate existence. It is an outmoded evolutionary strategy. The body need no longer be *repaired* but simply have parts *replaced*. Extending life no longer means 'existing' but rather being 'operational'. Bodies need not age or deteriorate; they would not run down or even fatigue; they would *stall* and then *start* – possessing both the potential for renewal and reactivation. In the extended space-time of extraterrestrial environments, THE BODY MUST BECOME IMMORTAL TO ADAPT. Utopian dreams become post-evolutionary imperatives. THIS IS NO MERE



FAUSTIAN OPTION NOR SHOULD THERE BE ANY FRANKENSTEINIAN FEAR IN  
TAMPERING WITH THE BODY. [...]

Stelarc, *Prosthetics*, extracts from 'Robotics and Remote Existence: Post-evolutionary Strategies',  
*Leonardo*, vol. 24, no. 5 (1991) 591, 593 [footnotes not included].

**Francis Alÿs**  
**As Long as I'm Walking//1992**

AS LONG AS I'M WALKING, I'M NOT CHOOSING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT SMOKING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT LOSING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT MAKING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT KNOWING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT FALLING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT PAINTING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT HIDING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT COUNTING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT ADDING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT CRYING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT ASKING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT BELIEVING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT FUCKING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT DRINKING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT CLOSING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT STEALING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT MOCKING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT FACING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT CROSSING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT CHANGING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT CHEATING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT TALKING  
" " " " " , I'M NOT REACHING  
" " " " " ,  
" " " " " ,  
" " " " " ,

"	"	"	"	"	,	I WILL NOT REPEAT
"	"	"	"	"	,	I WILL NOT REMEMBER

Francis Aljés, 'As Long as I'm Walking' (1992). Text written on polyurethane board and kept in the artist's studio for many years.

## **Kathy Acker**

### **Against Ordinary Language//1992**

[...] I am in the gym every three out of four days. What happens there? What does language in that place look like?

According to cliché, athletes are stupid. Meaning: they are inarticulate.

The spoken language of bodybuilders makes this cliché real. The verbal language in the gym is minimal and almost senseless, reduced to numbers and a few nouns. 'Sets', 'squats', 'reps' ... The only verbs are 'do' or 'fail' adjectives and adverbs no longer exist: sentences, if they are at all, are simple.

This spoken language is kin to the 'language games' Wittgenstein proposes in his Brown Book.

In a gym, verbal language or language whose purpose is meaning occurs, if at all, only at the edge of its becoming lost.

But when I am in the gym, my experience is that I am immersed in a complex and rich world.

What actually takes place when I bodybuild?

The crossing of the threshold from the world defined by verbal language into the gym in which the outside world is not allowed (and all of its languages) (in this sense, the gym is sacred) takes several minutes. What happens during these minutes is that I forget. Masses of swirling thought, verbalized in so far as I am conscious of them, disappear as mind or thought begins to focus.

In order to analyse this focusing, I must first describe bodybuilding in terms of intentionality.

Bodybuilding is a process, perhaps, a sport, by which a person shapes her or his own body. This shaping is always related to the growth of muscular mass.

During aerobic and circuit training, the heart and lungs are exercised. But muscles will grow only if they are, not exercised or moved, but actually broken down. The general law behind bodybuilding is that muscle, if broken down in a

controlled fashion and then provided with the proper growth factors such as nutrients and rest, will grow back larger than before.

In order to break down specific areas of muscles, whatever areas one wants to enlarge, it is necessary to work these areas in isolation up to failure.

Bodybuilding can be seen to be about nothing but *failure*. A bodybuilder is always working around failure. Either I work an isolated muscle mass, for instance one of the tricep heads, up to failure. In order to do this, I exert the muscle group almost until the point that it can no longer move.

But if I work the same muscle group to the point that it can no longer move, I must move it through failure. I am then doing what are named 'negative reps', working the muscle group beyond its power to move. Here is the second method of working with failure.

Whatever way I choose, I always want to work my muscle, muscular group, until it can no longer move: I want to fail. As soon as I can accomplish a certain task, so much weight for so many reps during a certain time span, I must always increase one aspect of this equation, weights reps or intensity, so that I can again come to failure.

I want to break muscle so that it can grow back larger, but I do not want to destroy muscle so that growth is prevented. In order to avoid injury, I first warm up the muscular group, then carefully bring it up to failure. I do this by working the muscular group through a calculated number of sets during a calculated time span. If I tried immediately to bring a muscle group up to failure by lifting the heaviest weight I could handle, I might injure myself.

I want to shock my body into growth; I do not want to hurt it.

Therefore, in bodybuilding, *failure* is always connected to counting. I calculate which weight to use; I then count off how many times I lift that weight and the seconds between each lift. This is how I control the intensity of my workout.

Intensity times movement of maximum weight equals muscular destruction (muscular growth).

Is the equation between destruction and growth also a formula for art?

Bodybuilding is about failure because bodybuilding, body growth and shaping, occurs in the face of the material. of the body's inexorable movement toward its final failure, toward death.

To break down a muscle group, I want to make that group work up to, even beyond, capacity. To do this, it helps and even is necessary to visualize the part of the body that is involved. Mind or thought, then, while bodybuilding, is always focused on number or counting and often on precise visualizations.

Certain bodybuilders have said that bodybuilding is a form of meditation.

What do I do when I bodybuild? I visualize and I count. I estimate weight; I count sets; I count repetitions; I count seconds between repetitions; I count

time, seconds or minutes, between sets: from the beginning to the end of each workout, in order to maintain intensity, I must continually count.

For this reason, a bodybuilder's language is reduced to a minimal, even a closed, set of nouns and to numerical repetition, to one of the simplest of language games.

Let us name this language game, *the language of the body*. [...]

In our culture, we simultaneously fetishize and disdain the athlete, a worker in the body. For we still live under the sign of Descartes. This sign is also the sign of patriarchy. As long as we continue to regard the body, that which is subject to change, chance and death, as disgusting and inimical, so long shall we continue to regard our own selves as dangerous others.

Kathy Acker, extracts from 'Against Ordinary Language: The Language of the Body' (1992), in *The Last Sex: Feminism and Outlaw Bodies*, ed. Arthur and Marielouise Kroker (Montréal: New World Perspectives/Culture Texts Series, 1993) 21–3, 27.

## Jennifer Doyle

### Difficulty's Audience//2013

The difficulty of the artworks discussed in this book is tied to their emotional and identificatory geometries. That difficulty has been flattened by traditional critical practices. Because this kind of work is shaped by a comingling of narrative, feelings and politics it can appear to some critics as naïve and propagandistic, especially when race and gender are on the table. Hal Foster, for example, writes that some artists 'treat conditions like desire or disease as sites for work. In this way they work *horizontally*, in a synchronic movement from social issue to issue, from political debate to debate, more than *vertically*, in a diachronic engagement with the disciplinary forms of a given genre or medium.' For Foster, these 'discourse-specific practices' often seek out a relationship with 'the other' and risk an over-identification with the subject 'othered' by the discourse these artists engage, in a collapse of critical distance. Foster worries that in such work (often autobiographical and overtly political) 'an ideal practice might be projected onto the field of the other, which is then asked to reflect it as if it were not only authentically indigenous but innovatively political'.<sup>1</sup> Critics interested in this work suffer from 'ethnographer envy', he argues, meaning that they indulge a fantasy of proximity with the other. Joining a growing crowd of dissenters

(Amelia Jones, Kobena Mercer, Jane Blocker, Jennifer Gonzalez, Darby English) and using the work of James Luna, Nao Bustamante and Carrie Mae Weems, I argue that the literalism attributed by some art historians and critics to certain kinds of work (engaged with questions of history, identity and identification and almost always by artists of colour, feminists and queer artists) reflects a critical limit, and not a limit to the work itself. In fact that desire to read artists as having 'ethnographer envy', as so many relics and theoretical primitives, is anticipated and refused in the work of the artists I discuss here. [...]

I want to share two images from Ron Athey's archive. In one, Stosh 'Pigpen' Fila sits in front of the crowd at The Faultline in Los Angeles watching the show before stepping onto the stage to perform his part as a queer St Sebastian, as he had done in Minneapolis. The Faultline is not a theatre but a bar, and here it's packed with a standing crowd of men and women. In club performances, performers often mingle with the crowd before and after their contribution to the evening's programme. The crowd is often pressed up against the stage – which is usually more like a platform. That night, Pigpen, head crowned by spinal needles (already in place in this photograph), played the part of St Sebastian. But in this image he has not yet taken the stage. Everyone seems completely engrossed by what might well have been the very scene that was the source of the controversy in 1994: Athey cutting into Divinity Fudge's back. Julie Tolentino (who worked closely with Athey's company and produced the Walker Art Center event) explains, 'The blood lines as I recall for [the Minneapolis] performance were crafted more like a tone of a 'pre-show' ... a kind of tempo hand-hold, as in setting a tempo ... The dense part of that show was certainly later' (and Pigpen was at the centre of it).<sup>2</sup>

The controversy about that night in Minneapolis has put a malicious fiction in the public mind, in which such performances are reputedly staged as an act of aggression against the audience. (Perhaps this is why in the artist's archive I can find pictures of almost every performance but that one.) That controversy has also nearly obliterated the queer architecture of the performance, leaving us with that one image of Athey standing over Divinity's scarred back instead of the even more complex geometries of gender, sex and race which structured that evening's performances. The event was shaped by the strong presences of Tolentino, Pigpen and Divinity Fudge. On the menu that night: 'Bloodletting, branding, piercing, cutting, purging, exhaustive dancing and gender bending'. The performance had contradictory moods. As Athey promised in the night's programme, 'Most of my pieces deal with actual physical and emotional trauma. What's new in this piece is that every scene has a healing.' He freely admitted, however, that whereas the performance might be 'cathartic' for some, it might hold for others 'a certain sideshow appeal'. Some might even find it 'burlesque'.



These different investments and reactions were not mutually exclusive. There was a lot more room for the diversity of that Minneapolis audience's feelings than the NEA controversy allowed us to see or acknowledge.

In another photograph in the artist's archive, the entire crowd is riveted. It could be a revival meeting; one person holds his hand over his heart, another raises his as in a 'Hallelujah'. The crowd is packed in tight, leaning around each other to see the show. They seem oblivious to the spectacles immediately in front of them: Duchess deSade, a musician and performer, is dressed as a virginal Goth. She looks bloodied. In front of her is Athey, in his tattooed glory. Limes have been sewn into his skin like Christmas ornaments. He's not alone, as the man sitting behind him is similarly decorated; you can see one lime dangling from the skin above his elbow. Nevertheless it's the audience's collective rapture that dominates the image.

Using words like *hard*, *challenging* and *difficult* to describe the work in this book is slightly misleading; it suggests, for example, that audiences at Athey's performances are uncomfortable, freaked out and miserable. But generally speaking, that is not the case. This audience's attention is being held, but not by Athey or the bloody Duchess. The crowd has moved on to the next act. They are watching an Easter Pageant mock crucifixion featuring Pigpen at the Los Angeles club Sin-a-matic (c. 1994).

A friend who was in the audience pictured here described that night as her first time in a place 'like that'. She'd been in gay bars, but the clubs where Athey performs are not part of the lesbian and gay mainstream. They are queer venues that welcome genderfuck of all sorts. As my friend watched Richard White sew the limes into Athey's skin, she thought, 'Is this really happening?' Another friend who was also at Sin-a-matic that night remembers that it changed her life even though at the sight of so much blood she (like quite a few other audience members) passed out.

The people in this picture sought out that experience. They knew what they were getting into, even if they didn't know exactly what was going to happen. Athey and company are giving them something that they want. Or something that they think they might want.

The thing about something 'like that' is, in the space of the performance, you adjust and accommodate to what's happening and also to the flexibility of your own desire. If you can't, you look away or you leave.

These are portraits of the people who stayed.

1 [footnote 28 in source] Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996) 199, 183.

2 [35] Julie Tolentino, personal correspondence with the author, September 2011.

## **Saba Mahmood**

### **Politics of Piety//2005**

To date, debates about the proper interpretation of religious obligations (such as veiling, fasting or praying) have been treated as inconsequential in most analyses of the socio-political landscape created by the Islamic Revival over the last forty years. Scholars have tended to treat questions of bodily form as superficial particularities through which more profound cultural meanings find expression. Even in those instances where bodily practices (like veiling and praying) are considered within political analyses, they are understood as symbols deployed by social movements toward political ends, serving at most as vehicles for the expression of group interests or political differences.

The specific conception of bodily practices and the forms they take are not in themselves seen to have political implications. This tendency is in part a product of the normative liberal conception of politics, one separate from the domain of ethics and moral conduct, and is in part a reflection of how the field of ethics has been conceptualized in the modern period. In regard to the latter, there is a general lack of attention paid within post-Enlightenment thought to what I have referred to as the morphology of moral actions, an omission reflecting the legacy of humanist ethics, particularly in its Kantian formulation. Since the Kantian tradition conceives of ethics as an abstract system of regulatory norms, values and principles, it tends to disregard the precise shape moral actions take. In this view, ethical practices may elucidate a moral rule, or even symbolize the value a moral code exemplifies, but the manifest form of an ethical practice does not help elaborate the substance of a moral system. It is therefore not surprising, for example, that even those scholars who write on the subject of Islamic ethics focus on Islamic doctrinal and legal arguments, while much of the literature that falls under the heading of *fiqh al-'ibādāt* (the pedagogical aspects of religious obligations) remains outside of their purview.

I would like to pursue a somewhat different approach to ethics here, glossed as 'positive ethics', in which the particular form that ethics takes is not a contingent but a necessary aspect of understanding its substantive content. Originally grounded in the tradition of ancient Greek philosophy, and more

recently expanded by Michel Foucault, ethics in this formulation is founded upon particular forms of discursive practice, instantiated through specific sets of procedures, techniques and exercises, through which highly specific ethical moral subjects come to be formed. An inquiry into ethics from this perspective requires that one examine not simply the values enshrined in moral codes, but the different ways in which people live these codes – something anthropologists are uniquely situated to observe. What is consequential in this framework is not necessarily whether people follow the moral norms or not, but what relationships they establish between the various constitutive elements of the self (body, reason, emotion, volition, and so on) and a particular norm. In this view, the specific gestures, styles and formal expressions that characterize one's relationship to a moral code are not a contingent but a necessary means to understanding the kind of relationship that is established between the self and structures of social authority, and between what one is, what one wants, and what kind of work one performs on oneself in order to realize a particular modality of being and personhood. [...]

It should be clear by now that the liberal communitarian framework is not appropriate for the analysis of conceptions of the self and its relationship to authority that were prevalent among the women of the mosque movement. Ultimately a person for whom self-realization is a matter of excavating herself [...], or sorting out her own interests from those that are social and collective [...], looks to a different set of strategies and horizons than a subject for whom the principle ideals and tools of self-reference reside outside of herself. This is one reason I have tried to use the analytical language of ethical formation to describe the process of moral cultivation (note the relevant term here is 'cultivation' and not 'inculcation'). My argument therefore has not focused on contextualizing the individual within a particular structure of the social. Rather, I have tried to map the contours of the kind of subject presumed to be necessary to the political imaginary of the piety movement (of which the mosque movement is an important part) and the various embodied practices through which such a subject is produced. If the desire for freedom from social conventions is not an innate desire, as I have argued, but assumes a particular anthropology of the subject, then it is incumbent upon us to analyse not only hierarchical structures of social relations, but also the architecture of the self, the interrelationship between the constituent elements of the self, that make a particular imaginary of politics possible. [...]

Saba Mahmood, extracts from *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) 119–20, 151–2 [footnotes/citations not included].

## **Carolee Schneemann**

### **On Intuition//2006**

Intuition contains all that you know. It is everything that has happened to you. Intuition situates immediacy of insight and response to what summons you. It's your science. It's your harmony. It's your disharmony. It's your disjuncture. Intuition provides recognitions to make an appropriate analysis. Why is intuition associated with a degraded feminism? Because it doesn't have that masculinist, definable, hierarchical process by which a concept leads logically to a principle, a solution. Because intuition is – always as we define it – a kind of flash: 'I got that right away!' Immediacy, clarity. One can nurture intuition in an indirect way as an aggregate of experience. You can trust your insights and coordinate them in many ways but you can't say 'I think I'll go work on my intuition.' As with a sneeze, with orgasm, intuition belongs to the parasympathetic dynamic – that autonomic physiological system.

An artist's process is often unexpected as we conceive an image, a structure, or combine materials. Where does that swift voice come from saying: 'Why don't you tear a piece of blue fabric?' Who told you to do that? When I am painting, I don't know where those instructions originate: 'Add two strokes of Payne's grey to that cobalt blue!' 'Use the thin old brush ...'

In concentration I lose myself. But what sort of 'self' is presented in popular depoliticized culture – a glamorized, commodified, conforming persona – the very opposite to that of the self subsumed by a rigorous exploration. Issues of process are occluded, suppressed.

In my work, transformation comes through recognitions of the body – the body is a bridge to equivalencies, connections – an alert. My occult influences have Pagan roots. As a four-year-old, my Scottish nanny would wake me up for prayers and evocations. Staring at the full moon, I was able to see my grandfather's face emerge, our secret. Always drawing. The psychic bonds to dream, to the ecstatic body flowed from nature. Images touched by the deeper unconscious formed a manifest intuition.

Our rationalist Cartesian culture despises the uncontrollable unconscious; its intuitions are feminized and in effect castrated as a force, a power. Accessing this implicit space involves a fragile address, a belief in transparent thresholds – most of which are blocked for us – through which spirits, coincidence, sacral and unpredictable guidance and information might occur.

And if our culture is bereft of ecstatic celebratory rituals, it is also bereft of mourning rituals. Communication with the dead sustains an active, powerful

flavour in other religions. Contemporary traditions regard paranormal experience as anomalous, perpetuating hypermasculine myths of control and dominance – logic, predictability, mechanistic certitude – all that which is counter-intuitive. But we flirt with the exotic, with paranormal and sacral systems, fascinated by oral, evocative studies, which might enrich our aggrieved, hungry roots. An unconscious nightmare realm still echoes with the suppressed history of the destruction of Paganism, the generations of nature religions destroyed in fire and ash. Behind power fantasies of righteous invulnerability lurk forgotten witchcraft trials, the demonized wise woman, tortured healers and visionaries, those who communicated with animals and plants.

I have to shield my own intuitive guides, but I can describe how the 1995 installation *Mortal Coils* developed as a particularly intuitive process, in conjunction with complex technology. I had begun photographic enlargements of the faces of fifteen friends of varying ages who had unexpectedly died within the past few years of a bewildering variety of illnesses. Designs for a wall of enlarged images were too static. Drawings for a photo-grid produced a dream in which Hannah Wilke stated, 'I don't want to be next to Paul Sharits.'

Then in a chaos of joy and grief, friends had prepared a wild picnic at a Zen country retreat in San Francisco for Dean whose death was imminent. We passed a camera among us, all hoping to capture Dean's vibrancy on film. Months later, after his death, the picnic photos arrived. There was not even one identifiable person in them! Somehow with all the different people filming, the prints showed only pink blurs, seemingly in motion at the top of each frame. Little pink feet seen from below. This 'mistake' I finally recognized as guidance; the images of the dead friends could not be static prints, but must be a projection system – in motion! Molten, melting, motion.

In the midst of resolving these formal uncertainties, I had a dream in which a very loud male voice pronounced: '6 rpm!' The dream vision showed me 15 three-quarter inch manila ropes suspended from ceiling to floor in motorized units, each rope turning at 6 rpm. As soon as I constructed a mock-up of these turning ropes, I saw the images of the dead friends sequenced in a slide projection system with mirrored components, so that each image could be 10 x 8 feet tall moving across an expansive wall, dissolving each into the other. Once the projections flickered through the slowly moving coiled ropes, *Mortal Coils* was realized – activated, driven by coincidences, inventive technologies, invisible conjunctions and dreams.

Carolee Schneemann, 'On Intuition', in *Technologies of Intuition*, ed. Jennifer Fisher (Toronto: VYZBOOKS, 2006) 95–6.



**Aliza Shvarts**

**Figuration and Failure, Pedagogy and Performance:  
Reflections Three Years Later//2011**

In 2008, as an Art Major at Yale University, I engaged in a year-long performance of repeated, self-induced miscarriages that sparked a great deal of controversy. As I see it, there are two elements of this work that are not neatly separable from each other, both of which played a large part in structuring the piece's reception. The first is the series of specific actions undertaken by a body over time. The second is the telling and retelling which made those actions knowable to the world. This first element – my physical act – was designed to interrogate the capability of the female form through the intentionality of art practice, calling into question normative notions of production, reproduction and artistic value through my own bodily experience. Yet because I performed this act in isolation, and because the Yale administration banned my planned installation of the various documentary materials collected during those acts, the latter narrative element became the piece's dominant performative mode. The media, online commenters, the administrators and others ultimately reduced my artist's statement, which accounted for the specificity and ambiguity of my actions, to a number of other accounts, which ranged from accusations of mass murder to a disavowal of the entire piece as an elaborate hoax. [...]

My 2008 senior thesis drew on [an art-historical lineage] to create an embodied performance of failure – a failure of normative narratives of reproduction, of commodification in artistic production, of the correspondence between realness and documentation, and of the relationship between form and function. With this work, I wanted to stage the failure of how ontological and epistemological bodies of knowledge become inscribed on physical bodies, and how that inscription informs our understanding of our own capability – an understanding that is both ideological and incomplete. In formulating this work, I thought about what a senior thesis should really mean to me, about what I could do that would feel like a serious engagement with my education as a whole. I started by thinking about what I had learned as an Art major, about what talents or techniques I might have developed, about the training my hands retained. In so far as the imperative of the senior thesis project was to demonstrate lessons learned through the creation of something new, pedagogy presented itself as a mode of discursivity, as a potential for iteration, for inventive repetition. I then began to think about the embodied quality of talent, about what skills are taught or cultivated, about which talents or techniques of the body are culturally sanctioned, about what kinds of bodies and cultural experiences are presupposed

or privileged, and about which are not. If pedagogy is a mode of discursivity, it presents a possibility for difference and innovation – for activism and for change. Such change would require a critical approach, a method that actively engaged existing discourse, a technique that wielded the discursive to expand upon these institutional determinations of value. This is how I came to performance. Performance happens at the level of the body and at the level of the live experience, yet it also exerts itself through the performativity of the documentation or language in which it is repeated. In the performativity of performance, I saw the opportunity to participate in the discursivity that is pedagogy – not only to repeat but to repeat with difference, to create a difference in bodily valuation that could be repeated. I then began thinking very specifically about my body, and what my body could make, about the true capability of my form separate from the ideological functions imposed upon it, and from this line of thought, which traversed a broad range of critical theory, I formed my piece. I formulated it as a bodily practice, as an experiment in visual documentation, and as a linguistic narrative. The bodily practice has happened, performed alone over many months now a long time ago; the experiment in visual documentation was banned, the elements of which sit unseen and unused; all that remains is the linguistic narrative, which became quickly overshadowed by the other language produced around me and my work. That language, my narrative, is precisely this:

For an academic year, I performed repeated self-induced miscarriages. I created a group of fabricators from volunteers who submitted to periodic STD screenings and agreed to complete and permanent anonymity. From the ninth to the 15th day of my menstrual cycle, the fabricators would provide me with sperm samples, which I used privately to self-inseminate. Using a needle-less syringe, I would inject the sperm near my cervix within 30 minutes of its collection, so as to ensure the possibility of fertilization. On the 28th day of my cycle, I would ingest an abortifacient, after which I would experience cramps and heavy bleeding. To protect myself and others, only I know the number of fabricators who participated, the frequency and accuracy with which I inseminated, and the specific abortifacient I used. Because of these measures of privacy, the piece exists only in its telling. This telling can take textual, visual, spatial, temporal and performative forms – copies of copies for which there is no original.

This language is my piece – on some levels all that remains, and on some level all that it was ever going to be – for it enacts the discursivity that structured even the practical and visual elements. Language was central to every part of the work's formulation and function. This work was not collaborative but the exercise of a single intentionality – I made it with 'fabricators' rather than 'partners',

invoking the specialized outsourcing common in contemporary art known as fabrication. Because my piece did not seek to address the social mechanisms and medical facilities already in place, I chose to call what I was doing 'miscarriage' rather than 'abortion', as miscarriage is something that happens outside the medical institution, something that happens all the time. The difference, given the early window in which my specific acts took place, is one that perhaps exists only semantically, but it is one that articulated the very intention of my piece. To miscarry, to carry wrongly – that is what I did. Indeed, the entire work was configured to create a physical act so ambiguous and inconclusive that the language applied to it could never be completely felicitous, drawing attention to the force of language itself; the reality of the pregnancy, both for myself and for the audience, was always a matter of reading. It is for this reason that the work has no title. It was a senior thesis, which describes its contextual positioning in the world, but other than that description, I did not want to name it as something separate from the discursive practice of life.

In this sense, even as an act steeped in blood, the work was an intervention into hegemonic discursivity through which the potentials of the body and of art are constructed and are taught. Through this work, I sought to participate in a counter-discourse, a counter-teaching, which I had the opportunity to learn about from a number of amazing teachers at Yale. Of course, there is something cruel in the fact that the activist pedagogical practice with which I identified and in which I attempted to participate existed in the same institution as the hegemonic pedagogies my work targeted – a cruelty on both parts. Having had time to think about it, and having since continued my education to delve deeper into these types of pursuits, I have come to conclude that this type of cruelty is the power of knowledge, the true pedagogical imperative: to reform from the inside, to split, counter, upheave and upset. Each reiteration of the project – as fake or real, as art or not-art, as worthwhile or monstrous – is a mark of pedagogical discursivity, of performance's duration. Although the actions I undertook with my body two years ago were important for their physical specificity and exemplarity, the piece was always a performance staged in the performativity of language – one that continues to take place as long as language about it continues to be produced. For this reason, I have come to think of the sometimes exhausting presence of my senior thesis, the tellings and retellings in which I participate and with which I live, as pointing to a future: a future of bodily capability articulated by the practice of figuration and failure, a future of theorizing what performance entails and what performance can do.

Aliza Shvarts, extracts from 'Figuration and Failure, Pedagogy and Performance: Reflections Three Years Later'. *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*, vol. 21, no. 1 (March 2011) 155, 159–61.

*Vincent Simon* In the last few years, you have been acting as both an artist and a shaman. Is shamanism something new to your life, or is shamanism the name of an ancient position?

*AA Bronson* From the time I was a boy, I took a big interest in all forms of esoterica – magic and shamanism, and other kinds of practices. My father was in the air force, so we would move to a new city every three years. I would basically clean out the library of that city, read every book I could find on Buddhism, Hinduism, the occult, shamanism, mythologies, and of course art and architecture. I have always identified with these subjects and always felt I had a special relationship to nature: when I walked into the countryside, there were trees or rocks that would talk to me in a certain way. It was my private world, I didn't talk about it to anybody, it was a secret. I remember having sex with a tree when I was about fifteen. In the middle of winter, I pulled down my trousers and had sex against the tree; it was very fulfilling somehow ... So there is a trail of experiences through my life. My intuition has always told me things that I have been unwilling to accept. Until I was in my mid forties I couldn't believe anything I thought or felt. I always had to rationalize everything. When Felix and Jorge [partners in their artist group General Idea] were dying, and there were a lot of people dying, I began to take healing courses in California and realized that what I needed to do was to listen to my intuition. Once I began allowing my intuition to have voice, my life changed. Typically in Siberian shamanism, shamans have a near-death experience as they are being born, or when they are very young. My mother and I almost died during my birth, and then I almost died again when I was two. I often think that's why I feel very comfortable with people who are dying or who have terminal illnesses. I can talk to people about their dying process and I see why this is part of shamanism.

*Simon* You came out of the shaman closet after the experience of HIV/AIDS, and especially the experience of taking care of Jorge and Felix ...

*Bronson* And other people as well. My father died during the same period, of cancer, also a terminal illness. I sat with a lot of people in their last days, hours, sometimes in their last minutes. It completely changed my perspective of what is important and what isn't. When I was very young, I was afraid I would be put

in a mental home, or an insane asylum, for the things that I thought. I was terrified to go to a therapist – who knows what they would tell me about myself! (*laughs*) And then somehow I didn't care about looking foolish any more.

*Simon* What kind of healing session do you offer?

*Bronson* First, we sit and talk, and the talking part is almost like a traditional therapeutic relationship, except that I'm watching my intuition about the person, and I'm watching their body language. After about twenty minutes or half an hour, I put them on the massage table; it becomes about touching the body and getting messages directly from the body. My massage has three parts to it: there's something similar to a California-style massage, more about energy work; then I do something that I call a Tantric massage, which is a genital massage, not a hand job, although it sounds like one (*both laugh*); and then I do the butt massage which is my speciality. The butt massage is the important thing. The sphincter is the muscle where we hide the secret part of our being. I act as a translator between the person's body and their head. Sometimes there's some sort of spirit life embedded in the body, that is somebody else, some other life form. I seem to be very good at releasing that spirit, so that is more like an exorcism. Luckily that doesn't happen very often (*laughs*). I have some special talent that really nobody teaches, that somehow I figured out for myself. I took all these courses, but that's not what I do any more. I think that I should have some sort of teaching retreat, where I can teach people these skills.

*Simon* In the nineteenth century, the spiritualists thought science was strong enough to help them get in touch with the afterworld. Today we believe less in science, and conjuring the dead is more a way of reminding ourselves that we are historical and social beings. In that sense, it's much more a question of memory.

*Bronson* Three things come to mind. Especially as gay men, we have to remember that there is a stream of history before us, with generations of people who never identified themselves as homosexual necessarily, and maybe weren't homosexual. There is a queer history that doesn't appear in history books, the history of all-male societies – explorers, loggers, trappers, the military, the church, even pirates – as well as the history of creative communities and so on ... So we have to rewrite our own history, not a genetic history but a storytelling history, otherwise we are a people without history. The second thing I think of is exorcism. That is specifically about a being of some sort lodged in another being's body, or in a building. In a healing session, I invoke that presence if it is there, to make itself physically visible. That's different from my queer spirits invocations, which



illustrate a third relationship to the dead. The invocations are about our selves in this place, about bonding and connection, and the feeling that we are protected by the spirits we invoke, whether or not we are physically aware of them.

*Simon* When you entered your sixties, you became a kind of wise man, like an ancient philosopher whose reflection and teaching is centred on two issues: happiness and how not to be afraid of death.

*Bronson* I like that (*laughs*). It's a good description. I spend much of my time sitting and talking to people now. I spend a lot of my time apparently having coffee and tea! [...]

AA Bronson and Vincent Simon, extract from 'Community of the Living and the Dead', interview (June and July 2012), in *Sorcières/Witches*, ed. Anna Colin (Quimper: Editions B42, 2013) 151–5.

## **Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman Sex without Optimism//2014**

*Lee Edelman* [...] Alain Badiou has good reason to remind us that 'every definition of Man based on happiness is nihilist',<sup>1</sup> but we can never be reminded often enough that the political programme of happiness as a regulatory norm is less a recipe for liberation than an inducement to entomb oneself in the stillness of an image. It is to seek, as I wrote at the outset, the 'stability of a knowable relation', where the fantasy of *knowing* the relation seeks to stabilize or mortify precisely what makes it living and relational in the first place: its opening onto differences we neither comprehend nor control. As a normative project, then, happiness has to abject, as radically inimical, whatever resists incorporation into its totalizing logic. Violence becomes the medium for its 'violence control', as Panopticism, like a Möbius strip, turns back to the negativity from which it tries to turn away. But to demur from *this version* of optimism is not to deny the inevitability of our, or anyone else's, optimistic attachments. [Edelman's *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, 2004] made clear that no one, including those who assume the figural status of the social order's death drive, can choose to stand outside that order or the Symbolic logic that shapes it. And only the prospect of making the intrinsic negativity of the social apparent, thus opening onto a possible political engagement with the Real, could motivate anyone to take on the function of

what I called the *sinthomosexual*. The negativity that interests me has no ground outside the optimism it opposes. The desire at work in these dialogues, invariably a political desire, is to think the enabling conditions of an anti-aesthetic space that would not reproduce the pacifications of aesthetic ideology or the sublimations that recuperate the sublime's distinctive undoings. Instead it would permit the encounter with negativity to initiate transformations whose end is only the endless opening onto the necessity of new ones.

This, then, is not a superior optimism dialectically raised up by negation but rather an effort, embedded in the contradictions of willing against oneself, to make possible what one's *self* impedes and Panoptimism renders unthinkable: an openness to what resists the survival of our mortified, adorabilized selves in their conformity to the dominant ethics of happiness and immobilized social forms. In the misrecognitions that sex entails and their recurrent neutralization by optimism's stabilizing impulse, I aim to locate the queerness that works as that optimist's self-resistance: the queerness that is less an identity than an ongoing effort of divestiture, a practice of undoing. Such queerness, I claim, can make no claim – no claim to the good or the proper, and so to no ground from which identitarian claims for redress of wrongs might be launched. In its paradoxical self-definition as what blocks definition's closure, it resists the regime of the smiley face whose rictus carries the promise of consistency, stability and normalization. Panoptimism precludes the very life it purportedly enables while denying the negativity of its own death-driven investment in 'life' – where 'life' names the fantasy of escape from loss, contradiction, confusion or defeat in pursuit of an armoured happiness that aggresses the enemies of its hope.

What hope for those who hope to remain consigned to that enemy camp? What happens when hope *turns against itself* in order to affirm the rupture that defines its enabling negativity, its structuring non-coincidence with the universe as it 'is'? Things that *may* happen include disaffection, depression, immobility, resignation or the suicidal fantasmatics of ontological repair. But among the others is a political resistance to the norms by which political possibility is defined – and defined precisely to exclude negativity and, with it, the radical undoing that animates hope as a rupture from itself and thus sets it apart from the happiness that Panoptimism promises.

*Lauren Berlant* I don't see queerness mainly as 'an effort of divestiture' but also as an attentiveness and will to make openings from within the overwhelming and perhaps impossible drive to make objects worthy of attachment, and therefore I'm less threatened by the potential foreclosures of hope. But I agree largely with what Lee has written; and it makes me realize that part of my resistance to apocalyptic crescendos is that they can well blot out the delicacies that got us

there. To amplify the substantive agreement: As James Baldwin pronounced long before Badiou, some fantasies of collective happiness *are* inhuman, but a critical social theory would have to engage how people manage their aversion to life and liveness in relation to their desire for them. Such structural ambivalence points to the very complexity of talking about sex when it would be so much easier to be reflecting on feelings. Politically the reparative drive about which I worry most is the genocidal one, the one to which Leo Bersani refers as the inflation of the state ego that forces the world into mirroring its grandiose fantasy; the one that Judith Butler identified in the imperial world's incapacity to grieve; the one that Sara Ahmed and Barbara Ehrenreich describe in their anti-supremacist critiques of happiness projects; and the one that Fred Moten and Stefano Harney refuse in their call to reinvent what we mean by both abolition and reconstruction (offering a quite different praxis from a project of *repair*).

Most fantasies of repairing what's broken aren't, though, genocidal; most of them are ways of staying bound to the possibility of staying bound to a world whose terms of reciprocity – whether in intimate personal or political idioms – are not entirely in anyone's control and which yet can be changed by a radical collective refusal of normative causality, of the normative relation of event to effect. Sex without optimism doesn't have to mean sex with or without 'bad sex'. It could mean facing that we never had the option of maintaining our composure around that which never provided us the clarity and assurance that seemed to be its promise. It could mean seeing that sex becomes more of a threat when it has to hold up a world that spans both chronological and fantasmatic futures. Sexual politics, even as critical theory, generates better scenarios for inhabiting its great and disturbing discomposure. [...]

1 Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (1998); trans. Peter Hallward (London and New York: Verso, 2001) 37.

Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman, extract from *Sex, or The Unbearable* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2014) 18–20.

**The New World Summit**

The first act necessary to free art from its complicity in the mass cultural torture of democratism is to rearticulate the political context in which we want art to be operational. Making art in defence of *fundamental* democracy – as opposed to democratism – means demanding of art that it not only reflect a progressive, emancipatory politics but also contribute to the shaping of its ideals. That is, the art that is required is not simply a product of politics, but a *political force in itself*.

In recent years I have worked with political parties, non-parliamentary political organizations and social movements focused on exploring what role art might play once it is resituated within an alternative political sphere, and how this political sphere might change once artists engage it. In my own practice, these endeavours have led to an artistic and political organization called the New World Summit. Since 2012, the New World Summit has developed a series of 'alternative parliaments' worldwide, providing a forum for political and juridical representatives from organizations that have been excluded from democracy, listed as terrorists, banned from travel and financially immobilized, with their assets frozen. [...]

The New World Summit attempts to explore at what level art can serve as a tool to bypass these restrictions. We have tried to circumvent them by operating as a nomadic parliament: the New World Summit has no fixed geographical location, as it represents no nation state. We make maximum use of the exceptional juridical status of art – that is, of the fact that art, today, is rarely simply present, but rather always simultaneously questioning the conditions of this presence. This *radical ambiguity*, we believe, creates the transformative space in which progressive politics can take shape, free from the restrictive legislative fall-out of global anti-terrorism initiatives. Where politics fails, and where democracy's deep state reveals itself at its most explicit, art operates to sustain an alternative political sphere. [...]

These international gatherings have included organizations that are internationally considered to be state threats. In the European Union, a committee called the Clearing House was formed following the 11 September 2001 attacks to draw up the blacklist. The Clearing House meets biannually in Brussels, but there are no public proceedings or records of the body's selection process. Even by its own standards, the committee in charge of deeming which organizations are to be placed 'outside' the ideals of democratism is organized in a fundamentally undemocratic manner. Consequences for listed organizations

and related individuals include blocked assets and an international travel ban.

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The first of the three editions of the New World Summit to have taken place so far occurred May 4–5, 2012, in the Sophiensaele, a theatre and space for cultural and political discourse located in Berlin. Invitations were dispatched to roughly 100 organizations mentioned on one of the many international lists of designated terrorist organizations. During this inaugural summit, we were able to host four political and three juridical representatives – as in lawyers – from the following organizations: the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, a guerilla faction that, since the 1970s, has opposed what they consider to be the country's US puppet regime; the National Liberation Movement of Azawad, a Tuareg-led group of insurgents that took over two-thirds of Mali in 2012, striving, in their words, for a 'multi-ethnic' and 'multi-religious' secular state; the Basque Independence movement, which seeks to redefine the notion of Basque citizenship such that it might be applied to global struggles for self-determination; and the Kurdish Women's Movement, which works in opposition both to the Turkish State and to the male dominant structure within the Kurdish revolutionary movement. Fadile Yildirim, who represented the KWM, proposed a radical feminist reading of history in order to 'liberate democracy from the state'. In her words Lenin's 'democratism' is echoed: for Yildirim, it is the *legalized* structure within which the secondary status of women is inherently inscribed.

'Democracy' may well have been made possible by state structures, but in order to shape its core principles of egalitarianism – the equal distribution of power and knowledge – we must liberate it from the state, thus disentangling its power monopolies and oligarchies from the capitalist doctrine. I propose a necessary *art of the stateless state* – an art not subject to prehistoric cultural and political structures, but an art that is a driving, imaginative force redefining the space and practice of the commons.



## **The New World Academy**

In the context of the New World Summit, art acts as an imaginative space for a different political arena: the 'alternative parliament'. We founded the New World Academy in collaboration with BAK, Base for Contemporary Art in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in order to continue our exploration of art as a force for political restructuring. The New World Academy is a school that invites stateless political groups dealing with systematic political exclusion to work with artists, scholars, and students over a period of three days, during which participants investigate the various roles art might play at the centre of political struggle, developing related projects in collaboration with one another. Here, we seek to trace the historical narratives and practices of stateless art. [...]

In the 1960s, Professor Jose Maria Sison, founder of both the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army, called for a Second Propaganda Movement, a cultural uprising that demanded independence. It is in this context that the figure of the artist as 'cultural worker' emerged and became central to understanding the role of art within the National Democratic Movement. The cultural worker, within this movement, broadcasts the Filipino people's right to self-determination, inscribing it through words and images in the imagination of an unrecognized state. The cultural worker uses artistic tools in order to uphold and to communicate the narratives and convictions of the marginalized and the dispossessed. He or she is educator, agitator, organizer, engaged in the maintenance of the symbolic universe of the unacknowledged state – not so much an administrative entity, but rather a collectivity, participant in a shared visual language. As such, a kind of meta-state is created in details; it possesses an independent network of references, histories and symbols that define identity, even beyond what a territorially or legislatively defined state might ever be able to obtain.

It is within this stateless state that we find the condition that may be understood as a 'permanent revolution' – that is, a permanent process of collectively communicating, critiquing and shaping our understanding of culture, not as an administered identity but as one in constant movement. This does not mean that art can replace – or must obliterate – state structure; instead it suggests that if there should ever be such a thing as a state, it should be reflective of the permanent process through which a people's culture manifests and expresses itself, not as an administered entity, restricted or restricting any form of communication. Art of the stateless is our way out of prehistory.

Jonas Staal, extracts from 'Art of the Stateless State', ART PAPERS vol. 38, issue 03 (May/June 2014), 42–46. Courtesy of Atlanta Art Papers, Inc.

[...] It is with his new installation *The Repair* that Attia fully addresses what Édouard Glissant has often called 'la complexité-monde', our relation to the Other as subject and object, and the subsequent difficulties that emerge from this encounter. We see all the possible representations of the Other in *The Repair* project: *les guelles casées* (the broken jaws) of World War One, the traumatized bodies, the bodies for exhibitions, the repaired bodies, the fetishized bodies, the aestheticized bodies, bodies of object, bodies of people, white bodies, black bodies, bodies of Africans, bodies of Europeans, bodies carved in wood, bodies stitched in clothes, masked bodies, tattooed bodies, hollowed bodies, protruding bodies, and bodies locked up in boxes like stereotypes. In this multiplicity of bodies, we find the body as opposition to; the body against; the hyphenated body; the relayed body; and the relative body.

The common ground for all these bodies is that they are all looking for reparation, they all need something else to make up for something missing; they're all striving to achieve a perfect state in the world, a compensation for some kind of lack, an amputation, or something perceived as a due.

As a reparation artist, Attia makes us revisit, through his installation, Europe's debt to Africa for the Atlantic slave trade, colonialism and the current mutilation of indigenous populations and their environment through mining and wars. Thus the show takes on, at least, two levels of signification. First we see that a broken body is a body that has had a weakness introduced into it, a hole that, if not repaired, becomes a sign of trauma. We need therefore to repair the hole, or the fissure, by covering it up, stitching it, or decorating it with other scars to reappropriate it and make it familiar. It is in this sense that different ethnic groups in history have demanded reparation for crimes committed against them.

Some of the African masks that Attia uses in *The Repair* were also used in traditional performances as symbols of ancestral deities who were called upon to repair damages caused by natural disasters and epidemics. Our understanding of reparation in this sense has the meaning of the restoration of a value that had been taken away. In so far as we think that damage was committed against us that has not only weakened us, but also taken a vital force from us, we feel that that we could only fix it through the payment of a debt, a legal settlement, or a psychological approach to the problem.

There is another level of understanding the show and Attia's concept of reparation. Walking through the installation, one of the first things we realize is

that the broken faces of black and white, masks and people, utensils and human faces are interchangeable, because their scars are relatable. They each construct a *lieu-commun*, the myth of which can be shared with the state in which the others find themselves.

We need therefore to change our imaginaries in order to begin to see the relation between the different disfigurements in the installation. We change the way we see the victims of trauma by familiarizing ourselves with the victims, by embracing their scars and letting them embrace ours. By licking the Other's scars and allowing him/her/it to lick our disfigurement, as Attia has done with every object in the show, we engage in an exchange that change us in the process. This, for me, is Attia's fundamental discovery in *The Repair*.

What Glissant had to say about 'reparation' is equally profound. For him, a long and permanent reparation, beyond political and civic actions, is possible if we seek out the Other and tremble with him/her. Building on what he has been calling *la pensée du tremblement* (a quakeful, or tremulous thinking), Glissant argues in *Philosophie de la relation* that, faced with the misfortunes that strike people around the world, every day, a quakeful thinking could open the door to a long term reparation, beginning by changing the imaginaries of the world. He states that myth and poetry find their condition of possibility in the quakeful, and the doubting thought. Even good philosophies must find their vocation in thoughts that are uncertain, timid, intuitive and opaque at first. To Glissant, thoughts that do not tremble are frozen, systematic and sterile. A people that only embrace themselves and their culture as the only culture, embrace nothing. The quakeful thought is thus the very condition of reparation of our disfigured selves, searching for Other disfigurements to identify with, to tell their stories, and relay them with our own stories. *The Repair* by Attia tells the story of our *guelles cassées* and teaches us how to reappropriate them as vital forces, sites of relation and creolization, as first obscure poetic and mythic scream of man on earth.

Manthia Diawara. extract from 'Kader Attia – A Glissantian Reading', in *Kader Attia: The Repair from Occident to Extra-Occidental Cultures* (Berlin: The Green Box, 2014).

## Biographical Notes

**Marina Abramović** is a Yugoslav-born artist based in New York State.

**Kathy Acker** (1944–97) was an American experimental writer based in New York.

**Theodor W. Adorno** (1903–69) was a German-born critical and cultural theorist.

**Giorgio Agamben** is a Professor of Philosophy based at the Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio.

**Louis Althusser** (1918–90) was a French philosopher and political theorist.

**Francis Alÿs** is a Belgian-born artist based in Mexico.

**Ayreen Anastas** is a Palestinian-born artist based in Brooklyn.

**Rasheed Araeen** is a Pakistan-born British artist based in London.

**Arakawa** (1936–2010) was a Japanese-born artist and architect based in New York.

**Hannah Arendt** (1906–75) was a German-born American philosopher and political theorist.

**Alain Badiou** is a philosopher and former chair of Philosophy at the École Normale Supérieure, Paris.

**Georges Bataille** (1897–1962) was a French surrealist writer and interdisciplinary thinker.

**Florence Belmore** is a Canadian Anishinaabekwe writer and artist based in Quebec.

**Walter Benjamin** (1892–1940) was a German-Jewish critical theorist and literary critic.

**Lauren Berlant** is George M. Pullman Distinguished Service Professor of English, University of Chicago.

**Joseph Beuys** (1921–86) was a German artist and theorist of education and society.

**Jennifer Biddle** is ARC Future Fellow and founding Coordinator of the PhD programme in Visual Anthropology, University of New South Wales.

**Gregg Bordowitz** is an American artist, writer and activist based in New York.

**Pierre Bourdieu** (1930–2002) was a French sociologist, ethnographer and photographer.

**AA Bronson** is a Canadian artist based in Toronto and Berlin.

**Julia Bryan-Wilson** is Professor, Modern and Contemporary Art, University of California, Berkeley.

**Judith Butler** is Maxine Elliot Professor, Department of Comparative Literature and Program of Critical Theory, University of California, Berkeley.

**Guido Cappello** (1933–96) was an Italian chess player and writer based in Milan.

**Judy Chicago** is an American artist based in New Mexico.

**Lygia Clark** (1920–88) was a Brazilian artist and therapist based in Rio de Janeiro and Paris.

**Commission of Artistic Action of the Argentine CCA** was an artist group affiliated to the labour union that opposed the dictatorship of Lieutenant General Juan Carlos Onganía (1966–70).

**The Dalai Lama** is the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people, born in 1935.

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'Boon and Levine have assembled an engaging collection of short essays, manifestos, interviews, impressions and expressions, which together explore the rich density of "practice". It is about art, and will fascinate anyone who experiences politics, philosophy and everyday life as forms of artistry - as artistic "practices" that repeat, hustle, experiment with, fly free from, and play with established subjectivities, cruelties, virtues. A bracing and marvellous book.'

- Jane Bennett Professor of Political Science, Johns Hopkins University

'To move from competency to fluency to freedom takes some practice, but just what that entails - as this volume makes clear - is more than technique. Personal desires comingle with social questions, so that whether working solo or in coalitions of the like-minded, having a practice is always a dynamic process of situating oneself in the world. And as writers from across a wide spectrum offer here, when embodied consciousness and impassioned commitment take hold, practice as a way of working becomes a way of being.'

- Mary Jane Jacob Director, Institute of Curatorial Research and Practice, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago

'Political, philosophical, poetic, aesthetic and critical, *Practice* will be of great use to anyone working with and thinking about this most dominant (but obscure) of terms. The texts collected here are fresh and provocative. From magic to high art theory, structuralism to anarchism, Boon and Levine have collected the most vital words on the "practical turn" in art, and many other ways of thinking about practice besides.'

- Nina Power Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Southampton

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**PRACTICE** is a key word in contemporary art, ranging from artists' descriptions of their practice to curatorial practice, from social practice to practice-based research. Once used to denote 'doing', as distinct from thinking and making, today the term can convey associations of political action, professional activity, discipline or rehearsal, as well as a shift away from the self-enclosed artwork or medium to open-ended actions, series, processes and projects. This is the first anthology to investigate and evaluate what contemporary notions of practice mean for art.

*Practice* is one of a series documenting major themes and ideas in contemporary art

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